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NC Health & Wellness Trust Fund

# Evaluation of the NC Tobacco. Reality. Unfiltered. (TRU) Media Campaign

## BRIEF SUMMARY

June 6, 2006



## Summary

Based on results from the latest Youth Tobacco Survey in North Carolina (NC), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) announced in 2006 that high and middle school smoking rates in NC have dramatically declined. Since HWTF funding began in 2003, the rate of decline accelerated, translating into 27,000 fewer teen smokers and putting NC on track to drop below the national smoking average. A major reason for NC's success is likely due to the comprehensive approach the state has taken to youth tobacco use prevention and cessation, combining a statewide counter marketing campaign, called *Tobacco.Reality.Unfiltered.* (TRU), with school and community programs. New research by the Tobacco Prevention and Evaluation Program (TPEP) at the University of North Carolina details contributions the campaign is making to the state's reduced smoking rates among youth and challenges for the media campaign's continued success.

The evaluation of the TRU campaign, based on the theme of serious health consequences of tobacco use affecting real people in the state, occurred on the campaign running in NC's six media markets from Spring through Fall 2004 and from Fall through Winter 2005. The 2004 campaign had a higher dose in the Charlotte media market to more rigorously evaluate the effects of the campaign. The evaluation measured the effectiveness of the TRU campaign through a telephone survey of a sample of NC youth at three time points: before the campaign began, after the first flight of ads, and after the second flight of ads.

*The 2006 evaluation report shows significant accomplishments, including:*

- ❑ Youth awareness of the TRU campaign is increasing.
  - Awareness of TRU ads increased from 45% in 2004 to 54% of NC youth in 2005
- ❑ Higher amounts of exposure to the TRU campaign have resulted in higher awareness.
  - Youth in Charlotte have significantly greater awareness of the TRU campaign compared with the rest of the state (66% vs. 49%).
- ❑ TRU ads appear to be becoming stronger and more effective.
  - Over 90% of youth who saw the 2005 ads reported that they were convincing, attention-grabbing, and gave good reasons not to smoke.
  - Over 25% of these youth reported that they talked to their friends about the ads, indicating high "chat value".
- ❑ Specific prevention brands, logos, and slogans have an established identity among NC youth.
  - "TRU", "Tobacco.Reality.Unfiltered.", and "What's it gonna take?" are all recognized by at least one third of North Carolina youth, though there has been little change from 2004 to 2005.

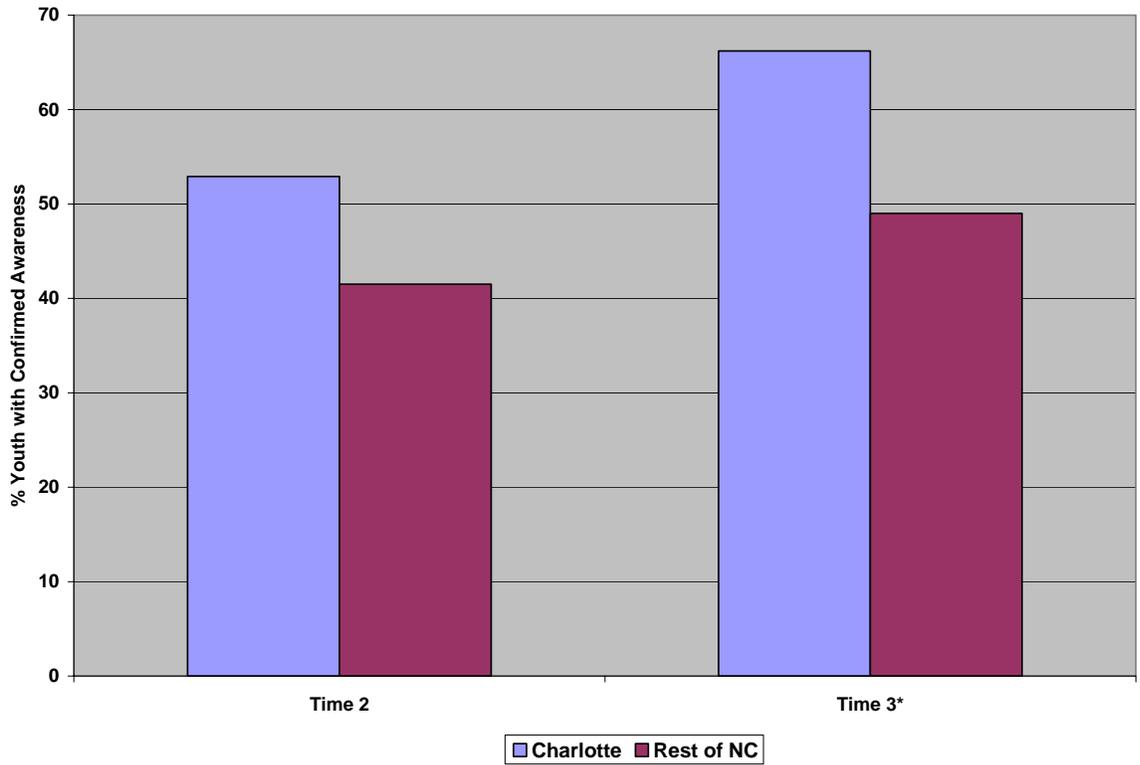
*The 2006 evaluation report also shows significant barriers, including:*

- ❑ Lack of sufficient and continuous funding for the TRU Media Campaign has limited campaign, brand, and slogan exposure, resulting in less than optimal levels of awareness.
- ❑ The social acceptability of cigarette smoking among NC youth is mixed.
  - Over 50% of youth believe that most people their age think it is okay to smoke, despite the fact that over 80% say they personally do not approve of people their age smoking.
- ❑ A significant portion of youth remain susceptible to tobacco use.
  - Roughly one-third of non-smoking youth remain susceptible to smoking, and 11% remain susceptible to smokeless tobacco products.

**Recommendations:** Funding for the TRU campaign should dramatically increase to push exposure of the TRU campaign to levels at or above the original campaign in Charlotte and ultimately to levels seen in best practice national campaigns. The evaluation concludes that the TRU media campaign is now reaching and potentially affecting over one-half of NC youth. Current ads are well received, and future TRU ads should be refined, using the successful themes contained in prior NC best practices media and focus group findings, and evolve in order to keep the campaign targeted and innovative. The evaluation also concludes that without increased and continuous funding of the program, accomplishments and gains may be lost, and rates of tobacco use may increase once again. North Carolina's TRU Media Campaign remains a critical component of its comprehensive program aimed at preventing and reducing teen tobacco use. Continued integration of the mass media campaign with community mobilization must occur to maximize campaign effectiveness.

# TRU Campaign Evaluation

Confirmed awareness of TRU ads in 2004 and 2005 by NC youth



Reactions to TRU ads among NC youth with confirmed awareness in 2004-2005

