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NEWS - LOCAL

Friday, Jan. 02, 2009

Teen smoking down in N.C., study finds

Research credits programs to stop spread of habit

McClatchy Newspapers

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RALEIGH, N.C. -- Programs designed to reduce teenage smoking in North Carolina are having an effect, according to a new study by researchers at the medical school at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The study showed the percentage of middle-school students who smoke dropped from 5.8 percent in 2005 to 4.5 percent in 2007. The number of high school students who smoke fell from 20.3 percent to 19 percent.

The results come from what is being called the first comprehensive independent evaluation of the state Health and Wellness Trust Fund's anti-smoking efforts.

Gov.-elect Beverly Perdue, chairwoman of the trust fund since its creation in 2001, called the results gratifying and a "tremendous sign of progress" for an initiative that has sometimes had to buck North Carolina's pro-tobacco forces.

The trust fund gets a quarter of the state's payments from the 1998 national settlement with tobacco companies, and has spent \$125 million trying to persuade people to quit smoking or not to start. Its budget for anti-smoking programs this year is \$17.1 million.

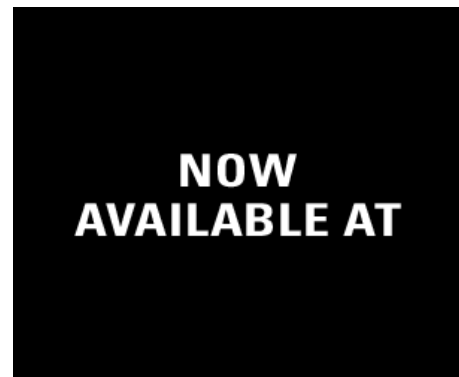
It's believed the trust fund's programs triggered most of the declines in smoking, said Dr. Adam Goldstein, director of Tobacco Prevention and

Evaluation Program at UNC. Kurt Ribisl, an associate professor at the UNC School of Public Health who studies tobacco issues, said the trust fund's efforts were impressive given the political courage they have taken.

"This is one of the best tobacco-control programs in the Southeast and hands down the strongest among the six major tobacco-producing states," Ribisl said.

Even those who think states often don't do enough to fight smoking are impressed.

"I actually think it has run a good program," said Danny McGoldrick, vice president for research at the



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