

NCPHA e-newsletter

E-Letter from the NC Public Health Association and the NCPHA Public Awareness Committee

MARCH 2012

Future Focus: 2020 Spotlight on Injury and Violence



Unintentional poisoning (primarily from overdoses of prescribed opioid pain relievers) has seen a tremendous increase in the rate of death over the past decade. In 1999, the rate of fatal unintentional poisonings per 100,000 North Carolina residents was 3.5 deaths; by 2009, the rate increased to 11.0 deaths, a 214% increase. As of 2010, North Carolina's rate is 9.9 deaths, which meets the goal set for 2020.

These results are due, in part, to initiatives such as Project Lazarus. Project Lazarus, a community-based drug overdose prevention program that originated in Wilkes County, is using a public health approach to address this injury epidemic. For more information about the project, please visit <http://publichealth.nc.gov/hnc2020/stories.htm>.

For additional information about injury and violence prevention, please visit <http://www.injuryfreenc.ncdhhs.gov>. Information regarding our state's health objectives and initiatives is available at <http://publichealth.nc.gov/hnc2020>.



From Jones Street...

A legislative update from Executive Director Lynette Tolson

On March 13th, NCPHA members addressed the NC HHS Legislative Oversight Committee (LOC) on innovative local public health programs. Beth Lovette, President of the North Carolina Association of Local Health Directors (NCALHD) and Health Director for the Appalachian District, shared with the committee information on public health and gave an overview of the NCALHD legislative agenda.

Anne Thomas, Dare County Health Director, gave an overview of Peer Power. This program is an innovative school-based peer health education program that trains high school kids as health educators and mentors for middle and elementary students. This program targets behaviors responsible for chronic disease and poor health. After the program, evaluations have shown that students increased fruit and vegetable consumption, increased the number of days of moderate physical activity and reflected an average decrease in the personal body mass index (BMI).

Deana Billings, Executive Director of the Wilkes County Public Health Dental Clinic, shared Wilkes County's experience in opening a public health dental clinic. This clinic was opened in 2000 after a public outcry concerning a lack of access to dental care for children in their community. Today, the clinic sees approximately 120 patients per day. By making prevention the primary focus of care vs. relieving pain, there is a reduction in total cost of treatment and fewer visits to the emergency department. This certainly represents savings for state Medicaid dollars!



Salute! Beaufort County!

Beaufort County Health Department is making Public Health Month in North Carolina visible

April is North Carolina Public Health Month, and the Beaufort County Health Department is taking the lead with the help of two interns, Janell Brockett and Ashley Miller, from East Carolina University. In February, staff wore red and black T-shirts (with sequins!) to promote women's heart health on *Go Red for Women* day. Billboards have been placed all over the county to remind everyone to exercise and eat their veggies to prevent cardiovascular disease. The Board of Health has also promoted and sponsored a kickoff event for folks to get their weight, BMI, and blood pressure checked out. Participants not only received a pedometer, heart healthy information and a goody bag, but also a chance to enter in an exercise challenge. The winner will be announced at the upcoming *Paws for a Cause Dog Walk* on April 22nd!

During Nutrition Month of March, the Beaufort County Health Department has been hosting Tuesday *Lunch and Learns* for community and county employees. A variety of speakers provide heart healthy information while participants eat their own healthy lunches. Physical activity is included, and the more times employees participate, the higher their chances are to win a prize.

During *Week of the Young Child*, Beaufort Health Department in partnership with their Physical Activity and Nutrition Committee and the Farm Bureau, will hold a free health screening at the *Healthy Living for a Lifetime Health Fair*. See next page for details. Finally, be on the lookout for brief heart healthy articles in the local newspaper!

Thank you, Public Health!

A message from President Gayle Harris

Many people take for granted public health because when it is working, they don't see it. Yet public health touches our lives every day.

In 1900, the average life span was less than 50 years. Today, we can expect to live to about 78 years old. In 1900, the leading causes of death were pneumonia, tuberculosis, and diarrhea/enteritis – diseases that we rarely fear these days because of clean water, vaccinations and improvements in nutrition. Thank you, Public Health!

Our goal as public health professionals is literally to put ourselves out of business. It would bring me no greater happiness than to eradicate tuberculosis, flu, diabetes, and childhood obesity. We aim to prevent illnesses and injuries before they occur, saving millions if not billions in taxpayer dollars, and thousands of lives every year.

We have a long way to go, though. For the first time, children are projected to have shorter life spans than their parents. In 2010 alone, health care costs in this country rose to 2.6 trillion dollars. This is largely due to preventable chronic diseases.

Health departments across the state are working hard to turn these trends around. We realize that in order to accomplish this, we need to think "outside the box." Obesity and chronic diseases cannot be reversed within the confines of a doctor's office. There are too many barriers in our environment that stop us from living healthy lives. Currently, public health officials are working with city and county officials, including planning and transportation staff members, to name a few. We aim to make our neighborhoods safer for children and adults to play, streets more pedestrian- and biker-friendly, and parks and healthy foods more accessible.

A Healthier America begins today. Thank you, Public Health!

April is North Carolina Public Health Month!

What is your community doing to celebrate?



March 31st – April 5th: The APHA is hosting its Fort Bragg National Public Health Week Celebration. Events include school outreach, health and safety fairs, a public health seminar/ professional poster presentation offering continuing education credits and a Department of Preventive Medicine Open House. www.nphw.org

The Martin-Tyrrell-Washington District Health Department is celebrating National Public Health Week by hosting a series of *Healthy Living in 2012* Health Fairs. The NC Farm Bureau will be offering FREE health screenings, including cholesterol, blood glucose, blood pressure, body mass index, bone density, and vascular ultrasound. Participants will receive a goody bag after their screening. <http://www.healthylivingforalifetime.com>

April 2nd, 9:00-5:00 p.m.: Martin County Health Department

April 3rd, 9:00-5:00 p.m.: Washington County Health Department

April 5th, 9:00-5:00 p.m.: Tyrrell County Health Department at Tyrrell Hall



April 3rd, 10:00-1:00

p.m.: *Hey Doc, How Are My Kidneys?* The UNC Kidney Mobile Unit will be providing FREE kidney screenings as part of Washington County Health Dept.'s Health Fair on April 3rd (see right).

April 25th, 2:00-4:00 p.m.: Beaufort County Health Department, alongside the NC Farm Bureau and the Physical Activity and Nutrition Committee, is holding a Healthy Living for Lifetime Health Fair at the First United Methodist Church to provide FREE health screenings. <http://www.healthylivingforalifetime.com>



April 2nd, 6:00-7:30 p.m.: UNC Charlotte & BCBSNC have invited Dr. Leandris Liburd, Director of Minority Health and Health Equity at the CDC, to give a presentation. Her talk, *Prevention: The Great Equalizer*, is part of the *Dialogue for a Healthier Community Series*. Reception to follow. http://health.uncc.edu/Health_Dialogue

April 21st, 9:30 a.m.:

In addition to hosting a Staff Appreciation Lunch on April 12th, David Rice, Director of New Hanover Health Department, will be leading a Public Health History Walking Tour of Oakdale Cemetery and downtown Wilmington. The tour begins at the Oakdale Cemetery on 15th Street.

April 22nd, 2:00-4:00 p.m.: Beaufort County Health Department is hosting its Paws for a Cause Dog Walk, where residents can walk dogs from the Animal Shelter or their own. In addition to vendors sharing lots of information, the winner of the Heart Health KickOff Event will be announced. The walk will start at a community walking path in one of their municipalities.

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