

State of the District

*2008-09 Community Health Report for
Alleghany, Ashe, & Watauga Counties*



We face a new challenge

November, 2009

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to bring you this community health report as a snapshot of community health successes and challenges we currently face in our district.

Today is a new day in public health. We face new challenges unlike those in our past days like tuberculosis and cholera. Now, our most urgent focus must turn to the growing epidemic of chronic disease, most attributed to the choices we make in our everyday lives.

Poor nutrition coupled with physically inactive lifestyles is adding a great burden on our health. We know these two areas in particular are linked to the chronic diseases that are among the leading causes of death in Appalachian District, North Carolina, and the United States. Diseases like heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes account for much of the disability and death in our area. To save on long term healthcare costs, prevention must be a key part of our plan. We had a great start last year with our Watauga County Childhood Obesity Prevention Demonstration Project, funded by the NC General Assembly.

Tobacco use continues to be of great concern for us. There is no safe level of secondhand smoke. Incredibly, this message has made it to the ears of policymakers across North Carolina. House Bill 2 is a great step in the right direction, but we need to do more to protect more people from secondhand smoke, support people who want to quit, and prevent our youth from starting tobacco use.

Not unlike other entities, public health has been greatly affected by budget cuts. It is our goal to continue providing quality service to our communities. We are working diligently to be prepared for the emerging issues we face, including the novel H1N1 influenza virus along with our usual seasonal influenza.

For the first time in history, our children risk having shorter life spans than their parents due to the growing obesity and chronic disease trends in children. It is going to take commitment from community partnerships, including our Healthy Carolinians' partners, and policymakers to address these health concerns in Appalachian District. We look forward to joining with you to help us become the healthiest community in North Carolina.

In Health,

Danny

Daniel Staley, M.S.
Health Director



Leading Concerns

The table below from the NC State Center for Health Statistics indicates the Leading Causes of Death for Appalachian District: Alleghany, Ashe, and Watauga Counties. Heart disease and cancer continue in the lead for causing death.

We know that there are many variables that are connected to chronic disease, but key focus points are life choices and access to healthcare. Tobacco use, poor nutrition, and lack of physical activity are clearly linked as risk factors for heart disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory diseases, and stroke.

An increasing concern in the leading causes of death is that of suicide. In review of Alleghany, Ashe, and Watauga County statistics, suicide ranks 8th, 9th, or 10th place, respectively, as a leading cause of death.

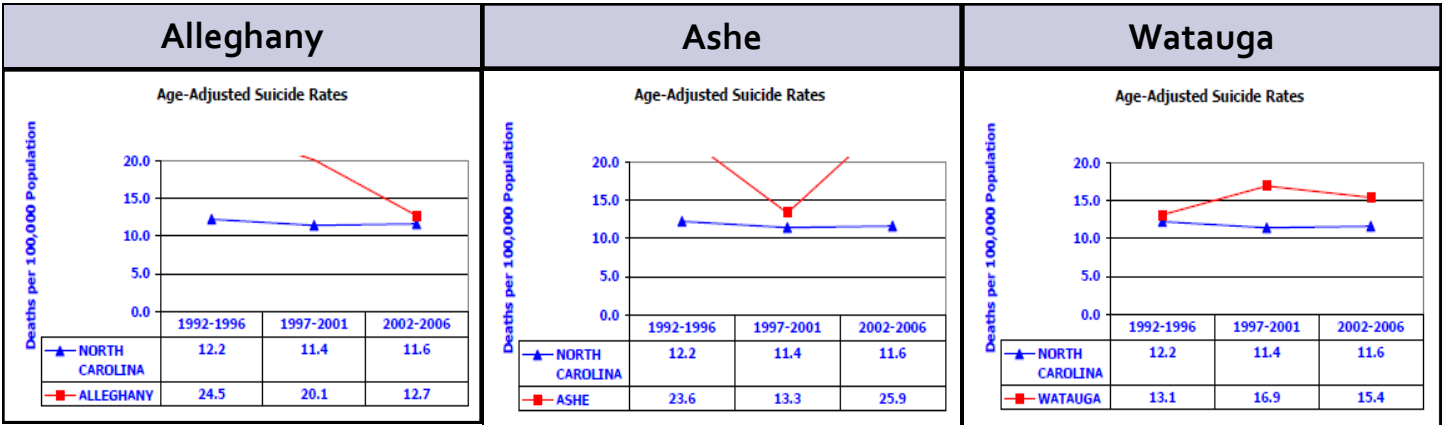
2007 Leading Causes of Death			
Rank	Cause	Number	%
1	Diseases of heart	179	25.2
2	Cancer	143	20.1
3	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	62	8.7
4	Cerebrovascular diseases (Stroke)	49	6.9
5	All other unintentional injuries	27	3.8
6	Alzheimer's disease	18	2.5
7	Motor vehicle injuries	14	2
8	Influenza and pneumonia	12	1.7
9	Intentional self-harm (suicide)	12	1.7
10	Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis	11	1.5
	All other causes (Residual)	184	25.9
	Total Deaths -- All Causes	711	100

Suicide



Suicide is a key concern of public health professionals today in our district. Following trend data from the NC State Center for Health Statistics, we see the red lines indicating each county's trend. Alleghany, Ashe, & Watauga County Healthy Carolinians Partnerships all have focused projects that take a community approach to addressing this concerning statistic.

Source: NC State Center for Health Statistics www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/catch/



In Ashe and Alleghany Counties, there are Suicide Awareness & Prevention Committees acting as an arm of the Healthy Carolinians to conduct educational campaigns, such as the Walk Out of Darkness, that raise awareness of suicide, remember those lives lost from it, and honor those who have lost loved ones from suicide.

In Watauga County, the Healthy Carolinians' Adolescent Health Committee has conducted training with Watauga High School faculty members to help recognize warning signs of suicide.

"A Walk Out of Darkness" to raise awareness about suicide. September, 2009

Recommendations

- ★ Continue community partnerships crossing multiple disciplines to raise awareness about suicide and mental health in schools, worksites, faith communities, and healthcare settings.
- ★ Continue sharing important messages about mental health, including depression, to reduce stigmas related to seeking help.

Access to healthcare

Access and affordability of healthcare for all is continuing to top the list of concerns among communities. In all Appalachian District counties, estimated uninsured rates of people ages 0-64 are equal to or higher than that of the North Carolina rate, according to the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research, UNC-Chapel Hill.



Area	Rate of Uninsured aged 0-64 yrs.
Alleghany	21.6
Ashe	19.3
Watauga	18.6
North Carolina	18.6

H1N1 Novel Influenza

This year, we began implementing public health surveillance and strategies to decrease the spread of H1N1 influenza virus. While we are still facing cases of the H1N1 influenza virus, we know that continuing to vaccinate those in priority groups first will help attack this virus. The public health community is still reminding everyone to cover their sneeze and cough, wash hands frequently, stay home when sick, and get the recommended H1N1 and seasonal influenza vaccines when they become available for your age group.



Sid the Science Kid has a new PSA video: "Stopping that virus. That's our goal!" on www.flu.gov

New Issue

Recommendations

- ★ Continue community partnerships to address healthcare access and affordability for all people.
- ★ Follow guidelines set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for keeping well, staying home if you are sick, preventing the spread of flu, and getting vaccinated when it becomes available for your age group.

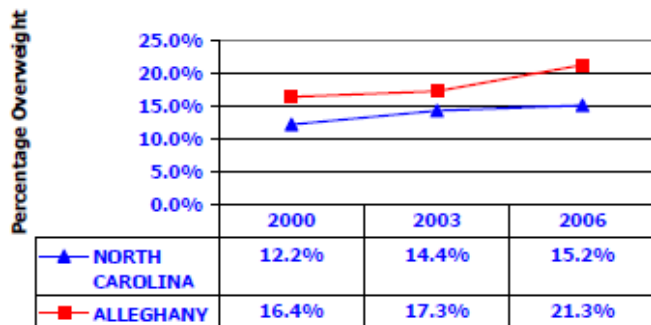
Let's Eat Smart



Overweight and obesity is not only common among adults. Today, children of all ages are at greater risk of developing chronic diseases like Type 2 Diabetes due to overweight. It is important to educate families about healthy eating and physical activity, but many children spend much of their time in a preschool or childcare setting. Partnerships can be developed to implement programs, like NAP-SACC, that increase the availability of healthy foods and beverages and encourage physically active lifestyles among young children. Source: NC State Center for Health Statistics www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/catch/

Alleghany

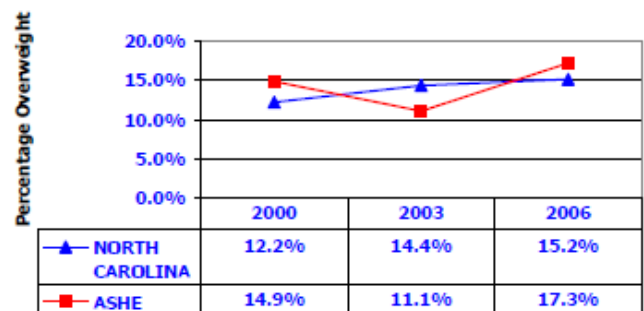
Prevalence of Overweight in Children Ages 2-4 Years



* Based on NC-NPASS data

Ashe

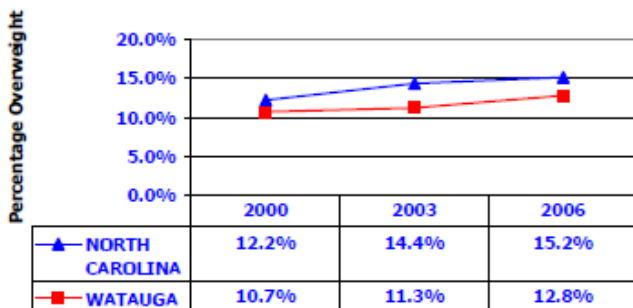
Prevalence of Overweight in Children Ages 2-4 Years



* Based on NC-NPASS data

Watauga

Prevalence of Overweight in Children Ages 2-4 Years



* Based on NC-NPASS data

Priority Issue



Nutrition and Physical Activity Self Assessment for Child Care program is an evidence based approach to policy change to support healthy eating and physical activity for preschool aged children. Watauga County had 12 facilities complete NAP-SACC in 2008.

Recommendations

- ★ Continue implementation of NAP-SACC program across preschool and childcare settings in Appalachian District.
- ★ Provide better opportunities to access healthy foods and recreation for families.
- ★ Educate families about strategies in making healthy food choices and prioritizing physical activity.

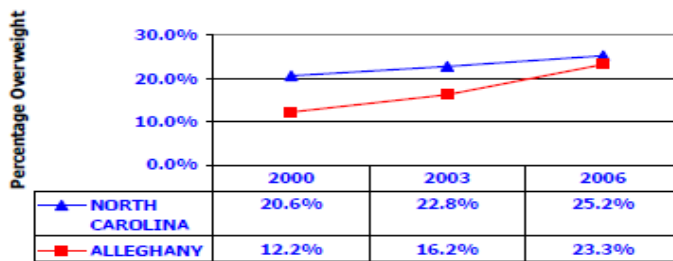


Let's Move More

Overweight and obesity is also a public health concern among school aged children. Policy changes that limit the availability of sugar sweetened beverages, high fat snacks, and require quality physical education programs will help our school aged children grow strong bodies and strong minds. After all, health is academic. Source: NC State Center for Health Statistics www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/catch/

Alleghany

Prevalence of Overweight in Children Ages 5-11 Years



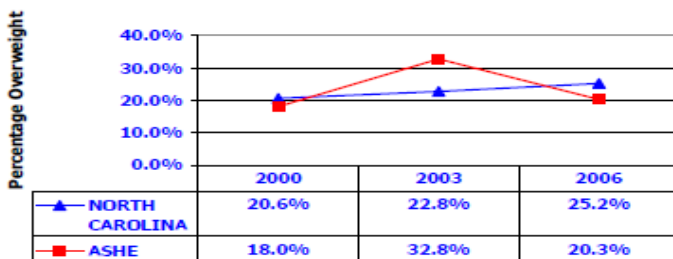
* Based on NC-NPASS data



Afterschool cooking classes conducted as part of the Watauga COPDP

Ashe

Prevalence of Overweight in Children Ages 5-11 Years



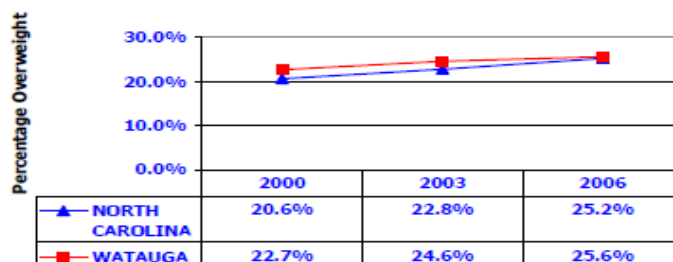
* Based on NC-NPASS data



PE teachers in Alleghany, Ashe, and Watauga trained on SPARK Jan, 2009

Watauga

Prevalence of Overweight in Children Ages 5-11 Years



* Based on NC-NPASS data

Priority Issue



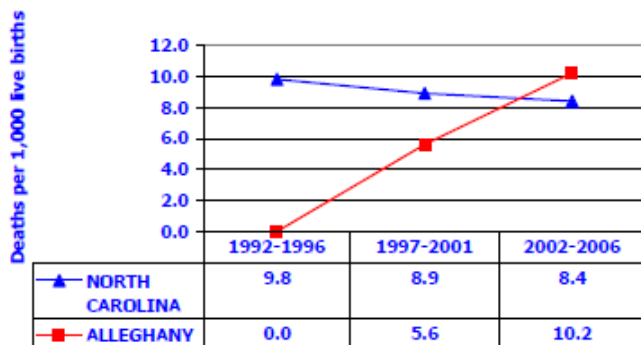
Farm to School cooking demos and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable grants teach children in Alleghany, Ashe, and Watauga County to enjoy more fruits and veggies, a key eat smart, move more behavior for a healthy weight.

Healthy Moms & Babies

Infant mortality is a hallmark statistic of public health. We recognize this as a measure to remind us that each life is precious and there is more work to be done to ensure all moms have early prenatal care, healthy pregnancies, and babies have a good start in life.

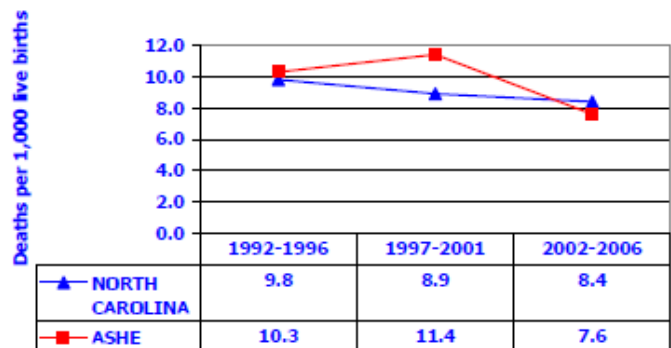
Alleghany

Infant Mortality Rates



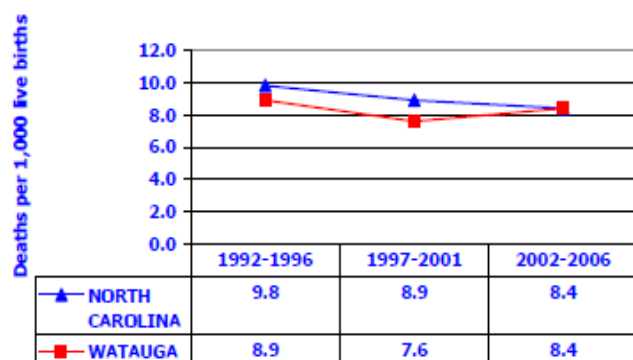
Ashe

Infant Mortality Rates



Watauga

Infant Mortality Rates



This year, Medicaid endured tremendous cuts. From the lens of public health, some of the proposed cuts were likely to negatively impact the health of mothers and their babies by eliminating the Maternal Care Coordination and Child Service Coordination services Appalachian District Health Department offers to many moms and their babies.

Appalachian District Health Department is actively involved in advocating for the health of moms and babies and will continue to work to provide quality care to achieve these outcomes.

Recommendations

- ★ Continue community partnerships to provide support resources for pregnant mothers, new mothers, infants, and young children.

Let's be Tobacco Free

NORTHWEST TOBACCO PREVENTION COALITION



Priority Issue

Governor Bev Perdue signs House Bill 2 into law prohibiting smoking in NC restaurants and bars.

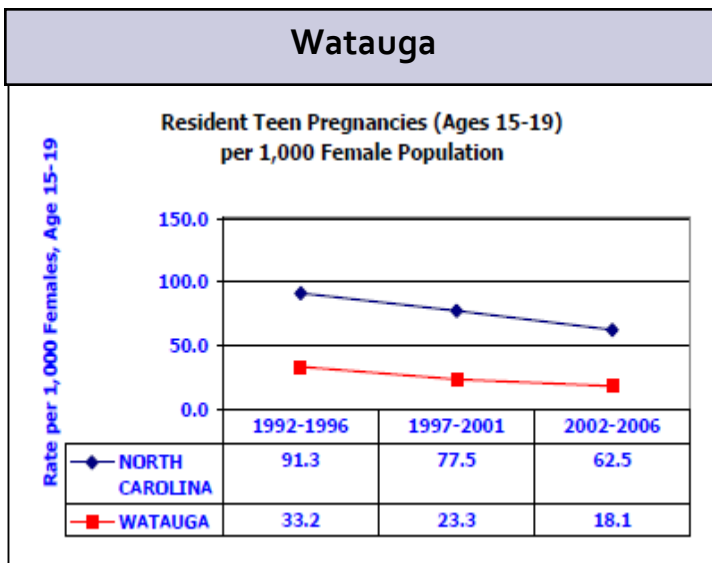
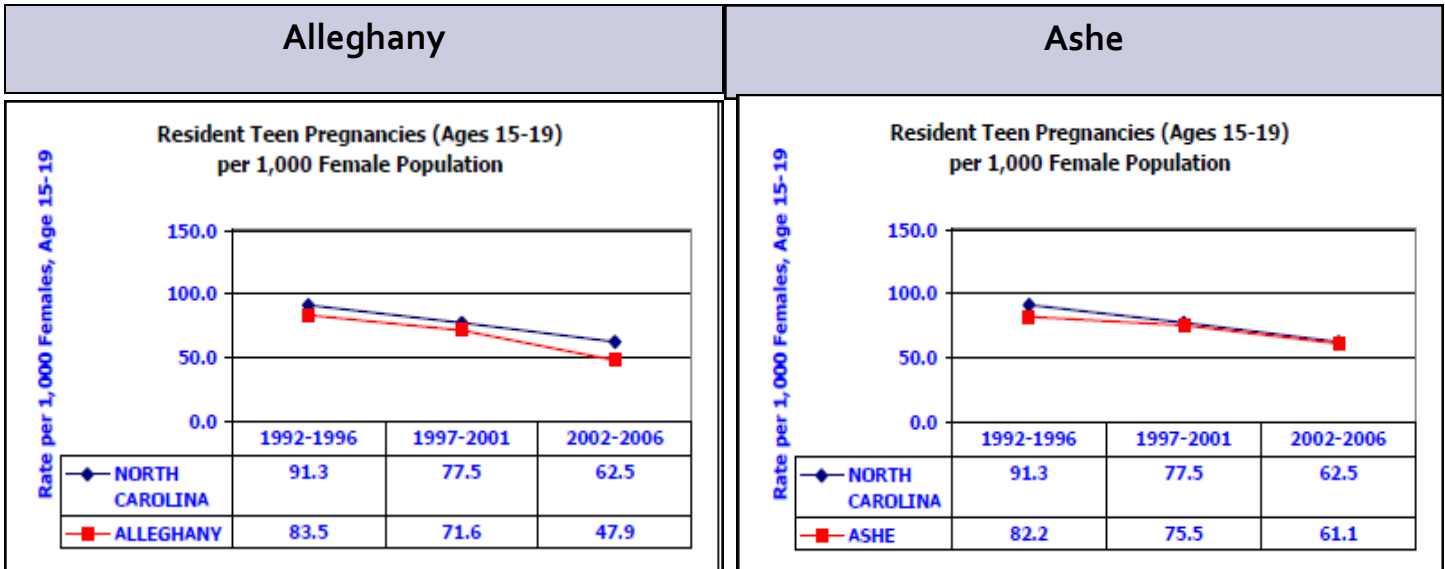
Tremendous progress was made this year in the fight for public health with the passage of House Bill 2. "This is a historic day for North Carolina," said Perdue. "But more important than the history that we are making is the positive impact we are having on public health. By banning smoking in our restaurants and bars, we will greatly reduce the dangers of secondhand smoke and lower health care costs for families."

The new law goes into effect January 2, 2010. Currently, the Northwest Tobacco Prevention Coalition is partnering with the NC Tobacco Prevention & Control Branch to educate restaurant and bar owners about the new law that will go in effect, as well as provide information about the NC Quitline, a free resource in which trained quit coaches can help people learn to quit smoking for good.

A great step forward in Public Health is the known fact that there are no safe levels of secondhand smoke. In addition to the new smoking ban in restaurants and bars, House Bill 2 also restores more local authority to local Boards of Health, municipal, and county leaders to pass a more stringent tobacco policy than that at the state level.

Healthy, Responsible Youth

Healthy, responsible youth are more likely to be healthy, responsible adults. One key area in supporting healthy adolescent development is education and programs sharing facts about sexual responsibility, including potential consequences. The NC Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Coalition now offers a free Birds -N-Bees textline for teens to get factual information and be pointed to local community resources for help if needed. Source: NC State Center for Health Statistics www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/catch/



Watauga High School students prepare to take their babies home for the weekend. A part of the "Baby Think It Over" program, provided by Watauga County Healthy Carolinians and Watauga County Schools.

Recommendations

- ★ Continue programs such as "Baby Think It Over" that educate teens about the consequences of sexual activity.
- ★ Advocate for continued support for the Youth Risk Behavior Survey to be conducted for 9-12th grades.
- ★ Encourage continued community partnerships and parental involvement to support adolescent health education.

Healthy, Responsible Youth

The School Based Health Center at Ashe County Middle School brings needed medical, nursing, nutrition, and mental health services directly to a large cohort of adolescents. Its mission is to provide available and accessible quality health services by qualified staff characterized by open communication and confidentiality leading to a healthier student community – with the goal of improving the health, safety, social skills, and self esteem of all middle school students. It took community commitment and strong collaboration to open and sustain the success of the center since 1999. Due to this collaborative spirit the center has maintained full credentials based on the NC Quality Assurance Standards for School Health Centers since 2004.



At the end of the year, 96% of the student body enrolled in the clinic for services and 94% of those used the clinic for services throughout the school year.

Being a small, rural town the clinic has had good success with offering the HPV vaccine for the first time this school year, along with the other immunizations. The clinic has given a total of 949 immunizations (Hepatitis A = 374, HPV = 127, Menactra = 283, Tdap = 165).

The FNP and RD have teamed up for another semester of the modified SESAMM program. The students seem to learn from the experience and take the information and use it to better their health status. This semester the clinic was able to provide the students that participated in the educational program tote bags that were donated with our logo from a local industrial company located in the county. The total participation this semester was 26 students in the 7th grade with a BMI greater than or equal to 30. Four of these students stayed the same weight, four gained weight, but 18 had a decrease in their BMI. The school principal witnessed and supported the importance of exercise and allowed them to exercise in the gym before school. The evidence of awareness of health topics has also been demonstrated throughout the school from this effort.

Performance Measure	FY 08-09 Target	FY 08-09 Actual
Total patients	460	452
Medical visits	1200	1292
Preventive health visits	925	835
Behavioral Health/Mental Health	325	437
Nutrition visits	150	125
% Patients Enrolled with Medi-	38%	38.8%
Nurse visits	N/A	1,139

Allegheny County



Healthy Carolinians

2008-09 Highlights



Healthy Start Grant program child participants
(Pictured above)

A Healthy Start Grant provided funding for an eight week program for Latino moms and At-Risk Teens. It was implemented at the Allegheny Wellness Center. Health education and fitness instruction were provided to participants to create a love of healthy living for a lifetime. (Pictured below)



The Allegheny Health Advisory Council continued to provide support for healthy living this year by conducting the annual Be Happy, Be Healthy Celebration fair. The event featured games, information, and activities to help children and parents learn about eating smart, moving more, and staying well. Additionally, the Health Advisory Council conducted a communication campaign to demonstrate and encourage healthy snacks for school celebrations to support Allegheny County Schools local wellness policy.



Annual Be Happy, Be Healthy Celebration (Pictured above)

Ashe County Healthy Carolinians



2008-09 Highlights

On September 12, 2009, approximately 77 people participated in the second annual Walking Out of Darkness event. The messages of this event are "It is OK to ask for Help" and "Help is available"



(Pictured left) -Ashe County High School students set the example for Enjoying More Fruits and Veggies by conducting class surveys about healthy eating patterns and conducting community presentations, including the 2009 Annual Ashe Community Health & Quality of Life Forum.

This school year, 18 students attended Camp Med; the experience is a maturing event in the lives of high school Freshmen and Sophomores. Pictured right are students with medical professionals at Wake Forest hospital; students were able to witness two heart catheterizations. Students also were able to interview different health professionals in varying disciplines, including public health nurses, health educators, and environmental health staff. These programs are critical in developing our public health and healthcare workforce.



Watauga County



Healthy Carolinians

2008-09 Highlights



All Things Possible Church participated in the Diabetes Today mini-grant program. The church made positive changes to encourage healthy eating and physical activity among congregation members including passing a healthy foods policy.

(Pictured Left)

Appalachian State University Sociology Intern, Hayley Von Hollen, shares important points about suicide and local mental health resources.

(Pictured below)



Watauga High School implemented the LEADS curriculum to help students recognize signs of depression and suicide.

(Pictured above)



Appalachian District Health Department



2008-09 Highlights



Eat Smart, Move More: Weigh Less is a 10-20 week program that provides group education and support for weight loss and weight maintenance. Program participants learn about right-sizing their portions, rethinking their drinks, building healthy meals and snacks, shopping smart, and moving more everyday in many different ways.

Community members of Allegheny participate in the 10-week class series Eat Smart Move More: Weigh Less taught by Jacquelyne Gordon, NC Cooperative Extension of Allegheny County and Beth Fornadley, ADHD. (Pictured Above)

Ashe County faculty and staff also participated in this class instructed by Beth Fornadley, ADHD and Callie Grubb, Ashe County Schools and dropped over 200 pounds! (Pictured Right)



Appalachian District Health Department



The Appalachian District Health Department (ADHD) lost a total of 515 pounds while participating in a 20-week wellness program designed by the Health Promotion staff. The program was modeled after NBC's reality television show "The Biggest Loser." Danny Staley, Health Director, offered forty hours of compensatory time to the employee with the highest percentage of weight loss. This incentive motivated forty-seven employees to sign up for the program. Participants were divided into three teams of members from each of the three health departments (Alleghany, Ashe and Watauga). Each week, participants weighed in and reported their progress to their team leader, who in turn submitted their team's result to Beth Fornadley, health educator and competition coordinator. Fornadley tallied

both team and individual percent weight loss on a weekly basis, and results were shared with district employees to keep them informed of each team's progress. Through group walks and dancing on lunch breaks, healthy eating and cooking together, personal training/education sessions, and lots of encouragement – each county's health department succeeded in creatively motivating each other. The program enabled several employees to reduce or stop taking some of their medications. Tracey Gibbs, Administrative Assistant at ADHD, stated, "On my weight loss journey, one of my goals was to reduce the number of medications I was taking. With the weight I have lost, I have been able to stop taking two blood pressure medications and reduce my diabetic medication to only once a day. My ultimate goal is to achieve a healthy weight and come off all medications. Who won this exciting contest? Not one but two employees received that honor; they tied for the "Biggest Loser" title. Aaron Winters, Environmental Health Specialist and Christy Blevins, CAP/DA Program Coordinator, both lost 29 percent of their original body weight! "I began the program to set a good example for my daughter as she grows up," says Winters, referring to his 21-months old daughter, Eilidh. Winters lost a total of 89 pounds during the 20-week competition. "When I started noticing shortness of breath when talking, walking, or just resting I knew then I needed to change my eating habits and begin exercising. This program just gave me opportunity and ambition to do it", states Blevins who lost a total of 48.5 pounds during the competition. Our team t-shirts shared our passion for success:

"The difference between try and triumph is a little umph!"

Appalachian District Health Department

Priority Issue

NORTH CAROLINA

Childhood Obesity Prevention Demonstration Project



In 2008, the NC General Assembly decided to step forward to provide funding for 5 community Childhood Obesity Projects to demonstrate interventions that work to create policy and environmental change supports for obesity prevention in North Carolina.

Through a statewide competitive application process, five counties were selected to receive \$380,000 each to address childhood obesity across multiple sectors of their community.

Appalachian District Health Department received one of the five awards for Watauga County. Through partnership efforts, the Watauga Childhood Obesity Prevention Demonstration Project made a great start toward creating a healthier county.

A Snapshot of Project Achievements

- ★ Twelve childcare facilities implemented the NAP-SACC program and demonstrated improvements across all nutrition and physical activity policies and environments. Childcare providers participated in a Biggest Mover program.
- ★ Three healthcare practices implemented the Pediatric Obesity Toolkit aimed at providing clinicians tools to identify childhood overweight and associated conditions, communicate with parents, and refer or treat children at-risk for chronic health conditions. Some children participated in the Watauga ENERGIZE! program and maintained or lost weight through the structured family education, fitness, and nutrition program.
- ★ Watauga County Schools implemented the In School Prevention of Obesity and Disease program that provides quality physical education and tracking for PE teachers. Three public schools in Watauga County started school gardening projects, and over 1200 WHS students participated in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey.
- ★ Watauga County Schools created student and staff wellness resource libraries with needed equipment to continue health promotion efforts with \$10,500 for staff wellness and \$17,000 for needed PE equipment. The NC State Board of Education provided \$41,667 in additional funding due to participation in the Childhood Obesity Prevention Demonstration Project.
- ★ The Town of Boone constructed a beautiful 0.68 mile addition to the Greenway Trail system, providing connection for recreation and active transportation from the future Hwy 421 and Daniel Boone Drive neighborhoods and created a Walk Boone map.
- ★ Appalachian Regional Healthcare System enhanced current employee wellness programs with equipment for health data tracking and implemented a worksite wellness incentive program, Love Your Life. Employees participated in education classes, events, and a weight loss challenge and lost over 500 pounds.
- ★ A social marketing campaign conducted with local media and the Watauga Education Foundation proved successful.
- ★ A strong partnership developed as a result of this project which continues to strive to build an Eat Smart, Move More community.

Appalachian District Health Department

WIC

Healthy Habits, Healthy Families

- ★ Breastfeed your baby
- ★ Eat more fiber
- ★ Lower the fat
- ★ Eat more fruits and vegetables
- ★ Eat more whole grains
- ★ Drink less juice and sweetened beverages
- ★ Make family meals matter

Starting on Oct. 1, North Carolina will make major changes to WIC, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. There will be more choices to support healthy habits such as breastfeeding, and eating more fruits, vegetables and whole grains while lowering the fat. And, there will be more variety.

Whole-grain breads and cereals, tortillas, brown rice, fruits, vegetables, tofu and baby foods are the new items that will be available to low-income pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants and children until the age of five. The changes will encourage more breastfeeding. Women who breastfeed will receive more foods than mothers who do not, and breastfed babies will receive more baby foods. As concerns about growing rates of overweight, obesity and diabetes continue, health experts say an overhaul was needed.

In general, the foods available to the WIC participants will be higher in fiber and lower in fat. For the first time, selections like tofu, brown rice, tortillas and a wider variety of beans will meet more cultural preferences.

WIC Program services include nutrition education, along with recipes and tips on how to buy and use the healthier foods, breastfeeding support, referrals to other health & community resources and vouchers for healthy foods to eligible persons. In order to be eligible for the WIC Program an applicant must be:

- ★ A woman either breastfeeding an infant less than 1 year old, pregnant, or post partum but not breastfeeding their infant up to 6 months postpartum, a child under 5 years of age or be an infant,
- ★ Meet financial eligibility guidelines of the NC WIC Program
- ★ Found to be at nutritional risk.

New Issue

Those who are interested may call their WIC office to see if they qualify. For more information, contact Alleghany County WIC office at 336-372-5644, Ashe County WIC office at 336-246-2013 or Watauga WIC office at 828-264-6641 or go to www.nutritionnc.com and click on WIC. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Looking Ahead...

October, 2009, Appalachian District Health Department and many community partners joined together to continue working toward healthier communities by applying to the North Carolina Division of Public Health to be a part of a competitive application for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding: Communities Putting Prevention to Work grant. The team was selected to create policy and plans to prevent obesity in Alleghany, Ashe, and Watauga Counties. Funding announcements will be made February, 2010, and the team is hopeful and poised to start.



Pictured last row to front, left to right: Clark (Alleghany BDC), Commissioner Richard Blackburn (Ashe County), Jacquelyne Gordon (NC Coop Ext-Alleghany), Joe Flowers (Alleghany Wellness Center), Dr. Travis Reeves (Ashe County Schools), Danny Staley (Appalachian District), Row 5: Angie Thompson (Ashe County Schools), Patti Cox (Alleghany Co Schools), Dr. Jeff Cox (Alleghany County Schools), Don Adams (Alleghany County); Row 4: Callie Grubb (Ashe Co Schools), Lynne Mason (Hospitality House/Town of Boone), Beth Fornadley (Appalachian District), Row 3: Nancy Kautz (Ashe Healthy Carolinians/Ashe Memorial Hospital), Margie Mansure (NC Coop Ext-Watauga), Jennifer Miller (NC Coop Ext-Ashe), Susan Tumbleston (Be Active-Appalachian Partnership); Row 2: Janet Braithwaite (Ashe Healthy Carolinians/Ashe Memorial Hospital), Alice Salthouse (Appalachian Regional Healthcare System), Teri Vandyke (Northwest Tobacco Prevention Coalition/Appalachian District); Row 1: Jennifer Greene (Appalachian District), Bryan Belcher (Watauga Healthy Carolinians/ARHS)

Looking ahead, we recognize the need for organizational excellence and community partnerships. Appalachian District Health Department commits to implementing evidence based practices and partnership approaches to address the public health concerns of our era.

We invite you to join us in making a healthy future for our communities of Alleghany, Ashe, and Watauga Counties. Individuals, families, schools, worksites, churches, healthcare professionals, hospitals, and community organizations have potential for great impacts with shared resources, common vision, and a clear commitment to making a difference. Together, we can make our communities the healthiest in North Carolina.



Alleghany County Health Department

157 Health Services Road

Sparta, NC 28675

(336) 372-5641 Clinic

(336) 372-5644 WIC

(336) 372-8813 Finance Office

1-866-257-5542 Dental Clinic



Ashe County Health Department

413 McConnell Street

Jefferson, NC 28694

(336) 246-9449 Clinic

(336) 246-2013 WIC

(336) 246-3356 Environmental Health Office

1-866-257-5542 Dental Clinic



Watauga County Health Department

126 Poplar Grove Connector

Boone, NC 28607

(828) 264-6635 Clinic

(828) 264-6641 WIC

(828) 264-4995 District Office/Environmental Health

1-866-257-5542 Dental Clinic