



Statewide Health Promotion

2009—2010 Highlights

Using funding from the state of North Carolina and the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant, the Statewide Health Promotion Program funds 83 local health departments to address obesity and tobacco use in their communities. The local Health Promotion Coordinators supported by these funds collaborate with schools, worksites, faith communities, health care and other community partners to establish policies and environments supportive of active living, healthy eating and tobacco-use prevention and cessation. Together, they make it easier for North Carolinians to eat smart, move more and avoid tobacco use.

The Statewide Health Promotion Program, managed by the Health Promotion Unit in the Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch, in partnership with the Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch, resides within the Chronic Disease and Injury Section, N.C. Division of Public Health.

Why Environmental & Policy Change?

Empowering individuals and families with knowledge and skills to change their eating, physical activity and tobacco-use patterns is imperative. However, knowledge is only the beginning. People must live in environments that support healthy behaviors in order to put their knowledge and skills to use. By improving the rules (policies) and physical surroundings (environments) of the places where North Carolinians spend most of their time—schools, worksites, communities—we can make it easier for everyone to make healthy choices. To accomplish this goal, the Statewide Health Promotion Program provides funding to local health departments and districts to support community-based programs. These programs promote policy and environmental change to support increased healthy eating, physical activity and tobacco-free living.

During the 2009-2010 program year, counties funded by the Statewide Health Promotion Program implemented a broad array of policy and environmental change initiatives, which included:

Local Environmental Changes

Built environment

Seventy-five change(s) to the physical environment in ways that support physical activity. (e.g., greenways, trails, paths, sidewalks, bike lanes, pedestrian crossings);

Breastfeeding facilities/equipment

Five new or enhanced facilities/equipment to support breastfeeding;

Farmers market(s) or farm stand(s)

Twelve new or enhanced farmers' markets or farm stands;

Garden(s)

Twenty-seven new or enhanced gardens in schools, communities, child care centers, etc.;

Parks or recreational facilities/equipment

Twenty-two new or enhanced recreational facilities (e.g., parks, playgrounds, fitness rooms) and equipment;

Stairwell enhancement(s)

Five stairwell enhancements to promote physical activity;

Physical activity point of decision prompt(s)

Twenty-five point-of-decision prompts (motivational signs placed at or near places that support physical activity to encourage individuals to increase use) were created;

Local Policy Changes

Development or enhancement of Bike/Ped Plan or Master Recreation Plan

Development or enhancement of eight Bike/Ped Plans (i.e., comprehensive plans that include construction details for both new and existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities and/or include policies regarding new construction pertaining to both land and transportation uses);

Establishment of wellness committee/coalition

Seventy-five wellness committees/coalitions (i.e., a group of partners/advocates promoting increased physical activity and/or healthy eating) were established at the community or organizational (e.g., worksite, religious organization, school) level;

Implementation of educational program or use of standard curriculum routinely on a long-term basis

Two-hundred sixteen educational programs or standard curricula routinely implemented with the intent to continue on a long-term basis;

Implementation of incentive program routinely on a long-term basis

Forty-six incentive programs implemented (e.g., insurance benefits, gym memberships) in organizations (e.g., worksites) to promote healthy eating and physical activity;

Establishment of physical activity policies

Two-hundred fifteen organizations implemented policies to promote physical activity among members;

Implementation of physical activity/healthy eating policies

One hundred fourteen organizations implemented policies to promote physical activity and healthy eating among members;

Implementation of healthy eating/breastfeeding policies

Three-hundred ninety-four organizations implemented policies to promote healthy eating and breastfeeding among members.

Health Promotion Success Stories

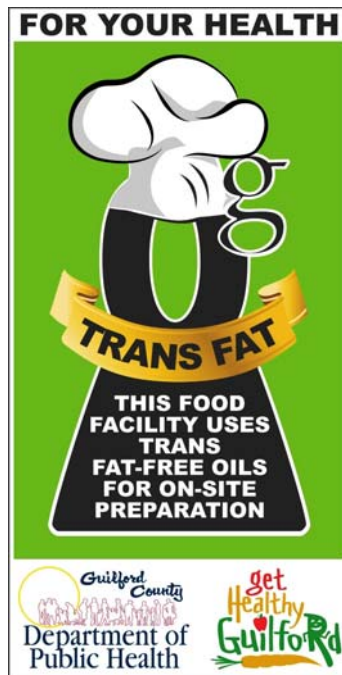
These numbers demonstrate the scale of how many environmental and policy changes have been implemented; yet, it is important to realize that behind every program lies a *success story* featuring the hard work of local partners and decision makers uniting to improve their community's health. The following stories showcase the innovation and dedication typical of Statewide Health Promotion programs.

Guilford County Taking Out Trans Fat, One Restaurant at a Time

If you want to declare war against trans fat, what better allies to have than local restaurants? In Guilford County, when health advocates launched an outreach campaign to rid menus of trans fats, they were blown away by the response. More than 200 local restaurants joined up to improve the nutritional value of the food they serve in the first year.

The campaign began in 2009 when the county's board of health announced concerns over the amounts of trans fats consumed by Guilford residents. In response, an ad hoc group was formed with local health experts and advocates from the Guilford County Health Department Health Promotion staff, Get Healthy Guilford, an anti-obesity group of 60 local health organizations and other organizations. After researching the situation,

the study group decided to petition local restaurant owners to voluntarily remove trans fats from their menus, hoping to incentivize participation with recognition and a promotional campaign.



The keys to success were the collaborative nature of the outreach program and understanding how best to incentivize restaurant owners. The campaign hit the ground running by using existing expertise and resources available through the ad hoc group participants.

Members of the study group adopted a non-threatening approach and mailed 500 letters that explained the trans fat proposal, offered help from nutritionists with analyzing menu items and emphasized that there would be no punishment for businesses that chose not to participate. This latter point was an important detail to clarify given that owners might assume health department staff involved in the campaign would include the health inspectors who grade restaurant cleanliness. The letter-writing strategy ensured that even restaurant owners who decided not to participate would still become more educated about the health risks of consuming trans fats.

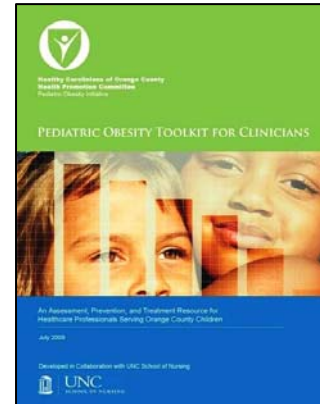
Get Healthy Guilford subsequently developed a campaign logo that participating restaurants could place in their window or on their website, and which was added next to restaurant names in the county's online database of food establishments. As a result, businesses are able to advertise that they offer healthier menu items and receive recognition for their efforts.

The trans fat campaign was officially launched in February 2009 with a kickoff event, press conference and promotional campaign to alert residents through local media. The ad hoc study group has since been established as a permanent subcommittee within Get Healthy Guilford, with the health department's Health Promotion Coordinator acting as chair to maintain the campaign's successful collaborative spirit.

The Health Promotion Coordinator is supported in part by the North Carolina Division of Public Health and its Statewide Health Promotion Program, which seeks to create environments that are more supportive of healthy behaviors. Restaurants are a key part of a community's environment because they influence what choices are available to people when they eat out. It is easier for residents to eat healthier when nutritious foods are available on menus. From the perspective of the Statewide Health Promotion Program, fostering this sort of positive "environmental" change is a key part of helping people make healthy decisions and live healthy lives. In Guilford County, health advocates and restaurants have teamed up to make environments as supportive of healthy eating as possible by getting rid of trans fats.

Orange County's One-Stop-Shop Toolkit for Childhood Obesity

In Orange County, a new tool for tackling childhood obesity is spreading like wildfire. The spark began in 2008, when Orange County Health Department staff and community partners created an obesity toolkit for pediatric health clinics. Two years later, practitioners in clinics and schools throughout the county have adopted the toolkit. Children, parents and medical staff are all seeing the benefits of a program that successfully connects the dots between the needs of young patients and their clinicians.



The aim of the Pediatric Obesity Initiative was to survey medical literature, patient education materials, local services and rapport-building methods and compile the best resources into a single, comprehensive toolkit. Clinical staff—doctors, nurses *and* support personnel—would then be trained on using the toolkit and identifying the materials that best meet their needs. The tools provide child health care professionals support and guidance to help improve care and outcomes for overweight youth.

For close to a year, Healthy Carolinians of Orange County (HCOC) housed at the Orange County Health Department worked with local experts and the UNC Chapel Hill School of Nursing. UNC graduate students developed training protocols and much of the toolkit manual, while HCOC partners provided guidance on programmatic tools and materials. Additionally, the Statewide Health Promotion Program, within the *Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch*, financially supports the health department's Health Promotion Coordinator, who spearheaded the entire toolkit initiative.

Thanks to this collaborative approach, the toolkit was completed in the Summer of 2009. Copies were then delivered to four practices in Orange County, followed by training for all clinic staff including managers and support staff. Of the toolkit's resources, comprising everything from posters, BMI charts and local resource guides, the most popular are guidelines for engaging families, motivating different types of patients and identifying readiness for change. Additionally, in recognition that doctors rarely have as much time to spend with patients as they would like, the toolkits include referral forms for nutritionists at the health department, where county staff can provide focused attention to children and families struggling with overweight or obesity.

The Pediatric Obesity Initiative has been so popular that within months of its start, school nurses in the Orange County and Chapel Hill-Carrboro School Systems requested their own version of the toolkit and training. After a brief adaptation of materials to the school setting, 18 elementary school nurses in the county were able to capitalize on the county's obesity prevention, assessment and treatment resource. Nurses from Chapel Hill-Carrboro Schools used the initiative as a complement to a grant that funded them to work especially closely with a small group (1-5) of children with a variety of chronic conditions.

Use of the toolkit continues today, thanks to the time and care invested in selecting resources and understanding the needs of both patients and clinicians. Additionally, the Pediatric Obesity Initiative encourages medical staff to consider adoption of the toolkit as a formal change in the rules or practices of their clinic. This approach promotes sustainability and echoes the philosophy of the Statewide Health Promotion Program, which seeks to improve health by shaping policies (rules and practices) that influence peoples' health behaviors. In Orange County, that vision has become a reality thanks to the Pediatric Obesity Initiative and toolkit!

Rowan County's Growing Greenway Gift

Growing greenways has become a way of life in Rowan County. The latest addition is a 1.5 mile stretch that connects Main Street in the City of Salisbury to preexisting trail segments and other neighborhoods in the area. The greenway expansion occurred in May 2010 when the Rowan Partnership for Community Health, the lead organization driving the project, completed its 2008-2010 Fit Community Project entitled, "*North Main Street...Enjoying the Journey.*" The Fit Community funds helped install trail connectors and sidewalks from North Main Street to the preexisting Salisbury Greenway.



Initially constructed in 2000, the growing greenway continues to benefit Salisbury citizens thanks to the committed efforts of the Rowan Partnership, which consists of the Rowan County Health Department, YMCA, Rowan-Salisbury Schools, Cooperative Extension, Rowan Regional Medical Center, Parks and Recreation, and other organizations.

The North Main Street expansion is part of a larger, second phase of construction that added more paved trails, mile markers and information kiosks for a total of 3.5 miles of walkable trail. The greenway connects various neighborhoods, destinations and amenities such as residential areas, parks, lakes, playgrounds, ball fields and other facilities, including a local shopping center, hospital and school. In fact, the project has been so successful in offering alternative transportation and wellness opportunities that Salisbury received a Fit Community Designation by the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund.

Salisbury's increasing connectivity represents the perfect example of creating opportunities for physical activity via a permanent change to a community's *physical* environment. This approach addresses how people's behavior choices (e.g., activity levels) are influenced by the world around them. Connecting a city's residential, commercial, education and recreation areas helps residents be more active and live more healthy on a day-to-day basis. This type of permanent, physical change is often

more successful than short-term education or promotional programs alone, and represented a key focus for the Rowan Partnership.

Amy Smith, the Health Promotion Coordinator at the Rowan County Health Department and one of the project's main organizers, played an instrumental role from the beginning in making sure environmental change remained at the heart of the greenway concept. Ms. Smith was supported in these efforts by the North Carolina Statewide Health Promotion Program, which resides in the N.C. Division of Public Health and provides assistance to communities focused on making policy and environmental change.

Future plans for the greenway include expansion to new neighborhoods as well as a host of community events and celebrations, including the first annual Fit Community 10K scheduled for April 2011 and other events such as Earth Day Celebration, Greenway Growlers, 5K Run/Walk for the Greenway and the Land Trust Tree Lighting. For Rowan County, the trail has truly brought a new level of health, connectivity and community to the City of Salisbury!



A Farmers Market Blooms in Wayne County

Parking lots are not generally known for their fruits and vegetables. In Wayne County, though, one lot helped turn a modest farmers market into a go-to spot for local shoppers looking for fresh produce.

The market was launched in July 2008 by Karen Padgett, the Health Promotion Coordinator at the Wayne County Health Department, which shares a building with the Department for Social Services. Karen realized that the 350 people working at her location represented a perfect start to establishing a local farmers market. After recruiting a few farmers to sell their wares, Karen set up traffic cones in her building's parking lot to create a small space where staff could buy produce. Thanks to some savvy planning and lots of hard work, the number of customers and farmers has since grown to the point that the city offered the market new resources in hopes of increasing its reach into the surrounding community.

Initially, Karen focused on making the market as easy as possible for farmers to sell their goods. Practical rules were established for who can sell and when; mass emails were sent to attract local staff and their friends and family; interns conducted surveys to gauge demand for various produce; and when farmers faced a surplus of a specific product, Karen increased demand by circulating healthy recipes featuring the extra item.

After almost two years, the market's growing success drew the attention of the City of Goldsboro and, in May 2010, officials provided a grassy and more visible location close to the original parking lot, plus six free heavy-duty awnings, attention-grabbing signage and advertising on the city website. Fortunately, the market sits perfectly between some wealthy neighborhoods and lower-income areas of Goldsboro. As a result, residents of all income levels now have easier access to healthy foods. Even better, the market is intentionally held on Wednesdays, when the health department receives large numbers of WIC and maternity clients, thereby increasing reach to an important population.



Evidence of the farmers market's impact is easy to find. The farmers often sell out of produce before the day is done and a before-and-after survey of on-site staff showed an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption and in perceptions of access to healthy food. On top of that, officials at nearby Wayne Memorial Hospital were so impressed that they decided to open their own market in order to serve patients and staff.

Karen's idea for the market all started when she saw a guide to bringing produce to local settings, which was created by the Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch (PAN), part of the N.C. Division of Public Health. PAN houses the *Statewide Health Promotion Program*, which provides financial and technical support to county Health Promotion Coordinators like Karen throughout the state. The health promotion program seeks to shape *communities* so that residents within them have an easier time making healthy choices. Creating a farmers market is a perfect example because it increases access to fruits and vegetables, thereby making it easier for people to buy healthy foods. Wayne County's farmers market has achieved this and more, as local residents—and the city—experience the benefits of healthy eating.



These stories represent just a few of the ways North Carolina counties implement policy and environmental changes to create healthy behaviors. Local health departments, supported by the Statewide Health Promotion Program, collaborate with schools, worksites and other community partners to increase access to healthy eating, physical activity, and tobacco-use prevention and cessation. These partners make it easier for North Carolinians to eat smart, move more and avoid tobacco use!