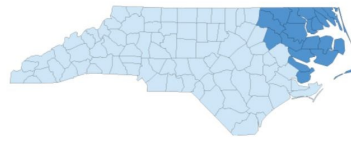


Winter 2024



**NENCPPH**

Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health

## Partnering for Public Health

*A quarterly publication of public health activities in Northeastern NC*

### EDNCPHA Conference at Kill Devil Hills

*Submitted by Kellen Long, and Julie Tunney, NENCPPH*

On January 11, and again on February 6, 2024, the Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health hosted public health leaders from across the region for the first two parts of a four-part leadership development training series. This fast-paced, hands-on, tools-focused next level leadership series was facilitated by Eric Rowles who is the founder and CEO of Leading to Change.

During the first two sessions, titled "Playing with Fire" and "Bridging the Gap," participants learned practical ideas on how to manage or relate to people of different "colors" (personality styles) and those from different generations. Individual profiles were completed using the True Colors assessment. Participants were challenged to see things from different perspectives when communicating with other team members, and how to break down those walls of communication through various fun and engaging activities that the participants could replicate in their own health department. Techniques and tools to deal with conflict resolution and taking the pulse of one's team or organization were also provided that will help our leaders.



Our world is evolving, and so is our workforce. Trainings like these keep our leaders engaged so that they are ready to tackle new challenges every day.

The next two sessions will be March 6 and April 11.



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## NENCPPH Board Corner - *Local Public Health: My Kind of People*

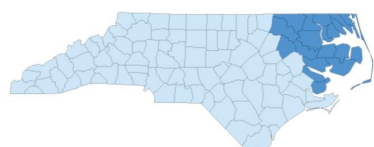
*Submitted by JaNell Octigan, Director, Beaufort County Health Department*

When I started my college journey my plan was to go into the medical field. I wanted to be a Physician Assistant or a nurse, but quickly after getting more into my field classes, as well as some chemistry and other sciences that kicked my tail, I learned that maybe the medical field wasn't the future for me. When I started exploring other programs my advisor recommended I look into public health. I wasn't too sure of what public health was or what I could do with a public health degree, but soon after starting the program I fell quickly in love with the prevention of disease, community health, and just how integrated public health was amongst everything and every body. I learned there was nothing that public health did not intersect with in some way or fashion.



Before graduating it is required to complete an internship. To this day, I still remember going to my advisor and asking her to "just place me anywhere". I didn't care where, just as long as I could graduate come May. She recommended an internship at Beaufort County Health Department and gratefully come January 2012 I started my semester long internship there. An internship where I grew professionally and came to love the public health community. I also came to learn how resilient those who work in public health are and how even with so little, they find ways to do so much good. Little did I know how much my love for public health would grow during that internship. I especially didn't know that 11 years later, I would become Health Director at the very place I conducted my internship.

While working in public health I have come to meet some of the strongest, passionate, caring, kindest people I know. People who put the needs of others before their own. People who fight and advocate for policy changes that impact communities, families, and generations. Those in Public Health are great at dodging curve balls and rolling with the punches. Public Health meets clients where they are, without judgement, and helps direct them to an improved and healthier well-being. Working in Public Health I have found my kind of people. The kind of people who care deeply about their communities. The kind of people who sacrifice their time and personal feelings in order to better serve clients and the community. The kind of people who take the little resources they have and make a big impact! **I have found my people, my public health kind of people.**



# NENCPPH

Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health

The Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health (NENCPPH) The NENCPPH started in 1999, and continues to meet regularly to lead and support regional community health improvement through collaboration and collective impact. The NENCPPH comprises nineteen counties in northeastern North Carolina, including: Beaufort, Bertie, Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Edgecombe, Gates, Halifax, Hertford, Hyde, Martin, Northampton, Pamlico, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Pitt, Tyrrell, and Washington Counties. The Board of Directors includes the Health Directors of the Health Departments covering these counties plus representatives from the Division of Public Health in the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the NC Institute of Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the Department of Public Health in the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University. To learn more about the Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health you can visit the website here: <https://nencpph.net>.

## Get To Know JaNell Octigan, Beaufort County Health Director

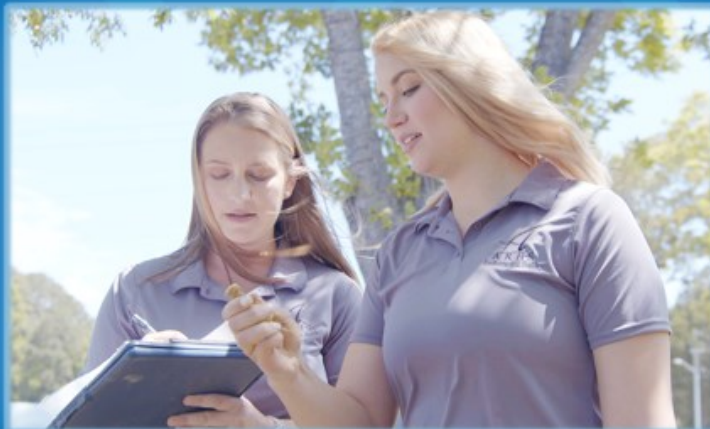
JaNell Octigan is the Health Director for Beaufort County Health Department and Vice Chair of the Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health Board of Directors. JaNell was born in Eastern North Carolina and has resided there all her life. She is a Pirate through and through and bleeds purple and gold. JaNell received her bachelor's degree in public health studies from East Carolina in 2012 and masters in Public Health in 2014 from East Carolina Brody School of Medicine. She began her career at Beaufort County Health Department in 2013 as a Public Health Education Specialist who oversaw the HIV/STD education and outreach. In 2014, she became the Human Services Planner IV/Preparedness Coordinator, and her responsibilities included: management of the health education department, emergency and preparedness, community outreach, public information officer and more. She has been with Beaufort County Health Department going on 11 years now. She loves public health because of how it impacts everyone and the ability to work with people to create lasting change in the lives of not just people today, but generationally.

Outside of work she enjoys spending time with her husband, Don, and daughter, Harper. She loves God, her family, friends, reading, music, and traveling. Her favorite place to visit is the beach, but she'll never complain about a mountain trip either.

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## Hyde Local Public Health Happenings Around the Community

*Submitted by Niki Waters, Hyde County Health Department*

Hyde County Health Department's (HCHD) Peer Support Specialist Mike Wheeler, has been out and about raising awareness for living drug-free, positively impacting the youth of the Hyde County community! This year for RED RIBBON WEEK Mike encouraged a local Hyde County student to compete in this year's theme of "Be kind to your mind - Live drug-free" national photo contest. In doing so, not only did Mike recognize that the youth of today are the future of tomorrow and advance the message of drug use prevention, but the student won, receiving \$1,000 for her school to use towards drug prevention!

Additionally, Health Educator Niki Waters has been helping teach Health classes at the Mattamuskeet School, covering topics from mental and emotional health to chronic illness and gun safety. She has also conducted presentations in the community at the library to teach children how to recognize and help prevent bullying behavior.

To round the year out, Niki and Mike, along with the assistance of the Mattamuskeet FFA students, planted a Community Orchard on the campus of HCHD that consists of Apples, Peaches, and Figs. This is one of four locations that will be planted throughout Hyde County to provide the community with access to fresh fruit, promote sustainable living practices, and impart community engagement!



## Riverfront Talks: Substance Matters Podcast Gets National Recognition

*Submitted by JaNell Octigan, Beaufort County Health Department Director*

Posted on: December 14, 2023

### Riverfront Talks: Substance Matters Podcast Gets National Recognition



WASHINGTON, N.C. — Riverfront Talks: Substance Matters, a podcast created by the Beaufort County Behavioral Health Task Force, was recently featured in Rural Health Models & Innovations, a national collection of successful rural health programs and interventions maintained by the Rural Health Information Hub.

The Riverfront Talks: Substance Matters podcast aims to help reduce stigma by featuring guests with lived experiences of substance use or mental illness. It is hosted by Behavioral Health Task Force Coordinator Tiffany Moore and funded by ECU Health Beaufort Hospital and Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust.

“I’m honored that Rural Health Information Hub reached out about spotlighting the podcast,” Moore said.

“Increasing awareness and communication, as well as decreasing stigma are areas that the Behavioral Health Taskforce continues to work on. RHlhub offering this opportunity to continue to expand our reach in order to bring awareness to substance misuse is an honor. We’re hopeful that this opportunity sparks additional conversation and support for those suffering from substance misuse and mental health disorders.”

As of December, the podcast consists of 10 episodes and has garnered 1,441 views. Two of the podcast guests have become state-certified Peer Support Specialists, and one is working with Moore on a re-entry program to assist people in the criminal justice system who have a history of substance abuse.

The podcast was selected by the Rural Health Information Hub because of its innovative services and impact on rural communities. [Click here](#) to read the full project summary. You can access the podcast on [YouTube](#), [Spotify](#) and [Apple Podcasts](#).

Rural Health Information Hub is a national online information center on rural health issues, funded by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy. Its website includes over 18,000 resources specific to rural health. The Rural Health Models & Innovations section features hundreds of successful programs that are serving rural residents across the nation.

## Edgecombe County Health Department Expands the Edgecombe Safe Syringe Initiative (ESSI)

*Submitted by Meredith Capps*

Edgecombe County Health Department (ECHD) is partnering with Carolina Family Health Centers and the Edgecombe County Community Paramedic Program to offer syringe exchange services as an extension site of the health department's Edgecombe Safe Syringe Initiative (ESSI). According to the North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition, Syringe Exchange Programs (SEP) are proven to be an effective harm reduction strategy by reducing the transmission rates of HIV by 80% and Hepatitis C by 50%. Edgecombe County Health Department's ESSI aims to prevent unsafe sharing and reusing of syringes and other supplies by providing people who use drugs with clean syringes in exchange for used syringes. Our ESSI also provides Band-Aids, gauze, alcohol prep pads, cookers, condoms, and educational material to help with safer use. Narcan is also offered and provided if the participant requests it.

Working with our two new extension sites allows the ESSI to reach more individuals with a targeted approach. Carolina Family Health Center's Freedom Hill Community Health Center is offering the ESSI to those patients who are currently participating in their Medicated Assisted Treatment (MAT) Program. The Edgecombe Community Paramedic Program is offering ESSI as a mobile service, going directly to those who need this service most, usually just after they have overdosed.

ECHD's ESSI Extension Sites are a much-needed expansion of service in our community. ECHD, along with our extension site partners, are looking forward to making a difference in harm reduction efforts and syringe exchange stigmas in Edgecombe County.

---

## NENC Connect

### Scan or Call for Local Substance Use Help or Information



Connecting People to Prevention, Support, Treatment & Recovery Services

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**[www.nencconnect.org](http://www.nencconnect.org)**



NENC Connect connects people to prevention, support, treatment, and recovery services. Click the QR Code at left or go to [www.nencconnect.org](http://www.nencconnect.org) for local substance use information and services.



## Tobacco-Free Policy Work in Perquimans County

*By Teresa Beardsley, Regional Tobacco-Free Living Coordinator*

Three students from Perquimans County High School are working with Gabi Corprew and Wanda Stallings, Health Education Specialists with Albemarle Regional Health Services, along with Teresa Beardsley, Regional Tobacco Prevention and Control Manager, regarding the importance of a comprehensive tobacco-free policy for Perquimans County. Currently, the policy in Perquimans County only prohibits smoking in government buildings and tobacco use at parks and recreation areas.

According to the 2021 Community Health Assessment data the top three leading causes of death in Perquimans County were cancer, heart disease and cerebral vascular disease. Additionally, tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in North Carolina. Tobacco free policies are an evidence based practice to reduce tobacco use among citizens and have many positive outcomes within communities. The Community Preventive Services Task Force Recommends Smoke-Free Policies to:

- Reduce exposure to secondhand smoke;
- Reduce the prevalence of tobacco use;
- Increase the number of tobacco users who quit;
- Reduce the initiation of tobacco use among young people;
- Reduce tobacco-related morbidity and mortality, including acute cardiovascular events; and
- Reduce healthcare costs substantially.

The goal is for these students to present their case for a comprehensive tobacco free policy in Perquimans County to their Board of Education and County Commissioners.



# PICH

Partnerships to Improve  
Community Health

## Pitt County Recognized With Eat Smart Move More Award

*Submitted by Allison Swart, Pitt County Health Department*

### Pitt County Eat Smart Move More Team Recognized as Champions

Award received for supporting healthy and active lifestyles in the community

The **Pitt County Eat Smart Move More (ESMM) team** was awarded the title of **Champions by the Eat Smart Move More North Carolina Board** on November 16, 2023 at the McKimmon Center at North Carolina State University.

The Pitt County ESMM team port of communities to have day and everywhere for ing that lead to healthy be-

"Eat Smart Move More North able resources, training, guidance that has been an health and wellness over twenty years," says Al- jects Coordinator, Planning



*Pictured Above: Wes Gray, Alice Keene, Eli Johnson, and Allison Swart*

was recognized for their sup- equitable opportunities every healthy eating and active liv- haviors.

Carolina has provided inval- uable funding and professional overarching banner for throughout Pitt County for ice Keene, Recreation Pro- Department.

Utilizing ESMM resources, a number of interventions were placed in key locations throughout Pitt County. Examples of these interventions and facilities/equipment include:

- Trails and fitness playgrounds constructed at most elementary schools across the County and utilized during the school day by students and staff and the general public during non-school hours.
- Pitt County developed one of the first Joint Use of School Facilities Policies in the state exemplifying the strong collaborative relationship between the Pitt County Board of Commissioners and Pitt County Schools Board of Education.
- Pitt County adopted the Healthy Food Policy to assure the availability of healthy foods at all County sponsored or hosted events.
- The ESMM team played a key role in developing the first countywide Community Garden adjacent to the Pitt County District Park. The Community Garden has been utilized as a training garden for people across eastern North Carolina. Another unique program of the Community Garden is providing educational sessions once a week in the fall and spring for all kindergarten students at Wintergreen Primary School, located across the street from the garden. Many kindergarteners return to the garden with their parents and grandparents, years after having worked there as students, and have started their own gardens at home.
- Through the Community Putting Prevention to Work Grant the ESMM team worked with Communities of Faith, businesses, schools, Parks and Recreation, East Carolina University Family Medi-



## Pitt County Award *(Continued from Page 8)*

cine and not-for-profits to develop healthy eating and physical activity best practices that continue to impact the lives of residents every day.

The ESMM team collaborates with community partners and the countywide health and wellness organization Pitt Partners for Health to put interventions and facilities/equipment in place to help make “the healthy choice the easy choice!” Sustainability is of utmost importance with new resources being implemented as funding becomes available.

The Mission of Pitt County Government is to enhance the health, safety, and well-being of our community by advocating for and providing quality services in a friendly and cost-effective manner. Learn more: [www.PittCountyNC.gov](http://www.PittCountyNC.gov).

Media Contact: Dawn C. Jones, Director, Public Information and Media Relations  
[dawn.jones@pittcountync.gov](mailto:dawn.jones@pittcountync.gov) | (252) 902-2955

## Pitt County Mobile Dental Unit

The Pitt County Health Department recently received a new mobile dental unit. The “floss cutting” is planned for March of this year.



## Northampton County Wears Red and Provides Fitness Classes

*Submitted by Misty Gibbs, Northampton County Health Department*

Northampton County recognized World Aids Day by wearing red on 12/1/2023.



Pictured: Northampton County Health Educator Kysha Gary leads the LIFT class

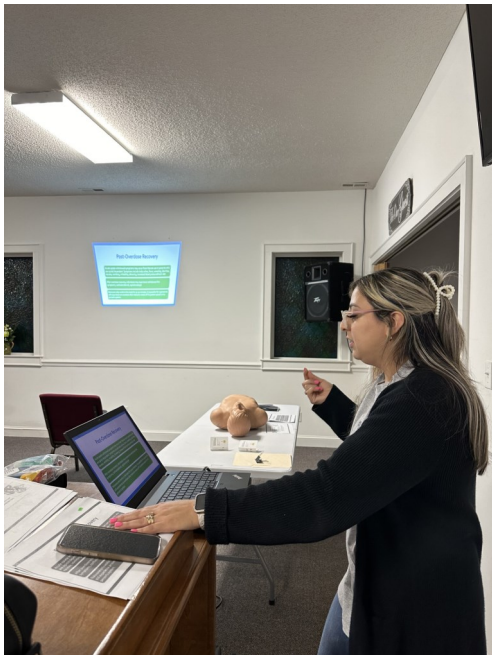
Northampton County Health Department partners with Northampton County Cooperative extension to bring the Lifelong Improvement through Fitness Together (LIFT) program to area residents. LIFT is an in-person, group-based strength training program that lasts 8 weeks. Participation is free. Participants meet twice a week, Monday and Wednesday mornings, for one-hour sessions. The classes help improve strength and mobility, create a habit of physical activity, and most importantly help form community.



## MTW District Health Happenings *(continued page 12)*

*Submitted by Miranda Keel, Martin-Tyrrell-Washington District Health*

Brie Cowand, our Tobacco Cessation Coordinator, started her position in January and has jumped straight in! She is continuing to offer INDEPTH sessions for students caught vaping at school as an alternative to suspension. She is also hosting assemblies for schools regarding tobacco. Bear Grass Charter School hosted Brie and other health educators on January 24<sup>th</sup> to teach middle schoolers about vaping, tobacco, nicotine addiction, and other dangers associated with tobacco use.



Yerlin Villegas has been facilitating naloxone trainings for emergency personnel and recovery groups in the area. Attendees at the Bridging the Gap Recovery meeting were even able to practice naloxone administration on an EMT volunteer who taught them how to roll someone to their back and into the recovery position.



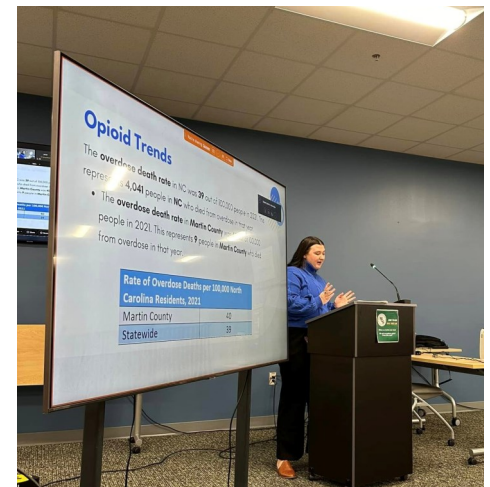


## MTW District Health Happenings *(continued from page 11)*

Nicoria Williams hosted the first 2024 Gun Safety Team meeting on January 25<sup>th</sup> for the district. She taught participants about safe storage practices, distribution of gun locks and cases from the health department, statistics and perceptions of suicide, as well as suicide prevention trainings she offers. If anyone is interested in taking the LivingWorks or CALM gatekeeper trainings for free, please contact Nicoria at [nicoria.williams@mtwdh.org](mailto:nicoria.williams@mtwdh.org). For more information, visit: <https://livingworks.net/training/livingworks-start/> or <https://www.calmamerica.org/>.



Pictured Above: Vickey Manning, MTW Health Director



Pictured Above: Brie Cowand, MTW Health Educator



Pictured Above: Miranda Keel, MTW Health Education Supervisor



Pictured Above: Yerlin Villegas, MTW Health Educator

MTW health fairs will be held April 4<sup>th</sup> in Tyrrell County, April 18<sup>th</sup> in Martin County, and May 2<sup>nd</sup> in Washington County from 3:00-6:00pm. Contact Miranda Keel at 252-793-1663 or [miranda.keel@mtwdh.org](mailto:miranda.keel@mtwdh.org) for more information or to request a booth!

## Halifax County Welcomes New Health Director, Receives Award and Provides Free COVID Vaccines

*Submitted by Laura Ellis, Halifax County Health Department*

Halifax County Health Department is pleased to announce Cheyenna James as the new Public Health Director as of January 2024. James, a native of the Hollister community, received her master's degree in Public Health with a concentration in Health Administration from East Carolina University in 2019. Prior to that milestone, she received her Bachelor of Science in Public Health Studies with a concentration in Community Health from ECU in 2016.

Since January 2022, James has worked for the Halifax County Health Department as a Quality Assurance Specialist II, providing supervision for the Health Education division, including four health education staff. Serving as a member of the Health Department's management team, she helped write and update policies, participated in strategic planning, and reviewed the annual budget with the Assistant Health Director. From December 2019 to December 2021, James was the Public Health Educator II and Lead Coordinator for the Triple P Parenting Program for the 10 counties supported in the region.

"I am so excited to have the opportunity to serve Halifax County in the capacity of Public Health Director," James said. "The knowledge I have obtained since working with the Halifax County Health Department has been invaluable, and I plan to utilize my well-rounded experiences to serve our staff and patients. I look forward to building lasting relationships within the community to meet the needs of its residents."

James currently resides in Rocky Mount with her husband Demonté and 11-month-old daughter Zoë.



Cheyenna James, MPH  
Halifax County Health Department  
Health Director



### Community Service Award

Betty Macon, Health Educator with the Halifax County Health Department, received the Community Service Award presented by Center for Energy Education during an event honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. She is a strong community leader, serving on multiple committees, who is always willing to go above and beyond for the citizens of Halifax County. Betty represents the Halifax County Health Department in a positive way, making sure all needs are met and requests are fulfilled from the public. Betty is very deserving of this award for all her continued support and dedication to the citizens of Halifax County.

### Bridge Access Program Offering COVID Vaccine

The Halifax County Health Department is pleased to announce they are a part of the Bridge Access Program, providing Moderna Spikevax mRNA 2023-2024 Formula COVID vaccine for individuals age 19 and over who are uninsured or underinsured free of charge for eligible individuals.

## Creamy Pasta Pea-Mavera

*Primavera is a bright dish full of tender vegetables combined with fresh cheese. Try this palate-pleasing recipe that uses light alfredo sauce as a flavorful shortcut as well as pasta made from yellow peas (hence "pea"mavera). Substitute other pasta and/or other vegetables based on what's in season. Fresh **peas**, baby spinach, asparagus tips, broccoli florets, cherry tomatoes or baby carrots work well in this recipe. Stir some pesto into this dish before serving for a delicious pop of flavor.*



### Ingredients

- ◇ 1 box (12 ounces) Rotini Pasta (made from yellow peas, or other pasta)
- ◇ 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ◇ 6 mini bell peppers, cut into ½ inch strips
- ◇ 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- ◇ ½ teaspoon each kosher salt & ground black pepper
- ◇ 1 jar (15 ounces) or 2 cups light alfredo sauce
- ◇ 1-3 large cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- ◇ yellow squash, cut in half lengthwise, cut into ¼ inch thick slices
- ◇ 2 cups loosely packed baby spinach
- ◇ 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan (or Parmigiano Reggiano)
- ◇ 1 tablespoon small Italian parsley leaves, torn or chopped into small pieces

### Preparation

- ◇ Cook Pasta according to package directions. Reserve ¼ cup pasta cooking water; drain.
- ◇ Meanwhile, heat oil in large skillet on medium heat until shimmering. Add peppers, onions, salt & pepper. Cook 2-3 minutes until crisp-tender. Add garlic; stir 1 minute until fragrant.
- ◇ Stir into large skillet the reserved pasta water, sauce, yellow squash and pasta. Cook 1-2 minutes, stirring occasionally, until heated through.
- ◇ Remove pan from heat; add spinach. Toss gently until wilted.
- ◇ Sprinkle with Parmesan and parsley before serving.

<https://fruitsandveggies.org/recipes/creamy-pasta-pea-mavera-with-zenb-rotini/>



## Northeastern NC Partnership for Public Health



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## Calendar of Events

Feb 9	PICH Tobacco-Free Living and Healthy Foods Coalition Virtual Meetings
Feb 22	NENCPPH Leadership Call
March 6 Mar 14-16	NENCPPH Next Level Leadership Series Part III Public Health Leaders Conference
March 18 Mar 21-22	NENCPPH Finance Committee Meeting NENCPPH Board Retreat
April 11 April 24-26	NENCPPH Next Level Leadership Series Part IV EDNCPHA Conference

For full calendar view: <https://www.nencpph.net/calendar>

## Board of Directors

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Stacie Saunders  
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Ashley Stoop  
Director, Albemarle Regional Health Department

### What is the Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health?

The Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health (NENCPPH) is a partnership of health departments in Northeastern NC which have come together with support from the Division of Public Health, East Carolina University, and the NC Institute of Public Health at UNC Chapel Hill, to collectively address the community's health by sharing best practices and resources. Currently the NENCPPH represents ten health departments/districts and nineteen counties.