

Winter 2025



NENCPPH

Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health

## Partnering for Public Health

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

### Pitt County Nutrition Director Contributes to Book

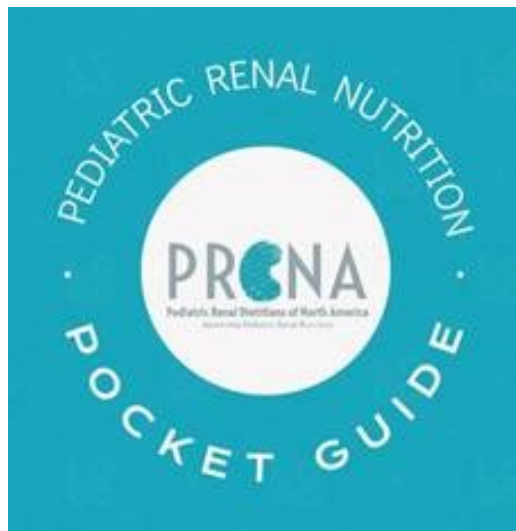
*Submitted by Wes Gray, Health Director, Pitt County Health Department*

Shannon Holton, MPH, RDN, LDN, Nutrition Director at Pitt County Health Department is a contributing author for a long-awaited pocket guide put together by Pediatric Renal Dietitians of North America (PRONA). The book is tailored to healthcare professionals and provides nutritional recommendations and guidelines for Pediatric Renal Diseases. For several years, Shannon collaborated virtually with Pediatric Dietitians across the US and Canada to put together this 350+ page tool with the goal of helping doctors, practitioners, nurses, other dietitians, and healthcare teams better understand the nutrition needs and critical needs for growth across the spectrum of kidney diseases in infants and children. Shannon contributed to chapters on the overview of kidney diseases that lead to Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) in children and enteral nutrition (tube feeding) in infants/children with CKD.

The pocket guide is available on the PRONA website both as a hardcopy or an electronic book. <https://www.prona.info/product-page/pediatric-renal-nutrition-pocket-guide>

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## NENCPPH Board Corner - With Some Determination and Eagerness To Learn, All Things Are Possible

*Submitted by Luana Gibbs, Health Director, Hyde County Health Department*

We are Starting out this year with an inspiring public health story that shows with some determination and eagerness to learn, all things are possible. Luana Gibbs has served her community for the past 26 years in public health, starting as a processing assistant, then as a nurse, and now as the Health Director, a role which she has held since 2016. We are inspired by Luana's career journey and her passion for public health! Read on to learn how she is making a difference in the lives of others!



### Describe your role in Public Health

I am the Health Director for Hyde County and have held this position since 2016, first on an interim basis, then in a permanent role. My official role in public health is to promote and protect the community's health through policy development with partners and community stakeholders. This involves reviewing data, planning, implementing, collaborating, and setting budgets. Many times, however, I find myself involved in "boots on the ground" type work, which is fine with me. I enjoy knowing and understanding how and why things work the way they do, and front-line work gives me the background and knowledge needed to understand my staff and carry out my official role. I only tell my story as encouragement for anyone who is considering public health or for any current public health employee who wants to chase their dream. Read on...

### What is your career/educational background and how did that lead you to a career in Public Health?

I was a banking officer for 16 years before coming to public health in 1998. I started out as a processing assistant, taking a hefty pay cut, but I didn't care, as I needed a change and there was an opening at the local health department. I quickly became super interested in everything I saw and wanted to learn and do more. I only held a high school diploma, but the Hyde County Board of Health provided me with scholarship funding so I could obtain an associates degree for Registered Nursing provided I come back and give service to the health department. Gladly, I took this offer and came back as a Public Health Nurse I (actually a work against). To make a long story short, I climbed the ranks working through all the PH Nurse steps (I-III) and Nursing Supervisor steps (I and II). I was offered the Health Director position once in 2014 and declined. However, the position became available again in 2016, and this time I accepted. Because I only held an associate's degree, I had to go back to school and obtain a BS in Interdisciplinary studies. I did this, and the State signed off on my qualifications. Now, the rest is truly history.

### Why did you choose a career in Public Health?

Public health was just so interesting to me. As front-line staff, I liked that we were available to help those who sometimes could not help themselves, but my favorite part of that was, and continues to be, teaching and empowering people. As a public health nurse, I had a client tell me one time that I saved her life. This was several years after taking care of her and I appreciated that she shared that with me. Now, in a health director role, I can tell anyone that choosing a career in public health will reward you in ways you cannot imagine. It feels good to know you make a difference for a person, a family, (continued p.3)

## **NENCPPH Board Corner** *(continued from page 2)*

or a whole community. As a Health Director, I am more focused on population policy vs. one-on-one patient care, but the reward is still the same. It's a blessing.

### **What's the best professional advice you have received?**

I am listing 3 pieces of advice that have carried me through, and continue to guide me today. The first health director I worked for said to me, "'Try' is a failure word. Instead, 'Do'." I never forgot that. The first public health nurse I practiced with said to me one day, "everyone is breathing and has a pulse." In other words, it's ok, don't sweat this, we've got it. And as health director (and really my whole life) I have heeded my parents' advice, which was to be honest, fair, and take the high road. This helps me sleep at night.

### **What advice would you give someone that was thinking about choosing a career in Public Health?**

It is never too late to pursue a career of any kind, but public health gives you such a sense of fulfillment. Genuine compassion for others and the strong desire to contribute to community is what our world needs more of. Public health encompasses that. Go for it!

### **In your opinion, what are the best benefits to a career in Public Health?**

Well, there are always the employee benefits, such as government holidays and such, Monday through Friday work schedules, etc., but the very best benefits are those of knowing you make a difference, even if that difference is small. Whether you are scheduling appointments, billing insurance, providing education on health, giving a depo shot, inspecting a restaurant for sanitation, collaborating with partners and developing policy, or overseeing all of the aforementioned, it feels good to go home at the end of the day and know you contributed to the wellness of your people.



[https://www.hydecourtync.gov/departments/health\\_department.php](https://www.hydecourtync.gov/departments/health_department.php)

## Farewell to Vickey Manning, NENCPPH Board

The Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health (NENCPPH) says farewell to Vickey Manning as she retired January 31, 2025. Vickey was a longtime employee of Martin-Tyrrell-Washington (MTW) District Health as well as a member of the NENCPPH Board of Directors for the past year while she was Interim Health Director. After 13 years at the Martin County Department of Social Services as the Child Services Supervisor, Vickey decided that she wanted to make a career change and joined MTW as a Social Work Supervisor II in June 2006. In this position, she was responsible for overseeing the care management programs of Child Services Coordination, Maternity Care Coordination, Healthy Start Baby Love Plus, Health Check as well as several family support grant programs. In December of 2019, Vickey added the Human Resources Manager to her responsibilities. In July 2020, Vickey was appointed the Human Services Deputy Director at MTW. Upon the resignation of Wes Gray, the MTW Board of Health appointed Vickey as Interim Health Director: she served in this role from October 16, 2023 until the new Health Director, Nicole Barnes, was appointed on November 1, 2024.

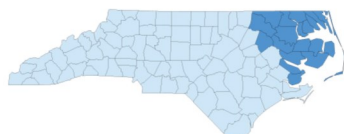


Vickey and her husband, Tim, will both be retiring on the same date. There are several trips already planned to include 2 cruises. Vickey also plans to spend more time with her three grandchildren (Owen, age 4, Hudson, age 2 and Fisher, 2 months). Vickey is not ready to sit at home and will continue to be involved with her community. One area that she is very passionate about is access to health care for the citizens of Martin County. She is currently the Chair of a 501c3 called Advancing Community Health Together (AHT) which was created in response to the closing of Martin General Hospital.

Vickey added, "I would like to sincerely thank Julie Tunney as well as all of the members of the Partnership (NENCPPH) for their support, guidance and friendship. The work that this group accomplishes is top notch which makes each of you a ROCK Star!"

Vickey's enthusiasm, care, and contributions to the Partnership and MTW will be missed. All the best in your retirement, Vickey, from your friends in NENC Public Health.

*The Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health (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 twenty counties in northeastern North Carolina, including: Beaufort, Bertie, Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Edgecombe, Gates, Greene, 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 Division of Child and Family Well-Being 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>.*



# NENCPPH

Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health

## Dare DHHS Opens New Youth Center Facility in Manteo

*Submitted by Michelle Wagner, Health Educator, Dare County Health Department*

The Youth Center on Roanoke Island, which became a part of the Dare County Department of Health & Human Services (DCDHHS) in December of 2023, is excited to move into its new Manteo facility next month.

Established in 2008 and formerly part of the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Youth Center is anticipating a ribbon-cutting ceremony and open house event on February 13, 2025 for its brand new 4,000-square-foot facility at 101 North Highway 64/264. The new space will include a multi-purpose room, office space, classroom space, game room, a fully-equipped kitchen, restrooms and an on-site playground.



The modern, state-of-the-art facility replaces the former building that was located a short distance away but due to its age and small size, was outdated and unable to adequately meet the needs of the growing Roanoke Island community.

“We are thrilled to open this wonderful new building that will allow the youth center to continue to grow and flourish as a positive nurturing environment for Dare County children,” said DCDHHS Director Sheila Davies. “This invaluable program is an asset to our department and complements the important work we do in meeting the evolving health and social needs of our community.”

The new facility is open to all Dare County residents and will have the capacity to serve roughly

100 children once it is fully staffed. Under the leadership of Leisure Activity Specialist Carolyn Norman-Holadia, children also participate in numerous enrichment activities, art projects, field trips and community service projects throughout the year.

“The Youth Center is designed to be a safe haven for children where we encourage education success and inspire children to be the best version of themselves that they can be,” said Norman-Holadia. “We are so much more than just an after-school program.”

From wrapping gifts for the Dare Center Christmas Party to collecting food to donate to local churches, youth in the program are regularly out in the community making a difference. They also participate in a number of field trips, including the Elizabeth City State University Empowerment Camp and N.C. State Fair.

The Youth Center children also participate in weekly summer camps at DCDHHS. The camps focus on summer safety and health education.

For more information on the Dare Youth Center, please visit: [www.darenc.gov/YouthCenter](http://www.darenc.gov/YouthCenter).



## Northampton County Health Department Hosts Senior Hour

*Submitted by Misty Gibbs, PIO, Northampton County Health Department*

Northampton County Health Education began a new education program in October 2024. The program, titled Senior Hour, is held at Roanoke Salem Missionary Baptist Church in Garysburg, NC. Participants perform activities such as walking in the sanctuary, completing low impact strength training exercises, and participating in a variety of games that encourage critical thinking skills, improve memory, and enhance fine motor skills. These activities are used to help seniors with their overall flexibility and mobility. The group meets every Tuesday at 10:00 AM in the church sanctuary hall and is led by Health Educator Kysha Gary.

Please come out and join us on  
Tuesday; October 15, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.

For

# Senior Hour

At

Roanoke Salem Missionary Baptist Church Fellowship Hall

**Dress comfortable and come prepared to laugh, move and have loads of fun!**

Presented by the Northampton County Health Department  
Health Education Department



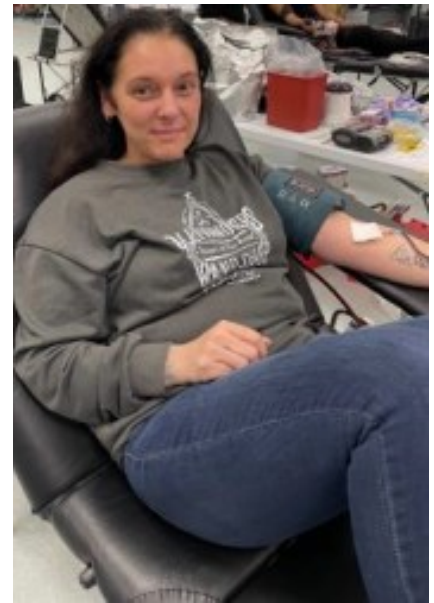
For more information contact: Kysha Gary at 1-252-534-5841 ext. 6019  
"Faith, Fellowship and Fun"

*Pictured above from left to right: Martha Paige, Linda Blount, Deborah Key, Ethel Thompson, Mable Lockhart, Sabrina Thomas, Hattie Harris-Vines*

## Halifax County Holds Successful Blood Drive

*Submitted by Laura Ellis, Health Education, Halifax County Public Health System*

Wellness Coordinator Denise Norman would personally like to thank all of you who came out and supported the county sponsored blood drive, which was held on Wednesday, December 11, 2024. The goal was set at 45 pints with a wonderful turnout for the county drive! Thanks to everyone, the goal was exceeded, collecting a total of 49 productive pints, which will be used to help save that many more lives. Again, the American Red Cross truly appreciates all of you who came out to donate, attempted to donate and volunteered. Our next county-sponsored drive is set for April 23, 2025.



*Pictured at right: Crystal White of EMS Station 6*

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## NENCPPH Welcomes Chloe Wilde as Spring Intern

*Submitted by Chloe Wilde, Regional Intern, NENCPPH*



Hello! I'm Chloe Wilde and I'm currently serving as the Tobacco Prevention and Control Intern for the spring with the Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health. I'm set to graduate this May from ECU with a Bachelor's in Public Health, and a concentration in community health. While my background has primarily been in mental health and research, I'm eager to learn more about tobacco prevention and control to broaden my expertise in public health.

Some of the exciting projects I'll be working on include writing the weekly newsletter, advocating for Tobacco 21 resolutions, creating new partnerships within Region 10, and implementing the CATCH My Breath program. I'm looking forward to contributing to the team and learning as much as I can during my internship! Feel free to contact me at [chloewilde4952@gmail.com](mailto:chloewilde4952@gmail.com) or connect with my supervisor, Teresa Beardsley, at [Teresa.beardsley@arhs-nc.org](mailto:Teresa.beardsley@arhs-nc.org) if you have any tobacco related questions or needs.

## MTW's Baby Shower, Avian Flu, and Farewell

*Submitted by Miranda Keel, Health Education Supervisor, MTW*

MTW has been hosting Community Baby Showers in each county of the district. The first event was held in Martin County on January 13th, followed by Tyrrell County on January 16th. The Washington County event was scheduled for January 23rd but was ultimately rescheduled to February 13th due to the snow storm. These showers were made possible by donations from Healthy Blue NC, Safe Kids Riverbend Coalition, and community members. Healthy Blue NC donated 300 packs of diapers and wipes, and 300 pairs of baby Crocs. Safe Kids Riverbend Coalition and community donations were combined to purchase gifts for all of the expecting mothers. We have had 13 expecting mothers join us for games, food, and gifts! Most importantly, participants were able to visit resource tables to learn more about programs and services offered within MTW and partner agencies.

(Pictures: baby shower participants, Health Educators; baby shower game, and diaper game)





## MTW's Baby Shower, Avian Flu, and Farewell (continued)

Throughout the month of January, MTW's Epi Team has been activated as we have navigated through an Avian Flu response. Collaboration with surrounding effected counties has been key to ensuring timely testing of symptomatic individuals. Thank you to Hyde and Beaufort Counties for being transparent and so helpful throughout this response. Luckily, symptomatic individuals were all negative for H5N1, although several tested positive for seasonal Influenza.

Interim Health Director Vickey Manning (pictured on left in two photos below) retired from MTW District Health on January 31st after almost 19 years with the agency. Vickey held multiple positions during her time with us, including Social Work Supervisor, Human Resources, Safe Kids Coordinator, Interim Health Director, and Deputy Health Director to name a few. Her supportive nature, cheery attitude, and excellent work ethic will be truly missed by all of MTW. We are lucky that she will be coming back to contract with us soon. Until then, we send our heartfelt congratulations and hope that she has a wonderful time on the trips that she has planned with family. Thank you, Vickey, for everything you have done for MTW!



Submitted by Matthew Sabin, Triple P Implementation Specialist, ARHS

WINTER 2025



# Positive Parenting Screen Time

In today's digital world, it can feel like kids are constantly glued to screen. While technology can be a great tool for learning and entertainment, too much screen time can mean missing out on other important activities like outdoor play, reading, and socializing.

## BENEFITS OF TECHNOLOGY

Age-appropriate tech, like TV shows, games, and apps can be fun and educational for children.



## RISKS OF TOO MUCH SCREEN TIME

Too much time in front of a screen can limit opportunities for kids to develop other vital skills.

## STRIKING A BALANCE

Research different devices and apps to understand their value. Talk to your children about the technology they use. Establish clear rules for screen time based on your child's age and family values. Discuss these limits together as a family.



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## Regional Get Moving Challenge Produced Amazing Results

*Submitted by Julie Tunney, NENCPPH Coordinator*

Once again the Northeastern NC Partnership for Public Health (NENCPPH) Regional Get Moving Challenge produced some amazing results! The fall 2024 6-week Get Moving Challenge was the eighth annual regional activity challenge held for local health department staff and partnering agency staff. Nine local health departments in the region participated: Dare, Edgecombe, Pitt, Greene, Halifax, Beaufort, Northampton, ARHS, and MTW. There were 54 local health department teams and 22 partnering agency teams, and a total of 372 participants taking part in the challenge.



Pictured Above: Ashley Stoop

The award for the Most Creative Name was a tie between two LHD teams: Dare County’s “Let’s Walk About It” and Albemarle Regional Health Service’s “Walk, Forrest, Walk”: Congratulations to both!

Eight Health Directors participated in the challenge, as well, with Ashley Stoop winning the designation of the NENCPPH Board Member with the most steps.

Another top performer was Marlen Villegas from the “Blister Sisters” team representing Martin-Tyrrell-Washington District Health who achieved 1,314,328 steps gaining her first place amongst the LHD staff with the most steps.



Pictured Above: Marlen Villegas



Martha Paige was the individual from a partnering agency with the most steps—Martha accumulated 1,590,018 steps! This was the third year she achieved this designation; she was part of the “stride Squad” representing Northampton Healthy Carolinians Support Group.

Pictured at Left: Martha Paige

## More From the Regional Get Moving Challenge

For the second year in a row, the local health department team with the most steps was “We Will Walk You” from Dare County with 895,662 average team steps. The team consisted of: Tammy Reber, Angela Long, Shannon Foltz, Sarah Bradshaw, and Jessica Brickey.



Pictured in photos from left to right: Shannon Foltz, Sarah Bradshaw, Tammy Reber, Angela Long, and Jessica Brickey

The partnering agency team with the most steps was “Stride Squad” representing the Northampton County Healthy Carolinians Support Group, with 1,118,635 average team steps. The team consisted of Martha Paige, Dale Bjarnason, Angela Mallory, Sabrina Hunter, and Tony Barrow.



Pictured in photos:  
At Left: Jan and Martha Paige  
Middle: Dale Bjarnason  
At Right: Angela Mallory

**“I'm ready for the next challenge. If we don't take the first step we will never get anywhere.”**  
– Challenge participant

## Italian Wedding Soup

*Try this warm, comforting and nutritious soup containing spinach, carrots, celery, onion, garlic, orzo, and chicken meatballs.*

Serves 6

Serving Size: 1.5 cups

### Ingredients

- 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 ½ cups chopped yellow onion
- ⅔ cup chopped carrot
- ⅔ cup chopped celery
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- 6 cups unsalted chicken broth
- 6 ounces orzo, preferably whole-wheat (or other small pasta like ditalini)
- 1 ½ tablespoons chopped fresh oregano
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 24 cooked chicken meatballs (12 ounces), such as [Easy Chicken Meatballs](#), or buy precooked frozen meatballs.
- 4 cups baby spinach
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese



*Photo by Jen Causey*

### Directions

1. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add onion, carrot, celery and garlic; cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is translucent, 4 to 5 minutes.
2. Add broth, cover and bring to a boil. Add orzo, oregano and salt; cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until the orzo is just tender, about 9 minutes.
3. Stir in meatballs and spinach; cook until the meatballs are heated through and the spinach is wilted, 2 to 4 minutes. If using frozen meatballs, add these and let warm through before adding spinach.
4. Serve sprinkled with cheese and drizzled with the remaining oil.

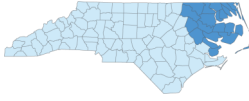
Serving Suggestion: Serve with crusty bread and salad.

### Nutrition Information per Serving

415    Calories  
19g    Fat  
36g    Carbs  
26g    Protein

[Italian Wedding Soup](#)

## Northeastern NC Partnership for Public Health



Bertie · Beaufort · Camden · Chowan · Currituck · Dare · Edgecombe  
Gates · Greene · Halifax · Hertford · Hyde · Martin · Northampton  
Pamlico · Pasquotank · Perquimans · Pitt · Tyrrell · Washington

912 Soundside Road

Phone: 252-339-6727

Email: [jtunney@arhs-nc.org](mailto:jtunney@arhs-nc.org)

### “Healthy Communities Through Leadership and Collaboration”

[www.nencpph.net](http://www.nencpph.net)



[www.facebook.com/nencpph](http://www.facebook.com/nencpph)

## Calendar of Events

Feb 4	Regional Substance Misuse Collaborative
Feb 14	PICH Tobacco-Free Living Coalition
Feb 27	NENCPPH Leadership Call
Feb 27	NENCPPH Regional Data Workgroup
March 13-14	NC Public Health Leaders Conference
March 24	NENCPPH Finance Committee Meeting
March 28	NENCPPH Board Meeting
April 2	NENCPPH True Colors
April 10	PH Champions Conf Planning
April 24	NENCPPH Leadership Call
April 30	NENCPPH Spring Newsletter Items Due
April 30-May 2	EDNCPHA Conference
May 6	Regional Substance Misuse Collaborative

## Board of Directors

Janel Octigan, NENCPPH Chair Director, Beaufort County Health Department
Megan Vick, NENCPPH Vice Chair Director, Northampton County Health
Cheyenna James, NENCPPH Secretary-Treasurer Director, Halifax County Public Health System
Nicole Barnes Director, Martin-Tyrrell-Washington District Health
Joy Brock Director, Greene County Health Department
Yvonne Copeland Director, Division of Child and Family Well-Being NC Dept of Health and Human Services
Sheila Davies Director, Dare County Dept of Health & Human Services
Melanie Dixon Director, Pamlico County Health Department
Michelle Etheridge Director, Edgecombe County Health Department
Luana Gibbs Director, Hyde County Health Department
Wes Gray Director, Pitt County Health Department
Amy Joy Lanou NCIPH at Gillings Global School of Public Health, UNC at Chapel Hill
Ruth Little Public Health Dept., East Carolina University
Stacie Saunders Deputy Director, Division of Public Health NC Dept of Health and Human Services
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, the Division of Children and Family Well-Being, 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 eleven health departments/districts and twenty counties. Learn more at <https://www.nencpph.net/>