

Fall 2025

Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health



NENCPPH

Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health

Partnering for Public Health

A quarterly publication of public health activities in Northeastern NC



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NENCPPH BOARD CORNER

*Submitted by~Ikisha Mullen,
Coordinator NENCPPH, Director Region 9 PH Workforce*

I am honored and deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve as the new Coordinator for the Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health and the Director for Region 9 Public Health Workforce. It is a privilege to work alongside such dedicated, passionate professionals who are making a real difference in the health and well-being of our communities.

As I step into this role, I want to express my sincere appreciation for the outstanding work and leadership of Julie Tunney. Julie has served this region with dedication, integrity, and compassion over the years. Her service has strengthened our region, and we are truly thankful for all she has done to move public health forward in the northeast.

We find ourselves in a time of both challenge and opportunity. The uncertainties we face from workforce shortages to the ever-evolving public health landscape—can be overwhelming. Yet I am continually inspired by the resilience and commitment of the health directors and public health staff across Northeastern North Carolina. Your tireless efforts are not only seen—they are deeply valued.

Please remember to prioritize your well-being. Take time for yourself, go on that trip you've been putting off, laugh with your loved ones, and protect your mental health. You cannot pour from an empty cup, and your health is just as important as those you serve. Take a moment to look around and celebrate the remarkable work being done across our region. From innovative programs to tireless outreach, the impact you are making is profound. Let's continue to support one another, build each other up, and keep moving forward together.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the contributors to this newsletter. Your voices and updates reflect the heart of our public health community and keep us connected and informed.

I look forward to working with you all and am excited about the possibilities ahead. Let's continue to serve, support, and uplift one another.

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>.



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Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health

HYDE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

*Submitted by Anna Schafer, Human Services Planner and Evaluator II
Hyde County Health Department*



Hyde County Health Department Promotes Youth Wellness Through Summer Partnerships

This summer, the Hyde County Health Department partnered with Hyde County Extension - 4-H for their Project Rescue Rising, a search and rescue camp. The health department discussed sun safety and heat related illness with youth to help prepare them for their upcoming mock rescue.

The health department also partnered with Hyde County Public Library for the "Color Our World" summer reading program. Savannah read two books regarding the benefits of eating a variety of colorful foods for various health benefits, facilitated a craft, and then the 19 children in attendance got to sample a variety of fruits and vegetables.

What a fun and educational summer it has been!



https://www.hydecourtnc.gov/departments/health_department.php



HALIFAX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT



Wearing Blue to Bring Awareness to Child Abuse Prevention

April 2025

Submitted by Laura Ellis, Health Educator, Halifax County Health Department

Here at the Halifax County Health Department, we rallied together the whole month of April to bring awareness and support. We gathered together to have lunch in our blue T-shirts and plant blue pinwheels around the health department and throughout the community.



“Children are the world’s most valuable resource and its best hope for the future.”
President John F. Kennedy



HALIFAX COUNTY GOVERNMENT
NORTH CAROLINA

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

*Submitted by: Misty J. Gibbs, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Public Information Officer
Northampton County Health Department*

Bringing the Capital to the Constituents Event



On June 19th, the "Bringing the Capital to the Constituents" event featuring Secretary Devdutta Sangvai of the NC Department of Health and Human Services and Deputy Secretary for NC Medicaid Jay Ludlam was held at the Northampton County Cultural and Wellness Center in Jackson, NC. The event was led by Representative Rodney D. Pierce and was in honor of Men's Health Month and National Cancer Survivors Month. Northampton County Health Department Director Megan Warren Vick, Halifax County Public Health System Director Cheyenna James, and Warren County Health Department Director Dr. Margaret Brakempton had the pleasure of speaking at the event.



Photo Credit:
Representative Rodney D. Pierce

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Submitted by: Misty J. Gibbs, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Public Information Officer Northampton County Health Department

Northampton County Promotes Men's Health with Free Prostate Screening Event



Pictured: Lab Manager Crystal Lynch and Nursing Supervisor Kayla Conde prepare for a prostate screening

Northampton County Health Department held a free prostate screening clinic on June 24, 2025 from 10 AM to 6 PM at the Northampton County Health Department, Jackson, NC. The event was free for male residents of Northampton County age 50 or older or have a family history of prostate cancer at any age; and had not had a prostate exam in the last twelve months. During the event 35 residents were screened. Of those 35 screened, 27 were African-American males, while 8 were caucasian males. The majority of those screened were age 60 or above, although two were below age 60. 33 individuals had normal test results, and 2 were referred to a private provider for follow-up.

MARTIN – TYRRELL – WASHINGTON DISTRICT HEALTH

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

Growth, Recognition, and Renewal. MTW Celebrates Big Wins and New Beginnings



The Tyrrell County Health Department has undergone a full remodel! We officially reopened on Monday, July 14th to the public and are so excited to see how these remodels will help us better serve our community.



Image: Health Education slide

Our staff had a fantastic time at the 65th Annual Eastern District North Carolina Public Health Association (EDNCPHA) Conference this year! The MTW team returned home with new insights on key public health topics—and several well-deserved awards! Andrea Freeman was honored with a Special Award for her tireless commitment to public health and her invaluable contributions to EDNCPHA. Her leadership, service across multiple organizations, and dedication within her health department have helped sustain and strengthen the association. Our Health Education Department received the prestigious William “Bill” Smith Outstanding Public Health Award, recognizing their innovative, community-centered work and lasting impact in the field. Andrea also wrapped up her service as Past-President by installing the 2025–2026 slate of officers, including Miranda Keel, who will serve as EDNCPHA Secretary. We’re incredibly proud of our team and their continued commitment to improving the health and well-being of Martin, Tyrrell, and Washington counties!



Image: Miranda Keel



Image: Nicole Barnes and Samantha Combs

MTW held our annual district-wide staff meeting in June. Staff learned about several innovative employee-focused initiatives coming to MTW, as well as heard a presentation on healthy food access from Dr. Pitts of ECU. We also celebrated Samantha Combs, who was honored with the Super Staff Award for her outstanding hard work with the MDPP program. Congratulations, Samantha!



Image: Andrea Freeman

PITT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT



*Submitted by Allison Swart, Public Information Officer
Pitt County Health Department*



Diabetes Support Group Garden: A New Community Partnership

We're thrilled to share an exciting new initiative at the Community Garden site: our dedicated Diabetes Support Group Garden! This collaborative project is becoming a vibrant space for health and community engagement for those living with diabetes.

The journey began with our dedicated DSMES team, comprised of Patti Columbe, Elizabeth Dail, Liz Steele, Jennifer Hardee, and Shannon Holton. This team invited Katie Winslow and Hannah Smith, from Soil and Water, to present in June 2024 and April 2025. These insightful sessions introduced our monthly Diabetes Support Group to the benefits of gardening and healthy habits, even providing seeds for hands-on activities. Following these presentations, the DSMES team partnered with our community garden leaders to secure a 100% donation for the diabetes support group, which gifted us two accessible raised garden beds. To further plan and envision this space, the DSMES Team then invited experienced gardeners from our Wellness and Employee Garden: Alan Riggs, Thomas Stebner, and Health Director, Wes Gray, to join in brainstorming efforts.

In July 2025, a heartwarming dedication officially marked the start of our "Diabetes Wellness Garden." The initial ground preparation began with the first shovels of dirt.

This summer marks the beginning of the Diabetes Support Group's community garden activities, with efforts continuing into the fall. We're leading a supervised tour for our interested community on July 28th, 2025, which will include the planting of our very first seeds! We've also been invited to the Community Garden's Fall Harvest celebration at the end of the year, bringing together all community gardeners to share the season's produce and celebrate everyone's hard work.

This project exemplifies powerful collaboration within our organization and community. Together, these groups will continue to weed, fill, tend, and care for the plot. Our group leaders will actively participate in maintenance, supervising diabetes support group members, share their expertise, and encourage good stewardship of the space.

This initiative truly embodies our commitment to fostering health and well-being, contributing to both fresh produce and stronger community connections.

PITT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Submitted by Allison Swart, Public Information Officer, Pitt County Health Department



Pitt County Hosts Infectious Disease Tabletop to test Measles Outbreak Response



On July 22, Pitt County Health Department facilitated a multidisciplinary tabletop exercise focused on a simulated measles outbreak. The scenario began with two symptomatic children returning from travel and expanded to include school and church-based exposures which required coordination across public health, EMS, healthcare, and education partners.

Participants from Pitt County Health Department, ECU Health Medical Center (Infection Control), Pitt County Schools, Pitt County EMS, Emergency Management, and local PIOs worked through scenarios related to early detection, contact tracing, public messaging, and interagency communications.

This exercise was part of Pitt County's ongoing efforts to improve preparedness for high-risk communicable disease events through community-wide collaboration.



EDGECOMBE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

*Submitted by Meredith Shivers, Deputy Health Director,
Edgecombe County Health Department*

Edgecombe County Health Department Welcomes New Director of Nursing



Edgecombe County Health Department (ECHD) is pleased to announce Morgan Petway, RN, as the agency's Director of Nursing. Ms. Petway is a graduate of Edgecombe Community College's Nursing Program and comes to ECHD with over 20 years of progressive leadership experience in corporate and Healthcare settings. Ms. Petway's nursing experience is extensive and covers a wide range of nursing disciplines including Hospice, Labor and Delivery, NICU, Mother-Baby Unit, and Mental Health. Ms. Petway started at ECHD as a PHN III in the CD, STD, and TB Programs. She served as the Interim Director of Nursing before accepting the full-time role. She has a great rapport with the nursing staff and is currently working on becoming an Enhanced Role Nurse for the STD program.

Outside of the clinic, Ms. Petway is a mother of two daughters, Hunter and Serena, who are also nurses. She is a dog lover and has two giant Great Pyrenees Mountain Dogs. In her spare time, you can find Ms. Petway at the beach, reading a good book or spending quality time with her daughters.

Ms. Petway has a passion for nursing and public health that is apparent from the first time you meet her. She is excited about this chapter in her nursing career. Ms. Petway is driven, committed and ready to lead ECHD's exceptional nursing staff towards public health excellence.

ALBEMARLE REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

Submitted by Mallynda Whittington, Public Health Educator, Albemarle Regional Health Department



Cooking Up Connection: Bridging Cultures Through Nutrition and Community Partnerships



Mallynda shared~

“ In the kitchen, I have wonderful volunteers—Justine from the Albemarle Food Bank and Emily, a nutritionist. I collaborate with the Food Bank to ensure the Hispanic community has access to nutritious food and essential resources. Together, we’ve also provided nutrition education, cooking classes, demonstrations, and food tastings tailored to a variety of cultural communities. ”



ALBEMARLE REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

Submitted by Wanda Stallings, Public Health Educator, Albemarle Regional Health Department

From Weeds to Wellness: Health Educators on the Move in Bertie County

Health Educators with Albemarle Regional Health Services, are active in their communities. When they are together they always find time for a mental health walk break, they pull weeds from their blueberry bushes planted at the Bertie County Health Department or inform the community of hot topics. They recently placed an educational vape board at the License Plate Agency in Windsor to make parents/caretakers aware of the dangers. This duo likes to make things happen.



(L-R) Wanda Stallings and Tina Brown



DARE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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

Dare County Harm Reduction Efforts Focus on Concert Venues

In an effort to extend its harm reduction reach, the Dare County Department of Health & Human Services' Recovery ROSS (Recovery and Overdose Support Services) team has become a mainstay at the summer concert series at Roanoke Island Festival Park over the past three seasons. With hundreds in attendance during each event, including both local residents and tourists, ROSS Peer Support Specialist Jesse Ruby has found that the concert events provide an ideal venue for getting word out about harm reduction in Dare County. Prior to the concert venue opening to the public, the ROSS team and volunteers join other venues at the site, setting up a table with materials such as naloxone, fentanyl and xylazine test strips, condoms and educational materials.



The outdoor concerts are held throughout the summer and feature popular bands that draw large crowds. Last summer, there were nine concerts throughout the summer. This year, the series, Live from the OBX, is featuring a similar line-up that runs through August. Ruby said that he hopes that the presence of ROSS and the Saving Lives Task Force, a team of local community members working toward the prevention of substance use disorders, increasing access, and the availability of effective treatment in Dare County, will encourage concert goers to “party responsibly and make good choices.” Ruby added that concert goers are eager to pick up the materials and learn more about ROSS and the services it provides locally. “The concert series is another great opportunity to get out into the community, share resources, talk to people and get the word out that there is help available to those who may be struggling with substance misuse,” Ruby added.

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

July 2025

Submitted by: Matt Sabin, Triple P Positive Parenting - ARHS



Positive discipline focuses on teaching skills instead of punishing mistakes. It helps kids understand limits, learn to make better choices, and feel safe and respected. Give clear instructions, make eye contact, and keep it short! Remember, use consequences that teach and are logical.

Summer heat got your patience melting? For more practical parenting tools, sign up for your free course today!

www.triplep-parenting.com.

Try This!

When emotions run high, yours or theirs, take a breath. Pause for 5-10 seconds. Remind yourself that they are still learning. "I'm here to guide not control." Respond calmly and confidently.

Remember

Try to catch the good stuff. Praise helpful or kind behavior as often as possible for kids and teens.



ALBEMARLE REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

Submitted by Teresa Beadsley, Tobacco Prevention Manager - Regions 9/10, ARHS

Please utilize and share the following back to school links

Back to School and Vaping (English and Spanish)

Text VAPEFREENC to 88709.

Envía un mensaje de texto con la palabra VapeFreeNC al 88709.



Back to School American Lung Association (English and Spanish)

Back to School with Healthy Lungs. Guidance for parents, young adults and school staff to ensure that everyone heads back to the classroom with healthy lungs and clean air.

<https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/wellness/back-to-school>

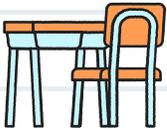
Regreso a clases con pulmones sanos. Orientación para padres, adultos jóvenes y personal escolar para garantizar que todos regresen al aula con pulmones sanos y aire limpio.

<https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/wellness/back-to-school>

Back to School and Sports (English and Spanish)

Text VAPEFREENC to 88709.

Envía un mensaje de texto con la palabra VapeFreeNC al 88709.



Back to School Checklist (English and Spanish)

Think your child wouldn't vape? Statistics say that they might. It's time to find out what you need to know about why kids vape and the dangers, signs and symptoms.

<https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/helping-teens-quit/talk-about-vaping>

¿Crees que tu hijo no vapearía? Las estadísticas dicen que sí. Es hora de descubrir qué necesitas saber sobre por qué los niños vapean y sus peligros, señales y síntomas.

<https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/helping-teens-quit/talk-about-vaping>



Free quit help, text VAPEFREE (English and Spanish)

Text VAPEFREENC to 88709.

Envía un mensaje de texto con la palabra VapeFreeNC al 88709.

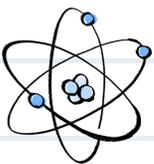
Know the Facts, Talk about Vaping (English and Spanish)

Think your child wouldn't vape? Statistics say that they might. It's time to find out what you need to know about why kids vape and the dangers, signs and symptoms.

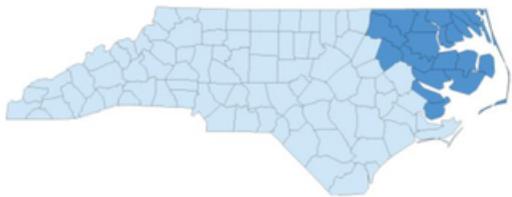
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<https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/helping-teens-quit/talk-about-vaping>



PARTNERING FOR PUBLIC HEALTH



NENCPPH

Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health

Explore two powerful resources designed to connect and empower our community:



NENC Connect

If you or someone you know needs help with prevention, support, treatment, or recovery services related to substance use, visit www.nencconnect.org.

Together, these platforms help build healthier communities—whether through career connections or compassionate care.



Careers 2 Make a Difference

Whether you're a student, job seeker, or looking for a new path in public health or human services, Careers 2 Make a Difference is your starting point. Discover rewarding career opportunities that make a real impact right here in Northeastern North Carolina. www.careers2makeadifference.com

ZUCCHINI NOODLES WITH PESTO & CHICKEN

<http://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/266239/zucchini-noodles-with-pesto-chicken/>

This healthy summer dinner subs zoodles for pasta to help use up your zucchini bounty--as well as slash calories and carbs. Once the spiralized zucchini has time to soak up the herby pesto sauce, this chicken and pesto pasta makes particularly good leftovers.



Prep Time: 40 mins
Total Time: 40 mins
Servings: 4
Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients

4 medium-large zucchini (about 2 pounds), trimmed
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt, divided
 2 cups packed fresh basil leaves
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup pine nuts, toasted
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
 2 tablespoons lemon juice
 1 large clove garlic, quartered
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground pepper
 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut into 1-inch pieces

Directions

- Using a spiral vegetable slicer, cut zucchini lengthwise into long, thin strands. Give the strands a chop here and there so the noodles aren't too long. Place the zucchini in a colander and toss with $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt. Let drain for 15 to 30 minutes, then gently squeeze to remove any excess liquid.
- Meanwhile, place basil, pine nuts, Parmesan, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup oil, lemon juice, garlic, pepper and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt in a mini food processor. Process until almost smooth.
- Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken in one layer; sprinkle with the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt. Cook, stirring, until just cooked through, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl and stir in 3 tablespoons of the pesto.
- Add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil to the pan. Add the drained zucchini noodles and toss gently until hot, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to the bowl with the chicken. Add the remaining pesto and toss gently to coat.

Nutrition Facts Per serving: Serving Size $1\frac{1}{3}$ cups 430 calories; total fat 32g; saturated fat 5g; cholesterol 67mg; sodium 598mg; total carbohydrate 9g; dietary



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

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“Healthy Communities Through Leadership and Collaboration”



Calendar of Events

August 5th	Regional Substance Misuse Collaborative at 9:00 am
August 14th	PH Champions Conference Planning
August 28th	Leadership Call at 9:00 am
October 6th	Finance Committee Meeting at 2:00 pm
October 8th-10th	Fall Retreat, Dare County
October 30th	PH Champions Conference – Windsor Cooperative Extension
December 8th	Finance Committee Meeting at 2:00 pm
December 12th	Annual Board Meeting

Board of Directors

Janell Octigan, NENCPPH Chair

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Megan Vick, NENCPPH Vice Chair

Director, Northampton County Health

Cheyenna James, NENCPPH Secretary-Treasurer

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NC Dept of Health and Human Services

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Director, Edgecombe County Health Department

Luana Gibbs

Director, Hyde County Health Department

Wes Gray

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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/>
