

# Health of Chatham

Annual Report

2015

## New Initiative

### Chatham Health Alliance targets health priorities

Establishing a culture of health is not something one agency, organization, or individual can accomplish alone. Rather, it requires committed partnership from all sectors, perhaps most importantly participation from those not traditionally thought of as health-related. In March 2015, Chatham County, building on years of informal collaboration and momentum from the 2014 Community Health Assessment, formed the Chatham Health Alliance. The purpose of the Alliance is to bring both traditional and nontraditional partners together to work on all issues affecting health in Chatham County, with a focus on the health priorities identified in the Community Health Assessment. Ultimately, the Alliance functions as a platform to develop a shared vision of health in Chatham County and to support each other's collective and individual efforts to achieve that vision.

The Alliance focuses on approaches that have the potential to benefit communities as a whole, and the initiatives described in this report reflect the strategies prioritized by subcommittees of the Alliance to address each health priority. The Chatham Health Alliance will continue to play a critical role in this work in the years to come.

### Alliance receives nearly \$500,000 in grants

Despite its recent formation, the Chatham Health Alliance has been instrumental in securing multiple grants to address health issues in the county. In December 2014, a team of Chatham County partners received a Blue Cross Blue Shield NC Community-Centered Health Homes grant that helped get the Alliance off the ground. This initiative continues to offer technical assistance to the Alliance.

In November 2015, Chatham Hospital and the health department were awarded a 3-year grant from the Duke Endowment worth \$450,000 to support the Alliance's efforts, including hiring a full-time staff member.



## Addressing Health Priorities: A snapshot of progress



### OBESITY

Obesity rates have risen slightly in the past year and much is being done to address this health priority on a population level. This year, two local town plans, the Town of Siler City Parks Master Plan and the Goldston Comprehensive Land Use plan, included health considerations. The Alliance's Obesity Subcommittee developed an inventory of nutrition and physical activity resources in the county to raise awareness of available services. Chatham YMCA has begun implementing OrganWise Guys, an evidence-based program to teach youth healthy habits. Approximately 450 youth participated in the program in 2015 in summer camps and after-school programs.



### ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Barriers to mental health services, including stigma and limited access and awareness, remain a challenge. These barriers can also lead to issues like drug overdose, which has been an ongoing concern, as shown in the graph on the back. Partners have been meeting through the Access to Mental Health Services Subcommittee to develop strategies to promote and strengthen mental health services in the county. The health department, Chatham Cares Pharmacy and Chatham Drug Free were awarded a Project Lazarus grant to distribute Naloxone to prevent drug overdose fatalities. The Chatham County Schools Bullying Prevention Task Force is implementing a program to reduce bullying through social media, specifically targeting elementary school students.



### ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

While life expectancy in Chatham has increased by nearly 6 years since the early 1990s, some, like African American residents, continue to face poorer outcomes. Overall, cancer and heart disease remain the leading causes of death. Work to address these issues has focused on linking residents to care within the county. Piedmont Health Services and Legal Aid, NC have been leading efforts to enroll uninsured residents in the Health Insurance Marketplace. Nearly 4,000 residents enrolled during the 2014-15 period, and the goal is to reach 4,100 this period. A team of UNC students conducted an assessment of medical transportation in the county and developed a marketing strategy to promote local services.

## Emerging Issue: E-cigarettes

# With e-cigarette, tobacco use on the rise, county takes action

With the rapid increase in electronic cigarette use, extensive marketing by the tobacco industry that targets youth, and the understanding that 90% of smokers begin before age 18, Chatham County developed a comprehensive, evidence-based policy to prohibit tobacco use on county grounds. The purpose of the policy is to protect people from the harmful effects of tobacco use and encourage tobacco users to quit while providing support and resources to assist them in doing so.

The policy was signed on July 21st, 2015 and will take effect March 1st, 2016. From that point forward, the use of tobacco products, including electronic cigarettes, is prohibited inside and on any property that is owned, leased, or maintained by the county. This includes any county vehicle, county building, and all county-owned land, including the Chatham County parks system.



In developing and approving the policy, the Chatham County Board of Health, Board of Commissioners, and County Manager took a proactive stand against the use of electronic cigarettes. The policy was also a response to worsening trends in youth tobacco use. According to the 2014 Youth Health Behavior Survey, overall tobacco use among middle and high school students surprisingly increased by 9% from 2011 to 2014.

In a press release announcing the policy, Health Director Layton Long said, "We can all be positive role models for Chatham County youth. Having a tobacco-free policy sets the right example by demonstrating healthy lifestyle behaviors."

For a rural county with an agricultural tradition in a state known for its tobacco roots, this policy represents a huge leap forward. It is also an opportunity to promote cessation resources and programs, such as QuitSmart, a program led by health department staff that has been offered to both county employees and residents, as well as the NC Quitline.

### Sources

1: 2014 ACS Survey, 2: NC SCHS, 3: NC DETECT, 4: NC Dept of Commerce, 5: CDC BRFSS, 6: Enroll America

## By the numbers

# 68,698

2014 Population of Chatham<sup>1</sup>

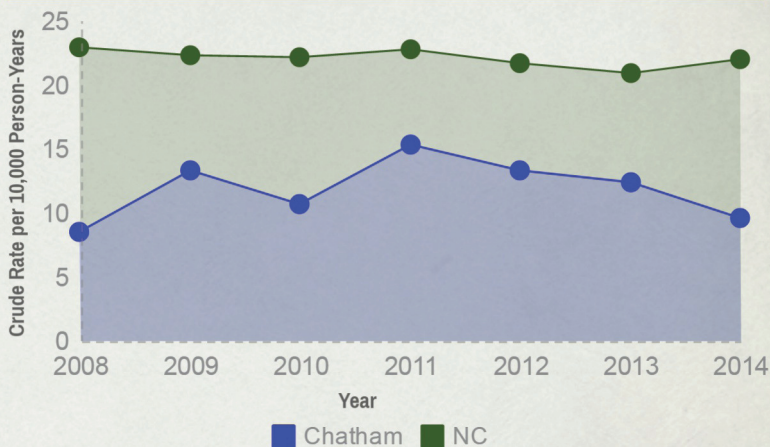
# 82 years

Life expectancy at birth in Chatham  
2nd highest in the state (2012-14)<sup>2</sup>

# 7.1 years

Difference in life expectancy between  
whites and African Americans  
2nd highest in the state (2012-14)<sup>2</sup>

## Medication or Drug Overdose<sup>3</sup>



# 4.6%

Unemployment rate in Oct 2015  
vs. 4.2% in Oct 2014<sup>4</sup>

# 42%

Percent of 2014 deaths due to cancer or  
heart disease vs. 41% in 2013<sup>2</sup>

# 27%

2012 percent of adults who are obese  
up from 26% in 2011<sup>5</sup>

# 56%

Increase in Health Insurance Marketplace  
enrollment from 2013 to 2014<sup>6</sup>

