

# Health of Chatham

## New Initiatives

Annual Report 2016

### Smoke-free Chatham

Effective March 1, 2016, all Chatham County government grounds became tobacco-free. The policy covers any property that is owned, leased, or maintained by the county; this includes any county vehicle, county buildings, and county property, including the Chatham County parks system. The policy covers all tobacco products, including cigarettes, cigars, and all forms of smokeless tobacco (chewing tobacco, electronic vapor products, etc.).

Tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure are leading preventable causes of illness and premature death in North Carolina. This policy illustrates Chatham's commitment to health for all residents and visitors.

### New Partnership with Piedmont Health Services

In 2016, the Chatham County Public Health Department began transitioning adult health primary care patients to Piedmont Health Services. These services include physical examinations, chronic disease management, and acute (sick) visits for people 21 years or older. This shift will allow health department staff to focus on developing and expanding existing population health initiatives to better serve the residents of Chatham. The transition will be complete in mid-2017.

### New Grants

In January 2016, the Chatham Health Alliance received \$450,000 as part of the inaugural cohort of the Healthy People, Healthy Carolinas (HPHC) program, an initiative of The Duke Endowment. HPHC aims to improve community health and health outcomes, focusing specifically on nutrition, physical activity, and chronic disease prevention.

In September 2016, Chatham County was selected as one of 50 participants in the Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge. As a member of the HealthyCommunity50, Chatham received \$10,000 and, at the conclusion of the Challenge, will be eligible to compete for additional funding. This funding will support the inclusion of health considerations in the Chatham County Comprehensive Plan and the development of a cohort study to track population health in Chatham through the coming years.

## Addressing Health Priorities: A snapshot of progress



Since its inception in January 2016, the Chatham Health Alliance has played an active role in improving health in Chatham and is leading many of the efforts discussed below to address the health priorities identified in the 2014 Community Health Assessment.

### OBESITY

Obesity rates continue to increase in Chatham, and much is being done to address this at a population level. The Food Vendor Survey, which identifies local healthy food vendors, was updated to include 88 stores - 17 of which attained the top tier of carrying five or more types of fresh fruits or vegetables and satisfying the federal MyPlate criteria. A pilot of the Exercise is Medicine evidence-based intervention was launched at Piedmont Health Services in Siler City to connect patients not meeting the recommended amount of weekly physical activity to active community resources. A team of UNC students was recruited to develop a worksite wellness program tailored to the needs of Chatham's employers. The Alliance also partnered with the Chatham County Planning Department to encourage a "health-in-all-policies" approach to the Chatham County Comprehensive Plan.

### ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Barriers to accessing mental health services remain a challenge. To improve knowledge about resources available in Chatham, a series of mental health services resource guides were developed; in addition to a general guide, guides specific to youth resources, women and families, and Spanish-language services are available on the health department website. A team of UNC students was recruited to assess opioid overdose in Chatham and will work with local schools to improve prevention efforts. The Sheriff's Office partnered with other local law enforcement, the NC Harm Reduction Coalition, EMS staff, and the health department to train officers to recognize and treat suspected opioid overdoses. Future efforts will focus on reducing mental health stigma.

### ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Cancer and heart disease remain the leading causes of death in Chatham. Work continues to help link residents to care. Piedmont Health Services and Legal Aid, NC continue to lead efforts to enroll uninsured residents in the Health Insurance Marketplace; 4103 Chatham residents were enrolled in 2016, an increase from 3893 in 2015. A team of UNC students was recruited to conduct a needs assessment to identify gaps and opportunities in medical transportation in Chatham. Chatham County Public Health Department and Piedmont Health Services are currently coordinating efforts to provide adult health services. Future efforts will examine non-emergency and primary care visits at the Chatham Hospital Emergency Department and explore ways to connect these patients to a healthcare home.

## Emerging Issue: Vector-borne diseases

# County addresses emerging diseases

You may have heard about some emerging diseases in the news this year - dengue, chikungunya, Zika. The Chatham County Public Health Department works closely with state and national partners to monitor and protect the public from these threats. The Siler City clinic is engaged in screening clients for recent travel to areas with active Zika transmission and educating clients on the symptoms and risks of Zika. An educational sheet about the virus was translated into Spanish and is provided to all maternity health clients and clients with positive pregnancy tests. Zika prevention kits have been ordered for distribution to pregnant women in the clinics.

A media campaign was organized to raise awareness about Zika, including posting billboards in English and Spanish. Mosquito dunks were provided to communities with mosquito breeding sites throughout the neighborhood as well as on an individual basis. An NCSU entomologist was consulted for advice on mosquito prevention strategies. Presentations on Zika were offered to several community groups and committees.

Though these efforts focused specifically on Zika, many of the prevention strategies to reduce mosquito breeding sites and prevent mosquito bites will also help prevent other mosquito-borne illnesses. In North Carolina, these illnesses include West Nile virus, Eastern equine encephalitis, and La Crosse encephalitis.

While mosquito-borne illnesses often garner more media attention, tick-borne illnesses are a greater concern in Chatham County. The tick population has increased in Chatham over the years, as have the number of tick-borne illnesses. Tick-borne illnesses found in Chatham include Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Lyme disease, Ehrlichiosis, Anaplasmosis, and Southern tick-associated rash illness (STARI). Tick bites can also cause a potentially life-threatening meat allergy, known as alpha-gal.

The Chatham County Public Health Department developed a tick experience survey that will be conducted at Central Carolina Community College in early 2017 to gain a better understanding of tick encounters and knowledge in the community. Tick kits are distributed to community groups or individuals who request them and are available in English and Spanish. These activities will serve as a basis from which to design future tick education campaigns.

Sources  
1: 2015 ACS Survey, 2: NC Dept of Commerce, 3: Enroll America, 4: CDC BRFS, 5: Chatham YHBS, 6: NC SCHS

## By the numbers

# 70,928

2015 Population of Chatham<sup>1</sup>

# 25%

2015 percent of Chatham residents 65+  
Up from 18.3% in 2010<sup>1</sup>

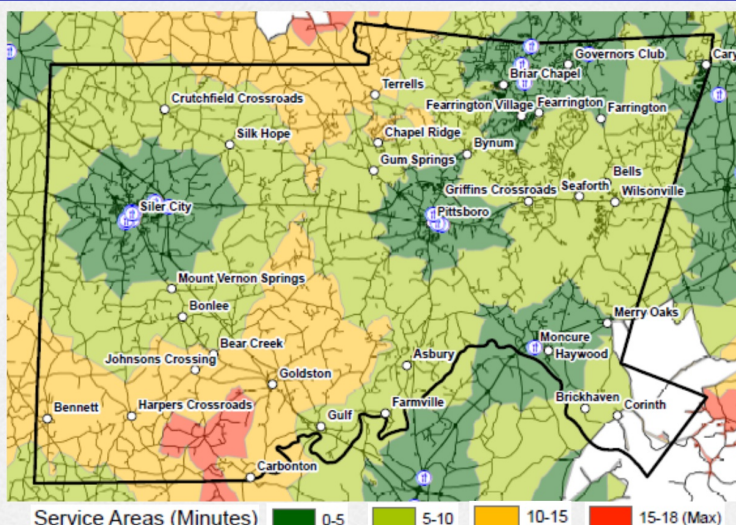
# 4.1%

Unemployment rate in November 2016  
Down from 4.6% in November 2015<sup>2</sup>

# 9.0%

2016 percent of Chatham residents without health insurance  
Down from 15% in 2013<sup>3</sup>

## Healthy Food Store Service Areas



# 27%

2013 percent of adults who are obese  
Up from 25% in 2009<sup>4</sup>

# 30%

2016 percent of Chatham high school students who have ever used electronic vapor products  
15% have ever smoked cigarettes<sup>5</sup>

# 82.3 years

Life expectancy at birth in Chatham  
Highest in the state (2013-15)<sup>6</sup>

# 6.8 years

Difference in life expectancy between whites and African Americans  
Highest in the state (2013-15)<sup>6</sup>