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Gaston, Guilford and Madison County Health Departments Honored with NC GlaxoSmithKline Foundation Child Health Recognition Awards

Asheville, NC – Public health programs in Gaston, Guilford and Madison counties today received Local Health Department Recognition Awards in the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation’s 2017 Child Health Recognition Awards program for tackling substance abuse during pregnancy, offering a clinic specifically designed for teens and establishing a coalition for substance abuse that benefits teens and adults.

The three award recipients were commended for developing an innovative program that has produced measurable, sustainable outcomes. Highlights of their programs include:

Gaston County Department of Health & Human Services Substance Treatment And Rehabilitation Program (STAR)

In the United States, an infant is born with signs of drug withdrawal every hour. The impact of maternal drug use causes a wide range of short- and long-term effects like low birth weight, congenital anomalies and growth and behavioral problems. To combat this, the Gaston County Department of Health & Human Services launched the Substance Treatment and Rehabilitation Program (STAR) in February 2016 to provide drug treatment and supportive counseling to pregnant women. STAR saw positive outcomes within its first year, not only among the women and children served by the program, but also through the agency’s convening of stakeholders and partners around this issue. In addition, other counties in North Carolina are replicating STAR. This program is a shining example of how innovation and collaboration can drive substantial and sustainable change in a community, and make a tremendous difference in the lives of women and their babies.

Guilford County Department of Health & Human Services JustTEENS

Focused specifically on teens, the JustTEENS clinic offers private, confidential, friendly, free or low-cost services set up to support teen needs. In addition to physicals, immunizations, pregnancy tests and infection screenings, the clinic also offers counseling services. The clinic, using evidence-based practices, reported seeing 926 unduplicated teens in the first year, up from 225 at the Wendover site the prior year. The clinic’s success and grant funding allowed a new clinic to open in May 2017 in an area where the highest teen pregnancy rate occurs. The JustTEENS initiative has been successful because of the diligent work by the public health staff as they offer services where they are needed and in a teen friendly environment.

Madison County Health Department Madison Substance Awareness Coalition

Like many communities, Madison County has seen an increase in substance abuse among teens and adults ranging from tobacco use to prescription drugs to illegal street drugs. In 2014, the Madison County Health Department used a state grant to form the Madison Substance Awareness Coalition

(MSAC). In less than 3 years, MSAC has successfully implemented both environmental and individual strategies to help raise awareness around substance related issues. By engaging youth through educational classes, assemblies, community events and student led projects, MSAC continues to spread the word about the dangers of prescription medication and other substances impacting the community. The coalition has earned a reputation for taking action to reduce youth substance use and by extension, reaching the adults in the students' lives, as well.

The Awards Program

The awards are designed to showcase exceptional and innovative programs that improve the lives of North Carolina's children. This year's awards focus on programs that address evidenced-based issues of particular significance to the community being served and work in partnership with others to help improve health outcomes for children. Key focus areas include asthma, dental health, environmental health (healthy homes), immunizations, low birth weight, mental health, nutrition and substance abuse, including drugs, alcohol and tobacco.

All nominees were recognized and award recipients announced at a ceremony today in Asheville during the North Carolina Public Health Association's (NCPHA) annual fall meeting. The **Local Health Department Recognition Award** recognizes local health departments that have developed an innovative program that has produced measurable, sustainable outcomes.

The North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation Child Health Recognition Awards were established in 1994 to honor local health departments, public health staff and individual citizens for their dedication to improving child health. The awards include monetary grants for educational and other purposes. A Selection Committee of healthcare professionals established by NCPHA chose the award recipients.

Other recipients of the 2017 NC GlaxoSmithKline Foundation Child Health Recognition Awards are:

Lifetime Achievement Recognition

- Elizabeth Krzysztoforska, DDS; Dental Director, Alamance County Children Dental Clinic

Individual Recognition

- Sarcanda Green, RN; MESH Coordinator, Wilkes County Health Department

Public Health Staff Recognition

- Debbie Biggerstaff, Innovative Approaches Coordinator, Cabarrus Health Alliance

The North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation supports activities that help meet the educational and health needs of today's society and future generations. The Foundation focuses on programs that emphasize the understanding and application of health, science and education at all academic and professional levels.

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