

Winter 2026 Edition

THE COMMUNITY CUE

Office of Health Equity
Community Engagement Program Newsletter



MECKLENBURG COUNTY
North Carolina
Public Health



Upcoming Events

March 17, 2026

Food Safety for Community Meals Training

249 Billingsley Rd., Charlotte, NC 28211, Multipurpose Room
6:00-8:00pm

[Click Here for More Details](#)

March 19, 2026

The Future of Public Health: Educating and Empowering the Next Generation

Virtual
6:00-7:30pm

[Click Here for More Details](#)

March 28, 2026

Food is Medicine Teen Seminar

South Piedmont AHEC
5309 Airport Center Parkway, Building K, Charlotte, NC 28208
10:00am-12:00pm & 1:00-3:00pm

[Click Here for More Details](#)

April 9, 2026

Growing Houseplants

Amay James Park, 2415 Lester Street., Charlotte, NC 28208
5:30-7:30pm

[Click Here For More Details](#)

MISSION, VISION, & CORE VALUES

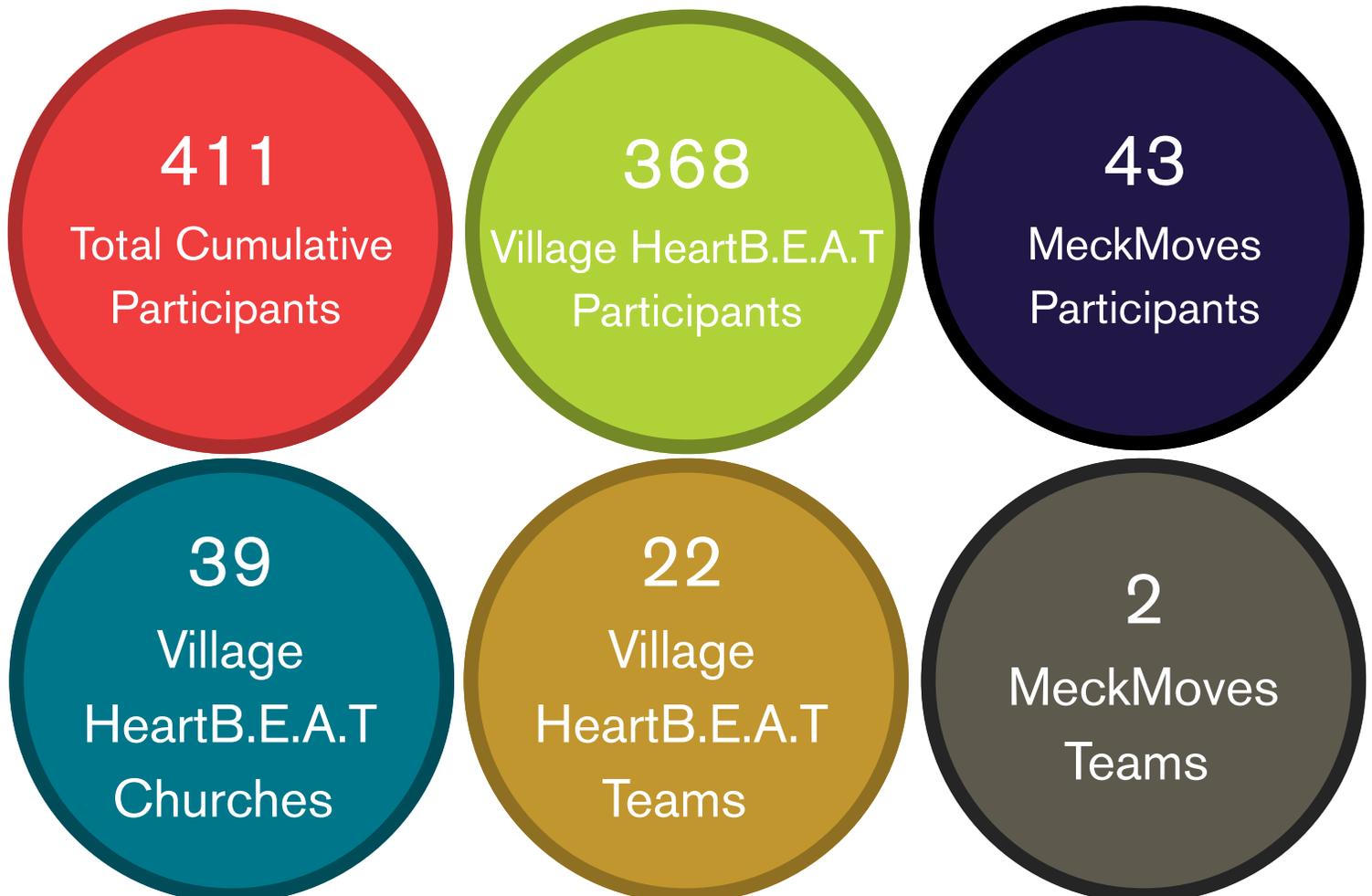
The Community Engagement program is staffed by our team of public health educators who serve as community liaisons. Our program reaches residents throughout Mecklenburg County and promotes all Mecklenburg County Public Health (MCPH) programs, services and initiatives. Our **MISSION** is to address community needs through collaborative partnerships and community-driven solutions. Our **VISION** is that all residents will be empowered to make informed decisions that will allow them to reach their full potential and enhance their quality of life. Our **CORE VALUES** are Inclusion, Collaboration, and Empowerment. Through educational workshops, trainings and outreach, we advance health equity and connect residents to the resources they need.

MECKMOVES

Are You Ready to Move?

MeckMoves is a countywide fitness challenge designed to boost physical activity, promote overall health & wellness, and reduce chronic disease. This initiative was launched by Mecklenburg County Public Health's Community Engagement Program, and it kicked off on January 12th! MeckMoves is inspired by the **Village HeartB.E.A.T. program**, which is a 12+ year chronic disease risk reduction and prevention program that operates through collaborative partnerships with faith-based organizations (FBOs), health care systems, county agencies and other community partners throughout Mecklenburg County to advance health equity by reducing chronic disease risk factors through the promotion of healthy lifestyles and environments, regular exercise, and education. We are now in our 13th season of the VHB program, and we are excited to have all our participants step into their best health this year!

To see the final counts for participants and teams, please see the chart below!



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Mentorship Program

Public Health Educator, Amore' McCullough, completed the mentorship program on December 3rd, 2025! The program began on February 12th, 2025. Her mentor was Michelle Partride-Doerr, Health Communications Manager. Over the 9-month program, the pair met monthly and covered various deliverables and objectives; Amore' was able to lean into her personal interests and strengthen her professional skills in health communications. Amore' also joined the HealthBuzz team, which is led by Michelle.

Here are some remarks from Amore' about her experience in the program: "I'm so thankful for my experience with Michelle. I admire her grounded approach to Health Communication. I always keep Michelle's advice in the back of my head when I create any marketing materials. I look forward to growing my relationship with her beyond the program!"



New Health Educator

Sarah Beth Sisney joins us as our newest Public Health Educator who will serve on the Community Engagement Program within the Division of Population Health - Office of Health Equity! Sarah Beth completed her BS in Exercise Science at Winthrop University and earned her Master of Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Beyond her degree, she is a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) and Certified in Public Health (CPH). Sarah Beth joins us with a passion for community-centered work and brings teaching and research experience, with publications and invited speaking engagements. When not working, she can be found taking care of her plants, spending time with her Persian cat, or traveling.



MLK PARADE

January 2026

Mecklenburg County participated in the City of Charlotte's MLK Holiday Parade on Saturday, January 17th, to celebrate and honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commissioners Mark Jerrell and Susan McDowell-Rodriguez, 150 employees of 19 departments, and approximately 100 community members joined public health to commemorate the occasion. We trailed alongside our mobile units resonating on Dr. King's profound message to address disparities in our community.

We walked the streets of Uptown Charlotte with our Meck Health in Action (MHIA) and Meck Dental Mobile units. During the parade, we distributed about 200 resource bags to residents with information on Tobacco Prevention & Control, Meck Dental, Overdose to Action (OD2A), Mental Health, Maternal & Child Health, & Clinical Services.



GIVE KIDS A SMILE DAY

February 2026

Mecklenburg County Public Health's Pediatric Dentistry Program, MeckDental, hosted its 3rd annual Give Kids A Smile Day in partnership with Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) on Saturday, February 7th. This event provided free dental services such as screenings and cleanings and education to uninsured and underserved families. This year we had a total of 393 participants. The Community Engagement Program Health Educators served on the planning and steering committee for this event and provided support with coordinating vendors and volunteers. There was a total of 150 Bilingual and English speaking volunteers! Health educator, Aubri Wallace, led the coordination of 16 internal and external community partner vendors.

Listed below are some highlights that demonstrate community impact and what a 5 STAR health department truly exemplifies. We were able to deliver the following to participants:

- Dental cleanings to 92 children through the combined efforts of our MeckDental team and CPCC's dental hygiene and dental assistant programs.
- Dental screenings to 99 children, conducted by our state and community partners alongside MeckDental Dental Hygienists.
- Onsite vaccinations administered by the MCPH Immunization team for families in attendance.

We extend special recognition to Mary Frederich, Dental Hygienist (Chairperson), Tabatha Shell, Dental Hygienist (Co-Chair), Aubrielle Wallace, Health Educator, and Amore' McCullough, Health Educator, for their exceptional coordination and collaboration with internal and external partners, volunteers, and service delivery. This outstanding team is supported and guided by their managers, Raydiance Swanston, Sr. Health Program Manager, and Gwendolyn Devins, Health Program Manager, whose leadership has been instrumental in the success of these efforts.



ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

November 2025

On November 1st, Public Health Educator Aubrielle Wallace participated in **Connecting Place at Greater Salem 6th Annual health & Wellness Expo** dedicated to promoting health and wellness. The event showcased Mecklenburg County Public Health (MCPH) programs and services, while offering engaging activities for attendees. Highlights included the HIV/STI Team providing on-site testing for 18 individuals utilizing the mobile unit, and free food and interactive activities to encourage community engagement in healthy living.

From November 3rd to 17th, Mecklenburg County Public Health, in partnership with Novant Health, offered **MeckMoves Pre-Health Screenings** on select dates, giving individuals the opportunity to “know their numbers.” These screenings empowered participants to take charge of their health and prepare for the MeckMoves Fitness Challenge—a new initiative aimed at reducing chronic disease risk and promoting healthy living. In total, 197 participants received pre-health screenings.

On November 12th, 13th, and November 18th, Public Health Educators Aubrielle Wallace and Amore' McCullough connected with the community during outreach events at the **University City Regional Library, Valerie C. Woordard Community Resource Center, and Ella B. Scarborough Community Resource Center**. They hosted a comprehensive Health Hub resource table, highlighting Mecklenburg County Public Health programs, services, and initiatives. These events provided residents with valuable information and resources to support healthier lifestyles and improve access to essential public health services.



ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

November 2025 Continued

We proudly launched our **Cooking Demo Series with Chef Cordell** in partnership with Eating Well with Chef Cordell Consulting. Chef Cordell shared practical tips and demonstrated how healthy eating can be simple, delicious, and festive for the Thanksgiving season. With 28 participants joining virtually, the event inspired healthier holiday traditions and proved that nutritious meals can be full of flavor.

On November 20th, the Community Engagement Team—Public Health Educators Amore' McCullough, Aubrielle Wallace, and part-time member Shely Acosta—completed a **Stop the Bleed Train-the-Trainer session**. This training better equipped the team to encourage bystanders to become trained and empowered to act during bleeding emergencies, strengthening community preparedness and resilience.



ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

December 2025

Between December 2nd and December 10th, the Community Engagement Team hosted a series of virtual and in-person **MeckMoves Participant Orientations** to kick off our MeckMoves journey. These sessions introduced participants to what they can expect during the fitness challenge, how to track their progress, and the resources available through the Wellness Academy. We also provided guidance on using Sworkit for activity tracking and progress monitoring.

On December 4th, 11th, and 18th, the Office of Health Equity Community Engagement Program partnered with MindHeart Institute & Wellness Center to deliver an educational series titled **Creating Opportunities for Personal Empowerment (COPE)** hosted in-person. This series equipped participants with practical skills to manage stress, build healthy habits, improve communication, and solve everyday problems. A total of 24 participants took part in this empowering program.

The Community Engagement Program of Mecklenburg County Public Health partnered with the American Heart Association (AHA) to host three **AHA Hands-Only CPR Train-the-Trainer** sessions on December 8th, 9th, and 12th. Participants got trained in hands-only CPR, how to use an AED and were presented with various educational resources to save lives. A total of 50 participants from various departments became trained and have the ability to save a life.



ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

December 2025 Continued

On December 15th and 17th, the Community Engagement Program hosted **Stop the Bleed** training sessions to empower participants with lifesaving skills. The training focused on equipping individuals to act quickly and effectively in a bleeding emergency before professional help arrives. A total of 18 participants completed the training and are now better prepared to respond in critical situations.

On December 18th, the Community Engagement Program of Mecklenburg County Public Health, led by public health educators Aubrielle Wallace and Amore' McCullough, hosted a virtual session titled **What's the 'Tea' on CE IAP2?** This interactive session introduced 6 participants to the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, explored strategies for tailoring the spectrum to align with public health goals and initiatives, and equipped attendees with actionable tools to enhance community engagement.



ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

January 2026

On January 13th, Mecklenburg County Public Health's Office of Health Equity Community Engagement Program, in collaboration with the Centralina Area Agency on Aging, hosted a virtual webinar focused on **Health and Wellness Among Older Adults**. The session offered practical insights into healthy aging and highlighted evidence-based programs and resources available to support older adults in maintaining their well-being. Twelve participants joined the session, actively engaging with strategies to promote long-term health and quality of life.

On January 14th, Community Engagement Program public health educators Amore' McCullough and Aubrielle Wallace partnered with Improving Community Outcomes for Maternal and Child Health (ICO4MCH) to host a virtual session titled **Mental Health is Mental Hygiene**. This informative and engaging event emphasized the importance of mental wellness and its impact on overall health. Eight participants joined the session, gaining practical insights into how mental health hygiene can support healthier lifestyles and well-being.

On January 15th, Mecklenburg County Public Health's Community Engagement Program, led by public health educators Aubrielle Wallace and Amore' McCullough, hosted an interactive session titled **What's the 'Tea' on CE? IAP2 Framework Training**. This in-person event introduced seven participants to the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, explored strategies for aligning the spectrum with public health goals, and provided actionable tools to strengthen community engagement. That same day, the Office of Health Equity's Community Engagement Program partnered with **Eating Well with Chef Cordell** to deliver an engaging cooking demonstration series, where 24 participants learned practical tips for preparing nutritious meals and making healthier food choices, gaining valuable knowledge to support their overall well-being.



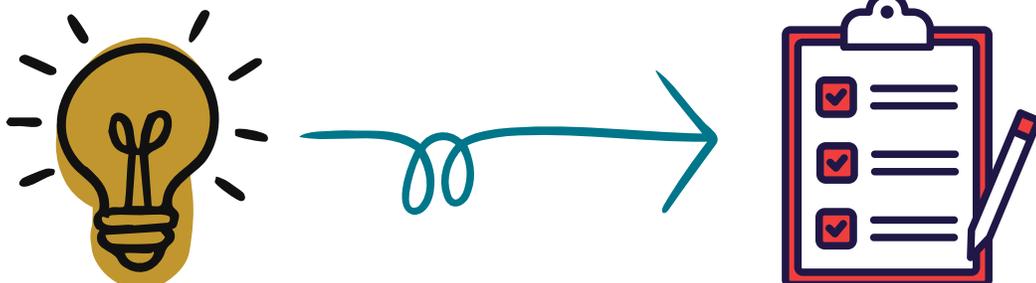
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TIPS & STRATEGIES

Community Connect: Turning Ideas into Action

Strategic planning is a key aspect of community engagement practice. It is the first and most important step because it allows you to lay the groundwork for an upcoming event, workshop, conference, and more! This is the stage where you sketch your blueprint before your ideas become a reality!

Here are some key tips to consider as you begin to plan your next engagement:

- **Be Proactive:** Start planning as early as possible (2-6 months prior to event date) to prepare effectively. Set the intended scale of your event; do you want a small and intimate experience, or do you want a large event that anyone in the community can attend?
- **Identify Your Audience:** This could be youth or elders. Maybe you are working with a group that is historically marginalized? Once you know who your target population or demographic is, you can curate the event to fit their needs.
- **Identify the Purpose of Your Engagement:** Think about what issues and topics you would like to address when defining the purpose of your event. Think about how you want to impact others; What do you want people to learn, gain, and take away once it has concluded?
- **Identify your key partners:** Network with essential stakeholders who can support and contribute to the success of your event or workshop.
- **Gather Your Resources:** Start by leveraging internal resources within your organization as a strong foundation, and then expand to external partners to supplement and enhance the experience.



HEALTH RESOURCES

Here are some important health observances for the months of February 2026 -April 2026!

Click the hyperlinks for educational resources!

[American Heart Month](#)
(February)

[American Heart Association](#)
[CDC American Heart Month](#)



[National Children's Dental Health Month](#)
(February)

[MCPH MeckDental Program](#)
[American Dental Association](#)



[National Nutrition Month](#)
(March)

[Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics](#)

[National Public Health Week](#)
(April 6-12th)

[American Public Health Association](#)
(APHA)



[STI Awareness Month](#)
(April)

[MCPH HIV/STI Services](#)

STAY CONNECTED

Need MCPH support at an upcoming community event?

Scan the QR code or click [HERE](#) to access Community Engagement Request Form!



Want to stay updated on community events, resources, and opportunities?

Click [HERE](#) or email CE@MeckNC.gov if you would like to be added to our Community Engagement listserv where you can receive updates on upcoming events and opportunities!



MECKLENBURG COUNTY
North Carolina
Public Health

Interested in learning more about MeckMoves?

Click [HERE](#) to learn more about MeckMoves and stay updated on upcoming health education sessions.

meckmoves

Interested in learning about Village Heart B.E.A.T?

To learn more about VHB and stay updated on educational opportunities provided by the Thereasa C. Elder Community Health Leadership Academy click [HERE](#)!



[Visit our website](#)



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