

Winter 2025 Edition

# THE COMMUNITY CUE

Office of Health Equity  
Community Engagement Program Newsletter



MECKLENBURG COUNTY  
North Carolina  
Public Health



## Upcoming Events

**February 8, 2025**

**Give Kids a Smile Day**

10:00am-2:00pm

Central Piedmont Community College

Worrell Building Gymnasium

1228 Elizabeth Ave., Charlotte, NC 28204

[Click here for more information](#)

**February 15, 2025**

**The Charlotte Alumni (NC) Chapter of  
Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.**

**Heart Health Expo**

10:0am-2:00pm

Friendship Missionary Baptist Church

3400 Beatties Ford Rd., Charlotte, NC 28216

## 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.

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT

## 2024 Heart of Charlotte Awards

On October 24, 2024 Northeastern University hosted their annual Heart of Charlotte Awards. The award ceremony recognizes individuals and community organizations who are making an impact on the health and wellbeing of the Charlotte community. Mecklenburg County Public Health was a co-presenter for this year's awards ceremony. Assistant Health Director of Population Health, Dr. Kimberly Scott, gave opening remarks and greetings. The awards ceremony ended with Dr. Raynard Washington, Public Health Director, giving a heartwarming and inspirational keynote speech.

A HUGE congratulations goes out to our amazing Health Program Manager for Community Engagement, Gwendolyn Devins, for receiving the 2024 Public Health Leader of the Year Award! This award honors a public health leader who has played a key role in coordinating health initiatives that benefit the Charlotte community and demonstrates an ability to work with diverse multisector partners addressing critical public health issues. CONGRATULATIONS GWEN!



## From Health Equity Fellow to Health Educator

We are happy to announce that our very own Aubri Wallace has been promoted from a Health Equity Fellow to Public Health Educator! Aubri has been a valuable member of our team since August 2023. We are so proud of her and look forward to seeing what Aubri will achieve in her new role within our program. CONGRATULATIONS AUBRI!



# PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCES

The Community Engagement Team had a great time attending our first NC SOPHE Annual Conference and Annual Meeting in Charlotte, NC on November 14, 2024. The theme of this year's conference was: "Investing in the Future: Strengthening the Health Educators".

We had the honor of presenting at our first professional conference at NC SOPHE. Our presentation titled: "Health Educators in Action: Strengthening Impact by Implementing Community Engagement Best Practices", was designed to teach participants about the role of health educators in a local health department. In addition, the session provided participants hands-on, practical tools to effectively apply a community engagement framework to their roles as health educators, as well as information on the importance of fostering collaborative relationships among community partners. Over 40 conference participants attended our session which made for a great day of learning and professional networking.

We also submitted an abstract for the 2025 NACCHO 360 Conference in November 2024. NACCHO is the National Association of County and City Health Officials, and we're hoping to be given the opportunity to present there as well. Notifications will be sent by mid-February.

Our Health Educator, Aubrielle Wallace, and Health Program Manager, Gwendolyn Devins, attended the 2024 American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting and Expo in Minneapolis, MN October 27 - 30, 2024. Gwendolyn Devins served as a moderator for two sessions: Oral Session / 4150.0 - Health Innovative Practices to Improve Population Health and Oral Session / 4016.0 - Building Trust through Community-Based and Community-Engaged Tools and Strategies.

In 2025, the CE team looks forward to continuing to expand our presence at local and national conferences for continued professional development and skill building. Public Health Educator, Amore McCullough will be attending the 2025 Society of Public Health Educators (SOPHE) Annual Conference in Long Beach, California on April 16-18, 2025.



"I had an amazing experience at my first APHA Annual Meeting and Expo in Minneapolis, MN. It was great to network with fellow colleagues, attend the presentation sessions and health expo. I look forward to applying what I learned into my work and continuing to build connections."

-Aubrielle Wallace, MPH, CCHW

# CROSS-COLLABORATIONS

In addition to providing community engagement and health education services directly to priority populations, the CE team provides technical assistance and consulting support to internal programs throughout MCPH. We ensure community engagement is central to all that we do for and with community throughout the Department. To support that work, each health educator is assigned to one of the four divisions to provide technical assistance and support to increase their program's impact through a community-engagement centered approach.

In November 2024, we cross-collaborated with The Office of Health Equity's Community Health Worker Initiative (CHWI) for their "Movers & Shakers CommUNITY Forum". Our entire team served as members of the Forum's steering committee. We provided support to CHWI by facilitating engagement activities and breakout rooms for the one-day Forum. The event had a total of 76 attendees. It was great to see CHWs, organizational leaders and the network of CHWs and their allies from across the County engage and connect with each other.

In December 2024, the MCPH "Getting To Zero" Team hosted their annual World AIDS Day Event. This year's theme was: "Collective Action: Sustain and Accelerate HIV Progress." The event featured a short documentary titled "Unexpected". The documentary highlights the impact of HIV on Black women in the rural South and follows Masonia Traylor and Cici Covin as they produce self-care packages for pregnant women recently diagnosed with HIV. Traylor and Covin use this opportunity with the self-care packages to provide women support and the opportunity be a part of a safe network of care and services in their local communities. During the Event, testimonials were offered by individuals impacted by HIV and event participants had the opportunity to meet members of the documentary's cast. Our Public Health Educator, Jaramial Lee, helped as a consultant for this World AIDS Day event.





# ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION



## October

**Syphilis Prevention and Treatment Summit: A Mecklenburg County Call to Action:** On October 1, 2024, MCPH's HIV/STD Division partnered with South Piedmont AHEC to host an informative summit on the syphilis Epidemic in NC. The speakers presented on congenital Syphilis, STI preventative treatments and had a panel discussion.

**"Lions Services" Employee Health Fair:** On October 9, 2024, Public Health Educator, Amore' McCullough attended alongside Meck Health in Action (MHIA). Lions Services provides opportunities for people with vision loss to prosper and achieve personal and economic independence by providing them with vocational rehabilitation and employment opportunities. We provided various resources on mental health and respiratory health. 50 employees were vaccinated for influenza and COVID-19 onsite.

**Black Men's Wellness Walk:** On October 12, 2024, Public Health Educator, Jaramial Lee attended the African American Male Wellness Agency's Black Men Wellness Day. The event consisted of a 5K Walk and Run, health screenings, and community resources.

**Community Engagement Outreach:** Our team was hard at work at our County Community Resource Centers (CRC's), Valerie C. Woodard and Ella B. Scarborough promoting our MCPH programs, services and initiatives to our residents. The purpose of our monthly outreach at the County CRC's is to build trust and rapport with the community and promote our services.

# ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION



## November

**Greater Salem Church 5th Annual Health Expo:** MCPH had a great turnout at the 5th Annual Health Expo hosted by Greater Salem Church on November 2, 2024. We had representation from our Community Engagement team and Maternal & Child Health Programs, Improving Community Outcomes for Maternal Child Health (ICO4MCH) and Triple P (Positive Parenting Program). They provided educational materials, resources, and facilitated a presentation on parenting.

**MedLink Fall Forum:** On November 12, 2024, one of our Public Health Educators, Amore' McCullough, provided technical assistance for the Medlink Fall Forum. She provided the forum steering committee with many engagement strategies and techniques that they utilized for the event. The forum dived into various health topics such as violence prevention, immigrant health, senior health, and LGBTQIA2S+ health. With 40+ participants in attendance it was a fun day of network and engagement.

**Community Resource Giveaway Event:** On November 22, 2024, MCPH's Office of Violence Prevention, in collaboration with Black Men United and World Vision, hosted a Community Giveaway. There were over 300 people who attended. Our team, alongside several other MCPH programs, attended and distributed hundreds of educational materials, resources, 200+ gun locks, COVID tests and masks.

**Calvary CARES Annual Community Impact Event:** On November 23, 2024, the our team tabled alongside various MCPH programs such as: Triple P, HIV/STI, Meck Health in Action (MHIA), and MeckDental at Calvary Christian Church of the Apostolic Faith Inc. There were 200+ residents that attended the event. Attendees received literature from all of our programs and community partners. It was a day full of excitement, food, and community.

# ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION



## December

**Families Forward Charlotte Holiday Resource Fair:** On December 3 2024, our Public Health Educator, Jaramial Lee and our Office of Violence Prevention team served as vendors at the Families Forward Charlotte Holiday Resource Fair. They distributed over 200 educational literature and about 20 gun locks. The event had over 60 families participate and receive educational material and resources from the various organizations.

**World AIDS Day Events:** Our Public Health Educator Jaramial Lee partnered with MCPH's HIV/STI Division for their World AIDS Day Event on Monday, December 2, 2024. This year's theme was "Collective Action: Sustain And Accelerate HIV Progress." On Friday, December 6, 2024, Jaramial facilitated a focused conversation on HIV/AIDS in partnership with MCPH's HIV/STI Health Investigator, Omar Valera and C.W. Williams Community Health Center.

**Mecklenburg Region Triple P Practitioners Conference:** The Community Engagement team helped provide technical support and assistance for MCPH's Triple P (Positive Parenting Program). On December 10, 2024, Triple P hosted a "Mecklenburg Region Triple P Practitioner's Conference". We helped coordinate vendor participation from our internal and external partners, and provided overall event support. The conference provided attendees with inspiring sessions, networking opportunities and collaborative discussions.

**Mecklenburg County Public Health Mentorship Program:** On December 11, 2024 our health educators, Jaramial Lee and Aubrielle Wallace completed the 2024 Mecklenburg County Public Health Mentorship Program. They have demonstrated outstanding commitment to personal and professional growth throughout the year. There were over 50 participants in this year's cohort which included mentors, mentees, and a new peer-to-peer group.



# TRAININGS AND IMPACT

## Community Engagement 101 Virtual Training Series

The Community Engagement Resource Team facilitated a 3-Part training series on October 30, November 19 and December 18, 2024. We had a total of 35 attendees for the entire series! Our sessions focused on the foundations, best practices, and practical applications of community engagement.

**Part 1: The Foundations of Community Engagement**, we established a formal definition for community engagement, discussed the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) five levels of engagement (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, & Empower), equipped participants with tools and activities that can be applied at each level of the IAP2 framework.

**Part 2: Community Engagement Best Practices**, we facilitated an interactive discussion on community engagement best practices, identified common barriers public health professionals face when engaging the community, and we emphasized the importance of building partnerships and enhancing cross-collaboration amongst internal and external partners.

**Part 3: Practical Applications of Community Engagement**, we discussed examples of practical community engagement strategies and tools, presented examples of the technical support and assistance executed by that community engagement program and we provided participants with a resource to guide their community engagement centered approach.

Be on the look out for announcements regarding our in-person trainings in the future!

## Data Impact Workshop

On November 18, 2024, our team had a great time with Drew Reynolds, Principal Consultant of Common Good Data, discussing our program goals, outcomes and evaluation. Our workshop consisted of discussions and activities that allowed us to evaluate current program data and establish clear strategic goals for the future of our program.





# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TIPS & STRATEGIES

## How to Ensure Equitable Communication

According to Mecklenburg County Public Health's Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), in order to prioritize health equity in your community engagement methods, you should "develop culturally appropriate communication messaging that resonates with the needs and preferences of BIPOC and historically marginalized groups".

Equitable communication involves strategies that ensure information is provided to individuals in a manner that is inclusive, accessible, and respectful of all people. As a key component of community engagement, equitable communication ensures each community member fully understands the information you are presenting to them. During face-to-face interactions, you must communicate with each community member in a manner that is clear, concise, and culturally sensitive. Therefore, you may have to adjust your communication style depending on the person you are speaking with as everyone has different needs and levels of understanding.

### **DO's** and **DON'Ts** of Equitable Communication:

- **DO** use plain language
- **DON'T** use organizational jargon or acronyms when speaking with residents (i.e., OHE, OCDPP, OVP, ect.)
- **DO** ask questions that are open-ended, nonjudgmental, and nonbiased
- **DO** provide language support and have resources in various languages
- **DON'T** present too much information at once
- **DON'T** speak too quickly
- **DO** listen empathically to residents
- **DO** ensure accessibility for individuals that have different vision, hearing, cognitive, and processing abilities



# HEALTH OBSERVANCES

Here are some important health observances for the months of January-March 2025!

Click the buttons for tips and resources!

Maternal Health Awareness Day  
(January 23)

<https://shorturl.at/tMZdv>

American Heart Month  
(February)

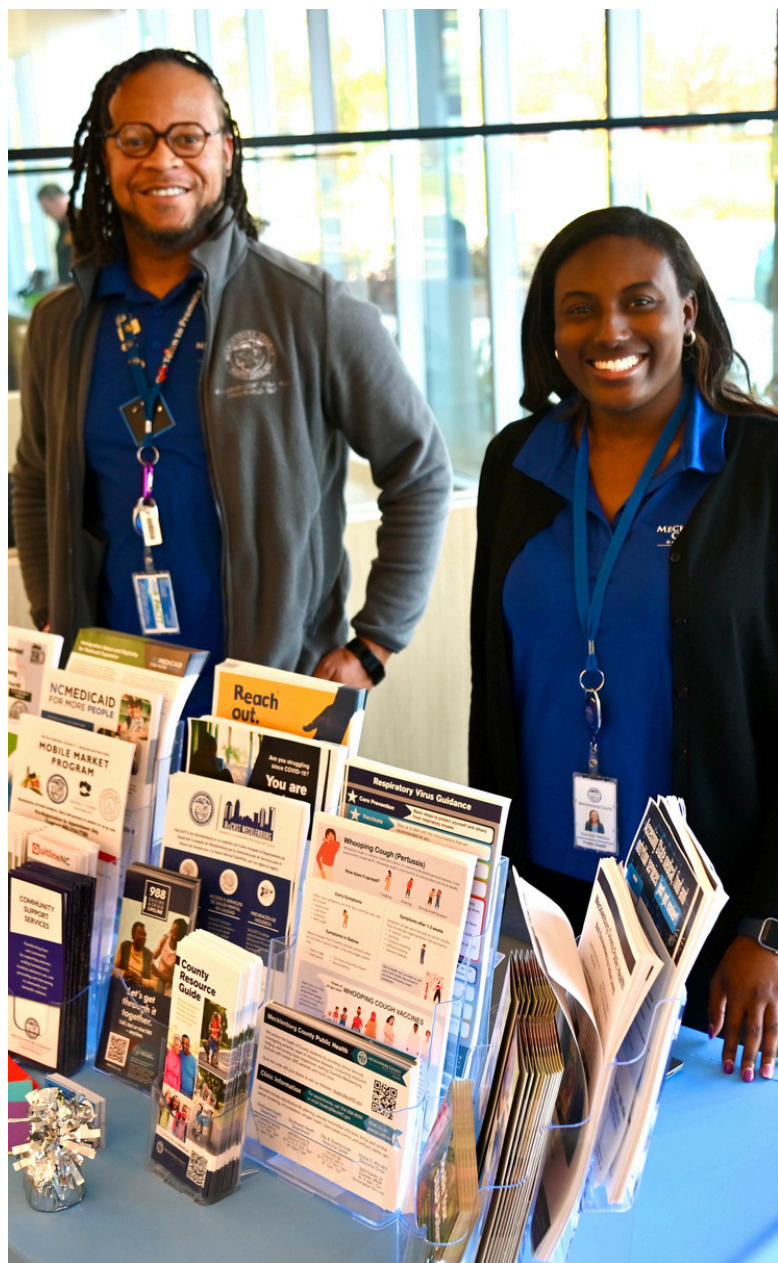
<https://shorturl.at/54wYR>

National Children's Dental  
Health Month (February)

<https://shorturl.at/qaJy5>

National Nutrition Month  
(March)

<https://shorturl.at/CDEZ1>





# STAY CONNECTED

## **Your Opinion Matters!** **Mecklenburg County Public Health:** **Office of Health Equity,** **Community Engagement Program** **Customer Satisfaction Survey**

A heartfelt thank you for continuing to partner with MCPH Office of Health Equity's Community Engagement Program. We strive to provide 100% customer satisfaction to our community partners and participants, we continually seek opportunities to improve the work we do for communities throughout Mecklenburg County. To assess our current Community Engagement Program efforts, we ask that you complete this very brief survey and provide us with feedback on your partnership, engagement and/or collaboration with the Community Engagement Program. Please click on the survey link below and submit before May 30, 2025.

**Click here to complete survey:**  
<https://bit.ly/4774fza>

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

Click [HERE](#) or email [CE@MeckNC.gov](mailto: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!



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

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



**Need MCPH support at an  
upcoming community event?**

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



# RESOURCES

Click on the links to learn more about our internal and external partners

[African American Male Wellness Agency](#)

[Calvary Christian Church of the Apostolic Faith Inc.](#)

[Families Forward](#)

[Improving Community Outcomes for Maternal Child Health \(ICO4MCH\)](#)

[Lions Services](#)

[MCPH's HIV/STD Division](#)

[Mecklenburg County Community Resource Centers \(CRC's\)](#)

[Meck Dental](#)

[Meck Health in Action \(MHiA\)](#)

[MedLink](#)

[Office of Violence Prevention](#)

[South Piedmont AHEC](#)

[Syphilis Prevention and Treatment Summit: A Mecklenburg County Call to Action](#)