

Spring 2026 Edition

THE COMMUNITY CUE

Office of Health Equity
Community Engagement Program Newsletter



MECKLENBURG COUNTY
North Carolina
Public Health



Upcoming Events

June 6, 2026

MeckMoves Wellness Bingo

NAMI Charlotte Resource Center
1930 Abbott St #403, Charlotte, NC 28203
11:00am-1:00pm

[Click Here for More Details](#)

June 25-26, 2026

Meck Design 3.0: Shaping a Healthier Tomorrow Together!

Pearl-Innovation District (915 Peal Park Way Charlotte, NC 28204)
9:00am - 3:00pm

[Click Here for More Details](#)

June 27, 2026

MeckMoves Field Fest

Eastway Regional Recreation Center
3150 Easway Park Drive., Charlotte, NC 28213
10:00am - 1:00pm

[Click Here for More Details](#)

August 15-16, 2026

2026 Charlotte Pride Festival and Parade

First Ward Park, Charlotte, NC 28202

[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.

PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCES

The Community Engagement team attended the **3rd Annual Maternal Health Conference** in Charlotte, NC, on April 9th, hosted by Care Ring. This conference was provided in collaboration with South Piedmont AHEC, aiming to support both birthing professionals and families by providing valuable continuing education and networking opportunities. Key partners included Atrium Health, Mecklenburg County Public Health, and a variety of grassroots and community organizations. The community engagement team enjoyed engaging at this conference for professional development and networking opportunities.

Health Educators, Aubri Wallace, Amore' McCullough and Sarah Beth Sisney, served as vendors and provided a comprehensive exhibitor table at the **HIV and STI Prevention and Treatment Summit** on Thursday, April 16th at the CPCC Harris Conference Center. This year's theme was "Innovation, Empowerment, & Engagement". The conference was hosted by Mecklenburg County Public Health's HIV/STD Division in partnership with South Piedmont AHEC. The summit brought together public health professionals, community leaders and organizations, healthcare providers and advocates to explore innovative strategies that drive progress toward ending the HIV and syphilis epidemics.

Community Engagement Program Manager, Gwendolyn Devins, and Health Educator, Sarah Beth Sisney, both attended the **2026 SOPHE Annual Conference** in Portland, Oregon from April 22-24th. The theme was "Local Roots, Global Impact: Transforming Health through Education". The SOPHE Annual Conference unites 900+ leading voices in school health and public health education, promotion and practice.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AMBASSADOR INSTITUTE

Mecklenburg County Public Health proudly hosted the **2nd Annual Community Engagement Ambassador Institute** on March 26-27th, 2026, welcoming over 200 participants from across Mecklenburg County, including community leaders, grassroots organizers, students, educators, faith-based leaders, and advocates. Building on the success of its inaugural year, the two-day Institute evolved to include a dedicated faith-based track creating a space for deeper dialogue around faith, wellness, and community resilience.

The institute was hosted in partnership with South Piedmont AHEC, MindHeart Institute & Wellness Center, Northeastern University Charlotte and UNC Charlotte.

Day 1 of the Institute was the Public Health Track. Guided by the theme “Engage, Empower, Elevate”, participants strengthened foundational public health knowledge, sharpened leadership and advocacy skills, and explored strategies to address health disparities and connect residents to essential resources. We were honored to learn from keynote speaker Dr. Apryl Alexander, Director of the UNC Charlotte Violence Prevention Center, whose insights set a powerful tone for the day.

Day 2 focused on Faith in Action: Building Healthier Congregations & Stronger Communities, highlighting the critical role of faith communities in advancing health, healing, and resilience. Attendees were inspired by keynote speakers Victor Armstrong, MSW, VP for Health Equity & Engagement with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Sonyia Richardson, PhD, MSW, LCSW, Assistant Professor at the UNC School of Social Work .

Across both days, approximately 18 vendor partners shared programs, services, and resources focused on strengthening communities and advancing health equity.



FOOD IS MEDICINE TEEN SEMINAR



As an extension of this year's institute, The Community Engagement program partnered with the George Washington Carver Food Research Institute to host an inaugural **Food is Medicine Teen Seminar** on Saturday, March 28th, 2026, at South Piedmont AHEC.

There were 17 students across Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools who successfully completed the Food Is Medicine Certificate Training facilitated by the George Washington Carver Food Research Institute. Students gained insight into the powerful connection between food, health, science, and future Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) career pathways. There was a morning and afternoon session.

This dynamic new dimension was added to make this a 3-day Institute experience by extending learning and training beyond the traditional audience and intentionally investing in the next generation of emerging leaders.



ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

February 2026

The Community Engagement Program in partnership with Eating Well with Chef Cordell, hosted a **Eating Well with Chef Cordell Cooking Demo Series**. The series expanded beyond a virtual platform into also an in-person series. Chef Cordell shared practical tips to deliver an engaging cooking demonstration series, where 16 participants learned practical tips to prepare nutritious meals.

The Office of Health Equity's Community Engagement Program, in partnership with Grobine, hosted a nutrition education series called **Simple Steps to a Healthier You**. The interactive cooking series was led by Demetria Grandberry, a certified nutritionist and herbalist. Our first session started with the Heart Healthy Cooking with an engagement of 15 participants on February 17th, and 17 participants attended the Mindful Eating & Weight Management session on March 10th.

The Community Engagement Program, in partnership with MindHeart Institute & Wellness Center, hosted the virtual series, **Creating Opportunities for Personal Empowerment (COPE)**. This series equipped participants with practical skills to manage stress, build healthy habits, improve communication, and solve everyday problems. A total of 16 participants took part in this empowering mental health education series.

On February 12th, Health Educator Amore' McCullough facilitated **Resilience and Thriving: The Secret Power of Stress**, a session designed to help individuals recognize signs of poor coping and strengthen their stress-management strategies. On February 19th, Health Educators Amore' McCullough and Aubri Wallace led a virtual **QPR Suicide Prevention** training, with 13 participants attending the first event and 6 attending the second.



ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

March 2026

From March 4th to April 29th, the Community Engagement Team along with our trusted partner Novant Health, led by Trauma & Injury Prevention Coordinator Angela Bryan, hosted an in-person series for participants to **Stay Active & Independent for Life (SAIL)**. These sessions are evidence-based classes for older adults to be stronger, better balanced, independent and prevent falls. Through this series, we had 12 continuously engaged participants making an effort to participate at their own level as these exercises can be done sitting or standing.

The Community Engagement Program Public Health Educators and part-time temp Shely Acosta engaged alongside Community Health Assessment Coordinator Keon Lewis and Latino/Hispanic Engagement manager Karina Gonzalez, in the inaugural **Live Well Meck Tour**. The Live Well Meck Tour encouraged residents from the city of Charlotte and six other towns incorporated in Mecklenburg County to gather community members and partners to share local health data and get feedback on future health needs and priorities. The tour ran from February 16th - April 16th, 2026.

On March 11th, Community Engagement Program Manager, Gwendolyn Devins and Kristina Cudney, Therapeutic Recreation Manager, from Mecklenburg County Parks & Recreation, co-facilitated a **QPR Suicide Prevention** workshop for the YMCA of Greater Charlotte's Teen Experience team. QPR stands for Question, Persuade, and Refer — the 3 simple steps anyone can learn to help save a life from suicide. The Teen Experience team was very grateful and appreciative to be trained in this area.

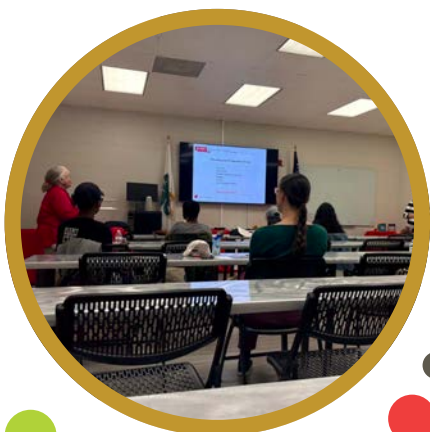


ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

March 2026 Continued

The Community Engagement Program, in partnership with NC Cooperative Extension's Master Gardener Volunteers, hosted a **3-part Gardener Demonstration Series** at Amay James Park. The sessions were held on March 19th, April 9th, and April 23rd. Topics included **Gardening 101: Right Plant, Right Place, Growing Houseplants**, and **Spring Vegetable Gardening**. These sessions were open to the general public, as well as our MeckMoves participants. Gardening is more than a hobby—it's exercise! Activities like digging, lifting, bending, and walking around your garden help improve flexibility, strength, and endurance.

On March 21st, Part-Time Temp Shely Acosta led the **Village HeartB.E.A.T. Mid-Year Fellowship**, where members came together to participate in group fitness activities, share testimonials, enjoy line dancing, engage with vendors, and connect with participants from other teams. This fellowship provided an opportunity for everyone to celebrate their progress and highlight their fitness journey as we approach a milestone in the MeckMoves challenge. The event had a total of 56 participants, which included Village HeartB.E.A.T. participants, MCPH staff, and 6 community partners who served as vendors.



ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

April 2026

Public Health Educator, Amore' McCullough hosted her **"Step Into Spring: Wellness Walk"** series from April 10th - May 8th, 2026. It was open to the general public and MeckMoves participants. They were hosted at various Mecklenburg County parks, trails, and greenways. Walking provides tremendous benefits for overall health and well-being. This low-impact exercise improves cardiovascular health, reduces stress levels, and reduces the risk of chronic disease.

On April 22nd, Public Health Educator, Amore' McCullough served as a vendor for the **Charlotte Area Chamber of Commerce's Wellness Fair** at William R. Davie Conference Center. Various county programs attended this event, such as MCPH's Tobacco Prevention & Control Program, ReCAST (Resiliency in Communities After Stress & Trauma), Parks & Recreation, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Storm Water Services.

On April 29th, Public Health Educator, Amore' McCullough, helped lead the planning and execution of **MCPH Employee Appreciation Day**. Amore' served as the promotions coordinator and decoration subcommittee for the Employee Wellness & Recognition Committee. This event brought together Mecklenburg County Public Health employees to celebrate one another while enjoying games, food, and activities that highlighted OUR PACTT and the values we uphold as Mecklenburg County public health professionals.

Public Health Educator, Aubri Wallace, and Sophia Marroquin, Health Educator for HIV/STD Division, served as vendors and provided a comprehensive exhibitor table at the **Annual Senior Day Family Reunion Event** with District 2 Commissioner Vilma D. Leake on April 30th. The event brought older adults, families and friends together to honor the past and inspire the future at her Senior Day Family Reunion. More than 150 attendees celebrated family and community.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TIPS & STRATEGIES

Networking 101: Build Connections to Strengthen Community Health

A larger community can have a vast amount of resources, but if organizations are not working together, residents can still face adverse health outcomes. Networking and partnership building allow you to expand your reach and cater to the needs of the individuals you serve, as you can share resources that your organization does not provide.

Do Your Research & Identify the Right Partner

As you consider communication with a new partner, you must identify who can effectively expand your message and impact to new audiences. A strong cross-sector partner:

- Provides guidance for reaching your intended audience
- Gives additional credibility to your message
- Offers alternative channels to reach your intended audience

Sustaining the Partnership

Build an organic relationship with your partner by staying involved with them beyond collaborations or initial contact. Support their events or hold regular check-in meetings to show that you are invested.

To combat silos within the public health workforce, it is imperative to form sustainable and strategic community partnerships. Community health is not dependent on one organization, but on everyone coming to a consensus on what residents want and need. We must work together to deliver high-quality services and improve the quality of life of the individuals we serve.



HEALTH RESOURCES

Here are some important health observances for the months of
May 2026 - July 2026!

Click the hyperlinks for educational resources!

Mental Health Awareness Month (May)

[MCPH Resiliency in Communities After Stress and Trauma \(ReCAST\)](#)
[Mental Health America of Central Carolinas](#)

[Older Americans Month](#) (May)

[Age-Friendly Mecklenburg Initiative](#)
[Centralina Area Agency on Aging](#)

Men's Health Month (June)

[Men's Health Network](#)

CPR & AED Awareness Week (June 1-7th)

[American Heart Association](#)

National Minority Mental Health Month (July)

[National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)

Chronic Disease Awareness Day (July 10th)

[CDC Chronic Disease Prevention](#)



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!



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 Thereasea C. Elder Community Health Leadership Academy click [HERE](#)!



[Visit our website](#)



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