

Summer 2025 Edition

THE COMMUNITY CUE

Office of Health Equity
Community Engagement Program Newsletter



MECKLENBURG COUNTY
North Carolina
Public Health



Upcoming Events

August 16-17, 2025

Charlotte PRIDE Festival & Parade

First Ward Park

301 E 7th St, Charlotte, NC 28202

[Click Here For More Details](#)

August 23, 2025

Black Men's Wellness Day - 5K Walk & Run

7:00am - 12:00pm

Friendship Missionary Baptist Church

3400 Beatties Ford Rd., Charlotte, NC 28216

[Click Here For More Details](#)

August 23, 2025

9th Annual Back-to-School Pep Rally

10:00am - 1:00pm

Stratford Richardson YMCA

1946 West Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28208

[Click Here For More Details](#)

September 6 & 27, 2025

Big Shots Back-to-School Immunization Clinic and Health Assessments

9:00am - 4:00pm

Northwest Health Department (September 6th)

Ella B. Scarborough (September 27th)

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.



Outcomes & Achievements

362

Community
Engagement
Requests Recieved

124

Internal Requests
Received

238

External Requests
Received

18

Internal Programs,
services and initiatives
requested for services

36

Zip Codes Received
(28216, 28208,
28215, 28205, 28213
top 5 priority areas
served)

327

VHB Participants
completed the season
12 fitness challenge
and screenings

23

T.C. Elder
Community Health
Leadership Academy
Sessions Facilitated

179

Participants attended
T.C. Elder Community
Health Leadership
Academy education
sessions

36

Community Events
Supported by the
CE team

1,000+

Educational
resources distributed

7

Different populations
served
(African-American/Black, General
Population, Hispanic/Latino/x,
LGBTQIA+, Veterans, Refugee
Immigrant Migrant, People w/
Disabilities)

5

Professional
Conferences attended;
presented at 2 of the 5
(NCPHA, NC SOPHE,
APHA, SOPHE, &
NACCHO 360

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Summer Intern

This summer, our program was given the amazing opportunity to host a Health Career Connection (HCC) Intern! Our intern, Shely Acosta, shared some words about her experience and goals!

“Hello my name is Shely Acosta! I am a recent graduate from UNC Charlotte with a B.S. in Biological Sciences and a B.A. in German. I'm currently pursuing an MD-PhD to become a neurosurgeon-neuroscientist with a passion for public health. As an Health Career Connection (HCC) intern with the Office of Health Equity at MCPH, I've been empowered by leaders, changemakers, and community partners who've helped me embrace my identity and deepen my purpose. The community engagement team—Gwendolyn Devins, Aubrielle Wallace, Amore' McCullough, and Jaramial Lee—has been instrumental in shaping my understanding of what true community engagement means. In this case, it comes in the form of a quote... "If you came to help me, you're wasting your time, but if you've come because your liberation is bound with mine then let us work together." - Lilla Watson. This quote ignited my passion and solidified my calling to public health and medicine.”

Shely's experience at MCPH has been very valuable. Her projects include a Hispanic/Latino Medical Insurance Gap Project in partnership with Camino Research Institute and a MCPH Community Engagement Toolkit for internal and external partners. She also served as an exhibitor at the Inaugural Community Engagement Ambassador Institute. We are excited to have you on the team!



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

MeckEmerge

Congratulations to Health Educator, Jaramial Lee, for graduating from the Mecklenburg County MeckEmerge program - Spring 2025 cohort!

Here are Jaramial's comments on his experience with the program:

"Having completed the MeckEMERGE program, I am excited to share that the experience has been transformative, eye-opening, and humbling. I have gained some great insights and skills from the Learning and Organizational Effectiveness (LOE) team. I know that the knowledge I have gained will greatly benefit my team and our community. The program has inspired me to continue to strive for excellence, but has also encouraged me to embrace new challenges from a fresh perspective. Being one of the 25 chosen from among 2,400 candidates was a tremendous honor. I look forward to applying what I've learned, both professionally and personally, and contributing to MCPH continued success."

Happy Workversary!

Congratulations to Gwendolyn Devins, Community Engagement Program Manager, on achieving her 10-Year Anniversary milestone with Mecklenburg County Public Health! We appreciate your dedication, passion, and service to Mecklenburg County and advancing health equity through community engagement!



ON THE ROAD

Our team presented at our first National conference at the 2025 NACCHO360 Annual Conference In Anaheim, CA from July 14-18, 2025. We presented on ***“Health Educators in Action: Strengthening Impact by Implementing Community Engagement Best Practices”*** to approximately 40 participants of public health professionals and health department leaders. This year's theme was “Bright Lights, Bold Ideas: Shaping the Future of Public Health Practice”. Every year, public health professionals gather at the NACCHO360 Annual Conference to share opportunities, challenges, best practices, and success stories; engage with federal, state, and local partners; and gain insight from public health experts. We also had a great time with our fellow MCPH colleagues and supporting their speaking and poster presentations from our Informatics, Epidemiology and Communicable Disease teams.



ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

May 2025



In partnership with Mad Miles Run Club, the Community Engagement team attended their “Wellness in Motion: Five Years of Mad Miles” anniversary events. On Tuesday, May 6th, Health Educator, Jaramial Lee, engaged and distributed resources to hundreds of residents at Camp North End, during their weekly evening run. On Wednesday, May 7th, Health Educator, Amore’ McCullough, provided a comprehensive resource table at the Harvey B. Gantt Center for their vendor fair. We also learned fun line dances with the Mad Miles instructors who taught classes to our Village HeartBEAT participants.

On May 27th, MCPH’s Wellness & Recognition Committee (WRC) hosted the annual Employee Appreciation Event. Health Educator, Amore’ McCullough, serves as the Promotions Coordinator on the WRC. She assisted in coordinating the volunteers for the event and planned a fun “Welcome to Las Vegas” themed celebration! Our Health Program Manager, Gwendolyn Devins, won 3rd place for Best Costume!

In honor of Women’s Health Month, Health Educator, Amore’ McCullough, hosted “Your Health is in Bloom: Ladies Lunch & Learn” on Friday, May 30th. It was an interactive health education session that focused on mental health and wellness. We had approximately 25 attendees. There were special speakers from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), who shared their lived experience on mental health. Our community partner at Zealous Empowering Nurturer, Incorporated (ZEN) demonstrated a fun herbal body scrub tutorial!



ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

June 2025

On June 11th, Mecklenburg County Public Health in partnership with Live Well Meck hosted Meck Design Day 2025 “Road to Community Health” at the CPCC Harris Conference Center. This event engaged community members, partners, and leaders around the Community Health Assessment (CHA) process. Our team served on the engagement sub-committee to provide interactive activities to participants. MCPH has launched the Community Health Assessment (CHA) prioritization survey to community partners and the general public to help shape the 2025 CHA priorities. Your voice plays a vital role in shaping future programs, services, and partnerships that promote health and well-being for all. The survey closes August 24th, 2025. Take the survey here: <https://tinyurl.com/mecksurvey>.

On June 17th, our team participated in a Clifton Strengths Team Building Activity with our Office of Innovation & Strategy colleagues. Our organization utilizes this tool to identify and develop individual talents. It helps individuals understand their natural patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving, categorizing them into 34 talent themes. By understanding these themes, individuals can leverage their strengths to maximize their potential and achieve personal and professional goals, according to Gallup.

On June 20th we had two events! During the first half of the day, Health Educator, Amore' McCullough, and HCC Intern, Shely Acosta, attended and provided a comprehensive resource table at the “Pathways to Peace: Community Tour/Resource Fair” at the Ella B. Scarborough Community Resource Center. MCPH's Office of Violence Prevention hosted this event for residents to learn the various resources Mecklenburg County offers. Other vendors included MCPH Overdose to Action, Love Speaks Out, and Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services. That evening the Village HeartB.E.A.T. program had their Season 12 End of Year Celebration, “Let the Good Times Roll”. The theme was Mardi Gras and about 125 participants celebrated their successes in improving their health!



ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

June 2025 Continued

On June 21st, Health Educator, Jaramial Lee, attended the Kappa Foundation of Charlotte's Annual Healthy Achievement 5K Run & Health Fair and provided a comprehensive health hub resource table showcasing MCPH programs, services and initiatives. There were hundreds of community members who engaged and ran at the event.

On June 26th, Health Educator, Jaramial Lee, facilitated a cross-departmental training on "Table Tactics " to our HIV/STI Prevention & Education team. There were 10 staff members present and they were very engaged in the presentation and interactive activity. Jaramial provided helpful engagement approaches and techniques and creative ways to empower our residents to get tested.

On June 27-28th, the Community Engagement Program in partnership with South Piedmont AHEC, Northeastern University Charlotte and Mindheart Institute & Wellness Center hosted the Inaugural *"Community Engagement Ambassador Institute: Empowering Communities for Health Equity and Advocacy"*. It was a transformative two-day event filled with approximately 100 participants ranging from community leaders to health educators, faith-based leaders, students, and grassroot organizers. There were dynamic breakout sessions and skill-building activities which promoted robust community engagement, fostered meaningful connections, and addressed specific issues or challenges within their communities. Participants left feeling inspired and motivated to be change agents in their community. Congratulations to our Health Program Manager, Gwendolyn Devins, on the creation and vision of the Institute!



ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

July 2025

On July 9th, Community Engagement Program Manager, Gwendolyn Devins, facilitated a cross-departmental training to our HIV/STI Division leaders called *"Talk. Trust. Test."* The training consisted of learning engagement strategies and interactive scenarios to have staff feel confident when engaging in conversations and empowering individuals to get HIV/STI testing.

On July 18th, HCC Intern, Shely Acosta, attended the NC MedAssist "Free Over the Counter Medicine Giveaway and Community Event". NC MedAssist is a statewide program that helps uninsured low-income North Carolina residents get the medications that they need, at no cost. The organization has programs for both prescription medications and over the counter medications. She represented the Community Engagement team and provided a comprehensive resource table of resources and information on our public health programs, services, and initiatives to approximately 100 residents. MCPH's Meck Health in Action (MHiA) mobile unit and immunization team also provided vaccinations to adults.

On July 29th, Health Program Manager, Gwendolyn Devins, facilitated a retreat for our Village HeartB.E.A.T. (VHB) program. The theme was *"Voices of the Village: Pulse Check & Path Forward"*. The retreat allowed the VHB Captains/Co-Captains to reflect on their collective journey, celebrate shared accomplishments, and engaged in dialogue and co-creation activities to amplify their roles as community leaders and ambassadors.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TIPS & STRATEGIES

How to Boost Audience Engagement

The CE Health Educators focus heavily on audience engagement during any presentation or training. We like to keep the audience active and involved so that they can retain the material and also have a memorable experience. Here are some tools that our team has used to ensure higher audience engagement and participation:

- **Interactive Polls**

- Throughout your presentation, quiz the audience on the content to gauge their level of understanding. This will help you see what they learned or took away from the presentation. Use platforms such as Mentimeter and Slido, which allow you to create word clouds from your poll questions. These are great for virtual settings and larger groups.

- **Sticky Wall and Flip Chart Paper**

- The sticky wall is a versatile tool that allows you to be creative. This is a primary component of the Technology of Participation (ToP) Facilitation Methods. This is a great way to organize the group's thoughts and allow everyone to see each other's work during activities.

Finally, make sure to acknowledge your audience and ask them questions. When you do this, everyone can gain new insights on the material based on the knowledge and experiences of others. If you see that the crowd is fatigued, do a short 5-minute activity that is fun and unrelated to the educational material like a game or a grounding exercise, to increase the energy in the room. With these methods, you can create a space that facilitates dynamic learning.



HEALTH RESOURCES

Here are some important health observances for the months of August-October 2025!

Click the hyperlinks for educational resources!

National Immunization Awareness Month (August)

[CDC Vaccination Schedules](#)
[MCPH Immunization Services](#)

National Suicide Prevention Month (September)

[North Carolina Crisis Services](#)
[Resiliency in Communities After Stress & Trauma](#)

National Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 - October 15)

[Salud America](#)
[MCPH Latino/Hispanic Engagement Program](#)
[NCDHHS National Hispanic Heritage Month](#)

National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (October)

[Susan G. Komen Educational Resources](#)
[National Breast Cancer Foundation](#)
[MCPH Breast & Cervical Cancer Screenings](#)

National Health Education Week (October 20-24)

[Society for Public Health Education \(SOPHE\)](#)
[NC SOPHE](#)
[MCPH Population Health](#)



STAY CONNECTED

What's the CE?

As we enter a new fiscal year, we want to know what you are planning for the upcoming months and how community engagement will play a role in your work? What's something new or different that you will be doing?

Submit your response in the poll below!

[Click here to complete a quick one-question survey.](#)

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!



[**Visit our website**](#)



[**Email CE@MeckNC.gov**](mailto:CE@MeckNC.gov)



[**Call 980-314-9675**](tel:980-314-9675)