

# *Caldwell County*

## *2015 State of the County*

### *Health Report*



\*photos by Brian P Streett

# *A Letter from the Health Director*

The Caldwell County Health Department is pleased to present the 2015 State of the County Health Report. This document provides updated information on key indicators for Caldwell County for the purpose of comparing local and state health data about our community's health and well-being.

This report includes information on the progress made over the past three years as well as information on the identified priority areas for the 2014 Community Health Assessment: Chronic Disease, Teen Health and Mental Health and Substance Abuse.

This information is designed to educate and update community members, community leaders, agencies, organizations and others on progress in addressing certain health issues. This update is also intended to influence the development of new policies that affect the health of the community, guide the planning of health programs and recruit interested community members to participate in future activities.

The Caldwell County Health Department seeks to “promote, protect and improve the health of our community” by focusing on long-term health priorities identified in the 2014 Community Health Assessment.

If you would like more information on the services and programs offered by the Caldwell County Health Department or would like to be involved in community health programming, please contact the Health Education and Health Promotion Department at 828-426-8506. For additional information on Caldwell County, please visit the county's website at [www.caldwellcountync.org](http://www.caldwellcountync.org).

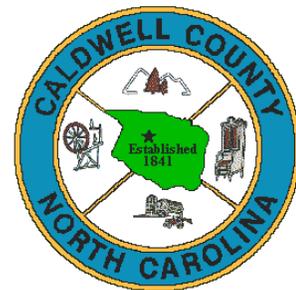
Sincerely,

*Denise Michaud*

Denise Michaud, MPH, RD, IBCLC

Health Director

Caldwell County Health Department





# Progress to Date

In the 2011-2014 Community Health Assessment (CHA), three top priorities were identified: Obesity, Teen Pregnancy and High School Drop Out. All of the priorities had many outcomes, as mentioned below.

**Obesity** has become a top priority in many communities across the United States. Obesity can lead to many chronic diseases like high blood pressure, stroke and diabetes. Obesity can also be prevented; therefore, Caldwell County put preventative measures into practice by planning and implementing a number of initiatives which focused on obesity as the priority. To name a few: the EBT/Debit transactions and the acceptance of WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FNP) vouchers at Sawmills Farmers Market and the Healthy Corner Stores Initiative. Since implementation of the Sawmills Farmers Market in 2011 and the EBT/Debit and WIC FNP program initiative in 2014, more residents have access to healthier foods who may not have been able to afford them otherwise. The Town of Sawmills is committed to the Market and its sustainability, allowing the residents of Sawmills and Caldwell County to purchase local, fresh and healthy foods.



In 2014, we partnered with Collettsville General Store to help them provide healthy food alternatives to their customers. Over the past 2 years, this store has made a large impact on the residents of Collettsville with their selection of foods and beautiful display. In the beginning of the program, the store was purchasing fruits and vegetables once every other week. Now, the store purchases health food options at least once a week and has increased their inventory by including other healthy food items in their selections.

**Teen Pregnancy** has been an ongoing issue in Caldwell County; however with many partnerships, like Caldwell Council on Adolescent Health (CAAH) and the Caldwell County School System, the Teen Pregnancy rate has been decreasing. According to ShiftNC.org, in 2013, the pregnancy rate in Caldwell County, for girls ages 15-19, was 43.2 per 1,000. In 2014, the rate dropped to 41.3 per 1,000.

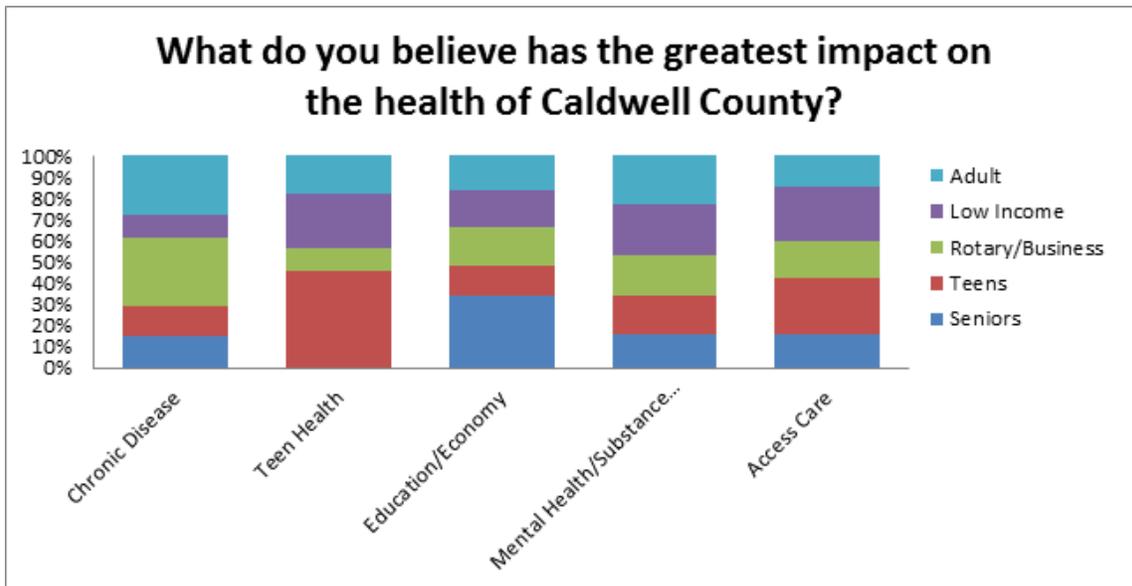
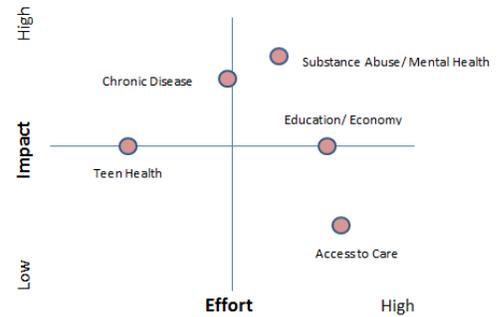
CAAH has the following programs intended to decrease teen pregnancy rates: Operation Safe or Sorry, Reach Out, Always Changing and the Adolescent Parenting Program. Currently, Making Proud Choices is being considered as a new program to offer to high school students. This program discusses public health issues which are on the rise in our teen population, including unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), like HIV. Making Proud Choices! uses the understanding of social learning theories and interventions for changing behavior within the target audience of adolescents.

Decreasing **High School Drop Out** in Caldwell County has been a priority for Caldwell County Schools over the past 3 years. Through programs like Communities in Schools, Safe Schools and Why Try, Caldwell County Schools works hard to lower high school dropout rates.



# 2014-2017 CHA Process

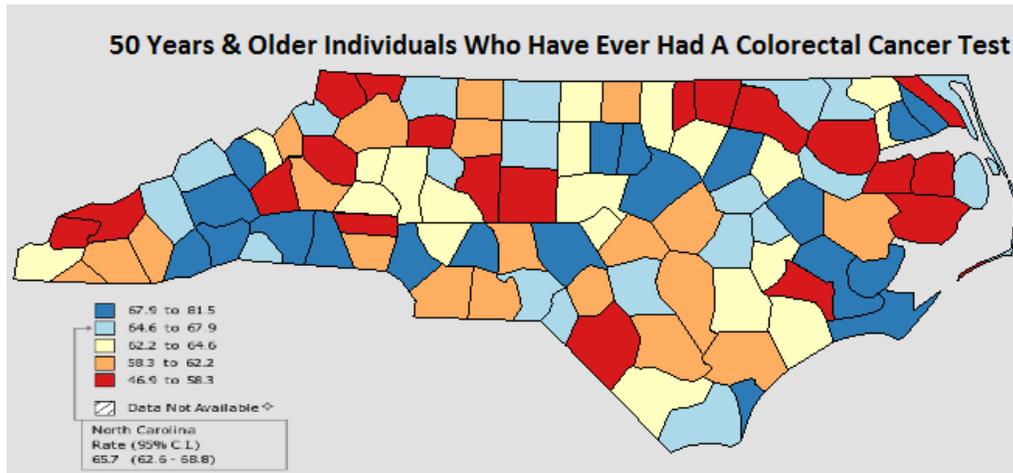
The 2014 Community Health Assessment (CHA) process was started in 2013. The first step in the process was to engage key partners to be a part of the advisory committee. This committee reviewed primary and secondary data. Primary data used included an opinion survey that was provided on paper at the library and handed out during jury duty. Focus groups were also conducted as a source for primary data. Focus groups included business leaders, low-income individuals, teens, seniors, and adults. These focus groups gave an abundance of qualitative data and a viewpoint of how the community conceptualizes health. Secondary data included information from the State Center for Health Statistics, department of labor, etc. Taking all the information, the advisory committee ranked the priorities from 1 to 5 based on the magnitude, seriousness of consequences and the overall feasibility (5 being the priority with the most magnitude, seriousness and overall feasibility). Through these processes, we chose the county's top three priorities: Chronic Disease, Teen Health and Substance Abuse and Mental Health. The advisory committee has completed the action plans for each priority and has started working on planning each priority's intervention.





# New Initiatives

## Chronic Disease



According to the State Center for Health Statistics, the top three leading causes of death in Caldwell County were heart disease, cancer and chronic respiratory diseases, all chronic diseases. Evidence shows that preventative screenings are one way to decrease the morbidity and mortality of disease.

## **Chronic Disease Self- Management**

In 2013, Health Educators from Caldwell County Health Department participated in the Living Healthy with Chronic Disease Self-Management (CDSM) training held by the Western Piedmont Area Agency on Aging. The Living Healthy- CDSM program is a six week, two and a half hour workshop, held once a week. Participants learn to deal with frustration, fatigue and pain as well as how to maintain stamina, improve strength and manage medication use. They also work on setting goals for their health using weekly action plans. As part of the program, participants also develop skills to better communicate with their family, friends and physicians in regard to their health needs.

Living Healthy with Chronic Disease is a research-based program developed by Stanford University. Currently, Caldwell County Health Department is partnering with Caldwell Senior Center to conduct Chronic Disease Self-Management classes. In 2015, two series of CDSM classes were conducted. It is the objective to have at least 2 classes per year.



## Flu-FIT and Flu-FOBT Program



Flu-FIT and Flu-FOBT Programs allow health care providers to increase access to colorectal cancer screening by offering home tests to patients at the time of their annual influenza (flu) vaccination. The Flu-FIT and Flu-FOBT Programs are designed for patients ages 50-75 years who are both due for colorectal cancer screening and receive annual flu vaccination during primary care visits or at drop-in flu vaccination clinics. The implementation of this intervention is crucial, because both influenza prevention and early colorectal cancer detection is important. According to the State Cancer Profiles through the National Cancer Institute, between the years of 2008-2012, Caldwell County had a colorectal cancer incidence rate of 42 per 100,000 residents; yet, only 55% of residents 50 years and older have ever received a colorectal cancer screening. Planning the implementation of this program will begin in the spring of 2016. In fall, 2016 the Flu-FIT and Flu-FOBT Program will be implemented in the county. During this program, health educators will educate the public on the importance on colorectal cancer prevention and screenings during our annual flu drive-thru clinic. A partnership with the McCreary Cancer Center during their annual colorectal screenings, will include for the dispensing of flu vaccinations in conjunction with their annual screening.

## NC Quit Line



Tobacco use is a leading factor towards most chronic diseases. North Carolina (along with many other states) has a Quitline a telephone helpline offering free cessation services to tobacco users who want to quit smoking. QuitlineNC provides free cessation services to any North Carolina resident who needs help quitting tobacco use. One portion of the NC Quitline program is conducting Quitline referrals. Health Department staffs have been trained in the 5A's of smoking cessation as well as the referral program. Over the next three years, this training will be offered to other agencies in the community. Once staff is trained in the 5A's, providers are able to bill for referrals, thus yielding a return on investment. As staff continues tobacco education throughout the community, the NC Quitline will become more recognizable and will hopefully lead to more individuals in the community using this service. The NC Quitline is an evidence-based intervention which helps patients quit and maintains cessation of tobacco products.

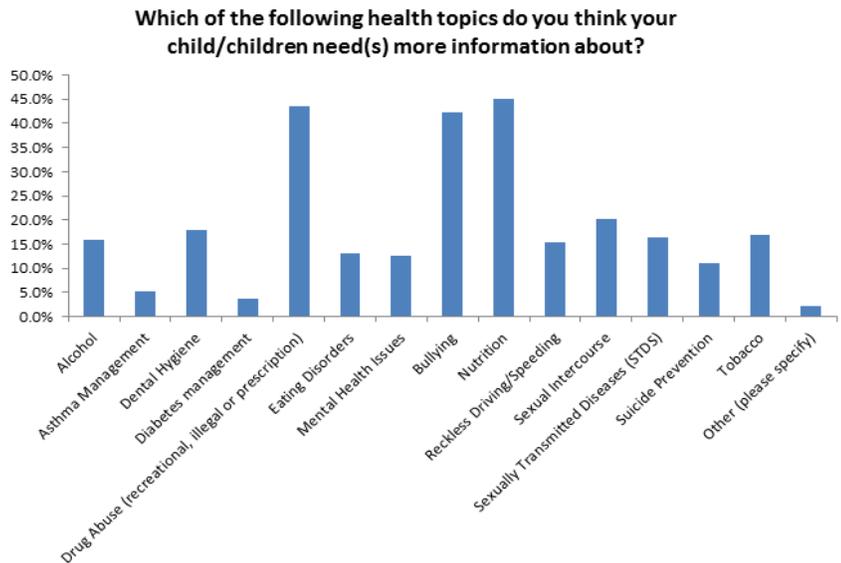
## Target Populations

Over the next 3 years, Caldwell County will focus on implementing the three interventions described above. Although chronic disease doesn't discriminate among ages, it is more prevalent in the older adult population. The target population for the Living Healthy-CDSM and the Flu-FIT/Flu-FOBT programs will be those ages 50 years and older. The target population for the NC Quitline initiative will be anyone in our community who currently smokes, with the main focus being placed on reaching teens and pregnant women.



# Teen Health

In past CHAs, Caldwell County focused solely on Teen Pregnancy. During this CHA process it became apparent that there were more teen health issues that needed to be focused on. Those teen health topics include suicide, violence, pregnancy, bullying, decision-making, substance use, sexually transmitted diseases, healthy habits and self-esteem. When conducting focus groups for the 2014 CHA, the main teen health issues in which the community voiced were a concern were drug abuse, bullying and nutrition.



## **Develop Teen Outreach Program/TRU Group**

Teen outreach programs are beneficial for youth as it give teens a sense of belonging and purpose. One approach in developing outreach programs is to implement youth/teen groups in a variety of settings across the county. One group that will be enhanced over the next three years is the Tobacco Reality Unfiltered (TRU) group at high schools in the county. This group focuses on tobacco prevention, but can expand to other healthy alternatives. Their primary purpose is to engage youth in making healthier lifestyle changes. In 2015, the Early College High School sponsored a TRU group, but due to staffing, they are no longer able to sponsor a group. Currently, efforts are being made to look for other schools (or avenues) to form TRU groups. Some of the avenues that may be beneficial are faith based communities (church youth groups) and boy and girl scout groups. In the fall of 2016, health education staff will be partnering with Smoky Mountain and these newly formed outreach groups to begin implementing anti-bullying presentations in all the high schools in Caldwell County.

In 2015, the health department's health education staff spoke with the local law enforcement agency about the current DARE program being implemented in the schools. Health education staff will be partnering with the DARE officers to increase the education students are receiving on various issues with an emphasis on bullying.

## **Expand Adolescent Intramurals/After-school Activities**



Evidence shows that youth who are involved in community events/groups are healthier and make better lifestyle choices. Caldwell County Health Department is working closely with many community partners, such as Caldwell County Parks and Recreation and Caldwell County Pathways, to develop programs in which teens can get involved. Some of these programs may be intramurals, 5K races, disc golf tournaments and a youth bowling team. In 2015, there have been a few 5Ks in Caldwell County that teens have been involved in including the Leprechaun Leap and the Firecracker Run. Caldwell County Pathways is also in the process of planning a hiking club for teens using the trails in Caldwell County.

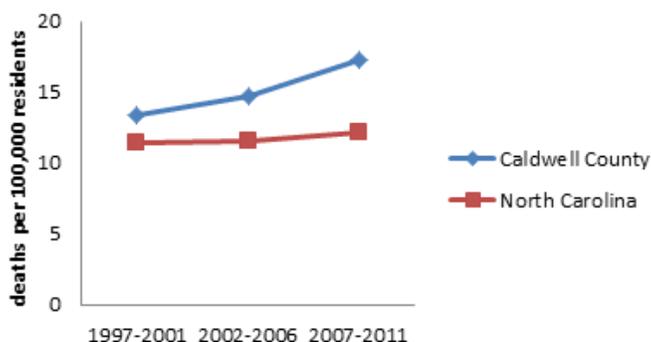
## “Get Moving Day”

In the spring of 2016, Caldwell County will conduct its first annual “Get Moving Day”. This event will be targeted towards all students (K-12) in Caldwell County Schools, with a goal of each student getting in at least 30 minutes of physical activity, in any creative way, each day. Students will be encouraged to go outside to play, walk, run, etc., for the allotted 30 minutes. Physical activity improves mental and physical well-being. “Get Moving Day” will be promoted throughout media resources, along with school system support. Health education staff will be partnering with our Active Routes to School team lead to kick-off this event.



## Mental Health/Substance Abuse

### Suicide Rate



Source: State Center for Health Statistics

Depression, anxiety, psychotic disorder, bipolar disorder and substance misuse are common mental health disorders. According to the State Center for Health Statistics, the suicide rate in Caldwell County has been higher than the rate in North Carolina in the past ten years. Mental health and substance misuse are linked risk factors for suicide. Substance abuse can include misuse of alcohol, tobacco, prescription drugs, etc.

### Mental Health First Aid Training for Adults

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training for adults is led by Smoky Mountain Center. In 2015, Smoky Mountain conducted two MHFA trainings, one for youth and one for adults. This training increases the ability of someone to identify signs and symptoms of Mental Health issues and those in crisis. By fall of 2016, Smoky Mountain will offer at least two more MHFA classes for adults. Smoky Mountain’s goal is to train all school staff (school administration) for the 10 schools in Caldwell County by Fall 2017.



### Intensive Outpatient Program for Substance Use

The intensive outpatient program for substance use intervention is led by RHA (a Substance Use Treatment Provider), partnering with ARP (Addiction, Recovery and Prevention). The goal of this particular intervention is to decrease the number of individuals who are testing positive for drugs. RHA and ARP have been conducting the ongoing intensive outpatient program which consists of a 12 week course (3 days per week of 10 participants for 3 hours each day) for a number of years. A total of 40 participants have been reached in 2015, with the same goal in 2016.

## Project Lazarus

Project Lazarus is a public health non-profit organization, first started in 2008. The organization started in response to extremely high drug overdose death rates in Wilkes County, NC. Project Lazarus has partnered with many officials to bring the initiative to Caldwell County. Caldwell County conducts monthly meetings to discuss various ways to bring substance abuse (like prescription drug overdose) awareness to the community. In 2015, Caldwell County Health Department conducted substance abuse presentations at a local middle school, educating students on the effects of substances, like alcohol, tobacco and prescription drugs. Caldwell County Health Department has also become the lead agency for Safe Kids Caldwell County. In this role, the department conducted two operation medicine drops in 2015, taking old and unused medications and properly disposing of them. There are plans for more medicine drops in 2016.

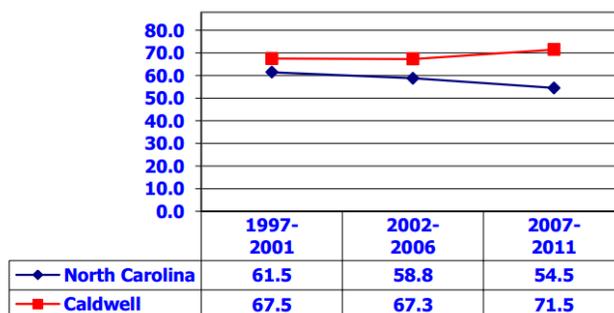


## Emerging Issues

### Trachea, Bronchus and Lung Cancer

Caldwell County has seen an increase in trachea, bronchus and lung cancer death rates over the past 10 years. From years 2002-2006, the death rate was 67.3 per 100,000. From 2007-2011, the death rate was 71.5 per 100,000 and from 2010- 2014, the death rate was 71.6 per 100,000. Many cancers are caused by modifiable risk factors such as a person's lifestyle choices, like smoking, diet and physical activity level, and environmental factors, such as being exposed in industries to certain substances (ex. asbestos, radon, smoke). Over the next few years, Caldwell County will be keeping a close watch over these cancers and evaluate ways to educate the community on the modifiable risk factor of cancers.

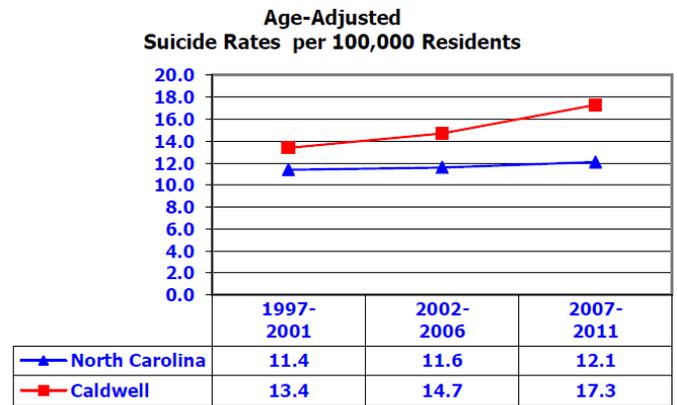
Age-Adjusted Trachea, Bronchus, & Lung Cancer Death Rates per 100,000 Residents



Source: State Center for Health Statistics

## Suicide

The suicide rate in Caldwell County has been gradually increasing. As shown in the chart, the rate from 2007-2011 was at 17.3% and from 2010-2014, the suicide rate increased to 18.7%. Suicide can be caused by many factors, like lack of community mental health resources, substance abuse/misuse, economy, etc. Suicide is one focus of the teen health priority, specifically targeting youth bullying, as well as in the mental health/substance abuse priority.



Source: State Center for Health Statistics

## Morbidity and Mortality

Morbidity and Mortality can be examined through leading causes of death. The chart below is a comparison of leading causes of death from 2013 and 2014. As shown, chronic disease still makes up the top five leading causes of death. Diabetes has dropped from the 6<sup>th</sup> rank to 9<sup>th</sup>. According to the BRFSS 2014 annual results, in the Western Region, the number of people who have two or more chronic diseases has increased from 380 (in 2013) to 394 (2014).

Intentional self-harm (suicide) is ranking 10<sup>th</sup> in 2014 and is not found in the top ten in 2013. Based on data from the State Center of Health Statistics, there were 5 suicide related deaths over the 3 year period from 2011-2014, among 13-19 year olds.

Rank	2013	2014
1	Cancer	Cancer
2	Diseases of heart	Diseases of heart
3	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	Chronic lower respiratory diseases
4	Cerebrovascular diseases	Alzheimer's disease
5	Alzheimer's disease	Cerebrovascular diseases
6	Diabetes mellitus	All other unintentional injuries
7	Influenza and pneumonia	Influenza and pneumonia
8	Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome and nephrosis	Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome and nephrosis
9	All other unintentional injuries	Diabetes mellitus
10	Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis	Intentional self-harm (suicide)

Source: State Center for Health Statistics