

Caldwell County Health Department

# 2009 State of the County

## Health Report



*“A yearly progress report that gives a review of the health status of our county”*

The Caldwell County Health Department is pleased to present the 2009 State of the County Health Report. This document provides updated data on key indicators for Caldwell County, for comparison of local and state health data of our community's health and well-being.

This report includes information on the identified priority areas: Obesity, Cancer, Asthma, Tobacco use, Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Dental Health.

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 the improve the health of our community" by focusing on long-term health priorities identified in the 2007 Community Health Assessment. Our mission is to improve the health of all residents of Caldwell County.

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 828-426-8462. 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

# Chronic Diseases and Unhealthy Behaviors

Asthma is a major public health problem in the U.S. and asthma prevalence has been on a steep rise since 1980. Asthma is a chronic, sometimes debilitating condition that has no cure. Although many cases of Asthma go undiagnosed, doctors estimate that at least 20 million people in the United States have Asthma, including 6.3 million children.

The Centers for Disease Control estimate that Asthma keeps children out of school for a total of 14 million lost school days each year which does not account for the lost physical activity time due to illness. The disease is also responsible for nearly 2 million emergency room visits each year.

The Caldwell County Health Department received funding to increase local education on Asthma management. This funding has allowed our agency to train over 50 physical education teachers and community recreation coaches with the Coaches' Clipboard Program. The program provides coaches and others who work with children a clipboard with the signs and symptoms of an asthma attack and emergency action steps to take. The program has been well-received and we are continuing to partner with as many schools as we can to provide this valuable education.

In January 2009, Caldwell County Health Department was enlisted to be a pilot county for the new state Asthma curriculum "Asthma Education for Childcare Providers". We used this opportunity to partner with our local school system to provide the curriculum to 40 school staff who are employed in the Wraparound Childcare program. Wraparound is a before and after-school program that also operates during the summer to provide childcare for working parents. The curriculum consists of educating caregivers on the basics of asthma, emergency action steps, medication, and asthma triggers.

The Caldwell County Health Department continues to provide community residents information related to ozone and air quality from May 1 through September 30. A daily ozone alert notice is sent to more than 150 agencies and businesses throughout Caldwell County including the hospital system and Caldwell County Schools.



**For more information on Asthma programs and/or services please call 828-426-8400 or 828-426-8462.**

## **Did You Know ...**

**In 2007, Caldwell County had 67 hospitalizations due to Asthma**

**Approximately 5.7% of Caldwell County's population has been diagnosed with Asthma**

**1 out of every 10 North Carolina children has Asthma**

**Asthma has been the leading chronic health condition reported by North Carolina Schools, affecting more than 83, 440 students in 2006-2007 school year**

**1 out of every 5 North Carolina adults with Asthma has visited the emergency room**

\* The Burden of Asthma in North Carolina, 2007

# Chronic Diseases and Unhealthy Behaviors

The obesity epidemic in the United States has received substantial attention in an effort to curb the current trends. Despite this strong focus, obesity rates have continued to increase in North Carolina. In 2007, 64.6% of adults in North Carolina were overweight or obese, and our state has the 5th highest rate of obese children in the nation. Studies have shown that four of the ten causes of death are directly related to obesity, including coronary heart disease, type II diabetes, stroke, and several forms of cancer. There have been tremendous efforts with several partner agencies in Caldwell County to change the current epidemic.

Caldwell County Government continues their efforts to reduce the burden of obesity among county employees. The Caldwell County Employee Wellness Committee has focused exclusively on those employees with a BMI of 26 or greater to encourage increased physical activity and healthier eating habits. The Caldwell County Ultimate Weight Loss Challenge was a success with a total of 121 pounds lost among participating employees. In 2009, The Caldwell County Health Department received funding from North Carolina Eat Smart Move More to enhance the current employee wellness programs with an additional component focusing on stairwell enhancements in county office buildings. The goal of this new project is to encourage physical activity and exercise among county employees and visitors in Caldwell County government buildings by encouraging the use of stairs. An additional component of the funding will provide physical activity and nutrition initiatives to Caldwell Memorial Hospital's employee wellness committee. The Caldwell County Wellness Committee is currently working with Caldwell County Pathways to secure funding for a trail project on the campus's of the human services building and sheriff's office. The trail will serve as a connecting point to the newly constructed Gamewell portion of the Lenoir Greenway.

The Caldwell County School System is proud to have an elementary school that has held the North Carolina Championship title of the President's Physical Fitness Challenge and Sports Award for the past 15 years. Davenport A+ won the state award in 2003-2004; Valmead Elementary championed the event in 2004-05 and 2005-06. The most recent results mark the 12th year that Lower Creek Elementary School has been recognized with this distinction. Lower Creek Elementary also placed first in the state and in the nation in 2006-2007. Lower Creek Elementary has earned 12 statewide championships and now holds a second national title. The 2008-09 recognition ranks the school as the most physically fit student body in North Carolina for enrollment of 200 to 500 students based on the highest percentage of students successfully passing the President's Physical Fitness Challenge. With approximately 360 students in grades K-5 enrolled at Lower Creek Elementary, 89.98 % met the Presidential Fitness Challenge requirement, a score that topped all competition in the state and nation and surpassed last year's rate of 88.71% , when Lower Creek won the state championship and placed second in the nation. The award is presented to an elementary school in North Carolina with the greatest percentage of students passing five areas of fitness criteria in the President's Physical Fitness Test: pull-ups, sit-ups, shuttle run, mile run and the sit-and-reach. For individual students to qualify for the presidential award, a student must score 85 % or higher on each event.

**If you would like more information on physical activity initiatives in Caldwell County please call the Caldwell County Health Department Health Education Team at 828-426-8462**

# Chronic Diseases and Unhealthy Behaviors

Caldwell Memorial Hospital earned the NC Prevention Partners' Red Apple Designation for Healthy Food Environment & Promotes Healthy Lifestyles to Staff & the Community. Caldwell Memorial Hospital is one of only ten North Carolina hospitals to receive the NC Prevention Partners' Red Apple designation, their top designation for a Healthy Food Environment. Caldwell Memorial earned the Red Apple designation by implementing all five principles of a Healthy Food Environment – access, pricing, marketing, benefits and incentives, education – and having an action plan for continuous improvement. These standards must be applied everywhere that foods and beverages are provided or sold. Internally, the hospital formed an “Eat Smart, Move More CMH” team to encourage employees as well as patients and guests to eat healthier foods and enjoy more physical activity. Caldwell Memorial's Dr. Ramesh Krishnaraj and David Horn began a local cooking show on the local cable television channel called “Two Men and a Stove: Fun in the Kitchen with Ram & Dave”. In 2007, Caldwell Memorial added a wellness option to its employee insurance benefits and soon after, introduced Commit to Be Fit, a program which allows wellness-option participating employees to use The Quest4Life Wellness Center free of charge if they maintain a minimum of 36 usage visits per quarter. Both the wellness option and Commit to Be Fit have been made available to the covered spouses of CMH employees participating in those plans.

Caldwell Memorial Hospital has been the catalyst for the first Caldwell Community Garden project on Beall Street in the West End area of Lenoir. The project provided 24 raised beds and 8 lasagna beds for members of that neighborhood to grow fresh produce. The first phase completed the spring and summer gardens and the community now has the fall garden producing lots of edible greens in addition to the herb garden maintained by the committee for everyone's use. The CMH committee is in the planning stages for adding fruit trees and berry bushes to the garden. The City of Lenoir has been working with the hospital to establish an even larger community garden project to provide garden space for people living in the Spainhour and Underdown areas of Lenoir behind the Fairfield Chair plant. That space will provide raised beds and wheelchair accessible beds plus fruit trees and a walking path over an area of 4+ acres.



## Did You Know...

**20.7 % of children in Caldwell County ages 2-17 years of age are overweight**

**20.4% of children in Caldwell County ages 2-18 are obese**

**80% of Adults in North Carolina eat less than 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day**

**20% of North Carolina's school-aged children do not meet the minimum 60 minutes of daily physical activity**

\* Eat Smart Move More NC, 2007

# Chronic Diseases and Unhealthy Behaviors

During 2007, Cancer passed Heart Disease as the number one cause of death for adults in North Carolina. Our state is both growing in population size and age. Because cancer is most often a disease of older persons, the number of cancer patients is expected to double over the next several decades even as the rates of cancer deaths and new cases continue to improve. Research has shown that people with lower incomes are consistently associated with lower screening and prevention behaviors that could reduce the cancer burden. Studies associating the level of income with the diagnosis of Prostate Cancer show that despite having 20% lower rates of new prostate cancers, men living in low-income areas had 33% higher prostate cancer death rates than men living in higher income areas. (Cancer in North Carolina, 2008 Report)

In September 2009, the Caldwell County Health Department and Caldwell Memorial Hospital held their 12th annual Prostate Screening. The event was provided to all men aged 50 or older and consisted of a digital rectal exam along with a PSA blood test. A total of 273 men participated in the screening! Twenty-four men had elevated PSA levels and were referred to a local urologist for follow-up.

The association between cancer deaths and income is consistent for women. Low income women had 28% lower rates of breast cancer cases but they were less often diagnosed with early stage cancer than high -income women and had similar death rates. (Cancer in North Carolina, 2008 Report) According to the most recent U.S. Census sponsored American Community Survey, the 2006-2008 report showed 11.7% of Caldwell County families were living below federal poverty guidelines. This is significant when discussing the connection between an individual's income and how likely they are to survive a cancer diagnosis. Caldwell County is fortunate to have strong partnerships and programs in place to provide free screenings to low income families, particularly low-income women. The Caldwell County Health Department receives funding from the Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program of North Carolina (BCCCP) to provide mammograms and pap tests to uninsured and under-insured women. In the past year, 168 women were enrolled in the program, twelve of those women were referred for additional breast biopsies due to an abnormal mammogram. For the initial 168 participants, 3 women were diagnosed with breast cancer in the past year. (Caldwell County Health Department Clinic Data, 2009)

Caldwell Memorial Hospital has been a strong supporter of preventive screenings and has worked closely with the health department to seek funding through the Susan G. Komen Foundation to financially assist women who do not qualify for BCCCP. In 2009, Susan G. Komen funding provided screening mammograms to 225 women. There were no reported breast cancers in the past year. (Caldwell Memorial Hospital, 2009)

Tobacco use continues to be the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. We are excited to report that tobacco use in Caldwell County is declining and with additional policies passed, expect to see steady declines over the next few years. There have been numerous programs aimed at reducing the smoking rate across the county. Quest-4-Life Wellness Center offers FreshStart free of charge to any interested community member. Our local free clinic, Helping Hands implemented a tobacco education and cessation class nearly 3 years ago aimed at chronic disease management patients trying to quit smoking. The clinic has been successful in its efforts to provide cessation medication at little or no cost to patients. The health department has received over 200 clinical referrals for tobacco cessation in the past year alone. Last, but certainly not least is the passage of Session Law 2009-27 **An Act to Prohibit Smoking in Certain Public Places** such as bars and restaurants. Public Health is excited to celebrate this monumental achievement and hope to provide decreased smoking rates next year.

# Oral Health

Dental decay has been dramatically reduced over the last 20 years, but almost 50% of North Carolina's children still have tooth decay. In the mid 1990's, the North Carolina Oral Health Section began assigning public health dentists to local health departments on a part-time basis in order to provide clinical services in support of newly established safety-net dental clinics.

Caldwell County Health Department Dental Clinic continues to find innovative ways to provide dental coverage to the most vulnerable populations in our community. The dental clinic has partnered with the Baptist Men's Association, our local Head Start agency, Caldwell County Schools, and participates annually in the national Give Kids A Smile day to provide dental care to uninsured children throughout the county.



## Did You Know...

**Caldwell County has 2.5 dentists per 10,000 people (the national average is 6 dentists per 10,000 people)**

**There are 7,622 children in Caldwell County who are eligible for NC Medicaid**

**Nearly 40% of 5th graders are reported to have un-treated tooth decay**

**In the 2007 Community Health Assessment, nearly 52% of Caldwell County residents said they could not afford dental care**

\* NC Medicaid Paid Claims Data, 2008

\* NC CATCH Data, 2005

\* Caldwell County CHA Data, 2007

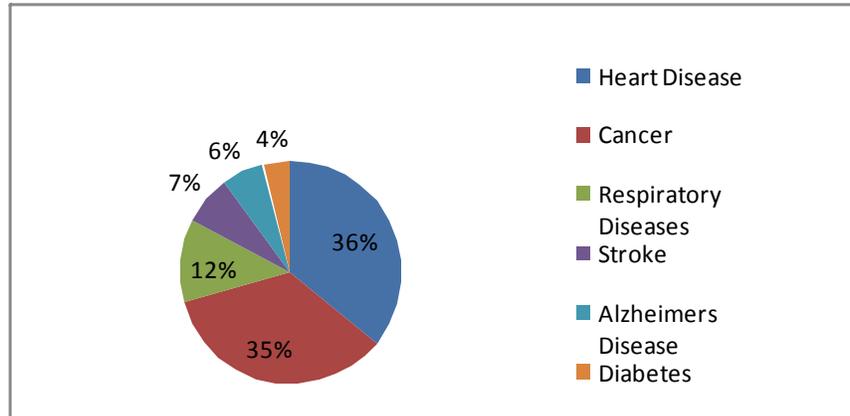
## Emerging Issues

In April 2009, the World Health Organization declared the novel H1N1 influenza virus a pandemic. Public Health agencies across the state including Caldwell County activated their Incident Command System and implemented long awaited local pandemic influenza plans. Caldwell County Health Department has been proactive in efforts to reduce the spread of illness and keep our community safe. We provided two large clinics for H1N1 vaccination of target groups as well as weekly and/or daily H1N1 updates to local radio stations, television stations and newspaper outlets. Partnerships were established with local physicians to receive shipments of H1N1 vaccine for their priority patients. The partnership with Caldwell Memorial Hospital has been vital in alleviating the burden of vaccine shipments to local medical practices. Together, we have participated in monthly and/or weekly H1N1 briefings and have worked diligently to be consistent in the media messages released by either agency. This event has been and will continue to be a major focus for our staff as well as our partner agencies throughout the county. Caldwell County Health Department is committed to protecting the health of our community.

# Impact of Chronic Disease in Caldwell County

## Caldwell County Leading Causes of Death

\* State Center for Health Statistics, 2008



## Financial impact of Chronic Disease in Caldwell County

\* NC State Center for Health Statistics, inpatient hospital utilization and charges by diagnosis, 2007

Type of Disease	Total Cases	Avg. Days in Hospital	Total Charges	Avg. Charge per Day
Colon, Rectum, Anus Cancer	36	8.5	\$2,056,939	\$6,700
Trachea, Lung, Bronchus Cancer	45	4.2	\$1,024,384	\$5,449
Breast Cancer	13	2.1	\$267,831	\$9,920
Prostate Cancer	8	3	\$228,223	\$9,510
Diabetes	126	5.0	\$2,145,148	\$3,405
Heart Disease	1708	3.9	\$70,753,471	\$10,573
Stroke	310	4.4	\$6,303,952	\$4,635
Respiratory Disease (flu, pneumonia, COPD)	812	4.9	\$14,187,785	\$3,412

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