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Since our establishment in 2007, we have centered health equity, public health strategies, and systems-level change to foster health among the people of North Carolina.

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to serve as the Executive Director of the North Carolina Center for Health and Wellness for the 5-years described and highlighted in this report. I have served alongside an incredible staff of leaders and team members. Two leaders in particular bear highlighting. Nicolle Miller was our Director of State and Community Collaborations and leader of the Healthy Aging Team from 2016 to 2021. Emma Olson is Associate Director and has led the Culture of Results Initiative since 2016, and she is currently serving as the Interim Executive Director. Together we worked to expand the NC Center for Health and Wellness’ from a small team of 5 team members advancing two core initiatives in 2018 to a vibrant, active, and effective team of 20+ people advancing multiple initiatives by the end 2023. The vision, skill and determination of all team members – who help direct and manage our federal grant, foundation and contract-funded projects – has fueled this growth and success. You will read highlights of the team’s successes throughout this report.

The founding vision for the Center was to be deeply connected to academics – both faculty and students – as well as embedded in the university and attentive to the strategic priorities of UNC Asheville. To this end, NCCHW has partnered with faculty in research and staff on initiatives; provided community engagement opportunities for classes, hosted internships, and employed students. The Center’s faculty and staff have taught undergraduate courses at UNC Asheville and have been deeply involved in the planning, development and implementation of a joint MPH program between UNC Asheville and UNC Gillings School of Public Health at UNC Chapel Hill.

Over the past five years, in addition to being awarded five federal grants, NCCHW has expanded its success in getting foundation and state funding to fuel ongoing and new programs. Our yearly budget expanded from $421,715.93 in 2018 to $2,122,251.27 in 2023. Our mission-driven efforts have resulted in an expanded ability to impact policy, build capacity, and ignite community initiatives to build healthier places around the state. We increased and highlighted our visibility through scholarly publications, reports, data and policy briefs, academic presentations, reports, and health policy blog posts. We have expanded our customer-focused websites (Healthy Aging NC, Standing Strong NC, WNC Health Policy Initiative, and Social Bridging NC), and increased our social media communication, and audio and video production.

On a personal note, I joined UNC Asheville as a faculty member in the Health and Wellness Department in 2005. From this vantage point, I was able to observe the planning and development of the Center from early ideas to concerted action. I am grateful to NCCHW’s founder, Dr. Keith Ray, the legislators who voted to support its establishment, and the early team members and leaders. I am incredibly proud of the efforts of the whole NCCHW team for what we have accomplished over these last five years. I have full confidence that they will continue to successfully contribute to the mission of UNC Asheville and to foster healthier North Carolina communities through strategic partnerships and authentic collaboration.

Amy Joy Lanou
Executive Director of the NC Center for Health and Wellness from 2018 - 2023
The North Carolina Center for Health and Wellness (NCCHW) was launched at the University of North Carolina Asheville in 2007 to support the health of people across the state by serving as a catalyst for primary prevention and health promotion.

NCCHW contributes to health and wellbeing for the state’s population via a web of relationships that lead to better practices, enhanced capacity, and community innovations at strategic points across the lifespan. NCCHW staff work with university, community, governmental, health care, social service and policy partners across the UNC Asheville campus, the region, and the state to help support health service systems and providers, impact critical policies, and ignite community initiatives. Our work collectively improves health outcomes for historically marginalized populations statewide and builds systems to support the inclusivity and decision-making abilities of these underserved populations long term.

NCCHW is fully funded by grants and contracts. Currently, federal funding sources include the US Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Community Living to support many of our Healthy Aging initiatives and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which supports our arthritis prevention and management work. State funding comes from the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services as well as the NC Department of Health and Human Services Division of Public Health Injury and Violence Prevention Branch. The Dogwood Health Trust, Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, and NC Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation are current and former foundation funding partners. NCCHW also has contractual relationships with a wide range of partners including Mountain Area Health Education Center, West Marion, Inc. and other community organizations.

**OUR MISSION**

Our mission is to foster healthier NC communities by leading innovation and developing equitable opportunities with partners statewide.

**WHERE WE FOCUS**

NCCHW focuses on initiatives and programs statewide, particularly in areas with the opportunity to reduce the greatest gaps in health outcomes through partnerships and community commitment to help everyone reach their full health potential.
NCCHW’S HISTORY

1982-1984
UNCA awarded a grant from the Kellogg Foundation to establish the Health Promotion Program and courses began shortly after.

2001-2002
- Faculty Senate approved the 4-year degree program in Health Promotion and Wellness.
- Keith Ray, Chair of the Health and Wellness Department (HWD), proposed a vision for an aligned NC Center for Health and Wellness (NCCHW).

2004
- The General Assembly of North Carolina funded a $35 million bill for the building and first programming of NCCHW at UNCA. Representative Wilma Sherrill became deeply involved in ensuring the investment was inclusive.
- The Board of Governors approved the degree program in Health and Wellness.

2007-2009
- First staff was hired for the department and NCCHW, and starter grants began with funding from BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina Foundation.
- UNCA broke ground on the Sherrill Center building.

2011
The Wilma M. Sherrill Center and Kimmel Arena officially opened to house NCCHW, the HWD, Campus Recreation, the Teaching Kitchen, Wellness Cafe, and Bulldog Basketball.

2014-2016
- NCCHW received grants for lab equipment in partnership with the HWD, a nutrition study, Chronic Disease Self Management and Falls Prevention.
- Healthy Aging NC and Culture of Results were established as overarching initiatives to support grant programming.
- The NCCHW team convened a multi-disciplinary team of UNCA faculty and staff to research violence and influencing factors in Buncombe County over the next five years.
- Culture of Results led regional and statewide community health trainings in the Results-based Accountability (RBA) framework and expanded research, coordination, facilitation and evaluation contracts.
- The Falls Prevention programming deepened with another grant success and Healthy Aging NC through involvement with the 2017 NCOA Network Development Learning Collaborative.

2017
Continue reading to learn what NCCHW has done from 2018 to present!
**FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT**

NCCHW is fully funded by grants and contracts. The Center has gone through a number of changes over the past five years. This includes growth of new partnerships and funders leading to new grants and contracts.

**FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS**

- Over $9 million in federal and foundation grant revenue over the last 5 years; $1 million in indirects to UNC Asheville ($288,663 in FY 23).
- Organizational budget of over $1.8 million in FY 2022 and estimated at $2.2 million in FY 2023 (*this estimate does not include Culture of Results and other contracts*).
- Culture of Results annual revenue is highlighted in the below graph. The CoR Team doubled their revenue from 2021 – $70,631 to 2022 – $153,065. In 2023, CoR increased their revenue by 44% to $219,938.

### NCCHW ANNUAL REVENUE | 2018-2023

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<th>Revenue ($)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>$2,154,018.96</td>
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<td>2023</td>
<td>$2,122,251.27</td>
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### CULTURE OF RESULTS ANNUAL REVENUE | 2019-2023

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Revenue ($)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>$153,064.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>$219,938.00</td>
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As of December 2023, NCCHW has supported 13,615 LEADERS statewide through trainings, technical assistance, coordination and other forms of partnership.

Of these leaders, 12,483 were supported during that five-year period (January 2019 – December 2023).

NCCHW has supported the delivery of evidence-based programs to reach approximately 10,000 PARTICIPANTS statewide through workshops to manage chronic diseases and prevent falls.

From January 2019 – December 2023, Healthy Aging NC had:

- **10,095** Total Participants
- **7,350** Total Completers
- **72%** Completion Rate

(This chart represents only part of the cumulative numbers but is incomplete due to data integration issues.)
WHAT WE DO

The North Carolina Center for Health & Wellness (NCCHW) works to build the capacity of diverse community and institutional partners statewide, to advance more equitable policies, and to ignite community initiatives. Housed at UNC Asheville, we leverage cross-disciplinary faculty and staff and engage passionate and committed students. Through grant and contract support we address numerous health outcomes and social drivers in addition to our foundational areas of chronic disease management and prevention.

Two initiatives have been part of our core work since 2015. The Culture of Results (COR) initiative provides training and support to assess opportunities and impact, strengthen coordination, and improve and sustain programs and systems statewide. The other, Healthy Aging NC, is North Carolina’s statewide resource center for evidence-based health programs. It connects people to the programs and agencies that improve community health; increases the capacity of providers to offer these programs; maintains the website with current program information and online registration systems; and collects and analyzes data to report results.

Two collaboration and networking projects deepen the primary focus areas of the Healthy Aging NC initiative: one is to develop a community care hub for NC to increase the dissemination of services for older adults through engaging health payor support, and the second is to create a plan for NC to improve the “No Wrong Door” system by which caregivers access long term services and support for their families. Additional NCCHW initiatives were established in 2020. The Social Bridging Project and the Student Health Ambassador Program provide direct support to isolated older adults and students across institutes for higher education in the region. The WNC Health Policy Initiative addresses the health policy issues and opportunities in our communities.
The killing of George Floyd and subsequent Black Lives Matter protests across the globe served as a catalyst to accelerate our work in health equity, starting with this statement of commitment to anti-racism. Specifically, this tragic event reminded us of the culturally and historically reinforced structural racism that has impacted every layer of society. NCCHW has a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice workgroup that operationalizes NCCHW’s anti-racist commitments into long-term action.

See more on our website.
CULTURE OF RESULTS

Culture of Results (CoR) provides training and support to assess opportunities and impact, strengthen implementation, improve programming, and sustain initiatives statewide. Culture of Results partners with initiatives across sectors to help advance their planning, research, evaluation, and implementation.

INITIATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

- CoR has deepened our commitment to equity and the “empowerment” evaluation model through Community-Based Participatory Research and Action (CBPRA) projects – building, coaching and working in partnership with two community research teams to collect and report on data related to community health work and substance use.

- Over the last 5 years, the CoR team has presented to statewide and national audiences at numerous conferences including the American Public Health Association (APHA) national meeting, Imagining America National Gathering, NC Public Health Association Data Summit, Annual NC CHW Summit, Open Forum for Quality Improvement and Innovation in Public Health Roundtable, All In Data for Health Conference, and the Society of Public Health Educators National Conference.

FUNDDERS

Our team was feeling the fatigue associated with the intensity of the recent racial reckoning and the COVID pandemic. We were considering pausing our collaborative efforts, but after we were shown the Scorecard [a data dashboard the CoR team built and updated], there was a tidal shift, a new energy. Folks started to get excited about having a common language in the way of data to tell our story collectively.”

- Mothering Asheville Movement

Emma C. Olson, MPH, MSW Associate Director of NCCHW and Director of Partnerships and Evaluation from 2018-2022

Alex Mitchell, MPH Culture of Results Senior Project Manager

Louise Noble, MSW Senior Research Associate

Culture of Results Website
**HIGHLIGHTED COR PROJECTS**

In June 2023, CoR was hired by the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services to conduct research with historically marginalized older adult communities across the state to better understand their experiences and inform the development of North Carolina’s Multi-Sector Plan for Aging, which was mandated by Governor Cooper as part of his efforts to make North Carolina an “Age Friendly” state.

From 2021-2023, the CoR team conducted evaluations of regional Community Health Worker initiatives utilizing a Community-Based Participatory Research and Action (CBPRA) approach. CoR partnered with the Mountain Area Health Education Center, UNCA faculty, and Asheville Buncombe Institute of Parity Achievement to train and coach a community research team.

From 2019 through 2023, the CoR team has partnered with the North Carolina Institute for Public Health (NCIPH) to lead the McDowell Partnership for Substance Awareness (MPSA) through a data collection and strategic planning process.

Since 2019, the CoR team has provided training and support to the McDowell Community Centered Health Initiative to address childhood obesity. CoR and the CCH core teams have collaboratively coordinated and launched projects, worked together to create a Scorecard to track key performance measures and population indicators, and supported the design and display of a billboard raising awareness of childhood hunger in McDowell county.

From 2019-2021, CoR was contracted by Verner Center for Early Learning to conduct community assessments on strengths, assets, challenges, and opportunities for pregnant people and families in Buncombe County and a feasibility study to understand the impact and growth areas of the Rainbow In My Tummy™ comprehensive nutrition program.

**CUMULATIVE LEADERS SUPPORTED STATEWIDE**

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<th>Year</th>
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<th>2020</th>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>1,307</td>
<td>1,748</td>
<td>2,352</td>
<td>3,456</td>
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**99.6% OF PARTICIPANTS**

In CoR training, workshops and events felt that they were treated well and respected by the facilitators.

**HIGHLIGHTED PUBLICATIONS, REPORTS & PRODUCTS**

Envisioning Elemental Care: Multimedia Messages of Community Health Workers short film

McDowell Substance Use Task Force Strategic Plan

“Existimos para ellos/We exist for them”: An Evaluation of the Community Health Workers (CHWs) as Culturally-Responsive COVID Support in WNC Communities Initiative

See Collaborative Work webpage for presentations: ncchw.unca.edu/meet-us/collaborative-research

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The Western North Carolina Health Policy Initiative (WNC HPI) mission is to inform strategies for improving the health and wellbeing of all people across the region through scholarship, collaboration, policy development and advocacy. The WNC HPI is convened weekly to engage partners in discussion of potential policy solutions to address challenging health issues facing our communities. This initiative was created to serve as a convener of and conduit for information, resources, and coalition-building between five core groups: policy makers, health and healthcare leadership and professionals, community-based service organizations, educational and research institutions, and the community members we all serve. The WNC Health Policy Initiative is co-hosted by the Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC) and the NC Center for Health and Wellness (NCCHW) at UNC Asheville and funded by the Dogwood Health Trust (DHT).

**Funder & Partners**

- **2021 - 2023 | $636,000**
- **2023 - 2026 | $748,140**

Dogwood Health Trust Grants

**Initiative Highlights**

- Hosted the 2023 WNC Legislative Caucus: Focus on Healthcare and Health Policy in WNC event at UNC Asheville
- Developed and launched the [WNC HPI Website](#)
- Produced the WNC Health Topic Podcast Series
- Supported/facilitated ongoing discussions with NC legislators, top NC Medicaid staff, and regional subject matter experts to support and inform the development and implementation of NC Medicaid Expansion and Transformation processes
- Informed draft and submission of the [Primary Care Payment Reform Task Force](#), an appropriations bill to the NC General Assembly (Sens. Hise and Burgin, primary sponsors)
TEAM MEMBERS

SUPPORT TEAM
Amy Joy Lanou
Soni Pitts
Kol Gold-Leighton
Maya Newlin (Former Project Manager)

EXPERTS IN RESIDENCE
(Stipended Fellows)
Senator Ralph Hise
District 47 Senator, NC General Assembly
Marc Malloy
Founder, Sevenya LLC, Former Senior Vice President of Mission Health Partners

“"We have a unique opportunity here in Western North Carolina to really move the needle on those issues that are most important to our citizens.””
– Kimberly van Noort, Chancellor of UNC Asheville at the 2023 WNC Legislative Caucus

INITIATIVE IMPACT

2021-2023

WEEKLY FRIDAY FORUMS

1,280 CONTRIBUTERS
88 POLICY FORUMS
74 PRESENTERS & SPEAKERS

WNC HPI 2023 LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS

9 CAUCUS PRESENTATIONS
8 STATE LEGISLATORS IN ATTENDANCE

18 Counties & Qualia
Boundary Represented

PUBLICATIONS

• Policy Recommendations to Improve Health Outcomes in Rural Areas - Dr. Jeff Heck
• Healthcare Access and Job Mobility: How Medicaid Expansion, Private Health Insurance Coverage, and the Local Healthcare Workforce Impacts Local Labor Markets - Dr. Melissa Mahoney and Dr. Jonathan Brown
• Sidebar: Regional Relationships: Creative Collaboration for Prevention and Mitigation Among Western North Carolina Learning Institutions. Hodge B, Lanou AJ. North Carolina Medical Journal July 2021, 82 (4) 260-261; DOI: 10.18043/ncm.82.4.260

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Established in 2016, Healthy Aging NC (HANC) is the largest and longest standing initiative of NC Center for Health & Wellness at UNC Asheville. Evidence-Based Programs and provides support to North Carolina’s 16 Area Agencies on Aging and other clinical and community-based organizations. HANC helps develop, integrate, and sustain health and wellness program delivery to improve the quality of life, healthcare costs, outcomes, and overall wellness of adults in North Carolina.

The Healthy Aging NC website provides a free platform for agencies offering classes and participants to enroll online, access healthy aging resources, webinars, training, and current news. HANC supports efficiency and effectiveness of evidence-based programs by collaborating with the NC Division of Aging & Adult Services to ensure: programs are offered with fidelity, providers meet the requirements to achieve health outcomes, and the accountability of all resources.

The Healthy Aging NC Website:

- Connects people to the programs and agencies that improve community health.
- Increases the capacity of providers to offer these programs.
- Maintains current program information and online registration systems.
- Collects and analyzes data to report results to reduce the administrative burden of agencies offering programs with data entry, analysis, and reporting.
- Provides agencies with access to reduced-cost master and leader training and support for creating inclusive and culturally competent programs.
- Support innovation in the areas of clinical-community integration, programming across the continuum of care, and referral pathways.

**SUPPORTED PROGRAMS**

- Falls Prevention
- Arthritis & Wellbeing
- Living Healthy Programs & PEARLS
- Social Bridging NC & Social Bridging Project
- The BOLD Project
- The BLEND Project
- Community Care Hub
- No Wrong Door for Caregivers
FALLS PREVENTION

A Matter of Balance & Tai Chi for Arthritis & Fall Prevention Programs

NCCHW supports two main falls prevention programs, A Matter of Balance and Tai Chi for Arthritis & Fall Prevention, designed to reduce the fear of falling and increase activity levels among older adults. We partner with the NC Falls Prevention Coalition (NCFPC) to maintain a statewide structure to coordinate falls reduction efforts through supporting and strengthening regional falls prevention coalitions and statewide partnerships.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

• Expanded membership in the NC Falls Prevention Coalition listserv from 170 to 285 members and led the 5-year Action Plan.
• Initiated virtual programming for Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention during the pandemic to prevent falls and to address social isolation.
• Launched Standing Strong North Carolina, a public awareness campaign to prevent falls and save lives including the production and release of three public service announcements and a new website.

“Tai chi has given me something that I didn’t expect, and that is, a real improvement in my balance and my walking, and has helped me to eliminate my fear of falling.”

– Bill Johnson, Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention participant

Supported network partners in reaching 14,693 PARTICIPANTS in evidence-based falls prevention programs

67% INCREASE IN MEMBERSHIP in the NC Falls Prevention Coalition listserv

INCREASED PROGRAM CAPACITY

for Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention, with WNC making up almost 50% of statewide workshops during a three-year grant period (2017-2020)
From August 2017 – July 2020,

7,145 participants attended
514 evidence-based falls prevention workshops in North Carolina

90% of participants stated that the programs reduced their fear of falling

97% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more comfortable increasing activity

99% agreed or strongly agreed that they plan to continue exercising

(*Survey data from ACL National Evidence-Based Falls Prevention Database surveyed participants in workshops from 2017-2020.)

Publications


Bailey, E. “Chronic Conditions and Fall Risk: Cross-Promoting Programs Across the Continuum of Care,” National Council on Aging website


Contributed to the Special Emphasis Report: Falls in Older Adults, NC Division of Public Health

Highlighted in the Falls Prevention Guide for State Health Departments: Expanding Falls Prevention Through Surveillance, Community-Clinical Linkages, and Strategic Planning and Evaluation (astho.org)
The CDC’s 2018 State Public Health Approaches to Addressing Arthritis award funded 13 states including North Carolina as part of a 5-year, multi-component cooperative agreement program to support statewide capacity-building for the dissemination of arthritis-appropriate, evidence-based interventions (AAEBIs), including Walk with Ease, Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention, Chronic Disease Self-Management Education Programs, and more. This cooperative agreement also promoted raising awareness about arthritis prevalence and management and improving health outcomes among adults with arthritis.

**PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

- **Enrolled 8,410 participants** in Arthritis-Appropriate Evidence-Based Interventions including both physical activity and self-management education programs. This includes the Walk with Ease program, Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention program, Chronic Disease Self-Management Education (CDSME), and EnhanceFitness.

- **Trained 384 leaders** of the programs mentioned above.

- **Established partnerships with 35 organizations** that provided letters of support for us to apply for funding beyond 2023.

**FUNDER**

**2018 - 2023 | $1,526,725**

Center for Disease Control and Prevention Grant

This grant supported arthritis-appropriate, evidence-based interventions (AAEBIs) including Walk with Ease, Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention, Chronic Disease Self-Management Education Programs, and more.

**PUBLICATIONS**


LIVING HEALTHY PROGRAMS

Chronic Disease Self-Management Education (CDSME) Programs:
Living Healthy with Chronic Disease, Living Healthy with Chronic
Pain, Living Healthy with Diabetes

CDSME Support Program: Program to Encourage Active,
Rewarding Lives (PEARLS)

Chronic Disease Self-Management Education programs, developed
by Stanford University, provide older adults and adults with disabilities
with education and tools to help them better manage chronic
conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, chronic pain, and
depression.

The Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives is an evidence-
based program designed to reduce depressive symptoms and
improve quality of life in older adults. PEARLS is a supportive program
that is being implemented for the first time in North Carolina with
funding from the 2022 CDSME grant.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

2019 - 2022 CDSME GRANT
• Led a learning collaborative for 8 Area Agencies on Aging and
helped 2 Area Agencies on Aging go through the accreditation
process for Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support
(DSMES)

2022 - 2025 CDSME GRANT
• Partnered with Centralina to pilot the Program to Encourage
Active, Rewarding Lives (PEARLS) in the Charlotte region
• Trained 42 lay leaders in CDSME programs in the first 18
months of the CDSME 2022 project

FUNDER

2019 - 2022 | $836,121
Administration for Community Living (ACL)
CDSME Grant

2022 - 2025 | $660,189
Administration for Community Living (ACL)
CDSME (including PEARLS) Grant

Natasha Vos, MPH, RD, LDN,
Senior Project Manager,
Chronic Disease Self-
Management and Education

Vivian Gettys, MPH, MA, RN
Project Manager, Chronic
Disease and PEARLS
Chronic Disease Self-Management Education (CDSME) programs focus on building self-management techniques & fostering a community of support.

Since 2019, more than 1,965 people have participated in CDSME programs in North Carolina communities and online.

More than 236 workshops were hosted at over 108 sites throughout North Carolina, with a 74% average completion rate.

Among Participants,

80% are aged 60+

78% manage more than one chronic condition

37% live alone

27% of completers reported an increase in confidence managing their chronic conditions

“Going through the ADCES Diabetes Education Accreditation Program (DEAP) process was intense but provided us a great opportunity to establish a new program within our region. With ongoing support and guidance from the HANC [Healthy Aging NC] team, we were able to successfully gain this national accreditation. We are excited to implement this type of programming in some of our most rural service areas and establish new partnerships with healthcare networks that exist in our region.”

- Brandie Garner, Mid-East Commission Area Agency on Aging

PEARLS Program Connects Older Adults in the Charlotte Area | ncIMPACT | PBS North Carolina Video

ncIMPACT LinkedIn Newsletter: “Mental Health Town Hall Focused on Older Adults” episode featuring PEARLS.

“New Grant Funds UNC Asheville to Launch PEARLS in North Carolina to Help Aging Adults at risk of Isolation and Depression,” UNC Asheville Article.
During the COVID pandemic in 2020, UNC Asheville (UNCA) and the Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC) partnered to form the Social Bridging Project as a response to concerns about the potential impact of social isolation, social distancing, and other COVID-19 pandemic-related measures on older adults in Western North Carolina. The project’s aim was to provide older adults who were isolated or lonely with a source of social connection, technology support and referrals to needed resources through social “wellness calls” from primarily university students. The project was also expected to increase students’ active listening skills and intergenerational connections. The project has expanded to serve all adults across the state and is funded through September 2024.

**FUNDERS**

- **2023 - 2024 | $157,648**
  NC Division of Aging and Adult Services

- **2022 - 2023 | $151,057**
  Dogwood Health Trust

- **2021 - 2022 | $55,536**
  UNC System Office

- **2020 - 2021 | $75,000**
  NC Policy Collaboratory

**PROGRAM IMPACT**

- **92%** of participants surveyed reported that the calls made them feel they had someone who listened to them when they needed to talk*

- **62%-85%** of callers surveyed felt happier, more hopeful or less lonely*

*2021: N=13 | 2023: N=12

**Social Bridging NC Website**
In 2023, the Social Bridging Project’s success and ongoing partnership with the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services led to the creation of a statewide hub, Social Bridging NC, a web-based resource center with information about social isolation and loneliness and all of the services and resources across the state that are dedicated to addressing social isolation and to promoting social connectedness and engagement.

Social Bridging NC aims to alleviate some of the difficulties associated with social isolation and loneliness by offering a one-stop shop of resources that includes a database of virtual programming resources. In addition to the virtual classes offered, the website connects adults with essential resources and offers support and phone-based reassurance through trained callers who provide friendly check-ins and assistance with telehealth services and other basic technology skills.

**PUBLICATIONS**


“It made me feel like I could have a part of the future; that she and also the program thought that geriatric people were important enough to have this program.”

- Social Bridging Project Participant
In 2020, NCCHW partnered with the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) to secure a 3-year (October 2020-September 2023), $1,000,000 core capacity and planning grant. BOLD programs are funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to address Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias and to create a cohesive public health infrastructure focused on risk reduction, increasing early detection and diagnosis, preventing avoidable hospitalizations, and supporting dementia caregiving. NCCHW served as a subcontractor and played a significant role in its evaluation and in the analysis and dissemination of data to inform state plan brain health priorities, health promotion materials and dementia-related training.

**Funders**

**2020-2023 | $297,990**

Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services (NCCHW’s sub-recipient amount)

“This plan is exceptionally clear and comprehensive and meets or exceeds expectations in every respect! A clear picture of Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) needs specific to NC is conveyed as well as the staffing structure and capacity. The logic model supporting narrative outlined participant roles in detail and very helpfully distinguished internal/external resources. Targets were clear, specific, and measurable and data collection sources and procedures were described with sufficient detail to understand the approaches. The data analysis descriptions were particularly comprehensive and well-organized. The listing of evaluation comparisons was especially helpful.”

– CDC Project Officer’s Evaluation on NCCHW’s Evaluation Plan

**Publications**

2023 BOLD Dementia Caregiver Data Brief
2020 Subjective Cognitive Decline Data Brief
THE BLEND PROJECT
Better Living through Education and Nutrition for Persons with Diabetes (BLEND)

BLEND was a pilot project in partnership with the Piedmont Triad Regional Council Area Agency on Aging, which aimed to provide support for older adults with diabetes through a Food Is Medicine intervention. The intervention consisted of medically tailored meals provided through a local partner housed at the Second Harvest Food Bank, Providence Catering, and education in the form of a Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support (DSMES) program or individual health coaching. Participants received 60 meals over the course of 6 weeks that were tailored to their individual health and nutrition needs. Participants in the DSMES classes were also connected to a registered dietitian who assisted during group nutrition sessions as well as one-on-one sessions to provide individualized support and education.

GOALS
To facilitate healthcare investments in Older Americans Act services by linking cost-effective modernized Title III-C and Title III-D diabetes services to improve health outcomes.

POPULATION OF INTEREST
Older adults with diabetes in Rockingham, Caswell, Guilford and Forsyth counties.

PROGRAM IMPACT
Formalized a referral pathway with a large Accountable Care Organization in the region, provided 540 meals, served 23 participants and completed 57 referrals.

FUNDER
Administration for Community Living (ACL)

SEPTEMBER 2020 - DECEMBER 2024
$1,082,861

Innovations in Nutrition Program and Services Grant - including matching funds.

PARTNERSHIPS
Piedmont Triad Regional Council Area Agency on Aging

Providence (a program of Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina)
COMMUNITY CARE HUB

Strengthening the Healthy Aging NC Network to Support Value-Based Care Through Evidence-Based Falls Prevention Programs

A Community Care Hub (CCH) is a community-focused entity that organizes and supports a network of community-based organizations providing services to address health-related social needs. It centralizes administrative functions and operational infrastructure including, but not limited to, contracting with health care organizations, payment operations, management of referrals, service delivery fidelity and compliance, technology, information security, data collection and reporting.

CCHs play an important role in promoting an equitable health and social care ecosystem. They serve as the bridge between community-based organizations, health care payers and providers, and public health systems to increase a community’s capacity to reach populations who are underserved. They achieve their goals through coordination and provision of services that address health-related social needs. Building the capacity of Community Care Hubs advances the nationwide vision of coordinated person-centered care and services for all community members.

The creation of a community care hub in partnership with the Council of Governments will increase access to services for people in North Carolina and provide a sustainable source of revenue for hub member organizations. Project staff facilitated the development of a governing and operational structure with the Council of Government following several years of collaboration and planning.

PROGRAM IMPACT

- **16** Area Agencies on Aging Readiness Assessments and Capacity Interviews completed
- **✓** Healthcare market analysis completed
- **✓** Memorandum of Agreement regarding operations completed and ratified

FUNDER

**2020 - 2023**
Administration for Community Living (ACL)

$1,202,100
No Wrong Door is an initiative funded by the Administration for Community Living aimed at improving the Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) system for caregivers, families, and individuals.

Finding and accessing the right Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) presents a daunting task for many individuals and their families. The current LTSS system involves numerous funding streams administered by multiple federal, state and local agencies. This leaves many of those who try to access LTSS confronted with a bewildering maze of organizations and bureaucratic requirements, often when they are vulnerable or during a time of crisis. These agencies use different, often fragmented, and sometimes duplicative processes and requirements involving screening, intake, needs assessment, service planning, and eligibility determination.

In partnership with consumers, state agencies, and the private sector, this project is using a collaborative approach and is addressing the work in two phases. In the current phase, the project is focused on assessing the LTSS system through various methods including mapping current services and access points, learning about consumer experiences, and understanding how service providers view the system.

The second phase will build on this knowledge base and collaboratively develop an implementation plan for an improved No Wrong Door LTSS system by the end of 2024. This plan will enhance the strengths of the existing system, reduce fragmentation, simplify and clarify access to the system for consumers and agencies, and improve the quality of life for caregivers and those receiving care.
NCCHW has always served as a catalyst for campus and community partnerships to advance health and wellness and applied student learning experiences.

Even before the physical NCCHW was built, students were involved in the Wellness Initiative Starter grants, such as the Salsa, Salud y Sabor pilot, which included a partnership with the YWCA of Asheville, with students on-site and also involved a Community Engaged Scholar project. Other examples include an undergraduate research project, in which a student chose to focus on learning more about Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention in connection with our Healthy Aging programs; one student wanted to learn more about how chronic conditions impact fall risk as part of her capstone project, and another led a Spanish-speaking Walk With Ease group on campus.

The Center has deepened relationships with Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC) and collaborated broadly on a wide array of initiatives to further link public health and health promotion to health care and workforce development for clinical and public health careers. We also partner with the Department of Health and Wellness on several ongoing efforts including a student-led Food Equity Initiative, a teaching kitchen used by community and campus organizations to promote healthy eating, and teach life skills as well as cooking skills. We also cohost “The WELL,” where students are trained to do fitness, cardiovascular health and performance testing for campus and community members.

In 2020, NCCHW worked side by side with UNCA student affairs teams to initiate a collaborative peer-led Student Health Ambassador program across 6 college campuses to support a culture of health and safety on campus and in surrounding communities. Over the last 4 years, the Student Health Ambassadors have not only reduced transmission of the COVID-19 virus and supported individuals in isolation and quarantine, but also supported the mental, social, intellectual, and physical health of students and others on these campuses.
UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH & STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

NCCHW offers diverse opportunities for student engagement, emphasizing the idea that the most effective learning comes from actively assisting our communities. Involvement options have included participating in internships, practicum placements or culminating experiences; partnerships with service-learning classes; becoming a student employee; and engaging through the Food Equity Initiative, Student Health Ambassador Program, or Social Bridging Project.

- **128 Student Health Ambassadors** engaged over 7 semesters at UNC Asheville
- **72 students trained and engaged in the Social Bridging Project** (40 undergraduates, 4 Masters in Public Health (MPH) students, 15 Pharmacy students, and 4 medical students)
- **23 individual internships/practical/student employment** of UNCA undergraduate and MPH students
- **4+ UNC Asheville student course projects** - First Year Seminar, Research Methods, Community Health, and Health Communication: Ellen Bailey, Nadia Mazza, Ameena Batada, Fabrice Julien, Jordan Perry

“\It was great working with classmates I hadn’t worked with before and collaborating on something many of us had little experience doing. I enjoyed the conversations I had with both classmates and OLLI members, getting to learn about each of them as well as some people’s interesting connections with cooking.\”

- M. Verolme, First Year Seminar Student

Students and OLLI Intergenerational Experiences

In the fall of 2023, first-year UNC Asheville students and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) members met four times to create connections and community. This included facilitated conversations, cooking and sharing a “Blue Zones” meal together, and a visit to OLLI.

Bryce Fisher, a Senior Health and Wellness major at UNC Asheville, wanted to learn more about falls prevention after his grandmother fell. In Spring 2023, Bryce researched how Tai Chi can prevent falls presented his poster at the Undergraduate Research Symposium.
The Wellness Evaluation and Lifestyle Lab (The WELL)

The UNC Asheville Health and Wellness Department houses several active laboratories that offer a variety of health and fitness assessments. In partnership with the NC Center for Health and Wellness you can have a comprehensive cardiovascular and fitness assessment, performance fitness assessments, body composition tests and health coaching.

The Wellness Evaluation and Lifestyle Lab (The WELL), which began in 2019 in partnership with UNC Asheville, aims to provide health and wellness evaluations for community members, staff, and students.

Assessments range from bone density scans and body composition tests to high-level fitness assessments. These assessments intend to provide scientific data on a person’s overall wellness and fitness levels. These tests are for all ages, fitness levels, and body types. The WELL strives to build a community that values inclusivity, living a healthy lifestyle, and overall well-being. Since 2019, The WELL has trained 13 students to do fitness and health testing. Faculty involvement included support of Sarah Donnelly, Fabrice Julien, Laura K. Jones, Jordan Perry and Tracy George.

PROGRAM IMPACT

2023 WELL FITNESS TESTS PERFORMED:

- **33** iDXA Tests
- **19** VO2Max Tests
- **14** Comprehensive Cardiovascular Assessments
- **5** Lactate Threshold Tests

TEACHING KITCHEN

Health & Wellness faculty and staff have been supporting the use of the Teaching Kitchen for the past 5 years.

The Kids at Work program has used the Teaching Kitchen year round for their twice weekly programs. Other campus and community groups have also used the space for culinary education events, such as the Asheville Bread Festival.

PUBLICATIONS

Co-authors of manuscripts and Collaborative Research (Comorbidity study, Braini, CHW evaluation, Attitudes Towards Violence survey, Student Health Ambassadors Impact manuscript) - Jason Wingert, Aubri Rote, Ameena Batada, Aubrey Mast, Laura K. Jones.

Collaborative Research Webpage: [ncchw.unca.edu/meet-us/collaborative-research](http://ncchw.unca.edu/meet-us/collaborative-research)
**FOOD EQUITY INITIATIVE**

**PROGRAM IMPACT**

The Food Equity Initiative (FEI) is a student-run organization dedicated to eliminating food insecurity within the UNC Asheville community, with a focus on health and sustainability. The project sources and distributes food donations and offers resources, events, and programs that promote food justice, nutrition, and community engagement. FEI’s mission is to ensure that every member of the UNC Asheville community has access to adequate, culturally appropriate and nutritious food for themselves and their families. Students working with FEI distribute food from MANNA food bank and Ingles through food drives, monthly produce markets on campus, community meals and other campus programs.

*22,000 lbs* of food from Manna Food Bank was distributed to the UNC Asheville community, the unhoused community, and Asheville community members from March – December 2023.

*2,750 lbs* of food donated from Ingles was distributed in 2023. FEI continues to receive 250 lbs of food per month that students distribute on campus.

FEI hosted numerous campus events and activities including:
- Regular and pop-up food distributions and Grab-n-Go Snack Bowls
- Community workshops/classes
- Community meals
- Food drives
- Campus Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) box coordination and distribution
- Campus community assessments for health and food insecurity
- Educational/outreach activities on the issues of food justice, food security and food equity

**CLASSROOM INVOLVEMENT & IMPACT**

In Spring 2018, NCCHW staff member and HWP 190 Professor Ellen Bailey led a class project “Addressing Campus Food Security.” Students focused on collecting food for the campus food pantry and hosting pop-up food distributions. In addition, HWP 190 Professor Jen Sanchez-Flack led the project “Understanding the Campus Food Environment” where students assessed the usability and accessibility of campus kitchen facilities and distributed healthy snacks on campus.

**FUNDER**

Walnut Cove Members Association

**DECEMBER 2017 | $7,500**

Additional funding supported by UNC Asheville and local Asheville community organizations.
In the Summer of 2020, six residential institutions of higher education (IHE) and the Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC) in Western North Carolina chose a collaborative approach to mitigating COVID-19 infection rates on campus. UNC Asheville, Western Carolina University, Brevard College, Montreat College, Mars Hill University, and Warren Wilson College hired and trained teams of Student Health Ambassadors (SHAs) to promote healthy and safe campus cultures through rigorous, transformational, and experiential learning.

The SHA project applied the Diffusion of Innovations model of peer-to-peer positive or gain-framed messaging for COVID-19 prevention and wellbeing promotion. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, student health ambassadors on campus went to work to make sure that their classmates in quarantine isolation received the connection and nourishment they needed.

**STUDENT HEALTH AMBASSADOR INSTITUTIONS**

1. University of North Carolina Asheville
2. Western Carolina University
3. Brevard College
4. Montreat College
5. Mars Hill University
6. Warren Wilson College

**FUNDERS**

**YEAR 1 (Fall 2020 - Spring 2021) | $610,000**

NC Collaboratory and Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC)

**YEAR 2 (Fall 2021 - Spring 2022) | $486,524**

**YEAR 3 (Spring 2023 - Fall 2023) | $173,845**

Dogwood Health Trust

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“We have created an environment that makes people feel safe coming to us with concerns regarding mental/emotional health.”

- Warren Wilson College Student Health Ambassador

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

• 1st Place - Leadership Excellence Achievement Partnership (LEAP) Student Org of the Year, UNC Asheville, May 2021

• 1st Place - Community Engagement Partnership Award Western Carolina University, April 2021

• 1st Place - Collaboration of the Year | UNC Asheville, May 2022

PROGRAM IMPACT

Impact of SHAs on Western North Carolina Campus Students

• 83% of student respondents believe SHAs provided a benefit to them and their peers by cultivating a stronger community on campus.

• 70% of student respondents believe their mental health improved as a result of SHA health and wellness activities they engaged in on campus.

Survey Methods: In late April of 2023, a sample of 323 students at all 6 partner campuses of WNC were surveyed using a 0 (not at all) to 4 (very much) Likert scale.

PUBLICATIONS

The UNC Asheville-UNC Gillings Master of Public Health (MPH) is an MPH degree program offered jointly by both UNC Asheville and the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health on the campus of the Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC) in Asheville, NC.

The Master of Public Health program is a competency-based, practice-oriented degree program, designed to provide students with a breadth and depth of knowledge and skills in public health principles and practice through classroom activities and applied learning experiences.

**NCCHW & UNC Asheville - UNC Gillings Master of Public Health**

**Over the past five years,**

- **7** NCCHW and UNC Asheville faculty members have taught in the MPH program
- **12** MPH students have engaged in NCCHW projects
- **6** MPH alumni currently or have worked with the NCCHW
- **27** UNC Asheville alumni have attended the MPH program, which is 40% of MPH students and graduates

Multiple faculty have partnered with NCCHW on community-engaged research projects, and NCCHW’s work has been integrated into several class curricula.

Among graduates,

- **88%**stay in North Carolina
- **77%**stay in Western NC
- **39%**attended UNC Asheville

“I think of you all often and am grateful each day for the incredible chance I had to deepen my awareness and skills around public health through the program.”

– Amy Moore, MPH ‘20
OUR COLLECTIVE VISION

As a team, we’re excited to move forward into 2024 and expand on the strong programming we have established and expanded since the Center’s inception. While we work to be responsive to community and partner needs and emergent opportunities, we have also identified specific issue areas we consider priorities. These include: increasing awareness of and funding for our resources and services; data modernization; deepening our commitment to justice, equity, diversity and inclusion; focused exploration of future directions; and financial sustainability.

We are also actively expanding our mental health evidence-based services and promising practices for increasing social support through online resources and a network of trusted providers statewide. We hope to deepen our use of Community-Based Participatory Research and Action (CBPRA) approaches to evaluation and assessment in partnership with the team we have trained and coached over the past three years. We just launched a new public awareness campaign, StandingStrongNC.org, and we are thrilled to be disseminating this messaging across the state in an effort to prevent falls and save lives. A major Healthy Aging NC initiative is also underway to increase access to chronic disease management programs to effectively improve quality of life among older adults. Finally, we plan to reconvene with NC legislators at our second annual WNC Healthy Policy Initiative Legislative Caucus in early 2024. These are just a few examples of the many ways we are working to advance health equity and justice in the new year.

We are grateful for the partnerships we have nurtured and the support we have received since our establishment and look forward to a bright future.

Emma Olson  
Interim Executive Director/Associate Director & the NCCHW Team
APPENDIX - PUBLICATIONS

See more publications, research, and reports on our Collaborative Research Webpage.

CULTURE OF RESULTS

- **Envisioning Elemental Care**: Multimedia Messages of Community Health Workers short film
- "**Community Health Workers provide comprehensive care and comprehensively care**" Evaluation of the Western North Carolina (WNC) Community Health Workers (CHWs) Initiative
- **McDowell Substance Use Task Force Strategic Plan**
- "**Existimos para ellos/We exist for them**": An Evaluation of the Community Health Workers (CHWs) as Culturally-Responsive COVID Support in WNC Communities Initiative

WNC HEALTH POLICY INITIATIVE

- **Policy Recommendations to Improve Health Outcomes in Rural Areas** - Dr. Jeff Heck
- **Healthcare Access and Job Mobility: How Medicaid Expansion, Private Health Insurance Coverage, and the Local Healthcare Workforce Impacts Local Labor Markets** - Dr. Melissa Mahoney and Dr. Jonathan Brown
- **Sidebar: Regional Relationships: Creative Collaboration for Prevention and Mitigation Among Western North Carolina Learning Institutions**. Hodge B, Lanou AJ. North Carolina Medical Journal July 2021, 82 (4) 260-261; DOI: 10.18043/hcm.82.4.260

ARTHITIS & WELLBEING

FALL PREVENTION

- Bailey, E. “Chronic Conditions and Fall Risk: Cross-Promoting Programs Across the Continuum of Care,” National Council on Aging website
- Contributed to the Special Emphasis Report: Falls in Older Adults, NC Division of Public Health
- Highlighted in the Falls Prevention Guide for State Health Departments: Expanding Falls Prevention Through Surveillance, Community-Clinical Linkages, and Strategic Planning and Evaluation (astho.org)

LIVING HEALTHY PROGRAMS

- PEARLS Program Connects Older Adults in the Charlotte Area | ncIMPACT | PBS North Carolina (https://youtu.be/dAdB8IBeCX0)
- ncIMPACT LinkedIn Newsletter: “Mental Health Town Hall Focused on Older Adults” episode featuring PEARLS.
- New Grant Funds UNC Asheville to Launch PEARLS in North Carolina to Help Aging Adults at risk of Isolation and Depression, UNC Asheville Article.

SOCIAL BRIDGING NC & SOCIAL BRIDGING PROJECT


BOLD

- 2023 BOLD Dementia Caregiver Data Brief
- 2020 Subjective Cognitive Decline Data Brief

HEALTH & WELLNESS DEPARTMENT

- Co-authors of manuscripts and Collaborative Research (Comorbidity study, Braini, CHW evaluation, Attitudes Towards Violence survey, Student Health Ambassadors Impact manuscript) - Jason Wingert, Aubri Rote, Ameena Batada, Aubrey Mast, Laura K. Jones

STUDENT HEALTH AMBASSADORS
