# 2013

# STATE OF THE COUNTY HEALTH REPORT

**Andy Smith, Health Director, Warren County Health Department**
**Larissa Mills, Health Education Supervisor, Warren County Health Department**
**Gwendetta Tunstall, Chairperson, Healthy Carolinians of Warren County**
**Hilda H. Baskerville, Healthy Carolinians Coordinator of Warren County**

**Approved by Warren County Board of Health**

**November 19, 2013**

# HISTORICAL WARREN COUNTY

**Photography by: Economic Development Commission, Warren County**

## INTRODUCTION

Warren County is located in the northeastern Piedmont section of North Carolina. Warren County is bordered by Virginia to the north, Northampton and Halifax Counties to the east, Franklin and Nash Counties to the south and southeast, and Vance County to the west. The climate of Warren County is an average of 59 degrees Fahrenheit.

State and local government is the leading employment in the county, followed by manufacturing, health care and social assistance. Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting and Fishing is a way of life for some county residents. There are 218,000 acres of forest land in the county, and 90-95% of this land is privately owned. There are various programs available to help landowners with planting young trees and middle age trees prior to the process of maturity. Tobacco was the earliest cash crop grown in Warren County. This crop is still being produced today along with cucumbers, cantaloupes, and grains. Although many residents make their living working for state and local government, there are a few industries remaining in the county.

Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau Quick Facts 2013, Warren County's estimated total population is 20,576. A total of 24.8% ages 0-19 and 54.9% age 20-64 and 20.3% 65 and over. The racial breakdown is 40.4 % white and 52.2% black, 5.5% American Indian, 0.4% Asian, 3.6% Hispanic or Latino and 1.6% two or more races. In Warren County, the per capita income is $19,113 which is much lower than the State's average of $25256 for the past twelve months (2007-2011 dollars). Unemployment is a major factor in such a low per capita income. When the unemployment rate of Warren County is compared to the State, the county is much higher. In 2012, Warren County has a range of 11.3 % -14.5% unemployment rates as compared to the state range of 8.8%-10.5%. Persons living below poverty levels in Warren County are 27.1% as compared to the state rate of 16.1 %. The rate slightly increased for both the state and the county from last year. There is a high level of undeveloped areas of the county, which may be a contributing factor to the poverty percentage.

## Morbidity & Mortality

The major causes of illness and death in Warren County are chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease and blood pressure or stroke. The leading causes of death for all ages are diseases of the heart, cancer, cerebrovascular disease, chronic lower respiratory disease, pneumonia and influenza, motor vehicle injuries, nephritis, nephritic syndrome & diabetes mellitus, other unintentional injuries and septicemia. The leading causes of death for the state are diseases of the heart, cancer, Cerebrovascular disease, chronic lower respiratory diseases, other unintentional injuries, Alzheimer's disease, Diabetes mellitus, Pneumonia & Influenza, Nephritis, nephritic syndrome, nephrosis, and motor vehicle injuries to name the top ten causes. It is believed that these chronic illnesses can be reduced dramatically though lifestyle changes, including nutrition education, exercise, smoking cessation, and limited alcohol use.

According to the North Carolina Department Health Human Services (NCDHHS) communicable Disease Branch, Warren County exceeds the state with Chlamydia in 2011. Warren County recorded 110 cases of Chlamydia in 2012 which is decreased from the previous year by 5 cases.

Warren County recorded 66 cases of Gonorrhea for 2012 which is up from the previous year of 52. However, there were no reported cases of primary and secondary syphilis in the past 3 years. Warren County recorded 29 teen pregnancies ages 15 to 19 and a 54.4% pregnancies rate in 2012 while the state recorded 12,535 pregnancies and a 39.6 % rate for the same age group. Warren County reported 8 teen pregnancies for ages 15-17 and the state reported 3,604 for the same age group in 2012.

Our area has its share of chronic respiratory problems including asthma, emphysema and lung cancer. Because of the agriculture-related force economy, jobs, there are a certain amount of injuries and deaths from farm machinery. The county has a low rate of injury or death from industrial work sites due to little manufacturing in the area and an intense safety program at the county's largest employer.

## Other Health Concerns for Warren County

Warren County is one of the poorest counties in the state; citizens are often forced to choose between regular healthcare and doctor visits or such things as groceries, heating fuel or payment of utility bills. The economic situation has always limited a certain group of the population from receiving the services that they not only desire but also desperately need. With most of the work force being either farm or log wood laborers, many are not afforded the luxury of health care insurance. The three main industries within the county provide very little stimulus as far as competitive wages, employee insurance benefits, or preventive healthcare programs for its workforce. Even those persons who are self-employed often are not afforded health or dental insurance because of the high cost and their small amounts of working capital.

Where we live has an impact on our health. The health of a community depends on many different factors, including quality of health care, individual behavior, education, jobs and the environment. Health outcomes represent how healthy a county is while health factors are what influences the health of the county. Warren County ranked 85 in health outcomes and 88 in health factors. Health outcomes had been improved by addressing all health factors with effective, evidence-based programs and policies. The Health Department continuously seeks funding sources to provide as many services as possible for the citizens of the county.

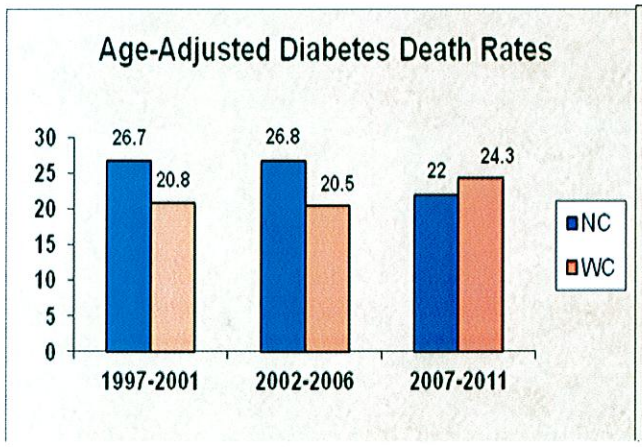
## Priority Health Concerns

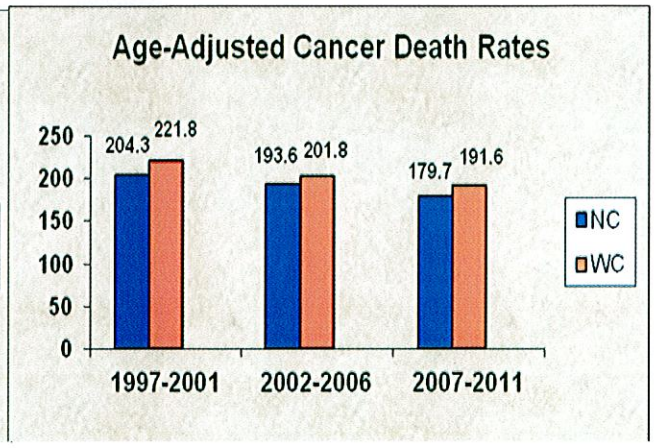
In 2010, Warren County conducted a community health assessment, which, through use of surveys and study of patterns in the community, gave the Health Department a feel for the needs of the area. The surveys identified unhealthy behaviors such as unsafe sex, smoking/tobacco use, poor eating habits, and lack of exercise, not having routine dental and medical check-ups, screenings, reckless driving and violent behavior. The top community issues were drugs/alcohol, dropping out of school, having no hospital here, low income/poverty, unemployment, affordable health services, lack of inadequate health insurance, no health insurance, lack of recreational facilities, and availability of positive activities for teens. Through this assessment, the group was

able to determine areas of major concern and make efforts to continue to address the problems in these areas. The efforts of the Healthy Carolinians of Warren County Partnership appears to stimulate genuine interest by government officials, private citizens and special interest groups in that problems are being identified and someone is taking the lead in seeking and providing solutions to the population in a reasonable fashion. The six areas of concern that are identified by the committee are physical activity and nutrition (obesity, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, Cerebrovascular disease); STD/unintentional pregnancy (HIV, Syphilis, Gonorrhea, Chlamydia); tobacco use; substance abuse; injury (motor vehicle, infant unintentional injuries); and mental health. The committee is working on the top two areas of concern for the next 4 years, Fitness & Nutrition and STD/ Unintentional Pregnancies.

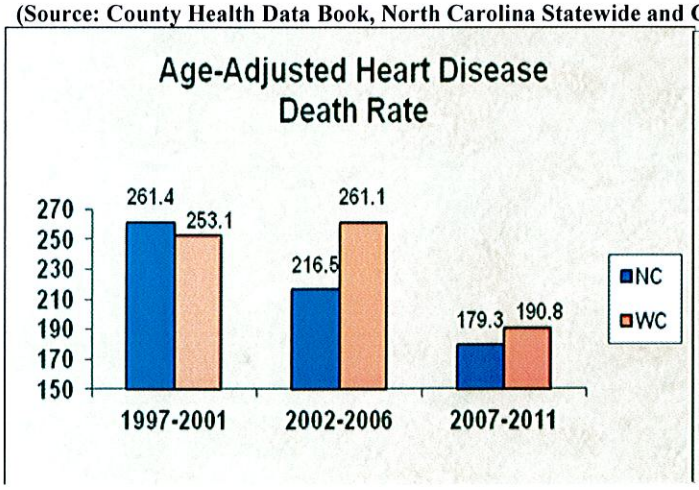
1. **Chronic Diseases (diabetes, cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure)**

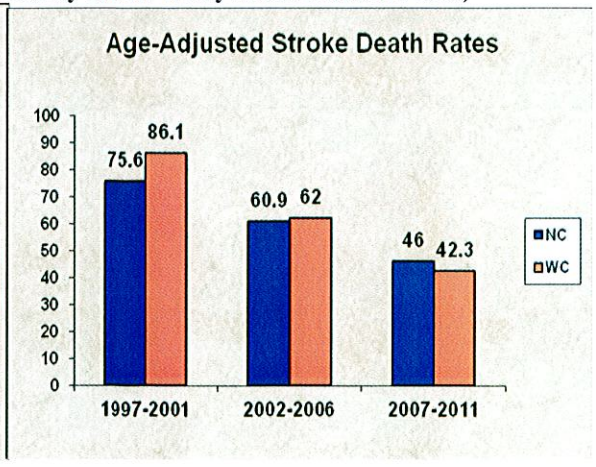
## AGE-ADJUSTED DEATH RATES GRAPH AT A GLANCE




**(Source: County Health Data Book, North Carolina Statewide and County Trends in Key Health Indicators 2013)**

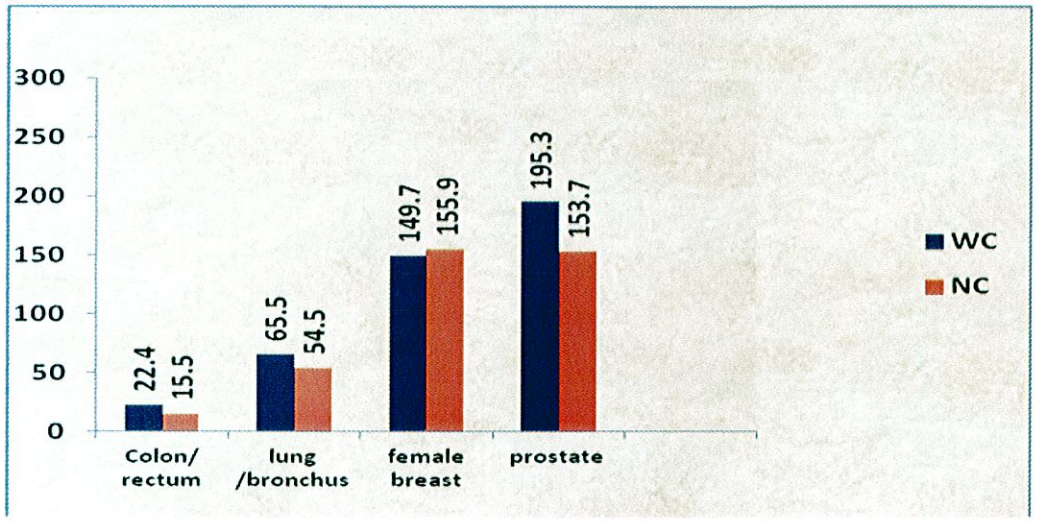



**Source: County Health Data Book, North Carolina Statewide and County Trends in Key Health Indicators2013**

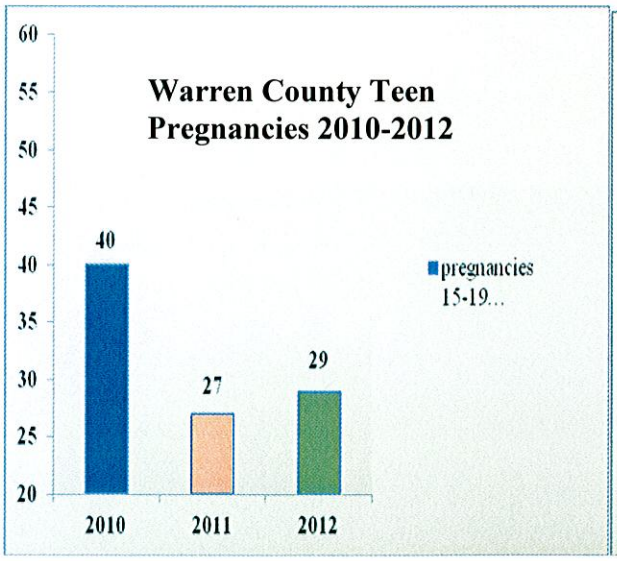
Death rates reveal major areas of health concern in our county. The leading cause of deaths in Warren County and the state are related to heart disease, cancer, diabetes and stroke. Death rates are compared to the state are per 100,000 Population.

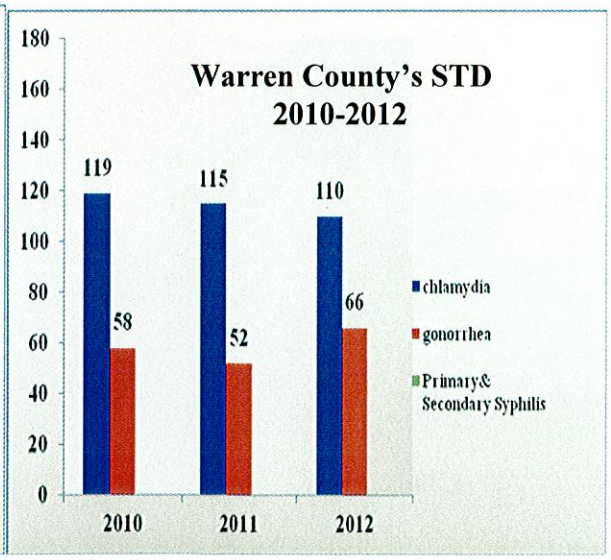
**Warren County & NC Cancer Incidence Rates**
**2007-2011 Per 100,000 Population**




**Source: County Health Data Book, North Carolina Statewide and County Trends in Key Health Indicators 2013**

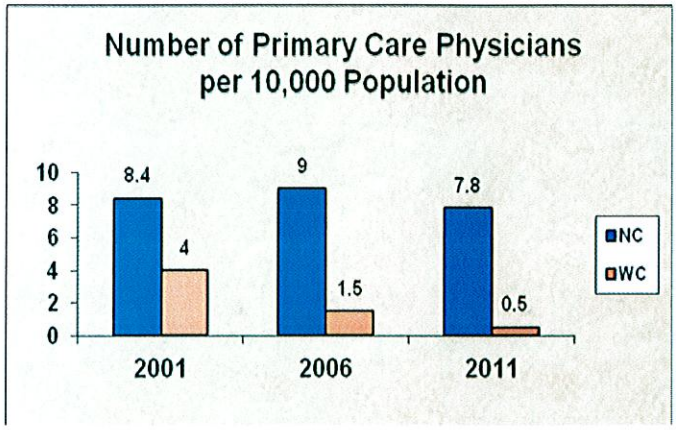
Warren County slightly exceeds the state with all cancers with the exception of female breast cancer.

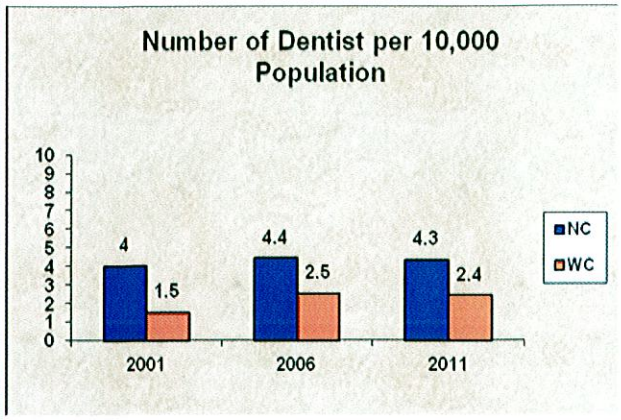



**Source data: NCDHHS (Communicable Disease Branch) 2013**

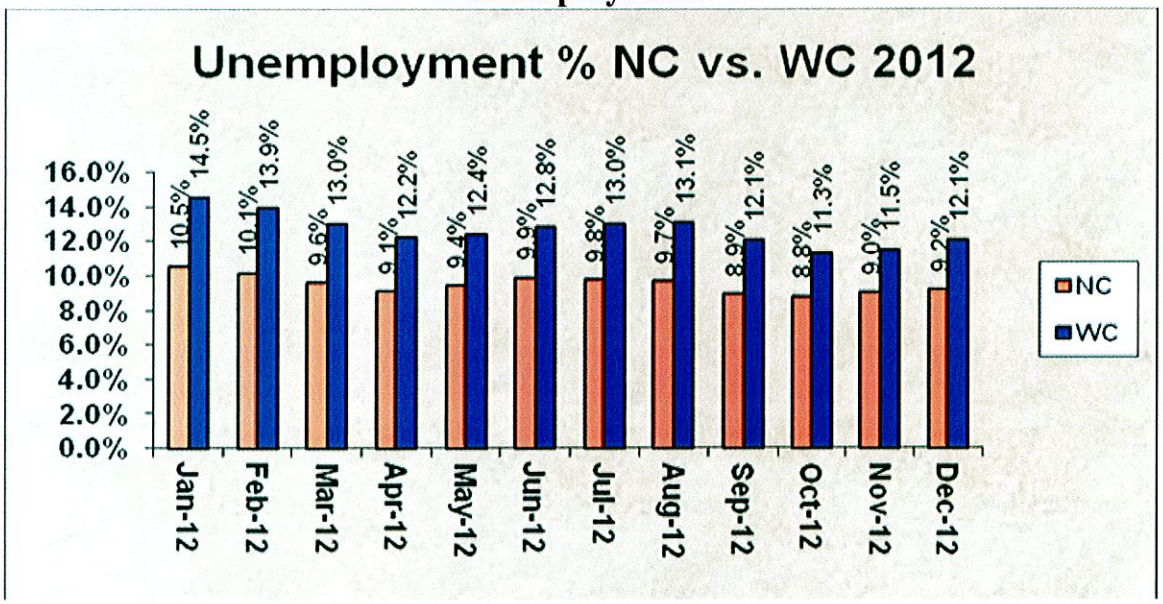
## Quality Health Care Services




**(Source: County Health Data Book, North Carolina Statewide and County Trends in Key Health Indicators 2013)**

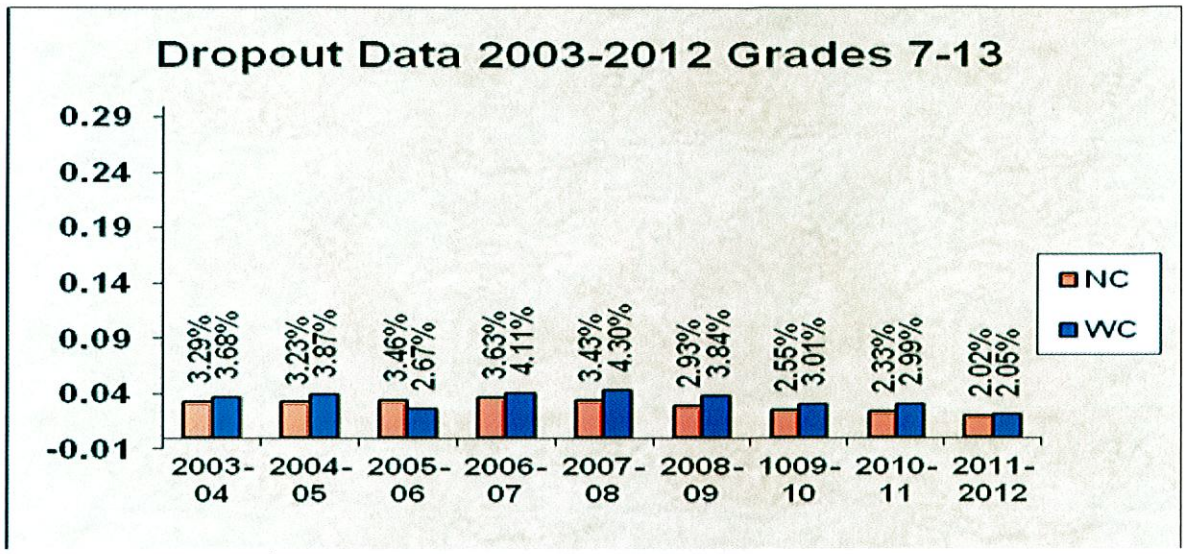
## Unemployment




**(Source: State Agency Data: Department of Commerce 2013)**

The unemployment rate for Warren County exceeds the state rate on an average by about 1-4% for the entire year of 2012. With no hospital and only minimal industry, the school system and county government employs the most people in the county.

## Education/ Dropout




(Source: NC: Department of Public Schools 2013)

The dropout rate is based on students who do not return to school from the previous year. Students who transfer to other public or private schools or who are home schooled are not included. The dropout rate does include students who enroll in community college high school equivalency programs.

### Healthy Carolinians of Warren County Goals & Progress

With Warren County being one of the poorest counties in the state, it was obvious there was a great need to address health issues here in the county. The vision of Healthy Carolinians of Warren County (HCWC) is children, teens and adults living healthy and safe lives through goals of:

~ Increased citizen participation in physical activities
~ Increased citizen commitment to healthy eating
~ Decreased use of illegal drugs by children, teens, and adults
~ Decreased abuse of alcohol by adults
~ Decreased use of alcohol by children and teens
~ Increased use of vehicle safety belts
~ Increased and proper use of child restraint and booster seats
~ Decrease the number of teen pregnancies
~ Decrease the number of STD'S
~Increased the number of children wearing bike helmets

HCWC continues partnering with individuals as well as organizations to address the concerns. After the completion of the 2010 CHA (Community Health Assessment) the priority areas changed their focus. There are currently two working groups within the partnership: a continuation of Fitness and Nutrition (FAN) and a newly formed committee PSPT (Pregnancy/STD Prevention Team). The committee will continue to work with Safe kids with

the Buckle-up program with child restraint safety. Substance abuse education will be conducted on an as needed basis.

**FAN (Fitness & Nutrition) Committee**

- The committee decided to publish two health articles a year on healthy lifestyles. The first health article, "Eating Healthy at Social Gatherings" was published in the local paper on July 9, 2013. The second health article, "Doing Physical Activity in the Winter Months" will be published in the local newspaper on November 2013.

- **Pickleball:** Pickleball celebrated its 2nd year Anniversary on January 16, 2013 from 10:00am to 12:00 noon. There are 8 to 12 people participating on an average at each session. There has been a second court added to accommodate the additional players and continues to be played on Wednesday and Friday. There were a total of 338 participant plays from January to October in 2013. This year, 59 plays were recorded in April being the most and the least plays recorded in February being 15.

- **Family Play Day:** Some committee members participated in the Progressive Ag Safety Day for the 4th graders at Northside Elementary School. The program was sponsored by Cooperative Extension. All 60 participants received a t-shirt that was worn during the event. The FAN committee set up games, such as bean bag toss, badminton, jump ropes, kickball, ball toss, and running games that was enjoyed by the students as well as the committee.

**PSPT (Pregnancy/STD Prevention Team) of Warren County**

- The committee's third of a series of articles on Teen Pregnancy and community awareness was published in the local newspaper the week of June 5, 2013. The article was a personal testimonial from a teen parent interview. The teen shared her experience of how difficult it was for her being a full time student and parent. The student is willing to assist the committee with talking with other students and trying to use her life for an example for others to not have to encounter.

- The committee developed a survey for parents to fill out at WCHD 3rd Annual Health Night Out. The committee collected a total of 13 surveys on STD/Teen pregnancy preventions. Ten citizens agreed that they think this is a problem in the county. Seven citizens indicated they may know of ways to help with this initiative. However, only 2 were interested in attending a community forum to discuss the issues.

- The committee plans to reach out to the community to raise awareness through the PTSA (Parent/Teacher Student Association) meetings and solicit help from parents and students.

The Healthy Carolinians of Warren County has been successful in reaching out to a diverse population for participation in the partnership. The program has reached out to the American

Indians, Hispanics, churches, civic organizations, county agencies, government officials, politicians and county residents in the community to create cross culture participation.

## Early Preventive Health

The Warren County Health Department has several programs in place to address the area of preventive health. Those programs, Exerstyle and Exerstyle plus, provide the wellness center with treadmills, stationary bikes, rowing machines, and low impact aerobics. There is a diabetes support group, regular blood pressure screenings, cholesterol checks and regular distribution of printed materials and samples. Also, walking trails have been marked, along with health fairs being held at the local industries.

Working Landscapes, Warren County Cooperative Extension and Warren County Schools have worked together to develop a new way to get vegetables grown by local farmers (this fall, collards and cabbage) into schools in Warren County and the surrounding region, increasing the school's access to fresh, healthy, local produce. In spring 2013 pilot season, this partnership assisted three local farmers in becoming Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certified under the USDA. These are the first produce farmers in the region to receive this certification! Working Landscapes also set up a processing facility, the Warren County Produce Center, which has the capacity to chop and bag produce, allowing farmers to enter new local and regional markets, and sell a value-added product. As this project continues, Working Landscapes plans to incorporate more farmers, expand the variety of our products, and grow into new local and regional markets.

Produce Packs aims to increase access to fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables in area convenience stores by purchasing produce from farmers, packing it into convenient packages, and distributing it to interested retailers. Produce Packs is a project of Working Landscapes, a Warren County nonprofit whose mission is to create more sustainable livelihoods for people in the Warren County region through stewardship of natural and cultural assets.

Many churches in the county have implemented a health ministry by taking control of their health. There are active exercise programs as well as community gardens that are providing fresh fruit and vegetables for the community.

## New and Emerging Issues

Warren County, like many other rural counties in our nation, continues to be challenged in growing its economy particularly in the area of recruiting new manufacturing jobs. The county has made significant improvements in infrastructure that supports economic growth. However, factors such as a county-wide public water system and extensive broadband Internet availability have contributed to stabilization. Our industries appear to have contributed to increased small business startups and tourism income. Additionally, the county has begun to employ an asset-based economic strategy that will focus efforts to recruit new jobs to appropriate targeted

sectors. Two forty-acre solar farms, as well as Duke Progress Energy's largest roof-top solar panel installation, have been constructed in the county in the past two years.

The North Carolina Division of Public Health (DPH) has been awarded Community Transformation Grant (CTG) funding to work with state and local partners to implement policy, systems and environmental changes that support tobacco free living, active living, healthy eating and high impact evidence-based clinical preventive services over a five-year period. Funding for CTG is authorized through the Affordable Care Act 2010. Johnston County is the lead agency for this grant project. Region 7 that includes Franklin, Granville-Vance, Halifax, Johnston, Nash, Wake, Warren, and Wilson counties have been awarded $400,000 per year for the 5 year grant period of March 1, 2012 – September 30, 2016.

**CTG updates from action teams:**

**Tobacco Team:**

The tobacco action team first objective is to establish tobacco-free grounds for all county agencies within 50 feet of the buildings. The team is working on surveying 200 county residents on their input on tobacco. Currently, Warren County has completed 105 surveys and will continue until we reach our goal. The survey results will be presented to the Warren County Board of Health and to the Warren County Commissioners. The team second objective is to establish tobacco-free multi-unit housing in the county. There are two-multi-housing units in Warren County that will be tobacco-free in January 2014.

**Active Living Team:**

The active living action team first objective is to establish joint-use agreements (JUA) in the county. The team is working with the Warren County Senior Center and the Warren County Parks and Recreation Department to formalize a JUA for the John Graham Gymnasium. The team second objective is to establish Comprehensive Plans with a health component in the county. Currently, the team is assessing various city, county, and school plans to see if they have health considerations into their land-use plans.

**Healthy Eating Team:**

The healthy eating team first objective is to create new/enhance farmers market within the county. The team has been working with Warren County Cooperative Extension and the Warren County Growers Association on enhancing the county's farmers market. New canopies, farmers market toolkits, a cooler, and a portable water fountain station has been purchased to enhance this market. The team second objective is to establish healthy convenience stores within the county. This team is working with Working Landscapes with the Produce Packs initiative at six convenient stores located throughout the county.

## Community Involvement

The Warren County Board of Commissioners proclaimed the month of September 2013 as **"Natural Resources Appreciation Month: *A Celebration of WATER.*"** Water is essential for life and is an agricultural, recreational and economical resource for Warren County. There were various activities throughout the month such as pool aerobics, family & friend's day, water harvesting, exhibits and a movie entitled "Troubled Waters".

The Warren County Environmental Action Team *(EAT)* was established in 2012 with representation of local government, faith community, schools, non-profits, farmers, academics, community activist, students and the county librarian to plan and facilitate the 30th anniversary celebration of the 1982 Warren County PCB toxic landfill protest. The mission of Warren County EAT is to work with others to improve the health and well-being of the citizens of Warren County by:

- Promoting its many natural, agricultural, and cultural resources
- Building on its rich heritage, legacies and history
- Advocating and demonstrating the best green practices

Collaborating Partners for the events were:

- Warren County Cooperative Extension
- Warren County Public Schools
- Warren County Memorial Library
- Warren County Economic Development
- Warren County Water and Soil
- Coley Springs Missionary Baptist Church
- UNC-CH Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
- Kerr Tar Regional Council of Government – 205(j) Water Quality Grant
- Pamlico Tar River Foundation
- Hamme's Mill

## Summary

The Healthy Carolinians of Warren County Partnership has pursued and solicited interest from all areas of the county. A collaborative effort continues between Healthy Carolinians of Warren County (145 partners), the Warren County Health Department, local government officials, county agencies, the Warren County School System, and civic organizations in pursuing every opportunity to address, reduce and/or eliminate the health concerns of the county residents. This goal has been reached by visiting high traffic areas such as grocery stores, chamber of commerce offices, convenience stores, government facilities and healthcare provider agencies. This, in addition to placing printed materials such as brochures and posters at various health fairs, schools and faith based organizations, has been a large part of their initial campaign and efforts towards the healthy lifestyles initiative.