

Chatham County wins Spotlight Award in Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge

Chatham County has been selected to receive \$25,000 as part of the Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge (the Challenge) Spotlight Award. Nationwide, ten winners and five honorable mentions were selected for their ability to address the need to improve opportunities for all Americans – regardless of income, education or ethnic background – to take an active role in healthy living.

The Challenge was launched in 2016 by the Aetna Foundation, along with the American Public Health Association (APHA) and the National Association of Counties (NACo), to help empower 50 small-to-midsize cities and counties to implement innovative solutions for their local public health issues. The 15 selected organizations have tackled community-specific health disparities head-on and developed practical, evidence-based strategies to improve health conditions and promote healthy living.

Chatham County has been highlighted as a Spotlight Award winner for identifying creative partnerships and enacting sustainable and replicable programs that address the unique health issues facing the Chatham community. Specifically, the award recognizes the collaborative effort of the Chatham County Public Health Department and Planning Department, along with the Chatham Health Alliance, to promote and foster health through the recently adopted Chatham County Comprehensive Plan. The partnership resulted in the inclusion of a new Plan Goal, “To foster healthy communities,” and a comprehensive Health Element that details strategies and recommendations to improve community health through the plan. Moving forward, the Chatham Health Alliance will work with these and other partner agencies and organizations to enact the strategies recommended in the Health Element and advance its efforts to shape a healthier Chatham for all.

“Partnership is the key to building a healthier community,” said Health Director Layton Long. “Chatham County’s Comprehensive Plan lays out a collective vision for the county, one that will guide our work in the years to come. We are grateful for this recognition and the continued support from the Challenge.”

The Challenge is a \$1.5 million prize competition among small and mid-sized U.S. cities, counties and federally recognized tribes that plan to address social determinants of health, such as improving access to healthy foods, physical activity and reducing violence and crime. The 50 participants were chosen based on strategies to improve the health of their communities in at least one of five domains: healthy behaviors, community safety, built environment, social/economic factors and environmental exposures.

“At the Aetna Foundation, we know that a positive health impact can be made when communities work together to tackle social determinants of health,” said Dr. Garth Graham, president of the Aetna Foundation. “We are honored to showcase these innovative organizations as Spotlight Award winners for their commitment to improving local health conditions and creating healthier, safer places.”

To learn more about the Chatham Health Alliance, or be involved in these efforts visit www.ChathamHealthAllianceNC.org. For more information on the Spotlight Awards, the recognized organizations and the Challenge, visit www.healthiestcities.org.