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BUNCOMBE COUNTY RECEIVES RWJF CULTURE OF HEALTH PRIZE FROM THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION IN RECOGNITION OF OUTSTANDING EFFORTS TO HELP PEOPLE LEAD HEALTHIER LIVES

Buncombe County’s Collaborative Work to Close the Health Equity Gap Gains National Recognition

Asheville, North Carolina (June 25, 2014) Buncombe County is one of six winners of the 2014 RWJF Culture of Health Prize awarded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). The prize honors communities that are harnessing the collective power of leaders, partners, and stakeholders to help residents live healthier lives. Announced today at the Aspen Ideas Festival Spotlight: Health, Buncombe County will receive a cash prize of $25,000 in recognition of its commitment to building a Culture of Health.

By creating a broad collaboration of community partners and multi-faceted programs to address the county’s most pressing health issues, Buncombe County is on a path to long-term and sustainable change. This work focuses on system and policy change, as well as individual behavior change. Examples of the work include the Community Navigator Program that helps families access needed health, social and community services; a partnership between local businesses and civic groups that is creating a safe space for fellowship and community building in the Shiloh neighborhood; and the Family Resource Center that provides food, clothes, and resources to support families in times of need in one of the county’s communities.

“We are pleased to have been chosen as a RWJF Culture of Health Prize community,” said Gibbie Harris, Health Director, Buncombe County Health and Human Services. “This work celebrates numerous cross-sectored, public/private partnerships and innovative community efforts to improve the health of our residents.”

“Through a systems approach, we have broken down the silos that traditionally exist in social change initiatives,” said Paul Vest, CEO and President of YMCA of Western North Carolina.

“The RWJF Culture of Health Prize winners are leading some of the nation’s most innovative efforts to build a national Culture of Health,” said Dr. Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, RWJF president and CEO. “These communities are inspiring examples of what is possible when all sectors work together so that every resident has the opportunity to live a long and healthy life.”

Buncombe County was among six communities selected from more than 250 prize applications across the country. The other winning communities are Brownsville, Texas; Durham County, North Carolina; Spokane County, Washington; Taos Pueblo Tribal Community, New Mexico and Williamson, West Virginia. Learn more about the RWJF Culture of Health Prize and watch a video profile of Buncombe County and the other prize winners at www.rwjf.org.
Guided by the principle that every community—regardless of health status and resources—has the potential to improve and become healthier, the *RWJF Culture of Health Prize* honors communities that are setting the standard. The *RWJF Culture of Health* prize winners excelled in six criteria:

- Harnessing the collective power of leaders, partners, and community members.
- Working strategically across the multiple factors that influence health.
- Addressing issues that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations.
- Developing sustainable, long-term solutions to shared community priorities.
- Leveraging and maximizing resources.
- Measuring and sharing results.

Buncombe County will celebrate with a community-wide public health event on Friday, September 26, at the Sherrill Center and Kimmel Arena on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Asheville. Local businesses, civic groups, students and community members will be invited to participate in the celebration, learn about the work of the community to move the needle of health forward, engage with the Community Health Improvement Process, and listen to local public officials and guests from RWJF and University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute.

The *RWJF Culture of Health Prize* was launched to further the work of the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* (CHR&R) program, a collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. The *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* help communities understand the many factors that influence health and identify strategies community leaders can take to improve health. Find out more at [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org).

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**About Buncombe County Health and Human Services**

Buncombe County Health and Human Services is the consolidated organization that oversees the Department of Health, Social Services, and Economic Services within Buncombe County government. The mission of the Department of Health is “to protect and promote the public’s health and to assure through community partnerships that all people in Buncombe County have the opportunity to make healthy choices in a healthy environment.” For more information, visit [www.buncombecounty.org](http://www.buncombecounty.org).

**About The YMCA of Western North Carolina**

The YMCA of Western North Carolina is one of the area’s leading nonprofits strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. The Y currently serves Buncombe, Henderson and McDowell Counties with five Y Centers, 22 elementary age afterschool sites and five 21st Century middle school age afterschool sites; engaging over 61,000 families, neighbors and children. Regardless of age, income or background our goal is to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the area’s health and well-being, and provide opportunities to give back and support the community. Deeply anchored in Western North Carolina, the Y has a 125 year history of developing lasting personal and social change. For more information, visit [www.ymcawnc.org](http://www.ymcawnc.org).

**About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**

*For more than 40 years the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve the health and health care of all Americans. We are striving to build a national Culture of Health that will enable all Americans to live longer, healthier lives now and for generations to come. For more information, visit* [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org).
About the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute

The University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute is the focal point within the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health to address questions of what it takes to improve health across the population. The Institute advances health and well-being for all by developing and promoting evidence-informed approaches to policy and practice at the local, state, and national levels. The Institute leads the work on the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps and manages the RWJF Culture of Health Prize. For more information, visit http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu.