



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WNC Colorectal Cancer Screening Initiative Receives Grant from Colon Cancer Coalition

Asheville, NC – The Western North Carolina Colorectal Cancer Screening Initiative (WNC-CRCSI), housed within the Western Carolina Medical Society (WCMS), has received a \$20,000 grant from the Colon Cancer Coalition. This grant will support critical colorectal cancer screening and colonoscopies for western North Carolina neighbors. The WNC-CRCSI Expansion Program offers essential colorectal cancer screenings to average-risk individuals across thirteen counties in WNC.

WNC-CRCSI was founded by Dr. Michael Newcomer of Digestive Health Partners, who continues to serve as its medical director. Upon receiving the grant, Dr. Newcomer shared, “We are grateful to have received continued support from the Colon Cancer Coalition. They continue to be outstanding supporters of education and screening in our region, and their ongoing partnership has been crucial for our program. This grant provides key resources for continued screening access for uninsured residents of western North Carolina. We are seeing an increase in the number of positive screening tests, and this grant will help decrease the burden of colorectal cancer in our region and save lives.”

Save the date for the 2026 “Get Your Rear in Gear” run/walk 5K on Saturday, August 1, 2026, at Carrier Park. Join the Colon Cancer Coalition and the WNC-CRCSI to raise funds to support colon cancer screening.

About the WNC Colorectal Cancer Screening Initiative

The WNC Colorectal Cancer Screening Initiative (WNC CRCSI) provides vital colorectal cancer screening to average-risk, uninsured, low-income patients between the ages of 45 and 75 in thirteen counties throughout WNC. The program is run by Digestive Health Partners (a gastroenterologist practice in Asheville) in collaboration with local federally qualified community health centers, WCMS’s Project Access, independent primary care offices, and the American Cancer Society. The program was founded by local

physician, Dr. Michael Newcomer of Digestive Health Partners, who remains the medical director of the program. Started in 2019, the WNC CRCSI is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) housed within WCMS. In 2025, the WNC-CRCSI screened over 1,000 uninsured individuals and provided 68 free colonoscopies.

About the Colon Cancer Coalition

The Colon Cancer Coalition is a non-profit organization based in Minneapolis, Minn. dedicated to encouraging screening and raising awareness of colorectal cancer. The organization's signature Get Your Rear in Gear® and Tour de Tush® event series are volunteer-driven in communities throughout the United States. Money raised at these events are granted back into local communities to help will build and sustain programs and research encouraging early prevention, screening, and patient support for this disease. By making the words *colon*, *colorectal* and *colonoscopy* a part of the everyday language, we believe we can overcome the fear and decrease deaths from this largely preventable cancer. For more information visit ColonCancerCoalition.org.

About The Western Carolina Medical Society

The Western Carolina Medical Society's mission is to advocate for healthy communities, increase access to affordable healthcare, fight health inequities, and promote wellness in WNC. Since 1885, WCMS has been respected for its leadership and innovation in addressing issues of access to affordable health care, disparities in health, and wellness promotion. Throughout its history, WCMS has been at the forefront of working collaboratively with area organizations to address the health challenges facing our community's residents.

For more information about the Western Carolina Medical Society, contact Niki Duff, Director of Development & Communications at niki@mywcms.org or visit www.mywcms.org.

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