



**TASK FORCE ON RURAL HEALTH**  
**Tuesday, May 14, 2013**  
**Guilford County Department of Public Health**  
**1203 Maple Street, Greensboro, NC 27405**  
**10:00am – 3:00pm**  
**Meeting Summary**

**Attendees**

*Members:* Paul Cunningham (co-chair), Robin Cummings (co-chair), Donna Tipton-Rogers (co-chair), Teri Bryant Adou-Dy, Jason Baisden, Ronny Bell, Danielle Breslin, Silvia Cendejas, D. Gregory Chadwick, Olivia Collier, Laura Edwards, Barb Gallagher, Laura Gerald, Joy Grady, Jim Graham, Phillip Hardin, Robin Jenkins, Polly Johnson, John Kauffman, Nena Lekwauwa, Armando Limon, Andy Lucas, Addie Luther, Will Mahone, E. Benjamin Money, Jennifer Nixon, Rebecca Olson, = Mary Piepenbring, John Price, Andrea Radford, Nancy Reigel, A. Ray Rogers, Margaret Sauer, Jeff Spade, Willona Stallings, and Dennis Streets

*Steering Committee and NCIOM Staff:* Kimberly Alexander-Bratcher, Renee Godwin Batts, Elizabeth Chen, Chris Collins, Linda Kinney, J. Nelson-Weaver, Joy Reed, Mikki Sager, Pam Silberman, Anne Williams, Patrick Woodie, Berkeley Yorkery, and Adam Zolotor

*Guest and Other Interested People:* N. Yolanda Burwell, Scott Daugherty, Sarah Grimme, Rev. Richard Joyner, Sadaf Knight, Melissa Lowry, and Marshall Tyson

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

*Robin G. Cummings, MD, FACC, FACS*  
*Director*  
*Office of Rural Health and Community Care*  
*North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services*

*Paul Cunningham, MD*  
*Dean, Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Medical Affairs*  
*Brody School of Medicine*  
*East Carolina University*

Dr. Cummings and Dr. Cunningham welcomed everyone to the Task Force's second meeting and asked all attendees to introduce themselves.

## **CONETOE: A STUDY IN PROMISING COMMUNITY PRACTICES**

*Reverend Richard Joyner*

*Pastor and Executive Director*

*Conetoe Family Life Center*

Reverend Joyner gave an overview of the demographics and health data for Conetoe, North Carolina. In Conetoe, Reverend Joyner cites the high number of premature deaths in the area and states that it is “commonplace” for members of the community to die young. In addition, he listed lack of transportation, lack of public safety officials, and lack of fresh produce as major socio-environmental factors that exacerbate health outcomes and quality of life issues for Conetoe residents. In order to address these needs, Reverend Joyner and the Conetoe Family Life Center capitalized on the availability of land in the area to start a summer program for Conetoe youth. During the agriculture camp all students exercise, attend cooking classes, work on genetic testing of seeds and plants, and grow and harvest fresh vegetables. The students then sell their produce or use them to barter for fish, thus equipping them with real work experience prior to graduating from high school. Reverend Joyner concludes his presentation by stating that while genetics are not changeable, lifestyle and healthcare are changeable; health transformation starts in the home and the community.

A copy of Reverend Joyner’s presentation is available here: [Conetoe Family Life Center](#).

*Selected questions and comments:*

- Q: How long will you need to see the effects of this program?  
A: The goal is to have 100 students participate in the program each summer for 20 years to break the cycle of poverty.
- Q: Are you spreading this model?  
A: We are trying to replicate this program in other places. Our goal is for it to be self-sustaining in the future.

## **POVERTY IN RURAL NORTH CAROLINA**

*N. Yolanda Burwell*

*Senior Fellow*

*Rural Research and Innovation Office*

*North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center*

Ms. Burwell opened her presentation by expanding the traditional categories of people who “live on the economic margins” and experience poverty to include individuals with fixed incomes, migrant farmers, and recent college graduates. She drew a distinction between poverty and being poor, cautioning Task Force members not to assume that those living in poverty consider themselves to be poor. The northeast and southeast regions of North Carolina have the highest rates of poverty. However, it is not the number of jobs that needs to be increased, it is the wage level. Work opportunities alone do not change poverty. Ms. Burwell then talked about the three kinds of poverty – generational, situational (e.g. new unemployment status), and place-based. She added three additional factors that lead to place-based poverty:

1. Food deserts: The USDA has recently unveiled an interactive [Food Access Research Atlas](#) that maps food deserts and tracks access to healthy foods nationwide.
2. Shortage of medical personnel and medical facilities

### 3. Environmental contamination

A copy of Ms. Burwell's presentation is available here: [Rural Poverty in North Carolina](#).

*Selected questions and comments:*

- C: Food deserts are an important policy issue. USDA distinguishes between urban food deserts (1 or more mile away from healthy food source) and rural food deserts (10 or more miles away from healthy food source).

#### **RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

*Scott Daugherty*

*Commissioner for Small Businesses*

*Director, Small Business and Technology*

*North Carolina Department of Commerce*

Commissioner Daugherty presented the Department of Commerce's changing approach for rural economic development and job creation.

A copy of Commissioner Daugherty's presentation notes is available here: [Rural Economic Development](#).

#### **NORTHEAST TRANSFORMATION ZONE**

*Marshall Tyson, MPH*

*Manager of the Health and Wellness Unit*

*Women's and Children's Health Section*

*Division of Public Health*

*North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services*

Mr. Tyson gave a brief overview of the Race to the Top grant and the Northeast Transformation Zone that consists of Beaufort, Bertie, Chowan, and Hyde counties. He then presented information on two important programs: Triple P and NorthEast Connects.

A copy of Mr. Tyson's presentation is available here: [The Early Learning Challenge in North Carolina](#).

#### **DISCUSSION AND VOTING ON PRIORITIES**

The goal of this next session was to set priorities for our Task Force that the meeting's topic of community and environment. As a whole group, we brainstormed potential priorities including: jobs/economic stability, place-based poverty/breaking the cycle of poverty, education/early education (cradle to grave), disparities, environmental pollution, transportation, isolation in rural areas, housing, access to healthy food, access to capital/entrepreneurship, violence/crime/safety, built environment/parks and recreation (also lifestyles), utilities/infrastructure/broadband, generational culture, and retaining community assets (including future leader).

Each Task Force member present voted on top priorities and the two overall priorities that were identified by the Task Force were jobs/economic stability and education.

## **DISCUSSION AND VOTING ON STRATEGIES**

The goal of this final session was to brainstorm and vote on strategies to address the Task Force priorities identified above: jobs/economic stability and education. The Task Force split into six groups where three discussed strategies to improve jobs/economic stability and the other three discusses strategies to improve education in rural settings. After reporting back to the whole Task Force, the strategies were combined into broader categories for voting. Before voting, Task Force members provided feedback on voting categories and sought clarification. Once concerns were addressed, Task Force members voted on top strategies to improve economic development and education in rural areas in the next five years. The recommended strategies of the Task Force are below, ordered by the number of votes received.

### **Top Strategies for Improved Jobs/Economic Stability in Rural North Carolina**

1. Invest in infrastructure (e.g. water, sewer, technology, transportation)
2. Invest in health care (including Medicaid expansion)
3. Develop regional industries and local resources (e.g. farm to table, fishing, tourism, agriculture, solar)
4. Encourage communication between community leaders (business, education, and faith) to support local economic development.
5. Recruit and retain industry
6. Create workforce development programs to support local economy

### **Top Strategies for Improved Education in Rural North Carolina**

1. Increase support for quality childcare and education (birth-5) and parenting supports to improve school readiness
2. Better recruitment and retainment of strong teachers
3. Increase technology/internet infrastructure
4. Increase K-12 parent engagement and involvement (e.g. PTA/PTO, classroom visits)
5. Promote innovative/non-traditional educational programs and strategies (e.g. flipping the classroom and project-based learning)
6. Increase adult learning opportunities and professional development