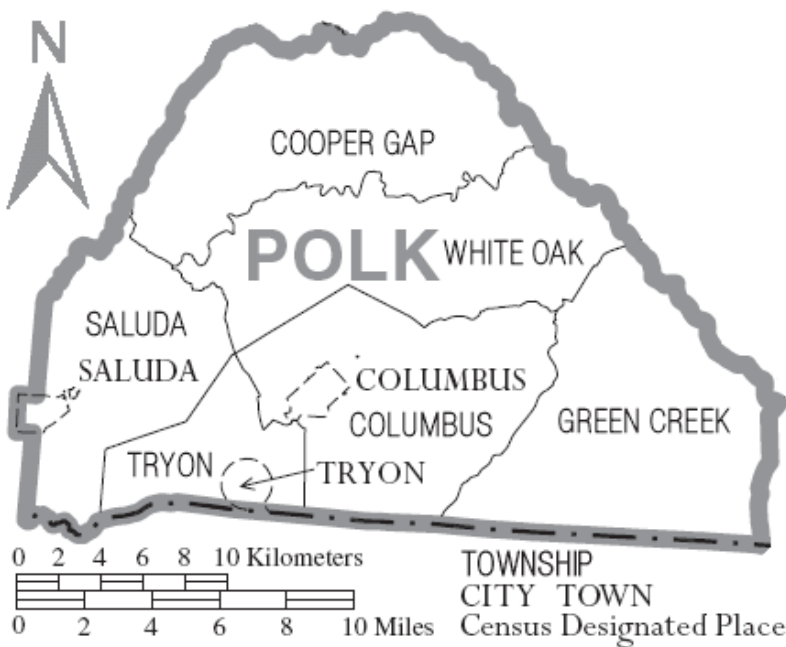


2009 SOTCH

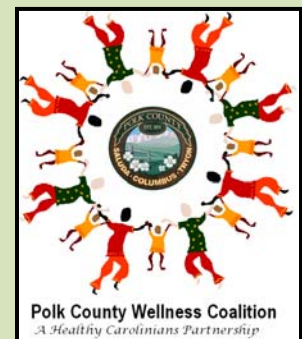
Polk County State of the County Health Report



Submitted by:

Polk County Wellness Coalition

Rutherford-Polk-McDowell District
Health Department



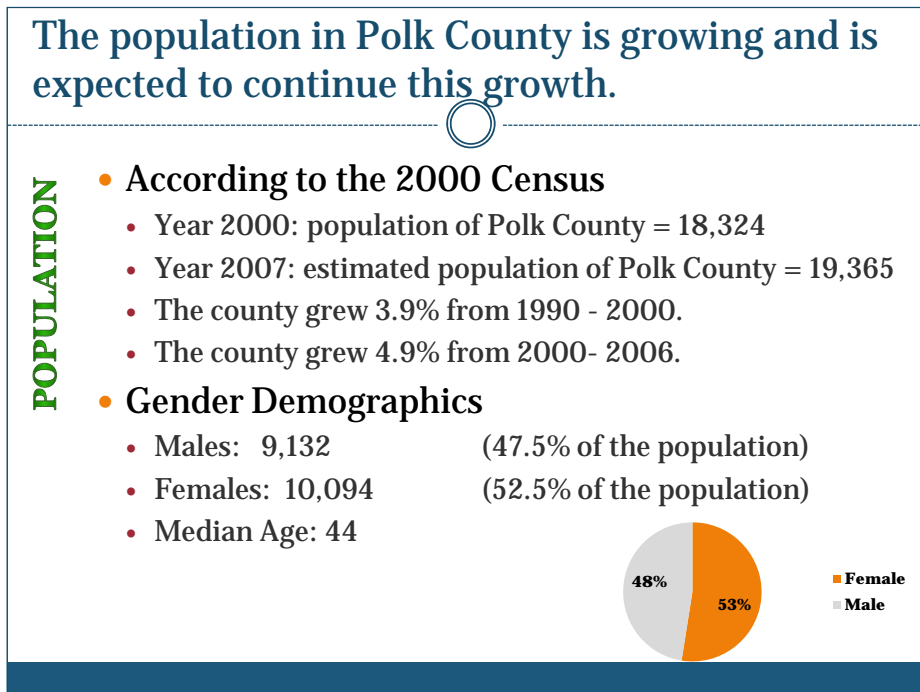
*Working Together for
A Healthy Community*

OVERVIEW

Every four years the State of North Carolina requires every local health department and North Carolina Healthy Carolinians Partnerships to conduct a community health assessment. A community health assessment is a process that allows the members of the community and stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the health needs and concerns of the community.

During the three interim years, the local health departments and Healthy Carolinian Partnerships are responsible for issuing the State of the County Health (SOTCH) report. The 2009 Polk County SOTCH report is an annual review of the priority health issues that were chosen in the 2008 Polk County Community Health Assessment. The report serves to inform the community and stakeholders about the health status of our residents and provide an update of the past year's progress.

Polk Demographics



2000 US Census

Leading Causes of Death (2006) in Polk County

- 1.) Heart Disease**
- 2.) Cancer**
- 3.) Cerebrovascular Disease**
- 4.) Alzheimer's Disease**
- 5.) Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease**

Source: 2002-2006 NC Resident Death Rates, 2008 County Health Data Book, NC Dept of Health and Human Services

The majority of the leading causes of death are chronic diseases. Despite their preventable nature, chronic diseases account for more than 75% of the nation's \$2 trillion medical costs. In Polk County, the leading causes of death include heart disease, cancer, cerebrovascular disease and chronic lower respiratory disease. Most of these diseases can be prevented through behavioral changes, such as eating healthy, being physically active, and not using tobacco.

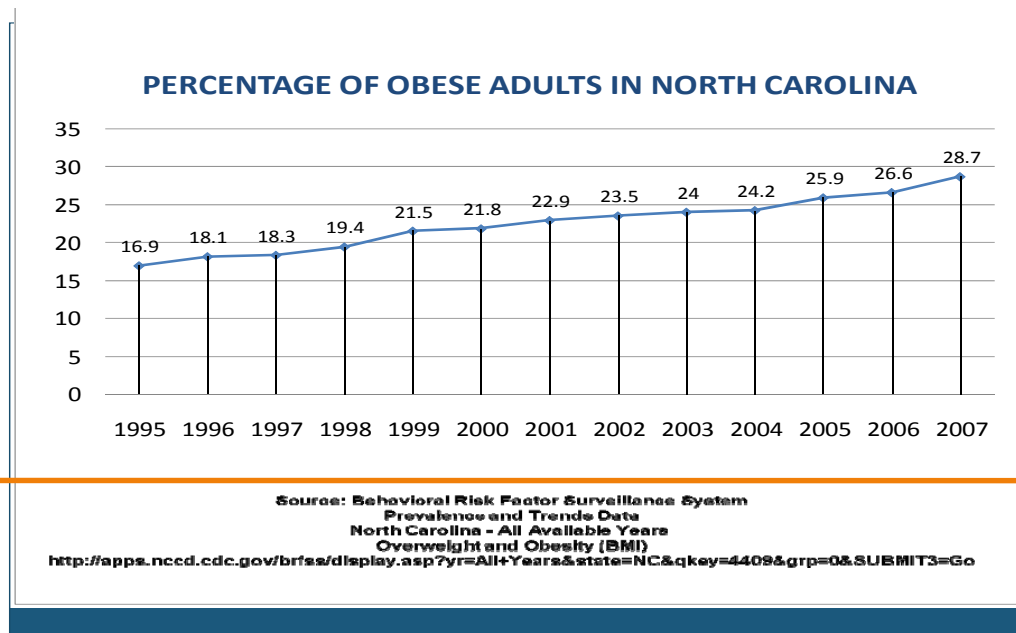
ACTION ON PRIORITY HEALTH ISSUES

Priority health issues are chosen through a public process every four years that includes conducting a community health survey, listening sessions, health data review and a health summit. At the Polk County Health Summit, held in October 2008, the community voted to chose obesity, access to care for the uninsured, mental health/substance abuse and prevention/education as the priority health concerns of the community.

1. OBESITY

Obesity is a growing public health concern for the nation, North Carolina, and locally. Obesity is caused due to the lack of physical activity, lack of recreational facilities and pedestrian planning, and poor nutritional diet. Obesity increases the likelihood of someone developing certain chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, some types of cancer, heart disease and high blood pressure.

Looking at the data on adult obesity in North Carolina, the chart below shows a steady increase in obese adults from 1995 – 2007. The 2008 data from the same source shows an increase from the previous year with 29.5% adults falling into the obese category.



The most local adult obesity data available is the Western NC region Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey that includes Polk County (shown below) shows a slight dip in the percentage of obese adults in WNC in 2008 but and increase of overweight adults from the previous year:

Year	Total	Obese	Underweight	Recommended Range	Overweight
2004	1570	23.4	1.5	35.4	39.7
2005	1916	25.8	2.3	38.7	33.3
2006	1590	25.1	2.2	36.3	36.3
2007	2782	26.0	1.8	35.1	37.1
2008	2794	25.7	1.7	34.9	37.6

The NC-NPASS data is the only comparison data available to view trends in Polk County obesity rates for children. The chart below shows a decrease in obesity rates but the data is derived from a low number of children reported by the Polk County Health Department. Also, data for 2006 does not compare well because it represents a larger age bracket, 2 – 20 instead of 2 – 18.

Overweight: low-income children who are overweight (Percent) – 2004 to 2007
Overweight = >=95th Percentile

Data Source: NC-NPASS Data on Childhood Overweight
<http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Data/ChildAndYouthData.html>

	North Carolina	McDowell	Polk	Rutherford
2004	17.0%	10.8%	15.5% (n=25)	14.2%
2005	16.7%	14.2%	17.2% (n=31)	13.4%
2006	15.8%	16.2%	19.9% (n=27)*	20.9%
2007	17.3%	13.4%	12.7% (n=24)	14.4%
2008	17.5%	12.9%	12.4% (n=20)	13.6%

Definitions: The percentage of overweight children, ages 2-18, seen in public health clinics.

***Note** that in 2006, the age range for this indicator changed to children ages 2-20.

The Polk County Wellness Coalition's Obesity, Physical Activity and Nutrition (OPAN) Action Team and community partners have worked together on the following strategies to combat the obesity epidemic at many levels:

Nutrition Education

- Polk County Cooperative Extension Service Family and Consumer Education Program provided:
 - *Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less* series presented to:
 - Polk Vocational Services – 12 week series, 18 participants
 - Polk County Schools – 12 weeks, 9 participants
 - Saluda Senior Center - 4 weeks, 10 participants
 - Men's Cooking Class - 10 weeks, 10 participants
 - Kids' Healthy Cooking Class – 3 Part series, 10 students
- Polk County School nurses trained elementary teachers in Food For Thought Nutrition Education curriculum and provided nutrition education kits to each elementary school.
- Health Department's WIC peer counselors provide education and support to breastfeeding mothers

Increase Access To Healthy Foods

- The Polk County Agricultural Economic Development Office works to promote agriculture within the county in order to ensure good health, economic development, and protection of natural resources. It has been involved with 12 community gardens and 34 home gardens throughout the county. The office also runs four farmers markets during the spring, summer, and fall months located in Saluda, Green Creek, Columbus, and Tryon on different days of the week. In addition to the community gardens and farmers markets, the Agricultural Economic Development Office collaborates with the Polk County Farm Bureau to host a Friends of Agriculture breakfast each month, each session with an informative guest speaker. Attendance usually runs at about 100 people for the breakfasts. The gardens, markets, and monthly breakfasts serve as opportunities for education, entrepreneurship, and fellowship among community members interested in local food efforts. In addition, in October 2009, the Office collaborated with the Town of Columbus and the NC Cooperative Extension to host the first annual Columbus Farm Festival, which involved 3000 participants.
- An Angel Food Ministry has been established to provide lower cost food purchases through volume buying. Every month menus are available on-line at www.FreeToReign.org (click on Angel Food) or flyers are in the lobby of the Polk County Health Department, Ashley Meadows (located off of 108 between Highway 74 and Polk County High School).

Health Promotion

- Eat Smart Move More Maintain, Don't Gain Holiday Challenge promoted to Polk agencies and school personnel.
- Fruit and Veggies, More Matters electronic newsletter by the Produce for Better Health Foundation promoted through Polk agencies and school personnel
<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org>

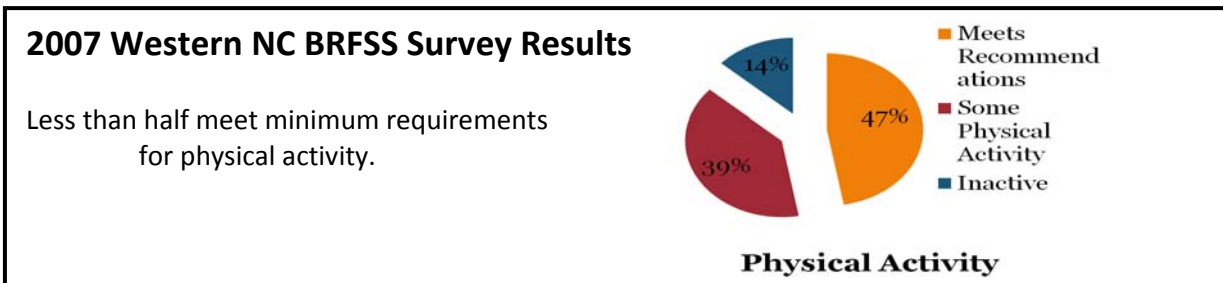
Services To Treat Obesity

- Polk Wellness Center, Saluda Medical Center and Springs Medical Center counsel patients on weight.
- Polk Health Department counsels patients on Body Mass Index
- Rutherford-Polk- McDowell Women, Infants and Children Program added a registered dietitian to the Polk/Rutherford staff. The dietitian is available to serve Polk children who are obese on a limited basis.

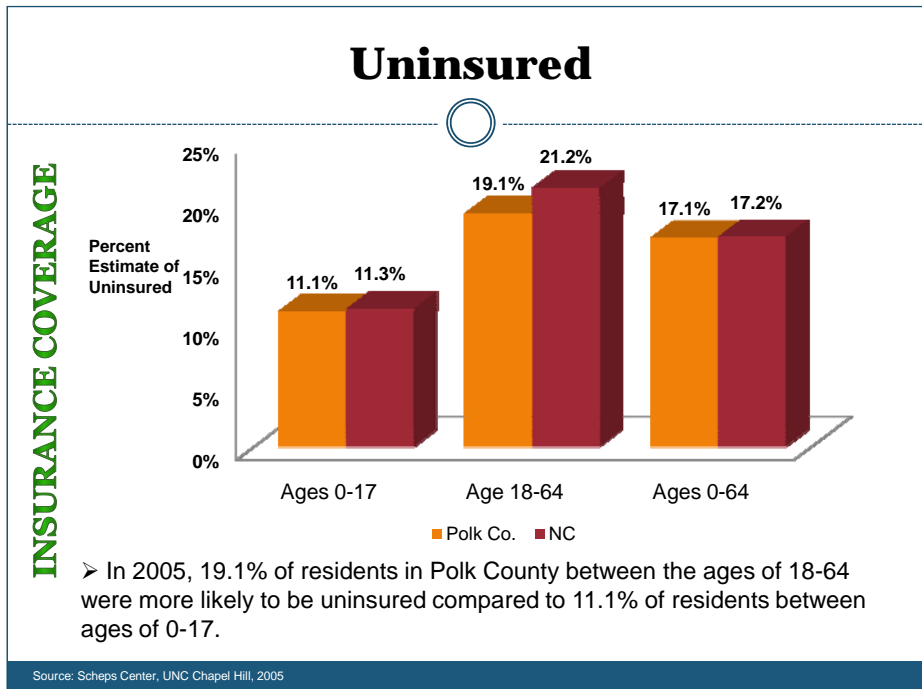
Environmental Change To Increase Physical Activity

A Greenway Master Plan Committee has organized to assist Isothermal Planning and Development Commission with a Regional Greenway Master Plan.

- 29% of people who responded to the Polk County Health Assessment Survey were dissatisfied with the lack of greenways and trails.
- 74% surveyed said they would choose increasing exercise as their wellness goal.



2. ACCESS TO CARE FOR THE UNINSURED



Health Navigator

The Polk County Wellness Coalition Health Navigator is funded through Access II Care of Western NC and HealthNet to better serve the needs of the uninsured between the ages of 18-64 that are at or below the 200% federal poverty level. The Health Navigator makes sure that Polk County residents have information they need to access health and behavioral health systems such as primary care, mental health, substance abuse and social services. The Health Navigator acts as an advocate for the uninsured.

Top 5 Issues

Source: 2008 Polk County Community Health Assessment Survey

<p>Personal Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Access to Dental Care•Access to Medical Care•Access to Vision Care•Access to Specialized Medical Care•Stress	<p>Community Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Tobacco Use Among Adults•Obesity•Tobacco Use Among 17 & under•Poor Eating Habits/Lack of Good Nutrition•Drug Abuse Among Adults
<p>Don't Know Where to Get Help for the Following Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Don't have enough money to pay bills•Stress•Access to Specialized Medical Care•Don't have enough money to buy clothes/shoes•Obesity	<p>Top Issues Written in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Obesity•Medical Services•Drug Abuse•Mental Health/Depression•Nutrition/Poor Diet

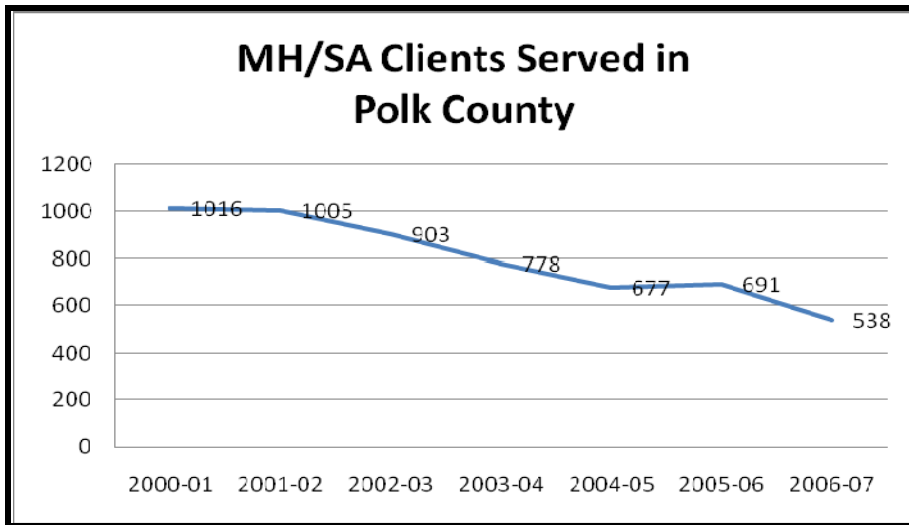
Access To Dental Care

Forty-two adults received dental services from the NC Baptist Men Dental Van. The Columbus Baptist Church in Columbus hosted the van Tuesday, October 27 thru Thursday, October 29. The cost for a dental visit was \$5 per person.

The Access to Care Committee is preparing a proposal to present to the Joint Oversight Board in November for an adult dental center to be established in Polk County.

The Collins Dental Center primarily serves children from Polk and Rutherford Counties from their first tooth to the age of 21. They provide dental care to the children who are uninsured or have Medicaid/NC Health Choice. The center also sees adults with emergencies who have no insurance and qualify for the Health Departments' sliding fee scale.

3. MENTAL HEALTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE



An estimated 5,074 people in Polk County have a diagnosable mental disorder. Since mental health reform in the state, there has been a drastic decrease in persons being treated. Source: Western Highlands LME Utilization Data

The Polk County Wellness Coalition is learning to work collaboratively and through systems thinking to develop a long term perspective to improve community health and build community-wide support among providers, consumers and advocates.

A local ad hoc group, the Polk County Mental Health and Substance Abuse Initiative worked with the Polk County Commission and Western Highlands to help Family Preservation hire mental health and substance abuse counselors, to create a crisis response program at St. Luke's Hospital, to provide education and training to counselors in the Polk County School System, to establish a mental health deputy program at the Sheriff's Department and to maintain a dialogue with area providers, consumers and advocates on current happenings in Polk County and beyond.

The Polk County Mental Health and Substance Abuse Initiative with assistance from the Polk County Wellness Coalition opened the Polk Wellness Center with funding provided by Western Highlands LME. This is an integrated care facility—assisting clients in primary care, mental health and substance abuse.

Polk Wellness Center has served 400 Polk County residents since it opened its doors in March 2009. Services are available to persons who struggle with emotional difficulties, mental health illnesses, relationship problems, addictions or substance use disorders. Crisis services are also available during office hours Monday through Friday. Primary care is also offered to the uninsured on a sliding fee based on financial assessment and there is a waiting list for primary care services due to limited funding for these services.

Grant writing and resource development is an ongoing challenge to fund the high overhead of facilities and professional staff to meet the needs of this growing population.

4. PREVENTION EDUCATION

Strategic Planning With all Community Partners for a Healthy Community

The Prevention Education Action Team is researching models and developing an interdisciplinary approach to defining Polk County wellness or thriving. A wellness strategy will be a foundation to the functioning of the Wellness Coalition and a reference point for other action team projects.

An initial part of this interdisciplinary work is asset mapping which will build collaboration among traditional and non-traditional partners. This is a process of community building and data gathering aimed at systematically inventorying community assets or attributes - human, material, financial, entrepreneurial, programmatic, and other resources in order to increase networking and collaborative potential amongst community based organizations to best serve the needs of the community. It will complement the Vision 2020 process, expand planning parameters beyond a land use focus, and provide information for a community resource directory.

Asset mapping and preferred futures visioning, in addition to Vision 2020, can be the basis for a broad strategy for community thriving. Within this framework, the prevention team in conjunction with the Mental Health/Substance Abuse Team aims to develop a comprehensive Mental Health/ Substance Abuse Prevention plan.

Social Determinants of Health

The Polk Prevention/Education Action Team would also like to shift the way the entire community thinks about health. The most powerful determinants of health standards in modern societies are social and economic factors that cause disadvantage. Life expectancy is shorter and most diseases are more common further down the social ladder in each society. The team aims to educate leaders, institutions, and social networks that more equitable social policies, secure living-wage jobs, affordable housing, racial justice, good schools, community empowerment, and family supports are health issues and just as critical as diet, tobacco use, and exercise in affecting health outcomes. By investing in these conditions for health now, we can reduce what we pay for poor health later.

To raise awareness about the social determinants of health, the Prevention Education Team has shown the “Unnatural Causes” documentary series to 8 groups in Polk County. This DVD series televised on PBS, examines America’s socio-economic and racial inequities in health - and searches for root causes. The documentary presents how the social conditions in which we are born, live and work profoundly affect our health and longevity.

Thursday, March 18 – April 22, the Polk Wellness Coalition is sponsoring a free weekly leadership series for the community at Isothermal Community College featuring four training films on Successfully Following Your Vision produced by Dewitt Jones and two episodes of the Unnatural Causes series. Web site: <http://www.unnaturalcauses.org>

Following the leadership series, the Prevention Team will host a Spring public forum in an effort to bring together people who have been engaged in this discussion. The aim is to organize an advocacy/work group that will develop a strategy to address root causes of poor health in Polk County and begin thinking towards a systems approach to achieve community wellness.

Listed below are facts about the US that will frame the discussion: (source: http://www.unnaturalcauses.org/assets/uploads/file/AmazingFacts_small.pdf
Produced by California Newsreel with Vital Pictures • Presented by the National Minority Consortia of public television)

Per person, the U.S. spends more than twice the average of other industrialized countries on health care - 16% of our GDP in 2006 - yet has some of the worst health outcomes: worse than 28 other countries in life expectancy (including Jordan) and 29 other countries in infant mortality (including Slovenia).

For all the rich countries for which there is data, the U.S. has:

- the highest infant mortality rate
- the highest homicide rate
- the highest teenage birth rate
- the highest incarceration rate (we house one fourth of the world's prisoners)
- the highest child poverty rate
- the highest child injury death rate
- the greatest gap between high and low mortality rates within a country
- the highest number of people living alone
- the highest poverty rate
- the most hours worked (except for New Zealand)
- the smallest middle class
- the largest wealth gap between the rich and the rest of the population
- the lowest voter turnout

NEW INITIATIVES

Nurse Family Partnership (NFP)

An evidence-based nurse home visitation program that improves the health, well-being and self-sufficiency of first-time, low-income parents and their children is serving 23 first time mothers in Polk County.

Three randomized controlled trials of the NFP model in other states have documented substantial, consistent and dramatic benefits to both mother and child, including improved prenatal health, fewer childhood injuries, fewer subsequent pregnancies, increased intervals between births, increased maternal employment and improved school readiness

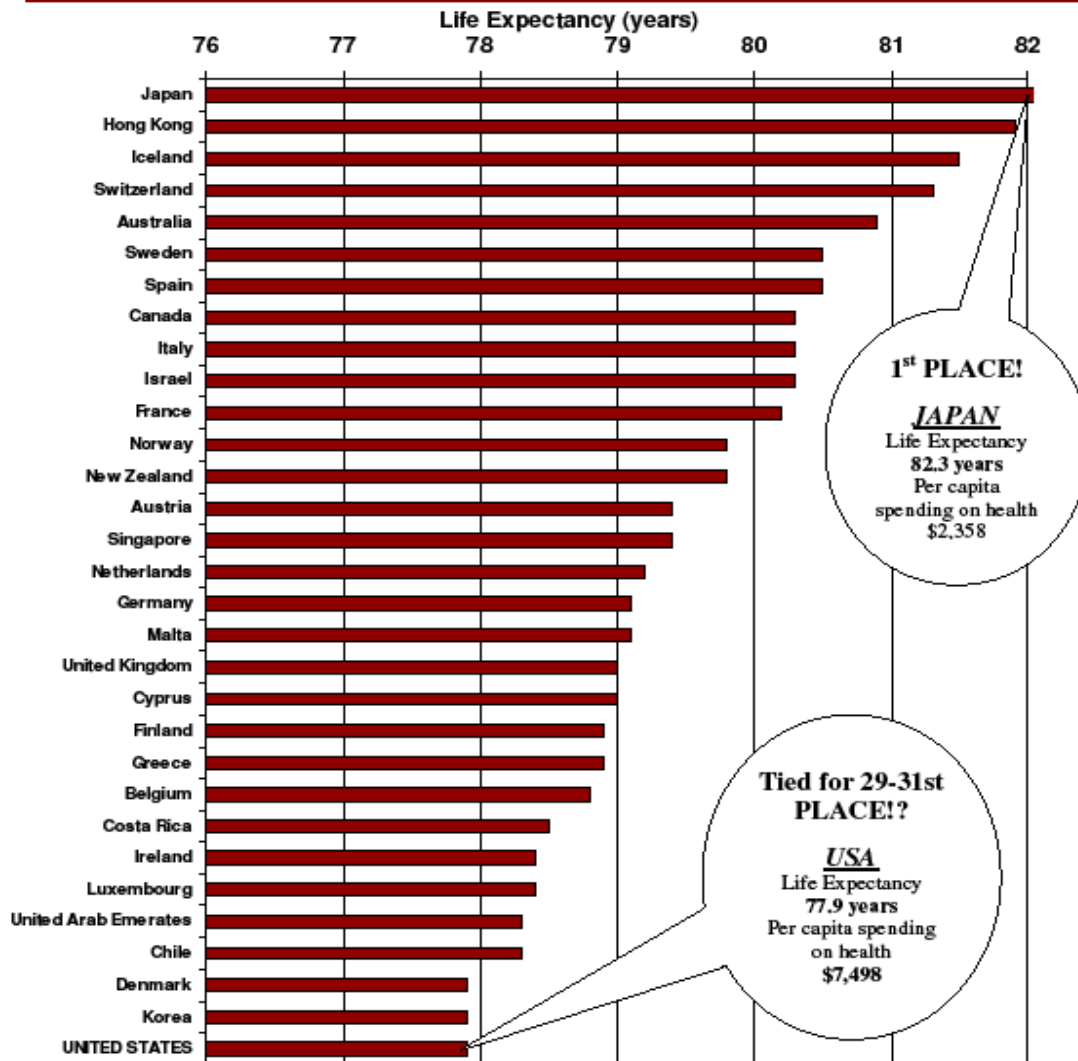
The NFP nurse home visitor works with her clients to achieve three important goals:

- Improve pregnancy outcomes by helping women engage in preventive health practices, including obtaining thorough prenatal care from their healthcare providers, improving their diet, and reducing their use of cigarettes, alcohol and illegal substances;
- Improve child health and development by helping parents provide responsible and competent care; and
- Improve the economic self-sufficiency of the family by helping parents develop a vision for their own future, plan future pregnancies, continue their education and find work.

EMERGING ISSUES

Health Care Reform

HOW DOES THE U.S.A. RANK IN THE HEALTH OLYMPICS? FIRST? SECOND? THIRD?



**We spend twice as much per person on health care.
Yet our life expectancy is among the worst compared to other rich countries.**

COURTESY Dr. Stephen Bezručka, Population Health Forum <http://depts.washington.edu/eqh/fh/>.
Japan Health Expenditure data from: 2007 OECD report <http://puck.source.oecd.org/v1=6637900/c1=12/nw=1/rpsv/health2007/g5-1-01.htm>. US Health Expenditure data from: 2007 projections are available from HHS for the US <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalHealthExpendData/downloads/proj2006.pdf>. Life Expectancy data from: The Human Development Report 2007-8. <http://hdr.undp.org>

The debate over healthcare reform in the United States centers around questions of a right to health care, access, fairness, sustainability, and quality purchased by the high sums spent. The mixed public-private health care system in the United States is the most expensive in the world, with health care costing more per person than in any other nation. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Healthcare_reform

One question posed in North Carolina is what will happen if reform legislation passes that grants health insurance coverage to the approximately 1.8 million North Carolinians who are currently uninsured? North Carolina Institute of Medicine and the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research. *North Carolina's Increase in the Uninsured: 2007-2009*. Data Snapshot 2009-1. http://www.nciom.org/data/DS_2009-01_UninUnemp.pdf. Published March 2009. Accessed June 24, 2009.

H1N1

In April 2009, a new strain of Influenza A virus H1N1 subtype was first detected in the United States and in June 2009 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). A vaccine was developed for the new strain of influenza, as well as the usual seasonal flu vaccine. As of December 8, 2009, the Polk County Health Department had administered 892 flu vaccines to Polk County residents.

The Recession

In North Carolina, more than any other state, the recession has triggered a burgeoning medical crisis. A steep rise in unemployment has fueled a commensurate increase in the number of people who do not have health insurance, including many middle-income families. In the past two years, North Carolina's number of uninsured has climbed 22.5%, the biggest jump in the nation, according to an analysis by the North Carolina Institute of Medicine, a quasi-state agency. Nationwide, about 22% of adults do not have health insurance. *Washington Post*, April 20, 2009, by Ceci Connolly, Staff Writer - <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/19/AR2009041902239.html>

The worst recession since the 1930s has caused the steepest decline in state tax receipts on record. As a result, even after making very deep cuts, states continue to face large budget gaps. New shortfalls have opened up in the budgets of at least 35 states for the current fiscal year (FY 2010, which began July 1 in most states). In addition, initial indications are that states will face shortfalls as big as or bigger than they faced this year in the upcoming 2011 fiscal year. States will continue to struggle to find the revenue needed to support critical public services for a number of years. Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities By [Elizabeth McNichol](#) and [Nicholas Johnson](#) Updated November 19, 2009

This report was prepared by Mary Smith, Health Educator, Rutherford-Polk-McDowell District Health Department, Phone: 828-925-0140 E-mail: msmith@rpmhd.org