

Gaston Together: Communities of Excellence

Bruce Hodge, 2009 Chairman

Mission: To bring the people and resources of Gaston County together to address our county's most pressing needs through the principles and best practices of Collaboration, Facilitation, Promotion and the Anticipation of Possibilities.

2009 Highlights:

Gaston 2012: Don Harrison, Chair

- ◆ *Gaston County's ten-year economic development and quality of life enhancements*
- ◆ **Entrepreneurial Development:** held third Student Contest for Business Ideas, awarded \$3,500 in scholarships; made presentations to Career/Tech Ed. classes in Gaston County Schools.
- ◆ **Education/Workforce Development::** successfully completed Gaston Career Climb first-year outcomes, a comprehensive community collaborative designed to create a nationally certified skilled workforce for Gaston County; Community Partners include Gaston College, Gaston Regional Chamber, Gaston County Schools, Employment Security Commission, Economic Development Commission, Workforce Development Board, Alliance for Children & Youth and Gaston Literacy Council - a program unique in NC and possible the entire country
- ◆ **Marketing and Communications:** developed a county-wide branding campaign incorporating all municipalities; unique county marketing concept for Charlotte Metro region; developed Gaston 2012 "Report Card" video in preparation for Gaston 2020 Visioning
- ◆ **Transportation/Infrastructure:** Restructured a municipal/county staff based Action Team into one composed of Elected Officials to position committee outcomes in preparation for citizen referendums on road selection/funding options.
- ◆ **Greenways:** serves as Steering Committee for Carolina Thread Trail (CTT) in Gaston County; partnered with CTT (15-county greenway network) to begin development of various greenway segments in Gaston County through grant funding; partnered with CTT "trail marking" multi-county event.

Gaston Community Healthcare Commission (GCHC): Cathy Kenzig, Chair

- ◆ Mission: *Collaboration of human service agencies and volunteers who identify healthcare gaps in our county and determine resources to fill those gaps.*
- ◆ Awarded Vera S. Robinson Longevity Award by NC Governor's Healthy Carolinian Task Force
- ◆ Awarded NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund "Fit Community" Designation on behalf of the entire county – one of only two counties in the state to receive this designation
- ◆ Six work groups operate to address local healthcare issues:
 - ◆ **Adolescent Sexual Health:** conducted two community forums for over 175 participants with Dr. David Walsh, nationally known speaker on teen brain development and risk-taking behaviors; facilitated the development of a collaborative committee with community group that has been researching current teen pregnancy prevention efforts within the county.
 - ◆ **Cancer Outreach:** conducted patient forum with over 35 participants to identify gaps in services; currently updating Cancer Resource Guide for county-wide patient and care-giver services

- ◆ **Community Wellness Education:** provided one-on-one information at CaroMont, Holy Angels and Gaston College Health Fairs; expanded membership to include more diverse agencies/ services
- ◆ **Fitness & Nutrition Council:** led Fit Community application process; developed Obesity Resolution and received adoption from Gaston County and eight municipalities to date; received grant to begin Eat Smart Move More program in Reid Park community; started WOW (walk or wheel to school) program in Belmont where over 100 elementary students participate
- ◆ **Gaston County Safe Kids:** conducted Cub Scout Safety Badge program for Child Passenger Safety Week with 35 cub scouts; conducted car seat checks with Health Dept. staff focused on Hispanic population; participated in Kohl's Cares for Kids program conducting 4 car seat checks with 50+ inspections; working with Gaston Memorial Hospital Birth Place staff on infant car seat program
- ◆ **Parish Nursing:** Promotes healthy mind, body and soul through health education series and preventive healthcare practices: conducted 1,006 blood pressure screenings - 155 were referred for treatment, screened 58 for skin cancer – 19 referred for treatment, screened 15 for stroke – 9 referred for treatment; conducted 10-week “Walk to Jerusalem” physical activity program (500+ participants in 2009 program); conducted health services/resource day “Fall into Good Health” Fair; conducted 4 Blood Drives; developed Parkinson's and Alzheimer's Support Groups; participated in community outreach in several subsidized housing developments; established county Advisory Board
- ◆ **Workplace Wellness:** HR specialists representing county's largest employers; held quarterly sessions on physical activity and nutrition programs appropriate for workplace setting, discussed successful diabetes management and smoking cessation programs for the workplace, coordinated with Health Dept. on H1N1 strategy
- ◆ **Health at Home:** community program developed by the GCHC in 2004 targeted to the uninsured and underinsured promoting preventive healthcare practices and reducing unnecessary visits to the ER.
- ◆ **HealthNet Gaston:** Partnering with Gaston Memorial Hospital, Gaston Family Health Services and Community Health Partners in this case management/insurance program for the county's uninsured population.

Gaston Clergy & Citizens' Coalition (GC3): Dr. Ben Hinton, Tabernacle Baptist, and Rev. Jim DuMond, Redeemer Lutheran, Co-Chairs

- ◆ *Mission: To embrace opportunities by building bridges of Faith, Family, Education and Empowerment, and Vision: Responding to God's Call, We Partner with Each Other to build Stronger Communities in Gaston County.*
- ◆ Addressing teen pregnancy crisis: partnered with Health Dept. to develop brochure of community program offerings for parents and students on risk taking behaviors
- ◆ Awarded 2009 Gaston County Martin Luther King, Jr. Unity Award, a community leadership award developed by the GC3 to Dr. Bernard Sullivan and the Honorable Rev. Dr. Richard Boyce for their efforts in Gaston County to build bridges of unity within our community.
- ◆ Continued the “Breakfast of Champions” mentoring program at York Chester Middle School (an at-risk school) with Communities in Schools program. Program partners pastors with at-risk students along with a special message of inspiration from guest speakers – 2009: retired professional athletes, retired scientist, and immigrant from Kenya.
- ◆ Partnered with Hope For Gaston community initiative

Leadership Training: Cathy Kenzig, Trainer

- ◆ *Leadership skills development training for community participants to assist in leading positive change throughout our community*
- ◆ Held two Level I facilitation trainings (basic skills) in 2009 with 27 participants
- ◆ Level II facilitation training (decision making and consensus building) in June with 12 participants
- ◆ Our trained facilitators also served as facilitators for other community organizations and civic groups: Cornerstone Christian, Gaston County Schools Youth Leadership Conference, Gaston County Commissioners School, etc.

Pride in Gaston Traveling Tour and the Proudest Kid in Gaston County Essay Contest: Houston Helms, Chair

- ◆ *Significant effort to build Community Pride in our school children that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives. Children who are proud of Gaston County as their home, grow into adults who choose to live, work and raise their own families in Gaston County.*
- ◆ Builds on the study of the ‘community’ taught in the third grade.
- ◆ 2009 Tour: Gaston County Courthouse where students visit the community room – the seat of local government, Schiele Museum Planetarium where they see the program “Earth, Sun and Moon,” and Gaston College, where students participated in hands-on exposure to college courses to inspire a desire for higher education.
- ◆ All students receive an activity book created by Gaston Together depicting twelve sites of interest in Gaston County.
- ◆ After day-long Traveling Tour field trip, students write an essay for the “Proudest Kid in Gaston County” Essay Contest describing why they are proud to live in Gaston County.
- ◆ County-wide winner is selected from the school winners and all are recognized at the Community Leadership Awards Dinner.
- ◆ Essay winner receives money towards a trip to Raleigh to meet with Senator David Hoyle and the Lt. Governor, and is introduced on the Senate Floor as the “Proudest Kid in Gaston County.” To date, over 26,000 students in both public and private schools in Gaston County have participated in these two programs since their beginning in 2000.

Community Leadership Awards (CLA): Susan Briggs, Chair

- ◆ *Established to recognize outstanding leadership by an organization whose work has made a significant impact on the betterment of our community and improved the quality of life for citizens throughout.*
- ◆ Sets an example of community pride for Gaston County by recognizing those principles of collaboration, non-silo thinking, and unique problem-solving solutions to community problems.
- ◆ 2009 Award presented to Alliance for Children & Youth, an organization that advocates for the youth of Gaston County by coordinating partnerships, incubating critical programs, and facilitating activities that positively impact the needs identified as essential to the successful development of our youngest citizens.
- ◆ Winner receives the “Circle of Caring,” a sculpture commissioned by Gaston Together to honor the CLA winner.
- ◆ The CLA has become one of our community’s most unique and inspiring means of recognition – one that resounds with community pride.

2010 Plans: Cathy Kenzig, 2010 Chair

In addition to the regular program of work, special focus on the following:

- ◆ Gaston 2012 Visioning Process extending the work of Gaston 2012 through 2020
- ◆ Expansion of Education/Workforce Development initiative, Gaston Career Climb
- ◆ GT Marketing and Branding through a redesigned website
- ◆ Integrating and collaborating common GT/Chamber goals for efficiencies and effectiveness
- ◆ Develop action items for Gaston Community Healthcare Commission's focus on obesity issue
- ◆ Expand Gaston Clergy & Citizens Coalitions teen pregnancy prevention efforts