Coordination. Collaboration. And Staying Connected.

By John Graham, PhD, deputy director of the North Carolina Institute for Public Health

Coordination. Collaboration. And Staying Connected. These are words we use often when referencing Incubator Collaborative efforts. They are also applicable as we transition the NCIPH administrative coordination of the Incubator Collaboratives from Heather Keith Gates to Lisa Macon Harrison and R. Erin Ridings.

As many of you are well aware, Heather began her new post as Executive Director of the Public Health Associations of NC the end of 2006. Although we will miss her here in Carrboro, we couldn’t be more proud of and excited for Heather. She will certainly stay connected to Lisa and Erin and with each of YOU as well as she works on behalf of Public Health in North Carolina through the Associations.

Are their faces familiar? Have you heard their voices on the phone or seen their names pop up in your email accounts already? I wouldn’t be surprised. Lisa has been working in local public health departments in North Carolina one way or another for more than a decade now. She has worked in both research and practice at UNC primarily managing projects in Public Health Preparedness, Workforce Development, and Health Promotion and Disease Prevention through the Departments of Epidemiology, Nutrition, Medicine and the North Carolina Institute for Public Health.

Most recently, Lisa has served as the workforce development lead for the NC Center for Public Health Preparedness where she assessed the workforce with the use of an online learning management system. Or, you may have run across her name through the Lifelong Learning program she initiated in local health departments which focused on workforce development opportunities. You could also have seen her associated with the Southeast Public Health Leadership Institute which she directs with the help of R. Erin Ridings. Lisa holds a Bachelors of Science in Public Health from the department of Health Policy and Administration, and a Masters in Public Health from the Public Health Leadership Program at UNC’s School of Public Health.

R. Erin Ridings has been working with Lisa through the Office of Executive Education at NCIPH coordinating the Southeast Public Health Leadership Institute (SEPHLI) in addition to the Emerging Leaders in Public Health (ELPH) program. Erin’s attention to detail, her commitment to top quality work, and her enthusiasm will be real assets as we seek to improve and consolidate the incubator collaboratives program. Erin is currently enrolled in the certificate program and is working towards her Masters in Public Health at UNC-Chapel Hill.

I think you will enjoy their energy and positive attitude where their first priority will be to provide you with the support you need to succeed. Lisa and Erin will work together to ensure you have all the support and assistance you need from the Institute. Together they have a broad range of experience in public health, a true dedication to public health practice, innovation, and supporting local public health initiatives.

We all look forward to working with you and I am sure you will appreciate all the good talents and energy as we move into 2007 and pursue new and exciting projects.

Wishing everyone the best in their new positions and looking forward to staying connected.
NORTHEASTERN NC PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC HEALTH (NENCPPH)

Colleen DiLiddo, MPH, recently joined the Northeastern North Carolina Partnership for Public Health (NENCPPH) as part of her fellowship in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC’s) Public Health Prevention Service (PHPS). Her office is located at the Hertford County Public Health Authority in its Ahoskie Office. PHPS is a 3-year service and training program for master’s level public health professionals. Fellows complete two 6-month rotations at CDC facilities and one 2-year rotation with state or local health agencies. Ms. DiLiddo completed the first year of the program in Atlanta, working at CDC’s National Center for Environmental Health/Agency for Toxic Substances Disease Registry (NCEH/ATSDR) and CDC’s Coordinating Office for Global Health (COGH). Her principal project for NENCPPH will be launching and managing a mobile clinic that will serve 19 counties in the region and will provide the community access to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) prevention and care and treatment services. The mobile unit arrived in Hertford County in December 2006; services are expected to begin in January 2007. When asked about her arrival in Ahoskie, Ms. DiLiddo stated, “I am excited to work in an area of the country where there is great need and to be given the opportunity to be part of a program that will help alleviate that need. It will also be an invaluable experience to learn from experienced public health professionals who continually think innovatively, within the confines of budgets to address the community’s needs.” Ms. DiLiddo received her bachelor of arts degree from George Washington University and her master’s degree in public health from Tulane University. Before beginning her fellowship, she served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Dominican Republic, working on HIV prevention.

SOUTH CENTRAL NC PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

South Central NC Partnership for Public Health Collaborates to Improve Public Health

The University of North Carolina’s NC Institute for Public Health (NCIPH) has been awarded a $30,000 grant from Common Ground: Transforming Public Health Information Systems, a national initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, to aid the South Central NC Partnership for Public Health in its development of new business processes that better leverage information systems to improve public health. As part of the initiative, NCIPH will collaborate with the Bladen, Cumberland, and Sampson County public health agencies, members of the South Central NC Partnership for Public Health (SCNCPHP). The project will start with project leaders being trained to use modern business process models that have been customized for use in public health. The training process will also give the attendees an opportunity to create professional connections with other grantees from around the country. As part of the grant, the same training will also be provided to the participating SCNCPHP members. The group will first apply the training to planning for an environmental health program that will make use of new information technology to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. The group will then apply models to a long-term plan for improving other business processes in their public health agencies. The Public Health Informatics Institute will provide the training and mentoring for project leaders. This 15-month project began in December 2006.

CENTRAL PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

Newest Partnership Targets Workforce Recruitment and Retention

The Central Partnership is including workforce diversity as a central strategic value for this upcoming year, and is working on developing best practices to identify, recruit and retain minority public health professionals and provide them with ongoing professional development and advancement opportunities. To this end, the Central Partnership has recently contracted with The Johnnetta B. Cole Global Diversity & Inclusion Institute at Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina. Bea Perdue, the Executive Director of the Diversity & Inclusion Institute, will work with the Central Partnership to host a workforce recruitment and retention summit on February 21st in Greensboro. Local health directors, county managers, human resource directors and key leaders in the Central Partnership counties will participate to develop new approaches to the issues public health experiences with regard to identifying and cultivating promising minority candidates early on, and establishing a diversity baseline to track and report changes. The Partnership also plans to inventory and evaluate existing recruitment policies and procedures in collaboration with HR managers, and analyze these policies and procedures from a workforce diversity perspective. Stay tuned to exciting updates from the Central Partnership about these and other accomplishments in the coming months.

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ISSUE 2 — “CURRENT CAPACITY & FUTURE WORKFORCE”;

SOUTHERN PIEDMONT PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC HEALTH
Focus on Public Health Dentistry

"We assess, address, and assure our region's public health together."

The Southern Piedmont Partnership for Public Health convened a dental work group in May 2006 to determine if there were sufficient common interests and issues to launch a new incubator project. At this initial meeting, which was open to all health department dental clinics in the state, a dental risk management training was provided by the Terrie Snowden Company, and a discussion of common interests resulted in ready recognition of the value of collaboration among SPPPH counties and also with counties from other partnerships.

A survey of those attending the first meeting led to the development of a Top 10 List of common issues/needs. For the past two months a committee has been working on the top 2 priorities: development and dissemination of templates for public health dental clinic policies and procedures and design of an improved system for recruitment of dental staff.

The work group now represents clinics from 3 incubators and has set an ambitious timetable for accomplishing its first 2 goals.

The committee on policy and procedure is being chaired by Kim Dehler, DDS, MPH, Dental Director of the Cabarrus Health Alliance. For further information, contact Dr. Dehler at 704-920-1092

NORTHWEST PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

Public Health and Technology: A Winning Combination

Many of the Northwest Partnership projects involve at least some level of technology. The HIPAA Interactive Training Modules, an intern-based project, has combined many necessary components of the fundamentals of HIPAA with interactive software. The result is a web-based program which allows an individual to complete HIPAA training at his own pace, complete exercises built into the program and answer a series of quiz questions. This basic training has the potential to save a HIPAA Privacy Officer hours educating staff about basic HIPAA principals. The two modules, “What is HIPAA?” and “Safeguards and Best Practices,” have been distributed widely across the state.

A second regional project has involved using a standardized template of questions and handheld technology to collect data for public opinion portion of the Community Health Assessments (CHAs). Also, randomizing the list of interviewees via GIS or 911 addresses adds to the validity of the sample population. The data from each handheld are fed into one computer which aids in compiling data from all participants.

Finally, the Northwest Region has been looking at best practices in public health. Working with a consulting firm, three counties studied Family Planning Services in terms of patient/employee satisfaction, clinic flow and lab testing. Plans are underway to incorporate many of these into the remaining Family Planning Clinics.

The more public health embraces technology now, the less “catching up” that will have to be done later. The Northwest Region is making ready for the technological challenges facing the future of public health.

WESTERN NC PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

“Agent” Bond to coordinate variety of incubator projects

As it’s often said, “what goes around, comes around”, and this time George Bond, Ret., has been recruited as the part time Incubator Coordinator for the Western Incubator. Yes, George consented to a contract arrangement to “bird dog” our projects and activities. As our experience has taught us, local health directors get distracted. The Western Incubator is expanding its effort to promote a public health presence in the Center for Health and Aging, a joint venture with Western Carolina University, UNC-Asheville and the Mountain Area Health Education Center. Last spring a Summit on Aging was held with stakeholders, and one outgrowth consisted of several community mini grants being awarded to address aging concerns. Reports are to follow at the completion of the projects.

Progress continues on refinement of community health assessment data that can be applied for the region. The Western Incubator anticipates sharing this data and template to promote a standardized state wide community assessment data base. Robert Weaver, MAHEC, is on contract with our Incubator to assist us with this project.

As our technology project utilizing handheld devices continues, we anticipate partnering with the other incubators in North Carolina to address Environmental Health and Community Health Assessments. Steve Smith, Health Director at Transylvania County, heads this project.

While Henderson County Department of Public Health has implemented its clinic organization utilizing input from a Health METRICS tool, the final analysis is to be completed in the ensuing weeks. Henderson County recently implemented Open Access in its WIC clinic and has experienced a positive outcome from the new scheduling process.

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ADA Diabetes Education Incubator Project: Only four health departments (HDs) in the state offer ADA level diabetes education. This strict requirement is very hard to meet and HDs cannot bill for the service without it. So, the vast majority of counties do not offer the service and hundreds if not thousands of diabetes patients do not get comprehensive training on how to best manage their disease. This results in increased ER visits, dialysis treatments and amputations in these patients over time.

The ADA Diabetes Education Incubator Project will establish an ADA umbrella under the State Health Director's Office similar to how we offer laboratory services under a similar state umbrella. This will allow local HDs to contract with the State to provide the diabetes education under the State's umbrella and bill for it. Contracting agencies will be asked to dedicate 10% of their earnings to maintain the umbrella once up and running.

Local Health Directors would like to thank the Incubator Selection Committee and the State Health Director for agreeing to share the cost of funding this important project that will plug a hole in diabetes education services that has been allowed to go on for too long.

Environmental Health Alliance Update

The North Carolina Alliance of Public Health Agencies, Inc. has worked tirelessly since the beginning of the year to develop a temporary staffing agency for environmental health professionals. In May 2006, the Alliance placed its first environmental health professional into a county who was experiencing a manpower shortage. Since our first placement, our employees have worked more than 800 hours and served four counties in the following capacities:

- Permits issued to Food, Lodging, and Institutional (FLI) establishments: 3
- Inspections of FLI establishments: 69
- Sites visited for On-site Waste Water (S-1): 234
- Improvements Permits issued (S-4): 142
- Improvements Permits denied (S-7): 3
- Construction Authorizations issued (S-8): 120
- Construction Authorizations denied (S-11): 4
- Operations Permits issued: 19
- Training Provided to Staff: 12 hrs

The Alliance currently has seventeen employees who are ready to begin work assignments across the state in a variety of settings. Counties who have current vacancies or backlogs are encouraged to contact the Alliance for placement of a temporary environmental health professional.

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