



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BUNCOMBE COUNTY WINS 2015 INNOVATION AWARD

Buncombe County Health and Human Services was recognized with a 2015 Local Government Federal Credit Union (LGFCU) Excellence in Innovation Award for its Community Service Navigator Pop-up Markets.

The Pop-up Market Program was developed in February 2014 in partnership with Buncombe County HHS and MANNA food bank. The pop-up markets provide healthy foods, preventative health screenings, safety tips for individuals and families, community engagement, and a connection to local support services. Most importantly, HHS staff and volunteers build strong, trusting relationships within their communities.

The Pop-Up Markets are a great way to connect with individuals and neighborhood communities to address needs at a local level. These markets run bi-weekly in the community centers of local housing communities in Buncombe County. They rely on “just-in-time” food donations from MANNA FoodBank, which often includes the healthy but perishable fruits, vegetables and bakery items that many local food pantries are not equipped to accept because they require immediate distribution. At each site, neighbors who qualify for SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamps) come to “shop” for groceries in a colorful, farmers’ market style setting.

Community Service Navigator Pop ups are more than food distribution sites. The educational and health screening aspect of the pop ups (such as blood pressure and weight monitoring with partners from Mission Hospital and ABIPA) is key to bringing good choices within reach. Relationships built through the navigators and neighborhood volunteers provide supports so that individuals can take small steps to improve their lives and their neighborhoods.

On average in 2014, 270 households per month were reached with this service. In October 2014, the program served 454 households, and officials with HHS expect to see this level of service continue. These are all clients that are eligible for HHS program and historically difficult to reach.

LGFCU Excellence in Innovation Awards program provides a total of \$10,000 in rewards to county employees who develop successful programs that help counties improve services to citizens. Cash awards of \$1,000 each are given to two or more programs in each of four categories - general government, health and human services, public information/participation and intergovernmental collaboration.

For more information on the program: Marian Arledge, Director, Community Development Specialist, (828) 250-5094 or marian.arledge@buncombecounty.org.

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