

The Asthma COALITION Update

Winter 2009

2009 North Carolina Asthma Summit Preview

Mark your calendars, and SAVE THE DATE for the 2009 North Carolina Asthma Summit. Make plans to attend this exciting event on May 14 at the Sheraton Imperial Hotel and Conference Center in Durham, N.C. The summit will feature discussions, presentations, and interactions relating to the theme “Coming Together to Improve Asthma Outcomes: Success Stories and More.” The summit agenda, along with registration information, will be available in February 2009. Check the Asthma Program’s web site, www.asthma.ncdhs.gov, for more information. ❖



Winter 2009 Asthma Epidemiology Update Features Children’s Asthma Data

The Winter 2009 issue of the Asthma Epidemiology Update includes updated prevalence and hospitalization data for childhood asthma in North Carolina. It also provides an in-depth look at selected asthma outcomes and management behaviors among children with asthma. Prevalence and hospitalization data from the past several years are examined to present a snapshot of changes over time for both adults and children affected by asthma. ❖

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Healthy Homes Outreach

Childhood lead poisoning, injuries, respiratory diseases such as asthma, and quality of life issues have been linked to the more than 6 million substandard housing units nationwide, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The North Carolina Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program is working to expand its services addressing child health hazards through the Healthy Homes framework outlined by several federal agencies, including EPA, HUD and CDC. Environmental Health Specialists will soon begin to couple a healthy homes assessment with every lead investigation they do for lead-poisoned children.

The Healthy Homes approach confronts not only lead hazards, but also mold, radon, carbon monoxide, home safety, indoor air quality and pesticides. Most people spend 90 percent of their time indoors; therefore taking a holistic approach to assessing the safety of a home can prevent disease and injury. Because many public health professionals and housing specialists spend a great deal of time connecting with a family in need of services, addressing multiple issues in one visit adds to the efficiency and quality of care. Training opportunities for health professionals is provided by the National Center for Healthy Housing, N.C. Cooperative Extension, and Advanced Energy. An online course aimed at nursing professionals is available at www.healthyhomestraining.org/Nurse/PEHA_Start.htm.



The transition to include Healthy Homes services is largely guided by the statewide Healthy Homes Outreach Task Force, comprised of local health department staff along with state agencies representing lead, asthma, and housing. This group, which meets quarterly in Raleigh, will continue to shape the direction of the Healthy Homes program and welcomes new participants. In order for the program to be successful, the Task Force knows it must build capacity and competency among environmental public health practitioners, public health nurses, housing specialists, managers, and others who work in the community to develop and manage comprehensive and effective healthy homes programs. Please contact Amy MacDonald for more information. amyjmac@email.unc.edu ❖

Submitted by: Amy MacDonald

SPOTLIGHT ON ...

the Caldwell County

Asthma Coalition

The Caldwell County Asthma Coalition/Healthy Caldwellians Asthma Committee was honored to have representation at the American College of Chest Physicians Annual 2008 Asthma and COPD Coalitions Symposium held in Philadelphia, Pa. Coalition member Dacia Hudson received a scholarship to attend the event, along with an invitation to present on our coalition's asthma-related activities and programs. Jessica Carter, coalition member and health education and promotion supervisor, was also able to attend and participate in the symposium. We used this opportunity to highlight our success with our ozone and air quality initiatives, our Coaches' Clipboard Program and our Smoke-Free Dining Campaign. The ozone and air quality program was so well received that coalition leaders from other states have contacted us for materials and information so that they can do similar programs in their areas.

We are heading full-speed into 2009 with projects like our monthly asthma education classes, our annual asthma awareness event, and our spring Coaches' Clipboard trainings. We provide monthly asthma management classes to families that need help understanding the basics of asthma. The class covers asthma triggers, allergens, proper use of inhalers and spacers, and a small part on medications. So far, we have educated approximately 60 families and have classes scheduled through May. We have had much success with the classes and have recently been invited to speak to several local agencies serving Latino families. The Family Resource Center of Caldwell County has been a wonderful partner and resource for us as well. The center is used by a large majority of Latino families for ESL classes, adult GED/high school, childcare and other educational events. We have become a familiar face with



Jan Pritchard, former Healthy Caldwellians executive director

many of the families who attend events at the center and hope to reach many more with our information. The coalition is also in the early stages of planning for our annual asthma awareness event and additional spring trainings on the Coaches' Clipboard program for school personnel and youth recreation league coaches.

Our coalition has been blessed for over 7 years to have the leadership of Jan Pritchard, Healthy Caldwellians executive director. Jan has provided our group with more than just a vision for a healthier Caldwell County. She has the desire and the perseverance to see that it happens. Sadly, we are wishing her farewell as she is retiring, effective Jan. 31. Jan, we will truly miss you and we thank you for all that you have done for Caldwell County. We wish you a happy retirement and much love! ❖

Submitted by: Jessica Carter

A Message from a Program Partner

N.C. Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology: Focus on Asthma

The Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology Branch's (OEEB) Industrial Hygiene Consultation Unit (IHCU) has been addressing indoor air quality (IAQ) issues as they relate to asthma for approximately 15 years. The IHCU visits schools and childcare facilities to identify asthma triggers and make recommendations for their reduction or elimination. We focus our visits on schools and childcare facilities to maximize our resources so that we can reach larger populations and have a greater impact on children's health. One subset of IAQ, mold, has taken an increasing amount of IHCU's energy. We have tried to maximize our limited resources by partnering with interested parties such as the Division of Public Health's Asthma Branch, Department of Environment and Natural Resources Children's Environmental Health Branch, North Carolina State University's Cooperative Extension Programs, and the Department of Public Instruction.

With respect to schools, better Indoor Air Quality can impact the learning environment by:

- Improving student comfort, the learning environment, and attendance.
- Reducing teacher and staff discomfort, sickness or absenteeism, and thus increasing productivity.
- Decreasing the potential for long-term health problems for students and staff.
- Improving the relationship between administrators and staff.
- Providing guidance in maintaining the schools' buildings.

We have partnered with other state agencies, universities, local health departments, and

alliances to promote awareness and reduction of asthma triggers in schools, childcare facilities, and homes. We provide training to local environmental health staff and other interested parties to help them conduct site visits to recognize asthma triggers and how to educate school staff, childcare operators, and homeowners to reduce asthma triggers. We have developed checklists to aid in such evaluations and have published a brochure focusing on indoor asthma triggers.

A majority of our time is spent in contact with citizens, via phone, trying to empower them to solve their asthma trigger or IAQ problems. We talk with them and provide guidance via printed materials, email, or links to Internet sites.

We have participated on several Open Net television programs, a Public Broadcasting Service production, and been interviewed by local television stations. We have and will continue to make presentations to interested citizens, schools or other groups. ❖

Contact Information:

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Submitted by: Romie Herring and David Lipton

AANC Launches Asthma Environmental Activity Survey

In February 2009, the Asthma Alliance of North Carolina (AANC) will launch its Asthma Environmental Activity Survey on the AANC webpage, www.asthma.ncdhhs.gov/NCAPaanc.htm. This survey is designed by the AANC Environmental Committee to collect data on local and statewide activities that focus on identifying and reducing indoor and outdoor asthma triggers, as well as exploring the impact of these environmental exposures upon human health. Collecting this information gives the Environmental Committee the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of activities and strategies aimed at accomplishing statewide environmental goals. For more information on the Environmental Goals of the State Asthma Plan, visit www.asthma.ncdhhs.gov/asthmaPlanDocs/NC_Asthma_Plan.pdf.

To provide valuable information for organizations who are seeking new ideas for their own initiatives, the AANC will publish descriptions of these submitted events and projects periodically on the Asthma Alliance webpage on the “Environmental Activity Corner” link. AANC expects and hopes that these descriptions will serve as models for other programs.

The survey will be available online and in hard-copy format. To submit the survey in hard copy format, send it to:

AANC Environmental Committee
c/o NC Asthma Program
1915 Mail Service Center
5505 Six Forks Road
Raleigh, NC 27699-1915
Fax number: (919) 870-4801

For additional information about the survey or if you have questions about submitting your project description, contact Diane Price at the N.C. Asthma Program at diane.price@ncmail.net or (919) 707-5212. ❖

Submitted by: Neasha Graves

Tips to Avoid Winter Asthma Episodes

- Wear a scarf or mask over your nose and mouth.
- Do not directly breathe in blasts of cold air.
- Exercise indoors on days when the outside air is really cold and dry.
- Play winter sports, such as hockey, basketball and skating, indoors.
- Always use medication as prescribed.
- Keep rescue inhalers close by and out of the cold air.
- Stay inside on especially windy winter days.
- Keep a weather diary, and track any asthma flare-ups.
- Get your flu shot!

Source:
www.healthnewengland.com

Don't Forget - Send us Your Stories, and Tell Us What You Think!

The *Asthma Coalition Update* is released quarterly, and we want to share your coalition or work group's stories and activities in future issues. Please let us know about the exciting asthma related events and activities in your community! We also welcome your feedback and ideas on items that you would like to see in future issues. Send news, updates and ideas to the N.C. Asthma Program at (919) 707-5213. ❖



State of North Carolina
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Division of Public Health
North Carolina Asthma Program
www.ncdhhs.gov

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