

# Burke County focuses on promoting activity, healthy food

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WINSTON-SALEM — The Burke County community, with support from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, is working to promote active living and healthy eating, as well as grow and sustain local food systems and nearby agriculture as part of the countywide effort to improve health.

Trust funding will go toward promoting year-round physical

activity for residents, establishing wellness programs, and educating residents about healthy food options. The grants are part of the Trust's Healthy Places NC, a long-term initiative aimed at improving the quality of life and health in rural, financially disadvantaged North Carolina counties.

The city of Morganton received \$150,000 to renovate and enhance Martin Luther King Jr. Park to increase opportunities

for physical activity for low-income families living in the Mountain View public housing community. Resident-led committees have been set up to work on several projects including installation of a trail, splash pad and playground structures in the community.

"Many youths and adults do not have access to several notable parks and opportunities for outdoor activities within our community," said local resident

Allen Fullwood. "One of the efforts to increase accessibility is the restoration and renovation of the MLK Jr. Park, located in a very diverse community. The immediate community and other community leaders focused on a common goal, and now we are well underway to accomplishing it."

Multiple school-age children in Burke County will have

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more opportunities to be active through the Trust's investment in The Walking Classroom, the nonprofit that gets students walking while they learn. The trust's \$410,000 grant to the organization will bring the Walking Classroom to all seven Healthy Places NC counties, including Burke County.

The trust also awarded the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project \$117,869 to pilot the Growing Minds Farm to School Program to increase access and education to locally grown foods at five low-income elementary schools in Burke County. The program will integrate strategies at the classroom, cafeteria, district and community levels to enhance education and increase access to healthy foods.

"When you give people the opportunity to change how they eat and exercise, it really makes a difference in how they live," said Allen Smart, interim president and vice president

of programs at the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust. "These initiatives serve people right in their communities and meet them where they're at. The Trust is excited to continue working with Burke County residents to identify solutions to long-term health challenges that fit the unique needs of the community."

Additional Burke County Healthy Places NC grants announced by the trust include:

» \$98,000 to Burke County Schools to purchase cafeteria equipment to prepare healthy school meals.

» \$35,589 to the Library Foundation of Burke County Inc., and the construction of a demonstration kitchen to support the Live Well @Your Library Diabetes Prevention Program at the Valdese Public Library.

» \$26,818 to Habitat for Humanity International to construct community gardens to increase access to fresh, locally grown produce through engagement of low-income youths and adults in Burke County.

» \$472,324 to implement Nurse-Family Partnership, a home-visitation program for low-income, first-time

moms, in Burke County.

"We are blessed to receive funding from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust for Healthy Places North Carolina," said Marla Black, executive director for Habitat for Humanity of Burke County. "The funds will allow Habitat to replicate and expand community gardens to another area of our county. We are excited to include Habitat families, young people, and the surrounding Enon Road community as we work to grow healthy food and provide access to fresh vegetables."

Burke County joined the Healthy Places NC initiative in 2014. The trust plans to invest \$100 million in 10 to 12 rural counties over a 10-year period. To date, the trust has invited seven counties — Beaufort, Burke, Edgecombe, Halifax, McDowell, Nash and Rockingham — to participate and will announce additional counties in the coming years. In each county, Healthy Places work and projects are driven by the community's concerns, as well as by where the trust thinks there's an opportunity for sustainable, long-term change.