

Healthy Living for a Lifetime Rolls into NC Communities



Rural residents all over the state are now receiving free blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, body mass index (BMI) and other health screenings thanks to North Carolina Farm Bureau's Healthy Living for a Lifetime mobile health trailer initiative.

The first stop on the 50-foot trailer's roll through the state was in Louisburg, at the Franklin County Medical Center. In addition to the screenings, the event brought together many of the county's health and health support services in one place. About 130 people passed through the screening stations, were able to discuss their results with medical professionals, and learned about health and wellness resources in their county.

A lack of doctors and other medical professionals is a common problem in rural areas, but related problems hinder access to healthcare for many rural residents too. Those problems can include lack of transportation, lack of knowledge about cost resources, and more.

Franklin County Farm Bureau President Bennie Ray Gupton said he appreciated the contributions of so many in making the first event a success.

"The community needs this service," Gupton said. "We feel honored to be asked to do this."

Beverly Kegley, executive director of Franklin County Volunteers in Medicine, said Franklin County is close enough to Raleigh and Durham that medical providers overlook their need, but that for those who are unwell or uncomfortable making treks into the city, Raleigh and Durham are not practical options. "What is so great about this is that it brings all the entities together," she said. Once visitors had gone through all the stations for screenings, they were met to go over their results and then directed toward handouts— available in English and in Spanish— on how to maintain or improve health habits.

Dot Robertson, a Farm Bureau member, was there to represent the Council on Aging.

“We really do have a big need because many don’t have insurance or access to insurance,” Robertson said. “I’ve seen a great need in the years I’ve been here. People come in and want to know where they can get health care.”

Farm Bureau Member William O’Neal said his main reason for visiting was to have his cholesterol checked out.

“I think this is great,” he said. “You’ve got a lot of people here and it was well-publicized. People need to get checked out.”

Farm Bureau Member Josie Nelms learned about the event from her father-in-law, board member Steve Nelms. Nelms said regular check-ups are important to her, and encourages others to consider that a screening might help catch a latent issue or a hereditary problem.

“They make a lot of different resources available, but people don’t realize it,” Nelms said.

Vainette Walker is a Hoke County Farm Bureau member, but works with the Vocational Rehab Center in Franklin. The agency plays an important role as a related health service, as it focuses on putting people back to work after an illness or injury, or retraining them for jobs in light of illness or injury.

Keeping people working also plays an important role in maintaining rural economies. Walker said issues such as chronic pain, high blood pressure and amputations due to diabetes are common conditions around which people still need to find ways to secure income.

Gupton said he thought the event was a success and well-run. A steady stream of visitors attended throughout the morning, and the line to be screened moved quickly.

“We just feel honored to be the first ones in the state of North Carolina to be able to offer this to the people,” Gupton said. “People do need this screening and I think everybody should take advantage of it.”

Follow the Healthy Living for a Lifetime mobile trailer and check the schedule for visits to your area at www.healthylivingforalifetime.com.