



National Institute of
Environmental Health Sciences

Women's Health Awareness Community Engagement Program

**Addressing Environmental Health Disparities and
Advancing Environmental Justice Utilizing a
Community Engagement Framework which Supports
Research, Interventions, and Policy Development**



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Division of Intramural Research, Clinical Research Branch*

Community Engagement Program

Big Picture – Promoting Data to Knowledge to Action

Translating our science findings into the community

- Inform real-life individual and public health outcomes

Understanding environmental health needs and priorities of the community

- Alignment of our research with real-world public health needs

Expand the reach of environmental research through education and intentional engagement with diverse communities

Form equitable collaborative partnerships with the community

- Develop ethical study designs and co-create innovations that are accessible and meaningful to community partners while advancing science

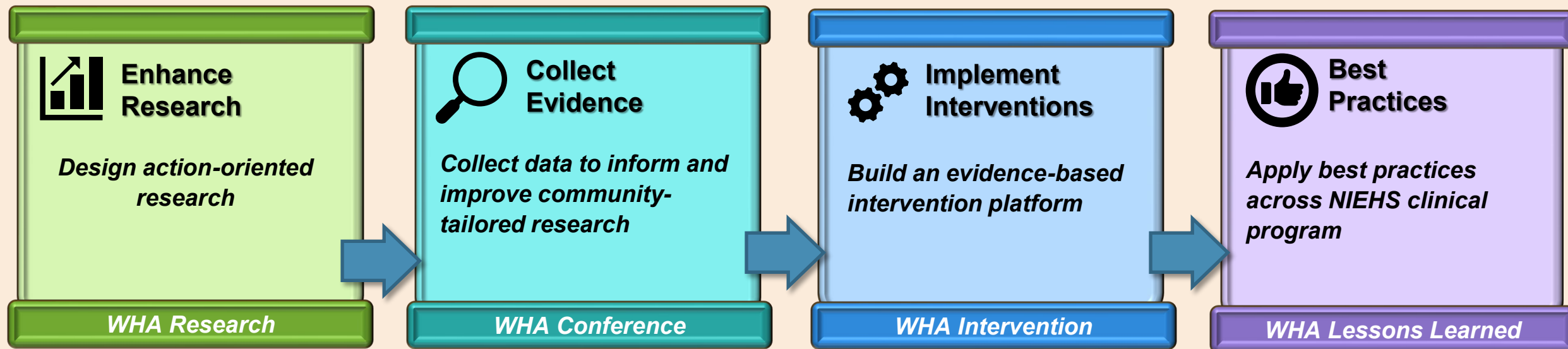
NIEHS Mission Statement

To discover how the environment affects people in order to promote healthier lives.



Community Engagement Program – Women’s Health Awareness Program

Mission: to conduct **community-engaged research**, **educate** and **advocate** on the intersecting issues of environmental health disparities, environmental and social justice, health and well-being, and gender and racial inequities to build community-based health resiliency and health equity.



Women's Health Awareness Program Intervention: Whole Person Health

- **Women's Health Awareness – Community-based participatory research platform (CBPR)**
 - address health
 - disease prevention
 - disease management and control
 - promotes wellness, resiliency, and health equity across the adult lifespan
- **Focuses on whole person health and the many intersecting factors associated with health**
- **Empowering women to advocate for themselves and take responsibility for their health and their families health**



Annual WHA Women's Wellness Conference

Evidence-based health intervention

2014 - Present

**Goal: Improved overall wellness,
health resiliency, and health equity**



PROGRAM FACTS

Brings together a multidisciplinary team :

- **Foundation of partnerships** - diverse stakeholders interested in advancing community environmental public health
 - Community, federal and local government partners, public health practitioners, health providers, academic partners and researchers

Program Impact:

- **Reaches hard to reach underserved communities**
- **Listens to understand** the environmental health needs and priorities of the community - Respond to community needs
- **Translates science into action** within underrepresented communities
- Program aligns with **President Biden's executive order 12898 on Environmental Justice** and the **White house initiative on Women's Health Research**
- **Increases the inclusion of diverse** populations in clinical research to decrease health care disparities
- **Provides training opportunities** in community engagement.

Women's Health Awareness Community Engagement Model

Evidence-based health intervention



- **Multidisciplinary model** centered around the goal of disease prevention, control and management.

- **Public health + environmental public health elements**

- **Core foundation** to promote health education, environmental health literacy, improved health care access and health resources to reduce the burden of environmental health disparities

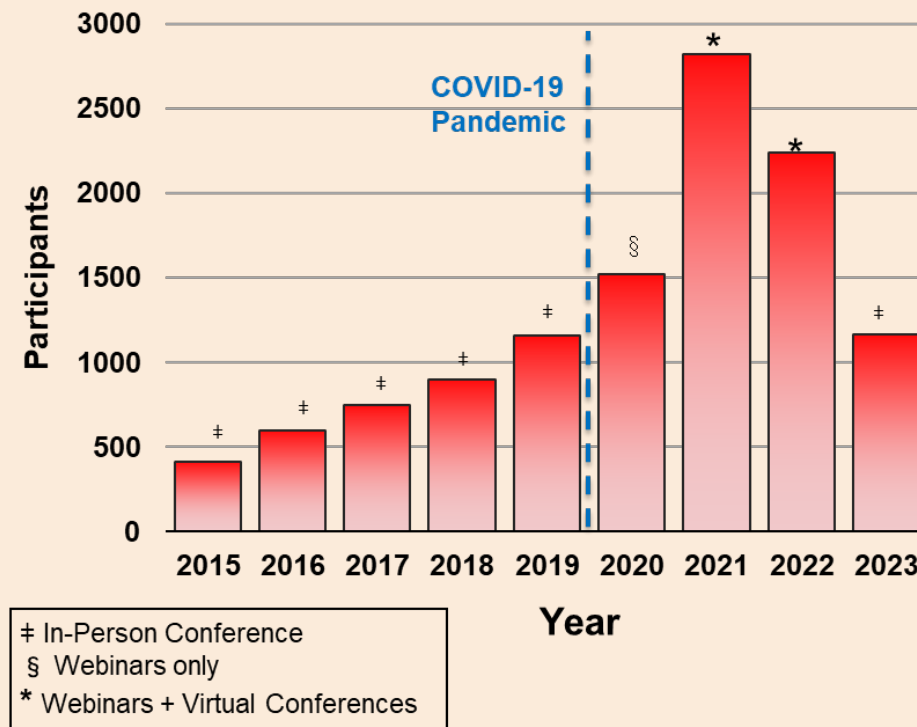
- **Produce behavior change:** Focus women on developing health strategies for promoting wellness, healthy lifestyles, healthier families, living environments and community environments

Goal: Improved overall wellness, resiliency & health equity

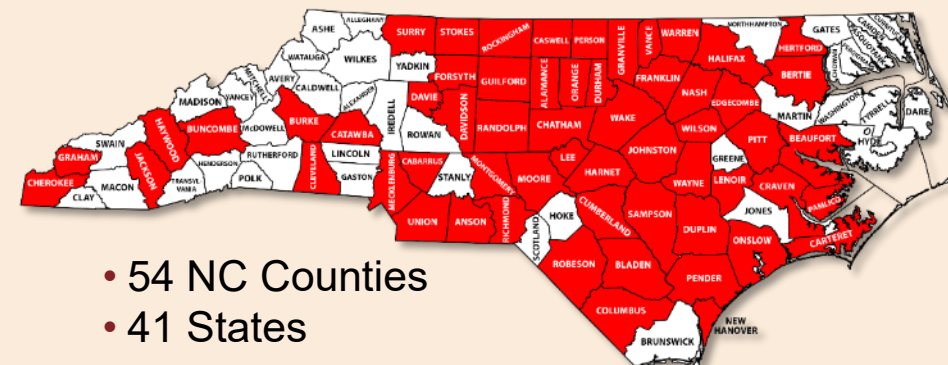
Women's Health Awareness Conference : Responding to Environmental Health Disparities

- **Built community trust, developed sustainable partnerships and provided community engagement**
- **Reached over 6,000 women**
 - 54 NC counties and 41 U.S. states
 - Special recruitment for U4 population of women – underrepresented, underserved, understudied, and underreported
 - Black or African American, Hispanic or Latina, American Indian or Alaska Native
 - Women across the adult lifespan: 18 to over 65
 - All walks of life and SES
- **3 Conference Sites**
 - Durham – WHA Main site (NCCU 2015-2023; Hillside High School 2024)
 - 2 WHA Satellite sites in rural communities
 1. **Granville/Vance County**
 2. **Western, NC - Buncombe County**

Growth of Participation



Geographic Reach of WHA



Key Accomplishments

Women's Health Awareness Program 2014 - Present

- Developed over 100 partnerships bringing diverse stakeholders (community, federal, state, and local governments, academic Institutions, healthcare organizations, etc.)
- Established collaborations and outreach to veterans and military-affiliated families
- Established sustainable co-sponsors (Durham Alumnae Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority (DST), Inc., DADH, Inc., North Carolina Central University (HBCU))
- Implemented over 400 unique educational health sessions tailored to participants' needs
- Provided over 100 important free health screenings including mammograms and other cancer screenings, cardiovascular, diabetes, kidney, vision, dental, hearing, mental health, pulmonary, liver)
- Annual WHA Conference hosts as many as 50 exhibitors providing health resources and information
- Improved healthcare access and quality to reduce the burden of environmental health disparities and environmental justice concerns
- Initiated WHA Resiliency, Environmental Action and Collaborations for Health (REACH) Equity Study to understand impacts of COVID-19 on minority women's health in North Carolina



WHA Conference Programming Expansion (Pre-COVID-19)

Key Program Milestones

Year 1 (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inaugural year, held at Mary Townes Science Building at NCCU, an HBCU and important community anchor
Year 2 (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiated Health Information Tracks focused on chronic disease (e.g., cardiovascular health, diabetes, behavioral health)
Year 3 (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiated Environmental Justice Education • Initiated Teen WHA
Year 4 (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiated Latina Health Education Sessions
Year 5 (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental health keynote • Environmental health speak-out interview sessions

Sessions	Services & Screenings	Resources
24	11	36
29	13	38
33	13	43
32	13	48
32	13	49

WHA Virtual Programming Expansion Timeline (Post-COVID-19)

Key Program Milestones

**Year 6
(2020)**

- Seminar Series “RealTalk with the Experts”
- Emergent Public Health messaging
- Newsletter

**Year 7
(2021)**

- Race and Health: Changing the Narrative, Reaching for Equity - Harriet Washington (EJ Keynote)
- Initiated the WHA REACH Equity Study Concept

**Year 8
(2022)**

- WHA satellite sites in rural counties
- Secretary Marsha L. Fudge, U.S. Department of HUD
- NCCU Student Center conference, ages 18-30

**Year 9
(2023)**

- Expanded satellite sites to include health services
- Middle school citizen science project (climate change)
- EJ Series hosted Jalonnie White Newsom (White House) and Dr. Robert Bullard (father of EJ)

Key Events

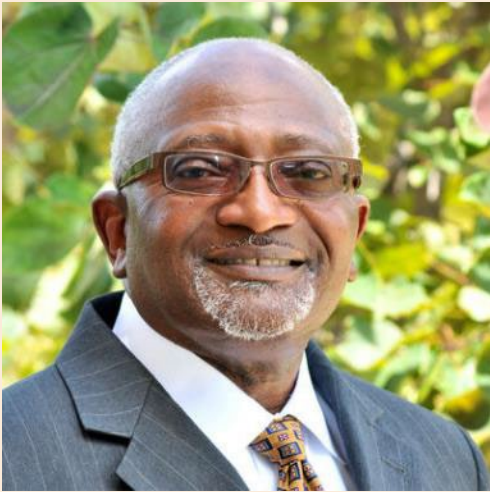
**COVID-19 Pandemic –
Conference Cancelled**

Virtual Conference

**Virtual Concurrent
Sessions (24)**

**Hybrid WHA
Conference**

Notable Environmental Justice Speakers at Women's Health Awareness



Robert Bullard, Ph.D.
Father of Environmental Justice
Distinguished Professor,
Texas Southern University



**The Honorable Secretary
Marcia L. Fudge**
US Department of Housing
And Urban Development



Harriet A. Washington
Science Writer, Editor and
Ethicist



Jalonne White-Newsome
Senior Director for Environmental
Justice, White House Council on
Environmental Quality



Nsedu Witherspoon,
Executive Director, Children's
Environmental Health Networks

Native American Women's Health Education Sessions

- **“American Indian Women’s Health Transforming Trauma: The Path to Hope and Healing”** Speaker Dr. Cavalier (2023)
- **Native American Women’s Health Education “Reconceptualizing American Indian Women’s Health: Hear Her Story”** Speaker Dr. Cavalier (2024)
- **“Native Health: Stress, Trauma, Resiliency, and Roots of Disparities”** Speakers: Ann Bullock, M.D. (retired), and Robin Callahan, RD, LDN, MHS Program Director, Nurse Family Partnership Program and Cherokee Choices - Eastern Band of Cherokee (2024, Western, NC Satellite Site)

Hands-on Mindfulness Practice – Dr. Cavalier

Techniques to free oneself from the loop of hopelessness and self-defeating thoughts that binds one to trauma – reducing the stress response

- **Soft Belly Meditation**
- **Expressive Meditation**
- **Guided Imagery**



Session Chair:
Dr. Crystal Cavalier
Founder, 7 Directions of Service
Citizen of the Occaneechi Band of the
Saponi Nation

Women's Health Awareness: Environmental Health Equity-Community Partnership-to-Action Framework

Over the first 9 years of the WHA program, we identified five critical principles that helped to organize diverse stakeholders and community around common goals:



Acknowledgements

NIEHS Team - Jane Lambert, BS; Craig Wladyka, MPA; Jaslyn A. Grullon, MPH; Mya Love Whitley, BS; Jennifer Profanchik

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Co-Sponsors - North Carolina Central University, Department of Public Health
- Durham Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.,
- Durham Alumnae Delta House, Inc.

Women's Health Awareness Steering Committee

Women Health Awareness Community

