



State of North Carolina  
Department of Health and Human Services

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For Release: **EMBARGOED until 2:00 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 8** Date: August 7, 2007  
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## **N.C. Fruits & Veggies Nutrition Star Awards Announced**

CHARLOTTE – The winners of the 2007 North Carolina Fruits & Veggies Star Awards were announced today [Aug. 8] by the N.C. Fruits & Veggies Nutrition Coalition at their annual symposium at Johnson & Wales University in Charlotte. The annual awards recognize successful programs in three categories: school/child care, worksites and business/other.

The N.C. Fruits & Veggies Nutrition Coalition – formerly the N.C. 5 A Day Coalition. – recognized five organizations for their innovative efforts to promote eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day: Avery County Schools Child Nutrition at Newland Elementary School; Mitchell County Schools; the Fit City Worksite Wellness initiative at Mecklenburg County Health Department; the Foothills Fresh Extension Leadership Team of Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston and Lincoln counties; and N.C. Cooperative Extension in Iredell County.

“The programs we honored today are models for other organizations across the state to follow,” said Diane Beth, N.C. Fruits & Veggies nutrition coordinator with the N.C. Division of Public Health. “If the message to eat more fruits and vegetables is going to reach all North Carolinians and have an impact, there has to be support at the organizational level,” she said.

“By making fruit and vegetable promotion a priority, these organizations have demonstrated their commitment to improving the health of the people in their communities,” said Zoe McKay-Tucker, co-chair of the N.C. Fruits & Veggies Star Awards Committee.

The winners for 2007 are:

**Gold Star Award for School/Child Care:** *Avery County Schools Child Nutrition / Newland Elementary School*

The staff at Newland Elementary School made fruits and veggies not just nutritious, but “cool” and fun. This year, children tasted new and exotic produce, planted fruit bushes and trees and vegetable plants. The children then tested their agility in a produce-themed field day, complete with coconut bowling, potato-sack races and a blueberry relay.

**Silver Star Award for School/Child Care:** *Mitchell County Schools*

This spring, all Mitchell County kindergarten classes participated in the “Give Me Five a Day” program. The nutrition education program included fruits and veggies taste tests and a puppet show featuring Little Miss Muffet and her good friends, Orange and Broccoli. Christen Snyder, a project coordinator with Mitchell County Schools said, “There was a little boy who refused to try any of the fruits or vegetables, saying he did not like them. I persuaded him to try a grape. All the other students and teachers gathered around to cheer him on. He tried the grape, and he actually liked it! The real success of our program was simply exposing these children to healthy foods they’d never tried before.”

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**Gold Star Award for Worksites:** *Mecklenburg County Health Department / Fit City Worksite Wellness*  
Employees at the Mecklenburg County Health Department had healthier snack options this year instead of just vending machine choices. The Fit City Worksite Wellness Team introduced “Fit City Healthy Snack and Fruit Baskets,” which are baskets filled with fruit and healthy snacks available around the worksite throughout the day. The results? One employee who purchased snacks from the baskets commented, “With this program I have been able to eat fruit on a regular basis - something I was not doing at all.”

**Gold Star Award for Business/Other:** *Foothills Fresh Extension Leadership Team (Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston and Lincoln Counties)*

The “Foothills Fresh” campaign encourages people to eat more fruits and vegetables, to buy from local farmers and to visit local farms. The leadership team in the four-county region educates people about locally grown produce, where to find it, and why it’s best to buy locally. The leadership team also promotes farm tours and keeps the public updated on what’s in season at the local farmer’s market. One of the greatest indicators of success is that several of the 46 participating farms reported an increase in sales in 2007.

**Silver Star Award for Business/Other:** *N.C. Cooperative Extension – Iredell County*

Family and Consumer Science Agent Ann Simmons visits Iredell County events, encouraging participants to eat more fruits and vegetables and showing them creative and delicious ways to do it. “Simple, quick recipes that taste good make the difference,” Simmons says. This year, she partnered with a number of local organizations to reach community college employees, children in summer programs, childcare providers, parents, diabetic patients, senior citizens and others with her “healthy eating tastes good” message.

The N.C. Fruits & Veggies Nutrition Coalition promotes better health for all North Carolinians by increasing their fruit and vegetable consumption. Eating at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day is essential to an individual’s overall health and well-being, yet 77 percent of North Carolina adults don’t reach that minimum. Statewide, the annual cost of poor health from diets low in fruits and vegetables is estimated at \$2.4 billion.

Coalition members across the state plan and implement activities in supermarkets, schools, restaurants, cafeterias, worksites, health agencies and community sites. Coalition members include representatives from government, academia, industry, media and other non-profit and private organizations. Membership is open to any organization or individual wanting to promote eating fruits & vegetables for better health. The N.C. Fruits & Veggies Nutrition Program is in the Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch of the N.C. Division of Public Health.

To learn more about the program or to become a Coalition member, visit [www.fruitsandveggiesnc.com](http://www.fruitsandveggiesnc.com).

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