Tar Heel Footprints in Health Care

A periodic feature that recognizes individuals whose efforts—often unsung—enhance the health of North Carolinians

Carolyn Dunn, PhD, MS

Many North Carolinians have heard of Eat Smart, Move More, North Carolina, a movement that aims to prevent and reduce obesity in the state (available at: http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com); Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less, a 15-week weight management program (available at: http://www.esmmweighless.com); and Color Me Healthy, a program that encourages healthy eating and physical activity among preschool children (available at: http://www.colormehealthy.com). One of the main forces behind these programs is Carolyn Dunn, professor and nutrition specialist at the North Carolina Cooperative Extension, North Carolina State University (Raleigh, NC). Dunn is a founding member and past chair of the Eat Smart, Move More movement and coauthor of Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less and Color Me Healthy.

Vital components of most beneficial public health activities include the free exchange of knowledge and information among stakeholders and the presence of champions who can help transform the stakeholders’ invaluable perspectives into a seamless mission. Surabhi Aggarwal, program manager for Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less, says of Dunn that “her passion, expertise, talent, and leadership in the field of nutrition and healthy living have inspired many to lead a healthier life.” Dave Gardner, chair of Eat Smart, Move More, North Carolina, highlights the esteem in which Dunn’s colleagues hold her views, asserting that, when Dunn speaks, “people listen because they believe and trust in what she has to say.” These attributes are integral to what Gardener considers to be Dunn’s greatest contribution to Eat Smart, Move More, namely, “the leadership she has provided,” particularly with regard to knowing “who and how to bring key players together on an issue.” This is crucial because the Eat Smart, Move More movement depends on the guidance and oversight provided by the many individuals and agencies throughout North Carolina that compose the campaign’s leadership team.

Dunn chose a career in nutrition because nutrition is “vital to a healthy happy life—what better way to serve than to help people eat smart and move more, 2 things that can improve and lengthen their life?” Dunn leads by example through her passion for healthful cooking and her involvement in physical activities, including cycling, weight lifting, and running.

Dunn received a bachelor of science degree from Meredith College (Raleigh) and a master of science degree and doctorate in nutrition from the University of North Carolina–Greensboro. In 2009, Dunn received the Distinguished Alumna Award for Career Achievement from Meredith College. Dunn and colleagues are the recipients of the Nemours Vision Award for Child Health and the Dannon Award for Excellence in Community Nutrition. Dunn is a member of the Academy of Outstanding Faculty Engaged in Extension and the Sigma Xi research society.

Contributed by Rachel E. Williams, MPH, research assistant, North Carolina Institute of Medicine, Morrisville, North Carolina (rachelemilywilliams@gmail.com; present affiliation: research associate, SciMetrika, Durham, North Carolina).