Joy Reed, EdD, RN, has championed the advancement of public health nursing in North Carolina for more than 40 years. She served as the head of public health nursing for the North Carolina Division of Public Health for more than 19 years, and she was also the head of the Local Technical Assistance and Training Branch within the division. In the latter role, she oversaw the community health needs assessment process completed by the 85 local health departments in the state.

Through her involvement in several groups comprising local health experts, as well as her own experience in community health, Reed became aware that many of the evidence-based programs being implemented around the state were not addressing the needs of local communities. She saw the community health needs assessment process as a way to harmonize local and statewide health priorities and to enhance implementation capacity by uniting the efforts of health departments with similar priorities.

Another accomplishment that stands out in Reed’s career is her leadership in establishing and implementing a mandatory accreditation program for the local health departments in North Carolina. In 2006 North Carolina adopted legislation that mandates accreditation, and now 100% of health departments in the state have completed the accreditation process. Reed remarked that the accreditation requirement has led to major improvements in local health departments and more engaged boards of health, many of which now hold monthly meetings.

Reed served twice as president of the Association of State and Territorial Directors of Nursing and in 2013–2014 served as president of its successor organization, the Association of Public Health Nurses. Reed also served on the North Carolina Board of Nursing. When asked about Reed’s contribution to the latter board, executive director Julie George commented, “Some individuals can hold an elected office for years, even decades, and when they leave office you have a hard time remembering any truly significant contribution they made during their tenure. That certainly is not the case with Joy Reed.” During Reed’s time on the Board of Nursing, several key initiatives were launched that altered how the board does business and how the licenses interact with the board. For example, the Practitioner Remediation and Enhancement Program was expanded statewide in 2004.

Throughout her career, Reed has received numerous awards and honors for her achievements in public health. In 1998 she was the only public health nurse in the inaugural cohort of recipients of the Executive Nurse Fellows program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. “The fellowship required me to become very clear about what motivated me,” Reed commented. “Whenever there is a mess to clean up, they call a nurse. I wanted the leadership skills to be able to make a difference for local health departments; this is where citizens of communities see the face of public health.”

Address correspondence to Ms. Kiah Gaskin, North Carolina Institute of Medicine, 630 Davis Dr, Ste 100, Morrisville, NC 27560 (kdp6@live.unc.edu).
N C Med J. 2014;75(6):375. ©2014 by the North Carolina Institute of Medicine and The Duke Endowment. All rights reserved.
0029-2559/2014/75618