

## **Buncombe County Health Director Receives Public Health Award**

George F. Bond, Jr., Buncombe County Health Director, received one of two statewide 2006 Ronald H. Levine Legacy Awards for Public Health on Jan. 27, 2006, in recognition of his many contributions to public health on the local, state and national levels.

Named for former North Carolina State Health Director Dr. Ron Levine, the annual award honors individuals whose life work on behalf of the public's health has resulted in significant, sustainable and positive improvements in North Carolina's public health system. The other 2006 award recipient is Robeson County health director William J. Smith, IV.

Bond received his undergraduate degree and Masters degree in Public Health Administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He later completed the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's year-long Public Health Leadership Institute for senior public health practitioners.

In 1971, following a four-year stint in the Navy during which he worked in medical and dental health, he began his public health career at the Durham County Health Department, working in environmental health. In 1975, Bond became director of the Henderson County Health Department, where he established a general medical clinic with full-time staff, fostered the development of a successful Hospice program, and growing a significant Home Health program.

From 1987 through 1995, Bond left public health for a period to work with his own construction company and as general manager of a health care and retirement community management firm.

Returning to public health in 1996, Bond was named director of the Buncombe County Health Center, where he has built a distinguished record of achievement in public health capacity, policy development, effective partnership building, and advocacy for public health system improvements and reforms.

To maximize use of Medicaid funds for health care in the county, Bond developed a managed-care pilot program involving a public-private collaboration of providers that now covers a seven-county region and has a proven record of cost containment and effective cost management.

Bond was a key player in the development of Buncombe County's Project Access, which provides health care services for the medically uninsured of all ages through a partnership of public and private providers. Through his leadership, the Buncombe County Health Center doubled its capacity to serve as the primary care home for the majority of the 13,000 patients served by Project Access, and over 90 percent of the county's physicians agreed to participate in this program. Project Access has been nationally recognized by the Ford Foundation, the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO), as well as

garnering state and local awards. It is now being replicated in communities across the nation.

To help ensure quality health and dental care for the county's school children, Bond helped build a coalition of healthcare providers and school personnel, called the Alliance for Student Health, to assess need, review policies, allocate resources, provide oversight for school health services such as the three school-based health centers and the school health nursing program, and to develop long-range plans for improving access to health care in the schools.

To address the county's continuing problem of poor dental health and lack of access to dental care, Bond expanded the dental program at the Buncombe County Health Center and led an initiative to obtain grants to provide a dental sealant program for all third-graders in the county.

Thanks to George Bond, Buncombe County now has a not-for-profit, 501 (c) (3) Public Health Foundation, which allows the county to compete for grants and receive charitable donations. During the first two years of its existence, over \$200,000 passed through the Foundation to promote health initiatives for the uninsured.

Bond's other accomplishments include increased effectiveness and responsiveness of health department services, the "Patient in Need" Pharmacy Medication program that dispensed over \$2.8 million in free medications from drug companies in fiscal year 2004, an employee health program and clinic for county employees and their families, and other initiatives aimed toward protecting and improving the health of the people of Buncombe County.

Under his leadership, in 2004 the Buncombe County Health Center became the first health department in the state to earn full accreditation, meeting all 41 accreditation standards.

Also on 2004, George Bond was selected among municipal, county, state and federal nominees as "Outstanding Executive Manager" for his public service in Asheville and Buncombe County. He holds numerous state and local awards as well.

Bond serves on the board of NACCHO and on the EPA's Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee. He is active on the state level as well, in state organizations, on legislative study commissions, and as an advisor in the development of state programs such as the Children's Health Insurance Program. As an appointee to the N.C. Public Health Task Force, Bond helped to write a new state public health plan and now serves on the N.C. Healthcare Safety Net Task Force. Along with the UNC School of Public Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Bond worked on developing a training program for mid-level managers in local health departments, which has now become a national program. He also serves on the advisory committee for Public Health Grand Rounds, a national

satellite broadcast and web cast series presenting real-world case studies on public health issues, which is sponsored by CDC and the UNC School of Public Health.

Bond and Smith were presented with the awards by State Health Director Leah Devlin at the 2006 State Health Directors Conference in Raleigh.