

Graduation effort will start at Philo and Parkland

Agencies announce battle to increase Forsyth's dismal high school grad rate

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

The United Way of Forsyth County is looking to increase the county's graduation rate to 90 percent by 2018, and the organization is starting its efforts at Philo Middle School and Parkland High School, where the effort dubbed, "Graduating Our Future," was announced last week.

The initiative is a partnership of the United Way, the YMCA of Northwest North Carolina, Big Brother/Big Sisters and Family Services, Inc. The plan will include student tutoring, counseling and mentoring. The United Way has made an initial investment of \$705,000. Over the next four years, the organization is expected to invest \$2 million into the effort.

"'Graduating Our Future' was established to respond to one of our community's most critical needs: increasing the high school graduation rate in Forsyth County," said Jim Nanton, chair of the Forsyth United Way's board.

Currently, the local graduation is 73.7 percent, which is higher than the state average but lower than other large NC counties like Guilford and Wake. Parkland, a predominately African-American magnet school, has the lowest graduation rate in the county, 65.8 percent. Philo is the middle school that provides Parkland with most of its students.

Nanton said that United Way decided to focus on high school graduation because of how vital it can be for young people. He said that those without high school degrees earn an average of 32 percent less in the work-



United Way Chairman Jim Nanton speaks during last week's announcement at Parkland High School.

force, are more likely to become incarcerated and are five times more likely to live in poverty. He said businesses look at the high school graduation rate of an area to determine the quality of the work force before moving there. Annually, the United Way devotes more than \$1.5 million to services that help at risk students. The "Graduating Our Future" funds are in addition to that.

"What we're seeing is that these children want to learn and 'Graduating our Future' helps to remove the obstacles that prevented them from finishing their education," said Curt Hazelbaker, CEO of the regional YMCA.

Hazelbaker said the initiative will focus on both students

and their families. At Philo, Family Services will provide a bilingual family counselor for Hispanic families and will start a program to strengthen families. Role models from local colleges - provided through Big Brothers/Big Sisters - will mentor the Philo students and tutoring will be provided by certified teachers.

For Parkland, Hazelbaker said, tutoring before, during and after school will be provided. Parkland will also have a class credit-hour recovery lab to help students graduate on time, a family counselor and mentors. The tutoring component at Parkland began Jan. 3. So far, 160 students have received 150 hours of tutoring.

"Our programs have started,

Cancer

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a mutation) in one of two genes, BRCA1 or BRCA2. Everyone has these genes, but in some people the genes don't work properly. These genes are involved in cell growth and division; they act like the brakes on a car to keep cells from growing out of control. If the genes are not working properly, cells can continue to grow and reproduce unchecked, allowing a cancer to develop. Unlike sporadic cancers, these mutations can be passed from parent to child. Since we inherit one copy of each gene from both the father and the mother, the mutation can come from either parent. It is now possible to test for these mutations by looking for mistakes in these genes through a process known as genetic testing.

Who should consider having genetic testing?

A personal or family history which includes any of the following should consider testing:

- Breast cancer prior to age 50
- Ovarian cancer at any age
- Male breast cancer at any age
- Bilateral (cancer in both breasts) breast cancer
- Both breast and ovarian cancer
- Relative with known BRCA1 or 2 mutation
- Ashkenazi/Eastern European Jewish descent
- Multiple family members with breast and/or ovarian cancer (all on mother's or father's side of the family)

What is involved in genetic testing?

Anyone who is considering genetic testing should plan to meet with a genetic counselor first. During this visit, family and personal cancer history will be assessed and benefits as well as limitations to testing will be discussed. Cancer risks associated with the hereditary syndrome and implications for family members will also be reviewed. If genetic testing appears to be appropriate, an informed consent will be obtained and a blood specimen (one tube) will be drawn for testing. The turnaround time for receiving test results is approximately three weeks.

What are the cancer risks associated with mutations in BRCA1 or BRCA2?

Women who have mutations in these genes are believed to have a lifetime breast cancer risk of approximately 55-87 percent. The risk for ovarian cancer ranges from 27-44 percent, depending on which gene is involved. Males who have mutations in these genes have a 6-7 percent risk of developing breast cancer, and their risk for prostate cancer is about three times that of the average male. In addition, the risk for other cancers may be increased slightly.

If a mutation is identified, what can I do to reduce my cancer risk?

Knowing that you are at risk for certain cancers allows you to choose ways to reduce those cancer risks. This might include very close medical surveillance, chemoprevention with drugs such as Tamoxifen, or prophylactic surgery (removal of breast and/or ovaries).

Will insurance cover the cost of testing?

Most insurance companies now cover the cost of testing. In some cases, coverage may be at 100 percent while other companies may require a co-pay. The genetic counselor and the testing laboratory will work with you to determine your insurance coverage. Medicare covers 100 percent of testing in patients who meet Medicare guidelines. Although Medicaid does not cover testing, certain patients may qualify for free testing in some cases.

What about genetic discrimination?

When genetic testing first became available, many people had concerns about genetic discrimination; however, there are laws to protect against this, including HIPAA and other state laws. These laws typically apply to people insured in group plans.

What should I do if I decide to consider testing?

If you are interested in pursuing genetic testing, or if you would like to talk with a counselor, ask your doctor for a referral. Remember, knowing your family history has important implications for your own cancer risks. Knowing these risks allows you to take steps to reduce cancer risk.

- Contribution by Gail Hurt, BSN, MAEd, LPC

Do you need further information on this topic or have questions or comments about this article? Please call toll-free 1-877-530-1824. Or, for more information about the Maya Angelou Research Center on Minority Health, please visit our web site: <http://www.wfubmc.edu/minorityhealth>.

having seen somebody other than their partner shake a child under two within the last year.

North Carolina's project plans to provide every parent of the approximately 125,000 babies born in the state annually with an intervention program called "The Period of PURPLE Crying," which was



Sen. Purcell

developed by Dr. Ron Barr, a professor of community child health research and a developmental pediatrician at the University of British Columbia, and Marilyn Barr, founder and executive director of the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome. Both Dr. Barr and Marilyn Barr are collaborating with the North Carolina project.

momentum is building and students are involved," said Hazelbaker.

Both schools will also have Summer Success Camps that will help rising 6th-graders at Philo and rising freshmen at Parkland. Those students will be given tutoring in math and language skills and will also be taught useful skills to help them

excel in all their classes.

United Way President Ron Drago said that this effort has really brought into focus what his organization, which has always focused on solving community problems, is all about. He said that helped make the 2007 fundraising campaign its biggest ever, raising \$18,305,019.

"We were able to really bring a voice to what the United Way is ultimately about," said Drago.

"Graduating Our Future" will be at Parkland and Philo for at least a year and half before being analyzed and possibly expanded to other schools in Forsyth County.

BestHealth

Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center

February 2008 Events

Events are held at BestHealth in Hanes Mall or other locations, as noted.

☎ = registration required. Call Health On-Call® at 336-716-2255 or visit www.besthealth.com.

To become a BestHealth member, call 336-765-8804 or visit our web site.

16 SAT - Yoga for the Heart

1:30 p.m. Yoga improves flexibility, strength and balance. It's also an excellent way to strengthen the heart muscle. Join Valerie Kiser, RYT, for a surprise Yoga for an introduction to basic moves and stretches that can help decrease your risk of heart disease. Sponsored by the Heart Center of WFUBMC. ☎

19 TUE - 12-Lead EKG Screening

1 to 6 p.m. Do you have a family history of early heart disease? Does your heart skip a beat? If you answer yes to either of these questions, you should have a 12-Lead EKG to have your heart rhythm checked. Receive a copy of your results and have a Forsyth County paramedic explain what it all means. Free. Space limited. Appt. required. Sponsored by the WFUBMC Heart Center. Sponsored by the Heart Center of WFUBMC. ☎

20 WED - Do Distractions Increase with Age?

11 a.m. How does aging affect our ability to pay attention and resist distraction? Christina Hugenschmidt of WFUBMC Neurosciences presents recent findings related to the attentiveness and strength of focus in all ages. For BestHealth members only. ☎

21 THU - Love Those Bluebirds!

11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The NC Bluebird Society supports activities that foster the resurgence of bluebirds. Bill Abbey offers tips on how you can help preserve this breed. For BestHealth members only. ☎

21 THU - Cardiac Magnetic Resonance Imaging

1:30 p.m. WFUBMC cardiologist Dr. Greg Hundley explains how cardiac MRI is used to diagnose and manage heart disease to improve patient outcomes. Sponsored by the Heart Center of WFUBMC. ☎

21 THU - Out of Rhythm?

7 p.m. Does your heart skip a beat? Join WFUBMC cardiologist Dr. Bryon Rubery to learn the signs, symptoms, diagnosis and treatments available for heart murmurs and arrhythmias. Sponsored by the Heart Center of WFUBMC. ☎

26 TUE - Meals for Moms-on-the-Go

6 to 7:30 p.m. Feeding the family with meals that are tasty and healthy can be challenging. Alex Swain of Whole Foods Market® presents meal ideas for busy moms. ☎

27 WED - Fitness Testing

1 to 6 p.m. How well can your heart manage a steady six-minute walking test? Dr. Pete Brubaker of WFU Health and Exercise Science conducts fitness testing and checks your body mass index (BMI) to indicate your risk for heart disease. Free. Space limited. Appt. required. Sponsored by the Heart Center of WFUBMC. ☎

27 WED - Exercise Your Heart

7 p.m. Like other muscles, the heart can get stronger with proper exercise and fitness.

Dr. Pete Brubaker of WFU Health and Exercise Science shares tips for developing an exercise plan that's right for you and ideal for your heart. Sponsored by the Heart Center of WFUBMC. ☎

28 THU - Advance Directives

1 p.m. Learn how advance directives, such as a living will and healthcare power of attorney, can ensure your wishes will be met. Learn the terminology and have documents notarized free of charge. ☎

28 THU - Strengthening the Immune System with Tai Chi

6 p.m. The Chinese exercise Tai Chi is well known for improving balance, strength and flexibility. It can also strengthen the immune system. Hear more about this, see a demonstration and join in with Sandy Seeber and Alan Graham of Three Treasures Tai Chi. ☎

Other Locations

13 WED - Identity Theft

11:30 a.m. Linsey Mills of the Mills Foundation addresses concern about identity theft, the fastest growing crime in the U.S. Held at Kernersville Family YMCA. ☎

14 THU - Preventing Golf Injuries

1 p.m. Learn from WFUBMC physical therapist Michael Way how to get fit for the golf course and prevent injuries. Enjoy a demo of our motion analysis machine. Held at CompRehab Plaza, Miller St. ☎

19 TUE - Yoga for Busy Parents

7 p.m. Join Christi Eley, certified yoga instructor and founder of Angel Bear Yoga, to learn how "A Pose a Day" can bring peace, harmony and relaxation to your day while providing meaningful time with your little ones. For parents and children. No yoga experience needed. Held at the Children's Museum of Winston-Salem, 390 S. Liberty St. Free babysitting available. ☎

20 WED - Foods for a Healthy Heart

11 a.m. or 6 p.m. Join BestHealth dietitian Dayle Fuentes for a tour at Whole Foods Market® and explore the many foods rich in antioxidants and good for the heart. Space limited. Registration required by calling 722-9233 or visiting Whole Foods' customer service desk. Held at Whole Foods, 41 Miller St., Winston-Salem. ☎

☎ To register for events, receive general health care information, or to schedule a physician appointment, call: Health On-Call® at 716-2255 or 800-446-2255.

Unless otherwise stated, BestHealth programs are for adults; no children under age 12, please.



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