

Former state health director to head Reynolds Trust

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Laura Gerald, a pediatrician and former state health director, will become the new president of Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust in July.

The trust is a statewide foundation that awards millions in grants annually to improve health and quality of life for the financially disadvantaged in North Carolina. In 2015, Trust President Karen McNeil Miller left and Allen Smart, vice president of program services, has been acting as interim president. Gerald said that she was drawn to the Trust partly because of its emphasis on helping rural communities and children.

"The match in my background and passions with the work that Kate B. Reynolds is doing is very compelling," she said.

Gerald brings many years of experience to the position. She's from Lumberton, which is in a rural part of the state.

"I had a very supportive childhood, a very engaged and supportive family and community," she said.

Her father died when she was young, leaving her mother - who was a teacher - to raise four children. She attended college at



Gerald

Harvard University, something she knew was possible because two of her brothers attended Harvard. She earned a degree in biology in 1990 and, along the way, discovered she wanted to be a doctor, so she then attended Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

During her pediatric residency, she was surprised to see Lumberton listed as an underserved area without enough doctors. So she returned to Lumberton in 1998 to join the clinic of her childhood pediatrician, who became her mentor. When he passed away, she took over the administrative duties at the clinic.

"Practicing medicine in Lumberton was a wonderful experience," she said. "Every patient was a cousin until genetically proven not to be a cousin."

In 2002, she received a Master of Public Health from Harvard and became a senior medical consultant for Community Care of North Carolina, a primary care medical, home program for Medicaid recipients. She developed statewide initia-

tives dealing with diseases like asthma. She said it let her have a wider impact than she could by seeing one patient at a time.

"You could be far more impactful by working outside of the walls of the clinic and seeing what you can do to help the community at large," she said.

In 2010, Gerald became executive director of the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund, which allocated some of the funds from the state's share of the national tobacco settlement. It awarded \$30 million in grants annually to programs that Gerald says have resulted in historically low rates of teen tobacco use in the state.

In 2011, she became senior advisor for Community Care of North Carolina under the Department of Health and Human Services. The next year, she was appointed to be state health director under Governor Beverly Purdue and Health and Human Services Secretary Lanier Cansler. She ran the Public Health Division, with an \$800 million budget and 800 employees. She also worked with health directors across the state to improve health outcomes, particularly for underserved populations. She said it was challenging work, but that there were improvements in HIV/AIDS prevention and infant mortality during her time as director.

"When you're trying to do work that helps the most challenged people, you're always going to be working in a tough environment, in an uphill battle," she said.

She resigned from the position in 2013, under the current administration. A copy of her resignation letter obtained by N.C. Policy Watch said she resigned because of significant differences and disagreements over policy and administrative directions in the Health and Human Services Department.

Gerald, a separated mother of two children, currently serves as the market medical director of Evolent Health in Raleigh.

"Dr. Gerald is an outstanding leader who is an expert in health care improvement, as well as a North Carolina native who understands firsthand the challenges facing rural areas," said Beth Renner, who is senior vice president and national director of Philanthropic Services at Wells Fargo Bank, which is trustee of the foundation. "She has an outstanding statewide and national reputation for integrity and excellence, and we are honored to appoint her as the next president of the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust."

Street closings to cause traffic slow down, detours

SPECIAL TO
THE CHRONICLE

Utility work and street repairs in the following areas will cause traffic slow down and detours throughout the city:

***Fifth Street, between Cherry and Marshall streets,** will be closed from 1 to 9:30 p.m. today, Thursday, June 2, and from 8:45 a.m. to 6:15 p.m. Friday, June 3, to accommodate the North Carolinians for Home Education Annual Conference being held at the Benton Convention Center. Exhibits normally set up in the lower level of the convention center, which is closed for renovations, will be set up in the Embassy Suites lobby. This will result in higher than normal foot traffic between the convention center and the hotel. This block of

Fifth Street will also be closed as needed between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m. Saturday, June 4.

***Portions of Sixth, Liberty and Trade streets** will be closed from 6 to 10:30 p.m. Friday, June 3, for the monthly Gallery Hop.

***Fourth Street** will be closed from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday, June 4, between Spring and Marshall streets for the Salute! wine festival. Also closed will be Spruce Street between Holly and Fifth streets, and Poplar Street between Holly and 4½ streets. Detours will be posted.

***Cloister Drive, between Konnoak Drive and Woodvale Avenue,** will be closed to through traffic today, June 2, to replace a drain pipe that



passes under the street. Work is expected to be completed and the street reopened by the afternoon of June 7, weather permitting. A detour will be posted.

***New Hope Lane between Cleveland Avenue and North Liberty Street** will remain closed to through traffic

through June 3. A detour is posted.

***Work will be taking place at the corner of Cleveland Avenue and 23rd Street, and on Gray Avenue** on either side of 18th Street, but these areas will not be closed. Traffic may be controlled by a flagger at times.

***Utilities is repairing**

or replacing aging water and sewer lines in the neighborhoods in the 21st Street basin. The project area is bordered by Liberty Street and U.S. 52 to the west, 25th Street to the north, 14th Street to the south and Attucks Street and Bowen Boulevard to the east.

***The following streets in Ardmore** will be closed to through traffic from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. through June 3: Melrose Street will be closed between Westover Drive and Hawthorne Road. Maplewood Avenue will be closed between Melrose and Coventry streets. Hoyt Street will be closed between Ford and Collingwood streets. Detours will be posted for all street closures.

***Utilities is repairing** or replacing aging water and sewer lines in the

neighborhoods in an area called Ardmore Basin 1. The project area is between Westover Drive, Miller and Magnolia streets and Hawthorne Road. It also includes portions of Walker and Jefferson avenues and Hoyt, Collingwood, Ford and Bellview streets.

***North Stratford Road, between Runnymede Road and Reynolda Road,** is scheduled to be repaved beginning on Friday, June 3. During these operations, traffic will be controlled by a flagger. Motorists should expect delays or take an alternate route.

Information about the project, including a map of the project area, is posted at www.Utilities.CityofWS.org. For more information call CityLink 311.

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