

## County Lab Supervisor Enjoys Her Health Care Support Role

BY RAHN ADAMS

Edie Fullwood isn't a doctor and she isn't a nurse. Still, she is an important link in the county's chain of public health care.

As head of the Brunswick County Health Department's laboratory, she supervises the support services that often enable the department's medical staff to correctly diagnose and properly treat health problems.

"I love it," Mrs. Fullwood said of her work. "You get a lot of satisfaction from this job in that you're really helping a segment of the population that needs it."

As a result of her work with the local health department, the 53-year-old Southport resident was recognized earlier this year as 1988 Outstanding Laboratorian of the Year by the Eastern District of the N.C. Public Health Association.

Mrs. Fullwood, the first recipient of the new award, was honored in May at the district association's annual meeting in Nags Head. The award was presented by Dr. Lou Turner of the state health laboratory in Raleigh.

"It being the first (award) made me feel very good," she said. "And I was very surprised, because I didn't even know I was being put in for it."

Nominated by Brunswick County Health Director Michael U. Rhodes, Mrs. Fullwood was selected from nominees representing health departments throughout the 58-county district.

Rhodes' nominating letter outlined Mrs. Fullwood's achievements during the previous year, including numerous training sessions that she attended and conducted, and several new testing programs she implemented. Also, she developed a new ordering procedure to eliminate shortages and stockpiling of laboratory supplies.

The health director also noted that Mrs. Fullwood completed a Spanish language class this spring at Brunswick Community College to help her better communicate with Spanish-speaking migrant workers who are health department clients. She now serves as an interpreter.

A Colorado native, Mrs. Fullwood has lived in Brunswick County for 11 years. Her husband, Lennie Fullwood, is a civilian boat operator at the Sunny Point Military Ocean Terminal. They have two children—Ar-

mando, 23, of Charlotte, and Melina, 15, a student at South Brunswick High School.

Mrs. Fullwood attended Trinidad State College in Trinidad, Colo., and graduated from the St. Francis Hospital Schools of Medical Technology and Radiology in Colorado Springs, Colo. Before moving to Southport, her husband's hometown, she worked at medical facilities in Colorado, Florida and Virginia, where he was stationed in the U.S. Air Force.

In Brunswick County, she was employed as staff technologist at Doshier Memorial Hospital in Southport for 4½ years before being hired by the county as laboratory supervisor five years ago. She said she enjoys the slower pace of her current job, which isn't as stressful as having to deal with the emergencies that are common in hospitals.

"Some days we're really busy, but those days you can handle," Mrs. Fullwood said. The health department operates as many as five clinics a day, with the lab providing support services for the various programs.

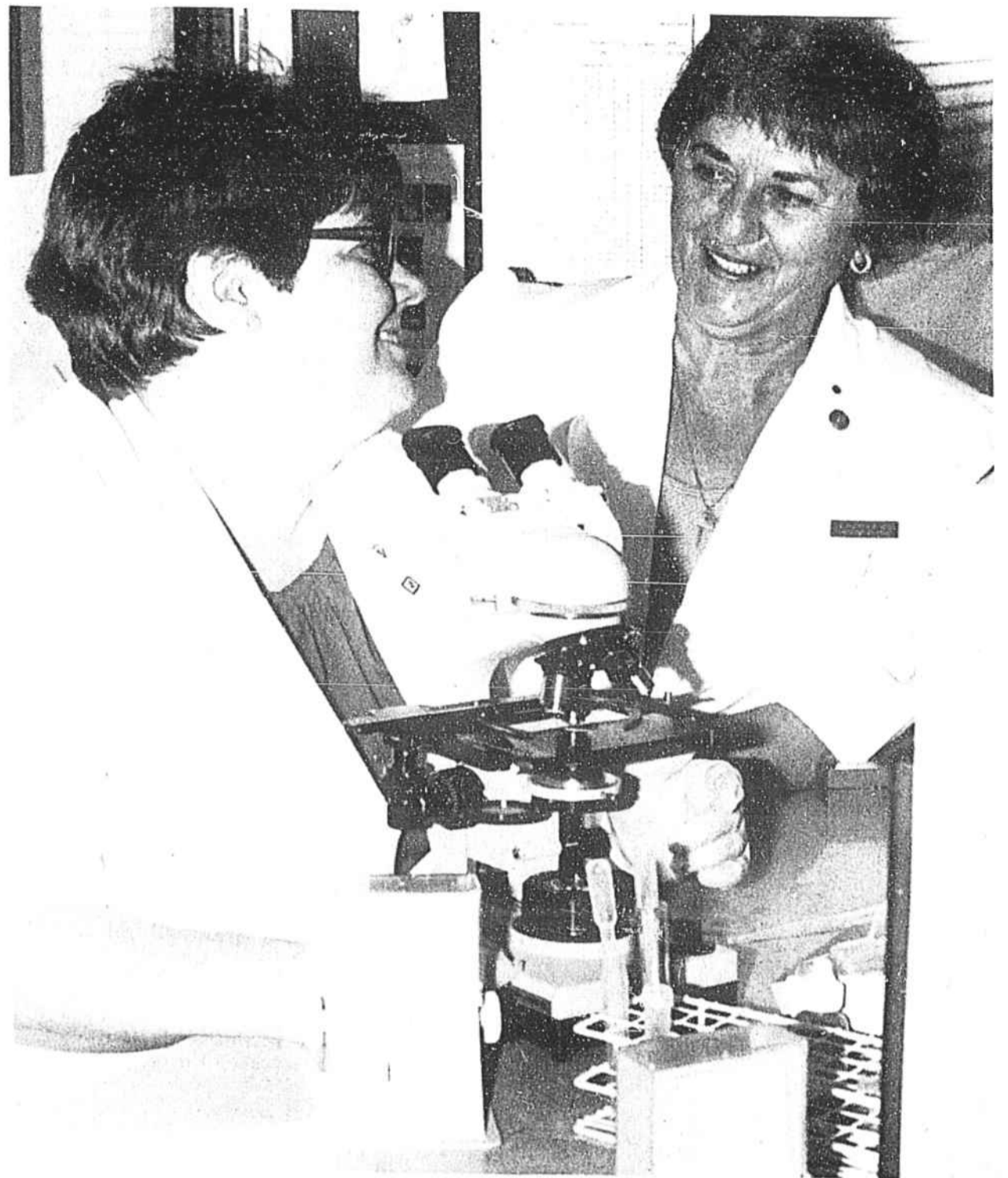
"My responsibility is to see that all the equipment in our lab is maintained and that the quality control on all our tests is performed with accuracy," she noted.

Among other lab work, Mrs. Fullwood and lab technician Debbie Sawyer handle blood typing, blood counts for anemia and infections, blood sugar and cholesterol screening, tests for sexually-transmitted diseases and complete urinalyses.

They also process specimens for other tests that are done at the state health laboratory in Raleigh, then later dispense the lab results to physicians. The state lab recently quit doing blood chemistry panels for the department.

However, Mrs. Fullwood emphasized that the health department still offers the service. The testing has been contracted out until the department can purchase the equipment to do chemistry panels in-house.

Another service she hopes to take on eventually is water sample testing, which also is done now by the state lab. "I would hope that someday we could test our water in-house," she said. "It would save a lot of time, especially with the growth of Brunswick County."



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LAB SUPERVISOR EDIE FULLWOOD (right) of the Brunswick County Health Department checks in on lab technician Debbie Sawyer.

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