



# CATAWBA COUNTY

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HICKORY, N.C. — Catawba County Social Services recently received a Best Practice Award from the N.C. Association of County Directors of Social Services. The award was for “Children and Aging Strategic Planning Projects” in the category “Profiles in Community Collaboration”.

This award was presented during the 89<sup>th</sup> Social Services Institute, held in Hickory Oct. 26-28. The entry described the Children’s Agenda Planning Committee and the Aging Leadership Planning Project. In both cases, Catawba County Social Services took the lead in collaborating with area agencies to develop reports about the needs of children and older adults.

The Children’s Agenda Planning Committee was established in 2009 by the Catawba County Commission and reported its findings in 2011. The Aging Leadership Planning Project was also created in 2009. It is expected to report its findings later this month.

The Children’s Agenda Planning Committee was led by Dawn Wilson, Social Services special projects coordinator. It brought together representatives from child-serving agencies and community leaders with the vision of ensuring a safe community where all children are engaged, enriched and equipped to reach their full potential.

The committee gathered information about the status of children in Catawba County. As part of this process, more than 700 county residents responded to a survey. The committee analyzed this and other information to develop a Children’s Agenda, outlining the priority goals for children and families, and suggesting strategies for accomplishing those goals. There were goals in six areas: Family Functioning and Self Sufficiency, Education, Health, Social/Emotional Health, Safe Environment, and Social/Community Connection. A Child Data Snapshot summarizing this committee’s work is now available on the Catawba County Web site at <http://www.catawbacountync.gov>.



Catawba County Social Services employees hold the Best Practice Award they received from the N.C. Association of County Directors of Social Services. The award was for "Children and Aging Strategic Planning Projects" in the category Profiles in Community Collaboration. From left to right are Rick Pilato, assistant director of social services; Beth Brandes, assistant director of social services; Dawn Wilson, special projects coordinator and leader of the Children's Agenda Planning Committee; Tami

The Aging Leadership Planning Project followed a similar process. Collaborating with other agencies that serve senior citizens, the committee's goal was to evaluate the county's "aging readiness," or ability to meet the needs of a growing older population. Tami Hefner, Social Services adult services program manager; and Sheila Weeks, Area Agency on Aging director, led the planning effort. Some 114 county persons representing 65 agencies and organizations participated. In addition, the group surveyed approximately 1,000 county residents. The group reviewed eight components of a Livable and Senior Friendly Community, including: Healthy Aging, Access and Choice in Services and Supports, Safety and Security, Public Accountability and Responsiveness, Physical and Accessible Environment, Technology, Economic Security, and Social and Cultural Opportunity. The committee plans to publish a Data Snapshot on the county's website following its report to the County Commission later this month.

Both of these initiatives were accomplished without additional funding or staff. Instead, existing staff members assisted with this effort.

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