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For Immediate Release: October 13, 2010

Catawba County Public Health Supports Women During Breast Cancer Awareness Month

As with many illnesses, breast cancer is best treated if found within the earliest stages. Having a mammogram is the best available method to detect breast cancer early. Catawba County Public Health's Women's Preventative Health Clinic is working to increase awareness of the importance of early breast cancer detection and resources available for women who are unable to pay for a mammogram.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 2008 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 81.3% of women in Catawba County over the age of 40 reported having a mammogram within the past two years.

"We are pleased to see that so many women have had a mammogram, but we would love to see that number rise to 100%," explained Sarah Lawson, Clinical Health Services Nursing Supervisor at Catawba County Public Health.

During the 2009-2010 fiscal year, there was an increase in patients participating in the NC Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program (BCCCP) at Public Health. BCCCP provides cervical and breast cancer screening, including lab work and a complete physical examination consisting of a pap test, clinical breast exam and instruction on how to perform a self breast examination, to women ages 40-64 who qualify financially. Women who qualify will also be scheduled for a mammogram on the Catawba Valley Medical Center Mobile Mammography Unit.

In addition to BCCCP, partnerships with the NC Foothills Susan G. Komen foundation and Through Healing Eyes, Inc. (T.H.E.) have helped to increase the number of patients who could obtain mammograms. T.H.E is a local nonprofit organization whose mission is to make breast cancer diagnosis and treatment available to those unable to afford care. A grant received by Centro Latino from the Komen foundation has also increased mammograms for Hispanic women.

"We do not want the issue of money to prevent women from getting mammograms or seeking treatment if they are diagnosed with breast cancer," said Lawson. "We are very grateful for our partnerships because they help with the cost of screening for those who need it the most."

To learn more about women's health services provided by Catawba County Public Health or to see if you are eligible for BCCCP, please visit www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth or call 828-695-5800.