

## **N.C. 5 A Day State Excellence Awards Announced**

WINSTON-SALEM – The winners of the 2006 North Carolina 5 A Day State Excellence Awards were announced today by the N.C. 5 A Day Coalition at their annual symposium in Winston-Salem. The N.C. 5 A Day Coalition, in collaboration with the N.C. Division of Public Health and other statewide partners, awarded five organizations and schools for their imaginative efforts to promote the positive health benefits of eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day. The annual awards recognize successful programs in three areas: school/child care, community and combined business (community and schools).



The winners are:

**First place – School/Child Care Division:  
Oaks Road Elementary School of New Bern**

Oaks Road Elementary School reached out to all students and changed their eating habits in less than one year. Previously, students could only identify a few of the most popular fruits and vegetables – now they can identify 90 percent of them by name.

**Second place – School/Child Care Division:  
Southend Elementary School of Reidsville**

Along with parent and community involvement, South End's 5 A Day program included a nutrition ventriloquist, healthier lunch items, salad shakers, educational displays, cafeteria decorations and recipe exchanges.

**Honorable Mention – School/Child Care Division:  
Avery County Schools of Newland**

Avery County Schools promoted the 5 A Day message in serving bars, menus, bulletin boards, Nutrition Advisory Council meetings, talking with students, and at a Relay for Life event. Faculty even dressed up as football players to let the students and staff visualize the positive benefits of eating more fruits and vegetables.

**First Place – Community Division:  
Fit City Challenge in Charlotte**

This program highlighted the power of bringing together diverse groups with unique talents and resources to change behavior. The program encouraged elementary school children to consume their five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, track their consumption and record it on the Fit City Challenge website. The school that logged in the most fruits and vegetables got a Carolina Panther pep rally at their school.

**First Place – Combined Business (Community/School):  
Mecklenburg County Health Department in Charlotte**

Mecklenburg County Health Department set a priority of addressing adults' declining intake of fruits and vegetables. They held a forum to bring together a diverse group of residents to develop a plan to reverse this trend. Sophia Matson, cafeteria manager at Oaks Road Elementary School, spoke about the aspects of her school's program that made it a success. "The program's uniqueness was its daily reinforcement of learning," Matson said. "As children went through the school cafeteria line, they raised their hand with the number of fingers that showed how many fruits and vegetables they had eaten so far for that day. The daily accountability made it fun for the students and also kept them aware of the importance of 5 A Day," she said.

NC 5 A Day Coalition representatives expressed the importance of organizations getting involved in promoting consumption of fruits and vegetables. "For all North Carolinians to become healthier by eating more fruits and vegetables, innovative programs like those we honored today are critical," said N.C. 5 A Day coordinator Diane R. Beth. "These organizations have demonstrated exemplary dedication to quality 5 A Day programming," said Jason Horay, health education manager with LIVE FOR LIFE at Duke and chair of the North Carolina 5-A-Day Awards Program. "Truly, this is an exciting time as we honor and express our gratitude to these organizations for their efforts in helping to improve the health of North Carolina residents."

Eating a healthy, balanced diet with at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day is essential to an individual's overall health and well-being. Research shows that eating five or more fruits and vegetables each day plays an important role in decreasing risk for serious chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes. Yet, 77 percent of North Carolina adults report not reaching the minimum of five servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Statewide, the annual cost of poor nutrition, overweight and obesity is estimated at \$15.85

billion. Through 5 A Day programs and promotions in supermarkets, schools, restaurants, cafeterias, worksites, health agencies and community groups, North Carolinians learn the health benefits of eating five or more servings of fruit and vegetables a day.

The N.C. Division of Public Health's Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch, in conjunction with the 5 A Day Coalition Steering Committee, provide support for the NC 5 A Day Coalition. Representing multiple governmental and industry partners, the Coalition's 271 members work collaboratively to spread the 5 A Day message and coordinate activities throughout North Carolina. Membership in the N.C. 5 A Day Coalition is open to any organization or individual wanting to promote the 5 A Day message.