

The Herald-Sun

FSA gears up for new programs

May. 31, 2015 @ 06:42 PM

[Katie Jansen](#)

ORANGE COUNTY —

Armed with \$90,000 from the Orange County social justice fund and inspired by a recent trip to New York City to learn from a successful anti-poverty organization, the Family Success Alliance is preparing to launch its first two programs to help area children succeed.

The Family Success Alliance, geared toward creating a pipeline that supports children from the cradle all the way to college or a career, plans to fund two “zone navigator” positions to be filled by people from each pilot zone chosen for the program.

The two pilot zones – referred to as Zones 4 and 6 – are east of I-40 and part of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, respectively.

Colleen Bridger, health director at the Orange County Health Department, said the zone navigator is meant to be a “bi-directional navigator,” meaning that the navigator will both help families connect to services already available and report back about what additional services are needed.

The Family Success Alliance will also implement a kindergarten readiness program – a four-week program available to children who have never been to preschool. The program will help children adjust to being in a classroom, Bridger said.

Representatives of the Family Success Alliance recently visited the Harlem Children’s Zone, an organization that works to break the cycle of poverty for children in New York City.

Now a national model for other organizations and serving more than 12,000 kids, the Harlem Children’s Zone started small – with a one-block pilot zone in the 1990s.

“I was struck by how, even 20 years into the project, there’s this scrappiness in the ‘do whatever it takes’ mentality,” Bridger said, adding that she feels this is what sets the Harlem Children’s Zone apart from other organizations.

Although Bridger said she learned a lot by visiting various services and programs offered by the Harlem Children’s Zone, she sees the Family Success Alliance taking a slightly different approach.

While the Harlem Children’s Zone is primarily a self-enclosed entity that offers services to its youth, the Family Success Alliance plans to partner with resources and services that already exist in the community.

“Here in Orange County, we’re fortunate to have a lot of resources,” Bridger said. This, she said, could counteract the fact that the Family Success Alliance doesn’t have a large budget or startup grants for funding.

But the group does have funding lined up for the future. The Orange County Board of Commissioners has allotted \$250,000 next fiscal year for the Family Success Alliance, and founders are looking toward United Way as another potential funding source.

While the setup in Orange County may stray from the approach at the Harlem Children's Zone, Bridger said the goal is the same.

At the Harlem Children's Zone, she said, there are "so many opportunities for people to be actively involved in each kid's life."

A major goal of the Family Success Alliance, she said, is to build this pipeline so that every child will have multiple touch points along the way to ensure success.

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TALK IT UP

E-cigs increasing tobacco use among youth

BY ALEJANDRA CAMARGO
Carrboro High School

I am a junior at Carrboro High School, and I have noticed how teens have changed their perspective on tobacco and are experimenting with dangerous new tobacco products. Did you know that from 2011 to 2013, teens in North Carolina increased their use of e-cigarettes by more than 350 percent?

Tobacco has been exposed for all the harm it does, but society has found a new form of smoking. Cigarettes are now being replaced by the e-cig, or electronic cigarette. It is so new that society doesn't have much knowledge of the health effects, although we do have some basic information. One of the big ways in which e-cigs are similar to cigarettes is that they have nicotine. Nicotine is a drug that is very addictive and can cause damage to the brains of teens.

People these days have ideas of, "You never know; it may not happen to me." People of every generation have probably had that thought,

but now it has a different meaning because we have more knowledge about the effects of nicotine and should know better. We are more educated than ever before.

The danger now is that it is more accessible than ever. North Carolina does not allow e-cigs to be sold to people younger than 18 years old, but we all have older friends, and while some are good friends, most times they aren't the best influence, and they can buy them for us. It is very accessible. I've personally seen people smoke the e-cigs on school grounds and even in the classroom, although the schools are supposed to be tobacco-free.

Because the vapor doesn't smell like much, it's easy to hide. One of the biggest places where you see the most usage is on the Internet. Many teens post pictures and videos of themselves smoking e-cigs on their social media accounts. They have a different perspective of the e-cig. It's like some new fad among teens.

Some people use it as a coping tool to help them quit, but there is no evidence that it works. A big problem is that it has lithium

batteries that can overheat and explode.

There are many things we don't know about e-cigs. We need to research e-cigs to find out what chemicals they have, what is in the smoke, etc., find the problems, and educate the public.

In addition to educating the public, the FDA should set standards on the amount of chemicals and nicotine that are added and how they can be marketed. Then from here on out, the e-cig would be regulated and at least the companies couldn't target youth. Just as important, North Carolina should show that it cares about its youth by fully funding youth tobacco prevention programs like TRU—Tobacco. Reality. Unfiltered.—that prevent youth from starting to smoke or vape in the first place. Maybe then teens wouldn't think it was such a cool thing to do.

Alejandra Camargo is a student at Carrboro High School and a student member of Tobacco Reality Unfiltered, a program through the Orange Partnership for Alcohol and Drug Free Youth.

Large Disparities Exist Even in State's Healthiest County

By [Jess Clark](#)

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Posted June 10, 2015 at 9:45 am



Photo Credit: Family Success Alliance

Orange County children may be [the healthiest in North Carolina](#), according to child-advocacy nonprofit [NC Child](#). But a closer look at Orange County shows that the block you grow up on may matter more than your county.

Orange County is the wealthiest and most educated county in the state, and overall its children are the healthiest. Orange County Health Director Colleen Bridger says that's not a coincidence.

"The more highly educated you are, the more likely you are to have a professional job that provides you with health insurance, time off to go to the doctor, time off to take your kids to the doctor and a living wage," Bridger said.

But Orange County's wealth and college degrees aren't divided equally among all its residents. Census estimates show wide socioeconomic gaps between adjacent blocks.

"Even though Orange County in the aggregate is doing well, there are pockets of poverty and places where people are struggling that rivals any other place in the state," Bridger warned.

Bridger says the greatest health disparities within Orange County often come down to disparities in education. There are areas in the county where two-thirds of third-graders are reading below grade level.

The county says it's working to improve health outcomes by closing the education gap through a project called the [Family Success Alliance](#). The program replicates an initiative out of Harlem in New York City. "They've basically said 'anything a child needs from before she or he is born to the time he or she has a job after they've graduated from college, we want to provide it.' And so we want to replicate that here so that we are able to ensure that every child in Orange County can succeed, regardless of where they live," Bridger said.

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Volunteers sought for health opinion surveys

Jun. 09, 2015 @ 01:44 PM

ORANGE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

CHAPEL HILL —

The Orange County Health Department is required to conduct a community health assessment every four years. The goal is to find where there are gaps in health, the health services available to people living in Orange County and to identify emerging issues or trends that may affect the health of residents.

A community survey is a key component of the assessment process. Staff and volunteers from the Health Department will visit a random sample of households across the county to administer a 30-minute, confidential survey.

The Health Department will compile the results of the survey and include them in the final report of the community health assessment, which will be completed in early 2016. Survey responses will help to determine the direction of future programs for the health department and other agencies across the county.

Teams of surveyors will be in Hillsborough and the northern portion of the county June 18-20. The following weekend, teams will be in Chapel Hill and surrounding areas of the southern part of the county June 26-28. All volunteers will be wearing Orange County Health Department or Healthy Carolinians of Orange County T-shirts and identification badges; many will be driving county cars.

If a surveyor comes to your door, please take the time to share your opinions with them. Also, please secure pets for the safety of the surveyor teams. Participants will not be paid, but will receive a small gift of appreciation and informational materials about Orange County services.

Volunteers are needed to help conduct the surveys. If you are able to volunteer on any of the survey days listed above and would like to be involved in this community process, visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5SBGQBV>.

Bilingual English/Spanish speakers are needed and volunteers need no prior experience; training will be offered on each survey day prior to going out into the community. Refreshments, lunch, and snacks will be provided to all volunteers.

The Herald-Sun

Guest column: It's time to close the achievement gap

Jun. 13, 2015 @ 03:27 PM

BY SHELDON LANIER and JAKE HENRY, Family Success Alliance



Jake Henry

Sheldon Lanier

CHAPEL HILL —

Ensuring that all students in Orange County have the opportunity to learn, so they may achieve academic and individual success in life is a major goal of both Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools and Orange County Schools.

However, it is a goal that our school districts cannot achieve on our own.

In Orange County, some of our families are struggling to pay their bills, put food on the table and provide their children with adequate health care. We all know that what happens to our children outside of the classroom, like their neighborhoods, homes and nutrition, has a major impact on what happens inside the classroom. And ultimately, the future of our community depends on whether our children reach their full potential.

That's why we are so excited to be a part of a new initiative in our county that aims to bring a diverse group of elected officials, community organizations, non-profits and government partners together to provide our families and children with the support and resources they need to overcome any obstacles on their road to success, learn, and grow successfully.

The Family Success Alliance will adapt lessons from successful models such as the Harlem Children's Zone to improve our children's chances for educational and economic opportunities. These models serve

a defined geographic area and its children with evidence-based programs, services and support from cradle to career. These opportunities are like charging stations that children depend on to “charge up” their developing brains and reach their full potential.

The first charging station begins with every child beginning kindergarten healthy and ready to thrive. High-quality early childhood experiences build the foundation for the future, and will make a tremendous difference for our at-risk students. As educators, we know that the academic achievement gap is greatly impacted by a child’s access to resources, beginning at a very early age. The Family Success Alliance will work to increase access to these resources for our families and children, which should be a big help in reducing, and possibly eliminating, the achievement gap in our schools.

The charging continues through school and the community to make sure each child succeeds academically, receives support both in and out of school, graduates on time, begins college or a career and then ends by supporting these young adults with their life and career goals.

Many families, who have felt unheard and unimportant in the past, have expressed excitement and anticipation for the work of the Family Success Alliance. By combining input from the families, children, service providers and leaders in the selected zones with decades of research, the Family Success Alliance will be able to greatly improve the odds of success for children and families in our county.

When we all work together as a community, great things can be achieved. By surrounding children with dedicated organizations and individuals who are able to provide resources and support along the way, we feel confident that all children in Orange County schools will be able to achieve their true learning potential.

EDITOR’S NOTES: Sheldon Lanier is director of equity and AVID for the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, and Jake Henry is the chief academic officer for Orange County Schools. ... For more information on the Family Success Alliance, visit www.orangecountync.gov/departments/health/FSA.php online.