

New sidewalks on Hwy. 176 provide safer, easier access to Human Services building

June 1, 2009

Henderson County, NC: Mothers and babies will no longer have to battle a busy highway with limited sidewalk access to reach the Henderson County Human Services building. The Childhood Obesity Prevention Demonstration Project helped fund the completion of sidewalks on both sides of Highway 176 (Spartanburg Highway) with part of the \$380,000 that was awarded to the Henderson County Department of Public Health in October 2008.

A ribbon cutting was held on Thursday, May 21, 2009, at noon in front of the health department to celebrate the completion of the sidewalks. Terri Wallace, Executive Director of Partnership for Health, was the coordinator of the project.

"We were so pleased to be able to support the City of Hendersonville with this sidewalk improvement to provide safe walking areas for residents," Wallace said. "So many times I have seen mothers and babies, even entire families, walking along this major highway to reach the health department. This will now make it safer and easier for Henderson County residents to obtain services and get exercise."

The sidewalks connect downtown Hendersonville with the new Human Services building, which houses the Henderson County Department of Public Health, the Department of Social Services, and the Veteran's Administration office. Approximately 1,334 residential properties and 335 commercial properties are located within ½ mile of this sidewalk project. Apple Country Transit also provides bus service along the sidewalks with six designated stops.

The new sidewalks enable residents to walk safely from the Human Services building to downtown and continue on to Jackson Park. When the upgraded Mud Creek Trail is complete this August, residents will be able to continue on to Patton Park, essentially walking all the way from the south side of town starting at the Human Services building to the north side of town at Patton Park.

Public input for the Bicycle/Pedestrian project was obtained by the city through community input sessions. This project was identified as Short-Term Recommended Pedestrian Project "H" and "I" in the adopted City of Hendersonville Pedestrian Plan.

The plan process involved the volunteer BiPeds committee who inventoried sidewalks throughout Hendersonville's planning jurisdiction. A steering committee of 23 members was created and met many times during the

process. Two public workshops were held for suggestions and feedback regarding the plan. A number of articles about the plan and workshops were published in the Hendersonville *Times-News*.

The total project cost was \$237,499.50. The City of Hendersonville provided \$142,499.50 of that cost from a Sidewalk Improvement Bond that was approved by voters in February 2004.

North Carolina ranks 16th in the nation in adult obesity and fifth in the nation in childhood obesity. Through the Childhood Obesity Prevention Demonstration Project, Henderson County addressed obesity through a comprehensive public awareness campaign, improvements to sidewalks, physical activity and nutrition programs in child care centers, training for health care providers, improved staff wellness in hospitals, training for PE teachers, and support for area farmers' markets.

The Henderson County Partnership for Health, the Department of Public Health, the Henderson County School System, Park Ridge and Pardee Hospitals, and 14 other partners came together to engage community partners and volunteers for a healthier Henderson County. For more information, contact the Henderson County Partnership for Health at 698-4600 and visit www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com.

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