

NEW Initiative to break the cycle of poverty

The NETworX CATAWBA initiative is a multi-dimensional model for reducing poverty based on national research suggesting that low-income families must have a support system of intentional relationships across economic and class lines to access resources in the community to move toward self-sufficiency. NETworX CATAWBA is also a model for systemic change that helps communities move toward ending poverty by working together to develop goals, practices, and policies that enable self-sufficiency.

NETworX CATAWBA is designed to target low income individuals and families at 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG). According to the most recent data (June 2014) provided by the Western Piedmont Council on Governments Data Services (using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the NC Center for Health Statistics and the Catawba County GIS Department), in 1999, 9.1% of all persons in Catawba County were living in poverty. This percentage rose to 12.5% during 2006-2010, and again increased to 15.1% from 2008-2012. There are an estimated 22,934 people living in poverty in Catawba County, the majority residing within the City of Hickory. Of this number, an estimated 8,233 are children 17 and under.

NETworX CATAWBA is part of a national evaluation project. Data* is collected on each participant before beginning the curriculum, at completion of the curriculum and for those who go on to become graduates, or Champions of Change, every six months after graduation.

There are several SMART Goals of NETworX CATAWBA, including:

1. 15 individuals will participate in the first 12-week training, to begin Monday, September 14, 2015. This does not include other family members or children of parents participating in program.
2. At least 50% of the participants will obtain employment during the course of the project.
3. During the project period, 100% of those obtaining new employment will experience an increase in income, increase in assets and/or a reduction in public assistance.

Other measurable goals include quality of life indicators including physical, cognitive, emotional, social, relational and spiritual components.

Upon acceptance into NETworX CATAWBA, each participant goes through a 12-week program designed to help them begin their transition out of poverty. NETworX CATAWBA participants attend a weekly meeting that includes a meal, child care, tutoring and classes. After participants complete the classes, lifestyle changes and goals for getting out of poverty, participants become NETworX CATAWBA Champions of Change. Champions work with trained Allies, who are community volunteers who work hand-in-hand with them over the next 18-24 months to move out of poverty.

In NETworX CATAWBA, relationships are intentionally and purposely built across race and socioeconomic lines in order to offer a personal enhancement through sharing and building of social capital. The program addresses causes and effects of poverty, increases long-term financial independence for participants, and demonstrates partnerships and a commitment to capacity building. It addresses barriers to eliminating poverty through training and one-on-one guidance for participants. This strategy uses a strengths-based framework that fosters hope and self-determination. Participants create their own roadmap to independence and draw on a supportive community to achieve their own goals.

NETworX CATAWBA is a community collaborative made up of area church leaders, community and civic leaders and support staff from Greater Hickory Cooperative Christian Ministry. GHCCM is providing staff, office space and resources to support the NETworX CATAWBA initiative. GHCCM is also a donating partner of NETworX CATAWBA. Supporting churches include St. Luke's UMC, First UMC, Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Episcopal Church of the Ascension, St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Hartzell and McQueen's UMC, Highland UMC, First Presbyterian Church, Bethel UMC, Morning Star Baptist Church and New Life Ministry. Community partners include Catawba County Dept. of Social Services,

Catawba County Public Health, NC Dept. of Health & Human Services, NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Legal Aid of NC, Western Piedmont Council on Governments, City of Hickory Public Housing Authority, Catawba Valley Behavioral Health, Lenoir-Rhyne University, Catawba Valley Association of Counselors & Therapists, Partners Behavioral Health, Catawba Valley Community College, Women's Resource Center, Cognitive Connection, Goodwill Industries, Hickory Soup Kitchen, Safe Harbor Rescue Mission, Family Care Center, Family Guidance Center, Exodus Homes, The Salvation Army and Burke Circles.

How can you help with NETworX CATAWBA? While much of the NETworX CATAWBA program cost can be offset with in-kind donations and volunteers, the program requires financial support from the community to help cover Champions of Change stipends and other costs associated with the program. We will begin our first 15-week NETworX CATAWBA class in the summer/fall of 2015. We need volunteers to:

- **Serve as an Ally** for a Champion of Change. Complete and return the Ally application.
- **Sponsor a Champion of Change Scholarship**, providing a \$250/half or \$500/full scholarship of a NETworX family. We are asking each church to consider providing a NETworX scholarship. Please contact [Barbara Rush](#) at GHCCM at (828-327-0979, ext. 223) for scholarship info.
- **Serve on a NETworX Catawba Committee** (complete and return a Volunteer application or Community Survey):
 - Work with area churches to coordinate weekly **Meals**.
 - Assist with **Childcare** at each meeting.
 - **Tutoring** for school-aged children during meetings.
 - **Volunteer** your time. Complete the **Community/Church Survey** to assist Champions with specific needs.
 - Serve as the **Ally Coordinator** for your church or business. Help recruit and train new Allies.
 - Assist Champions of Change with **Transportation** to and from meetings.
 - Assist with **Hospitality**, greeting, set-up and clean-up after each meeting.

This is an exciting program and an opportunity to help families living in Catawba County move out of poverty. We hope you will consider supporting NETworX CATAWBA and/or becoming an Ally or volunteer. For more information about NETworX CATAWBA, please contact [Rev. Nancy Griswold](#), Program Director, (828-612-4030) or [Barbara Rush](#) at GHCCM at (828-327-0979, ext. 223). If you or someone you know would like to apply to participate in NETworX Catawba as a Champion, please contact [Alice Horton](#), Champion/Ally Coordinator at GHCCM at (828-327-0979, ext. 227).



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SECURING WELL-BEING TOGETHER

**Data for initial N.C. sites shows average income increased from \$466.50 to \$1,200 at 12 months. Reliance on public assistance decreased from \$312.50 per month to close to zero at 12 months. Assets (cash on hand) increased during this period, from \$80.50 to \$310.50. This data is consistent with the national data in which 88% of families reported an increase in earned income; 30% reduced their use of welfare benefits; and 56% reported an increase in assets.*