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CABARRUS HEALTH ALLIANCE TEAM TAKES HOME BLUE RIBBON
PHACTS strives to change the face of public health.

(Kannapolis, NC) – Cabarrus Health Alliance has been the ‘first’ in many public health endeavors. This innovative staff has done it again by writing a business plan to empower other health departments to convert to a new governance structure.

Six Cabarrus Health Alliance employees were invited to attend an intensive 10-month Management Academy for Public Health through the Institute for Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Members of the team included Gina Goff, Tammie Harkey, Victoria Manning, Jan Odell, Barbara Sheppard, and Erin Shoe. The team worked together beginning in July 2006 to write a full business plan. Their project, titled **PHACTS – Public Health Authority Consultation and Training Services**, strives to teach other local health departments about a unique governance structure called a Public Health Authority. “I am very proud of our team for winning the blue ribbon for the best business plan. This further demonstrates our commitment to operating Cabarrus Health Alliance within a business model” said Dr. Pilkington, Director of Public Health.

The Cabarrus Health Alliance has been a public health authority since 1997 and has realized numerous benefits because of this change. “Due to our change in governance structure, we have benefited from enhanced flexibility which has allowed us to design innovative programs that directly meet the needs of our community” said Barbara Sheppard, Health Initiatives Director. Additionally, Jan Odell, Director of Community Health, said “We would have never been able to hire 22 nurses in six weeks under the old, traditional public health structure. The flexibility of a public health authority allowed us to quickly design the school health program which places a school nurse in every single Cabarrus County and Kannapolis City school.”

The business plan ultimately plans to offer trainings geared towards County Commissioners, County Managers, County Finance Managers, Board of Health members, and Health Directors to teach them about the differences between a public health authority structure and a traditional health department. Separation of the health department from county government is the most notable change in becoming a public health authority. As discussed in the business plan, health departments and communities with an interest in pursuing conversion can contract with the Cabarrus Health Alliance for consultation services. The CHA team consulted with **Taffy Williams**, President of **Colonial Technology Development Co.** (<http://www.colonialtdc.com>), to develop the best strategies for marketing this new initiative. Six other teams from around the country attended the same cohort session as the Cabarrus Health Alliance. Teams traveled from as far as Wisconsin to attend the on-campus academy sessions.

ABOUT CABARRUS HEALTH ALLIANCE:

Cabarrus Health Alliance (established as the Cabarrus County Health Department in 1911) incorporated in July 1997 as the Public Health Authority of Cabarrus County. The agency provides a comprehensive array of traditional public health services including women's and children's health services, chronic and communicable disease prevention, environmental health, case management, and health education. For more information about Cabarrus Health Alliance, please visit www.cabarrushealth.org.