



**North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
Office of Public Affairs**

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**Fresh Food Drive Highlights Importance of Local Food to Public Health**

Raleigh — A Fresh Food drive brought in more than a 1,000 pounds of fruit and vegetables today highlighting the importance of healthy eating. State Health Director Jeffrey Engel joined middle schoolers from Wake County's Exploris Middle School on Monday in celebrating the health and economic benefits of fresh, local food. The Fresh Food Drive in front of the N.C. Legislative Building was the highlight of a day-long "Game Changers" conference, where more than 100 representatives of community-based and state organizations met to discuss the transformation of the American diet to one based on locally-grown and minimally-processed foods. The conference was part of Food Day, a national event to encourage eating healthy, affordable food produced in a sustainable, humane way.

"This event is an opportunity to educate us all on the importance that our locally-grown food has on our physical and our economic health," said Dr. Engel. "North Carolinians suffer with chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity and cancers that we know can be prevented at least in part with better nutrition—meaning that we need to eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lowfat dairy and meat, eggs and seafood—much of which is produced right here in our state."

Seventy-two students from Exploris participated in the conference, sharing poster presentations and interactive games they created during a 9-week study of our food system. Students discussed their own efforts to eat healthier, ranging from giving up soft drinks and junk food to foregoing seconds at the dinner table.

North Carolinians consistently fail to eat the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables, and over-eat fast food and sugary drinks. The result is poor health. North Carolina consistently ranks in the bottom third of all states when it comes to rates of chronic disease and obesity. This epidemic of poor nutrition begs for radical change—both in the types and amounts of foods that we eat.

The N.C. Division of Public Health, N.C. Cooperative Extension, the Gillings School of Global Public Health at UNC-Chapel Hill, the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle, the Center for Environmental Farming Systems and Sustainable Sandhills joined forces to sponsor the day's events, which included national and community-level speakers, a Farmers Market on the Mall and the "fresh" Food Drive of fruits and vegetables, all of which will be distributed by the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle to families in the Triangle area

For more information about Food Day, visit [www.foodday.org](http://www.foodday.org).



Location: 101 Blair Drive • Adams Building • Raleigh, N.C. 27603

[www.ncdhhs.gov](http://www.ncdhhs.gov)

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Photo cutline: Dr. Jeffrey Engel joins students from Wake County's Exploris Middle School in donating fresh fruits and vegetables during the Fresh Food Drive as part of national Food Day. Today's collection of 1,064 pounds of produce is the largest one day collection of fresh food by the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle to be distributed to families in the Triangle.