2022 Annual Update

You would think that in the wake of a globe-shaking pandemic that health news would slow down. You’d be wrong.

2022 continued to be a busy, significant year for health news, with the rise of the Omicron variant, the liminal space between pandemic and non-pandemic that we’re all navigating and a second pandemic (monkeypox). Closer to home, NC Health News kept tabs on how the Supreme Court’s Dobbs ruling would affect abortion access, a building mental health crisis in kids and a number of environmental issues.

We’ve had a great team in place this year. Our environmental health reporter Greg Barnes retired in late 2021. In his wake, Will Atwater has spent considerable time driving around eastern North Carolina reporting stories about water quality.

Our Report for America corps member Elizabeth Thompson finished up her year and now works at the UNC Center for Innovation and Sustainability in Local Media. Recent UNC journalism graduate Rachel Crumpler stepped in to cover the challenging topics of prison health and gender health. It’s been such a pleasure to work with a sharp, curious and well-trained young reporter.

Clarissa Donnelly-DeRoven has become something of an expert on North Carolina Medicaid. Her ability to speak Spanish has helped us do more insightful reporting on issues faced by the state’s Latino population.

Freelancers Tommy Goldsmith (who covers aging), Taylor Knopf (our mental health reporter) and Anne Blythe (oral health, children’s health, etc) keep their eyes on various aspects of health care in the state.

I’m particularly proud of Taylor’s work. After eight months of careful and sensitive reporting, she recently published a story about trauma allegedly suffered by a preteen in one of the state’s private psychiatric hospitals that’s run by a company with a troubling history. We co-published that story with the News & Observer.
Impact

Our peers have taken notice of our work: NC Health News received 17 NC Press Association awards this summer (including second place for general excellence) and we won a national Local Media Association award for our COVID coverage.

Our decision to allow for free republication in 2019 continues to bear fruit: more than 130 other publications used our work over the past year, spreading our impact.

If you read the state budget carefully, you can see the DNA of Taylor’s stories, where the legislature made adjustments to mental health policy and changed several line items after Taylor wrote revelatory stories about substance use treatment funding. People in the aging community point to Tommy’s work after the legislature added dollars to support seniors in the budget.

Thank you!

We raised close to $68,000 in end-of-year contributions from individuals in 2021 and we’re on track to raise more than that during our 2022 NewsMatch campaign. For the third year, a group of local donors - our Publisher’s Circle - came together to contribute more than $20,000 in local matching dollars to add onto the national NewsMatch pledge of $15,000. This match helps to drive giving from smaller-dollar donors, who love to give when there’s a match on the table! We think we’ll end 2022 with enough surplus to hire another reporter.

There’s no way to thank our donors enough. Y’all keep us going not just with dollars, but with words of encouragement (much appreciated), phone calls and by sharing our content with your friends and colleagues.

Financial Update

Providing accurate, useful and independent health news is not free, but in an online model, it’s not as costly as the old model of print-based newspapers. North Carolina Health News operates on a nimble annual budget with limited overhead yet continues to generate award winning journalism through its dedicated, state-wide network of journalists. The vast majority of dollars raised go to producing hard-hitting and impactful journalism that changes lives.

We now have someone dedicated to social media and audience engagement who works half-time and we’re looking to grow the team next year with another reporter and a part-time website manager.

We’ve grown slowly and steadily, thanks to continued support from state-based foundations, sponsors and individual donors.

Earned income is the next hurdle for us. We’re looking to double down on website sponsorship in the coming year, both on the main website and in our newsletter (that now goes to more than 13,300 subscribers). If your organization wants to get it’s message in front of a well-educated, dedicated and engaged audience in 2023, reach out to us: development@northcarolinahealthnews.org.

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