

**Eastern Shore Healthy Communities
National Leadership Academy for the Public's Health
Leadership Fellows' Experience**

The investment in Eastern Shore Healthy Communities Leadership Fellows from Virginia's Accomack and Northampton counties has transformed both our personal and regional leadership capacity and enriched our culture of health. Our region lies on a spectacularly beautiful peninsula off Virginia's mainland. A fishing and farming community with tremendous assets for health, the area is rural, isolated, and its people (population 47,000) suffer disproportionately from lifestyle-related chronic diseases. Our multi-sector health partnership was pleased to participate in the NLAPH fellows program because our region needs more leaders sensitive to the role health plays in regional success, and because our partnership has significant work ahead to change the culture from ill-health to wellness. To fulfill our NLAPH project requirement we enhanced our already underway Worksite & Faith Community Wellness Policy project by increasing our goal from 10 to 20 organizations that adopt Wellness Policies. Partnering with the Eastern Shore's three Chambers of Commerce and area churches, we held an informational forum that attracted 25 participants with whom we will follow-up to assist them craft and implement policies to achieve organizational wellness policies. Additionally, plans are underway and a grant application is pending for a youth and adult year-long Leadership Institute to improve current and future leadership capacity. The NLAPH experience has helped our fellows and coalition strategically select new partners, frame our message, maintain a strategic focus and rein in our expectations. We have learned to manage meetings transparently, become comfortable with dialogue and disagreement, and reflect on and capture our learning moments and accomplishments. NLAPH planted seeds on Virginia's Eastern Shore that will yield many healthy harvests for years to come. For this we are truly grateful.