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## Introduction To The Journal

By: **Gary H. McCullough**

### Abstract

Welcome to our Inaugural Issue! The Blue Cross NC Institute for Health and Human Services (IHHS), housed administratively under the Beaver College of Health Sciences, is one of only two institutes at Appalachian State University. The Vision of the IHHS is that it will be the preeminent vehicle for connecting university resources to community needs for the promotion of health and wellness research, clinical training, and outreach in Western North Carolina. As our vision states, “We aspire to create a community of learning—or regional classroom—wherein all community members are engaged with Appalachian in the process of learning, training students, seeking new knowledge, and directing the future of a healthy and prosperous region.”

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# Sustainable Health



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Achieving our mission and vision, by definition, would not be possible without the willingness of the extraordinary men and women who serve our communities in their respective organizations across the region to open their arms to our faculty, staff and students who want to learn with them, train with them, and create new knowledge and new opportunities collaboratively. The purpose of this journal is to address the most salient regional problems and opportunities surrounding health and wellness in Western North Carolina and highlight the ongoing efforts of our regional collaborations to address these through research, outreach, education/training, and program development.

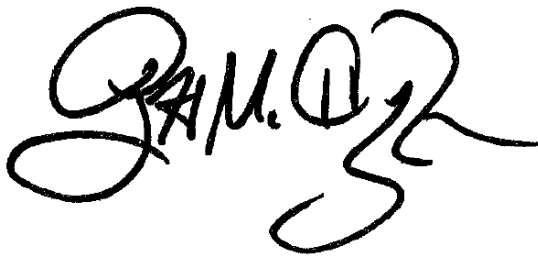
We chose the topic of Sustainable Health for this inaugural issue because sustainability is at the core of Appalachian State’s mission, and we believe that it is critical to define what sustainable health is and explain why it must be a significant part of the ongoing discussion and agenda addressing sustainability. It was one year ago that we began the process of shutting down most of the planet over a new coronavirus. If anyone needed a reminder of how we are all dependent upon one another for sustainable health, that should have served the purpose. Then there are the underlying aspects of a disease entity such as this--how people with lower incomes, less access to health care, inability to socially distance from others due to employment or living conditions, and other factors were more likely to contract the virus, more likely to suffer morbidity and mortality, and less likely to receive adequate support.

But creating and maintaining sustainable healthy communities has been a challenging goal long before this virus and will be long into the future. It includes everything from the basics, such as clean water and sanitation, to education, access to adequate care, transportation, and sufficient amounts of nutritious food. Cultural, economic, and environmental factors are top among many others that play a role in the successes and failures surrounding sustainable health. Fortunately, there are researchers, educators, case workers, health and human service providers, and others working to address these factors at the local level with an eye toward global success.

In this issue, we offer six articles addressing sustainable health from different perspectives, including the very definition of it; mental health issues; hunger, poverty, and health; impact on aging; the importance of access to outdoor healthy activities; and climate and health. Our authors include Appalachian State faculty, as well as regional health and human service providers from Hospitality House of Northwest North Carolina, Mt. Vernon Baptist Church, Second Harvest Foodbank of Northwest North Carolina, the Hunger and Health Coalition of Boone, Appalachian Regional Health

System, Appalachian District Health Department, and the North Carolina Institute for Climate Studies. It's exciting to have these experts in the field and experts in the halls of academia working together to address our most pressing health issues, and I hope you enjoy reading about their efforts and gain some new insights into the complexities of creating sustainable healthy communities.

Special thanks to Dr. Adam Hege, who took extra time out of his very busy schedule to serve as the associate editor for this issue. His article does an outstanding job of defining sustainable health and laying out a framework that everyone can understand and appreciate. This would not have been possible without his support. Thanks also to the amazingly talented interdisciplinary faculty from across our university who contributed to this issue. They did so out of their true desire to impact change right here where we live. As a university, we want to provide hands-on training to students wherever possible; and it was a pleasure to have Justin Radulovich, a senior studying graphic design, put this issue together for us from start to finish. I think you'll agree that he did an outstanding job. Finally, thanks to the support of the Beaver College of Health Sciences from Dean Marie Huff and to Appalachian State University for supporting our ongoing efforts to educate the future health and human service workers of our region and create a sustainable, healthy planet.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'GAM. 11' followed by a stylized flourish.

**Gary H. McCullough, Ph.D.**

Editor

Executive Director, Blue Cross NC Institute for  
Health & Human Services