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Cleveland County Welcomes New Local Health Director

SHELBY, NC — Cleveland County has selected Paula Black, MSN, RN, as its new Local Health Director following a comprehensive recruitment and interview process. Black joined the Health Department on October 29, 2026.

Black is an experienced public health leader with a passion for improving health outcomes and building healthy communities. A registered nurse with a Master of Science in Nursing from Queens University in Charlotte, she began her career as a public health nurse before moving into leadership. She has managed a variety of programs at the Gaston County Health Department, Carolinas HealthCare System (now Atrium Health), and the Mecklenburg County Health Department.

Since 2023, Black has served as assistant health director for clinical operations at the Gaston County Department of Health and Human Services. In that role, she oversaw clinical and laboratory services at Gaston County's three clinic locations and its mobile unit. She also served as operations chief for the department's H1N1 and COVID-19 pandemic responses and mass vaccination efforts, ensuring the community had access to critical vaccines.

A graduate of the UNC-Chapel Hill Management Academy for Public Health, Black was a core member of the team that developed the business plan for the Highland Health Center, a public health satellite clinic in a historically underserved community in Gaston County. Her work as clinical lead helped secure a blue ribbon for the project.

Black is an active member of the North Carolina Public Health Association and the North Carolina Nurses' Association. In 2000, she was inducted into the Mu Psi Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing.

The county looks forward to the leadership, expertise, and perspective she will bring to the Health Department and the broader community.