

Tarheel Footprints in Healthcare

Recognizing unusual and often unsung contributions of individual citizens who have made healthcare for North Carolinians more accessible and of higher quality

Recognizing Shirley Lucey and Virginia Scanlan and the Alice Aycock Poe Center for Health Education

Without the volunteer efforts of many of our state's citizens, North Carolina would not be the envy of so many others. Dozens of the wonderful programs and organizations for which this state is known sprang from the ideas, commitment, and determination of a few individuals who saw a need, convinced others of the feasibility of addressing it, and then led the effort to mobilize the resources to make a valuable initiative possible.

Such is the case with what is now known as the Alice Aycock Poe Center for Health Education in Raleigh, a statewide non-profit organization whose mission is to provide comprehensive programs and resources in healthy lifestyle education for all youth in North Carolina. This wonderful facility offers on-site instruction to more than 5,500 school-age participants each year, coming from many school districts throughout North Carolina. The Poe Center's theatre-style instructional programs are delivered by master teachers to classes of students from across the state who come to the Center for periods of a few hours or a whole instructional day. Classes are conducted in model classrooms, which are exceptionally well-equipped as teaching theaters dealing with: general health, nutrition, physical activity, dental health, drug education, and family life and reproductive health.



The Poe Center was first imagined as filling a need in the Wake County Schools, initially as an exhibit at the old North Carolina Museum of Natural History funded by the Wake County Medical Society Auxiliary. When the new museum was built, space for a health-focused exhibit was limited so members of the Auxiliary started exploring other educational program possibilities. Leaders of the organization decided to visit eight-to-ten free-standing health education centers around the nation to see how these facilities and programs operated and whether this idea might be feasible in central North Carolina. The result was a decision to start raising funds to construct a multi-classroom teaching facility, which could become a resource for all schools and school systems in North Carolina, thus extending the impact of regular classroom instruction on matters related to health and enlivening the content and presentation style associated with this information.

The two individuals who took primary responsibility for conceptualizing the Poe Center's program and for raising the funds to support its implementation, including its physical construction, were **Shirley Lucey** and **Virginia Scanlan**, who served as President of the Board of Directors of the Poe Center in 1987-1988 and 1988-1989, respectively. Ms. Lucey and Ms. Scanlan organized teams of their Wake County Medical Auxiliary colleagues in 1990 to approach dozens of corporate and



Shirley Lucey (left) and Virginia Scanlan (right) inside the Alice Aycock Poe Center for Health Education

individual donors, and they worked with area school systems to develop contracts with the Poe Center for the instructional programming that would be offered. Their efforts raised the \$3.5 million necessary to build this fabulous teaching/learning facility and are a tribute to their dedication and determination. "Once the first \$100,000 was raised, there was no turning back," Virginia Scanlan recently recalled. Most of the counties in central North Carolina and beyond have benefited from their efforts as the Poe Center has taken shape. Today, the Poe Center offers programs of instruction for students from some 25 school systems throughout North Carolina, as well as special programs of teacher training, educational programs focused on specific disease and public health issues (e.g., breast cancer, family life, adolescent health, substance abuse, dental health), and active summer programs for children from preschool to age ten. Shirley Lucey recently gave credit to the physician members of the Wake County Medical Society, who collectively donated \$1 million of the total cost of building this facility. The footprints of these leading Tarheel volunteers have made a deep impression on the lives and health of North Carolina's children.