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**SECU Foundation**

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**SECU Foundation Partners with East Carolina University for Student Wellness Pilot**

**Raleigh, N.C.** – With funding from State Employees’ Credit Union (SECU) members via the SECU Foundation, four public middle schools in two northwestern counties are slated to participate in a new student wellness pilot – SECU MATCH Pilot, in partnership with East Carolina University (ECU). The project is a two-year effort, with SECU Foundation providing up to \$200,000 to help expand ECU’s Motivating Adolescents with Technology to CHOOSE Health (MATCH) Wellness Program to one or more school districts in western North Carolina. Under the management of ECU administrators, the following schools were recently selected for the Pilot – East Yancey and Cane River Middle Schools in Yancey County, and Bowman and Harris Middle Schools in Mitchell County. SECU Foundation Board member Dr. Olson Huff made the official announcement and presented award certificates to school officials during ceremonies held yesterday in Burnsville and Bakersville, North Carolina.

“We are pleased to extend our support for ECU’s MATCH Wellness Program,” said Dr. Huff. “As long-time advocates of education, SECU members understand the strides that can be made through a school-based wellness program that engages adolescents and helps them develop the knowledge to make healthy nutrition and physical activity choices that will remain with them for years.”

MATCH began in 2007, targeting schools with economically disadvantaged populations and addressing health disparities in rural eastern North Carolina counties. The program is an interdisciplinary approach designed for 7<sup>th</sup> grade students, integrating physical activity, nutrition and technology education within existing school curriculum standards over a 16-week period. ECU’s MATCH Wellness Program is currently taught in 46 schools and 14 districts, showing consistent results with improving weight status in over two-thirds of overweight and obese participants. SECU’s MATCH Pilot expansion is focused on assisting schools in rural, low-wealth districts in the northwestern part of the state.

Upon accepting their certificates, MATCH District Coordinators from each county shared their thoughts on how the SECU MATCH Pilot will benefit their students. Heather Cox said, “Yancey County Schools continually strive to promote wellness, healthy living, and positive lifestyle choices for students, their parents, and the community. By focusing on the whole child through resources received from SECU Foundation’s grant, it is our hope that students will become advocates within their families regarding all aspects of a healthy lifestyle.”



*L to R: Erica Deaton-VP, SECU's Burnsville branch; Heather Cox-MATCH District Coordinator, Yancey County Schools; Kim Stephenson-SVP, SECU's Spruce Pine branch; Jama Campbell-Executive Director, SECU Foundation; Dr. Olson Huff-Board member, SECU Foundation.*

“Mitchell County Schools is excited to be part of the MATCH Wellness Program for the 2018-2019 school year,” remarked Jennifer Gregory. “Making healthy choices and increasing physical activity are skills that will benefit our students throughout their lives.”

### **About SECU and the SECU Foundation**

A not-for-profit financial cooperative owned by its members, SECU has been providing employees of the State of North Carolina and their families with consumer financial services for over 80 years. The Credit Union also offers a diversified line of financial advisory services including retirement and education planning, tax preparation, insurance, trust and estate planning services, and investments through its partners and affiliated entities. SECU serves over 2.3 million members through 263 branch offices, nearly 1,100 ATMs, 24/7 Member Services via phone and a website, [www.ncsecu.org](http://www.ncsecu.org). The SECU Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization funded by the contributions of SECU members, promotes local community development in North Carolina primarily through high impact projects in the areas of housing, education, healthcare and human services. Since 2004, SECU Foundation has made a collective financial commitment of more than \$130 million for initiatives to benefit North Carolinians statewide.



*L to R: Jama Campbell-Executive Director, SECU Foundation; Kim Stephenson-SVP, SECU's Spruce Pine branch; Jennifer Gregory-MATCH District Coordinator, Mitchell County Schools; Dr. Olson Huff, Board member, SECU Foundation; Chad Calhoun-Superintendent, Mitchell County Schools.*