From:	Kathy Hughes
To:	angie newsome; asheville citizen times; associated press; barbara blake; bill mcclement; bob hunter; cibo; cibo; clarke morrison; clear channel; dale neal; david forbes; dawa hitch; Don Yelton; ellen; Ellen Heywood; jake frankel; Jerry Rice (jerry1advocate@gmail.com); lavox; mark barrett; mountain x; Peggy Moody; tammy jones; Trudi Walend; wlos; wwnc radio
Cc:	Brownie W. Newman; David Gantt; david gantt work; David R. King; Ellen Frost work; Ellen M. Frost; Holly Jones; Joe Belcher; Mike Fryar
Subject:	Buncombe Wins State Award
Date:	Thursday, October 3, 2013 8:19:26 AM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BUNCOMBE COUNTY RECEIVES 2013 LGFCU EXCELLENCE IN INNOVATION AWARD FOR DSS MEETING GARDEN

Buncombe County has been recognized with a Local Government Federal Credit Union (LGFCU) Excellence in Innovation Award for 2013. The awards competition is conducted by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners and sponsored by the LGFCU. One of two winners in the Human Services category, Buncombe County was honored for its Health & Human Services Meeting Garden.

Soon after Buncombe County's Child Welfare Section moved into its new location, it became apparent that an outdoor area would do much to engage young children and provide a welcoming outside space for productive parent-child visitations. Social workers identified a suitable area, and a design team worked to create an outdoor area that is secure and family friendly for those involved with child welfare.

As the design team worked, it seemed logical that the garden should contain components that would be adult friendly, thus making the space a multi-use area. It is equipped to provide an alternative setting for supervised visits between parents and children, visits between siblings, interviews with family members, shared parent meetings between birth and foster families, and interviews of prospective adoptive parents.

In addition to providing a beautiful multi-purpose area for the children, families and HHS staff, the Meeting Garden also provides children and their parents with the opportunity to be active in a safe and welcoming environment, contributing to their overall health and wellbeing. Elements within the Meeting Garden are engaging and offer a variety of activities for a wide age range where children and adults might interact. This natural, nonthreatening setting provides an opportunity for social workers to work with parents to demonstrate safe and nurturing behaviors and interactions between family members that help achieve safety and permanency outcomes for children.

The Excellence in Innovation Awards provides a total of $8,000 in rewards to county employees who develop successful programs that help counties improve services to citizens. Cash awards of $1,000 each are given to two programs in each of four categories - general government, health and human services, public information/participation and intergovernmental collaboration.

For more information on the HHS Meeting Garden, please contact Mandy Stone with Buncombe County at (828) 250-5588 or mandy.stone@buncombecounty.org.

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"Be kinder than necessary, for everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle."