New cervical cancer initiative aims to save lives

Supported by a $1.5 million gift from Glaxo-SmithKline, two of the School’s researchers are teaming up with N.C. Gov. Bev Perdue and others to “eradicate cervical cancer” in North Carolina—the first step toward ending the disease nationwide.

The Cervical Cancer-Free Initiative, led by Noel Brewer, PhD, assistant professor of health behavior and health education, and Jennifer S. Smith, PhD, research associate professor of epidemiology, will develop a plan for the state based on evidence that cervical cancer can be prevented through vaccines and effective screening. Former North Carolina State Health Director Leah Devlin, DDS, who is a Gillings Visiting Professor at the school, is an adviser to the project.

At the outset, the initiative aims to bring a coalition of stakeholders together to identify opportunities for and barriers to prevention, screening and treatment. The researchers also will develop a project to increase in-school access to vaccines, including the HPV vaccine which prevents infection with the virus that causes most cervical cancer.

The initiative also will coordinate efforts in California (via the California Medical Association Foundation), Alabama and, eventually, other states. Each state will build a coalition of key stakeholders in cervical cancer prevention, including government, private, nonprofit and community groups.

“North Carolina is a tremendous leader in this multi-state effort to end cervical cancer,” said Governor Perdue. “Initiatives like this go hand-in-hand with efforts such as our state’s investment in the University Cancer Research Fund, a historic commitment to preventing and treating cancer through innovative medical research within our world-class universities.”

—Natalie Gott

Allison composes song to celebrate School

Jack Allison, a 1966 UNC alumnus, has composed “Dedication Song” to honor the UNC public health school’s new name as of September 2008—UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health.

The song celebrates new possibilities for growth at the School, thanks to Dennis and Joan Gillings’ generous donation.

Allison began writing songs while serving in the Peace Corps from 1967 to 1969, when he worked in a children’s clinic in Nsiyaludzu, Nigeria. He had an urge to see the world “outside the classroom” after graduating from UNC with a chemistry degree.

His songs contained lyrics with simple lessons for new mothers, which, if followed, would improve their babies’ health.

Since his first efforts, Allison has raised more than $150,000 in charity through his music, establishing the Self Help Foundation to manage funds generated by his songs.

When he heard about the School’s name change, he took the initiative to compose “Dedication Song” to commemorate the occasion. Allison based the lyrics on key words used to promote the School’s goals, namely, anticipation, acceleration and innovation.

A copy of the CD is available upon request to anyone who makes a gift of $25 or more to the School’s global health program. For more information, contact the School’s Office of External Affairs at (919) 966-0198.

—Jay Cartwright

Jack Allison and his wife, Sue Wilson, are shown here with friends in Nsiyaludzu, Malawi.