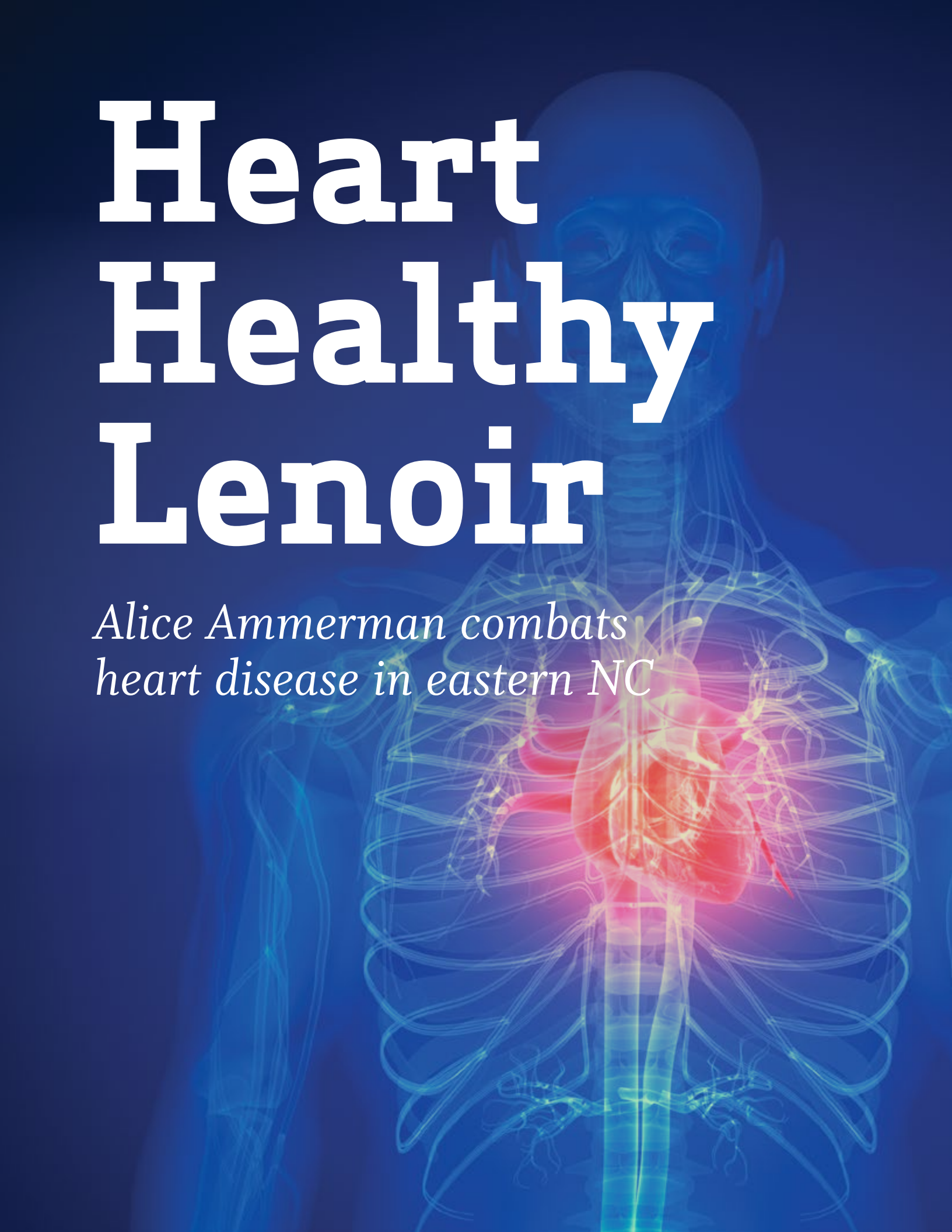


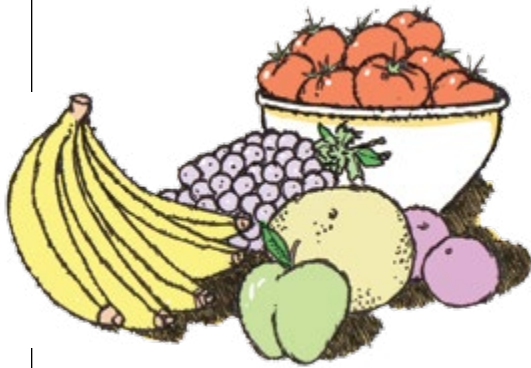
# Heart Healthy Lenoir



*Alice Ammerman combats  
heart disease in eastern NC*

**Heart Healthy Lenoir, a community-based research effort based at the UNC Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (HPDP), was established in Lenoir County, N.C., in 2010 to develop and test better ways to tackle cardiovascular disease (CVD) in a vulnerable North Carolina community.**

**Alice Ammerman, DrPH, professor of nutrition at the Gillings School and HPDP director, leads the project in collaboration with her former doctoral student Stephanie Jilcott Pitts, PhD, now associate professor in East Carolina University's Department of Public Health.**



The project uses a three-tiered approach toward prevention and treatment, including a clinic-based blood-pressure study; lifestyle study promoting healthy eating, physical activity and weight control; and a genomics study assessing ways that genes influence CVD and the treatments that work.

Data from early formative work with the project revealed that having too few places where one could obtain a quick, healthy meal was perceived as a major barrier to a heart-healthy lifestyle. In a project survey, 18.6 percent of African-Americans and 7.8 percent of whites reported as a “big problem” that their neighborhoods had

too many fast-food restaurants. As a result, a project component launched in fall 2013 expanded the lifestyle program to empower Lenoir County residents to make healthier choices when dining out.

Three Kinston, N.C., restaurants now offer patrons information about healthier menu choices and provide discount coupons to those who make two healthy choices when they order, such as selecting whole grains, fruits and vegetables, foods made with healthy fats and minimally-sweetened beverages.

Lenoir County has some of the highest rates of heart disease in the U.S., but it also has public health and clinical resources to support the three-tiered approach to reducing CVD. More than 660 participants have enrolled in the five-year study, which is funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, one of the National Institutes of Health.

—Sonya Sutton

## GOOD DECISIONS IN THE LUNCH ROOM

Dr. Alice Ammerman, who has spent much of the last 20 years working on food access and education efforts across the state, particularly in eastern North Carolina, also leads the research team for Food Explorers, a new partnership between UNC's Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Rockingham County (N.C.) Schools and Chef Cyndie Story ([www.chefcyndie.com](http://www.chefcyndie.com)).

The program, which continues until spring 2014, is a social marketing campaign to promote healthy lunch menus and increased consumption of fruits and vegetables at school. Seth Noar, PhD, associate professor in the UNC School of Journalism and Mass Communication, collaborates on the social marketing aspects of the program. Ammerman and Noar also are members of UNC's Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Learn more at [tinyurl.com/hpdp-food-explorers](http://tinyurl.com/hpdp-food-explorers).

