

McDowell County

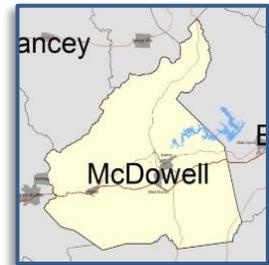


Catalyst Coordinator: **Emily Roberts**

Host Organization: **McDowell County Health Department**

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As the Catalyst Coordinator for McDowell County, Emily Roberts has been involved in the following efforts:

- Explored opportunities to engage and connect with faith communities in the county through resource sharing, program planning, and networking around healthy eating and active living.
- Investigating the potential for a local volunteer-driven gleaning program to support food pantries in the county.
- Working with the Local Food Access and Awareness subcommittee of the McDowell Health Coalition, the Local Food Advisory Council, and community leaders across McDowell County to build connections and coordinate efforts among individuals and organizations committed to strengthening the local food system.
- Working with the Built Environment subcommittee of the McDowell Health Coalition to identify opportunities for engaging multiple communities in the county through community forums around multiple issues, including barriers and resources related to healthy eating and active living.
- Supported the inaugural “Walk to...” walking challenge to build collaboration among faith leaders from five faith communities in the county. Together, they developed and coordinated an 18-week walking challenge in 2017.
- Partnered with the Healthy Food Options group of the West Marion Forum to plan a spring and fall community garden, as well as healthy food programming in the West Marion Community.
- Collaborated with McDowell County Schools and the Active Routes to School Program to provide local support for safe routes to school, the *Let’s Go NC! Bike/Pedestrian Safety Education Curriculum*, and walk/bike to school events to promote safe biking and walking.

Highlight: Local Food System Work Gains Momentum in McDowell

When Emily Roberts joined the Catalyst team as the McDowell Catalyst Coordinator in August of 2016, she began partnering with community leaders to strengthen McDowell’s local food system. She assisted with a feasibility study for a community food and health hub. Emily was already familiar with the emergency food network in the region, and she was able to help connect this network with the feasibility study. She initiated conversations and explored the potential for a gleaning program for McDowell County. Emily also supported a group of community leaders who planted a garden in West Marion in the spring and fall of 2017. These leaders offered food preservation classes in their community, and they continue to share a portion of the garden’s harvest with families and senior adults who may not otherwise have access to healthy foods. Reflecting on her work, Emily states, “It has been truly exciting to not only see the community continue to come together around increasing access to healthy food, but to also have the opportunity to play a part in this work.”