

Barnes receives outstanding commissioner of the year award

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RALEIGH - The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners named Catawba County Board of Commissioners Chairwoman Kitty Barnes as one of the two winners of the Outstanding County Commissioner of the Year award for 2006-07 on Saturday night.

This announcement comes on the heels of Barnes serving as the president of the N.C. Association of County Commissioners in 2005-06. In addition to Barnes, Edgecombe County Commissioner Viola Harris was chosen for the award.

The announcement was made at the N.C. Association of County Commissioners' annual conference. The award is given to county commissioners who have done outstanding work in county government that benefits the entire state.

"We would not have achieved Medicaid relief this session were it not for the involvement of past president Barnes," said outgoing N.C. Association of County Commissioners President Terry Garrison, who chose Barnes and Harris. "She was constantly in touch with legislators and helped keep the issue at the forefront during this session."

In addition to her work to alleviate the amount of money counties have to pay for Medicaid, Barnes was recognized for several other things she's done throughout the year.

Most notably, she examined state and local revenue sharing and taxing authority on the state and local fiscal modernization study committee; is a strong advocate for public health, including improving service gaps; created a set of strategies to reduce particulate matter and ozone pollution in Burke, Caldwell, Catawba and Alexander counties; and helped create the Hickory Metro Higher Education Center and secure state and federal funding.

Barnes also implemented the N.C. Association of County Commissioners' strategic plan, which includes informing and educating the public and media about county government; strengthening county leadership and board development; re-defining the roles of counties and the state-county relationship by creating a partnership with the state; enhancing the ability of county officials to represent counties and the commissioners' association on local and statewide issues; and facilitating regional and intergovernmental collaboration.

According to her nomination letter, which was written by Catawba County Commissioners Barbara Beatty, Dan Hunsucker, Glenn Barger and Lynn Lail, Barnes "is constantly aware of the relationship between projects, and how her work on one task may benefit or affect another. Her advisory capacity as Catawba and Burke counties discussed a merger of mental health services is one good example of this relational awareness, as is her work on both regional and local air quality committees."

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