

To begin this new section, the AHEC Program Office will feature short bio sketches of selected staff members of its program office and regional centers as a way to get to know each other better, and help the CT AHEC Network to remain a cohesive unit. To begin this feature section, the AHEC Program Office will feature three staff members that have joined them in the past year: Ursula (Ula) Kubrynski, Elizabeth (Liz) Lorenson, and Mildred (Millie) Reyes.

Liz Lorenson

Liz joined the AHEC Program office as our K-16 Health Careers Program Assistant at the beginning of November. She came to us from Yale University doing disease surveillance for their School of Public Health. She received her Master of Public Health Degree from Southern Connecticut State University in May of 2011 with special interest in health disparities. She is working on organizing our Middle and High School Career Days, implementing our new AHEC database, and planning our annual trip to Washington, D.C., among other things. If you need to contact her, call 860.679.7969 or email Lorenson@uchc.edu

Millie Reyes

Millie joined the AHEC program in January 2011 as the Administrative Program Assistant to Dr. Bruce Gould. She came to us from Connecticut Children's Medical Center doing related administrative duties. She received her Associates degree in business management and is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in Psychology. Millie has special interest in advocating for children with disabilities and becoming a child therapist. She assists in various AHEC projects. If you need to contact her, call 860-679-3675 or email wMireyes@uchc.edu

Ula Kubrynski

Ula, proud of her Polish fluency, became CT AHEC family as of November of 2011. As the Primary Care/Urban Service Track Program Assistant, Ula dove right in, working closely with our UST Scholars. She is setting up mentoring activities, coordinating and planning quarterly learning retreats, helping to maintain and arrange the Scholars' service activities, and she planned this year's Cornell Student Externship schedule. Among her ongoing projects, she is helping to plan the CQI Symposium, with assistance from Millie Reyes and Shannon McClure. With her brief nursing school background and six year hospital work history, Ula's clinical skills are a proven resource and asset to UST. She graduated from Worcester State College in May of 2009 with a Bachelors of Science in Health Education and a concentration in Women's Studies. 860.679.4659 or email ukubrynski@uchc.edu

Integrating Public Health into Middle School Health Careers Awareness Day

The Connecticut AHEC program office will host its annual Middle School Health Careers Exploration Program on Saturday, May 5, 2012 at the UConn Health Center in Farmington, CT. This program focuses on exposing middle school students from around the state of Connecticut to health careers in a meaningful and engaging way. In the past, this popular program has attracted approximately 150 middle school students from around the state to the UConn Health Center. There, the students have participated in hands on demonstrations and behind the scenes views of health professions from students and staff working in health careers.

Presenters in the past have focused on careers in medicine, dental medicine, and engineering to expose students to health careers. They have used clinical activities, the physics of car crashes, and demonstrations on blood pressure and healthy lifestyles to engage students and educate them about possible future career choices. This event is the beginning of the AHEC pipeline, which aims to expose and attract students to careers in health fields that they might not have otherwise explored. It works in conjunction with the High School Clinical Career day, which will also be hosted at the UConn Health Center in Farmington,

and aims to work with high school students for an even more in depth look at career paths in health professions.

According to the language of the AHEC Program Requirements as outlined by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), each AHEC should "Establish a youth public health program to expose and recruit high school students into health careers, with a focus on careers in public health." In line with these new HRSA priority areas, the CT AHEC program will implement a public health careers segment to this year's Middle School program.

This curriculum was developed in part by AHEC program staff and one of its AmeriCorps members, who also happens to be a dual medical and MPH candidate at UConn. It will focus on the epidemiology of pandemic influenza and engage students in a hands-on activity that will demonstrate how and why this disease affects certain vulnerable populations, and what public health does to address it. This new exposure to public health careers will hopefully interest some prospective students to explore what public health is and be a promising start for AHEC programs to begin featuring public health prominently in their future programs.

CT Area Health Education Center Programs



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Connecting students to careers, professionals to communities, and communities to better health.

AHEC Advance

Note from the Director



First, we at AHEC would like to wish all of our partners and readers a Happy, Healthy and peaceful New Year! Certainly, last year was challenging for many of our neighbors and those we serve. We look to the new year with both optimism and enthusiasm for its potential. The potential to expand our reach, improve our outcomes and make the lives of those we serve that much better.

That having been said, the program office is fully staffed and "ready to go"...we would like to welcome our new program assistants, Ursula Kubrynski, Elizabeth Lorenson and Millie Reyes, to the team. Each brings their own unique set of skills and enormous energy to the work ahead. A brief bio for each is included in this month's Advance.

With the new year, come new challenges and opportunities. Some of our programs are highlighted in the pages following. Please enjoy the read and, as always feel free to share your comments, thoughts, ideas and creativity with me or any of the staff. Feel free to call, email or come in and talk. Again, Happy New Year and thank you.

Best Regards,

Bruce E. Gould MD



"The program was highly collaborative, and benefited from the support of multiple actors."

Jennifer Cook
Graduate Assistant, CLACS
About ESL Class

A Great Success: A Pilot English as a Second Language (ESL) Class at Thrall Tobacco Farm

During the 2011 summer season, AHEC sponsored a pilot English as a Second Language program for migrant farm workers at O.J. Thrall Tobacco Farm in Windsor, CT. The project grew out of the previous experiences of two of the clinic's volunteer medical interpreters, Jennifer Cook and Ruth Hernandez, which indicated that migrant workers have difficulty accessing adult education services. While some programs are available locally, they are often out of reach due to workers' seasonal migration, isolation in rural areas, and lack of transportation and financial resources. This pilot program aimed to break down these barriers by bringing needed services directly to the workers on the farms, a concept already in use by the UConn clinics.

The program was highly collaborative, and benefited from the support of multiple actors. With the support of Professor Cynthia Lord, Director of Quinnipiac's Physician Assistant Program, 12 Quinnipiac PA students and several other community volunteers, taught nine informal English classes on-site during the clinics. The Hartford Public Library's English as a Second Language (ESL) staff also supported the project, by providing materials, handouts, and instruction books, and the Cornell University Immigrant Farmworker Initiative shared their ESL curriculum and materials.

Class content was determined through a participatory process with workers, focusing on topics that students found most helpful and relevant to their own lives (including common phrases and greetings, telling time, ordering food, shopping, jobs and employment,

and health and safety). Workers became comfortable asking questions of volunteers and as such tailored the direction of lessons. In one instance, a student expressed interest in learning how to order a meal at a restaurant, and a Quinnipiac University volunteer was inspired to create an impromptu role-play activity for students to practice ordering food. Lessons were often lighthearted, with both students and teachers dissolving into laughter during activities like charades. This kind of interactive instruction was a valuable method for teaching in the farm's informal setting in which classes were held outside, with both teachers and students either standing in a circle or sitting at a picnic table.

As a pilot, the program had several goals beyond just teaching English, including gauging the interest of workers in participating in English classes, assessing the feasibility of instituting a longer-term sustained English program, and fostering cross-cultural interaction between workers and volunteers. The program proved to be a success, as farm workers showed significant interest in attending English classes on the farm. Class attendance averaged between 15 and 20 students, while on some evenings an impressive 40 workers showed up, and students (Continued on page 2)



Dr. Bruce Gould Recognized for Serving Underserved

Dr. Bruce Gould is the 2011 winner of the Howard I. Mark Advocate for Oral Health Award from the Connecticut Oral Health Initiative.

Dr. Bruce Gould's commitment to enabling access to care has earned him another honor. The Connecticut Oral Health Initiative has chosen Gould the 2011 winner of its Howard I. Mark Advocate for Oral Health Award. "Bruce Gould epitomizes what many believe to be the dedicated, concerned, involved, and altruistic primary care physician," says Dr. Howard Mark, president of the COHI Board of Directors, for whom the award is named. "His long term interest in helping those who need it the most and teaching others to follow his lead is legendary, noting the numerous awards he has been given for this by so many disparate organizations. Oral health has played a role in his teachings and outreach programming, recognizing the intimate relationship between the state of oral health and general health that many fail to appreciate."

In addition to serving as associate dean for primary care at the UConn School of Medicine, Gould is director of the Connecticut Area Health Education Center Program, medical director of Hartford's Department of Health and Human Services, and medical director of the Burgdorf Health Center, a community clinic serving the underserved population in Hartford's north end in collaboration with Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center. He also is the founder of and an adviser to the Mobile Free Migrant Farmworker Clinic, which has served Connecticut's migrant farm worker population since 1998.

"This is a great, yet unexpected honor for me," Gould says. "I have always considered oral health as an integral part of the comprehensive care of individual patients but especially the care of populations in our journey toward better health status for all our citizens. The award reflects the collaborative work, both in education and clinical care delivery, of my colleagues and partners at UConn, especially the schools of medicine and dental medicine, the CT AHEC Program, the Burgdorf Health Center, the Hartford Health Department and the community. I accept this for all of us."

COHI will present Gould with the award at its annual meeting Wednesday, Dec. 7, at 5:30 p.m. at the Aqua Turf in Plantsville. Those interested in attending should call 860-246-2644.

ESL Class (Continued from page 1)

would often stay with the class for the full three-hour clinic period, or until the sun went down and the whiteboard was no longer visible.

Volunteers and collaborating agencies also felt that the program was a success. Quinnipiac's Cynthia Lord commented, "The launch of the Migrant Farmworker English Project was truly a grassroots project. The students and coordinators brainstormed creative teaching methods and then rolled up their sleeves and dug in to

get the program going. The heartfelt passion of the coordinators along with the determination of the farmworkers energized and motivated the students. It was quite moving to hear the PA students describe the dedication of the farmworkers and how they would get "dressed up" for their weekly English lessons.

The program will continue during the coming summer, with some expanded goals. The coordinators hope to recruit more volunteers to accom-

modate smaller class size, to hold classes more frequently and regularly throughout the week, and to start an ESL resource library for workers to practice English outside of class periods.

If you are interested in volunteering with the English program this summer, please contact Jennifer Cook and Ruth Hernandez at ctmfwenglish@gmail.com. Volunteers are not required to have Spanish language skills or experience with teaching. All are welcome!

Urban Service Track at UConn: A Successful Practice for Clinical Health Professions

Healthy People 2020 is a nationwide initiative, providing 10 year goals for improving the health of Americans. Set in place, are specific objectives to help people in society live longer and healthier lives, free of preventable diseases. We are proud to announce that the CT Area Health Education Center's (AHEC) Urban Service Track (UST) Program at the University of Connecticut was chosen and published as a Successful Practice for Clinical Health Professions, having met several vital objectives set by Healthy People 2020.

Since its inception in 2007, UST has been an exceptional partnership between UConn's School of Medicine, Dental Medicine, Pharmacy, and Nursing and community practitioners. As of the 2010-2011 academic year, the Physician Assistant Program at Quinnipiac University joined forces with UST bringing the program to a phenomenal 176 Scholars. The future is

very exciting as UST is going to be accepting Social Work students in the 2012-2013 academic year. As the UST program grows, it also expands in its ability to nurture the students' interprofessional skills and ability to promote population health. Regardless of the number of Scholars we boast, they all hold one commonality; an innate dedication to care for Connecticut's urban underserved populations.

The populations identified as most in need are children and youth, the elderly, the homeless, immigrants and refugees, HIV positive patients, those individuals with substance abuse issues, and the incarcerated and ex-offenders. Although the program focuses on the populations stated, it also follows a rather strict curriculum aimed to shape the best future medical professionals possible. The following competencies are adhered to: cultural and linguistic differences, professional and ethical conduct, population health and pub-

lic health, health policy, health care financing and management, inter-professional teamwork and leadership, community resources, quality improvement and patient safety and advocacy. Each competency is crucial in molding our Scholars to think, act, and practice on another more culturally sensitive and diverse level.

The Healthy People 2020 objective that the UST program addresses is the Educational and Community-Based Objective, or ECBP 12-16 which is to "increase the inclusion of the core clinical prevention and population health content in health professions education." Population health and public health are core principles in our program education, outreach and clinical activities. Our Scholars are taught essential skills for success that make them more knowledgeable and confident regarding interprofessional teamwork, related to underserved patients and the real life situations they will encounter. As part of our program, our Scholars work with community-based organizations, schools, migrant farm workers, etc., to encourage and teach health promotion, disease screening, and nutritional education events. The program offers students the opportunity to provide direct patient care in free clinics, promote health literacy and cultural competency, as well as conduct quality improvement projects. By exposing the Scholars to the realities of today's underserved health care in Connecticut, they are given a greater appreciation of primary care as a career path, which is congruent with the goals of Healthy People 2020, (ECBP 12-16).



Connecticut AHEC Network Statewide AmeriCorps Program is Growing Strong

The Connecticut AHEC Network's YHSC AmeriCorps Division Program engages 20 AmeriCorps members who work on projects that strengthen Connecticut's communities by improving the lives of at-risk youth. The four regional centers of the Connecticut AHEC Network host the full-time AmeriCorps members who volunteer 40 hours per week for 10 months.

The Connecticut AHEC Network's AmeriCorps members engage middle and high school students in the Youth Health Service Corps (YHSC) Program. Through the YHSC Program, youth participate in service learning projects that address pressing community health issues. In addition to leading YHSC members in service learning projects, AmeriCorps members pay special attention to students at risk for dropping out of high school, ensuring they have the extra support they need to be successful.

The YHSC AmeriCorps Division Program is made possible by a grant from the Connecticut Commission on Community Service

and the CT AHEC Network is a proud member of the AmeriCorps National Service Network. CT AHEC Network AmeriCorps members participate in statewide efforts led by the Connecticut Commission on Community Service such as the AmeriCorps Kickoff Event and national days of service including the 9/11 Day of Service, Make a Difference Day, MLK Day and Global Youth Service Days.

In 2011, the first year of the three year program, 16 AmeriCorps members engaged 386 at-risk students from 25 high schools in Bridgeport, Hartford, Waterbury and Willimantic. Those 386 YHSC members completed 14,600 service hours engaged in projects that addressed pressing community health issues including hunger and homelessness, childhood obesity prevention and access to dental care.

The CT AHEC Network is in full swing of year two of the YHSC AmeriCorps Division Program. Our new cohort of AmeriCorps members is busy recruiting and training a new group of YHSC members to

begin volunteer service in their communities. The 2012 AmeriCorps members include; Leah Galasso, Megan Kimball, Meghan Hamel, Kareem Mohamed and Sara Servin serving at Northwestern CT AHEC in Waterbury; Audrey Zachery, India Daley, Fludiona Naka and Shanta Wiley serving at Central AHEC in Hartford; Lillian Rogers and Sara Borys serving at Eastern AHEC in Willimantic; and Cleophas Hanciles and Ting Lu serving at Southwestern AHEC in Bridgeport.

In return for their service, the CT AHEC Network's full-time AmeriCorps

members receive a \$12,100 living allowance, health insurance benefits, and a \$5,550 education award. The benefits received by the CT AHEC Network and the communities it serves is "priceless".

If you or someone you know is interested in becoming an AmeriCorps member with the YHSC AmeriCorps Division Program at the CT AHEC Network please visit www.nwctahec.org and click on the AmeriCorps tab.

Follow us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/AHEC-Nation/276917015694182>



My Experience as a Community Health Worker *By: Millie Seguinot, Southwestern AHEC*

Three years ago I had the opportunity to participate in a project for the Children's Health Insurance Program Reinvestment Act (CHIPRA). Southwestern AHEC was subcontracted by the Community Health Center Association of CT (CHCACT) to train Community Health Workers (CHWs) to enroll children in HUSKY. What an experience! I was in charge of helping to develop a training curriculum, doing site visits, field assessments, giving support to a group of CHWs that I met for the first time in my life, etc.

It was not easy! Even though I have years of experience dealing with outreach, am a "people person" and love my job, I had the responsibility of keeping a group of CHWs together. But I worried, how was I going to do that?

Despite doing a lot of research, I didn't find information on how to train CHWs, or a manual on how to make this program work. It was a great challenge! A lot of people depended on me. I had to be very creative; I had to work not just with CHWs, but also with

their supervisors and the community. I knew a lot of people had their eyes on me and I had to do the best I could to cover each piece of the puzzle. I learned a lot about this group of CHWs, their dedication to their jobs, their enthusiasm to help the community, and their motivation to work against the challenges they face constantly. My respect goes out to all of them! Working with them taught me how to be the best Community Health Worker ever and to be very proud of what I do.

This experience also helped me better understand that I am a CHW by nature. It made me realize that I have been a Community Health Worker all my life and that I was simply following my mother's footsteps. CHWs are full of joy, because every time we help a person and we are able to find resources for him/her, we feel that we have really accomplished something.

That is a great feeling! We are connecting the community to better care, better health and good resources.



The picture of Millie is when she was awarded the Esther M. Holderby Award, at the Unity Conference in New Orleans, LA on May 18, 2011. The Esther M. Holderby Award honors a dedicated community health worker (CHW) who has overcome personal adversity to promote health in his or her community.