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. 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.

Promoters 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 demonstration of blood pressure and health monitoring 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 Career Day, which will 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.

The 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.

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 farm, a concept already in use by the UConn clinics.

The program was highly collaborative, and benefitted from the support of multiple actions. With the support of Professor Cynthia Lord, Director of Quinnipiac’s Cornell University Immigrant Farmworker Initiative and several other community volunteers, teachers showed up, and students filed in. 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 interactions 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 10 and 20 students, with some evening classes having an impressive number of workers showing up, and students (Continued on page 2)
Those interested in attending Wednesday, Dec. 7, at 5:30 p.m. the award at its annual meeting COHI will present Gould with UConn, especially the schools of collaborative work, both in education and outreach program-teaching and outreach program-teachings and outreach program-teachings and outreach program-teachings. The Connecticut Oral Health Advocate for Oral Health Award. Bruce Gould epitomizes what many believe to be the dedicated, concerned, involved, and altruistic primary care physicians,” says Dr. Howard Mark, president of UConn, especially the care of patients but especially the care of patients. The award reflects the receiving the numerous awards who have 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 personal health that many fail to appreciate. The addition to serving as a cessation counselor for the care of Connecticut’s urban underserved populations. The project 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 is not yet over, we are seeing good progress. The topic is then followed by a question-and-answer period, where the audience is invited to ask questions about the program and its goals. The Connecticut AHEC Network’s YHSC AmeriCorps Program, youth participate in service learning projects that address pressing community health issues. In addition to leading YHSC members in service learning projects, Americans pay special attention to the needs of people with special needs, such as those with disabilities, and focus on quality of life 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 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 “dress up” for their weekly English classes. The program will continue during the coming summers with some expanded goals. The coordinator hopes to recruit more volunteers to accom-