

Fighting childhood obesity with dynamic classrooms

Lunch duty at the elementary school: my job as a volunteer is to squirt ketchup on kids' trays, open milk cartons, and remind kids to stay in their seats.

Lunch trays are loaded with pizza or chicken nuggets and tater tots, which get eaten while the fresh veggies and fruit or yogurt are left and thrown into the trash. Kids who bring a lunch often don't fare much better—I witnessed one child empty his lunch bag to reveal a package of snack cakes, a big bag of chips, a piece of string cheese, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and a fruit roll-up. Wow.

Childhood obesity is a problem. A lot of kids are gaining excess weight—they're getting fatter at younger and younger ages. Unfortunately, overweight and obese youth are likely to become overweight and obese adults.

Dr. Mark Benden, one of CCHD's affiliated faculty, spent a good

deal of his career in the private sector developing ways of helping office workers be healthier and more productive. One strategy was utilizing a standing desk to build core strength and increase passive calorie burn. What he found was that the average office worker standing 2 to 3 hours per day would burn the equivalent of 20 pounds of calories in a year—that's weight lost or weight gain avoided! As a faculty member in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health at SRPH, Dr. Benden and his team are exploring ways of translating this standing desk strategy to combat childhood obesity.

In 2009, the United Way of the Brazos Valley provided seed funding to support a pilot project using the standing desks in some first grade classrooms in College Station. The preliminary findings are encouraging; the students in the standing classrooms are standing most of the time and burning significantly more calories than the kids who are sitting. In addition, the heavier students are burning an even higher percentage of calories. Unexpectedly, the research team has also discovered from talking to teachers that the desks are improving attention and behavior for the kids who are standing. This

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led to the addition of Dr. Jamilia Blake, a faculty member from the Department of Educational Psychology at TAMU, to the research team. Measures are being planned in a future study to assess changes in behavior and academic performance of those using the standing desks.

Given the substantial policy implications of the standing desk or "dynamic classroom" model, Dr. Benden was asked to testify before the Public Health Committee of the Texas House of Representatives. In his testimony, he emphasized that nutrition and exercise were important aspects of addressing obesity, but that the dynamic classrooms also provide a way of increasing calorie expenditure in a setting in which the vast majority of children spend a great deal of time. In addition, he was able to talk one-on-one with the chair of the Public Health Committee, Representative Lois Kolkhorst (TX-13), while showing her his own standing desk as well as a student desk mock-up when she visited SRPH on April 13th. She encouraged Dr. Benden and Dr. Wendel to get data and recommendations to the legislature for their consideration. The team will be working on a policy brief upon collection and analysis of the final round of data from this school year.



2010 BVHSA Update

The 2010 Brazos Valley Health Status Assessment officially launched in February with the household survey. ETC Institute has already recruited over 2,400 Brazos Valley residents to take the survey. As of April 9th, ETC had received more than one thousand surveys. Recruitment will continue through the month of April and completed surveys will be accepted through May.

Community discussion groups with health and social services providers, key community leaders, and consumers have been scheduled throughout the Brazos Valley. Several discussion groups were held in March and will continue to be held throughout the months of April and May. The remaining schedule is posted at www.bvhealth.blogspot.com.

Save the date for the 2010 Brazos Valley Health Summit which will be held on September 23, 2010. Assessment findings will be released at the summit and local health care efforts will be highlighted. More details will be released in August 2010.

Community Spotlight

A local health champion retires

Community champions can be the key to a program's success, especially in rural communities. In Leon County, one local champion has been at the heart of efforts to improve access to health for residents since 2004.

Colonel James W. Wallace served in the U.S. Army for over 30 years. He and his wife of 50 years, Mary, reside on a 100-acre ranch in Leon County, Texas, and are very active in the community. Even with his home, family, and community activities, Col. Wallace committed in 2004 to serve on the board of the Brazos Valley Health Partnership and was instrumental in establishing the Leon County

Health Resource Commission in 2005, of which he was appointed the executive director—his time donated. During his six-year tenure as the executive director, the Leon Health Resource Center was opened and ultimately located in a renovated building together with the federally qualified health center. Under his leadership, the county secured a \$540,000 grant to expand transportation, mental health, and specialty care services in 2006 that significantly improved access to care for local residents. He has forged relationships among organizations within the county and the region, and has provided strong leadership to achieve the Commission's goals.

Having seen a lot of progress towards improving health for Leon County residents and creating enough momentum for newly developing leadership



to take on the challenge, Col. Wallace has announced his retirement, effective April 30th.

On behalf of the Center, we wish to offer our sincerest thanks to Col. Wallace for all the time, thought, and energy he has invested in local health improvement, as well as his support of the Center these past six years. Happy retirement, Col. Wallace, and we wish you the very best!



CCHD Organizes Theme Issue of the Journal of Primary Prevention

The February issue of the *Journal of Primary Prevention*, guest edited by CCHD director, Dr. Jim Burdine, and the Dean of the School of Rural Public Health, Dr. Craig Blakely, highlights the work of several prevention research centers around the nation regarding community-based participatory research and community health development. The introduction to the issue,

written by PRC Program Director, Dr. Eduardo Simoes, and SRPH founding dean, Dr. Ciro Sumaya, emphasizes the importance of community engagement in research.

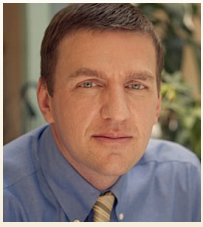
A number of CCHD affiliated faculty, staff and students were co-authors of three of the seven papers in this issue of the journal. Drs. Burdine, McLeroy, Blakely and Wendel, along with Michael Felix, co-authored

an editorial introducing key topics addressed in the issue. Mr. Felix, Drs. Burdine and Wendel, along with Angie Alaniz co-authored a paper discussing application of community health development principles to health care reform. Drs. Wendel and Prochaska, along with Heather Clark and two students, Shawta Sackett and Keith Perkins, co-authored a paper examining inter-organizational

network changes among health organizations in the Brazos Valley.

Other articles in the issue addressed racial health disparities, community organizing for environmental health, public health program adaptation and enhancing community support of physical activity programs.

New Affiliated Faculty



At Texas A&M University, Dr. Christopher E. Beaudoin is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication and a joint appointed faculty member in the School of

Rural Public Health. Additionally, he is the Incoming Director of Communication and Training at the Center for Community Health Development. Dr. Beaudoin's program of research is on the social determinants of health, in both domestic and international contexts, including communication, social capital, and social norms. Centering on health and information disparities among poor and underserved groups, his research has been supported by governmental agencies and foundations and published in scholarly journals in the areas of communication and public health. He received his PhD from the University of Missouri. Prior to joining the faculty at Texas A&M University, Dr. Beaudoin was the Usdin Family Endowed Professor at the Tulane University School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine.



Dr. Edwards is an Assistant Professor in youth development in the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences at Texas A&M University. Dr. Edwards earned his doctoral degree from North

Carolina State University in Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management with a specialization in Sociology. He was the first parks and recreation graduate student to receive a dissertation grant from Active Living Research. He also holds a Master's Degree in Exercise and Sport Science from East Carolina University and a B.A. in History from the University of North Carolina. His research centers on disparities in accessibility to supportive environments for physical activity and recreation for rural youth and the implications for youth development.

Dr. Edwards is particularly interested in the connections between racial composition and community social capital in rural communities and how these conditions affect local support for public resources for youth physical activity and health.



George B. Cunningham (PhD, The Ohio State University) is an Associate Professor of Sport Management and also serves as the Director of the Laboratory for Diversity

in Sport. He has published over 100 journal articles and book chapters, has written an award-winning textbook (Diversity in Sport Organizations), and has received external funding for his research from a variety of entities, including the NCAA. Cunningham served as President of the North American Society for Sport Management during the 2009–2010 academic year.

3rd Annual Fun Run

The School of Rural Public Health ended National Public Health Week with the third annual 5K Fun Run on the morning of Saturday, April 10, 2010. This year's theme coincided with National Public Health Week's theme, "A Healthier America: One Community At A Time". The purpose of this year's Fun Run was to raise money for the School of Rural Public Health's student scholarship and special project fund, as well as provide an opportunity for the Brazos Valley to "kick start" healthy living initiatives thought the run/walk. We had a great turnout with a total of 104 participants ranging from 9 to 60+ years old. The entry fee was \$15.00 prior to the race and \$20.00 the morning of the race. Each participant received a race bag that included a t-shirt with the national public health week logo, a CCHD aluminum water bottle, hand sanitizer, and many coupons to local businesses. Each participant was divided into age categories designed to give runners a chance to win a medal. The age groups were

as follows: 25 and under, 26-35, 36-49, 50 and over for both males and females. Medals were awarded to the top three finishers in each age group, along with a plaque given to both the overall male and female finisher. The Fun Run committee consisted of Dr. Jane Bolin, Ashley Wilson, Harlan Johnson, Jessica Pierce, Thomas Hunt, Mario Castillo, Nick Reale, Christina Ly, Budi Yunanto and Christopher Grunkemeyer. Thanks to the committee, the 30 plus student volunteers, and the many businesses in our community who donated to the event. The SRPH 5K Fun Run was another huge success!



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Talkin' About Better Skin

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer. In Texas, the risks are high; one in three Texans will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime. The best way to address the high risk of skin cancer is to do what you can to prevent it through sun safety, and also know how to spot potential cancers early to have them examined by a physician. Important prevention techniques are: to always wear sunscreen, hats and sunglasses; keep out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.; and never use tanning beds.

Hairstylists are “natural helpers” and often discuss

health related topics with their clients, making them ideal to deliver these skin cancer messages to the community. Talkin' About Better Skin, “TABS,” is a program currently being developed by Melody Dorman, an M.P.H. candidate at the School of Rural Public Health who is also a local hairstylist. As a key project of the Central Texas Cancer Prevention and Control Network, the TABS program will train hairstylists how to share skin cancer prevention techniques with their clients and how to spot possible skin cancer on their clients and refer them to doctors.

Services

The Center for Community Health Development can be contracted to provide services, training or technical assistance in the following areas:

- Strategic Planning
- Operational Planning
- Leadership Development
- Research Design
- Survey Construction
- Coalition Development
- Assessment
- Evaluation