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Community Health Workers Across Texas— Working Together for Healthy Texas Babies

The Healthy Texas Babies initiative was developed by the Texas Department of State Health Services to help Texas communities decrease infant mortality using evidence-based interventions. The initiative involves community members, healthcare providers, and insurance companies. Reducing infant mortality in Texas will improve the health of babies and mothers—and has the potential to save millions of dollars in healthcare costs. Healthy Texas Babies programs include:

- Evidence-based interventions led by local coalitions in communities at high-risk for infant mortality and preterm birth.
- A communication campaign to raise public awareness of the factors leading to infant mortality, health disparities, and preterm birth in Texas.
- Survey of state hospitals to determine where Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICUs) and Obstetrical (OB) Units are and how DSHS can improve access to care for high-risk pregnancies.
- Collaborations between public and private industry to improve patient education on the importance of the last weeks of pregnancy.

- Provider education to reduce disparities in birth outcomes between ethnic groups, improve adherence to national standards of care, and provide support for clinical decision-making.

As an additional part of this initiative, DSHS hosted a one-time statewide Community Health Worker in San Marcos from August 6-8. The primary audience was 350 certified Texas CHWs who received scholarships to attend the conference that focused on infant mortality and morbidity reduction at the local level. Speakers shared important updates on birth outcomes research and demonstrated practical activities to implement in communities. The conference included four plenary sessions with guest speakers Senator Judith Zaffirini (Texas State Senate); Evelyn Delgado (assistance Commissioner, Family & Community Health Services); Dr. Fernando Martinez (Northwest Vista College); Marjorie Petty (Department of Health and Human Services); Frank Castro (San Antonio Fatherhood Campaign); and Sam B. Cooper (Director, Office of Title V & Family Health, Texas DSHS).

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The Center for Community Health Development is a member of the Prevention Research Centers Program.

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In addition, there were 51 break-out sessions offering a total of 14 DSHS-certified and non-DSHS certified CEUs covering the following topics: Shaking Baby Syndrome; risk of weight gain in pregnancy; stress prevention and reduction for CHWs; motherhood; prevention of childhood lead poisoning; CHW resources; infant mortality; diabetes and pregnancy; Text-4-Baby; domestic violence; coping with pregnancy loss; cardiovascular disease and stroke; teen peer-to-peer education; postpartum depression; preventing infant death and injury; birth defect prevention; hypothermia and vehicle deaths; cancer during pregnancy; addressing health disparities; smoking cessation practices for pregnant women; helping families of children with disabilities; breastfeeding; fertility and pregnancy issues for cancer survivors; the father's role in pregnancy; preconception health; and Texas Ten Step program for birthing centers. Further, there was an awards ceremony honoring nine CHWs who have been DSHS-certified since 2003. CCHD had two proposals accepted for presentations of three break-out sessions. CCHD's seven DSHS certified CHW Instructors (Aracely Garibay, Lupita Garza, Letty Gutierrez, Dinorah Martinez, Gaby Robinson, Paula Saldana, and Julie St. John) presented the following sessions that provided 1.25 CEUs for over 100 CHWs: 1) HOPE for Cancer Survivors: Pregnancy & Fertility—provided in Spanish; and 2) What CHWs Must Know about Cancer & Pregnancy—provided in English and Spanish. CCHD CHW instructors had a wonderful opportunity to learn about improving birth and maternal outcomes in Texas, as well as to contribute to the learning of conference attendees and network with fellow CHWs across the state of Texas.



The Healthy Texas Babies Initiative aims to decrease infant mortality.

New Affiliated Faculty Member



Peter S. Murano, Ph.D., currently serves as an Associate Professor in the Department of Nutrition and Food Science and Director of the Institute for Obesity Research and Program Evaluation at Texas A&M University. With research interests focused on obesity and health, Dr. Murano works to (a) examine and evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programs aimed at decreasing the incidence of obesity; (b) develop and evaluate lifestyle interventions using broad-based partnerships and fast-track the translation of research findings to targeted individuals and at-risk populations; and (c) examine dietary components, physiological mechanisms and other factors that influence hunger, satiety, food acceptance/preference,

weight gain, weight loss, and weight maintenance. Prior to coming to Texas A&M, Dr. Murano effectively led and managed the Special Nutrition Programs Office at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). He also worked closely with Congressional committee staff, the advocacy community and the White House, resulting in the enactment of the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 2004. Other notable accomplishments for Dr. Murano include: providing support to the USDA efforts to develop the nation's Dietary Guidelines and Food Guide Pyramid, establishing a national nutrition education and anti-obesity partnership initiative delivered through the school system, developing Making It Happen, jointly with the CDC, a major anti-obesity public school technical assistance tool for schools, and developing and implementing the Free Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Project in over 100 schools in 5 states, paving the way for Congressional authorization of a permanent program.

Texas Department of Criminal Justice Survey Conducted

CCHD was contracted to evaluate a medication and treatment adherence curriculum, *Somebody Cares*, for soon-to-be released offenders in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) System. To impact continuity of care when HIV positive offenders are released, the curriculum was developed as a joint effort of the Texas Department of State Health Services HIV Medication Program, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Health Services Division and Re-entry & Integration Division, AIDS Foundation Houston, and ETR & Associates. HIV positive offenders are released with a 10-day supply of medications and information on local resources available to them.

The two-part evaluation consists of (1) pre- and post-tests during curriculum implementation at four pilot sites with all attendees, and (2) post-release surveys at 45 days, 90 days, and 6 months following the release of HIV positive offenders. The post-release surveys are being administered to HIV positive offenders who are released from pilot and non-pilot sites, allowing for a comparison group. To date, a total of 32 classes have been conducted, and the 45-day post-release surveys are underway, with the 90-day post-release surveys scheduled to begin in early September.

Geocaching Project with Texas Parks and Wildlife

The Center for Community Health Development is collaborating with Texas Parks and Wildlife and Groundspeak, Inc., the founder of geocaching.com, to conduct a research study exploring the physical activity benefits of geocaching. Geocaching is a high-tech treasure hunt that uses a global positioning system (GPS) to locate hidden “caches” or treasures. The sport has been in existence since May 2000 when the United States government turned off selective availability, which limited the accuracy of GPS signals for non-military persons. Since 2000, geocaching has grossed millions of competitors and has grown into a worldwide phenomenon.

To date, geocaching is primarily played as a recreational activity. It has also been used as a tool for schools to creatively teach children about subjects in social studies, math, and history. Geocaching is commonly referred to as a way to promote healthy lifestyles, however no research has been conducted to establish such merit. The Geocaching for Exercise and Activity Research (GEAR) Study hopes to determine out how much activity is involved when individuals geocache. GEAR is a three-year study, which will begin in October 2012 and end in September 2015. If you would like more information about GEAR, please contact Whitney Garney at wrgarney@srph.tamhsc.edu or (979) 862-1212.



Whitney Garney and George Cunningham at a geocaching event.



Geocaching in Leon County

New Brazos Valley Health Health Partnership Board Members

The Brazos Valley Health Partnership (BVHP), which serves as the Center for Community Health Development's Community Advisory Board, recently amended its bylaws to add an additional representative from each of its member counties. The new BVHP members are Mr. John Hughson representing Burleson County, Ms. Lara Meece representing Grimes County, Ms. Francis Thompson representing Leon County, and Mr. Reed Edmundson representing Madison County.

Mr. Hughson is the Administrator of Burleson St. Joseph Health Center. He also serves on the Burleson County Health Resource Commission. Ms. Meece is the new Executive Director for the Grimes County Health Resource Commission and is a longtime resident of Navasota. Ms. Thompson is a member of the Leon County Health Resource Commission and works at the Lord's Pantry in Leona. Mr. Edmundson is the Administrator of Madison St. Joseph Health Center and served as a founding member of the BVHP in 2002. A total of 12 county-appointed representatives now serve on the BVHP Board of Directors. Their diverse backgrounds contribute to board representation from Burleson, Grimes, Leon and Madison counties.



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Graduating Doctoral Students



Brandy Kelly, studying Youth Development in the College of Agriculture, through the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences joined CCHD as a doctoral assistant on the evaluation team in 2009. Although sad to leave the Center, Brandy will be spending the next couple months before her May 2013 graduation teaching in the Youth Development field and writing her dissertation on the performance, portrayal, and perception of hope from a longitudinal perspective of young women. In addition, in April The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy selected Brandy as one of three 2012-2013 Barbara Bush Fellows in Family Literacy. She will be spending her fellowship year researching how the power of performance narratives can be used as a tool for both community and identity development. Congratulations, Brandy!



Katrina Serrano has been a doctoral student at the CCHD for three years, assisting with the Program for Rural and Minority Health Disparities Research, a P20 grant funded by the National Institute for Minority Health & Health Disparities. With her graduate school journey coming to an end, she hopes to obtain a postdoctoral position in the Washington DC area, where she intends to relocate. Katrina's success would not have been possible without her advisor, as well as other mentors, supporters, and friends in Health Education (HLKN), the Center for Community Health Development (SRPH), the Institute for Obesity Research and Program Evaluation (Agrilife), and the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning (ARCH). Congratulations, Katrina!