

Covering the Working Uninsured in the Brazos Valley

According to the 2006 Brazos Valley Health Status Assessment, 24 percent of adults in the region are uninsured, which is comparable to the State of Texas—among the worst in the nation. The majority of those who have no health insurance are people who are employed—sometimes in multiple jobs. Because of their income, they cannot qualify for state and federal health care programs, but they simply do not earn enough to be able to afford private health insurance.

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Several communities across the country have developed ways to assist the working uninsured in accessing health services.

Notable communities include the Access Health project in Muskegon, Michigan, JaxCare in Jacksonville, Florida, CoverTN in Tennessee, FirstPlan in North Carolina, and Pima Community Access Program (PCAP) in Pima County, Arizona. These programs, except PCAP, rely on divided funding between the employer, client, and third party payers to cover health services including primary, inpatient, emergency, outpatient, visionary, and dental care.

Other programs, such as PCAP, offer discounted services to qualified members through provider partnerships.

Of particular interest to the Texas Legislature in the 2007 session was a model developed in Muskegon, Michigan called Project Access. Their “three-share” model offers health coverage to employees of small businesses, with the costs distributed among the employer, the employee, and the community—in this case, initially with disproportionate share funds contributed by the local hospital. Texas Senate Bill 10 authorized the State to support three communities in piloting a similar model. Working with the Brazos Valley Council of Governments, CCHD staff developed a proposal to build upon

the Multi-Share Feasibility Study currently underway through the United Way’s Health and Safety Matters Committee.

If funded through the Texas Health and Human Service Commission, the Brazos Valley Council of Governments will spearhead development of a health coverage product (similar to insurance) for employees of small business across the seven-county region that will improve their access to a broad range of health services. With an ambitious timeline, the program is scheduled to begin offering services in one pilot county by the end of 2009.

This initiative has drawn attention to the Brazos Valley from other Texas communities who are pursuing similar goals. Austin, Dallas, Galveston, Houston, and El Paso have active projects already in the works, most scheduled to “go live” in the next 18 months. The Brazos Valley has been invited to participate in the Texas Communities Health Care Coalition—a collaborative of these communities that serves as a forum to learn from each other’s successes and failures and to identify ways to create synergy in similar efforts across the state. This presents the Brazos Valley with a unique opportunity that will benefit our multi-share initiative immensely.

Welcome Aboard

New Project Manager

The Center for Community Health Development would like to welcome Kelly Morris as the Project Manager for the Steps to a Healthier San Antonio Program Evaluation and Communication Specialist. Kelly is a graduate of the Texas A&M Health Science Center School of Rural Public Health with a Masters of Public Health with a concentration in Community Public Health and Management. She also has a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from Texas A&M University. During her graduate studies, Kelly completed her practicum work under Monica Wendel and Heather Clark and worked with partners of the Steps to a Healthier San Antonio program designing a database to assist partners in data collection. As a full time staff member, Kelly will continue working on the Steps to a Healthier San Antonio Project as the Project Manager and in her role as Communications Specialist, she will be managing the Center's communication and dissemination activities.



New Graduate Assistant

Araceli López is a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at Texas A&M University and a Graduate Research Assistant for the Center for Community Health Development at the Texas A&M Health Science Center School of Rural Public Health. Currently, she is overseeing the Spanish translation of a touch screen diabetes education module, which will be implemented throughout the Brazos Valley to rural health clinics and resource centers. Her professional interests include the investigation and reduction of mental health, health and educational disparities that exist among Latino populations.



Grant for Grimes County Health Resource Commission

The Grimes County Health Resource Commission was recently awarded a \$15,000 grant from Safeco on behalf of Ms. Cynthia Parker-Robertson The commission chair, Navasota Mayor Bert Miller, nominated Ms. Parker-Robertson for the Safeco Community Hero Award for her selfless work supporting the Grimes County Health Resource Commission's goal of expanding access to health care through the coordination of information, resources, and services offered at the Grimes Health Resource Center. Ms. Parker-Robertson founded the very successful Lena Mae Farris Foundation in 2003, whose mission is to serve the underserved and vulnerable seniors and adults in rural Texas. As the Executive Director of the Lena Mae Farris Foundation, Ms. Parker-Robertson oversees more than five programs aimed at improving the lives of our elder residents. Two years ago, Ms. Parker-Robertson generously agreed that the Lena Mae Farris Foundation would take the lead in the management of the development and on-going operations of the Grimes Health Resource Center and transportation program on behalf of the commission. This Safeco grant will help the commission expand the Grimes Health Resource Center to include far more than the transportation program. The commission will utilize the grant to relocate the center in a larger facility and will leverage remaining grant funds to secure additional funding to support the future expansion of services provided through the Grimes Health Resource Center. Safeco representatives presented the award to Ms. Parker-Robertson at a reception in Navasota on February 18, 2008.

"We are so excited for the recognition of Cynthia for the work she does to benefit our community. This grant from Safeco will go a long way to help with the mission of the Grimes Health Resource Commission, serving the citizens of Grimes County"

—Bert Miller, Mayor of Navasota



Program Development Workshop

Monica Wendel, Associate Director of the Center, was invited by the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors to provide an advanced workshop at the annual Chronic Disease Academy focusing on program development. The one-day training, titled "Expanding Your Funding Sources: Strategies for Finding and Securing Diversified Funding for Your Programs," emphasized ten key strategies. The 27 chronic disease directors in attendance engaged in skill building around developing an action plan for growing a program, leveraging resources, marketing ideas, writing proposals, and networking. According to Wendel, "One of the biggest mistakes organizational leaders make is failing to think strategically and act deliberately. Strategy is the key to successful program development."

If you're interested in the content of this training, please contact the Center's Training Director, Carrie Sorrells at Sorrells@srph.tamhsc.edu or 979-458-8057.



Healthy Communities Coalition

The Brazos Valley Building Healthy Communities Coalition (BVBHCC) is a regional collaboration that provides a centralized focus for merging Smart Growth and Active Aging strategies and is comprised of diverse public and private individuals and organizations. This is the first time these planning, health and aging sectors have joined together with a common goal to build healthy communities. Cathy Liles and Marcia Ory of the CCHD/PRC have played an instrumental role in launching the BVBHCC. As a first project, the BVBHCC applied for an "Excellence in Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging" national recognition award from the US Environmental Protection Agency. With the Brazos Valley Council of Governments as the applicant, Brazos Valley was one of five communities across the nation receiving a Commitment Award. This new coalition brings new partners to the table to increase the community's ability to work collaboratively to catalyze constructive changes in the Brazos Valley, resulting in regional improvements in public health, the environment and economic development.



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