

# Introducing the Brazos Valley Health Partnership, Inc.

**After six years of togetherness, the Brazos Valley Health Partnership is making it official! (It is June, after all.)**

The partnership is in the process of finalizing their commitment to organize as a non-profit entity. Although new board members have already held an initial meeting, they will hold their formal organizational meeting in August. The formation of the Brazos Valley Health Partnership (BVHP) as a non-profit entity is the culmination of work performed over the years by many regional stakeholders representing our local communities as well as health care, social service, faith-based, and educational sectors among others.

Since its inception in 2002, BVHP's mission has been "to improve health status and access to care in the Brazos Valley through the collaboration of services and the creation of local partnerships." The group's first endeavor was to specifically address the disparity between the availability of health and social services within the six rural communities as opposed to the centrally located small urban county. BVHP, primarily consisting of service providers in its earliest stages, proposed to develop one-stop "health resource centers" and limited transportation services in at least four of the rural communities. On behalf of BVHP, the Center for

Community Health Development (CCHD) received a Healthy Communities Access Program grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration in 2003. With this funding, BVHP worked over the next three years with four rural counties to establish five resource centers and a volunteer transportation program. The success of the resource centers was directly related to the formation of county-appointed health resource commissions whose responsibility was to oversee the development and

on-going operations of their community's center. These health resource commissions ultimately changed the face and the future of BVHP.

Through the development of health resource centers, community leaders and health resource commission members gained an appreciation of the potential impact they could have on extending additional health care and related services within their community. Working with BVHP resulted in the development of new, or, in some cases, stronger relationships between communities and

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service providers. By the time grant activities came to a close in August 2006, BVHP's leadership reflected the teamwork that had taken place throughout the grant with health resource commissions being well represented on the BVHP Board.

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## BVHP Milestones

- **July 2002** – The Center for Community Health Development releases assessment findings at Brazos Valley Health Summit and BVHP organizes.
- **As of March 2006** – Five Health Resource Centers have been opened including Madison County, Grimes County and Leon County, all having one center, and Burleson County which has two centers.
- **January 2007** – BVHP Board decides to reorganize as a non-profit.
- **January–December 2007** – Meetings with various stakeholders to determine new BVHP structure
- **July 2007** – Each county health resource commission adopts their strategic plan.
- **April 2008** – Burleson, Grimes, Leon, and Madison Health Resource Commissions agree to be the founders of the non-profit BVHP and name members to the new BVHP Board.
- **May 2008** – BVHP Board holds their first meeting and finalizes their Certificate of Formation.

## Community Highlight

# Judge Mike Sutherland

**A**s Burleson County Judge, one of my priorities has always been the health of our residents.

In a rural community you do not always have the amenities and services found in a larger urban community. The challenge is figuring out how to bring services to your community when you only have limited resources.

In 2004, I attended a Brazos Valley Health Partnership (BVHP) meeting about increasing access to care in the rural communities through partnerships and collaboration. I knew this was something I wanted for my community and I volunteered for Burleson County to take part in the endeavor. In their role as facilitator on behalf of BVHP, the Center for Community Health Development (CCHD) staff helped us establish the Burleson County Health Resource Commission that would determine what health resources our community needed. The commission, still intact today, established health resource centers in Caldwell and Somerville. Furthermore, they have secured local, sustainable funding for both of these centers and staff including a full-time service coordinator for the county. Our local funding partners include the Burleson County Hospital District,



Burleson St. Joseph Health Center, Burleson County, City of Somerville, Somerville ISD, and local churches. I am proud to say our community partners have made the health resource centers a local priority as well.

CCHD continues to be an outstanding partner for all of our Brazos Valley communities. Through their guidance of our commission, CCHD helps us ensure our residents will have access to services that were previously unavailable to our community. Our relationship with CCHD will allow for Burleson County residents to pursue more options for healthy living in our community.

## For Your Health

# Summer Sun, Not so Hot...

**A**s the mercury starts reaching 100° this summer, the battle with the scorching sun begins!

Along with the fun in the sun come the blistering rays that damage the skin. Although many associate only sunburns with skin damage, a suntan is not healthy for your skin either. Skin aging and wrinkling are caused by UVA rays. UVA rays also add to skin cancer. Most of the sun we get on earth are UVA rays. UVB rays cause sunburns, cataracts, and damage the immune system. Like UVA rays, UVB rays also contribute to skin cancer. Most UVB rays never make it to the earth surface, but enough of these rays pass through the ozone layer to cause severe damage. UVC rays are the most dangerous; luckily for us they are completely absorbed by the ozone layer.

It is important that during the summer months you protect yourself and loved ones from the skin's archenemy, the sun. In order to win the rivalry with the rays follow the ABCs:

**A**void the strongest rays of the day. These rays usually occur between 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM. This is when fun in the sun is a foe of your skin.

**B**lock out the sun with sun block. Sun block is essential to fighting off the sun's harmful rays; however, it's important to analyze the degree of protection from UV rays your sunscreen gives you. Always go for a higher SPF when choosing a sunscreen and choose a sunscreen that protects against UVA and UVB rays. The key to sunscreen is to apply it often and generously.

**C**over up. Sun block alone is not enough. It is important to wear clothing that covers the body as well as wide brimmed hats to protect your face. Also wear sunglasses that block out 100% of UV rays to protect your eyes from the damaging effects of the sun.

It is evident that the effects of the sun on your skin are not so hot, so take the time to protect yourself and have some fun in the sun this summer!

### *Brazos Valley Health Partnership continued from page 1*

Although the BVHP Board was assembled in September 2004 in response to members' desire to create a leadership team, the partnership remained an informal entity. As the BVHP Board considered the partnership's future in early 2007, the group decided that BVHP should formalize as a non-profit and work with the Brazos Valley communities to do so. In April 2008, all four county-health resource commissions voted to join in the creation of BVHP as a non-profit. While the communities will be directly responsible for management of the non-profit, the BVHP will continue to

rely upon the participation of and partnership with service providers and key community organizations and leaders in order to meet its mission. BVHP will also continue to partner with CCHD for technical assistance including, but not limited to, organizational development, strategic planning, and evaluation.

The founding board has eight members, with each health resource commission appointing two members. The three counties that do not currently have a health resource commission will each be asked to appoint two board members to join the current eight members to finalize the BVHP Board. New

BVHP Board members include Judge Mike Sutherland, ex-officio member of the Burleson County Health Resource Commission and Burleson County Judge; Mr. Albert Ramirez, Executive Director of the Burleson County Health Resource Commission; Ms. Vicky Jackson, Vice Chair of the Grimes County Health Resource Commission & Professional Service Coordinator at Grimes St. Joseph Health Center; Ms. Cynthia Parker Robertson, Grimes County Health Resource Commission member and Executive Director of the Lena Mae Farris Foundation; Mr. Britt Allen, Madison County Health

Resource Commission member and owner/physical therapist – Allen Therapies; Ms. Carol Townsend, ex-officio member of Madison County Health Resource Commission, registered nurse and former hospital administrator; Commissioner Dean Player, member of the Leon County Health Resource Commission and Leon County Commissioner; and Colonel James Wallace, Executive Director of the Leon County Health Resource Commission and retired U.S. Army colonel.

## New Graduate Assistant



Orie Achonwa is a graduate student working towards a Masters in Public Health with a concentration in Social and Behavioral Health at the Texas A&M Health Science Center School of Rural Public Health and a Graduate Research Assistant for the Center for Community Health Development. She will be assisting strategic committees to build the capacity to create efficient health resources in Brazos Valley counties under the direction of Ms. Angie Alaniz, our Brazos Valley Regional Director. Orie is a 2007 graduate of Baylor University where she majored in Health and Human Performance and received a certification in health education by The National Commission for Health Education Credentialing. Her professional interests include creating avenues to access healthcare in underserved communities and improving the quality of life of minority populations.



# Aging in America

Dr. Marcia Ory along with SRPH doctoral students John Prochaska and Taffy Fulton recently attended the ASA-NCOA meeting in Washington, D.C. and participated in a panel discussion highlighting the scope of the “Texas Healthy Lifestyles” initiative. The presentation titled “Aging Texas Well: Using Evidence-Based Programs With Older Adults” included representatives from the Bexar Area Agency on Aging, the Texas Department of Aging and Disabilities (DADS), and Neighborhood Centers, Inc. The primary focus of this presentation

was on what works and ways of stimulating synergies within Texas and across the group of funded states when implementing evidence-based programs. DADS through its “Aging Texas Well” program provides funding for evidence-based programs for self-managing chronic diseases, fall prevention, and physical activity programs for older adults. CCHD, in conjunction with its Diabetes Prevention Program, participates in this project twofold: providing community support to the Brazos Valley Area Agency on Aging and evaluating provider efforts in Texas. As of February 1, there have

been 7 evidence-based classes in the Brazos Valley and by the end of the project we expect to have served over 400 participants across the whole Brazos Valley, and 1500 across the State. For those interested in learning about chronic disease management contact Taffy Fulton ([dsfulton@srph.tamhsc.edu](mailto:dsfulton@srph.tamhsc.edu)) or Norma Erosa ([erosa@srph.tamhsc.edu](mailto:erosa@srph.tamhsc.edu)) for falls prevention courses. Information can also be found on our web at <http://srph.tamhsc.edu/research/texashealthylifestyles/index.html>.

BACK ROW LEFT TO RIGHT:

**Carol Zernial - Director, Bexar Area Agency on Aging; Daphne “Taffy” Fulton; Marcia Ory**

FRONT ROW LEFT TO RIGHT:

**Michael Wilson - Coordinator, Aging Texas Well; Ronnie Gipson-Program Manager, Area Agency on Aging, Brazos Valley Council of Governments Area; and Andrew Lorino - Health and Wellness Coordinator.**



# Washington County Health Center

Through the facilitation of the Center for Community Health Development at Texas A&M School of Rural Public Health, Trinity Medical Center, Faith Mission and Washington County have collaborated to form the Washington County Health Center Coalition. This coalition overseeing the development of the Washington County Health Center. The proposed health center will house local public health entities including WIC, MAP, State Health Services and Faith Mission Case Management Services under one roof making it a “one stop shop” for

Washington County Residents. Also, within this health center will be a clinic that will offer health care to uninsured individuals meeting income criteria. This medical care will be given by a nurse practitioner, and the clinic will initially be open 20 hours a week. The health center facility will be located at 310 E Alamo St in Brenham, Texas. A Master of Health Administration student, Ashleigh Dozier, has been hired to oversee this process and coordinate all project activities at the direction of the Washington County Health Center Coalition. The executive director of Faith Mission will serve as the general

contractor for the facility development. Currently, the Washington County Health Center Coalition is seeking funding through USDA and other local entities. With the help of Second Mile Mission Center, a clinical protocol committee is currently developing all clinic protocols and necessary documentation. Through cooperation among local and county entities, the Washington County Health Center can help improve the health and well being of residents of Brenham and surrounding Washington County communities.



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## Resources

The following resources are available for more information on the articles in this edition of *Communitas*:

**Brazos Valley Health Partnership**  
<http://bvhp.org/>

**Aging in America**  
<http://www.agingconference.org>  
<http://www.ncoa.org/>

**Burleson County Health Resource Commission**  
[http://bvhp.org/community\\_burleson.php](http://bvhp.org/community_burleson.php)

**Summer Sun**  
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/sunexposure.html>  
[http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid\\_safe/outdoor/sun\\_safety.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/outdoor/sun_safety.html)

## 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