



Connecting students to careers,
professionals to communities &
communities to better health.

AHEC ACCESS



Inside

Closing the Gap on
Cardiovascular Disease . . . 2



New and Improved CE
Registration Process 3



For Future Health Profes-
sionals, Clinical Rotations
Provide Vital Experience . . 5



The Sarasota County
Wellness Coalition (SCWC)
Planning Committee. 6



New Board Members
for Gulfcoast South and
Gulfcoast North 7



Profile: REACH Alumna
Alicia Guerrero 8

Painting a Moving Train

A GNAHEC sponsored seminar prepares mental health pros to work with veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan and their families.

By Mark Schreiner, WUSF University Beat and Anne Maynard, USF AHEC Program

Police Officer José Sanchez is a retired United States Marine Reservist Gunnery Sergeant from Winter Haven. He was on his second tour of duty in 2005 when seriously injured by a car bomb explosion north of Baghdad. “I had second and third degree burns to the tops of both my hands, I had first and second degree burns to the top of my head, my ears and the right side of my face, as well as some shrapnel wounds,

and my eardrum collapsed in my right ear.”

Although he received treatment for his physical injuries, GySgt. Sanchez hid the mental trauma he suffered when he returned home from Iraq. “You go in believing you’re trained, trained for war and that’s all there is. I didn’t think I had a problem, I was just wounded, I was coming home and I’d deal with it and I’d get going.”

But dealing with it wasn’t easy for GySgt. Sanchez or his family. Fortunately, his wife Donna in-



José and Donna Sanchez

sisted he seek professional help. The couple recently shared their story at “Painting a Moving Train,” a semi-

Train cont. page 4...

PSEP: A Collaborative Pre-Med Program that Works

By Nazach Rodriguez Snapp, MPH, MSW

Developing a more diverse physician workforce is one of the most pressing healthcare challenges today. The need is particularly great for African Americans and Hispanics, the most severely underrepresented minorities in medicine. The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) states that improved physician diversity can address health disparities by increasing access, enhancing patient satisfaction, and providing more culturally competent care.



From left: Dr. Marlene Hart and Kim Schuknecht of Premier Community HealthCare Group meet with USF AHEC 2009 PSEP students.

In 2003, the University of South Florida AHEC Program and the USF College of Medicine Office of Student Diversity and Enrichment embarked on a project to address the lack of minorities and those from disadvantaged

backgrounds in medicine. The result was the Pre-Medical Summer Enrichment Program (PSEP), a 40-hour per week program targeting underrepresented minority or disadvantaged students. Participants receive six-weeks of intensive enrichment in the sciences (biology, chemistry, physics) and verbal reasoning, test taking strategies, MCAT

preparation, health disparities and social justice, and medical school admissions. They also shadow minority community physicians. Up to 20 students per year are accepted into PSEP; students from

PSEP cont. page 2...



Area Health Education Center Program • USF College of Medicine, MDC 76
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd. • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
health.usf.edu/ahec • 813.974.3507

AHEC ACCESS

AHEC Program Director

Cynthia Selleck, DSN, ARNP

Gulfcoast North AHEC

Chief Executive Officer (Interim)

Christina Mathis, MBA

Gulfcoast South AHEC

Chief Executive Officer

Edna Apostol, MPH

ACCESS Editor

Rimma McKnight

AHEC ACCESS is published biannually for members of the health care community serving our nine counties: Charlotte, Citrus, DeSoto, Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas and Sarasota.

Send correspondence or notice that you have received this newsletter in error to:

Rimma McKnight
ACCESS Editor
AHEC Program Office
College of Medicine, MDC 76
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.
Tampa, FL 33612-4799
813.974.3507
rmcknigh@health.usf.edu

For more information please contact the AHEC in your service area or visit www.health.usf.edu/ahec.

USF AHEC Program Office

813.974.3507

Gulfcoast North AHEC

1.888.546.2432

(Serving Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Pasco & Pinellas counties)

Gulfcoast South AHEC

1.800.967.0807

(Serving Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee & Sarasota counties)



Closing the GAP on Cardiovascular Disease

By Ansley Mora

The statistics are shocking: data gathered by the Florida Office of Vital Statistics indicate that cardiovascular disease (CVD) accounted for 38 percent of all deaths in Manatee County in 2007. CVD is the number one killer in the United States, and although all populations are affected by it, African Americans, Hispanics and Latinos bear a disproportionate disease burden.

GSAHEC's long-standing partner, Manatee County Health Department (MCHD), is poised to do something about this disparity. MCHD staff members Donna Keith and Mary Ellen Sagatys were instrumental in developing a proposal to improve health outcomes and help reduce disparities related to CVD in racial and ethnic minority populations in Manatee County. This past July, the MCHD received a Closing the GAP grant from the Florida Department of Health to create a Cardiovascular Wellness Education Program.

In order to successfully reach targeted populations, MCHD will capitalize on the success of dedicated Community Health Workers (CHWs) to serve as the initial point of contact to recruit

participants into the wellness education program. Research shows that trained CHWs are effective in reaching hard-to-serve racial and ethnic minority populations due to their cultural background and linguistic competence.

MCHD will train CHWs on CVD risk factors and blood pressure monitoring. Gulfcoast South AHEC, a local leader in the realm of CHW training, will provide cultural competency training to MCHD healthcare professionals to enhance their interaction with participants. Together, MCHD and GSAHEC will assure that the CHWs are properly educated on CVD risk factors, conducting health risk appraisals, making referrals to the program, and wellness coaching.

MCHD will collaborate with various community partners to identify and train new and experienced CHWs to conduct CVD risk appraisals throughout the community. The appraisals will screen for CVD risk factors such as diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, poor nutrition habits, family history, tobacco use and being overweight. Participants who

are at risk will be referred to MCHD's Cardiovascular Wellness Education Program for additional screening, assessment, wellness education classes, one-on-one counseling with a registered dietitian and lab work.

CHWs will follow up with participants over the next three months and provide wellness coaching. The use of wellness coaching recognizes the abilities of the CHWs and the relationship they have with their community members. Using motivational interviewing techniques by telephone or in person, the CHWs will help participants improve or sustain their cardiovascular health. At the end of ninety days, the CHWs will refer participants back to MCHD for follow up to determine their level of success.

MCHD plans to provide 600 risk appraisals, enroll 250 participants in the program and facilitate 1,500 wellness-coaching sessions through the CHWs. This is a big endeavor, but with the help of CHWs and partnering organizations, this program may help close the gap on CVD health disparities in Manatee County.

PSEP from page 1...

USF and other in state and out of state institutions are eligible to apply. Each student receives a \$1,500 educational grant for participating.

PSEP emphasizes educating students about the shortage of primary care physicians and inspiring them to practice in areas where the need is the greatest. They learn about AHEC and the scholarship and loan repayment programs offered by the National Health Service Corps. In addition, students visit a federally qualified health center where they see health disparities and the needs of uninsured and underinsured patients first-hand.

PSEP students visited Premier Community HealthCare Group in Dade City this summer and met with Medical Director Marlene Hart, M.D., CEO Kim Schuknecht and the Director of Clinical Operations Norma Bruce, R.N., MSHA. The trio discussed the rewards and challenges of providing care in rural, medically underserved areas. "We love to share our philosophy about creating a medical home for our patients and how we go the extra mile to provide high quality compassionate care in a positive environment," says Dr. Hart. "We get renewed by the students' enthusiasm, energy and questions, and if just one of them considers working with the

underserved, then we have been successful."

Now in its seventh year, 122 students have completed PSEP. The program continues to improve the competitiveness of talented underrepresented minority and disadvantaged students for acceptance into medical school. USF AHEC and the Office of Student Diversity are committed to retaining more of these students in medical schools, residencies and clinical settings throughout Florida and thus reduce the health disparities in this state. To learn more about PSEP visit www.health.usf.edu/medicine/osde/psep.

A Blazing Hot Summer at the USF AHEC Health Professions Summer Academy

By LaToya Clark, MPH

During these tough economic times, it's good to know your state legislators are in your corner. This summer, the USF AHEC Health Professions Summer Academy wrapped up its two-week residential experience on an impressive note. Florida State Representatives Ed Homan and Kevin Ambler attended the Academy's Award Ceremony and congratulated the students who proudly received certificates of completion. Representatives Homan and Ambler spoke humbly about their experiences in the community and stressed the need for more underrepresented and disadvantaged minorities in health professions. Their warm, uplifting personal stories and words of encouragement motivated the students to pursue health careers. Connecting students to careers, professionals to communities, and communities to better health...that's exactly what AHEC does!

The highlight of the ceremony was the presentation of student research projects. Three student groups were selected to present their research on health conditions to parents, special guests, and peers in attendance. Representatives Homan and Ambler were delighted to see



how the students took what they learned during the Academy and presented it to the audience with confidence, professionalism, and enthusiasm. It was a proud moment for both the parents and the Academy staff that mentored the students as they watched these young men and women blossom into aspiring healthcare professionals.

The Health Professions Summer Academy is held each June at the University of South Florida. Students complete a standardized test preparation course (SAT course) and learn about college admissions, financial aid, health careers, professionalism, personal development, and more. High school students who are rising juniors and rising seniors from AHEC's nine-county service area can apply. The Summer Academy strongly encourages enrollment of students from groups underrepresented in the health professions. Those groups include

African-Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, and low-income, first generation college students.

We are looking for the next generation of talented health care providers. Could that be you?

For more information on the USF AHEC Health Professions Summer Academy, contact LaToya S. Clark, MPH, Coordinator of Diversity Initiatives at lclark2@health.usf.edu.

FACEBOOK FANS: You can become a fan of the USF AHEC Health Professions Summer Academy on Facebook. By becoming a fan, you get up-to-date information on financial aid, academic enrichment programs, engage in discussions, ask questions, and communicate with staff and other fans of AHEC and alumni of the Summer Academy.

LaToya Clark
USF AHEC
lclark2@health.usf.edu

Victor Rodriguez Cruz
Gulfcoast North AHEC
vrodiguez@gnahec.org

Joan Beatty-Lee
Gulfcoast South AHEC
jbeatty@health.usf.edu

We look forward to meeting you in our virtual AHEC community!

GSAHEC Offers Educational Products

Medical Spanish CD-ROM for healthcare professionals and students – Focused on vocabulary and phrases appropriate to the healthcare setting, it provides the learner with helpful exercises to learn and practice intake information, medical terminology, anatomy, diseases and symptoms in Spanish. The course is approved for 30 continuing education credits for Florida licensed nursing and mental health professionals. *Cost is \$50.00 plus shipping and applicable tax.*

Dental Spanish Cards – A quick reference card ideal for dental care providers. Presents basic dental health information and terminology in Spanish and English. It also includes appropriate questions for patients. *Cost for 25 cards (minimum order) is \$15 plus shipping and applicable tax.*

Medical Terminology Booklets – This user-friendly, pocket-sized three-page booklet includes more than 100 terms frequently used in healthcare settings. *Cost for 25 booklets (minimum order) is \$25 plus shipping and applicable tax.*

To order, please visit our website at www.gsahec.org or contact Lucie Gurley, GSAHEC's Administrative Support Specialist, by phone 941.361.6602, fax 941.361.6612, or email lgurley@health.usf.edu.

Find us on Facebook!

Social networking sites are a great tool to educate and communicate with students, teachers, parents, community partners and the online world. To broaden our outreach and track the educational path of current and former program participants, USF AHEC, Gulfcoast North AHEC and Gulfcoast South AHEC each have a presence on Facebook.

By becoming a friend/member of AHEC fan pages or groups, you can get information, ask questions, engage in discussions, and communicate with staff and friends of our various programs.

This new and innovative web resource enhances how we communicate with students, teachers, parents and community partners.

Visit www.facebook.com and become a fan/friend of USF AHEC, Gulfcoast North AHEC or Gulfcoast South AHEC. If you have any questions about our Facebook pages, please contact the following AHEC staff members:

Raised on AHEC: Gulfcoast North Welcomes New Leadership

By Jody Lazzara, LMHC

Few people understand AHEC the way Christina Mathis does. Then again, few people have held as many roles within AHEC as she has.

Christina's career with AHEC began shortly after she graduated from Pasco High School in 1996. Gulfcoast North AHEC had recently established itself in rural Dade City, Christina's hometown, and was advertising for an Office Assistant. A job search led Christina to answer the ad and her knowledge of the community impressed prospective employers. She got the job and went to work in a small storefront office space she shared with GNAHEC's four other employees. That communal work environment exposed Christina to AHEC's many programs and services.

Her potential was quickly recognized and Christina was encouraged to continue pursuing her education - she became the first person in her family to attend college. While working at GNAHEC, she pursued a bachelor's degree in elementary education from the University of South Florida and was awarded scholarships from Bright Futures and the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. She left GNAHEC briefly to complete her internship, but returned to help manage data part-time. Upon graduation, she returned to full-time employment with GNAHEC as Coordinator of Recruitment.

Christina was given increasing responsibility at GNAHEC and advanced to Director of Continuing Education and then to Director of Clinical Training. She went

back to school and graduated from Saint Leo College in 2004 with a master's degree in business administration. In 2008, Christina was promoted to Assistant Executive Director of GNAHEC.

On August 10, 2009, Christina became interim Chief Executive Officer of GNAHEC upon the retirement of Jody Lazzara, LMHC. Having held every position in the center, Christina thoroughly understands all aspects of AHEC's programs and mission; she understands rural communities and the need to increase access to healthcare for medically needy



Christina Mathis, MBA

populations; and she is personally familiar with the special challenges facing first generation college students. In addition to her career with GNAHEC and academic pursuits, Christina married her high school sweetheart, Kenny Mathis, in 2001 and gave birth to son Karson Mathis

in January 2006.

Christina's experience and dedication make her a natural choice to lead GNAHEC. Please join us in congratulating this dynamic individual in her latest AHEC role!

Know when to say "Generic"

Knowing when generic medications aren't just the most affordable option but are in fact the best choice for patients can be a challenge for clinicians. The National Center for Farmworker Health has created an interactive CD that explores the role of generics in treating conditions such as asthma, depression, diabetes, acute bacterial infections and hypertension.

Cost Effective Prescribing vs. Moments of Compromise is an evidence-based curriculum that presents situations when prescribing low-cost treatment options is a good alternative to the more expensive use of name brand drugs. Up to 5 hours of continuing education credits from the National Center for Primary Care at Morehouse School of Medicine are available for physicians, nurses and physician assistants.

For a free copy of the CD, visit www.ncfh.org/?pid=156 or contact Erika Garcia at garcia@ncfh.org or (800)531-5120.

Train from page 1...

nar sponsored by Gulfcoast North Area Health Education Center for mental health professionals working with veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan and their families. The title refers to the challenges of dealing with a constantly moving target.

"Almost a third of U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan are National Guard and Reservists who have limited access to Veterans Administration resources once they've been discharged," said USF AHEC Program Director Dr. Cynthia Selleck. "Most community providers are not well-versed in military culture and don't know how to ask the right questions about the kinds of incidents that these returning service men and women have encountered."

The seminar was part of an effort by Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense to help community mental health providers, particularly those in rural areas, treat returning service members

transitioning back to civilian life. Psychiatrist Harold Kudler, Mental Health Coordinator for the Veterans Integrated Service Network, stressed the importance of knowing how to intervene with veterans and family members. "They don't have to be experts," he said, "but they should know the basics. They should know what resources are available and be prepared to make referrals when they need to."

Over seventy professionals attended the seminar held at the Pepin Heart Institute at University Community Hospital in Tampa. Dolores Dunn, a licensed mental health counselor from Sarasota, was impressed by the training and said it enabled her to care for returning veterans and their families. "I am interested in learning all I can. Thank you for presenting such an informative program."

For GySgt. Sanchez, supporting his brothers and sisters in arms

remains as much a priority now as it was during his deployment. "I'd give them a pat on the back, tell them, you know, everything's going to be fine. They need to talk to somebody." Dr. Selleck believes AHEC will be able to continue this mission of service to our military. "This may be the first of these conferences, but our goal is to get out to all of the areas in Florida and try to access the community providers all over the state."

For information including a list of service providers and video from the seminar, visit the University Beat link www.wusf.usf.edu/university_beat/UBeat_Past.cfm and click on August 3, 2009 Veterans Therapy.

For Future Health Professionals, Clinical Rotations Provide Vital Experience

By Victor Rodriguez-Cruz, BS

Most people don't realize that going to school to become a health professional requires much more than simply studying and attending classes. Students in medical, nursing, dental, physician assistant and other health professions training programs must also complete hands-on training under the watchful eye of a supervising preceptor. This aspect of their education is known as a clinical rotation. Often times, clinical rotations take place in sites far from the classroom setting such as private medical practices and community clinics. There is a great demand for clinical sites to provide these quality rotations. As a result, identifying and arranging rotations can be a very complicated process. Gulfcoast North AHEC plays a pivotal role in coordinating clinical rotations, carefully crafting affiliation agreements between academic institutions and the

sites where training takes place.

One example is the successful partnership between GNAHEC and the Barry University Physician Assistant (PA) Program. Based in Miami, 24 of Barry's 66 PA students are enrolled at its St. Petersburg campus. Technology allows the students to receive the same lectures regardless of location, but the 28-month program also requires students to complete 48 weeks of essential clinical rotations in disciplines such as family and internal medicine, obstetrics, psychology and pediatrics. According to Assistant Professor Whitney Lester, MPAS, PA-C, finding enough qualified preceptors to supervise and train students can be a daunting challenge particularly in rural and medically underserved settings. Professor Lester, the Clinical Coordinator for Barry's PA Program, describes GNAHEC role as "a huge benefit and crucial part of the program."



Whitney Lester, MPAS, PA-C, Clinical Coordinator and Asst. Professor and Natalie Wilbanks, Physician Assistant Student

Barry PA student Natalie Wilbanks finds the AHEC clinical rotations essential to her professional and personal development. "AHEC provides us with rotations in clinical settings that otherwise we would not be exposed to. Throughout these underserved sites, you can see the extreme need for health professionals and for an improved healthcare system." Following her AHEC rotation,

Ms. Wilbanks spent a year in the rural mountains of Honduras working at a remote medical clinic. Her experiences with the Honduran people prompted her to learn Spanish in order to communicate better with her patients. She has dedicated herself to caring for the underserved and has already been offered a position in pediatrics upon graduating in December 2009.

Gulfcoast North AHEC Bids Farewell to Jody Lazzara

By: Anne Maynard, MPH and Christina Mathis, MBA

After ten years of service with Gulfcoast North AHEC, Jody Lazzara, LMHC, retired on August 7, 2009.

Ms. Lazzara's career with GNAHEC began in 1999 as the Coordinator for Continuing Education. She was later promoted to Director of Professional Education followed by Director



By Jody Lazzara, LMHC

of Clinical Training. Through her various roles, Ms. Lazzara gained a holistic view of AHEC and an appreciation for the range of services it provided to the community. In 2007, she was named the agency's Chief Executive Officer after a national search.

Her passion for improving access to healthcare for medically underserved individuals stemmed from Ms. Lazzara's own experience raising

a family on limited resources. "I know intimately how it feels to not be able to afford things like food and healthcare," she said. "That's why I feel so passionately about AHEC's mission."

Over the years, Ms. Lazzara's efforts and leadership helped establish GNAHEC's reputation as a valuable resource for health promotion, youth recruitment, and training and support of health professionals in medically underserved areas. "Jody really understood AHEC," said USF AHEC Program Director Cynthia Selleck. "She was very committed to making life better

for those we serve."

A native Floridian, Ms. Lazzara plans to spend time the majority of her free time with family and friends relaxing in her rustic home along the banks of the Withlacoochee River (lovingly referred to as "The River House"). However, she will also provide periodic consultation for GNAHEC's new interim Chief Executive Officer, Christina Mathis.

Congratulations, Jody! Your colleagues and the community wish you the very best.

Gulfcoast South AHEC Honors Community & Academic Partners

In honor of National AHEC Week, March 23-27, GSAHEC held a recognition ceremony to highlight the outstanding contributions of some of its outstanding community and academic partners.

Preceptors Ken Cetin, PA-C, Hannah Bair, PA-C, and Justin Blalock, ARNP of Community Care Family Clinic in Arcadia were honored for their excellent work precepting health professions students. Nurse practitioner students from University of South Florida and physician assistant students from the University of Florida and Barry University have given the clinic high marks!

DeSoto Memorial Hospital was recognized by the Gulfcoast South AHEC Tobacco Training and Cessation (A.T.T.A.C) program for its efforts to help educate county residents about



GSAHEC's Honors community and academic partners. L to R: Louise McGrath, LECOM; Beverley Winston, DMH; Amy Keys, DMH; Dennis Pierce, DMH; Edna Apostol, GSAHEC; Leslie Bickett, DeSoto Middle; and Michael Polin, LECOM.

tobacco and support tobacco users wanting to quit.

Recognizing the importance of training our future health professionals on how to intervene successfully with tobacco dependent patients, the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM) was honored for integrating the A.T.T.A.C. program into the curricula of its pharmacy and medical training programs. Over 300 medical students and 150

pharmacy students were trained this year as a result.

Finally, Career Counselor Leslie Bickett, MSPH, was recognized for her outstanding contributions to the Recruitment & Educational Assistance for Careers in Health (REACH) program at DeSoto Middle School. A strong advocate for recruiting youth into health careers, Ms. Bickett's 29 years of experience in health education have made her an in-

valuable REACH Advisor. "The REACH club gives our students an opportunity to find out what health careers are available to them," Ms. Bickett reports, "and gives them a head start on planning for high school and beyond. Thanks for coming to our school and making this opportunity available to our students!"

Congratulations to these wonderful partners!

Committee Gives Providers Credit

By Ansley Mora

The Sarasota County Wellness Coalition (SCWC) Planning Committee works hard to promote healthy lifestyle choices and prevent obesity in Sarasota County.

SCWC provides a forum for organizations and community members to collaborate on conducting educational programs and providing networking opportunities for Sarasota County professionals and residents. Members of the Planning Committee include the Sarasota County Health Department, Venice Regional Medical Center, the School Board of Sarasota County, Sarasota County Parks and Recreation, Tidewell Hospice and Palliative Care, the South County Family YMCA and Gulfcoast South AHEC.

GSAHEC was one of the pioneer agencies involved in the creation

of the SCWC, formerly known as the Obesity Prevention Coalition of Sarasota County. Since its inception in 2003, I have been steadily involved in the work of the Coalition, taking a front seat by becoming Chair of the Coalition in January 2008.

The Planning Committee knew that continuing education units (CEU) would increase the appeal of its programs for healthcare providers. When it decided to offer CEU credits for its quarterly education programs, GSAHEC was an obvious choice to provide the credits. A partnership was born! For the past eighteen months, Charlene Chirillo, GSAHEC's Continuing Education Coordinator, has worked with SCWC to provide credit towards licensure for nurses, mental health professionals, registered dietitians and dietetic technicians. Thanks to Ms. Chirillo for her time and valuable expertise!



Dr. T. Patrick Fitzgerald, Sarasota Memorial Hospital's Comprehensive Bariatric Program presents "Bariatric Surgery: The Last Resort".

Last year, SWCW developed, implemented and evaluated five programs attended by 116 participants. The topics chosen complemented the mission of SCWC and were based on evaluation comments and available expertise. They included Smart Growth & Walkability; Bariatric Surgery: The Last Resort; It Starts in Parks: Health Initiatives & Programming; Weighing in on

Sleep; and Worksite Wellness: Tools & Resources that Work. As current Chair of the SCWC, I am fortunate to be surrounded by a Planning Committee composed of dedicated, hard working, professional and talented members. This group gives a lot and their hard work goes a long way!

My Life Serving the Medically Underserved

by Jillian R. Palmer PA-C

One of the things I am most proud of is that I am the daughter of two physician assistants (PA). My mother and father graduated from the University of Florida's first PA class in 1979. They truly were trendsetters - they championed the role of PAs at a time when the profession was not well known. Many people assumed that since this was the career choice of my parents, I must have just fallen into the role when I decided to attend PA school. However, this was not the case.

I attended the University of North Florida on a softball

scholarship and graduated with a liberal arts degree in psychology in 2003. After graduating, I worked as a financial advisor and obtained multiple licenses in this field. But it did not take long for me to realize I was really unhappy doing this, and needed to be in a field that was better suited to me.

I decided to return to school and took all of the necessary prerequisites required for a PA program. I began working as an ER technician in the critical care section of Lakeland Regional Medical Center and entered the PA program at UF. My clinical year was an incredible, life changing experience. I realized

how much of a positive effect PAs have on the lives of patients. I found this to be even truer in the rural setting when Gulfcoast South AHEC facilitated my rotation DeSoto County at the Community Care Family Clinic (CCFC). There, I was blessed to be precepted by Hannah Bair and Ken Cetin who are amazing examples of great PAs. I found myself very comfortable and happy in that environment.

After graduating in April of 2009, I was offered the op-



by Jillian R. Palmer PA-C

portunity to work at CCFC. It was a decision I did not have to think twice about. The patients are grateful for the care, and the staff is fantastic. I feel so lucky to work with the other providers and our unique patient population. Since beginning work, I have given thanks many times for this opportunity. I am so excited about the path my life has taken. I absolutely feel I am able to make a difference each day, and that is something I will never take for granted!

Ramirez Receives National Award

Martha Ramirez, one of the first Community Health Workers (CHW) trained by GSAHEC, was recently chosen as the recipient of the 4th Annual Esther M. Holderby Award. The award honors a dedicated CHW who has overcome personal adversity to promote health in his or her community. It was presented to Ms. Ramirez in July during the Center for Sustainable Health Outreach's 2009 Unity Conference in Saint Louis, Missouri.

Ms. Ramirez has worked with GSAHEC partner Healthy Start Coalition of Manatee County since 2002. She has been trained in numerous health education and prevention topics including breast and cervical cancer, prenatal care and folic acid education, infant safe sleeping practices, breastfeeding promotion, family planning, HIV prevention and smoking cessation. Her mission is to educate and empower those who typically do not have access to healthcare.

As a young adult, Ms. Ramirez experienced first-hand poor housing



Martha Ramirez and Luz Corcuera at CHW Award Ceremony, July 2009

conditions, long hours, meager wages, and lack of healthcare toiling in the fields as a farm worker. When her own mother was diagnosed with breast cancer, Ms. Ramirez cared for her and worked tirelessly to ensure she received treatment until her death seven years ago. The tragedy strengthened Ms. Ramirez who dedicated herself to serving those most at-risk, forgotten, and without access to services. She returned to the fields as a CHW only to discover that little had changed after 25 years. In many ways, she found the conditions of labor, housing, pesticide exposure, abuse and general exploitation are worse. Witnessing these conditions has moved Ms. Ramirez to take a proactive role to effect change wherever she can; receiving the Holderby Award acknowledges that commitment. ¡Felicitaciones, Martha!

Welcome New Board Members

Gulfcoast North AHEC and Gulfcoast South AHEC have recently added new members to their respective boards of directors. Please join us in welcoming these folks to the AHEC team.

Gulfcoast South

Zenobia Brown, MD

Associate Medical Director
Tidewell Hospice and Palliative Care, Sarasota

Scot Hoverman, MA

Tobacco Program and Policy Consultant
Charlotte County Health Department

David E. Klement, MMC

Director of the Institute for Public Policy and Leadership (IPPL)
USF Sarasota-Manatee

Nina Perry, JD

Attorney
Legal Aid of Manasota, Inc.

Gulfcoast North

Subhakararao Medidi, MD

Associate Medical Director
Suncoast Community Health Centers, Inc.

Brian Shaub, DO

Associate Medical Director
Premier Community Healthcare Group, Inc.

Kevin Sneed, Pharm D.

USF College of Medicine
Department of Family Medicine

Gulfcoast South AHEC Helps Student REACH Her Goals



Barry University freshman and REACH participant Alicia Guerrero.

by Joan Beatty-Lee

Alicia Guerrero is proof positive that students who set goals for their future and have the drive to succeed can exceed even their own expectations. Alicia has a genuine interest and passion for community health and working with underserved populations. While attending Sarasota High school, Alicia participated in Gulfcoast South AHEC's Recruitment & Educational Assistance for Careers in Health (REACH) program. REACH partners with healthcare organizations and academic

health centers to provide minority and underprivileged youth interested in health careers like Alicia exposure to a variety of health careers and internship opportunities.

Alicia was a REACH participant and intern for three years before graduating from Sarasota High School in 2009. Her hard work earned her several scholarships to pay for her tuition in full, and she is now attending Barry University enrolled in the pre-physician assistant program. She gives credit to Gulfcoast South AHEC for much of her success. "GSAHEC has helped me in all academic aspects of achieving what I have so far," Alicia wrote in a letter expressing her appreciation to the staff. "The opportunities granted for me and other young students to

participate in educational and training experiences such as the REACH program and summer internships are what really make a difference in decision-making. I hope these programs remain available for students in the future because that is what will help us 'reach' our goals for better healthcare for underserved and underprivileged communities."

Her exceptional interpersonal skills, natural leadership abilities and talent for research will make Alicia an outstanding medical professional. "Thank you GSAHEC and Mrs. Beatty-Lee for all you have done. I look forward to continuing our partnership in the future." We do too, Alicia!



Area Health Education Center Program
College of Medicine, MDC76
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.
Tampa, FL 33612-4799

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit NO. 1632
Tampa, Florida

If you have received this newsletter in error, or if the address is incorrect, please send a note to ahecnews@health.usf.edu.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED