The music was pumping in Karen Stewart’s fourth period class at Pineview Middle School.

“Fergalicious... So delicious... It’s hot, hot!”

Under the watchful eye of University of South Florida (USF) College of Nursing students: Crystal Nichols, Brittany Reidy, Marcell Rice and Clarissa Rowe, 20 sixth graders were jumping and swaying around their classroom to the pop tune’s rhythmic beat.

“Okay,” Crystal shouted after pausing the CD, “now stop and take your pulse!”

As the class dutifully and silently counted their heartbeats, the nursing students began handing out drinking straws. After completing a lesson on the effects of smoking on the heart, Crystal turned the music back on and instructed the kids to get up and dance around again while breathing through the straws.

“This time, it was harder. Some of the kids found it difficult to get enough air. Before a minute was up, a few stopped dancing and sat down.

“Okay, now take your pulse again,” Crystal instructed.

The kids took their seats and did as asked. For many their pulse rates were higher. The team of future nurses from USF explained that breathing through a restricted airway like a straw is similar to having emphysema – one of many conditions caused by smoking.

Since 2000 the USF Area Health Education Center Program (AHEC) has marshaled the resources of health professions students in a coordinated anti-tobacco effort known as PIPSA (Partners in the Prevention of Substance Abuse). Teams of health professions students from the USF College of Medicine and Nursing along with doctoral students from the Florida A&M University College of Pharmacy are assembled and trained on a variety of tobacco-related issues. Lesson plans, videos and teaching kits were provided to 244 future healthcare professionals to help them deliver an anti-tobacco message aimed at vulnerable young people such as these sixth graders.

“We target children at this age level because Big Tobacco is also targeting them,” said USF AHEC Program Director Cynthia Selleck. “While delivering an important message, our students also serve as role models to these kids.”

Further south in Manatee County, the power Big Tobacco has over middle school students quickly became evident to participants in the Gulfcoast South AHEC PIPSA Program.
Community Health Workers in the Spotlight

By Maureen Guthke, MPH, CHES, and Ansley Mora, BA

On May 21-23, the Center for Sustainable Health Outreach (CSHO) will be holding its annual Unity Conference at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Tampa. The theme of Unity 2007 is Community Health Workers as Essential Components of Public Health: Solving the Disparities and Access Puzzle.

CSHO at the University of Southern Mississippi was formed in 1999 through a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration Office (HRSA) of Rural Health Policy. CSHO provides support and technical assistance to community health workers (CHWs) and CHW programs and facilitates partnerships with funders, policy makers, health systems and community organizations. It serves as a national point of contact for CHWs and CHW programs and provides up-to-date information on emerging trends in the field. For more information on CSHO and Unity 2007, visit http://www.usm.edu/csho/index.html.

Several Florida AHEC Network (FLAHEC Network) CHWs and CHW program staff have attended Unity Conferences in the past and were excited to learn that Unity 2007 will be held in Tampa. In addition, GNAHEC Community Health Education Coordinator Maureen Guthke accepted an invitation from CSHO to participate in the Unity 2007 planning committee activities as a representative of the network. These national conferences offer excellent networking and skill building opportunities for CHWs, CHW program staff, supporting agencies, CHW networks, health care providers, elected officials and policy makers. For this reason, the Florida AHEC Network has decided to sponsor more than 34 AHEC-trained or AHEC-supported CHWs to attend Unity 2007.

Gulfcoast North AHEC will sponsor 13 CHWs to attend the conference, and three partnering organizations have already submitted proposals to present their outreach activities. Gulfcoast South AHEC will be sending 12 CHWs, and three partnering organizations have submitted presentation proposals as well.

Luz Corcuera, program director in charge of CHW programs at Healthy Start Coalition of Manatee County, said she is looking forward to learning from others at Unity 2007. “I hope to have the opportunity to network and learn from other organizations that support the work of CHWs. It is exciting to see the many new programs being developed nationwide to bridge the gap and reach out to families who are not served by traditional resources.”

In recognition of community health workers, the Florida AHEC Network will hold a reception for all AHEC affiliated CHWs on the evening of Tuesday, May 22nd, coinciding with Unity 2007. It is a perfect opportunity to show appreciation for the hard work and dedication that CHWs have demonstrated in reducing health disparities and promoting healthier lifestyles in Florida. At the reception the network plans to continue discussion of how to further support the efforts of AHEC affiliated CHWs in the state.

Celebrating Community Health Workers

By Ansley Mora, BA

Gulfcoast South Area Health Education Center, Inc. (GSAHEC) held its Third Annual Community Health Worker Conference on January 20. GSAHEC sponsored this conference to recognize Community Health Workers’ (CHWs) many efforts to educate other members of their community on cardiovascular health, breast/cervical health, diabetes prevention, HIV prevention, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), prenatal care and the benefits of breastfeeding. These dedicated CHWs provide countless hours of support and connect those in need to health and human services in DeSoto, Manatee and Sarasota Counties.

The conference was planned in part by GSAHEC’s key community partners: the Healthy Start Coalition of Manatee County and the Newtown Wellness Program. GSAHEC’s Chief Executive Officer Edna Apostol provided a presentation on the impact CHWs have in closing the gap on health disparities as well as discussed the issue of health literacy; roundtable discussions were facilitated on stress management, communication skills and the stages of change. Many organizations are turning to CHWs for their unique ability to serve as "bridges" between community members and health and human service systems. Research indicates the benefits of using CHWs include improved health outcomes and lower costs, reduction of emergency room and hospital visits, decreased barriers to medical care, increased trust between clients and the health care system and timely use of services and better compliance.

Since 2003 GSAHEC has worked successfully with its community...
partners on many CHW initiatives in the medically underserved communities it serves. Its targeted audiences include individuals who are uninsured, underinsured and/or lack access to health care due to racial, ethnic, language and/or socioeconomic barriers. This past fiscal year GSAHEC partnered with the Healthy Start Coalition of Manatee County (HSCMC), Manatee County Health Department (MCHD) and the Newtown Wellness Program (NWP) in Sarasota County to reach these targeted populations.

GSAHEC’s Community Health Partnership Project experienced great success during 2005-06 exceeding all of its stated objectives by providing CHW training to 51 participants (20 CHWs received training in breast cancer awareness; 18 CHWs were trained in diabetes prevention, six on breastfeeding promotion and seven on SIDS prevention); the trained CHWs made 268 presentations to 655 participants on the topics of breastfeeding promotion, cardiovascular disease prevention, SIDS prevention, diabetes prevention and breast cancer awareness.

GSAHEC was also recently awarded a $19,300 Susan G. Komen for the Cure Grant Award to help fight against breast cancer. This is the second year that GSAHEC has received funding from the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation Florida Suncoast Affiliate in addition to an earlier mini-grant. In partnership with the Healthy Start Coalition of Manatee County and the Newtown Wellness Program, GSHAEC will again train and support CHWs to provide breast health education to targeted community members.

For more information about GSAHEC’s Community Health Partnership Project, please contact Ansley Mora, Community Education Coordinator, (941) 361-6602 or amora@health.usf.edu.

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**Celebrating from page 2**

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**Faculty Development Training When You Need it. Anytime. Anywhere.**

By Cynthia Selleck, DSN, ARNP

Do you supervise medical, nursing or other health professions students in your practice? Are you interested in becoming a preceptor for students? Would you benefit from learning more about being a clinical faculty member but faculty development courses don’t fit into your busy schedule?

Now the courses are available to you anytime, anywhere, free of charge with FACDOT, USF Health’s new Faculty Development Online Training.

Based on materials created by Mountain AHEC through a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Family Medicine Training Grant, FACDOT was developed to provide faculty, residents and community preceptors the opportunity to learn about topics to help in their teaching and supervision of students. FACDOT currently includes the following six modules with more to be added in the future:

- The One Minute Preceptor
- Integrating Learners into a Busy Practice
- Dealing with the Difficult Learning Situation
- Giving Effective Feedback
- Teaching and Learning Styles
- Evaluation: Making it Work

Most chapters within a module take five to seven minutes to complete. The modules are self-paced; an entire module doesn’t even have to be completed in one sitting. FACDOT will remember where a user left off and take the user right back to that spot the next time logged in. FACDOT also keeps track of completed modules, and a certificate of completion can be printed once a module is finished.

The FACDOT site also includes a number of useful teaching tip articles that can be accessed by a click of your mouse.

So how do you get started? If you have an HSCNET ID and password, you can access FACDOT now! Visit http://health.usf.edu/facdot.

If you are an AHEC community preceptor and do not have an HSCNET ID, contact Jonathan Hartmann, AHEC librarian, at (813) 974-6401 or johartma@health.usf.edu.

Take advantage of the convenience of FACDOT for your faculty development needs. Gaining this knowledge will help make the experience rewarding for both you and the students you precept. As a result our students will be better prepared to serve their patients and communities as outstanding health professionals.
Profile: Dr. Lars Berk

By Emily Meade, BA

Dr. Lars Berk is the newest dentist at the East Manatee Family Healthcare Center, but he’s been familiar with the site for over a decade. Dr. Berk was one of the first dental students from the University of Florida College of Dentistry who completed an AHEC rotation at the center in 1996. A decade later, in September 2006, Dr. Berk returned to provide dental care to the patients at the East Manatee Family Healthcare Center.

After he graduated from UF in 1998, Dr. Berk briefly worked at a health department before entering private practice. Nine years later, he was ready for a change. Dr. Berk saw the job posting for Manatee County Rural Health Services (MCRHS) on the National Health Service Corps Web site, and he applied. The funny thing: Dr. Maria Pardo remembered him after all those years.

Dr. Pardo, now the MCRHS dental director, also participated in an AHEC rotation during her dental education, and she was on staff at East Manatee when Dr. Berk was a student.

“Maria was great. My rotation was really pleasant. I worked with lots of kids, which was nice because at UF we didn’t have a lot of exposure to pediatrics,” said Dr. Berk.

Dr. Berk is happy to be back in an environment where he can assist an underserved population. “I’m really enjoying it right now. It’s definitely an experience that everyone should have. It [community health] should be a mandated year of service for all dental graduates.”

Dr. Berk views his role as both a dentist and an educator for his patients: “With every exam and every visit, we try to stress good oral hygiene. We don’t want patients to be motivated by pain, but by wanting to improve or maintain what they have. We are... trying to develop a long lasting relationship with our patients.”

Dr. Berk is equally excited about educating dental students in the unique environment of the clinic. “By exposing students to community health, they get to see a different type of dentistry, one that is not driven monetarily, but by the opportunity to help people,” he remarked.

“Exposure to underserved populations, with the preceptor as the guide, can be really helpful. It teaches them different ways of talking and working with patients. Even if they [the students] don’t go into community health, this experience will help them with interacting with their patients,” he said.

Dr. Berk believes that a community health setting offers health professionals and students the opportunity to “make a lot of underserved people very happy who otherwise would have no choice. You get an emotional connection because you are doing something you really like for people who really need it.”

When asked what one thing students should know before starting an AHEC rotation, he responded, “You will be exposed to a lot of situations and people that you won’t experience in private practice. Here things go back to basics. It is an elementary approach, but one that earns you a lot of internal satisfaction and gratitude from the patients.”

Gulfcoast South AHEC is pleased to have Dr. Lars Berk as a preceptor and excited to place our dental students under his mentorship!
Jody Lazzara Named GNAHEC Executive Director

By Mandelyn Hutcherson, MAMC

Jody Lazzara, an eight-year employee of Gulfcoast North Area Health Education Center (GNAHEC), has been named the new executive director. She replaces John Wills who retired in February after more than 12 years of service as the executive director.

Lazzara began her career at GNAHEC as the coordinator for continuing education. She was promoted into the director of professional education position and most recently served as the director of clinical training for Gulfcoast North AHEC. Through her varied roles, Lazzara has obtained a holistic perspective of the center’s programs and services overseeing clinical training and preceptor development as well as professional continuing education.

In her new role as executive director, Lazzara is looking forward to being a more public, visible figure in the five counties GNAHEC serves.

“I want to be intimately involved with the working of our center and in the community,” said Lazzara. “There are numerous opportunities for us to experience growth as a center. I see more outreach particularly and resource development.”

Lazzara anticipates that she will be very active in the surrounding communities increasing the visibility of Gulfcoast North AHEC and illustrating what the center is accomplishing.

“No matter how hard we [AHEC] work at it, it seems to me that I still run into people in the health community who do not know what AHEC does. They know small parts of what we do, continuing education or training, but lack a general understanding of the overall mission,” Lazzara said. She wants to make it a priority to educate those in health care professions about AHEC’s three-pronged focus: recruiting, training and retaining health professionals for medically underserved communities.

Lazzara was selected as the executive director of Gulfcoast North AHEC after a national search. Dr. Dennis Penzell, longtime board member for GNAHEC, served on the selection committee.

He said, “I have always been impressed with Jody’s sincerity, straightforward approach to communication and person to person interactions.”

Dr. Penzell added that he expects nothing less from Jody in the future.

“Working with Jody has always been a pleasure. Jody’s professionalism, expertise and genuine care for her colleagues and community will be an asset as she takes on her new role of executive director at GNAHEC,” said Christina Mathis, GNAHEC director of professional education.

Lazzara exudes a real passion for improving access to quality health care for the medically underserved. She was divorced with two children at a very young age and remembers first hand the challenges of raising a family on limited resources.

“Because of my history, I know intimately how it feels to not be able to afford things – like food and health care. The people we serve are near and dear to me. I was uneducated and under-employed when I was just starting out and without access to the basic necessities. That’s why I feel so passionately about AHEC’s mission, and GNAHEC making life better for the medically underserved by connecting students to careers, professionals to communities and communities to better health,” Lazzara said.

Lazzara feels that her personality more so than her background has been the best preparation for her as the new executive director. She has always been a student of human nature. She enjoys people and is very positive about basic, human nature.

Lazzara was a late comer to higher education. She began her educational path at the age of 33 with an associate's degree in human service technology from Hillsborough Community College. Then she pursued a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Saint Leo University and a master’s in mental health counseling from Nova Southeastern University. She became licensed as a Mental Health Counselor in 1996 and maintains a private psychotherapy practice on a part-time basis.

Lazzara brings a number of strengths to the table as the new executive director for Gulfcoast North AHEC: honesty, a strong work ethic, a sense of humor, good organizational skills. But perhaps the most important one is that she “gets it.”

“Jody really understands what AHEC is all about, and she is committed to making life better for those we serve,” said USF AHEC Program Director Cindy Selleck.
Office Depot Donates to GNAHEC at Wesley Chapel Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony

Office Depot, a leading global provider of office products and services, opened its first store in Wesley Chapel on Dec. 7, 2006. During the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Office Depot made a $500 contribution and donated a number of new children’s backpacks to three local nonprofit organizations: Pasco Education Foundation, Suncoast Harvest Food Bank and Gulfcoast North Area Health Education Center. Coordinator for Student Recruitment and Enrichment Dianne Frankel and Jody Lazzara, director of clinical training, at the time, accepted the donation for GNAHEC.

Tobacco from page 1

At Sugg Middle School in Kristi Morgan’s third period class, a sixth grade student raised his hand, “I have this friend who used to smoke. He quit, and he's trying not to [smoke] anymore. Is he going to get sick? Will he get lung cancer?”

Tara Kroll, a medical student from Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine, responded, “It’s good that he quit. It’s important that he not start again so that he won’t increase his risk of getting sick. You should really support your friend and tell him what a good job he is doing and how important it is that he doesn’t start smoking again.”

The boy looked down sheepishly and replied, “It’s actually me. I’m the one who smoked.”

“It doesn’t matter,” said occupational therapy assistant student Sarah Lauren Ickes. “You don’t now, and now you know why you shouldn’t start again.”

The health professions students in Ms. Morgan’s class are representative of a group of 70 students that came from four different local colleges: Manatee Community College, New College of Florida, Manatee Technical Institute and Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine and six different health professions (medical, dental assistant, dental hygiene, radiography, pre-med and occupational therapy assistant) to participate in this year’s PIPSA program. In small interdisciplinary teams the students went to seven different middle schools and spoke with over 1,300 sixth and seventh grade children in a coordinated effort to educate Manatee County middle school students on the hazards of smoking. The impact the students had was clear.

“The speakers related to my sixth graders,” exclaimed teacher Dianna Bone from Lee Middle School. “My students were engaged, interested and willing to share personal stories with the speakers. [It] doesn’t get any better than that!”

Presenting at local middle schools enabled the health professions students to act as role models for younger members of the community in which they live.

Claire Murphy, a participant in the GSAHEC PIPSA program, summarized her experience by saying, “Working in a classroom setting allows you to step into their world and minds as a refreshing positive influence, and to be fun and energetic at the same time. It was really rewarding.”

In a unique twist, nursing students Andrea Mendenhall and Michelle Bologna returned to their former middle school, Most Holy Redeemer, to teach PIPSA accompanied by teammates Daniel Ford and Amanda Braue.

“I loved working with this age group,” said Michelle. “I felt they were really drawn to us.”

“The reception from the kids was very enthusiastic,” added Daniel. “It was more enjoyable than I thought it would be!”

Amanda added, “I was a little nervous about the whole thing. I wasn’t sure what to expect, but I think we made an impact.”

This sentiment was widely shared by many of the health professions students including second year medical student Lynn Summers. Looking through a stack of cards and letters received from the children she and her teammates Kathryn Baksh, Kristen Marsonek and Christine Brownyard taught, she read one boy’s message:

“Thank you so much for taking time to come visit us. I liked learning the chemicals in cigarettes. I talked to my mom because she is a smoker. I think she was surprised but I don’t know if she really listened.”

“It brought tears to my eyes,” said Lynn. “I wondered if they were listening to what we said.”

More than 4,000 children in 26 middle schools throughout Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco and Pinellas counties heard PIPSA’s anti-tobacco message; many took it to heart.

Vanessa Travieso, who helped to coordinate the PIPSA Program at USF, was shocked on a recent visit to her sister-in-law’s Pasco County home. Hanging on the family’s door was a bright yellow PIPSA “No Passing Gas Zone” placard. Her nephew, Angel, attends Pine View Middle School and unbeknownst to Vanessa, his class received a PIPSA presentation.

“I really liked it,” he said. “I learned what’s in cigarettes. I can’t believe that people put battery acid and methane in their mouths!”

It looks like these kids got the PIPSA message loud and clear.
Impressive USF AHEC Program Library Services

By Jonathan Hartmann, MLS

Dr. Leslene Gordon, community health director at the Hillsborough County Health Department, has found the library services provided by USF AHEC Program Librarian Jonathan Hartmann to be very useful.

“My first request for assistance from our AHEC Librarian really impressed me” said Dr. Gordon. “I was preparing a presentation for a national conference and needed a number of journal articles that I could not locate in a timely manner. Some were not available at the USF Library. I made a request to Jonathan and truly expected at best, to get some help the next day. In less than 30 minutes I got the first three articles and the final two came the next day. Needless to say I was amazed. Jonathan has also assisted our professional staff in gaining access to the USF Library services and provided us with clinical reference materials.”

AHEC Library Services available to health care providers working in medically underserved communities include: computer accounts providing access to the USF Health Science Center Library electronic resources; reference materials for clinical sites; interlibrary loan of articles and AHEC-owned books and other materials; and computer and Internet training at clinical sites.

For more information, contact Jonathan Hartmann, AHEC librarian at (813) 974-6401 or johartma@health.usf.edu.

Upcoming Events

The USF AHEC Sophomore/Junior Access Day event will be held on Friday, April 20, 2007, at the USF Health Auditorium. This event will provide students with information about college admissions, financial aid and provide a forum to discover the possibilities available in various health professions.

The USF AHEC Program will host its seventh annual Health Professions Summer Academy June 3 - June 16, 2007, on the USF campus in Tampa. The Academy is designed to provide high school students with SAT preparation, personal development and exposure to the health professions. Disadvantaged and underrepresented minority students who have expressed an interest in the health professions, have a 3.0 GPA and are residents of AHEC’s nine-county service area are eligible to participate in the Academy.

For more information about the Summer Academy and Access Day visit the AHEC Web site at www.health.usf.edu/ahec and click on Middle & High School Student Learning Opportunities.
2007 Belles & Boots Bash

On behalf of the USF Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Program and Gulfcoast North Area Health Education Center, Inc. (GNAHEC) located in Land O’Lakes, we thank you for “MOSI-ing on down to our second Belles and Boots Bash, on March 8. Proceeds from the fund-raising event will benefit health career programs for underrepresented minority and disadvantaged youth from Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco, Hernando and Citrus counties.

The fun filled evening consisted of a silent auction and reception, dinner provided by Outback Steakhouse®, specialty malt beverages provided by Pepin Distributing, music and photo opportunities in a country setting by A Coyote Production, Inc. and a live square dancing demonstration. Honorary Chairman Retired Congressman Mike Bilirakis spoke briefly to the crowd of approximately 250 attendees on volunteerism, and a $1,000 scholarship was awarded to Doevia Mattei from Seffner, Florida.

Pictures from the event are now available online at www.gnahec.org, or www.health.usf.edu/ahec.

We greatly appreciate your support, and we enjoyed seeing you MOSI on down!

Gulfcoast South AHEC Named Booker High School’s Outstanding Business Partner of the Year

GSAHEC was honored during the Police Athletic League (PAL) Business Reception as Booker High School’s Outstanding Business Partner for 2006-2007 for the organization’s Recruitment & Educational Assistance for Careers in Health (REACH) program. The REACH Program is designed to provide minority, first generation college, underrepresented and/or underprivileged students interested in health careers a rare and unique opportunity to explore a variety of health career occupations. The program strives to assist students in establishing and maintaining a career in health.

According to Sandy Baar, career counselor at Booker High School, GSAHEC was selected because the organization, “support the Booker High School students interested in health careers with education, presentations, informational sessions, internships, field trips and summer camps. This has made the REACH Club one of the most popular in our high school, and many students further their high school careers in health professions as a result of their involvement in REACH.”