Call for Nightingale Luminary Award Nominations

By: Lisa Schwantes

DURANGO, CO – The Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center (SWCAHEC) is accepting nominations for the 2015 Nightingale Luminary Awards. The award recognizes outstanding nurses in the four corners region during a local awards ceremony to be held in March of 2015.

Nominations can be made for registered nurses in two categories: clinical practice or non-traditional roles (administration, education, or research). In each of the two categories, nominees will be judged in the areas of: advocacy (advancing a cause or proposal); leadership (motivating others to work toward a common goal); or innovation (demonstrating creativity in the nursing field). Up to six regional “Nightingale Luminaries” will be selected with the possibility of advancement to a statewide award contest. The statewide Nightingale Awards event takes place in Denver, May of 2015.

Details about the nomination process and the application is available at www.swcahec.org or contact the SWCAHEC office at 970-375-3250. Nominations are due no later than January 15, 2015.
Twenty-Five Years of Success
By: Megan Blaser

The Centennial Area Health Education Center (CAHEC) has been hosting the Nurse Educator Conference in the Rockies for 25 years. Former employee Diane Stille and graduate of University of Northern Colorado identified a need to offer an affordable and practical education opportunity for nurse educators to stay abreast of current topics and teaching methods post-graduate. Back in 1990, CAHEC planned its first event with the help of some local University nursing professors. The first year the conference was held in beautiful Estes Park. However, the only facility large enough to host the 100 registrants was the local YMCA Camp. “Everybody remembers the first year, if they went,” Stille said. “It was the only time they went to a nursing conference where they slept on bunk beds in group rooms and had food that tasted like it was from a Boy Scout camp.” Despite the basic accommodations, participants enjoyed themselves, learned a lot, and many of them returned the following year. Today, CAHEC continues to host this event with some of those attendees continuing to return year after year. After taking a year off in 2013, an all-new CAHEC staff successfully brought this event back with a substantial increase in participants. The more than 300 attendees were able to stay and engage in conference activities all while enjoying the beautiful facilities at the Village of Breckenridge. With a year of staff experience, some outside contracted help, and some great feedback, CAHEC is gearing up for an exciting 25th year celebrating the success of the event. Monica Daniels-Mika, executive director of the Centennial Area Health Education Center, said “It’s amazing to think of the impact that the conferences have had throughout the years for nurse educators.” “They’re talking thousands of nursing engagement opportunities, if you look at how many people attended,” Daniels-Mika said. “It’s pretty impressive that a couple of nurses from Northern Colorado can get together and they can impact thousands of other nurses across the nation.”

Abstracts are currently being accepted covering the theme; To Transform Education for the Future. Abstract submissions are due January 12, 2015, and registration opens mid-March 2015. Staff is working tirelessly alongside a subcontracted Event Planner to ensure we host another great conference in 2015, so please mark your calendars to attend the conference July 16-18th.
Improving Immunization Rates On A National Scale
By: Megan Blaser

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recently awarded the National AHEC Organization support for a program to improve immunization rates on a national scale for HPV. The Centennial Area Health Education Center (CAHEC) took an active role and assisting in the grant application and is excited to announce this upcoming program. This partnership will focus on improving immunization rates of 11 and 12 year old males and females throughout the nation by improving clinician training to understand the vaccine and its role in cancer prevention. This five year projects outcomes include: the creation of state and national HPV needs assessment and inventory resource books; increased awareness among clinicians of available HPV vaccine information, resources and tools; and, an increase in: clinician education and awareness and partnerships that strengthen and leverage efforts to increase HPV vaccination rates. The project will decrease missed opportunities of parents who report their child’s provider did not recommend HPV vaccination and, most importantly, increase HPV vaccination rates. The National AHEC organization made our grant a competitive one, and we look forward to being a part of rolling out a national program in which we can see our local impact. Please watch for more information or contact CAHEC for more information about this program.
CU Nursing Students Volunteer at the Springs Rescue Mission

By: Gloria Nussbaum

Last year Central Colorado AHEC partnered with the Colorado Springs Rescue Mission to introduce the R.I.C.H. online cookbook and use their facility for community service learning. Medical and Nursing students have been working to get the cookbook they developed to as many food pantries as possible in Colorado Springs as well as other locations in the state. The Mission has a food pantry and a soup kitchen that serves the homeless and others in need. Next spring, there will be a contest for culinary students with the help of the chefs and restaurants of Colorado Springs. The students will use pantry foods to make an entrée and the chefs will judge the winners. The awards will be given at the annual fundraising event. Medical and Nursing students from the CU Anschutz and the Colorado Springs campuses will host an education event to help the attendees experience pantry “shopping” with the help of “Hunger Free Colorado”. Britney May of Telluride and Jamie Atencio of Commerce City, Nursing Students studying this fall with the Program Coordinator of Central CO AHEC continued to enhance and upgrade the online cookbook. New tabs on the site will now direct the user to “Crock Pot Cooking” and “Cooking with Kids”! Visiting the Mission was also on the calendar so the nursing students could see the site and talk with people who work and benefit from the facility. Since we had the opportunity to volunteer while we were there, we helped the staff and volunteers organize and store a large shipment of bread, pastries, cookies and cakes that just arrived from Safeway and Whole Foods. Vegetables were also sorted and refrigerated and one of the students mopped the whole dining room! We were invited to join the staff and some of the residents for lunch. The students experienced firsthand the value this facility has in the community.

One of the residents eating with us asked why nurses would be volunteering at the Mission. The Program Coordinator explained that the profession of nursing regards caring as the primary reason for our work. Starting with Florence Nightingale and even before, nurses have worked to put patients in an environment where healing and wellness can begin and be maintained. This coincides with the work of the Mission as well so it is a innovative place where nurses can lend their expertise, their time and their caring. This was the first time the students had ever been in a pantry or a soup kitchen. It won’t be their last…

Photo left to right: CU Nursing Students Britney May & Jamie Atencio; CCAHEC Program Coordinator Gloria Nussbaum
Engaging the Next Generation in Heath  
By: Crystal Rider

Kids sure do love to have fun. It is great when we can turn that fun into learning as well. The Southeastern Colorado AHEC is partnering with local preschool and elementary schools to offer two programs to young children in our region.

The first program is the “Great Hospital Adventure”. The interactive puppet presentation is geared for children in preschool and elementary school. The program includes viewing a short DVD presentation and a discussion period. The children learn about different individuals they may encounter while in the hospital. The primary goal of the program is to get children interested in health careers. In addition, the program instructs children in what to do if there is an emergency. They learn that 9-1-1 is the number to call if there is an emergency and what information they should have available for the operator. Each child receives a coloring book which corresponds with the DVD presentation. The other program is a healthy eating presentation. Food models are used to help the children visualize a healthy plate. In addition, the presentation allows them to practice making choices for their own healthy meal. The children learn what items are in each food category and meal planning. The hands-on approach really allows the students to see various food items and to think about trying new foods. The children in the program are not the only ones to benefit from the school presentations, the adults attending also learn how to eat better particularly if they have a chronic disease such as diabetes. These adults are unsure of what items are in the protein category. Often patients are given health care advice and do not understand what is being communicated. It is our role as an AHEC to take the time to educate
Western Colorado AHEC Opens Nurse Aide Training Lab: Providing Valuable Community Resource
By: Nicole Heil

WCAHEC has become an area resource, providing a valuable service to the community: a lab facility that local employers can use to re-test their Nurse Aide staff’s skills. “It serves as a great marketing tool to spread the word about our program and has given us the opportunity to network with other local medical professionals,” says Kathi Wilson, Program Coordinator. To date, three different organizations have used the facility to re-test their employees.

When the partnership between WCAHEC and Hilltop came to an end, it was necessary to locate a new facility for the long time evening Nurse Aide Training Program. With approval from the WCAHEC Board of Directors and in an effort to use existing resources, the program was moved to the offices of WCAHEC at 743 Horizon Ct., Suite 204. At present, evening nurse aide classes are conducted in the building’s grand conference room and the training and skills lab is set-up in a currently vacant office within the suite.

In addition, students use the lab to refresh and practice their skills prior to the State Board Exam, which is usually held several weeks after graduation. In response to the community need, WCAHEC intends to expand its trainings by offering QMAP (Medication Administration) classes in the Spring of 2015.

During the move we discovered that our hospital bed, which was gifted to us by Grande River Hospital in Rifle, presented a problem for movers. Because the bed was so heavy and much too big for the building’s elevator, they had to call in two additional movers to help carry it up to our second floor suite. Ultimately, while the move was a success, we hope it is one we will not have to soon repeat.
Western Colorado AHEC Support’s the Colorado Mesa University Student Nurse Association’s Holiday Sack Lunch Project
By: Nicole Heil

This holiday season, in an effort to help those less fortunate, members of the Student Nurse Association (SNA) at Colorado Mesa University (CMU) prepared and personally delivered more than 50 sack lunches (along with blankets and winter coats) directly to the homeless and homeless shelters in Grand Junction.

In addition to donating monetarily, WCAHEC provided transportation to the student nurses so that together they could distribute the lunches to the hungry in parks across the community. Additional financial support from Sprouts Farmer’s Market and Vitamin Cottage Natural Grocer of Grand Junction, as well as student donated winter coats and blankets, made the project a success.

Nicole Heil, WCAHEC staff member and SNA member who participated in the project, was able to share her insights with younger CMU students about services offered by nonprofit organizations in the community.
The San Luis Valley Area Health Education Center (SLVAHEC) is in the midst of this dynamic project addressing alternative methods of treating chronic pain and working with prescription drug misuse. A grant funded by COPIC has allowed the SLVAHEC to bring together San Luis Valley providers and other community professionals working with prescription drug misuse to consider additional treatments when working with patients and/or clients. Dr. Joshua Blum, MD, Assistant Professor of Medicine, Denver Health and Hospitals conducted a three-series presentation during the months of September, October and November, 2014 in Alamosa, CO. His presentations of, “Chronic Pain Assessment, Common Features and Non-Opioid Modalities”, “Behavioral and Mental Health to Manage Chronic Pain Patients” and “Chronic Opioid Therapy (COT), Monitoring and Substance Abuse” were very well attended. Much learning took place as evidenced by the exceptional evaluations of the presentations. Continuing work on this project is the development of “Neighborhood Meetings” intended to address similar concerns in the area of prescription drug misuse in the community. Neighborhood Meetings are bringing together other community stakeholders addressing the issues of prescriptions drugs misuse from a non-clinical perspective. Lessons learned from both formats will be utilized to help develop more effective approaches to dealing with this significant community health problem.
The 1999 “Grow Your Own” participant from Alamosa High School, Esperanza Salazar is now Dr. Esperanza Salazar, General Otolaryngologist at Pueblo Ear / Nose / Throat, 1218 Pueblo Blvd. Way, Pueblo, CO 81005.

Dr. Salazar, born and raised in Alamosa, is excited to return to Southern Colorado. She is a general otolaryngologist and treats the full spectrum of ear, nose and throat problems in both children and adults.

Dr. Salazar was a recipient of the prestigious Boettcher Scholarship. She completed her undergraduate studies at Colorado College in Colorado Springs where she graduated cum laude in 2004. She went on to receive her medical degree at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and was inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society her senior year. She completed her residency in Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas.

The SLVAHEC is truly proud of Dr. Esperanza Salazar!
SWCAHEC Announces New Special Projects Manager
Mary Dengler-Frey to assist local providers
By: Lisa Schwantes

DURANGO, CO – The Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center (SWCAHEC) is pleased to announce Mary Dengler-Frey as the new Special Projects Manager. Frey will coordinate the Asthma/Respiratory Toolkit Program, facilitate the Regional Hub for Connect for Health Colorado, and provide support for health professional preceptor recruitment. Frey will also be the primary care liaison for the Center of Excellence in Care Coordination (CoECC). CoECC is an 18 month planning grant that facilitates collaboration, shared learning, and practice advancement of care coordinators. The grant’s objective is to provide assistance for the improvement of access to quality, coordinated, and cost effective healthcare and social services.

Frey comes to SWCAHEC from Southwest Colorado Community College in Durango where she served as an instructor, academic advisor, faculty and staff trainer and mentor, and interim special assistant to the Dean. Frey graduated from State University of New York with a Bachelor of Arts degree. She also obtained a Teaching Certification from Buffalo State College and a Master of Landscape Architecture from State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

Local Students Awarded Colorado Health Professions Scholarships
Program aims to place health professionals in underserved areas of Colorado
By: Lisa Schwantes

DURANGO, CO —Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center (SWCAHEC) and the Colorado Health Foundation are pleased to announce two local residents as recipients of the Colorado Health Professions Scholarship. Allie Anderson and Russelyn “Rusty” Connor, both of Durango are graduate level health professional students. Each was awarded $30,000 over a two year period. In return, the scholars agree to practice in a rural or underserved community in Colorado for at least two years upon completion of their training. (continued on next page)
Ms. Anderson is returning to the University of Colorado as a graduate student studying to become a Family Nurse Practitioner, enrolling in a three year online program offering distant learning. Anderson received her Bachelor of Arts in Exercise Science from Fort Lewis College prior to obtaining a Bachelors of Science in Nursing from the University of Colorado. She has worked in urgent care, women’s health, and as a maternal-infant nurse home visitor. Anderson concurrently works as a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) at Mercy Regional Medical center and is the 6th Judicial Sexual Assault Nurse Coordinator for La Plata County.

Anderson said becoming a Family Nurse Practitioner will allow her to continue caring for a diverse patient population, “I am interested in caring for a variety of patients, pediatric through geriatric, and want to continue caring for all patient populations as an advanced practitioner.”

Ms. Connor is working toward her Doctorate in Nursing Practice (DNP) at Regis University. Connor has been a psychiatric nurse for 30 years and received her Clinical Nurse Specialist license in psychiatry in 1996. Connor was awarded the Master's Fellowship at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in 1990. Connor is taking advantage of Regis’ long-distance learning program which allows her to remain in Durango and pursue her passion for bringing evidence-based research into clinical practice, "My professional goal is to help my community remove barriers to care for individuals and families suffering the difficulties of mental illness in Southwest Colorado, so that these people can more fully enjoy life."

Anderson and Connor are among 17 students statewide selected to receive the scholarship this 2014-2015 academic year. More than 120 applicants from communities across Colorado applied for the Health Professions Scholarship.

“SWCAHEC is proud to be a part of the Health Professions Scholarship as a way to keep future healthcare providers in the state of Colorado,” said Kathleen McInnis, Executive Director at SWCAHEC. “We know these students will impact the lives of thousands of Colorado residents in years to come.”

McInnis also praised The Colorado Health Foundation for their commitment to increasing the number of health professionals who serve in rural and underserved areas across the state, “This scholarship program will improve access to care by bringing more primary care and behavioral health providers to areas facing shortages today.”
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