WCAHEC’s Delta Pathways Program Reaches Out to Students

WCAHEC’s Delta Pathways Program, a health careers pipeline program, has had a number of successful events this year:

The science teachers participating in the program continue to teach about health care professions as part of their ongoing curriculum, and to bring in health care professionals to talk with the children. In addition we helped fund a trip to NASA’s Space Camp for Delta Middle School gifted and talented students. They learned all about the exciting things healthcare providers do at NASA.

WCAHEC funded educational supplies, including dissection trays and an electronic whiteboard for the Delta Middle School science department. The middle school science teachers gave an excellent in-service to the physical education teachers on integrating health care careers into their curriculum.

Alex Sherwood, WCAHEC’s Education Coordinator is delighted to report that we have secured a teacher sponsor for the Health Careers Club to begin this fall at Delta High School. The club will meet once a month with the teacher and Alex co-facilitating the club. We have great plans and activities for the students and high hopes of growing a successful and useful club.

WCAHEC staff members addressed students at local high schools and at the Grand Junction Career Fair in March, and encouraged students to pursue their healthcare career goals and distributed copies of the University of Colorado Denver School of Medicine CD Keeping Our Promise.
AHEC Director: A Day in the Life of a Family Doctor

A day in the life of one family doctor: The names and details may change. Some days are busier, not many are slower; there is never a dull moment.

Yawn … need a cup of coffee. Up and ready to go, and it’s off to the hospital to round on Mr. G. and Mrs. L. Mr. G. has an exacerbation of his heart failure; too much salt, too much activity, now too much water. A bit of Lasix and he’ll be ready for home in several days. Mrs. L. has a recurrent kidney infection; three in three months – wonder if she might have a stone that needs to be removed? Antibiotics today, and refer her to a nephrologist next week. Sign orders for Miss H. to get her infusion this afternoon, answer several emails from patients and two calls from the nursing home.

Off to Med-Staff meeting. New stroke guidelines. I wonder if we can give lytics for stroke here in our rural hospital? How will we get the nurses and staff trained? How to train EMS in the NIH stroke assessment? Then it’s time for a lunch meeting with all the nurses and some researchers from the University. We are participating in several projects on the “Medical Home” and one on “Asthma Toolkits.” It’s a bit of extra work, but we learn a lot about our practice, and our patients benefit quite a bit from the new spirometer and self-management tools.

Afternoon clinic brings several patients with Diabetes, with colds and gastroenteritis, and a depression follow-up. Mid-afternoon Mr. J. comes in with a piece of iron in his eye; grinding a blade for the farm. Need a steady hand for removal; don’t want to leave a rust ring. Just before closing two teens come in with several lacerations; flipped their ATV. Lucky they weren’t worse. Sutures, a splint, and a lecture on the benefit of helmets and common sense get them going just after closing.

From the Librarian’s Desk

Have you heard the term “Medical Home”? While it was originated by the American Academy of Pediatrics in 1967, the term has become increasingly popular in recent years. According to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, “A Medical Home is not a building, house or hospital, but a team approach to providing health care. A Medical Home originates in a primary health care setting that is family-centered and compassionate.” For more information:

Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative
http://www.pcpcc.net/

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment: http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/ps/hcp/medicalhome/index.html

Continued on page 12
Aurora Lights Summer Institute

The Aurora Lights Saturday Academy, for youth interested in healthcare careers, ended successfully with the graduation of 30 ninth-graders on the 9th of May. Beginning on June 22, an ambitious six-week program will begin for students in the 10th, 11th and 12th grades in the Aurora Public School District. During the first four weeks of the program, faculty from the University of Colorado Denver will provide the students instruction and guidance in the fields of math and science. The lessons will characteristically be hands-on and field trips will round out the learning experience.

The final two weeks will be in residence. The dorm experience at Colorado Christian University will provide another opportunity for the students to share their excitement for learning with like-minded people. Job shadowing with professionals at the A.F. Williams Family Practice Clinic, Metro Community Providers Network, and the University of Colorado Hospital, to name a few, will help the students better define their health care career paths and encourage them to pursue higher education once they finish high school.

This program is for students who are currently enrolled in the Aurora LIGHTS program.

For information on becoming part of the Aurora LIGHTS program, please contact Shelly Thiessen at 303-724-0329.

Congratulations Science Fair Winners

Congratulations to all of our regional category winners of the 2009 Denver Metro Regional Science and Engineering Fair (announced on our website: http://www.centralcoahec.org/) and especially our overall Grand prize winners Connie Liu (Biology) and Scott Martin (engineering), both from Cherry Creek High School. They won cash awards and advancement to the Colorado state competition and the International Science and Engineering Fair in Reno, Nevada. The sponsors and supporters of the Denver Metro Regional Fair are proud of the efforts of all the Colorado participants and offer special congratulations to our regional participants, Connie Liu for receiving 3rd place in the ISEF Grand Awards, and to David Wu (Chemistry), for his 2nd place honor at the ISEF. Denver Metro Regional Science & Engineering Fair supporters and sponsors applaud your efforts!
**Asthma Toolkits: Fighting Asthma in Southeastern Colorado**

Southeastern Colorado Area Health Education Center (SECAHEC) is joining forces with National Jewish Health and High Plains Research Network (HPRN), in the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, to combat asthma in southeastern Colorado. The Asthma Toolkit II, which provides resources to primary care physicians and patients with asthma to improve treatment of the disease, builds on the success of Asthma Toolkit I in reducing asthma hospitalizations.

Colorado’s high rate of asthma -- one in 10 -- is estimated to be even higher in its rural areas. This project will focus on 10 southeastern counties (Chaffee, Custer, El Paso, Fremont, Huerfano, Lake, Las Animas, Park, Pueblo and Teller) which have the highest asthma hospitalization rates in Colorado.

SECAHEC is looking for the right full-time practice facilitator who will be key to the success of the project. Participating practices will receive the Asthma Toolkit, training (including asthma certification) from National Jewish Health, and award-winning educational materials that help patients to successfully manage their illness. The value of the training and materials is in the range of $10,000 for each practice. The Asthma Toolkit program is funded with a grant from the Colorado Department of Public Health. For more information, contact SECAHEC at info@secahec.org, or 719-544-7833.

**Students Value MASH Camp Experience**

SECAHEC, in partnership with the Spanish Peaks Regional Health Center (SPRHC), has launched a new Medical Academy of Health and Science (MASH) Camp program, designed to educate middle school students about careers in healthcare. SECAHEC worked with the local school district to bring ten 6th-, 7th- and 8th-graders to the SPRHC facility in Walsenburg, and SPRHC provided a variety of creative educational experiences for the students.

The future health care professionals visited 10 different hospital departments over the course of two days, and each department was challenged to come up with hands-on experiences to help the students better understand various health professions. For instance, in surgery students performed endoscopy on a watermelon and removed a “bad seed,” and in anesthesia a nurse anesthetist helped them to learn to intubate a patient (put a breathing tube in a simulator mannequin). There was very little “seat” time for the kids, and they were encouraged to handle equipment when possible, and to ask questions.

Program evaluations showed that the health professionals and students both enjoyed the MASH Camp experience, and the students finished the program excited about potential health careers.
Brush Middle School Science Students Visit Visible Human

On May 20, 30 advanced placement 8th grade students took a field trip to the University of Colorado Health Sciences Campus. With the help of a generous grant from El Pomar Foundation, Centennial AHEC arranged for the class to visit the Visible Human Project at the Center for Human Simulation (CHS). CHS is a synthesis of human anatomy and computer imaging which has resulted in The Visible Human, a three-dimensional, high resolution database of human male and female anatomy.

The students were totally engaged while staff member Adam Larson focused on individual organs and entire organ systems: a student who had had knee surgery was shown just how the ligaments and muscles attached, another asked about the structures of the heart and brain and a third examined a kidney. No students were observed texting by the teachers, and “awesome” was the word most heard as we left.

After the world of bones, nerves and vessels, the students visited the state-of-the-art Children’s Hospital, just two years old. While most 13-year-olds have not determined their career path, it is hoped that some may be stimulated to consider one of the more than 100 healthcare occupations.

Centennial AHEC Approved for $1.1M CDPHE Grant

Breathing Easier on the Eastern Plans (BEEP), a new Centennial AHEC initiative, has received approval from the Cancer, Cardiovascular, and Pulmonary Disease (CCPD) division of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). BEEP will train health care providers, patients and the public on optimal management of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). COPD is a major problem throughout Colorado’s Eastern Plains; it has a huge impact on quality of life and is a leading cause of death. Centennial AHEC will partner with South-eastern Colorado AHEC to offer the internationally adopted evidenced-based GOLD Standards throughout all 25 eastern counties. Provider education will focus on the primary care practices in the High Plains Research Network, in concert with University of Colorado School of Medicine’s Department of Family Medicine. A “toolkit” for patient self-management skills will be developed by a community advisory committee and the American Lung Association in Colorado. Better control of the disease is expected to reduce provider and hospital visits. We are excited about getting this long-awaited program started.

Centennial AHEC
http://www.cahec.org
4650 W 20th St, Ste A, Greeley CO 80634
Phone: 970.330.3608 / Fax 970.330.3698
WCAHEC Oral Health Project Serves Children on Western Slope

Over the past year, WCAHEC’s Oral Health Project, which is funded by the Caring for Colorado Foundation, has provided oral health screenings to 504 students in the western region. The students were seen by a hygienist, given an oral screening (the first for many children), and administered sealants and/or varnishes. Children were seen at seven different schools in Hinsdale, Montrose, Delta and Garfield counties. Follow-up visits are planned for the next school year for all 504 children. Natasha Schumann, WCAHEC’s business manager, has done such a good job administering the program that WCAHEC has been asked to re-submit to continue the grant for next year.

Summer Health Careers Institute

This year we are delighted to be taking 20 students to the Summer Health Careers Institute (SHCI). Many excellent applications made it hard to choose participants but we have selected a variety of students from all over the western slope. Two groups of students will travel to Denver to participate in the SHCI, one in June and another in July. Our conversations with the students and their parents make it clear that the students are very excited about attending.

We have kept in touch with last year’s SHCI students by email and phone. We encourage them to “stay on track” and provide referrals to interesting websites or other resources to help keep their interest high.
Advocacy and Colorado Conversations

Carol Giffin-Jeansonne, WCAHEC Director, attended the National AHEC Organization (NAO) Spring Policy Days in Washington DC in April. She had the opportunity to meet Congressman John Salazar, along with healthcare staffers Annie Fetcher of Congressman Salazar’s office and Aya Johnson from Senator Bennet’s office, and share information about WCAHEC and the Colorado AHECs.

Dr. Giffin-Jeansonne continues to serve as co-chair, along with Sandra Pope of West Virginia AHEC, of the NAO Collaborative Initiatives Sub-Committee of the External Relations Committee. Their goal is to facilitate relations and progress among people and groups who have special interest in national health care issues, e.g., Parkinson’s, Career Pathways, Traumatic Brain Injury, etc. She also co-chairs the NAO Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Psychological Health Workgroup with Dr. James Kelly, former Associate Director of Colorado AHEC.

WCAHEC, in partnership with a number of other agencies, is currently hosting a series of advocacy conversations, through our Colorado Conversations program, in six communities across the western slope. Our partner agencies include local groups such as Club 20, Colorado Rural Health Center, Health System Solutions LLC, Rocky Mountain Health Plans, Montezuma County Public Health Department, San Juan Basin Health Department, Colorado Children’s Campaign, Garfield County Public Health, Business Health Forum, Montrose Health & Human Services, Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved, Yampa Valley Medical Center, Route County Health & Human Service.

The presentations begin with brief panel presentations by experts in healthcare access and affordability, followed by a 1½-hour conversation among attendees and presenters. We have had four conversations thus far, and the response has been very positive, with frequent requests for return visits to continue the conversations.
Colorado Conversations for Better Health Care Policy

Colorado Conversations for Better Health Care Policy, a new San Luis Valley AHEC (SLVA-HEC) program developed with the Colorado Trust, is creating opportunities for SLVAHEC staff to speak with residents of the San Luis Valley regarding their concerns and/or questions about Colorado’s health care insurance system. The project has spurred lively discussions with audience members, and it is fair to say that many San Luis Valley residents are concerned about the state of health insurance in Colorado. Our hope is that data from these meetings will help policy makers to be better informed on this important issue. For more information, or to participate in a conversation, contact SLVAHEC at info@slvahec.org, or 719-589-4977.

Summer Health Careers Institute

This June, a group of 20 San Luis Valley high school students took part in the annual Summer Health Careers Institute (SHCI). This program, which originated thirty years ago at the SLVAHEC, promises to be another exciting educational program for high school students interested in pursuing a health career. 

For more on the Summer Health Careers Institute, please see page 9.

SLVAHEC Welcomes Epilepsy Outreach Coordinator

Please join SLVA-HEC in welcoming our new Epilepsy Outreach Coordinator, Belinda Toth. Belinda comes to the SLVAHEC with extensive first-hand knowledge of the topic, as her son has epilepsy. She is excited about joining SLVAHEC, and has numerous plans on how to reach out to various communities in the San Luis Valley, including school district personnel, law enforcement agencies, human service agencies and others, about the “hidden illness” that constitutes epilepsy.

Council for Excellence in Health Career Education

We are excited to announce the development of our new Council for Excellence in Health Career Education. The council was designed to serve as a vehicle for collaboration to enhance and expand area educational programs in health careers. To date, a most significant example of collaboration is a joint financial effort to develop a simulation lab to be located at the Adams State College Nursing Department. This partnership between SLVAHEC, Adams State College, Trinidad State Junior College, Valley-Wide Health Systems, San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center, SLV school districts and Colorado State Senator Gail Schwartz came into being thanks to the successful legislation led by Senator Schwartz in 2007.
In June the Colorado AHEC System, from the University of Colorado Denver Anschutz Medical Campus, hosted 50 rural students from around the state at a Summer Health Careers Institute. This week-long program allowed students the opportunity to explore various health careers, and included DNA Lab experiments at the Community College of Aurora, long-term care visits with residents at Shalom Park and the Colorado Veterans State Nursing Home, dissecting cadavers at the Spine Education Research Institute (SERI), dental procedures at the University of Colorado Denver School of Dental Medicine, performing ultrasounds, practice suturing and much more. They even took part in a simulated delivery of an infant under the guidance of Joey Failma, Simulation Director at the Center of Advancing Professional Excellence (CAPE) at the University of Colorado Denver Anschutz Medical Campus.

The Summer Health Careers Institute Week Two will be July 19-24, 2009. Week Two will also have 50 students, but include both rural and urban underserved students. This program is meant to encourage students to explore various health career professions and create a Health Career Engagement Plan notebook as a guide for their chosen health career pathway.

Students are selected regionally through the five regional AHEC offices. If you are interested in the 2010 Summer Health Career Institute, please contact your regional office. The institute is funded by part of a generous grant from The Colorado Trust.
Saturday Academy LIGHTS the Way for Students

The Aurora LIGHTS (LeadInG the way in HealTh Sciences Careers) program, funded by a $3.9 million Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP) grant, is shining the light on health sciences and creating a pathway that leads students into health care professions. As part of the program, some Aurora Public Schools students recently spent a number of weekend days in class.

The Aurora LIGHTS Saturday Academy provides an opportunity for 30 ninth-grade Health Sciences Academy students to participate in special enrichment sessions designed to enhance their academic and cultural experience, and expose them to hands-on, research-based science activities. The activities are designed to prepare the students to excel in their academic coursework and increase their motivation to enroll in higher-level science and math classes. The Saturday Academy consisted of ten sessions. During the final session, students received medical scrubs to represent their accomplishments.

The Aurora LIGHTS partnership includes APS, Community College of Aurora, University of Colorado Denver Anschutz Medical Campus, Metro Community Provider Network, Colorado Area Health Education Center (AHEC) System and Central Colorado AHEC.

Saturday Academy students receive their scrubs and certificates during the final Saturday session.
Cinco de Mayo Health Professions Collaborative

Health professions students from the University of Colorado Denver Anschutz Medical Campus and the Rocky Vista University College of Osteopathic Medicine collaborated to offer free health screenings to adults and children during the 2009 Cinco de Mayo Denver event held at Denver’s Civic Center Park on May 9 and 10. Health screenings for adults included monitoring blood pressure and blood sugar (glucose). Youth participated in the Heart Smart Kids touch pad healthy heart risk assessment. All health information materials were available in English and Spanish.

There were 68 volunteers over the course of the two-day event. Volunteers completed CHP+ and health screening training prior to their volunteer experience, and the students performed procedures with oversight from faculty. Students from both University of Colorado Denver and Rocky Vista University provided joint leadership in the planning, training, recruitment and overall health collaborative program.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Early Intervention Makes a Difference

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) often go undiagnosed due to a lack of understanding of the disability, a lack of health care providers to give the diagnosis, or a reluctance to give a diagnosis as no known effective interventions were available.

Early diagnosis and early intervention are known protective factors for children with an FASD diagnosis, yet until recently no scientifically-researched interventions were available. Now families and professionals have five newly-researched interventions funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These interventions, which are available at sites across the U.S., address the neurodevelopmental needs of children with an FASD, and are shown to effect positive change in the children and their families. The interventions are described in “Interventions for children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs): Overview of finding for five innovative research projects,” published in the September-October issue of Research in Developmental Disabilities. More information on projects related to FASD prevention and intervention is available at the CDC’s website: http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fas/faspub_grantee.htm. For more information on FASD prevention, training and technical assistance please contact Dr. Pamela Gillen, COFAS Director at pamela.gillen@ucdenver.edu or 303-724-0327.
School of Medicine’s Rural Track Graduates Inaugural Class

On May 22nd, 13 medical students of the 144 graduates of the class of 2009 were honored for also completing the Rural Track. These new physicians are the first group to have completed both the four-year medical curriculum and the additional studies of the Rural Track. During the first two years of medical school, they attended seminars on rural topics and clinical skills workshops. In the summer between their first two years, they participated in a month-long rural clinical preceptorship. During their third and fourth years, they served clerkships in rural areas and attended additional seminars and skills workshops. Now they are going on to residency training, before settling down to practice. All are entering specialties that are needed in, and appropriate for, rural areas: seven in Family Medicine (five in Colorado), two in Pediatrics (one in Colorado), two in Emergency Medicine (one in Colorado) and one is entering a General Surgery residency in Colorado.

The Rural Track was founded four years ago with a grant from the Colorado Trust and matching funds from the Dean of the School of Medicine. The program’s Director is Mark Deutchman, MD, a professor in the School of Medicine who says: “I’m extremely proud of this inaugural group of Rural Track graduates who have dedicated considerable time studying rural topics in addition to the rigorous regular medical curriculum. We look forward to following their future career paths and offering them the chance to mentor the upcoming students who are following in their path.”

Director’s Column, continued from page 2

Off to the ball-fields for a baseball game; assistant coaching again this year. We won, 6-3. Will run by the hospital to check on everyone on my way home. Nothing acute happening. Home for the evening. Read a bit on these new stroke guidelines and recommendations. We should call the AHEC to see if they could get us more details for our staff. Goodnight to the boys and a long walk with my wife.

Lucky to be a family doctor. Get to spend time with my patients, their families, hear their stories, share their triumphs and their challenges. And get to spend time with my family.