Hey Community Engagers,

A new year is about to begin, full of opportunity to fulfill our mission of transforming the way communities and researchers work together to design and conduct research by building bridges between health research, clinical practice, and community health initiatives to improve the health of the people of Colorado and the Rocky Mountain Region. As I reflect on the past three years, I believe PACT has made a good start together and certainly has built a solid foundation upon which to move forward. Thank you, All, for your time, effort, dedication, and passion this past year.

We were delighted to discover in the Research Features section of the CCTSI Connections newsletter (Vol. 1, Issue 4) an article about one of our 2009-10 Community Engagement Partnership Development Projects.

**Aging in Community—Good for Your Health**

"Professor Ronica Rooks, PhD, UC-Denver’s Department of Health & Behavioral Sciences, is tackling one of the challenging aspects of our aging society. She has embarked on a community-academic partnership (funded by a CCTSI Community Engagement Pilot Grant award) with the non-profit Neighborhood Resource Center of Colorado (Sarah McCarthy, Executive Director) to develop evidence-based research on improving social capital and health among older adults in varied socio-economic status communities.

"The decline of social capital (e.g., the informal, voluntary and reciprocal relationships that individuals develop over time, building social trust and mutual interdependence, and are enhanced through positive interactions and collaboration in shared interests and pursuits, Blanchard & Stambolian 2008) has been well-documented; however, how this decline impacts elders’ ability to stay in their home and connected to their communities is not well understood.

"Most Americans would prefer to “age in place,” e.g., to continue living at home with supportive services if necessary, as an alternative to a nursing home. While many elders and families consider aging in place preferable to an institutional setting, others find it a hollow victory -- particularly when it occurs in a home that poses physical and financial challenges and makes connection with family, friends, neighbors, and the community difficult or impossible. An increasing number of people now envision a third way for older adults to remain in their homes – “Aging in Community (AIC),” an emerging international grassroots movement, that looks to people being “darn good neighbors” to address gaps in aging services with the goal of creating innovative social capital building solutions to keep elders in their homes and connected to their communities.

"Initial literature research funded by a CCTSI pilot-grant found few published, analytical studies documenting the relationship between social capital and elderly individual and community health
outcomes, particularly at a population health level. It is also not yet clear which community building strategies increase social capital among the elderly or how social capital relates to their sense of health. While there is individual, anecdotal newspaper and website evidence on elderly and social capital supporting the positive health impact of AIC-type programs, this hypothesis has not been analyzed at a population-level. Thus, our community-based research program is examining whether social capital, expressed in a variety of ways as: a sense of community, social support within a community, reciprocity, and AIC-type programs, has a relationship with older adults’ health, and if this relationship varies by community socio-economic status. This study is intended to provide the evidence needed to move this important field of research forward."

For your reading pleasure, the entire current issue of CCTSI Connections newsletter is attached and back issues can be found on the CCTSI Web site: 
http://cctsi.ucdenver.edu/Public%20Documents/newsletters/

See you all next year!
Jack Westfall