

Commitment to Rural Health Care Honored

Several people were recognized for their contributions or commitment to rural health care at the 2004 Annual Nebraska Rural Health Association Conference in September in



Jodi Polaha, Ph.D.

Kearney. Jodi Polaha, Ph.D., assistant professor of pediatrics, department of psychology, Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI), and Joe Evans, Ph.D., professor of Pediatrics and director of the MMI Psychology Department, were named the Integrated Rural Healthcare award winners.

The two pediatric psychology faculty members from the University of Nebraska Medical Center were recognized for their contributions to rural mental health.

Each received a glass award and \$250 for their work in rural Nebraska.

The award came as a surprise to Dr. Polaha, who directs the pediatric outreach integrated behavioral

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Statewide Telehealth Network Links Hospitals

Governor Johanns calls network “critical communications component”

Nebraska state health officials now have the ability to connect with more than 40 hospitals throughout the state via interactive videoconferencing.

The announcement of this important communications network was made Oct. 27 by Gov. Mike Johanns. Not only is this network critical in the event of an emergency, but it will also provide Nebraskans access to health specialists without leaving their hometowns.

Eventually, the Nebraska statewide Telehealth Network will connect to every hospital, public health department, state and regional public health labs and key state agencies. A key part of the network will allow genetic specialists at UNMC’s Munroe-Meyer Institute to connect with patients at Regional West Medical Center in Scottsbluff and Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney through videoconferencing technology.

“This new network is the answer to a longstanding desire to be able to pro-



Health professionals (pictured on the monitor) from Callaway District Hospital participate in a telehealth demonstration. Watching are Joe Evans, Ph.D. at left and Brad Schaefer, M.D.

vide the resources of UNMC to health care professionals and local health departments across the state,” said James B. Milliken, President of the University of Nebraska system.

The telehealth system is the first in Nebraska for children with special health care needs.

“This system makes the whole gamut of services we have here in Omaha available to the Scottsbluff area,” said Brad Schaefer, M.D., medical director of Munroe-Meyer Institute and chief of clinical genetics at UNMC. “This allows us to make follow-up appointments with patients, who in the past we might not have been able to see for another three months.”

Delivering more accessible special-

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2005 Bioterrorism Symposia Dates Set

The Nebraska Center for Bioterrorism Education (NCBE) presents its third interdisciplinary education symposia for health professionals.

Nearly 500 people attended the 2004 symposia.

The NCBE works in cooperation with consortium members composed of more than 35 organizations across Nebraska with support from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

The Rural Health Education Network and the Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) forming across the state will be coordinating the programs.

Please plan to join us at one of the 2005 Bioterrorism Symposia that visit your area.

**March 23 - 24 – Lincoln,
Cornhusker Hotel**
**April 20 - 21 – Norfolk,
Lifelong Learning Center**
**May 24 - 25 – Kearney,
Holiday Inn**
**June 16 - 17 – Gering,
Gering Civic Center**



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Thanks For Supporting AHECs

During this holiday time, I want to thank each of you across Nebraska that devoted your time and energy to the development of the Nebraska AHEC.

AHECs are about partnering and working together to meet the health-care needs of our communities.

In November we had a productive first annual retreat to begin strategizing as a statewide entity. We had twenty seven staff and board members attend the two-day retreat held at Mahoney State Park.

We were fortunate to have Steve Shelton and Leslie Hargrove of the East Texas AHEC facilitate the two days of concentrated activities.

Retreat activities centered around developing a common language and writing vision and mission statements.

These two statements, which should help in molding our statewide strategies, are:

Vision -- Healthy Communities for Nebraska.

Mission -- Promote healthier communities through workforce development, health education partnerships and access to quality healthcare.

A special thank you to Steve and

Roxanna Jokela

Director, Rural Health Education Network

Deputy Director, Nebraska AHEC Program Offices



Leslie for their guidance; to Bob Barte for his session on "Building a Case for Sustainability;" and to Mike Sitorius, M.D., for his leadership in the planning of the retreat. Plans are in the making for follow-up sessions beginning in January and for our next retreat in early Fall, 2005.

Update on Nebraska Panhandle AHEC: The Nebraska Panhandle AHEC (NP-AHEC) has chosen their Board of Directors for their first three years. The officers include:

President: Jan Fitts - Panhandle Community Services, Gering.

Vice President: Jane McConkey - Box Butte General Hospital, Alliance.

Secretary: Joyce Hardy - Chadron State College, Chadron.

Treasurer: Dan Doherty - Western Nebraska Community College, Scottsbluff.

In December the NP-AHEC board will meet with three candidates selected for interviews for the executive director position.

Best wishes for a safe and happy holiday and a healthy New Year!



UNMC students celebrate National Primary Care Week by distributing Lifesavers candy to employees as a reminder of the importance of wearing seat belts. Participants included, Kari Yaw (M-1) of Imperial and Shannon McGee (PT-2) of Scottsbluff.

Harold M. Maurer, M.D., Chancellor

Robert Barte, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor

Roxanna Jokela, RHEN Director and Deputy Director of the Nebraska AHEC Program Office

Liliana Bronner and Ann Kraft, Program Coordinators

Michael Sitorius, M.D., Director, Nebraska AHEC Program Office

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Brad Schaefer, M.D., at left, the medical director of Munroe-Meyer Institute and Brett Kuhn, Ph.D., right, a MMI psychologist, talk with the Massey family from their office in Omaha.



The Massey family of Scottsbluff listen to Drs. Kuhn and Schaefer during their video teleconference consult. Pictured from left to right are: dad John, son Jacob and mom Megan.

Telehealth Capabilities Make Doctors More Accessible

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ized services is critical to serving Nebraskans, Dr. Schaefer said.

“Rehabilitation services help children develop better – in speaking, walking, in their daily activities – and this improves their quality of life and that of their family,” Dr. Schaefer said.

The Massey family of Scottsbluff welcomes the expanded service.

John and Megan Massey are the parents of Jack, 15, and Jacob, 13, who were born with Fragile X syndrome. Fragile X is the most common inherited cause of mental impairment and the most commonly known cause of autism. For their disease, the teens take anti-anxiety, blood pressure and other medications, and receive a variety of therapy, including speech and occupational therapy.

“It’s very comforting and wonderful that more families will have access to, and more frequent visits with, geneticists from UNMC,” said Megan Massey, who has worked with Dr. Schaefer for the past seven years.

Right now Dr. Schaefer’s team travels to see about 2,000 Nebraska patients a year. The telehealth network will enable specialists to conduct 4,000 more patient visits a year via videoconferencing, he said.

That’s a marked change for MMI genetics specialists who have traveled to eight sites across Nebraska over the past 30 years. The team, composed of a genetics physician, genetics counselor, developmental pediatrician and child psychologist, generally travels outside of Omaha 45 times a year to conduct clinics in Scottsbluff, Columbus, Grand Island, Hastings, Kearney, Lincoln, North Platte and Winnebago.

Although in-person clinics will continue, the telehealth network will reduce the three-month interval between patient visits and make specialists accessible for medically urgent matters that usually require the patient and family to travel to Omaha or Denver.

In addition, patients and families will have access to all of the institute’s spe-

cialists, including physical, occupational and speech therapists.

UNMC genetics and behavioral specialists have conducted more than 50 patient sessions since the system began operating four months ago.

The psychology department has been providing pediatric behavioral health services to Scottsbluff and the Good Samaritan Telehealth Network based in Kearney and other sites. Using this technology, these psychologists are working with children and families with behavioral, developmental and emotional concerns.

Of the 20 clinical geneticists, genetic counselors and developmental pediatricians in Nebraska, all are in Omaha, Lincoln or Fremont. In addition, the majority of child psychologists and mental health care professionals are concentrated in the eastern part of the state.

“This service makes more resources available for those who don’t have the ability to seek these specialized services away from home,” Massey said.

Medical Management of Chemical and Biological Casualties Course Set for January 2005

This course has been offered across the United States as a premier program in relaying medical care to victims of chemical and/or biological exposure. It offers a unique opportunity to share protocols and procedures of treatment and brings together military and civilian physicians, nurses and other front line personnel that will be called to duty in the event of an attack on our Homeland Security.

Experts from the U.S. Medical Research Institute of Infectious Disease and the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense will come to Nebraska to present this course, which also covers two days of training on weapons of mass destruction, in a community setting.

The next two-day course is being planned for January 22-23, 2005, at the Crowne Plaza in Omaha. For more information call Liliana Bronner at (402) 559-8106 or email lbronner@unmc.edu

Rural Health a Priority for NeRHA Award Winners

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healthcare program.

“For a long time our department only provided services to families who could come to our offices at 44th and Dewey,” said Dr. Polaha. “That was fine but we wanted to find a way to help all of the families who needed it throughout the state.”

Often though, many of the physicians in rural Nebraska had no one to refer their patients to. That was until seven years ago when in an attempt to expand services, Dr. Tim Riley, a psychologist, formerly with MMI, began to drive to Columbus, Neb., to see patients.

“The clinic was a success and soon after the pediatric outreach integrated behavioral healthcare program expanded with clinics opening in Fremont, Plattsmouth and Papillion,” Dr. Polaha said.

Each clinic is held in cooperation with the primary care physician and at the doctor’s office.

“This provides better coordinated care and there is less stigma for the patient,” said Polaha.

Another bonus of the program is that pre-doctoral interns and post-doctoral fellows are able to be trained by psychology faculty in rural sites and learn how to work in rural primary care.

In the past several years many of these trainees have relocated to rural communities and continue to practice at these clinics after graduation.

In nominating the founders of this program for the award, Marcia M. Freer, said: “The program has strived to improve behavioral healthcare through other efforts, as well. The group has provided over 50 lectures and workshops in rural Nebraska over the past five years and has been instrumental in writing grants that support projects in rural areas.”

Dr Evans noted that the rural behavioral health-training program has been a blessing for some rural residents who would otherwise need to travel across the state to see a pediatric behavioral health provider.

MAXINE MOUL



Maxine Moul received the first Rural Health Consumer Advocate Award for her commitment for bringing rural health issues to the forefront of public policy.

As a consumer and advocate of rural health care, Maxine Moul, knows the impact recruiting health care practitioners and maintaining health care facilities has on the economy and well being of rural areas.

A native of Oakland, Neb., Moul has worked hard to help shape policy for rural health issues.

For her efforts the NeRHA awarded Moul with the first Rural Health Consumer Advocate Award.

In 1993, as lieutenant governor, Moul was appointed director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and created the Rural Development Commission.

Today, as president emeritus for the Nebraska Community Foundation, Moul continues to contribute to vital programs in rural communities. The foundation has helped raise nearly \$60 million for community and economic development in Nebraska and has assets of \$18 million.

Currently Moul is co-chair of EndowNebraska, which is supporting passage of a charitable tax credit by the Nebraska Legislature.

EMANUEL BEYER, M.D.



Emanuel Beyer, M.D., passed away one month after receiving the Outstanding Rural Health Practitioner award for 2004 from the NeRHA at the fall conference. He is pictured with NeRHA board member Phyllis Gardner.

The late Emanuel Beyer, M.D., was a family practice physician in southwest Nebraska since 1978.

For much of that time he was also a patient, who suffered from cardiomyopathy, a heart condition, which ultimately resulted in Dr. Beyer having a titanium mechanical heart assist device implanted in 2002.

Throughout all of this Dr. Beyer continued to deliver babies, see patients and provide the best care he could.

For his commitment to providing outstanding care to rural Nebraskans, Dr. Beyer was named the Outstanding Rural Health Practitioner for 2004 by the NeRHA. Dr. Beyer passed away one month after receiving the award.

In her nomination of Dr. Beyer for the award, Phyllis Gardner wrote, “Dr. Beyer continued to work during all of his disquieting health problems. He continued to deliver quality care to his patients while being a patient himself. He worked with a compassion that many family physicians lack.”



John Roberts, new executive director of the NeRHA congratulates Joan Frances on her award on Outstanding Rural Health Achievement.

NeRHA Recognizes Joan Frances with Outstanding Rural Health Achievement Award

Continued from page 4

Without Joan Frances, the integration of health and human services in the Panhandle would not exist.

As executive director of the Rural Healthcare Network, Joan helped to shape and develop this model, as well as provide consultation to the Panhandle Partnership of Health and Human Services.

For her leadership and initiative in developing community-oriented rural healthcare delivery, Joan was given the Outstanding Rural Health Achievement Award by the NeRHA.

Through her efforts Joan convinced those that deliver health and human services that they could accomplish more by working together versus competing with one another.

One of the first successes of her efforts was the introduction of a Panhandle-wide Welcome Baby program, in which all newborns receive an in-home visit by a nurse within the first 24 to 48 hours after dismissal from the hospital.

During a site visit Steve Wilhide, executive director of the National Rural Health Association, said that the panhandle health care system is a highly motivated model that should be replicated in other parts of the country.

Students Explore Health Careers

The Rural Health Education Network and the Student Association for Rural Health sponsored the eighth annual Rural Health Professions Career Day on September 21 at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha.

“Our Career Day gives students a chance to visit the UNMC campus and learn about our programs,” said Roxanna Jokela, RHEN Director.

Two hundred fifty-two students from 54 rural high schools heard about opportunities in medicine, nursing, pharmacy, dentistry, physician assistant, physical therapy, medical technology and other fields. The students attended three 30-minute informational sessions of their choosing with various health professionals.

Liliana Bronner, coordinator of the program, said students learned about the different programs at UNMC and what classes they should be taking now, and in college, to pursue health care education at UNMC.

“We expose students to the wealth of different health care careers in society to better assist them in achieving their goals as health care professionals in the



UNMC Chancellor Harold M. Maurer, M.D., spoke to career day guests about the University of Nebraska Medical Center, the future of technology in health care and the revolution of health care.

future,” she said.

The Rural Health Professions Career Day is one of many UNMC efforts to assist in “Growing Our Own” future health professionals for Nebraska.

“Our Career Day gives students a chance to visit the UNMC campus and learn about our programs,” said RHEN Director Roxanna Jokela.

Dates Set for 2005 Cardiovascular Research Symposium

The Ninth Annual Cardiovascular Research Symposium will be held on Friday, February 4, 2005, on the UNMC campus.

The symposium is designed for individuals interested in the latest cardiovascular treatment and research.

Researchers from The Nebraska Medical Center and UNMC will present original ongoing research in the area of congestive heart failure.

The purpose of this symposium is to: exchange ideas that will enhance research collaboration, create awareness of cardiovascular research and to foster a discussion and partnership among researchers and clinicians regarding patient care and medical

management of chronic cardiac disease.

Finally, it serves to inspire students, a new generation of researchers to take an interest in congestive heart failure research.

The symposium includes a keynote address by Ray E. Hershberger, M.D., Director, Heart Failure/Heart Transplant at Oregon Health Sciences University in Portland, followed by oral and poster presentations.

The target audience includes physicians and research scientists interested in cardiovascular disease. For more information contact Joan Husted (402) 559-6235.

Early Exposure to Health Careers Beneficial

EMTs Provide Students Insight Into World of Emergency Services

A First Responder presentation was recently held at Madison High School. Northern Nebraska AHEC, in conjunction with EMS Northeast Services and Northeast Community College, provided three stations with hands on activities for students to learn about administering an I.V, intubations and how to use a defibrillator.

Madison High senior Tyrel Unger said, "It was interesting watching the EMT's (Keith Neal, Northeast Community College and Gary Hastings, EMS Northeast Services) demonstrating intubations. We saw just what it was

like to be an EMT."

The First Responders presentation objective is to recruit more EMT's for the region and provide an opportunity for high school students to explore health professions related to EMS services.

Jennifer Becker, a junior at Madison High School, said, "I want to be nurse anesthetist. Learning more about heart rhythms like a normal sinus rhythm, and a ventricular fibrillation will benefit me in the future."

Classroom presentations on a variety of health professions are done regularly

in the Northern Nebraska AHEC area.

Donovan Roy, program coordinator, said, "We regularly bring information to students about different careers. It is especially beneficial to students when we can bring a health professional to the classroom too. Meeting health professionals in a classroom setting lets students see that they are real people too."

For a classroom or organization presentation, or if you are a current health professional and want to share your profession with students, give Northern Nebraska AHEC a call: 402-644-7253.

Job Shadow Experience Enlightening and Rewarding for Students

After last years successful "Groundhog Job Shadowing Days," which drew 180 students from 25 area high schools, Northern Nebraska AHEC initiated another job shadowing program for area youths and adults interested in Job Shadowing.

Since then over 200 additional students and adults have been placed in 46 different healthcare fields at 37 different facilities.

Those who seek a job shadowing experience do so for several reasons.

"My shadowing experiences were great," said Renee Saunders. "Northern Nebraska AHEC really provides a great service for people who are curious about different careers."

To learn more about a healthcare career; receive shadowing hours for their current college classes; sharpen skills for college interns; and it also helps non-traditional students looking for a healthcare career.



Norfolk Senior High School student Rafaela Romero, at left, shadows Dr. Jennifer Strausser, DPM.

"My shadowing experiences were great. Northern Nebraska AHEC really provides a great service for people who are curious about different careers. As a non-traditional student, this experience really reinforced to me that I am choosing the best career for me," said Renee Saunders from Laurel.

"I strongly suggest high school students and others like myself to try a shadowing experience. When you can see first hand what you might be doing day to day in your new job, it gives you a new perspective and encouragement." Stacy Rabe of Winside, a college student at Mount Marty, said her shadowing experiences have helped her make the right decision about becoming a radiologic technologist.

"I was not sure what the field entailed

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Northern Nebraska AHEC Celebrates Fall's Rewards

For many people fall is a time of sadness; summer is gone and the snow will soon fly.

I have always looked at fall very different. It is a time of celebration. The harvest season allows us to see the fruits of our labors, the varied colors of the leaves provide a beautiful landscape to enjoy and football season is in full bloom.

For Northern Nebraska AHEC, fall brings us into our third year of funding and again a new excitement that great things will be happening.

The fruits of our labors continue to flourish. Our job shadowing program continues to provide students with the information they need to make decisions.

Groundhog Job Shadowing day is just around the corner and will be an exciting time amidst the cold snowy days of February.

Gretchen Forsell

Executive Director,
Northern Nebraska AHEC



Students are working on science meet projects at school when the cold fall winds would make time outdoors not their first choice, and students on rural rotations in communities are providing care to citizens as they get ready for winter.

The fruits of our labors have been possible due to the tremendous support that we receive from communities, schools, healthcare professionals and citizens of the region. AHEC's work is to help communities and it is with your support that we can enjoy our success and look for a continual harvest.

Job Shadowing Program A Success

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and shadowing has shown me exactly what is involved," Rabe said.

"Internships are a great way to get ahead in your career choice," said Abby Johnson, a pre-pharmacy student at Chadron State College.

"This past summer I completed internships at Faith Regional Health Services, Hy-Vee Pharmacy, and Vital Care Compounding Pharmacy. It really opened my eyes to all the different fields of pharmacy."

"I strongly suggest high school students and others like myself to try a shadowing experience. When you can see first hand what you might be doing day to day in a job, it gives you a new perspective and encouragement," said Stacy Rabe.



The mission of the Northern Nebraska Area Health Education Center (AHEC) is to promote, recruit and retain health care professionals through partnerships among health care, education and community providers in Northern Nebraska.

For further information please visit the NNAHEC Web site at: www.nnahec.org, or contact one of the following:

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Address:
110 N. 16th St., Ste 2
Norfolk, NE 68701
Fax: (402) 644-7254

Dates are set for the 2005 Groundhog Job Shadowing Days



Northern Nebraska AHEC will be hosting the 2nd annual Groundhog Job Shadowing days in Norfolk on February 3, 15 and March 3.

In order to meet the tremendous demand, multiple dates have been set.

This program is open to high school junior and seniors (over 16 years of age) in the region.

The program will be held at Faith Regional Health Services West Campus and will begin with a morning of health career related activities and information, then followed with an afternoon of job shadowing.

Punxsutawney Phil may or may not see his shadow on February 2nd, but we know that students in Northern Nebraska will see themselves job shadowing!

Information on the Groundhog Job Shadowing program is being sent to area schools.

If you have not received information or are interested in receiving information on this event, please contact Northern Nebraska AHEC at 402-644-7253 or email: gwright@nnahec.org

Patch Health Fair A Big Draw for Kids

One weekend each September the PATCH (Planned Approach to Community Health) Health Fair provides a variety of health screening, low cost blood work and fun activities for people of all ages.

This year Northern Nebraska AHEC was a corporate sponsor of the event, which was held at the Northeast Community College Cox Activity Center.

The center is filled with screening stations, seminars, cooking demonstrations, health information and even disco dancing contests to support the theme, "Staying Alive."

The turn out was huge with more than 1700 people from eight counties surrounding Norfolk in attendance.

Northern Nebraska AHEC assisted in planning the event and securing speakers for the seminars.

Northern Nebraska AHEC also had a booth providing information on health careers for all ages, including coloring books handed out to youth in both English and Spanish.

Young and old were given a chance to take the internal organs out of our mannequin and name them. This is always a fun activity when people can actually hold a liver, or intestines.

"The PATCH health fair supports the community as well as the region," said Gayle Wright. "We look forward to participating in next years' event."

Wright said that the Northern Nebraska AHEC plans to bring the health careers puppet show next year as well.

Northern Nebraska AHEC Compass Continues To Guide Students

A new poster can be seen in junior, middle and senior high schools in the Northern Nebraska AHEC region.

"The poster continues our theme of exploring directions in health careers," said Donovan Roy, program coordinator.

"The graphic on the poster is the same circle listing careers and compass that we use on our health careers camp materials and t-shirts. Youth identify with the compass, and the careers listed around the compass. They see it as how all of the health careers work together."

The poster is sent to all of the schools in the region at the beginning of the school year to remind schools and students of the variety of programs that NNAHEC offers.

The poster also allows NNAHEC to add smaller flyers to the bottom when necessary.

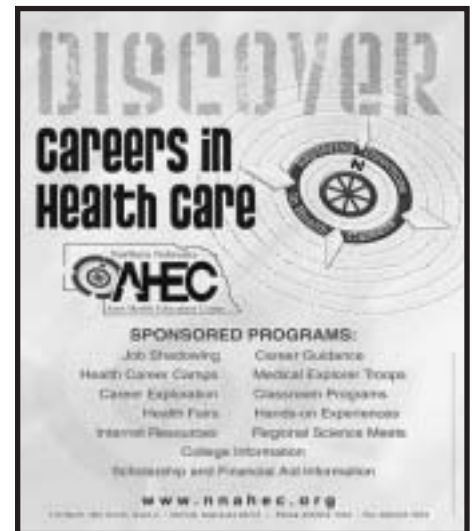
"We are currently working with Faith Regional Health Services and Learning for Life to revitalize an Explorer's troop at Faith Regional. Colorful reminders of the first meeting were sent to the schools in the area and attached to the poster," said Gretchen Forsell, NN-AHEC Director.

"When students were asked how they heard about the Explorer's meeting many stated they saw the sign attached to the AHEC poster."

A similar mini-poster is used in classrooms to announce coming events.

Summer health career camps were recently advertised at locals schools, youth organizations, churches and businesses using the smaller poster.

"The smaller poster is nice because we have a customized area in the center where we can put information specific to a program," said Roy. "Our materials and message remain clear to the students: Explore the career you are interested in and then plot the direction you need to go in to make that career a reality."



The Northern Nebraska AHEC poster shows the wide variety of health profession career opportunities.

Youth Find Many Career Choices at Educational Planning Day

The Tri County Educational Planning Day was held at Elkhorn Valley High School on Oct. 11.

Over 300 high school students from Madison, Antelope and Pierce counties attended.

Students spent the afternoon in sessions and having the opportunity to visit over 50 colleges, universities and educational organizations to learn more about opportunities available.

Northern Nebraska AHEC sponsored the keynote speaker, Keith Neal, Director of Allied Health Northeast Community College.

Northern Nebraska AHEC also provided students with information on health careers and information on a variety of scholarships available including the Rural Health Opportunities Program and Mid-America Rural Health Opportunities.

Health Career Opportunities Abound

York General Health Care Services Sponsors Health Career Day

“So many professional health career opportunities in Nebraska . . . where do I go now that I have decided to pursue a health career?”

That was the question asked by students who recently attended the York General Health Care Services Health Career Day Oct. 6.

It was the perfect opportunity for students to spend a day visiting with admission counselors from colleges that offer careers in health care.

Students learned first-hand that options available within the health field are virtually limitless, including direct patient care, health education, administration and a host of other possibilities.

The admission counselors from each college explained to the students how to launch a career in health care, what some of those jobs are like, and where students can obtain the education to become a member of the health care team.

In developing the Health Career Day,



Students from High Plains High School review health career materials they received from various college counselors.

one major objective was to invite small, rural schools to participate.

“My students were thrilled to have the opportunity to learn more about health careers in Nebraska,” said one counselor from High Plains High School.

The counselor also said that his students “don’t always have the chance to attend career fairs, being such a small school. Thanks for thinking of our

school.”

One of Central Nebraska Area Health Education Center’s goals is to provide awareness and education regarding health career opportunities in Nebraska. Thank you, York General Health Care Services for your support in providing an enlightening and educational day for the students in York and surrounding counties.

CN-AHEC Partners with Medical Health Recruitment and Retention Committee

Central Nebraska Area Health Education Center’s objective as a team member with the Medical Health Recruitment and Retention Committee is to work with schools and community agencies to expose K-16 students to an expanded awareness of health care careers in Nebraska.

The committee is comprised of 27 people, including staff from St. Francis Medical Center, faculty from Central Community College, teachers from Grand Island Senior High School and representatives from the Nebraska Workforce Development office.

Areas that were identified as goals for the Committee include: increasing awareness among minority populations about opportunities in health care careers; providing educational resources to underserved and non-traditional adults; developing methods to increase the number of students involved in the HOSA Program; hosting health career camps for middle and high school students; increasing the number of non-clinical hospital employees into clinical positions; providing financial and student loan information to students with limited resources necessary to gain

admission into a health care career program; increasing the number of GED and ESL students pursuing health care careers; and enhancing health care career awareness to school administrators, counselors and teachers.

Committee members were asked to work individually or as a group to identify ways to accomplish these objectives.

As the first year of this committee is coming to a close, we can acknowledge our accomplishments and look forward to new and exciting objectives as year two draws near.

CN-AHEC Reaches Out to Health Professionals via DVD

CN-AHEC continues to make strides in reaching out to students throughout Central Nebraska as reflected in the articles in this issue.

The entire staff is very excited about taking on 10 additional counties to the west of our present area.

Although distance is always a challenge, we hope to utilize distance learning connections into the schools and the hospitals to offer a wide array of services.

We are also on the verge of releasing our first DVD designed to provide health care professionals and bilingual health

Sarah Cunningham

Executive Director,
Central Nebraska AHEC



care workers a glimpse into the importance of medical interpreting.

The DVD will include segments by Jose Romero, M.D., professor of Pediatrics Infectious Disease at the

University of Nebraska Medical Center, and Dr. Rubens Pamies, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at UNMC.

These segments explain the importance of using qualified interpreters and understanding the cultural background of patients.

This project would not be possible without the expertise of UNMC's Video Services and ITS Learning Environment Internet Services.

During the coming year we hope to produce other DVDs to help train medical interpreters.

CN-AHEC and Central Community College Begins Certification Program for Medical Interpreters

Changing demographics in Central Nebraska have brought linguistic and cultural demands on the delivery of appropriate healthcare services to a population of limited English proficiency patients.

The Central Nebraska AHEC and its grant-funded program *Hablamos Juntos*, in response to this reality and with the collaboration of Central Community College developed and implemented the first academic and sequential program for a certificate in Medical Interpreting.

The 12 credit certificate program is divided into 4 courses: the first course introduces participants to the main concepts and theoretical principles of professional interpreting, emphasizing the value of linguistic and cultural competency, as well as introducing them to the requirements and standards of the profession.

The program does not offer language specific classes for individuals needing to improve their linguistic competence, and participants are required to take the language and interpreter's readiness assessment (L&ISA) and the Community College's English placement test.

Understanding that language proficiency in two languages is a requirement for professional interpreters, depending on

their individual results, certificate candidates will need to devote personal time and energy to enhance their language competency in one or both languages.

In addition to the certification program, CN-AHEC and Central Community College are working on the continuation of the career and have designed the outline for a Medical Interpreter Diploma, with 32 credits and an Associate of Applied Science Degree with 64 credits.

The ultimate goal would be for dedicated professional interpreters to look towards a bachelor's and even a master's level education.

The first cohort of 13 interpreters includes individuals from Lexington, Hastings, Columbus Grand Island and Aurora; some are full-time, others are dual-role bilinguals who spend most of their time as interpreters, and a couple are persons with linguistic ability who are interested in becoming medical interpreters.

Once the first group completes their certification, and the results are evaluated, CN-AHEC and *Hablamos Juntos* along with Central Community College would be in a position to offer this program as a model for other language pairs, viable and self-sustainable.

CN-AHEC Expands Westward

On November 12, CN-AHEC held its first quarterly regional meeting in North Platte.

At the meeting were representatives from the 10 counties to our west who recently joined the CN-AHEC as a result of the reconfiguration of AHEC areas.

Stuart Shepard, vice president of development, Great Plains Medical Center, will represent the area on the CN-AHEC Board of Directors.

Several suggestions were made as

how to best serve the area.

Ideas included: hosting an "Expanding your Horizons in Math and Science Conference" for middle school girls, housing science modules in the western edge for the high schools to utilize, and collaborating with area hospitals on job shadowing and career awareness activities.

CN-AHEC will now serve schools, healthcare facilities, public health districts and communities within a 26,655 square mile area.

Second Annual Latino Youth Rally A Success

Central Nebraska Area Health Education Center (CN-AHEC), along with Central Community College and Saint Francis Medical Center, sponsored the Second Annual Latino Youth Rally at Grand Island College Park on Saturday, October 2, 2004.

The focus of the rally was to highlight the uniqueness of being Latino and bilingual. This event attracted more than 50 participants, less than last year due to other community events.

Students and parents from as far as Lexington to Schuyler attended the event.

Breakout sessions included area bilingual professionals representing their jobs skills as an LPN, dental and medical assistants, role plays addressing the need for medical interpreters, and current Central Community students' testimonials on the benefits of continuing education.

The highlight of the event was the

Puppet Show Promotes Good Dental Hygiene

Children's Day Festival held at Fonner Park in Grand Island was an excellent way to get young children to interact with puppets including Delbert the Dental Dog and other health career puppets.

This festival is held annually in Grand Island and this year was the 11th year in which there were over 2,000 in attendance.

Central Nebraska Area Health Education Center sponsored a booth which included Delbert the Dental Dog puppet along with other healthcare puppets promoting wellness in young chil-

keynote speaker, Roberto Dansi, a clinical psychologist.

He has been repeatedly chosen as the keynote speaker by such prestigious organizations as Mayo Clinic, Cornell University and CNN Center Atlanta Youth Leadership Congress.

Roberto Dansie has been in the educational arena for over 30 years. Among awards received by Roberto are the National Award for Community Development, Golden Medallion from the National Indian Health Board for his contributions in Indian Health; Cesar Chavez Award; and Federal Award from the Administration on Aging.

The U.S. Surgeon General has commended Roberto for "being a dedicated foot soldier for the health of the nation." He spoke to students about their unique abilities as bilingual individuals who can accomplish anything they set their mind to do.

This event also enabled the Hablamos Juntos Project to gather information regarding how many students continue to interpret for parents and friends at doctor visits due to the shortage of bilingual health professionals.

The survey showed that sixty-nine percent of the students have interpreted in a medical setting.

The degree of interpreting difficulty varied from hard to being uncomfortable with medical terms and procedures.

Sixty-four percent of the students would like to attend a summer language camp to build on their skills to interpret.

Several students that attended the event last year encouraged other students to come this year. Many students said this event is very informative and educational.



Puppets were the main attraction at the Children's Day Festival in Grand Island.

dren. This was a great way for young children to interact with puppets and at the same time talk about healthy habits.

Parents as well as the children were delighted to see the puppets with a few

of them even wanting to hold and play with the puppets.

Finger germ puppets were also handed out to remind everyone that we need to wash our hands often to avoid all those nasty germs that seem to find us during the flu and cold season.

The puppets are a great way to get children under the age of five enthused about brushing their teeth, washing their hands and, yes, even to think in the future about being a healthcare worker. Anyone interested in CN-AHEC doing a puppet show, contact us at (308) 385-6677.

The Central Nebraska Area Health Education Center's mission is to enhance access to quality health care in Central Nebraska, particularly primary and preventive care.

CN-AHEC offices are located at College Park, 3180 West Highway 34, Grand Island, 68801-7279. With questions, please visit the CN-AHEC Web site at www.cn-ahec.org, or contact one of the following:

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Rural Health Professionals Play Important Role in Homeland Security Says Lieutenant Governor Dave Heineman

One of the major goals of the Nebraska Rural Health Association's annual conference is to provide specific ideas that can be applied to local communities.

At the 2004 fall conference, rural health care professionals, administrators and advocates got the chance to hear about the steps Nebraska officials have taken to guard the state from terrorism.

Lt. Gov. Dave Heineman spoke to participants in a general session about homeland security and how each community across the state plays a role in this effort.

"The statewide communication system links health care facilities across the state," said Heineman. "Everybody, from emergency room personnel to firefighters, needs to be hooked into this system. We have got to be able to communicate with you because you are very, very critical to this effort."

The lieutenant governor, who also serves on the National Homeland Security Council, advised everyone to be aware of what takes place in his or her community and to report anything suspicious.

"Terrorists don't have any regard for human life," he said. "So we have got to be able to think outside of the box." Being aware and communicating concerns are a couple of the most important things private citizens can do.



Lt. Gov. Dave Heineman and Joann Schaefer, M.D., deputy medical director with the Nebraska Health and Human Services System told participants of the 2004 fall NeRHA conference to be aware and communicate any public health concerns.

"Because of their constant contact with the public, health professionals have the best opportunity to be able to do this, whether it is reporting a suspicious illness or activity in their community," the lieutenant governor said.

Heineman also advised attendees to be prepared in case of a communications blackout.

"This would present a very difficult situation," he said. "What are the alternatives? The use of radio would be critical."

"Always be aware of your surroundings and report any concerns," said Heineman.

"Communication is key in a crisis," said Joann Schaefer, M.D., deputy med-

ical director with the Nebraska Health and Human Services System (NHHSS).

Dr. Schaefer said one method the NHHSS has devised for crisis communication is the Health Alert Network.

Through this network, NHHSS was able to notify health care professionals across the state about the SARS outbreak in Toronto in an hour.

"Word came in at 10 on a Saturday night and within one hour of finding out about the SARS outbreak in Canada," said Dr. Schaefer, "we had sent out an alert to every physician and medical facility across the state."

Dr. Schaefer noted the extensive work UNMC officials have done to create the Health Professions Tracking Center and continue to do to keep it up-to-date.

"This important database of phone numbers, e-mail addresses and physical addresses of health professionals across the state would not be possible without the help of UNMC," Dr. Schaefer said.

She also spoke to the group about risk communication and preparing standard messages that consist of accurate, credible information about known risks such as Monkey Pox, SARS and West Nile Virus to pass along to the media.

"This can be comforting to people in the event of a public health threat," she said.

Rural Health Professionals Wonder How State Behavior Health Reform Will Impact Their Communities

Just how behavioral health reform will affect the many rural communities across the state of Nebraska remains to be seen.

"But something has to be done," said Allen Bartels, speaking to healthcare professionals in an afternoon session at the 2004 Nebraska Rural Health Association conference.

Bartels is director of behavioral health services at Mary Lanning Memorial Hospital in Hastings, Neb.

"I applaud the state's efforts," Bartels said. "I haven't talked to a provider or patient who wouldn't say there isn't a huge need for reform."

The process to reform behavioral healthcare in the state has already begun, said George Hanigan, former deputy director of behavioral health services at the Nebraska Health and Human Services System.

The goal of the governor's plan is to create more community-based services

that will keep people closer to their families and communities.

Hanigan said the state recognizes that there are many rural residents who are concerned about where people will go to seek treatment in the future.

"I applaud the state's efforts," said Allen Bartels. "There is a huge need for reform."

Continued on page 13

Behavioral Health Reform on the Minds of Many Rural Nebraskans

Continued from page 12

But he assured the group that current Regional Center funding for acute inpatient and secure residential services will be leveraged with Medicaid match dollars and re-invested in the appropriate community services.

“Community services must be in place before patients are transitioned,” Hanigan said.

Denise Bulling, with the University of Nebraska’s Public Policy Center, said there are proactive steps rural communities can take in anticipation of the reforms.

“Reform is more than just regional centers and funding new ones,” said Bulling. “People with mental health issues also



have other real needs that the state won’t be able to support, such as food and housing issues.”

That is where communities should look at other resources available, such as social

and faith-based organizations that can help pick up the slack.

“We see challenges and opportunities in this reform effort,” Bartels said.

Community Grant Enables Potter-Dix School Priceless Opportunity

Sixty-one students in the Potter-Dix Public Schools are improving their posture and learning about health careers through the Potter-Dix Posture Project.

The project is funded through UNMC’s Rural Health Education Network (RHEN).

In 2003-2004, RHEN and the two Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) provided funds for 22 community grants across Nebraska.

The Potter-Dix Posture Project attempts to address inactivity, obesity and poor posture among teenagers.

Chairs with poor back support allow for slumping, inattention and an extended period of minimal to no physical activity during the school day.

Instead of spending 6-7 hours sitting on a traditional chair in the classroom, students are balancing on large exercise balls.

Balancing on an exercise ball requires concentration. The increased alertness improves classroom attention.

Ms. Nancy Miller, a science teacher, collaborated with Dr. Michael Moravec, a physical therapist from Memorial Health Center in Sidney.

Dr. Moravec measured the height of the tables and inflated the balls to the appropriate size. He also taught the students the correct way to sit on the balls.

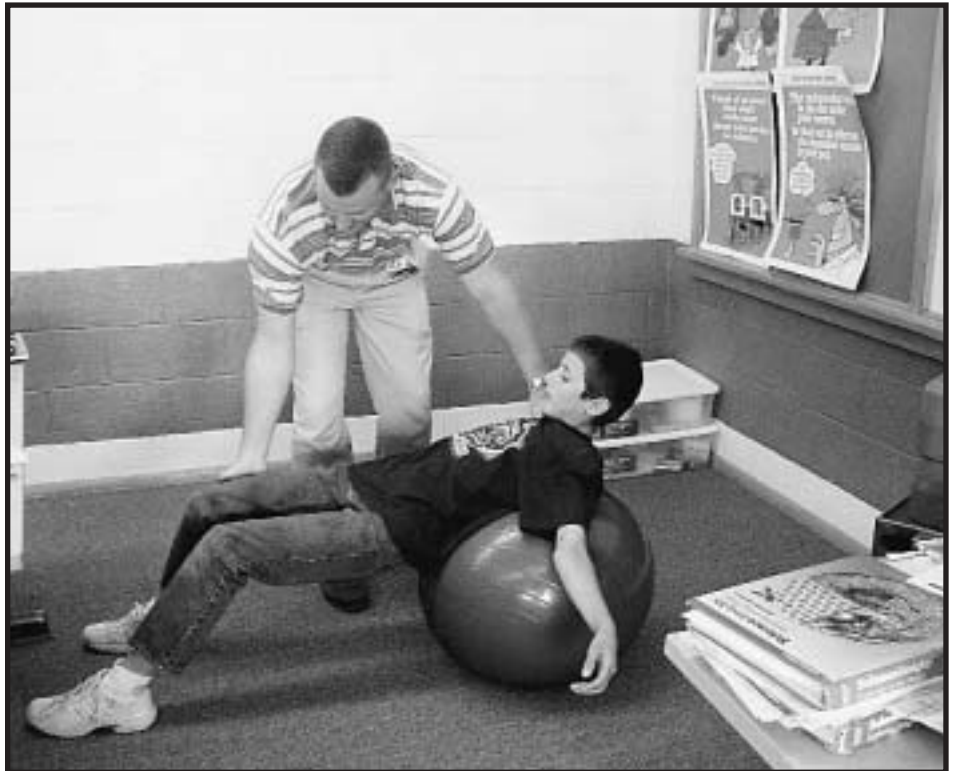
Dr. Moravec told the students about

the importance of good posture and the educational requirements of becoming a physical therapist.

In addition to learning about physical therapy, Potter-Dix students have learned about scoliosis, how hospitals prevent infections, occupational therapy, dental hygiene and among others.

Ms. Miller said the project would not have been possible without the community grant.

“School budgets are so tight these days,” she said. “These funds made it possible for us to provide a meaningful experience to our students in a fun way.”



Michael Moravec, D.P.T., a physical therapist with Memorial Health Center in Sidney, Neb., demonstrates how exercise balls are used to develop strength and balance. Jay Welch, a seventh-grader at Potter-Dix Public School is assisting with the demonstration.

Health Professions Tracking Center Useful Resource

How many dentists practice in Cozad, Nebraska?

Where is the nearest obstetrician's office in Scottsbluff?

If you are looking for answers to these questions, Kolene Kohll, director of the Health Professions Tracking Center (HPTC) at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and her staff just might have the answers.

"When we started the HPTC in 1995, we only had the licensure data from the state to work with," said Kohll. "But that wasn't reliable enough because not every physician who has a Nebraska license practices in the state and renewals are every two years."

The data left an incomplete picture of just how many rural Nebraska counties were in need of health professionals.

Since then, Kohll has built a database that not only tracks which counties have a medical doctor and how many, but an array of health professions including pharmacists, dentists and nurse practitioners.

"The unique thing about our data is that we can look at all primary care providers in one area and see what is or isn't being offered," said Kohll. "This



helps the rural health policy commission designate which counties or areas within a county are shortage areas."

Kohll said that being able to determine where health professionals are needed around the state has had a \$1 million annual impact in terms of state and federal funding to help recruit and retain family practice physicians in designated counties.

Not only does the HPTC track where a health professional is practicing, but also whether that person has a satellite office.

"There are some physicians that go to 38 different clinics in one month," Kohll said.

By using the HPTC data, Kohll said

policy makers and other health systems can look at where a shortage exists, what type of services are needed and plan accordingly.

"That is our primary mission," said Kohll, "to capture knowledge for workforce planning and health policy decisions."

Kohll said that she has gotten inquiries from officials in 22 different states asking for guidance in setting up a tracking center and whom to track.

"We were recently designated a Center for Public Health Preparedness by the Centers for Disease Control, which we call the Center for Rural Biosecurity," Kohll said.

State and federal officials recognize how important it is to maintain a database like the one at the HPTC, said Kohll, who noted the strong support of Richard Raymond, M.D., chief medical officer with the Nebraska Health and Human Services System.

"Since we have virtually every health professional's e-mail, clinic address and phone number at the tips of our fingers," she said, "we can use this as an effective communication tool in times of crisis."

RHOP Students from Chadron State College Tour UNMC



Alesa Hebbert, left, and Brett Van Briggie, foreground right, were among 13 Chadron State College students who visited UNMC earlier this school year. The students are members of the Rural Health Opportunities Program. Hebbert is a physical therapy student from Gering, while Van Briggie is a medical technology student from Gordon.



Students, from left, Lea Wells, Brandy Schaum, Joe Merrill and Jeremy Peterson visit with Med Center official Dave Eggers during a tour of The Lied Transplant Center. Wells is a physician assistant student from St. Paul, Schaum is a radiography student from Gering, Merrill is a radiography student from Gering and Peterson is a radiography student from Atkinson.

High School Science Teachers Attend Annual Workshop

Betty Shambley's closet soon may be full of medical white coats, but her zest for gathering more information will continue to bring her back to the annual Science Teacher Connections Workshop at UNMC.

"This is the third one of these that I have," Shambley said of her white coat, one of the few tangible perks that the high school teachers receive for attending the workshop. "They didn't give them to us the first few times I came down here."

The workshop is now in its eighth year, and Shambley has been a mainstay, attending about a half-dozen times. Each time, she makes the 2½-hour trip from Battle Creek at her own expense. At Battle Creek, Shambley teaches courses in life sciences, earth sciences and biology.

"It's worth it to me, and it's worth it to my students," Shambley said. "I always learn something new that I can take back with me to the classroom. That's why I keep doing it."

This year's workshop took place on Oct. 28 in conjunction with the Nebraska Association of Teachers of



Teresa Hayes, from Wauneta-Palisade Public Schools, visited the Protein Structure Core Facility. Here, she learns to spot peptides onto a plate before determining its molecular weight by MALDI-tof (Matrix Assisted Laser Desorbed Ionization by time of flight).



High school teachers learn basic auscultation of the heart and lungs on an emergency care device simulator at the College of Nursing. Pictured from left to right: Dawn Weimer of Fremont, Marie Nielsen of Ord, Deb Koehlmoos of Pierce, and Paul Sok of Winside.

Science (NATS) Conference.

Eleven teachers and one student spent the day with UNMC scientists and researchers to learn about the most recent advances in science.

This year, the teachers spent time learning more about genetics, cancer research, techniques for crime scene investigation, modern medication delivery and lung function, among others.



Betty Shambley learns about a spirometer. It measures air going in and out of the lungs.



John Dickinson, a graduate assistant at the UNMC Genetics, Cell Biology, and Anatomy Department, poses with teachers after showing them the lab where he researches lymphoma therapies. Teachers (from left to right) are: Dawn Weimer of Fremont, Deb Koehlmoos of Pierce and Mary Ann Niemoth of Hastings.

UNMC Announces Officers for Student Association for Rural Health

Four students at the University of Nebraska Medical Center were named officers of the Student Association for Rural Health (SARH) for 2004-2005.

SARH promotes interest in health careers in rural areas of Nebraska by hosting monthly seminars on rural health issues.

All UNMC students are eligible to join the SARH group.

The 2004-2005 officers are:

President, Kristin Maricle, a second-year medical student. Maricle graduated from Albion Public High School and Nebraska Wesleyan University. She joined SARH because she is interested in family medicine and plans to return to rural Nebraska to practice medicine. She is the daughter of Mary Ann and Keith Maricle of Albion, NE.

Vice President, Justin Misko, a sec-



The SARH officers: Justin Misko, Kristin Maricle, Stephanie Schutte and Bryan Purdy.

ond-year medical student. Misko graduated from Ord High School and Chadron State College. Misko joined SARH because strong family and community values drive his desire to practice medicine in a rural and underserved area of Nebraska. He is the son of Nancy Misko of North Platte and Bill Misko of Ord.

Secretary, Stephanie Schutte, second-year medical student. Schutte graduated from Bellevue East High School and the University of

Nebraska-Lincoln. Schutte is interested in practicing medicine in rural Nebraska because her husband, Kyle, is from Laurel. Schutte is the daughter of Sandra and David Kern of Bellevue.

Treasurer, Bryan Purdy, a second-year medical student. Purdy graduated from Burke High School and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He is also interested in practicing medicine in a rural community. His parents are Lynne Purdy of Papillion and Mike Purdy of Grand Island.

Visit our new Web site at www.unmc.edu/RHEN

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