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Introduces
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Notes from
the 2005
Nebraska
Rural Health
Association
Conference

New AHECs Complete Coverage

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has awarded the University of Nebraska Medical Center a \$1.9 million grant to create Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) in Omaha and southeastern Nebraska and to continue funding the three existing AHECs based in Grand Island, Norfolk and Scottsbluff.

“Nebraska has received nearly \$5 million in AHEC funds over the past four years, which have enabled communities to leverage additional funds for rural health care education needs,” said Michael Sitorius, M.D., chairman of the UNMC

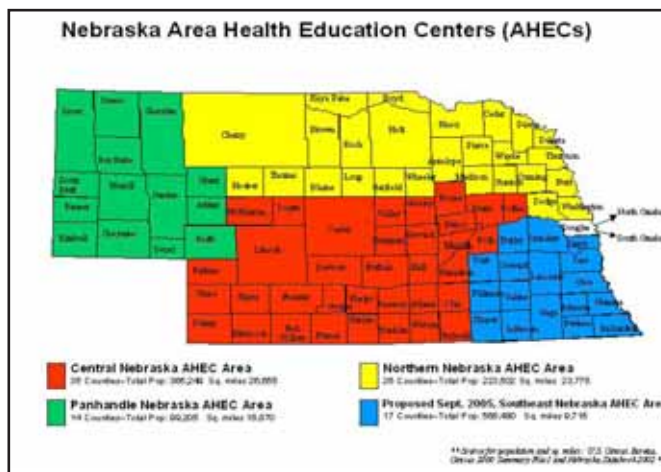
Department of Family Medicine and director of the AHEC program in Nebraska.

Dr. Sitorius said that AHECs are multi-institutional, multi-disciplinary, community-based programs that work with community and academic partners to address the primary health care work force needs and health promotion and disease prevention information needs of medically underserved communities.

“We are ecstatic that HRSA has awarded these funds to Nebraska. The AHEC centers across the state have given Nebraska’s health workforce needs and rural economy a tremendous boost,” said Roxanna Jokela, director of Rural Health Education Network

and deputy director of the Nebraska AHEC Program Office.

“With more than 75 percent of the AHEC dollars going to the centers and their communities,” said Jokela, “we are confident that AHECs are making a difference for tomorrow’s health professionals.”



“We are ecstatic that HRSA has awarded these funds to Nebraska.” — Roxanna Jokela, University of Nebraska Medical Center.

The Omaha Urban AHEC center will serve Douglas County and will be established first, Jokela said. It is a collaborative effort between UNMC and Creighton University Medical Center (CUMC). The Southeast Nebraska AHEC center will serve 17 counties.

With the creation of the Omaha and southeast Nebraska AHECs, all 93 counties across the

state of Nebraska will now be served, she said.

While each AHEC sets its own focus priorities, the primary role of AHECs is the recruitment and retention of health professionals to underserved areas, including a focus on minority recruitment.

AHEC activities include working with local schools (grades K-12) in health career promotion, providing health career fairs and camps, assisting with health profession students to gain education experiences in underserved communities, and working with local health career providers to assure continuing education is available.

“The first three AHEC centers have proven

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AHECs

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successful and we are excited to bring this program to Douglas County.” said Ward Chambers, M.D. “Especially since Douglas County has the largest population of underserved people in the state.”

Dr. Chambers is an associate professor of cardiology and executive director of Community and Multicultural Affairs at UNMC.

“Over the past four years, the AHEC program has been extremely successful in addressing the health care workforce needs in Nebraska and exposing students to the importance of careers in the health professions.” — Congressional Representative Jeff Fortenberry

The ultimate goal is to recruit more minorities into the health professions, he said.

CUMC will use the Omaha Urban AHEC Center as a way to educate its health profession students about the needs of underserved populations.

This will be done by placing those students in clinical rotations at

community health centers in Omaha and Council Bluffs, said Frank Peak, a Creighton representative.

“The goal is to help our students develop insights into the needs of underserved populations and induce them to practice in those communities,” Peak said.

“I am pleased that HRSA has chosen to support the expansion of AHEC’s across Nebraska,” said Congressional Representative Lee Terry.

“With the newest center located in Omaha, we have a great opportunity before us to help educate minority students about the importance of health care professions,” he said.

I am also excited that the newest AHEC will have the opportunity to work in collaboration with our outstanding community health centers,” he said.

“Over the past four years, the AHEC program has been extremely successful in addressing the health care workforce needs in Nebraska and exposing students to the importance of careers in the health professions,” said Congressional Representative Jeff Fortenberry.

Congressman Fortenberry

represents the part of the state that the southeast AHEC will serve.

“It’s a program that should pay big dividends for the state when it comes time for these students to choose their future career,” he said.

MEIR Course Set for January

The Center for Biopreparedness Education (CBE) will be sponsoring a Medical Effects of Ionizing Radiation (MEIR) course on January 21-22, 2006 at the Crowne Plaza in Omaha.

The CBE will bring experts from the U.S. Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute (AFRRI) in Bethesda, MD to teach the course.

This course provides military and civilian operational personnel with up-to-date information concerning the biomedical consequences of radiation exposure, how the effects can be reduced, and the medical management of casualties.

The course covers two days of the fundamentals of ionizing radiation: the ionizing radiation interaction with cells and organs, diagnosis and treatment of acute radiation symptoms and combined injuries, psychological effects of radiation exposure, internal radiation contamination, radiological defense, and protection against radiation.

RHEN will help with logistic coordination of the course. To register on-line visit our website at www.unmc.edu/rhen (click on Military Courses on the left menu).

For more information about this program you can contact the CBE office at (402) 559-2529.



The RHEN Focus is published three times a year by the University of Nebraska Medical Center Chancellor’s Office, 986660 Nebraska Medical Center, Omaha NE 68198-6660, (402) 559-8946.

The University of Nebraska does not discriminate in its academic, admissions or employment programs and abides by all federal, state and regental regulations pertaining to same.

Funded in part through the Health Resources & Services Administration, Bureau of Health Professions Federal Grant #2 U76HP00592

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Career Day Showcases Opportunities in the Health Professions

The University of Nebraska Medical Center Student Association for Rural Health, (SAHR), held its ninth annual Rural Health Career Day on September 20.

The event, also sponsored by the Rural Health Education Network and the Nebraska Area Health Education Center program, introduced students with an interest in health careers to the multitude of professions available in the health sciences. Two-hundred thirty-seven high school students from 46 rural communities learned about opportunities in Clinical Laboratory Science, Dentistry / Dental Hygiene, Geriatric Education, Medical Nutrition, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Physical Therapy, Physician Assistant, Public Health, and Radiation Sciences.

The students attended three, tailored 25-minute interactive sessions of their choosing with various health professionals. The SARH Rural Health Career Day is one of many UNMC efforts to assist in Growing Our Own future health professionals for Nebraska.



Above: Alice Kinney, at left, and Megan Knudson, from Norfolk Catholic High School listen to their heartbeat during a career day session on medicine.

Below: Suzy Reed, at left, and Bree Opfer, check out dental molds during a session on careers in dentistry. Both girls attend Arlington High School.



Science Teachers Learn About Health Sciences at UNMC Workshop



Cathy Larson, (at left) of Eustis Farnam Public Schools and Beth McMahon (at right) of Fremont High School analyze stem cells under the microscope.

Ten high school teachers from throughout Nebraska participated in this year's ninth annual Science Teacher Connections Workshop.

The workshop was held Oct. 27 at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

At the workshop science teachers had the opportunity to learn more about the health sciences.

Each teacher's agenda was individually planned based on his or her interests.

Cathy Larson of Farnam said, "It was fascinating to learn about a lot of the interesting research being done at UNMC."

Pancreatic islet transplantation, bariatric weightloss surgery, muscle physiology, Parkinson's disease, lung function, stem cells, cardiac disease, human genetics, and biosecurity threats were among the topics that teachers learned about this year.

"I have a lot of new material to share with my students," said Betty Shambley of Battle Creek.

Roxanna Jokela's Commitment to Science Education Recognized with Award

It was during an informal meeting in the living room of Roxanna Jokela's home that Jim Woodland first realized how committed Jokela is to supporting science teachers across the state.

"She insisted on knowing how she and UNMC could lend support to science teachers and improve outcomes for all students," said Woodland, director of science education for the Nebraska Department of Education and an advisor for the Nebraska Association of Teachers of Science (NATS).

For her contributions to science education in Nebraska, Jokela was



Jokela

given the Catalyst Award by NATS at their fall conference.

Jokela, who is the director of the Rural Health Education Network at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, has worked with NATS for the past ten years.

Woodland said that in that time she has set up shadowing opportunities for science teachers with researchers at UNMC, as well as provide middle and senior high school students the opportunity to spend a week at the medical center learning about science, research and careers in the health professions.

"NATS wanted to express our gratitude and appreciation of an outstanding individual who is very supportive and has touched a major portion of educators in the state of Nebraska," said John Niemoth,

president of NATS.

Niemoth said the impact of Jokela's work on improving science education in the state became clear at a summer workshop.

"It was impressive to see just how many students' and teachers' lives she has touched at the inquiry workshop," Niemoth said.

That workshop, held in June at Wayne State College, was funded through a grant Jokela secured from the state. The purpose of the two-year grant is to help science teachers improve their inquiry skills and curriculums.

"Everything that has happened with the science teacher retreat activities has been teamwork," Jokela said. "These events could not happen without the willingness of our faculty at UNMC."

Biomedical Research Program Attracts Rural Student

In an effort to retain those students who might otherwise leave Nebraska and seek scientific research opportunities elsewhere, the University of Nebraska Medical Center introduced the Biomedical Research Infrastructure Network (BRIN) program five years ago.

The BRIN program is geared toward introducing students at undergraduate institutions across Nebraska to scientific research opportunities in the state.

Since its introduction, the program has seen several students move on to graduate school.

Ethan Mann is one of those students who chose to pursue his Ph.D. in Nebraska. Mann participated in the BRIN program while at Chadron State College. The Wayne, Neb., native is enrolled in the Biomedical Research Training Program (BRTTP) at UNMC. The BRTTP is a common entry program for Ph.D. study at UNMC.

Mann credits his two years in the BRIN program for giving him the opportunity to explore scientific research as a career.

“The biggest thing that BRIN did was give me the experience I needed to work in a research lab, a grasp of how science works and how to think critically as a scientist,” he said. “I’m better prepared for the work I now do in graduate school.”

Mann, who has a bachelor of science in chemistry, is one of six former BRIN scholars from around the state who are pursuing a Ph.D. As a graduate of the BRIN program Mann receives a \$21,000 stipend in financial support during his first year of graduate school.

“The support lets the student focus on going to school and conducting research,” Mann said.

It also gives him an advantage over other students when it comes time to find a lab to pursue his Ph.D. research in.

That’s because the research scientist doesn’t have to pay the graduate student’s stipend out of their research grant, explained Mann. “I bring my own funding through BRIN,” he said.

Not to mention a familiarity of lab techniques, how a lab operates and a unique perspective on how a research lab is run.

As a student in the BRTTP program Mann has the opportunity to rotate through any of the more than 115 research laboratories at UNMC during his first year of graduate school.

“It’s been interesting to be able to work in a number of different areas,” Mann said.

For more information about the INBRE-BRIN program contact James Turpen at (402) 559-4388 or e-mail him at jturpen@unmc.edu.



Ethan Mann, became interested in research after taking part in the Biomedical Research Infrastructure Network program as an undergraduate student at Chadron State College. Mann is now pursuing his Ph.D. at UNMC.

First National Congress on School Biosecurity Jan. 5 & 6

To help K-12 administrators and staff manage their unique circumstances posed by public health emergencies, the Center for Biopreparedness Education (CBE) is hosting the first National Congress on School Biosecurity January 5-6, in Omaha. The National Congress of School Biosecurity is tailored to members of school safety teams, principals, teachers, support staff and district-level administrators that guide school safety policy.

Breakout sessions, panel discussions and a unique “Ask-An-Expert” luncheon are scheduled. On Day 2 of the conference, participants will have one-on-one access to ask questions of experts on such topics as school-based law enforcement, health maintenance, disease surveillance and more.

For more information visit the CBE website at: http://www.bioprep.org/schools_conference or call (402) 552-2529.

Sixteen Graduates are the First Group to Complete 10-Month Medical Interpreter Certification Course

Central Nebraska AHEC and the Hablamos Juntos project saw the completion of the first medical interpreting certification course become a reality on August 20, when sixteen interpreters completed the 10-month, twelve credit program.

The course was taught via the Central Community College distance learning system and included students from Lexington, Hastings, Kearney and Grand Island.

Course content was divided into four areas: basic bilingual medical terminology, treatment and procedures, cultural issues affecting healthcare delivery to patients of limited English proficiency (particularly Spanish speaking immigrants) and ethical

dilemmas affecting interpreters in the course of their professional jobs.

Interpreters were also immersed in the practice of self-care as a means to personal well-being and competent professional behaviors.

The program is designed to grow into a three-year applied arts degree program that will be offered through Central Community College in Grand Island.

The certification program was developed as part of the Hablamos Juntos projects, a Robert Wood Johnson grant-funded initiative looking to offer replicable models that will contribute to the elimination of

language barriers in the delivery of healthcare services.

Clear communication between healthcare providers and patients is essential and when there is a language and cultural barrier, this communication is only possible when there is a competent, professional medical interpreter.

Central Community College, through their allied health careers program, will be offering the medical interpreting certification program next semester with the cooperation of CN-AHEC.

One of the unique aspects of the program is that it is designed to grow into a three-year applied arts degree, as an allied health specialty.

Area Hospitals' Respond Enthusiastically to New Service

During the past several months Central Nebraska AHEC has worked hard in the implementation phase of its Video Medical Interpreting (VMI) service, which provides interpretation capabilities to local hospitals through videoconference technology.

It has been a long and arduous job that is now showing positive results.

The hospitals that are using this service now can guarantee bilingual service to their patients 24 hours a day.

The last three months have shown an exponential increase in the level of usage of the service. Usage rates have increased 323% in August, 232% in September and 145% in October.

Clinics and hospitals in Hastings, Grand Island, Aurora, Columbus

and Kearney are showing more and more interest in this new alternative to provide medical interpretation service in a convenient, efficient and economical fashion for the participating health care organizations and their clientele.

This explosive growth has allowed the project to get closer to its sustainability point, a goal that is highly desired since it will guarantee the long-term continuation of the program. Originally the VMI service was funded by a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant, but those monies will not be available in the future.

Recent statistics show that during the last few months another important objective has been achieved. There

is now a more even distribution of hospitals requesting interpreting service from VMI.

Hastings Community Health Center (HCHC) and Mary Lanning Memorial Hospital are the highest volume users of the service while a month earlier the HCHC was the only institution to be identified as a main user.

This aspect is important because it allows the program to have a bigger impact in the society.

The consolidation of the VMI program as a project that is self sustained and, at the same time, has the capability to serve larger parts of the population, is now becoming a reality, and that is certainly a good reason to celebrate.

Nebraska AHEC Advisory Board Holds Statewide Retreat

The Nebraska AHEC Advisory Board met for their second annual retreat Oct. 12-13 at Mahoney State Park.

Nebraska AHEC Program Director Mike Sitorius and Deputy Director Roxanna Jokela provided a “State of the AHEC” address bringing board members up-to-date on the program.

Among the highlights of the retreat was the announcement that there was increased funding that will allow for the formation of two new centers: one in Omaha in partnership with Creighton University Medical Center, and one in southeast Nebraska in

conjunction with the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership.

Dr. Sitorius and Jokela also stated that the staffing situation for the Nebraska Panhandle AHEC did not work out, but that it has a strong and committed board that will keep it operating until new staff is hired.

Board members also thoughtfully addressed several themes, such as developing and maintaining collaborative efforts with partners; sustainability for the Nebraska AHEC Program; using networking opportunities to further the mission of the AHECs; solidifying the

structure of the statewide program; and enhancing internal and external communications.

The board also discussed sustainability, recognizing that there are many components involved in being successful.

Five questions put forth by Dr. Sitorius at the September statewide advisory board meeting were also reviewed.

Those questions were: Why should AHECs be sustained? What do AHECs do that are important? What are the outcomes that AHECs produce that can be sold to future funding partners? How do AHECs package their accomplishments to make them an attractive investment by others? Who are AHECs future funding partners?

The board also began thinking about what messages are needed to engage partners and help others understand the added value that AHECs bring to a community.

The group identified several quantifiable statements that tell others what the AHECs do and have done across the state and in specific geographical areas.

The center directors and program staff will work on data collection for these statements.

This advocacy tool will be made available to all board members, center and program staff, along with a map that shows the geographic distribution of services provided.

Health Fair A Hit With Grand Island Students

That was the idea behind the first-ever health fair for students at Barr Junior High School in Grand Island.

Teachers and parents put their heads together to dream up something interesting and fun for students to do while parents were meeting with teachers.

The idea was to create a “Family Night” so students would not feel left out of the parent/teacher conference experience.

Central Nebraska Area Health Education Center in Grand Island was contacted to develop an educational program geared for junior high age students.

Along with the collaborative efforts of Wellness Works in Grand Island, students were asked to rate the beverages they drink according to the amount of sugar and calories in each beverage.

Students were also asked to identify

which drink has the most vitamins, minerals and nutrients.

Of the list of beverages available, the majority of students chose water over milk as the beverage with the most vitamins, minerals and nutrients.

Discussion then followed with the students on the benefits of choosing milk as the beverage that should always be selected first.

The students learned that the benefit of drinking water is important in keeping your body hydrated throughout the day, but milk contains the most vitamins, minerals and nutrients.

Along with the examples of beverages displayed, there was information pertaining to “hidden” sugar, calories and fat in foods we consume on a regular basis.

The students also had fun participating in a health food/beverage scavenger hunt.

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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Montana native finds much to love about rural Nebraska

“Growing our own health care professionals” is more than just a slogan at Northern Nebraska AHEC.

While many of NNAHEC’s programs plant a seed in children to consider a health care profession, they also nurture those who have chosen to continue their education in preparing for a chosen health field.

NNAHEC provides students with a bit of a personal touch. Students who perform their community based training in the NNAHEC area are contacted and visited by Program Coordinator Karen Wesche.

Many times those contacts form long lasting relationships. Wesche helps students with any number of issues from locating a particular preceptor site to finding housing and the local stores. Students often come into a community with very little knowledge of what it has to offer.

If a student’s experience is positive then perhaps he or she would consider practicing there or in another rural Nebraska community.

Starting with this issue NNAHEC will spotlight students on community based trainings.

Audrey Kerr, a physician assistant student from UNMC grew up in



Audrey Kerr

Circle, Montana, a small town of about 600 people. She is married to Charles Kerr and has a four year old daughter, Julie, whom she absolutely adores. Kerr attended Miles Community College in Miles City, Montana and earned a bachelors degree from the University of Montana. She will graduate in December.

Although going to school has kept Kerr busy and apart from her family who remain in Montana, she does have a few hobbies that give her a break from her studying.

She enjoys quilting, crafts and reading. Her favorite pastime, though, is being able to play with her daughter.

When asked why she wanted to

pursue a career in the health care Kerr said that ever since she was a “little bitty kid” she always played doctor.

“My Barbie would be the doctor and take care of the others who were sick,” she said.

One of Kerr’s favorite training sites has been the Pender Community Hospital and Pender Mercy Medical Clinic.

Kerr would advise other students to go there.

“The preceptors let you do it all. They are great teachers,” she said.

Kerr said the most enjoyable aspect of practicing in a rural area is the small town atmosphere and friendly people.

“Working with the Northern Nebraska AHEC has been a benefit,” she said.

NNAHEC assisted Kerr with finding a preceptor site and housing when one of her rotations was cancelled.

She was even referred to another AHEC that helped her find a preceptorship in their area.

Kerr said she has enjoyed her time in Nebraska. After completing a recent rotation she was offered a job in Nebraska which she accepted.

Medical Interpreting More Than Just Repeating Words

The Fremont Area Medical Center hosted the second Introduction to Medical Intrepreting workshop offered by Northern Nebraska AHEC this summer.

The workshop is for Spanish speaking interpreters.

Dr. Arturo Spindola of the East-Central District Health Department

explained to the audience the difference between being able to translate and becoming a good medical interpreter.

“A medical interpreter should be an honest, ethical and moral person,” Dr. Spindola said.

“They should interpret with

See Interpreting continued on page 9

Upcoming NNAHEC Events:

Burwell Health Career Day
 December 12th

Groundhog Job Shadowing Day
 Norfolk -- Jan. 31 and Feb. 16

For more information please contact
 NNAHEC at 402-644-7253 or
www.nnahec.org

Interpreting

(continued from page 8)

confidence, accuracy and completeness, conveying everything that is said," he said.

One of the biggest frustrations Dr. Spindola noted is when a provider asks a patient a question and the interpreter repeats the question with just one word.

"Intrepreters need to repeat exactly what the doctor says," he said.

Participants learned that a non-judgmental attitude should be displayed, that they should accept their assignments from health care providers with self-determination, a positive attitude, without ethical violations and with professionalism.

Because privacy is a very sensitive issue for patients, HIPAA regulations were integrated into the workshop.

Dr. Spindola demonstrated techniques in interpreting which included both verbal and sight translations.

Participants left with a better understanding of the role of a medical interpreter and a deeper knowledge of medical vocabulary.

They also iscovered the sensitivity needed to perform the job and why it is so important.

To date over 40 participants have taken part in the four hour workshop from 11 counties in the Northern Nebraska region.

One participant summed up the workshop by saying: "Interpreting is more than speaking the language, it is truly providing a valuable service."

Volunteers' Service Is a Welcome, Wonderful Gift

The NNAHEC staff knows how wonderful the gift of volunteer help can be.

Leslie Schulz has been donating a couple hours of her time every week since May to help Northern Nebraska AHEC with office tasks.

Schulz said she enjoys coming to the office to assist in a variety of

The Director Would Like to Say Thanks

One thing about AHEC, you can always tell when a new school year starts. The enthusiasm noted by students at each classroom visit, the increased number of students wanting to shadow, new health profession students starting their community based training are just a few signs that it is fall and things are a buzz.

While Mother Nature seems to be winding down for a cold winter our activities are just warming up.

It is also exciting to know that we have completed our first three years of AHEC funding with so many successes. It would take all of our space to thank everyone who has helped along the way.

A special thank you to Dr. Micheal Sitorius and Roxanna Jokela for their leadership in guiding the Nebraska AHEC program. Their commitment is evident in the successes seen at each AHEC in the state.

Thank you also to the statewide program office staff for answering all our questions and being there to help when we need an extra set of hands.

And a special thanks to everyone involved with NNAHEC from the beginning. The NNAHEC Board of Directors is always there to help with projects and guide us along a path to stay mission driven and meet the needs of our communities.

Current board members include: President Keith Neal, Vice President Mark Seier, Treasurer Anita Brenneman, Secretary Kathy Nordby, Senator Doug Cunningham, Ronald Briggs, Roger Weise, Theresa Palacio, Connie Cooper, Jean Henes, Gary Hastings, Shawn Percy, Ann Steckelberg, Jean Sturtevant and Dr. Sussy King.

Former Board members who I cannot thank enough for their time and talent include Sally McKenzie, Demarus Carlson, Dr. Heather Titman, Ann Fenton and Deb Scholten. Their contributions were greatly appreciated and we plan to still call on them for assistance!

The hardest thank you of all is to the NNAHEC staff, Donovan Roy, Marie Janke, Karen Wesche, Kyle Smith, our summer program assistant, and former staff member Gayle Wright.

Jumping in and trying to learn AHEC while doing activities is difficult. They accept the challenge and are always eager to try something new. I could never thank them enough for all they have done and continue to do.

Gretchen Forsell

Executive Director,
Northern Nebraska
AHEC



duties. She has folded T-shirts, put labels on envelopes, entered data into a data base, laminated documents, copied handouts and the list goes on.

"Many times Leslie will come in, something will have come up at the last minute and she just jumps in and gets it done. I don't know what we would do without her," said Executive

Director Gretchen Forsell.

In addition, this past month NNAHEC has taken simple projects to Envision, a center for mentally handicapped adults, and asked for their help.

The volunteers there are thrilled to help and perform such tasks as

See Volunteers continued on page 10

Handout Aimed at Helping Students Develop Science Projects

Last summer Northern Nebraska AHEC produced a handbook for teachers interested in becoming involved in the eighth grade science meets.

This handbook provided teachers with information on the educational standards that could be met with participation in the science meets, how to do projects and how to get students started.

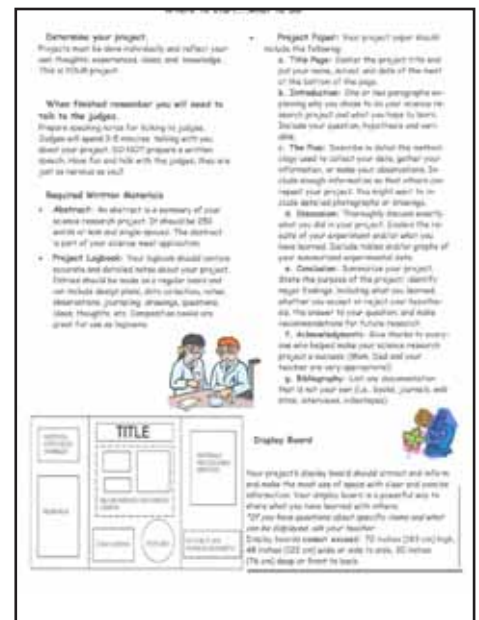
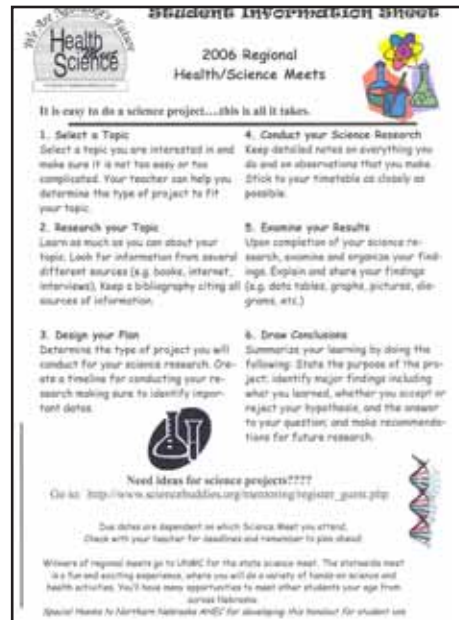
Many teachers found the handbook so helpful that they shared it with their students.

In response NNAHEC has taken this handbook and condensed the information into a one-page handout for students.

The handout provides students with general information on how to get started, provides a list of what is required to participate in the science fair and a helpful website to get ideas.

During development the handout was given to a group of eighth grader students for their opinion.

For many students the biggest



hurdle has been understanding what to do.

The students all said that the information in the handout was helpful and they would have no problem doing a science project. Many even said they have started thinking about ideas for their next project.

“We hope to get feedback from the students who use the handout this year and make any necessary changes.” said Gretchen Forsell, NNAHEC executive director.

Hopefully the handout will help increase participation in the eighth grade science meets, Forsell said.

Volunteers

(continued from page 9) collating packets for programs, sharpening pencils and wrapping appreciation gifts for presenters.

“Without the help of Leslie and the people at Envisions we wouldn’t be able to meet the needs of our region,” Forsell said.

“Volunteers provide an invaluable gift. Their time, talents and dependability are immeasurable.”

Gretchen Forsell, NNAHEC Executive Director

These volunteers will never know just how immeasurable their gift of time is to our success, she said.

Thank-you to all of you who help make our day at NNAHEC run that much smoother!

Members of NNAHEC Staff Assume Leadership Roles

Donovan Roy, a program coordinator with the Northern Nebraska AHEC has recently been elected to serve on the Nebraska Minority Public Health Association board.

NNAHEC Executive Directory Gretchen Forsell was selected to serve as Treasurer for the Norfolk Community Health Care Clinic



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. NNAHEC offices are located at 110 N. 16th St., Suite 2, Norfolk, NE 68701. The fax number is (402) 644-7254. For further information please visit the NNAHEC Web site at: www.nnahec.org, or contact one of the following:

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Workshop Increases Number of People Trained in Bioterrorism and Natural Disaster Preparedness

Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Nebraska has established itself as one of the leading states in the country in bioterrorism preparedness.

Now the Cornhusker State can claim another milestone, it ranks among the three largest training centers in the National Disaster Life Support program.

At the end of August a three-day workshop designed to provide participants with the necessary skills to become course instructors in bioterrorism and natural disaster preparedness was held in Kearney.

The workshop was a collaborative effort between the Center for Biopreparedness Education (the CBE is a joint project between the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Creighton University Medical Center) and the Center for Continuing Education (CCE) at UNMC.

“The idea is to train a group of instructors, then have them train the

next group,” said Leslie Gunning, program associate in the UNMC CCE and coordinator of the disaster training program.

“The ultimate goal is to provide a standardized approach for responding to a disaster.”

Gunning said Nebraska’s program for training instructors in disaster preparedness is exactly what federal officials envisioned.

“Our original course in Omaha provided disaster training for health professionals in Eastern Nebraska,” Gunning said. “However, we knew there was a need for us to provide this same training to the rest of the state.”

The goal of the CBE is to offer this same course each year both in Eastern and in Central/Western Nebraska, said Sharon Medcalf, associate director for the center.

“We want to ensure that all responders have the opportunity to be trained locally and in turn, train their colleagues,” Medcalf said.

The first day of the workshop was devoted to Basic Disaster Life Support (BDLS) and included a series of lectures dealing with response to all sorts of disasters.

The next two days focused on Advanced Disaster Life Support (ADLS) and featured lectures on mass triage, community and hospital disaster planning, media and communications during disasters and mass fatality management.

On the final day participants took part in an actual disaster training exercise.

The workshop is geared to physicians, nurses, physician assistants, dentists, pharmacists, allied health and public health professionals, law enforcement officials, emergency medical service and hazardous materials personnel.

“With the 37 instructors already trained we now have more than 70 certified instructors in our state,” Gunning said.

Mini-Medical School A Familiar Favorite Among Rural Communities

Mini-Medical School has become a common name in sixteen communities across the state of Nebraska.

For the past 10 years communities from Columbus to Scottsbluff have participated in the University of Nebraska Medical Center’s popular public education series by playing host.

The program is broadcast live from the auditorium of the Durham Research Center in Omaha on NebSat2.

“We have participated in mini-medical school for ten years and the majority of people who attend are area nurses who come for continuing education credits,” said Doug Hann, media tech coordinator at Central Community College in Columbus, Neb., “but we have had good responses from the

public too.”

The most recent mini-medical school, held in October, focused on the three most popular topics covered in the past 10 years – genetics, the brain and the heart — giving an update on any advances and treatment pertaining to each subject.

The communities that participated include: Chadron, Columbus, Grand Island, Harrison, Hastings, Holdrege, Kearney, Lincoln, Norfolk, North Platte, O’Neill, Red Cloud, Rushville, Scottsbluff, Sidney, Wayne.

Mini-Medical School began in 1995 and is the largest semiannual public education event sponsored by UNMC.

The free program is designed for anyone who wants to learn more

about issues surrounding significant developments in research and patient care.

The series is taught by experts and explores science in language anyone can understand.

The next Mini-Medical School will be held in the spring of 2006.

Continuing education credits are available for health care professionals for a small fee.

For more information about the 2005 Fall Mini-Medical School check out the Website at: www.unmc.edu/minimed. To become a host site for future Mini-Medical School events call Vicky Cerino, UNMC Public Affairs at (402) 559-5190 or e-mail her at: vcerino@unmc.edu

The 2005 Nebraska Rural Health Association Conference

Creating collaborations among rural health care providers is not easy Joan Frances said.

“But it can be done.”

As the executive director of the Rural Health Care Cooperative Network (RHCCN), Frances knows.

“A partnership will work,” she said, “if all of the agencies involved share a common vision, are open and inclusive and the roles and responsibilities of all involved are defined.”

For the past several years Frances has worked to form collaborations with more than 60 agencies in the Nebraska Panhandle to create the RHCCN.

The network was recognized by the National Rural Health Association



Joan Frances, left, is the executive director of the Rural Health Care Cooperative Network with Kim Engel, director of the Panhandle Public Health District.

as one of the most successful partnerships in the country.

Frances and Kim Engel, director of the Panhandle Public Health District, shared their secrets for success with attendees of the 2005 Nebraska Rural Health Association conference held Sept. 8-9 in Kearney.

Advocates of Rural Health Honored at Conference

More than 200 people attended the 2005 Nebraska Rural Health Association Conference held Sept. 8 & 9 in Kearney.

“It was a great opportunity to network with other rural health advocates and to learn more about key issues and trends,” said John Roberts, executive director of the NeRHA.

Topics presented at the conference ranged from learning about advances in telemedicine and emergency preparedness to discovering the community-based coalitions and partnership models currently making strides in Nebraska, Roberts said.

A highlight of the conference was the NeRHA awards banquet on Sept. 8.

Listed below are the awards and honorees:

President’s Award: Senator Ben Nelson and his staff for their work on federal legislation related to rural

“To convince the agencies to agree to a partnership we had to define what benefits the collaboration would have for the people they serve and the region,” Frances said.

It was also a matter of convincing those that deliver health and human services that they could accomplish more by working together rather than competing with one another.

In order to make any partnership work make sure everybody has the same information and avoid creating costly bureaucracies, she said.

The ten counties that make up the Panhandle Public Health District share the same vision, said Engel.

“We are a small number of people, so in order to ever get anywhere we have to come together,” she said. Both Engel and Frances said one component to creating successful partnerships is in creating a culture of collaboration.

For example, when the Rural Health Care Cooperative Network introduced the Welcome Baby program, all of the funding received was shared among all parties involved.

And they all had the same goal – provide in-home visits to all newborns 24 to 48 hours after birth.

The result was that no new staff needed to be hired and the nurses people encountered at their local hospitals were the same people making the site visits,” Engel said.

The impact of the collaborations has been phenomenal, Francis and Engel said.

The majority of health care providers, hospitals, public health departments, community action agencies and mental health providers in the panhandle that have been brought together now get the maximum use of available resources to provide residents with the best services, they said.

Grant to Prepare Students for Rigors of Medical School

Rural college students who have an interest in a medical or dental career now have the opportunity to spend six weeks immersed in academic medicine thanks to a new grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF).

The University of Nebraska Medical Center received a \$1.2 million grant to implement the Foundation's Summer Medical and Dental Education Program (SMDEP) for undergraduate students at its Omaha campus. UNMC is among 12 academic health centers nationwide to host this program.

The SMDEP is part of RWJF's Human Capital Portfolio and supports its goal to attract, develop and retain a high-quality health care workforce, with an emphasis on diversity and leadership development.

Rubens Pamies, M.D., vice chancellor for academic affairs at UNMC is principal investigator of the grant.

"This is a six-week enrichment program that not only brings undergraduate students up-to-speed on the fundamentals in the core sciences of medical school, but also on the strategies they will need to know when

they apply," Dr. Pamies said.

Along with academic courses in biology, chemistry and physics, the students will get advice on writing their essay for medical school, filling out the application and interviewing skills.

"The reason people don't get accepted into a professional school isn't just because of a low MCAT score," Dr. Pamies said. "It can also be because their approach is wrong."

An applicant might have a great resume and high test scores, he said, but if the person fails the interview they won't get in.

Another important aspect of the program, Dr. Pamies said, is that it reveals things about the students that don't necessarily show up on paper.

"Drive, motivation, ambition, perseverance – you really get a sense of those things when you work with a person," he said.

Lois Colburn, project director of the four-year grant and executive director of continuing education at UNMC, said the SMDEP program is set to begin with the first cohort of 80 students coming to UNMC in June of

2006.

"The target audience is rising sophomores and juniors who are from economically disadvantaged backgrounds or racial, ethnic and geographic groups that are underrepresented in medicine and dentistry," Colburn said.

Each student in the SMDEP will receive a \$1,000 stipend, attend classes taught by faculty from UNMC and the University of Nebraska at Omaha and have clinical shadowing opportunities in medicine and dentistry. All of the students will become certified in basic life support and heart saver first aid.

John Reinhardt, D.D.S., dean of the UNMC College of Dentistry, said this is a great opportunity for both the students and UNMC.

"We can help the students learn about and strengthen their passion for medicine or dentistry while also showcasing our strong academic programs," Dr. Reinhardt said.

"The SMDEP is a great way to help rural, disadvantaged and underrepresented minorities enter the field of health professions," Colburn said.

Professor to Share His Love of Science with Rural Youth

Maurice Godfrey, Ph.D., loves science.

As an associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Dr. Godfrey shares his enthusiasm for science with young people as often as he can, from visiting local schools to talking to students touring UNMC.

Through a five-year \$1.3 million Science Education Partnership Award (SEPA) from the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Godfrey will bring his enthusiasm to Native American youths on reservations in Nebraska and South Dakota.

"The long term goals of this project are to promote student interest in health sciences, foster a more science literate public and increase the number of Native Americans entering health careers," said Dr. Godfrey, principal investigator of the grant.

SEPA grants are designed to improve life science literacy by bringing together biomedical and behavioral researchers, educators and community groups in partnerships to create and disseminate programs that give K-12 students teachers a better understanding of life

sciences.

It will take a year to get the program established, Dr. Godfrey said.

He and co-investigator Roxanna Jokela, director of the Rural Health Education Network at UNMC, will first focus on establishing partnerships with tribal leaders, administrators and teachers from K-8 schools on and off the reservation that serve Native Americans in Nebraska.

"Working with teachers is one way to reach students," said Dr. Godfrey. "Reaching beyond the classroom to parents and communities is another."

Teachers will have input on the development of health science education modules to insure that they are age-appropriate and adequate for classroom use, Dr. Godfrey said.

To engage students the curriculum will adapt materials to provide cultural role models with input from tribal leaders.

"It's important to note that this grant is a partnership between UNMC, the schools, tribal colleges and the Aberdeen Area Tribal Chairman's Health Board," Dr. Godfrey said.

2005 Cattlemen's Ball Raises \$600,000 For Cancer Research

As nurses and staff in the University of Nebraska Medical Center tent were packing up for the day a man walked in.

He didn't introduce himself, instead he had come to the 2005 Cattlemen's Ball to say, "Thank you."

Just by chance at the 2004 State Fair, the man had received a free prostate specific antigen (PSA) screening for prostate cancer from these same nurses manning a booth there.

Five months earlier, he told them, his PSA level had been at four, a level considered normal. When he got his results back from the State Fair screening, his PSA level had soared to nine, an abnormally high level.

"I just wanted you to know that you saved my life," he said.

"That was really a special moment for the entire staff," said Sue Wardian, staff nurse for The Nebraska Medical Center and the UNMC Eppley Cancer Center.

"He never told us his name, but his message is unforgettable," she said. "It really let us know what a difference we can make by volunteering for an event like the State Fair or the Cattlemen's Ball."

Wardian said moments like that gives added meaning to the ball.

"Not only is it a great fund-raiser for cancer research," she said. "but it also has the potential of saving lives."

The UNMC Eppley Cancer Center is the primary recipient of this fund-raising effort with 90 percent of the proceeds going toward cancer research. The remaining 10 percent stays in the



Cattlemen's Ball hosts Herb and Kathy Albers present a check for \$600,00 to Ken Cowan, M.D., Ph.D., director of the Eppley Cancer Center at UNMC.

local area and is used for health care related activities.

On July 26 officials from the Cattlemen's Ball of Nebraska presented Ken Cowan, M.D., Ph.D., and director of the Eppley Cancer Center, with a check for \$600,000.

"This donation is beyond our wildest dreams," said Dr. Cowan. "Words can't adequately express how grateful we are to the Cattlemen's Ball staff for what they have accomplished. It is remarkable."

Over the previous seven years, the Cattlemen's Ball has raised more than \$880,000 for cancer research, with the previous record set in 2002 when \$207,000 was raised.

"The Cattlemen's Ball mission of supporting cancer research, showcasing a Nebraska ranch and promoting beef as a part of a healthy diet is resonating with more and more people each year," said Wade Horton, chairman of the Cattlemen's Ball of Nebraska

Advisory Board.

"This year's fund-raising results are not only a testament to the growing support we have received from across Nebraska, but also to the enthusiasm and hard work exhibited by the local businesses and individuals who are central to the success of the event."

Cancer survivor Herb Albers, who was diagnosed with a type of leukemia just over two years ago, and his wife Kathy, hosted the 2005 ball.

"Our lives have been touched by cancer," he said. "This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for us to help in the fight against cancer, while also bringing a great event to Northeast Nebraska."

The 2006 ball will be held June 3 in Milford, Neb. Hosts of the event, which is open to the public, are Bob and Marg Dickinson and the Midwest Feeding Company.

Tickets can be purchased by calling Jones National Bank & Trust in Milford at 1-888-562-3602.

New Student Community Health Program Takes Off

The new SEARCH program is off and flying.

With 30 students placed in its first year, Program Director Robyn Henderson was pleased with its success, so far.

“Thirty students is wonderful,” Henderson said. “Obviously we would like to have more, but I know we will get more when this year’s participants start spreading the word about what they did over their summer vacation!”

“I was able to staple my first scalp laceration in the ER,” said one nurse practitioner student after her rotation in a primary care clinic in Friend, NE.

She also saw patients with asthma, congestive heart failure, cancer, back pain and school physicals, just to name a few.

“I now know what a family practice in a rural clinic is all about,” she said, adding she intends to continue her clinical experience working in the clinic on a part-time basis.

Another nurse practitioner student who was located in Wymore, NE., found value in the interdisciplinary nature of the clinic.

“Working as a team is very important when caring for patients. Problem solving and brain storming about the various issues takes many providers with various experiences and education. I try to put myself in these patients’ world, with their health issues, problems financially and emotionally; it was an eye opener,” she said.

More than one participant faced challenges in finding the appropriate resources for uninsured or underinsured patients, especially when it came to prescriptions.

Two out-of-state students spent three to four weeks at the Indian Health Services hospital on the Winnebago Indian Reservation.

“This was a fantastic opportunity for these students, one from UCLA and the other from Dartmouth College, who chose Nebraska to learn about community service opportunities,” said Henderson.

“They had a terrific preceptor that really spent time working with them, not only with the scientific and academic part of health care, but also from the human dimension. This was information they would never learn in class or from a text book.”

The students also had the opportunity to learn about the Native American culture in a more intimate setting by helping out at the Winnebago powwow that was held while they were there.

While in Winnebago, the participants also spent time with several high school students discussing health issues and college opportunities.

In addition to clinical experience, SEARCH participants also gain understanding about being a part of a small community.

Participants are required to get involved in community activities that

will take them outside of the clinical scope of work.

Many students provided informational sessions to high school students about health careers.

Some worked with parents, day-care providers, and educators about the special needs of children with behavioral health concerns.

One SEARCH participant planned and implemented a Bike Rodeo and Helmet Safety event for the children in her local community.

“It is important for health providers to understand the expectations that communities place on them in addition to their health care role.

Many are looked to as the leaders in the community and students can use this opportunity to enhance their leadership skills, understand why it is important to involve the entire community in decision-making, and learn how to adjust to seeing patients at church, at the grocery store, or when out for dinner,” Henderson observed.

“It can be tough at first, but it also helps you know what other things are going on in a person’s life that may be affecting their physical health,” she said.

One first year medical student had a totally different rewarding community experience. She spent an entire week working as a counselor with a group of junior high students at a health careers camp in Fremont.

Northern Nebraska AHEC sponsored the camp.

Health Professions Tracking Center Prints 10th Edition of Popular Directory

The 10th edition of the Health Professions Tracking Center’s “Directory of Nebraska and Western Iowa Healthcare Resources” is now available for purchase.

This year 25 pages were added to the publication to accommodate a special section on dental practices.

“Each year we try to do something to enhance the directory,” said

Marlene Deras, operations manager.

“We want it to be a useful and valuable resource,” she said.

The HPTC directory offers a wealth of information in an easy to use format. It is broken down by profession and practice location and includes listings of physicians, dentists, pharmacists, nurse practitioners, physician assistants and

members of the Nebraska Optometric Association.

The directories cost \$70 each when purchasing five or fewer; \$65 for orders of six to 10 directories; and \$60 when ordering 11 or more.

To order, you can e-mail the HPTC at HPTC@unmc.edu or call them at (402) 559-2903.

New Grants, Expanded AHEC Funding Round Out A Busy Year

The last couple months have been very busy and very exciting!

We've started work on a new grant, received enough federal funds to open two new AHEC centers and been busy planning for the National AHEC Conference next summer.

While times are exciting they are also very trying with the never ending question of whether or not there will be federal funding next year?

By the time you get this newsletter we will hopefully know the answer to that question.

With the enthusiasm that is growing in the new AHEC communities, we can only be optimistic until we hear otherwise!

Over the past two months the staff at each AHEC center and in the program office have been collaborating to look at how we can

Roxanna Jokela
**Director, Rural Health
Education Network**

**Deputy Director,
Nebraska AHEC
Program Offices**



best tell the AHEC story.

While each AHEC works to design the best possible programs to meet local needs, we need a coordinated identity when we look at our program statewide.

In the next few months we hope to have a special insert in this newsletter that will tell what the Nebraska AHEC is, what we have accomplished and what our future plans are.

If you have not marked your calendars to attend the National AHEC conference, it will be at the Qwest

Center June 10-14.

Committees have formed and they are working fervently to make sure Nebraska AHEC hosts the best NAO conference yet!

This is a great opportunity for you and our communities to learn about AHECs and what they can do for your community.

As mentioned before, in this issue you will read about the newly funded National Institutes of Health Science Education Partnership Award grant.

The grant allows us to partner with reservation schools, the Aberdeen Area Tribal Chairman's Health Board (AATCHB) and Liberty Elementary, an urban school in Omaha, to raise awareness of and interest in the health sciences.

Finally, may you all have a blessed, safe and happy holiday season.

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