

A partnership with Fairbanks Memorial Hospital/Denali Center and the University of Alaska Anchorage

- *Recruitment into Health Careers*
- *Assistance to Students Scheduling Clinical Rotations*
- *Retention of Rural Providers through Expanded Continuing Education Opportunities*

200 STUDENTS ROTATE THROUGH FMH/DC

In the course of the 2006-2007 academic year, 200 health programs students from a half-dozen Western schools and universities came to the Fairbanks Memorial Hospital/Denali Center (FMH) to complete their clinical rotations. The students are enrolled in nursing (certified, licensed, registered, and bachelors), radiology, physician assistant, social work, paramedic, dietician, pharmacy and rehabilitation programs. Their rotations ranged from 40 to 400 clinical hours in the facility.

Clinical Rotations Coordinator Russ Amerson assisted each and every student from Day One in having a successful experience. From Orientation to fingerprinting to ID badge to computer access and immunization records, Russ tracks students from before the moment they arrive until they have completed their clinical rotations.

A critical first step in the process is making sure that legal contracts are in place between the various schools and the facility. Faculty members must be in compliance with all regulations governing hospital employees. Clinical directors and supervisors are consulted about the possibility of placing students on their specific units. And sometimes students require financial assistance with housing or transportation costs.

Interior AHEC has also worked with students from outlying communities. A group of Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) students enrolled at the Chukchi Campus of the University of Alaska Fairbanks in Kotzebue came to FMH to do their rotations, as well as a class of CNA students from the Northwest Campus in Nome. Negotiations are underway to assist a group of CNA students from Ilisagvik College in Barrow to do their rotations in the Fall 2007 semester.

NATIONAL AHEC NETWORK

Though Alaska's AHEC is new, Interior AHEC is fortunate to be operating as part of a statewide and national network of centers. The national network consists of 51 AHEC programs and 205 affiliated AHEC centers across the United States. Funding comes initially from the federal agency Health Resources and Services Administration in the Department of Health and Social Services. Federal funding for AHEC programs eventually diminishes while other community, industry and educational partners step in. <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/ahec>

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CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR RURAL PROVIDERS

Interior AHEC goals include an annual survey of health care providers throughout the region to determine continuing education (CE) needs. Courses offered through the Interior AHEC office or in partnership with other health care organizations are intended to reduce professional isolation and provide opportunities to keep skills current.

Special CE events in 2006 included a week in

August of continuing education classes for 13 community health aides from various villages in the region. This was a great success by all accounts and so the partnership with Tanana Chiefs Conference and Athabaskan Tribal Governments will have a repeat performance in August 2007. Also on behalf of the health aide program, a DVD is being produced to orient new

health aides to the latest edition of the manual used statewide.

Interior AHEC also co-sponsored three classes in becoming a preceptor, in which providers learn skills that assist them in teaching their skills to new providers. This helps overall to orient new providers to their profession and establish a mentor relationship with a more experienced provider.

www.interiorahec.com



Interior AHEC staff members (from left): Russ Amerson, Tania Clucas, and Lillian Ruedrich

HEALTH CAREER RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES

Get kids interested in health careers! This is the first objective of recruitment activities at Interior AHEC. Education Specialist Tania Clucas has worked to develop and maintain relationships with school counselors in nine Interior school districts to determine the best ways to reach youth interested in health care careers. Thanks to her efforts, a program is evolving to make information about health careers available and accessible to all interested students.

Tours—Eight student groups have visited Fairbanks Memorial Hospital to find out what it's like to work in a hospital, including three special education classes, a Girl Scout troop, the youth conference members of the Tanana Chiefs Conference, health

sciences students from the Galena school district, a church group and high school nutrition class.

Job shadow experiences—over 60 students have participated in the job shadow program during the 2006-2007 academic year, and spent a half day to 16 hours observing hospital professionals in their jobs. Students were overwhelmingly enthusiastic in their appreciation of this opportunity. In addition, almost 20 individuals considering a change in their jobs or career have used this program to gain a sense of the possibilities in the health care field.

Job fairs—Interior AHEC has had an information table set up at six local job and college fairs, with lots of inquiries as to career opportunities in the

health field and educational requirements for various professions. Tania has also traveled to Tanana to participate in a job fair at the high school in that community.

Public lecture series—collaboration with the Alaska WWAMI Medical School program allowed a series of public lectures on current medical topics to be offered to students and the general Fairbanks area population each Monday evening in October 2006. An average of 50 people attended each lecture, with subjects ranging from liver disease, spinal cord injuries, influenza to changing paradigms of human behavior. Speakers used lectures and interactive patient examples to demonstrate the latest innovations in medical science.

“The Job Shadow met all of my expectations! I loved every single minute of it! Everything I did kept me up on my toes and wanting more.”

LILLIAN RUEDRICH, INTERIOR AHEC DIRECTOR

Lillian Ruedrich has been working on issues of rural Alaska workforce development since the mid 1990's, first in tourism and economic development while living in Juneau; eventually turning to rural health care workforce needs upon relocating to Fairbanks five years ago. While a University employee, she helped to coordinate a pilot project to distance deliver associates and bachelors degrees to rural Alaskans already employed in village clinics. This experience and her current work as director of Interior AHEC has inspired her to become an advocate for building the network of healthcare providers serving all of the Interior and Alaska.

“Our service area, Interior Alaska, is served by a mix of 30 village clinics staffed primarily by community health aides, six public health clinics or federally designated community health centers, three military facilities, three regional facilities in the Fairbanks area including Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, and various smaller private clinics. So in essence, we are working with the entire spectrum of facilities and providers, from FMH with 1200 employees to the village clinics staffed by one or two health aides. Quite the challenge!”

