

INTERIOR ALASKA AHEC

Healthcare Workforce Development for the Interior

FALL 2008—NOVEMBER
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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*

MINI-MEDICAL SCHOOL LECTURE SERIES

The Fairbanks public had the opportunity throughout October to attend a series of four lectures addressing hot topics in the medical field. The presentations were held at Wedgewood Resort each Tuesday, and there was no charge to attend. They were sponsored by Fairbanks Memorial Hospital and the WWAMI office at University of Alaska Anchorage. Interior AHEC Education Specialist Tania Clucas helped to arrange for the venue and coordinate the events (tania.clucas@bannerhealth.com).

Dr Rosalyn Singleton with the Centers for Disease Control was the first guest. She talked about immunizations, how they work, are they safe, and what new immunizations are being developed.

The second event featured Dr Terry Maresca speaking on using herbals in medicine. Dr Maresca's training includes both a Western and Native traditional

perspective. She gave information on how to determine the efficacy of herbal medicines and supplements, and their important role in health and wellness.

Dr Tom Nighswander shared his experiences in the sub Sahara nation of Malawi in a talk titled "Life and Health in the Have-Not Part of the World." He has traveled there with his wife each year for the past 11 years to work at the Malawi Children's Village, which supports 2,500 HIV/AIDS orphans.

The last evening of the series featured Dr Shihadeh and Dr Andrew Cox of the Fairbanks Cancer Treatment Center to present some of the astonishing new developments in the treatment of cancer. There are many options for patients and doctors as they work together to select therapies best suited to each individual case.

PATHWAYS INTO HEALTH CONFERENCE

Girdwood, AK—The national advocacy organization Pathways Into Health held their annual conference at Alyeska Resort in early September. Russ Amerson, Clinical Rotations Coordinator for Interior AHEC, presented information about the successful collaboration resulting in two groups of students in the certified nursing assistant program traveling to

Fairbanks from Nome to spend two weeks completing their clinical rotations at the Denali Center long term care facility. The students were taking part in a distance delivered program through the Nome campus of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. They worked on classroom activities while still in their region, and through a joint effort of

the Norton Sound Health Corporation, the Northern Alaska Technical Education Center and Interior AHEC, finished the required rotation hours to take the state certification exam.

Pathways Into Health is a grassroots organization dedicated to improving the health, health care, and health care education of American Indi-

ans and Alaska Natives. This was their third annual conference, attended by over 100 health care educators from around the country. They are striving to create innovative, interprofessional, team-based educational programs for health professions students, distance delivered for greatest access.

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DIRECTOR REPORTS ON YEAR 3 ACTIVITIES—SEP '07 TO AUG '08

During the third year of operation, Interior AHEC staff continued to work towards the three goal areas common to all centers in the national AHEC network. Collaborating with community partners, we

- Delivered the Job Shadow program and other activities to interest youth in choosing health careers
- Provided students with clinical rotation placements at Fairbanks Memorial Hospital/Denali Center and in underserved areas of the Interior
- Assisted rural health care providers to obtain continuing professional and medical education

There have been challenges to handle, and at the same time, a growing network of personal and professional relationships available as resources. We have many accomplishments to be proud of, and plans for the future to help us stay focused and committed to our goals. I am most grateful for the dedicated staff in our office, the terrific staff at FMH/DC who are so welcoming to students, and the Advisory Council members who continue to meet quarterly to keep us connected to the needs of our community health care agencies.

One of our most important and rewarding ongoing partnerships is with the Tanana Chiefs Conference and the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments. Both agencies manage health care services in Interior villages through the Community Health Aide Program. For the third year running, Interior AHEC helped to coordinate a week of continuing education classes in Fairbanks for a group of 12 health aides, funding travel expenses, lodging, and meeting space for the classes.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks Tanana Valley Campus (TVC) is another important partner. The Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program is growing rapidly, and classes are offered through the Fairbanks TVC Center and Hutchison High School, as well as remote locations such as the Nome campus of UAF. One hundred forty CNA students were placed at FMH/DC over the course of the 07-08 school year to complete their clinical rotation hours.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough School District worked with us to select three teachers to do a summer externship at FMH/DC. Through extensive job shadowing experiences with hospital staff over a two week period, they learned about the range and scope of local health care careers. In their classrooms, the educators are using what they learned in the program to enrich their curriculum and inform their students about the variety of career options available in health care.

School districts across the region are taking advantage of the Job Shadow program and other outreach activities to bring information to students about health careers. **Almost 600 middle- and high school students had a job shadow experience or learned about health careers through a tour, a speaker, or career fair information tables.** This is the start of the health care workforce pipeline, and making connections between youth and providers goes a long way to introduce them to the rewarding careers available in health care.

For those students already enrolled in a health professions education program, clinical rotations are often part of the required coursework. Placements close to home help to keep students in the state and in our rural communities where the workforce need is greatest. **Overall, Interior AHEC placed 263 health care students during the 07-08 school year.** This included three medical students placed in rural or underserved locations and 11 CNA students who returned to their rural communities after completing their rotations in FMH/DC.

“I am most grateful for the dedicated staff in our office, the terrific staff at FMH/DC who are so welcoming to students, and the Advisory Council members who keep us connected to the needs of our health care community.”

In the year to come we hope to develop a regional workforce development plan that is a useful tool for the many agencies struggling to address the issues. We plan to partner with the Red Cross to bring a babysitter training program to several rural communities as a pilot. We have a well-developed curriculum ready for use in creating a Youth Health Service Corp with one of our school district partners. One thing for sure, there is no shortage of new challenges and opportunities as we strive to “leave no stone unturned” in our efforts to be the health careers resource center for our region.

Lillian Ruedrich