

# *The Advocate*

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## From the Director

We have had several important events occur since our last newsletter. Sadly, Dr. Harvey White and his family have left Mobile and the University of South Alabama to pursue other opportunities. Dr. White founded the USA Center for Healthy Communities (CHC) and laid a solid foundation from which to grow. He continues to advise us and support us in our endeavors, and all of us, the City of Mobile and the University, are deeply indebted to him. We wish him and his family the best as they move forward. For now I am serving as interim director as we develop our plans to find an energetic, accomplished, and motivated person to take on permanent leadership of the Center.

We are now recognized as a Center of Excellence by the NIH's National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities. We were awarded a center grant that provides over \$900,000 per year for five years to work toward our goal of eliminating health disparities. These funds are used to support several research projects and community engagement activities focused on our goal. Previously, this project was known as EXPORT. We are grateful for all of the support provided by our collaborators and advisors from across all sectors of the Greater Mobile area. The collaborative relationships that have been developed with the

business, education / academic, faith-based, community service, and medical sectors had to be the major factor in our receipt of this award. These collaborative relationships are essential for us to achieve our objective and make our region, indeed our nation, a healthier place.

We hope that you find this newsletter informative. We want your feedback so that we can provide the best service possible. We look forward to highlighting the achievements of our partners and the Center itself and invite all those interested to find ways to collaborate in our effort.



Dr. Errol Crook  
CHC Principal Investigator

Errol D. Crook, M.D.  
Abraham A. Mitchell Professor and Chair  
Department of Internal Medicine  
Interim Director, USA Center for Healthy Communities

## CHC Mission Statement

**The Center for Healthy Communities is the lead entity within the University of South Alabama for coordinating community education, research, public service and health activities to help eliminate health disparities, foster access to health care for underserved populations and enhance the capacity of individuals to better participate in decision making about their health.**

## CHA Directed Project Award

USA Center for Healthy Communities would like to congratulate Theresa McPherson for being awarded funding through the Community Health Advocate (CHA) Directed Projects. Ms. McPherson's *Listen, Learn & Live:*



Theresa McPherson  
CHA

*Healthy Living Program* is designed to empower women and girls to improve their lives by making healthy lifestyle changes. This program will provide them with educational information on health issues, identifying negative behaviors related to health, cooking strategies and physical activity. The goal of the *Listen, Learn & Live* program is to lower health disparities among African American women.

The *Listen, Learn & Live: Healthy Living Program* will be facilitated by Escape to Tranquility, which is an organization that Theresa McPherson began several years

ago to assist women. Escape to Tranquility's mission is to strengthen and empower women to take back the responsibility of the health of their families and communities.

Ms. McPherson is a member of Mt. Hebron Church and is currently a CHC Community Health Advocate. She became a Community Health Advocate to acquire additional tools on addressing health disparities to strengthen outreach efforts offered by Escape to Tranquility. Ms. McPherson believes that our health care system could be reformed with improved communication between doctors and patients. She strongly advocates for greater access to doctors for advice regarding health and more emphasis being placed on self empowerment and gaining knowledge concerning health for yourself.

CHC would like to thank Theresa McPherson for her continued effort in working with and assisting members of the community through her work as a Community Health Advocate.

# Advocating Change

## In the Community

The University of South Alabama, Center for Healthy Communities – Center of Excellence is building a network of Community Health Advocates (CHA's) to assist in developing and implementing research initiatives and to disseminate accurate and evidence-based health information within their communities. CHA's are self-identified lay workers who are well connected in their communities and interested in delivering health information through interpersonal contacts and through community based organizations such as churches, local gathering places such as barber shops and beauty salons, and sororities. During the initial phase of the program, CHA's identified issues in health care, barriers to effective health information delivery, and problems with access to care within their communities. The trusted position of CHA's emanates from their connections to individuals, families, and community based organizations. Research and program development at the Center of Excellence follows the Community Based Participatory Research model. As a group of key informants, CHA's can provide insight into the "real" issues of communication and decision making at both the individual/family and community level. As research partners, CHA's can identify issues that University researchers might not otherwise explore and assist in delivery of culturally sensitive information through informal networks, churches, or community-based health and social organizations.

The focus of CHA activity has now moved to training and the program has expanded to include both adult and youth CHA's. Approximately 20 adult CHA's and 10 youth CHA's are currently active. Monthly meetings provide an opportunity for CHA's to share ideas and discuss issues as well as to participate in training opportunities. Additional training activities may be provided by the staff of the Center of Excellence or may be identified by CHA's or Center staff from a range of

offerings in the community. CHA's may also participate in statewide and national training opportunities with support from the Center of Excellence.

Youth CHA's have been identified through the Center of Excellence Pipeline programs – STARS & STRIPES. The idea for cross-generation sharing of health information emerged in meetings of adult CHA's. The adult CHA's were concerned about the inaccuracy of health information among young people in their communities, as well as disparities in such health problems as

*of communication and decision making at both the individual/family and community level.*

underweight births, incidence of HIV-AIDS, childhood obesity and poor nutrition. Several of the adult CHA's are retired educators or nurses (retired and working) who are also aware that young people in their communities may not be receptive to traditional health education formats. The youth CHA's are currently planning a youth oriented health fair which they have titled,

"One Night Stand" to signify the need for youth to take a stand against health disparities. The event will include radio rap sessions, an afternoon/evening of intensive discussion of health issues, and follow-up activities to get important health messages out to youth.

In order to encourage both adult and youth CHA's to seek a variety of training opportunities, a CHA Passport to Empowerment program was initiated in 2008. CHA's receive stamps in their CHA Passports as rewards for participating in approved training events. The program allows CHA's to advance through five levels of certification with increasing levels of training and related community based dissemination activities. In the later levels of the passport program, CHA's are required to make presentations to disseminate the health information they have received through training.

CHA's also help to plan and implement the Regional Health Disparities Symposium (RHDS), an annual event held in July. The 2008 RHDS featured CHA's as co-leaders for discussion groups who addressed health disparities issues that had been identified

in the participating communities. Discussion groups prioritized issues and developed action plans to address the priorities. CHA's are working on various strategies to implement the action plans. The primary mechanism of support for CHA's in addressing these priorities is CHA Directed Program funding. CHA's are being encouraged to initiate, implement, and evaluate programs within their communities. This program provides training in proposal development, mentoring in grant proposal writing, and funding for projects up to \$1,000 each.

Round II of the CHA Directed Program funding competition has been launched with a proposal deadline of March 1, 2009. Proposals must address one of the priorities identified at the 2008 Regional Health Disparities Symposium including: (1) women's roles in family health, (2) nutrition, physical activity, and obesity, (3) violence, (4) safe housing, and (5) health care policy. For information or assistance in developing a proposal, contact Lee Ann Kendrick, Hettie Vaughn, or Terrie Henderson at the Center of Excellence (471-7705) or Dr. Roma Hanks (460-6020 or [rhanks@usouthal.edu](mailto:rhanks@usouthal.edu)).

*Are you interested in attending a CHA meeting?*

**The CHA meetings are scheduled for every third Wednesday from 4:00-5:00pm at the CHC Center of Excellence office located on Stanton Road.**



## Building Healthy Girls, & Strong Women

**U**SA Center for Healthy Communities, Center of Excellence partnered with the USA College of Nursing and hosted a *BodyWorks Train the Trainer* program at the Toulminville Branch Library. 24 participants from area organizations completed the *Train the Trainer* program and agreed to facilitate follow-up sessions with parents and caregivers from the community.

*Bodyworks* is an obesity prevention program that was developed for use with parents and caregivers at the community level by trainers from community organizations. *BodyWorks*, developed by the U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Women's Health, focuses on helping girls ages 9 to 13 and their families create healthier lifestyles. It focuses on parents as role models and provides them with the tools and support needed to create healthy lifestyles for their children.

The objectives of the *BodyWorks* program was to train representatives from area organizations on how to facilitate the program with small groups of parents and caregivers. Training participants learned the key principles that shape the components of the program which included how

to engage in healthy discussion, correlating how your emotions effect your eating. During the course of the training, participants discussed strategies for determining proper food choices, proper portion sizes of various foods, overcoming barriers to physical activity and how to set goals for eating and activity.

If you would like additional information on the *BodyWorks* program you can visit the US Department of Health & Human Services website at [www.womenshealth.gov/bodyworks/](http://www.womenshealth.gov/bodyworks/).

## Women & Cervical Cancer

**C**ervical cancer is the easiest cancer to prevent. Almost all cervical cancer is caused by human papillomavirus (HPV), which is a virus that infects the skin and mucous membrane of humans. HPV is a common virus that is passed from one person to another during sex.

There are two tests that can prevent or detect cervical cancer early including the Pap test (or Pap smear) and the HPV test. The Pap test looks for precancerous cell changes on the cervix and the HPV test looks for the virus that can cause these cell changes.

Women should begin having a Pap test at the age of 21 or within three years of the first time having sex.

Risk factors for cervical cancer are not having annual Pap tests, not following up on abnormal Pap tests, having HIV/AIDS and smoking. In the early stages of

cervical cancer there usually are no signs or symptoms. However, advanced cervical cancer can cause abnormal bleeding and discharge from the vagina.

You can lower your risk for cervical cancer by not smoking, using condoms during sex and limiting your number of sexual partners.

January was National Cervical Cancer Screening Month and all women are encouraged to schedule an appointment with a health care professional to have a Pap test completed.

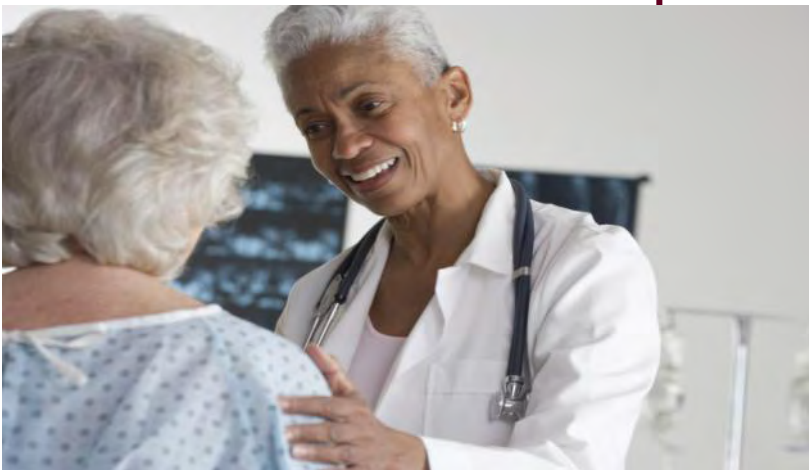
### HPV Vaccine

**If you are between 11-26 years old, you can help prevent cervical cancer by getting the HPV vaccine. The vaccine is effective against the types of HPV that most often cause cervical, vaginal and vulvar cancers. Talk to your doctor or health care professional to get more information.**

#### Diabetes Telemonitoring Project

**T**he Research Office is charged with research and evaluation of a type II diabetes tele-monitoring trial conducted at the main adult clinic of the Mobile County Health Department (Dr. Bernard Eichold, PI; Dr. Martha Arrieta, Co-PI, Dr. Errol Crook, Co-PI). Funded by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (Finding Answers: Disparities Research for Change grant program), the two-year project will test the effectiveness of using telephones to transmit glucose levels from patients at home to a central server. Patients in both the intervention tele-monitoring group (100 patients) and the control group (100 patients) will be enrolled for nine months. Immediately after checking their glucose at home, intervention group patients dial a 1-800 number and enter their blood sugar using the phone's keypad. Patient glucose levels are then stored in the patient's cyberfile (*RMEDE*, designed and operated by the University of South Alabama Center for Strategic Health Innovation). *RMEDE* automatically sends e-mail alerts to the study nurse coordinator if the patient's sugar is out of physician-prescribed range. The nurse and/or the patient's physician can thus address hyper- or hypoglycemic events immediately and from a distance by calling the intervention group patient or taking other action. Moreover, a visual picture of the patient's sugars over time can be created using the report-making feature of the computer system. It is expected that patients who are transmitting their glucose over the phone will achieve better glucose stability than those recording values in a paper and pencil log (control group), and will thus be at a reduced risk for adverse complications of diabetes.

We are still in the recruitment phase of the project having enrolled 50 patients, 25% of our 200 patient goal. If you would like further information about the study, please contact Shantisha Hansberry at [chcresearch@usouthal.edu](mailto:chcresearch@usouthal.edu).



**I**t has been a very busy and exciting year for the CHC Research Office. We have conducted new projects with community and university partners, and added several new members to our team.

We have launched five pilot projects which include:

- A family-oriented obesity intervention at the University of South Alabama Pediatric Healthy Life Center, facilitated by Dr. Judy Blair-Elortegui (PI) and Dr. Daniel Preud'Homme (Co-PI).
- A project working to improve medical resident communication skills and address community distrust of providers by using ethical dilemmas as tools to foster communication facilitated by Dr. Errol Crook (PI) and Dr. Maggie O'Brien (Co-PI).
- A project examining the impact of job type on individual and family abilities to obtain health care conducted by Dr. Kenneth Hudson (PI).
- A project which uses the USA Breathmobile to enhance asthma diagnosis and care to public school children conducted by Dr. Loran Clement (PI).
- Dr. Martha Arrieta (PI) is working to build a network among Gulf Coast community health centers and other entities in the safety net healthcare infrastructure in order to improve continuity of care for patients with chronic diseases in the aftermath of natural disasters.

Also, the Health Disparities Research Group (HDRG)—an interdisciplinary group of faculty who meet regularly to address research issues in health disparities—has been working closely with Bay Area Women Coalition (BAWC) Executive Director, Ms. Leevones Dubose, to launch a community based participatory research project. Ms. Dubose and BAWC have noted a connection in local housing conditions with the respiratory health of household members, particularly children. BAWC has asked for assistance from the HDRG in collecting the data to support this observation. HDRG faculty will train BAWC staff and volunteers in research methodology. BAWC volunteers will then design an assessment tool and conduct an environmental health survey in the Trinity Gardens neighborhood.

HDRG is also working diligently to recruit nationally recognized guest speakers with expertise in health disparities. Stay tuned for 2009 event dates.

## Academic Pipeline

Last summer, the **Student Training for Academic Reinforcement in the Sciences (STARS)** and **Special Training to Raise Interest and Prepare for Entry into the Sciences (STRIPES)** peaked to an all time high with the largest participation of students along with parental support. A total of thirty students participated in the Academic Pipeline Programs which included nineteen students in STARS and eleven students in STRIPES. Among the STARS participants, five in the **Short-Term Education Program for Underrepresented Persons (STEP-UP)** program and five students participated in our Shadowing Program.

The **STARS Shadowing Program** is designed for students to shadow health care professionals who can provide them with an opportunity to receive invaluable learning experiences, exposure to health care practices, and medical research experience. The six week paid internship is based on the students' professional interests. They are partnered with various distinguished, local health professionals who are interested in mentoring. The following is a list of professionals who participated last summer:



Sharnika Gildrsleeve & Myesha McCants

Porter, MD MBA, OB/GYN Program Director, USA Center for Women's Health; Thomas W. Butler, MD -USA Mitchell Cancer Institute; Daniel H. Spriggs, MD- Providence Hospital; Rosina Connelly, MD, MPH - USA Department of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine. Throughout the internship, the students kept a daily journal of their activities; wrote weekly reports about their experience; performed self-evaluations on their strengths and weaknesses, and created power point presentations about their overall internship experience and how it impacted their attitudes or feelings about their chosen career path.

The **Short-Term Education Program for Underrepresented Persons (STEP-UP)** is sponsored by the Office of Minority

*The Academic Pipeline Program serves as the coordinating body for a variety of programs including STARS, STRIPES and STEP-UP. The Pipeline Program is designed to provide access to educational opportunities as well as prepare students for a field in the Health professions. The program targets rising sophomore, junior and senior high school students from Mattie T. Blount, John L. Leflore, C.F. Vigor and Ben C. Rain High Schools.*

Health Research Coordination (OMHRC) in the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). The **STEP-UP Program** is designed to provide short-term research education for high school students from racial and ethnic minority or disadvantaged backgrounds to expose them to research in areas of diabetes, endocrinology, metabolism, nutrition, obesity, digestive, liver, urologic, kidney, and hematologic diseases.

The STEP-UP Program provided support for eight consecutive weeks during the summer in basic research education and training provided by our experienced faculty Drs. Martha Arrieta, Errol Crook, and Roma Hanks. The program culminated with a Scientific Session and Summer Research Presentations held at the world renowned campus of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland. The students presented their research to an audience of their peers, mentors, and scientific experts, in addition to enjoying other exciting events such as touring NIH and the Nation's Capitol. Furthermore, these students participated in the 2008 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Undergraduate Symposium at USA; University Committee on Undergraduate Research (UCUR), where they displayed their published poster presentations.

Throughout the year, our **STARS Saturday Academy** program provides on-going support structures and educational enrichment opportunities throughout the academic school year. It also provides after school tutoring in Math, Science, and English for both STARS & STRIPES students. The program holds a series of monthly Saturday workshops addressing topics in: Academic Enrichment, Life Skills Enhancement, and Youth Community Health Advocates.

For more information about our Academic Pipeline Programs, Becoming a Mentor, or an Application Packet. Please contact Diana Falcon at the USA Center for Healthy Communities, Center of Excellence at (251) 470-1687 or visit our website to obtain an application at [www.southalabama.edu/healthycommunities/export/edu/apply.html](http://www.southalabama.edu/healthycommunities/export/edu/apply.html).

## Addressing Health Through Faith

The faith-based community has consistently emphasized positive spiritual health in congregant members. In recent years, the faith community has played a more active role in encouraging its members to improve their physical health. CHC has collaborated with area churches in providing educational information and tools necessary to improve the physical health of members. The faith-based community has become an essential component in addressing health issues and providing education. Churches have partnered with the Center in establishing health ministries and further enhancing existing ministries.

Health ministers were designated at each church to participate in training and to plan health promotional events for their church and surrounding community. Through their programs, they have facilitated various health promotional activities which have encouraged healthy lifestyle changes and education concerning health related conditions and issues. Churches have facilitated

health fairs, exercise classes, health conferences and youth educational events.

The Center is also partnering with Universal Patient Record Information Systems (UPRIS) Corporation in providing the faith community access to vital health information. UPRIS is a health information technology firm that develops consumer-centered, website communities built around people that share a common interest in improving their health. UPRIS has developed online personal health records (PHRs) to assist members of the faith-based community in monitoring their health. PHRs are an excellent resource to assist in monitoring the state of your health and chronic health conditions. In addition to health information and PHRs members will have access to useful health tools including recipes, health quizzes and assessments.

If you are interested in starting a health ministry at your church or would like assistance in planning health promotional events for your church contact FeAunte Preyear at (251)414-8001 or by e-mail at [fpreyear@usouthal.edu](mailto:fpreyear@usouthal.edu).



*Are you interested in creating an online personal health record?*

Visit

[www.ourhealthministry.com](http://www.ourhealthministry.com) to register and access health information and tools to enhance your church's health ministry.

## WORLD AIDS DAY

Leadership was the theme for World AIDS Day on December 1, 2008. This theme was selected to encourage community leaders at every level to keep the promise, to feel empowered to act and to stop AIDS. It is especially important for the leaders of the past, in the fight against AIDS, to look to the future and pass the torch to the leaders of tomorrow.

CHC would like to recognize Amber Beavers and Barbara Blair for being trail blazers for the next generation of leaders in the fight against AIDS. While they are student assistants at CHC, Ms. Beavers is the President and Ms. Blair is a member of AIDS Awareness Poets, Inc. (AAP), Alabama Chapter. To commemorate World AIDS Days last year, AAP made personalized red ribbons in exchange for a small donation. The money that was do-

notated was given to an area AIDS service organization assisting those affected by this disease.

They also completed an outreach effort in downtown Mobile where cards stating facts concerning HIV/AIDS were disseminated to individuals visiting local businesses.



Amber Beavers & Barbara Blair

The CDC estimates that there are approximately 1.1 million people living with HIV in the United States, as of December 2008. According to the Alabama Department of Public Health, there have been close to 16,000 (cumulative) HIV/AIDS cases report in the state of Alabama.



CHC Staff

## Upcoming Events

**Feb. 20th, 2009**

*HDRG*

meeting in the  
College of Medicine  
Conference Room  
from  
1:00 pm– 2:30 pm

**March 1st, 2009**

*Round II Competition*

CHA Directed Program  
Funded Project  
deadline.  
Submit your proposals on  
time!

**March 18th, 2009**

*CHA*

meeting in the CHC  
Center of Excellence  
Conference Room  
from  
4:00 pm– 5:00 pm

**March 20th, 2009**

*HDRG*

meeting in the  
College of Medicine  
Conference Room  
from  
1:00 pm– 2:30 pm

**March 31st, 2009**

*STARS & STRIPES*

Applications for  
enrollment deadline.  
Submit your applications  
on time!

**April 17th, 2009**

*HDRG*

meeting in the  
College of Medicine  
Conference Room  
from  
1:00 pm– 2:30 pm

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