

# *The Advocate*

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*Community Health Advocates*

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## From the Director

Welcome to another issue of The Advocate, the newsletter of the University of South Alabama Center for Healthy Communities. We feel that the most successful path to eliminating health disparities is by empowering those most at risk for health disparities with skills and



Dr. Errol Crook  
CHC Principal Investigator

knowledge to advocate for themselves – teach a man to fish. We have found several people who have volunteered to advocate for the good health and health care of their communities. Our Community Health Advocates (CHAs) are an energetic group that includes both youth and adults. In this issue we highlight many of the efforts of our CHAs. We are convinced that their projects, almost all of which are designed by them, will have a significant and lasting impact.

We congratulate many of the youth CHAs who have par-

ticipated in our programs for several years. Several of these young people are graduating from high school and going off to college. We are proud of their accomplishments as scholars and leaders. Because of them, we feel confident about the future.

Finally, you might have noticed that health care reform has been discussed extensively in recent weeks. We encourage you to remain informed on this topic and to participate in the debate as the nation, states, and cities look for solutions. We at the Center for Healthy Communities are interested in your ideas and opinions on how health care should be organized, financed, and distributed. We know that access to health care is often limited for many people and that the lack of access of those individuals is a concern for many of you. We are often asked to provide information and opinions on this topic, and, when doing so, we want to speak for you, our constituents. So, please share your ideas with us and we will do what we can to make sure your voice is heard.

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.

## Advocate Spotlight

USA Center for Healthy Communities (CHC) would like to recognize Ernestine Pritchett for her continued service and effort to assist members of her community in addressing health disparities. Ms. Pritchett is a retired nurse who remains very active in her community.

**Ms. Pritchett is a member of St. Joseph's Baptist Church** where she is a Sunday school teacher and vice president of the Nurses Aide program. She is also a member of the **Mission Department at St. Joseph's, which is a senior group that helps the sick and disadvantaged members of the community.**

Ms. Pritchett has been an active member of the USA CHC Community Health Advocate program for five years. She became a CHA because she loves to help people and the program offers her the opportunity to obtain strategies for addressing health disparities. She states that the CHA program has also enhanced her ability to educate the members of her church and community on various health issues.

Ms. Pritchett believes that the best way to address health disparities is for people to change their lifestyle and to gain knowledge concerning health issues. Individuals who suffer from health conditions sometimes have a difficult time comprehending the medical information provided by healthcare professionals which may result in the deterioration of their health. Ms. Pritchett asserts that better communication between the doctor and the patient is needed to combat this issue in addressing health disparities. She also believes that health care professionals need to consider their audience and be flexible in the manner in which they deliver health information.



Ernestine Pritchett

CHC would like to thank Ernestine Pritchett for assisting members of the community through her work as a Community Health Advocate.

## Healthy Teens & Strong Families

**C**HC's Center of Excellence has been conducting the *Body Works* training in the Trinity Gardens Community at the Dotch Community Center. CHC has collaborated with Bay Area Women Coalition and various community partners who have previously completed the *BodyWorks* Instructor Trainer program. Seventeen women are enrolled in the program and have benefited from the information and tools provided during the sessions.

*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 first session introduced program participants to the *BodyWorks* curriculum and provided them with information on the benefits to changing to more positive eating and activity behaviors. Participants identified the barriers that exist to making positive lifestyle changes and the risks of not making the necessary changes. They discussed goal setting and identifying a support system that will assist them in accomplishing their goals. Program participants also enjoyed a dance session, facilitated by the co-owner of DanceFit dance aerobics studio, as a demonstration of a fun way to exercise.

During the second session, program participants discussed healthy weight and the challenges of assisting teens in reaching and maintaining a healthy weight. They were provided with information concerning obesity, the health risks that are associated with an unhealthy weight and the necessary nutrients girls need to grow strong and healthy. Program participants brainstormed alternatives to eating due to negative emotions such as sadness, depression, stress and boredom. Another DanceFit aerobic exercise ses-

sion was completed to encourage positive health through physical activity.

The next *BodyWorks* session is scheduled to take place at the Dotch Community Center on June 3<sup>rd</sup> from 10:00am to 1:00pm. If you would like additional information on the *BodyWorks* program or curriculum, you can contact Hettie Vaughn at 251-471-7705 or Teri Henderson at 251-471-7708.

### *Living a Healthy Lifestyle*

**I**n today's society everyone has a very busy life. There is very little time to worry about health between working, transporting the kids, grocery shopping, cooking and cleaning. In order to live a healthy lifestyle deliberate steps have to be taken.

Everyone can start by eating a healthy diet which should include a variety of fruits, vegetables and whole grains every day. The food and physical activity choices that you make everyday affect your overall health. You may be eating plenty of food, but not eating the right foods that give your body the nutrients needed to be healthy. You may not be getting enough physical activity to stay fit and burn calories. There are keys to living a healthy lifestyle and by practicing healthful habits you can reduce your risk for chronic diseases.

Physical activity is a very important aspect of a healthy lifestyle. According to the *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, adults need at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of physical activity (kids and teens need 1 hour) a week to improve their health.



## Raising Stroke Awareness

**S**troke is a cardiovascular disease that affects the arteries that lead to and are within the brain. A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that carries oxygen to the brain is blocked or ruptures and a portion of the brain starts to die because it cannot get the blood and oxygen it needs. There is a three hour window where medication can be provided to the stroke victim to slow down the progression of a stroke and reducing the re-



Cindy Carrigan

sulting damage. It is vital that a stroke victim receive medical treatment as soon as possible following the onset of a stroke to minimize the physical and behavioral affects which could include paralysis, slurred speech, trouble swallowing and walking, and vision problems.

When considered separately from other cardiovascular diseases, stroke ranks third among all causes of death. Every three to four minutes someone dies of a stroke. According to Cindy Carrigan, Stroke Coordinator, at the USA Medical Center Stroke Center, the factors that put an individual at risk of a stroke include smoking, family history, excessive alcohol excessively and diet. Other risk factors for stroke include age and gender because more men have strokes than women, but more women die from stroke.

A person can reduce their risk for a stroke by maintaining a nutritional diet, staying physically active, completing regularly scheduled check-ups and complying with **doctor's orders. Another way people can reduce their risk** is by controlling other medical conditions including high blood pressure,

*Stroke Warning Signs*

*Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.*

*Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding*

*Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes*

*Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination*

*Sudden severe headache with no known cause*

*Not all of these signs occur in every stroke. If you have one of these signs, do not wait call 9-1-1.*

diabetes and heart disease.

The University of South Alabama Medical Center has **Mobile's first certified Stroke Center. The Stroke Center** was established to improve the standard of care for patients with cerebrovascular disease through clinical care, research and education. It offers a variety of opportunities for members of the community to get involved and assist those affected by this disease. The Stroke Center partners with Goodwill Easter Seal to provide life saving information concerning stroke. Ms. Carrigan coordinates the support group which encourages participants to take ownership of the disease and to change their lifestyle to reduce their risk for suffering another stroke. Supporting stroke victims is very important, because once a person has been diagnosed as having a stroke; they are more likely to suffer from subsequent strokes. The support group meets on the third Tuesday of each month at the USA Medical Center in the Stroke Center.

If you would like more information about the USA Stroke Center or to attend the stroke support group please contact Cindy Carrigan at 251-471-7752.

## Academic Pipeline Graduates

The Center would like to congratulate Narcethia Allen, Maya Battles, Alexandria Broadnax, Jourdan Gooden, Alison Johnson, Kiara Johnson, Melanie Johnson, Quinton Miles, Anitria Tate, Jhory Buskey and Leia Brown of the 2009 graduating STARS program. These graduating students will continue their success by **transferring into CHC's shadowing and STEP-UP** programs. The Center would like to thank the graduates for all of their hard work and dedication.

## Academic Pipeline Spotlight

**M**iss Kiara Johnson has participated in the USA Center for Healthy Communities, Center of Excellence S.T.R.I.P.E.S. program and is currently a member of the Students Training for Academic Reinforcement in the Sciences (S.T.A.R.S.)



Kiara Johnson

program. She is the daughter of Rodd and Joyce Johnson and attends Mt. Hebron Church Ministries. As a student at Mattie T. Blount High School, Miss Johnson maintained a 4.45 GPA in all honors classes earning an Advanced Diploma with Honors. She is a member of the National Honor Society, Head Majorette in the BHS Mighty Marching Leopards

Band, Culturama Service Organization sponsored by Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority INC., Health Careers Access Program (HCAP), Health Occupational Students of America (HOSA), and the Elites Service Organization.

Miss Johnson participated in the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, National Institutes of Health (NIH) Short-Term Education Program for Underrepresented Persons (STEP-UP) High School Summer Research Program in Bethesda, Maryland last summer. She believes that being a part of these programs has greatly enriched her life both academically and spiritually. Miss Johnson was presented with a wealth of information about healthcare and the sciences, including opportunities to work hands-on with healthcare professionals in a healthcare environment. This experience has further encouraged her to pursue a career in Optometry or Ophthalmology.

## Youth Community Health Advocates

**U**SA Center for Healthy Communities has established a Youth Community Health Advocate program. Like CHC's Community Health Advocates, Youth Community Health Advocates (YCHAs) are concern individuals who desire to improve the overall health of their community. The goal of the YCHA program is to heighten awareness concerning health disparities among youth, to improve health literacy among youth, to recruit and train participants on health information dissemination strategies and to encourage community involvement among youth. There is currently 21 active YCHAs and 11 more recruits will be joining the program this summer.

The Youth Community Advocates have participated in a variety of community events including the Diabetes Walk, Central Plaza Towers Christmas Party, Dumas Wesley Walk and Health Fair, Dumas Wesley Girls Outreach and the Delta Sigma Theta HIV/AIDS Walk. They have planned and will participate in the *One Night Stand* event scheduled for May 30th at the Dumas Wesley Community Center. The YCHAs will also participate in the *Trinity Gardens SwampFest* scheduled to take place on June 20th.

Want to become a Youth Community Advocate?

Any high school student who is interested in improving the health of their community and working with community members can become a YCHA. If you are interested in becoming a Youth Health Advocate, you can contact Teri Henderson at 251-471-7708 or Hettie Vaughn at 251-471-7705.

USA Center for Healthy Communities  
Center of Excellence  
Presents...  
*One Night Stand*  
It's Not What You Think!

**OUR YOUTH ARE TAKING A STAND!**  
**AGAINST**  
Teen Pregnancy in Our Community  
Risky Sexual Behaviors  
Teen Violence  
Dating Violence  
Teen Obesity and Obesity Related Diseases  
**FOR**  
HEALTHY AND POSITIVE LIFESTYLE CHOICES FOR ALL YOUTH  
IN OUR COMMUNITY!

Date: Saturday, May 30th, 2009  
Time: 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.  
Where: Dumas Wesley Community Center

Youth summit from 3-6 p.m., followed by dance from 6-8 p.m.  
(subject matter appropriate for youth ages 13 and up)

Free Admission  
For more information contact the Center of Excellence - Terri Henderson 251-471-7708

A Youth Community Health Advocate Affair



## Men's Health Month

**T**here is a silent health crisis among men. Men are dying over five years younger than women. There are more men born than women each year, but by the age of 35 women outnumber men. Men die at a higher rate from the leading causes of death which include heart disease, cancer, unintentional injuries and cerebrovascular disease.

There are several contributing factors in the high mortality rate among men. A higher percent of men do not have health care coverage when compared to women. Women are more likely to visit a physician for an annual exam with men only making one-half the physician visits for preventative care. Another factor that puts men at risk is their occupation, because men are employed in the most dangerous occupations such as mining, fire fighting and construction. Men are more likely to live less healthy lifestyles and engage in risk-taking behavior at a younger age. There is also an inconsistency in funding for research in male specific diseases that exists.

The mortality rate of men has a direct affect on the health and well-being of their family. The gap in life expectancy is leaving their families in poverty. The factors that are directly related to the onset of poverty include the loss of income and death related expenses. According to the U.S. Administration on Aging, women account for 80% of the 9 million elderly individuals living alone. Over one-half of

the elderly widows now living in poverty were not poor before the deaths of their husband.

**June is Men's Health Month (June 15-21 is Men's Health Week)** and USA Center for Healthy Communities is encouraging all men and boys to visit their healthcare provider and to seek treatment if necessary. Men are encouraged to maintain a healthy diet, to be active, to protect themselves from unintentional accidents and to manage their stress level in an effort to improve their life expectancy and to live healthier lifestyles.

### *Office of Men's Health*

*U.S. Rep Tim Murphy (R-PA) has proposed the Men and Families Act of 2009 to raise public awareness concerning health problems affecting men and ways to detect and prevent them. He believes that the health needs of men have been unaddressed for **too long. The Office of Men's Health would be established as a result of the legislation.** U.S. Rep. Murphy is confident that more men will get the treatment that they need, which will ultimately save lives.*

# Community Outreach *In Action*

## Mobile Housing Board Health Fair



YCHAs



## Dumas Wesley Health Fair



## Go Red For Women



Community Health Advocates



CHC Staff

## Upcoming Events

May 30th, 2009

*One Night Stand*  
Dumas Wesley  
Community Center  
from  
3:00 pm– 8:00 pm

June 4th, 2009

*Body Works*  
session at  
Dotch Community Center  
from  
10:00am– 1:00pm

June 17th, 2009

*CHA*  
meeting at  
Goodwill Easter Seals  
from  
4:00pm– 5:00pm

June 19th, 2009

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

June 20th, 2009

Trinity Gardens  
*Swamp Fest* at  
Dotch Community Center  
from  
9:00 am– 9:00 pm

July 15th, 2009

*CHA*  
meeting at  
Goodwill Easter Seals  
from  
4:00 pm– 5:00 pm

July 17th, 2009

*HDRG*  
Meeting in the  
College of Medicine  
Conference Room  
from  
1:00pm– 2:30pm

August 19th, 2009

*CHA*  
meeting at  
Goodwill Easter Seals  
from  
4:00 pm– 5:00 pm

August 21st, 2009

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

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