



William G. Faraclas, Dr.P.H., MPH., Chairperson
Deborah Flynn, PhD, MPH, RN, CHES, Graduate Coordinator

Coordinator's Message by Dr. Deborah Flynn



"Let your mind start a journey thru a strange new world. Leave all thoughts of the world you knew before. Let your soul take you where you long to be...Close your eyes let your spirit start to soar, and you'll live as you've never lived before."

Erich Fromm, German-born American philosopher and psychoanalyst, 1900-1980

Welcome to the Fall/Winter 2010 edition of the MPH News!

To begin, I'd like to give a special thanks to Alicia Hanke, first year MPH student and Graduate Assistant, for putting this edition together. Thanks go, as well, to all of those who contributed to what I think is an exciting edition of our MPH News. It takes a lot of time and effort to put this newsletter together and it could not have happened without your contributions. Thank you for keeping it going!

The transformative power of a journey emerges as the unofficial theme for this edition. Whether physical travel to places both near and far, or the challenge of new experiences, each is a journey of place, time or point of view. I will mention here two travel destinations: beautiful Guatemala and mile-high Denver. Both, in their unique ways, engage place and point of view. Browsing through this edition's pages, those in attendance at one or more of these events will be able to relive, just a little, their experiences. Others can catch a glimpse of the excitement and will perhaps come along for the travel journey next time. Continued on next page→

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1.-2. Coordinator's Message
- 3. Health Equity Project
- 4-5. Guatemalan Field Studies
- 6. Congratulations
- 7-8. Faculty Research Corner
- 9. NCI Internship Experience
- 10.-13. To Conferences We Go

Coordinator's Message by Dr. Deborah Flynn

In August, 14 undergraduate and graduate students traveled with Dr. Farclas and myself to Guatemala for two weeks of study about public health in a developing nation. The students' experiences are highlighted in this issue, both in pictures and words, though they will tell you neither are enough to express what it meant to them to be on the trip.

In October, approximately 60 SCSU public health students attended the Connecticut Public Health Association annual meeting and conference. Also in attendance were full and part-time faculty and many of our esteemed alumni. The conference theme, *Equal Opportunities for Health: Overcoming Racial, Ethnic and Socioeconomic Disparities in Connecticut* provided the context for a terrific keynote address on the social determinants of health and for a number of very good presentations throughout the day. Many of our students commented that they were both inspired by the presentations and pleased to realize how much they've learned in the program.

In November, several faculty members and students traveled to Denver, Colorado, to attend the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) and American Public Health Association (APHA) annual meetings. The SOPHE conference, supported by its theme, *Healthy People 2020: Scaling New Heights*, focused on moving forward into the next decade and beyond, armed with the knowledge and skills to meet the Healthy People 2020 goals. APHA's theme, *Social Justice: A Public Health Imperative*, provided a rich forum for discussions about health disparities and a fair distribution of resources. *These events, on the heels of passage of health care reform, helped reinforce our commitment to public health's core value of justice for all.*

Enjoy this Fall/Winter edition of the MPH News. My very best wishes for a safe and peaceful holiday season – we hope to see you again in the Spring!



Health Equity Projects

The work of two Health Equity Projects will be presented at the APHA annual conference in Denver. The Diabetes Prevention and Control Grant will be featured in a poster session. This poster describes the development of pamphlets on diabetes self-management for people with low-literacy (in English and Spanish), and supporting teaching modules for clinicians - especially developed for use by Community Health Centers. The seven topics covered are: blood sugar control, depression, diet, medication, physical activity, stress, and support from family and friends. The faculty working on the project were Drs. William Stohler, Peggy Gallup and Kim Lacey (from nursing). Maritza Rosado, a graduate of the Bachelor's of Public Health program, did the Spanish translation. The pamphlets are available without charge and can be downloaded from the Connecticut Department of Public Health website. The second project describes a survey of language services provided for people with limited English-proficiency provided by local health departments in Connecticut, which will be featured in an oral presentation. This survey was done by Peggy Gallup and members of the Connecticut Commission on Multicultural Health. Many of our alumnae who are now local health staff contributed to the survey, and graduate assistants Comfort Agaba, Joy Eribo, and Simbiat Ebenuwa provided a great deal of help to conduct the survey.

The cornerstone of the Health Equity Project is the Bridgeport REACH 2020 project which was just funded for its second year. The SCSU Department of Public Health and Bridgeport community leaders are working together to address health inequity in the East End neighborhood of Bridgeport. Through community-engagement REACH 2020 will develop initiatives addressing social determinants related to racism that negatively affect health. REACH has just completed an assessment to determine the most important problems in the community. Young people from Bridgeport did a photovoice project to illustrate the issues, under the guidance of a professional photographer. An exhibition of the photographs will be presented in November to the community. Community members will be asked to select the most important issues and to commit to working to on a project. The faculty working on REACH are Stanley Bernard, Marian Evans and Peggy Gallup, with Ms. Dinny Mathew as the Graduate Assistant. The Bridgeport community is represented by Kristin duBay Horton, Ted Meekins, Marilyn Moore and Jasmine Pettway (a recent Public Health undergraduate). The project began in 2009 and will continue through 2012 with a grant from the Boston Public Health Commission, funded by CDC.

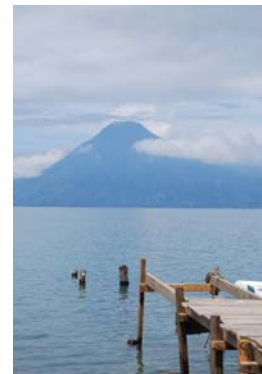
Guatemalan Field Studies

In the ancient Mayan city of Tikal, we stood surrounded by two thousand year old temples, vaulting through the rain forest canopy and into the sky. Our archeological guide Roxy told us this magnificent city was made without beasts of burden, captured slaves, or the use of the wheel. These enormous, superb, and prolific structures were built solely through human effort. Rather than this knowledge quenching my fascination of the Maya, it only deepened and expanded it. – Barry Flynn



Children at the Escuela Privada David Lamotte in Tzanchaj Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala.

Since the day I returned from Guatemala, I have been wishing that I could have stayed. I fell in love with the country, the people and the culture, and will definitely be traveling there again. SCSU's International Field Studies in Health program in Guatemala has cemented my interest in international public health as a career path. – Lauren Bifulco



2011 Guatemala Study Abroad Dates: July 31 – Aug 14

Photos credits: Alicia Hanke (Temple and Children Shots), Nichole Kasper (Lake)

Guatemalan Field Studies

Not only did I get to experience the field of public health first hand, but I was also able to learn things about myself while being immersed in another culture. The experience made me not only appreciate Guatemala's culture, but my own as well.~ Mary Kwasniewski



Students at the Clínica Rxiiin Tnamet in Lake Atitlan, Guatemala dropping off much needed medical supplies.

In the summer of 2010, I participated in the Department of Public Health's International Field Studies in Health trip to Guatemala, where I studied public health in a developing nation for two weeks. It was truly amazing to get to travel abroad and work closely with enthusiastic faculty and student colleagues, to learn about public health through experiential learning, while immersed in a new culture. I gained perspective that I would not have otherwise received, and had experiences that I will never forget. This was my first experience in the MPH program at Southern, and I am thankful to the extremely generous Graduate Student Affairs Committee grant that partially funded my trip. I really appreciated having the opportunity to reach out to people in need at various points in the trip, from donating our dinner leftovers to the homeless on the street, spending the afternoon volunteering at a home for the disabled, participating in the sponsorship project, and delivering medical supplies to a small clinic in Santiago Atitlan. This trip really solidified my interest in international public health, and I am certain this was my first, but not last trip to Guatemala.~ Victoria Zigmont



Photos credits: Dr. Faraclas (Group)

Congratulations!

Our 2009 MPH Alumna Cortney Goulet , will be marrying Chuck Larkins on May 14, 2011. They have just bought their first house together in North Branford. Many wishes of happiness to Cortney!



Congratulations to MPH Alumna, Maureen Lillis. Maureen is the new Director of Health for the city of West Haven. Good Luck on your new journey in Public Health!



Congratulations to Dr. Peggy Gallup on receiving the SPAR Above and Beyond Award. Dr. Gallup is dedicated to seeking funding that meets the needs of Southern's students as well as department and university goals. We are very grateful for her endless efforts.



Faculty Research Corner

Jean Breny PhD, MPH- Examination of Relationship Power on Women's Ability to Practice HIV Protective Behaviors. This proposed research aims to explore, understand, and target power imbalances by race, social class and gender that influence heterosexual, low-income African American women's safer sex behaviors. Specifically, the aim is to explore the impact relationship power has on women's ability to practice safer sex with a male partner. Interviews will be conducted with men and women on their perceived power in sexual relationships. Results of this study will then be used to develop an HIV prevention program, for both men and women, with the purpose of eliminating HIV disparities among African American women living in Connecticut.

Deborah Risisky PhD- Evaluation of the Violence Intervention Partners (VIP) Program: Conducting a program evaluation of a primary prevention curriculum aimed at young males with a goal of prevention of first time sexual violence perpetration. Working with Women and Families Center in Meriden (the creator of the program) and Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Incorporated.

Evaluation of the Centering Pregnancy Program: Working with the Center for Women's Health and Midwifery at the Hospital of Saint Raphael in New Haven to evaluate the Centering Program, a group prenatal care program. Women meet for the same ten sessions as traditional prenatal care, but in groups of 8-10 women for two hours incorporating education and support in addition to clinical care.

Richard Cain, PhD- Conducting an "HIV Wellness Study" that attempts to better understand the health-promoting behaviors among those living with HIV. HIV disease has been shifting from an acute to a chronic illness. A better understanding of the progression of the disease and the needs of those infected, along with more effective medications, has influenced this shift. These advances bring an increasing need for health-promotion efforts aimed at limiting disability and improving quality of life.



Faculty Research Corner

Christine Unson PhD, Dr. Unson will be doing sabbatical research in New Zealand starting in January. Here is a brief of her study.

Life satisfaction, a characteristic of successful aging, has been associated with positive self-rated health, a healthy lifestyle, and absence of chronic health conditions. ¹ Encore careers, defined as “the pursuit of purposeful driven work in the second half of life”, ² are being advocated as a means to achieving life satisfaction among older persons. A seminal survey on encore careers reported that 84% of its participants expressed high satisfaction with their encore careers. ² The survey also reported several barriers to obtaining encore careers but did not report how those in encore careers overcame these barriers. The need for this information is part of the focus of the first study proposed. The second part will compare the United States and New Zealand (NZ) encore career experiences in order to determine the impact of presence (NZ) or absence (US) policies that support encore careers.

Age stereotypes and discrimination were also a concern for many in the survey. Ageism is largely based on the belief that older workers are less “promotable and trainable”, have less stamina, and few interpersonal skills.³ As a result of ageism, older workers encounter many barriers to employment and are subject to “ageist discourse, expressed ageist attitudes, and discriminatory practices based on age in the workplace”. These stressful encounters have been associated with negative mental and physical health outcomes for the older worker. ³ The causes and outcomes of ageism are the concern of the second proposed study of this grant application.

Specific Aims:

The aims of the encore career study are to compare a) motivations of encore career workers, b) the perceived benefits, barriers, especially ageism, to entering and maintaining encore careers, and c) the means for overcoming these barriers in the US and NZ. The aim of the proposed ageism study is to identify, via social network analysis (SNA), the key barriers and courses of action to eliminate ageism in the workplace and marketplace in NZ.

MPH Student, Dominic Francese's Internship Experience at the National Cancer Institute

I am currently a Health Communication Intern at the National Cancer Institute (NCI), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Specifically, I work in the Office of Advocacy Relations, which was created in the mid-1990s in order to better engage cancer advocates and advocacy groups in workings of the NCI.



More recently, it had worked to give advocates a voice in the research process and empower advocates and advocacy groups in ways they can exploit their strengths to further cancer research.

Personally, I've been involved in editing a biweekly newsletter for advocates, organizing speakers for advocacy groups that visit the NCI, updating our office Web site, and multiple initiatives to better train cancer advocates to become involved in NCI activities.

There are 10 interns in my cohort that started the program in July, and we're spread over many offices, including the Center for Cancer Research, The Cancer Genome Atlas, the Office of Cancer Control and Prevention, and the Office of Multicultural and International Communications, to name a few. Being the largest of the 27 institutes and centers in the NIH, the NCI offers an opportunity for people with varied interests, but a universal goal of working in health communications.

Simply working on the NIH campus is amazing. It includes dozens of buildings and thousands of employees, including the world's largest hospital dedicated purely to medical research, and its own fire department and police force. It also attracts talent from all over the world. I've been lucky to attend lectures by David Satcher and Robert Gallo, and actually had the chance to eat lunch with current NIH Director Francis Collins.

If you are interested in applying for the program, I'd suggest you visit <https://hcup.nci.nih.gov/hcup/> and www.cancer.gov to learn more about the program and NCI. I'd also be happy to speak with anyone as well. Contact me at francesed1@owls.southernct.edu

Society of Public Health Educators

Lauren Bifulco

Only at SOPHE can you sit down at a lunch table marked for public health practitioners interested in anthropology and health and strike up a conversation with the gentleman sitting next to you, who turns out to both run the Institute for Circumpolar Health Studies at the University of Alaska Anchorage and to be the conference trustee! I also had an hourlong conversation with a doctoral student I was introduced to by the professor who wrote my research methods textbook, and promised one of the innovators of the PRECEDE-PROCEED theoretical model I am using for my thesis that I would come back to SOPHE next year and have him autograph it. Chance interactions like these are facilitated by SOPHE's atmosphere of collaboration, friendship and learning. The knowledge I gained and the connections I made at this year's SOPHE meeting are invaluable to me, and have helped me to set new post-MPH career goals.



Connecticut Public Health Association

Alicia Hanke



One does not have to travel far for a great networking opportunity. Each year, the Connecticut Public Health Association (CPHA) puts on a conference for local public health practitioners. Students are not only encouraged to attend but also very welcomed. This year the student turnout was incredible. Some benefits for students to attend include networking and opportunities to talk with public health practitioners in the field. I have attended the conference three years in a row and developed many relationships with professionals in the field as a result of conversations I had at CPHA. Each year, I not only learn something new at the conference but meet incredible people in the field.

American Public Health Association

Laura Hayes

From the moment that I heard about American Public Health Association Meeting and Exposition (APHA), I knew I had to be there. What is more invigorating than 12,000 like-minded people who cannot wait to share their ideas with you and talk about the issues that equally inspire and infuriate you? The energy that you feel from walking into an exhibit hall that is easily the largest room you have ever been in and then instantly feeling welcomed is an experience that I encourage all of you to take advantage of next year. I had the privilege of sitting and listening to one of the greatest speakers of our time, Dr. Cornel West, and being inspired by his energy and enthusiasm for social justice and the need for change. I recommend that everyone go online and watch his speech and be equally inspired as I myself was. Listening to him speak was worth the trip to Denver, but then to spend the remainder of the conference in the presence of people who are carrying out his values everyday was truly incredible.



I was only able to spend two days at the conference, but I could have easily spent the whole two days in the exhibit hall. I met so many amazing people who at table after table were just giving away their data, the experience just feeding my passion for our field. If you ever doubt that great things are happening in the field of public health, the APHA meeting is the place to be rejuvenated. Not only was it wonderful to see so many people dedicated to public health, it was reassuring to hear that there were jobs available and internships galore. I was lucky enough not only to attend a dinner with some of Dr. Breny's friends from San Jose State and their own students but on the following night to attend our own department dinner held by Dr. Faraclas. Both experiences were wonderful, and they allowed an intimate setting to talk with current students, alums, professors, and professionals who shared a wealth of knowledge and advice in the field.

If I had had more time, I would love to have attended more sessions, but I am thankful for the experience I was able to have. I hope that next year in D.C., SCSU will have a larger group because I know that everyone would walk away with a fresh perspective on the field of public health. Regardless of your interests, I assure you that all of them are represented at the conference. There are school representatives there to talk to about PhD programs and an endless number of nonprofits, businesses, and government agencies that are more than willing to share their experience and knowledge with you. I cannot say enough good things about my experience, and I cannot wait for next year!

Further, I would not have been able to attend the conference if it were not for generous funding from the Public Health Conference Scholarship and from the Graduate Student Affairs Committee (GSAC).

Photo Credit: Jacquelyn Rose (APHA Sign)

APHA Conference Photos

MPH Students Victoria Zigmont, Laura Hayes, Mark McRiley and Dr. Breny



Students at the SCSU dinner

Students with John Allegrante, deputy provost at Columbia University's Teacher's College



Photo Credits: Ranelle Brew (SCSU dinner)



American Public Health Association

Victoria Zigmont

This November, I had the opportunity to visit Colorado for the first time to attend the 2010 American Public Health Association Annual Meeting and Exposition—the largest gathering of public health practitioners in the world. As a full time graduate student at Southern, I would not have been able to attend this meeting had it not been for generous funding from the Southern Public Health Conference Scholarship and the Graduate Student Affairs Committee. I am grateful for the opportunity to travel to meetings, and this is a truly valuable resource that is provided to students at Southern; it adds an entirely new dimension to learning about public health that isn't possible in the confines of a classroom.

I was amazed by the number of exhibitors—including graduate schools, companies, non-profits and government organizations—that were represented in the exhibit hall, and the vast quantity of information that was available. All of the people we spoke with were incredibly excited to discuss their work with us, and embraced the idea of having interns in their facilities. We received information about longitudinal data studies, internship opportunities, job postings, graduate programs and gained exposure to wonderful non-profits that we had not heard of before seeing them at the APHA meeting. There are so many fabulous projects going on, and so many meaningful organizations that we could work with or volunteer for that I think I will have a really hard time settling on just one! The more that I learned at this meeting, the more I became interested in. I truly value the diversity of ways to make a meaningful impact as a future professional in the field of public health.

Seeing students' completed projects during the poster session and getting to speak with MPH students from other programs throughout the US provided wonderful networking opportunities that would not have been possible without leaving Connecticut. In attending some of the research sessions, I also was pleasantly surprised (and impressed) to realize how much I have learned in my first semester at Southern; I am completely new to the field of public health, but my classes this fall prepared me well for the topic of "Social Injustice," and I really appreciated that. It was a treat to meet with alumni from SCSU's public health programs during the Departmental Reception arranged by Dr. Faracis and learning about what they are doing presently in the field of public health. We also were invited to the San Jose State University departmental dinner by Dr. Breny (where she completed her MPH), and I was amazed by the number of students who were present at the dinner, and the high energy and enthusiasm of the group. Having the opportunity to attend APHA for networking purposes, education and to gain more exposure to the field was a truly meaningful experience to me, and I hope to share in this experience again with my fellow students next year when the APHA meeting is on the east coast in Washington, DC.

M.P.H. News Editorial Board

Editor-in-Chief:

Dr. Flynn

Editorial Staff:

Alicia Hanke

Other Contributors:

Lauren Bifulco

Barry Flynn

Dominic Francese

Alicia Hanke

Laura Hayes

Mary Kwasniewski

Victoria Zigmont



The M.P.H. News is published by the Southern Connecticut State University Department of Public Health M.P.H. students. Address inquiries, comments, suggestions and articles for submission to

Dr. Deborah Flynn at: flynnd1@southernct.edu