

U P D A T E

Fall/Winter 2002

Bronx AHEC Success Story

Madelyn Rivera, Bronx-Westchester
AHEC Associate Director

Last summer, Leonel Arriola, 16, completed his sophomore year at Health Opportunities High School in the Bronx and was seeking a challenging experience to participate in during his time off from school. He was told about the Bronx-Westchester AHEC summer internship program in health care from several of his friends at school and decided to follow up. For some time Leonel had been interested in pursuing a career in the health field.

Leonel was one of 43 students selected to participate in the Bronx-Westchester AHEC summer internship program and was placed in the Pharmacy Department at Jacobi Medical Center in the Bronx under the supervision of Alfred Tapis, a pharmacist who served as his mentor. Leonel was

responsible for delivering medication to satellite pharmacies throughout the hospital. He also spent time observing his mentor and was exposed to the daily activities of a pharmacist. This first experience in health care served as a great learning tool and afforded Leonel the opportunity to be responsible in terms of attendance, punctuality and reliability.

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*Leonel Arriola in Pharmacy
Department at Jacobi
Medical Center.*

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An AHEC Success Story Lives In Brooklyn

Nadege Dady, MEd, New York
Metropolitan Region Director

Brooklyn, also known as Kings County, is one of New York City's five boroughs, and only one of the boroughs that the Brooklyn/Queens/Long Island AHEC intends to target.

Brooklyn is larger in area and population than most cities in the U.S. It is also home to many ethnic groups and an assortment of neighborhoods ranging from the privileged to those living below the poverty level. This story is about how the AHEC program exposed youth to careers in the health professions and made healthcare an exciting topic during the summer of 2002. During the planning phase of the summer program, both Lutheran Medical Center and SUNY Downstate Medical Center's Arthur Ashe Institute were more than happy to collaborate on the Brooklyn/Queens/Long Island

AHEC's start up initiative. As a result, both institutions were instrumental in providing the opportunities and health professional mentors who participated in the program and made it an enormous success.

Thirty-three high school and college students applied to and participated in the program. The six-week experience linked students to health care professionals who involved them in their work, including public health outreach initiatives and hands-on learning experiences within their departments. Students also participated in a weekly educational program that involved mandatory attendance at two to three didactic workshops per day. The workshops covered public health care topics and information on the health care professions.

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Cogitations from the Director

Thomas C. Rosenthal, MD, Director,
New York State AHEC System

"I could have gotten through high school with 70s. They'd have let me go. But after AHEC, I know I want to be a pharmacist. I gotta have grades above 90 and I've already aced my first two tests this semester!"

These are the words of an 11th grader at the Health Opportunities School in the Bronx. Obviously a bright young man, who is going someplace. His parents enrolled him in the Health Opportunities magnet school because it was in a safe neighborhood.

The school has had seven principals in the nine years it has existed. The present principal, who started just weeks prior to our visit, quickly recognized that his kids were going nowhere unless the school met its original intent of providing 180 hours of community health career placements per student. He also recognized the value of AHEC.

The Westchester-Bronx AHEC team assembled, coordinated and expanded on programs in the community to place more than 40 students in mentorships. Placements were in medical record rooms, pharmacies, nursing, physical therapy, and almost every health care setting and profession. Not only were students' lives changed, but mentors have been enriched by one-on-one relationships with enthusiastic kids. Many are staying in touch. All seemed affected in important ways by the experience.

President Bush has identified community health centers (CHCs) as a national priority. Congress has passed a \$166 million increase in funding and is considering more next year. Some of these CHCs are in the same communities as AHEC, from the Bronx to New York's underserved rural areas. But who will staff the CHCs encouraged by this legislation?

Incredibly the president's proposed 2003 budget contained crippling cuts for programs to educate and encourage tomorrow's providers. Much of Title VII from the Public Health Service Act, including AHEC, would be gutted. The National Institutes of Health budget has more than doubled since 1998 and is slated to receive \$27.3 billion dollars in 2003. These funds will stimulate the development of new technology at a time when 40 million uninsured Americans can't afford basic X-rays or medication.

Title VII, the federal program that encourages the training of primary care providers as well as funding AHEC to facilitate experiences for the kids most likely to serve America's underserved, received \$295 million last year. This is 1% of the NIH budget. Title VII has been operational for 30 years. It works! Just read the quote at the top of this article. Last year 32,000 health profession students spent time in clinical settings sponsored by AHECs. Virtually

every physician serving our less advantaged communities today has been touched by one of these programs.

These students are the future of health care, safety net programs and diversity in the workforce.



*Thomas C. Rosenthal, MD,
Director, New York
State AHEC System*

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Fortunately Congress can reinstate the funding for Title VII (at the time of this writing, the matter was still in debate). Training a diverse workforce with the insights to care for all Americans is the best way to assure health for all Americans. The NYS AHEC System has been active in drawing the attention of our legislative friends to the AHEC mission, as have many of the readers of this newsletter. Feel good about your own opportunities and feel even better about those opportunities you provide others. Let's promote a health care system that looks like New York, and that keeps New York healthy.

NYS Health Occupations Educators Association Annual Professional Development Day

The New York State AHEC System had the honor of presenting at the New York State Health Occupations Educators Association (NYSHOEA) Annual Professional Development Day on October 18, 2002 in Syracuse. Approximately 70 teachers/administrators of Health Occupations Education programs throughout New York State attended the meeting. After

an overview of the AHEC System, given by the Education Director, small group sessions were led by regional and center directors and other AHEC personnel. Small group sessions included discussions regarding: descriptions of on-going AHEC educational activities and programs for students, opportunities available for students interested in health careers, funding opportunities and support available to teachers and

administrators, and other ways in which AHEC could be of assistance to these educators.



*Joanne Borfitz, Central New York
AHEC Executive Director,
presenting information about AHEC
to Health Occupations Educators.*

Statewide Advisory Board Convened

Featured presenters at the October 1 meeting of the New York State AHEC System Advisory Board were Thomas H. Feeley, PhD, Education/Evaluation Specialist and Carol S. Brewer, RN, PhD, Director of Nursing. Both are with the New York State AHEC System Statewide Office at the University of Buffalo.

Dr. Feeley summarized the results of the summer 2002 survey of Advisory Board members. The purpose of the survey was to 1) evaluate purpose and direction of the advisory board, 2) solicit advice from advisory board members on structure, process, and effectiveness of the advisory board, and 3) evaluate communication and information dissemination from the New York State AHEC System to the advisory board members.

When asked about the extent to which the New York State AHEC System advisory board had been successful in contributing toward identified goals, respondents indicated success in "forging important relationships." Respondents indicated that previous advisory board meetings were effective and could be improved through "more action plans and updates on actions."

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He also became aware of the importance of teamwork and how the pharmacy needs to work as a team in order to accomplish its goal of providing medication to the entire facility.

Leonel was eager to learn from his mentor and wanted to know what the academic requirements were for becoming a pharmacist. His mentor had a strong impact on him and was always available to respond to his questions regarding health and pharmacy.

When asked to use one word to describe his summer experience, Leonel said it was "fulfilling". He stated, "Now that I know that I want to become a

Mary J. Sienkiewicz, MBA, New York State
AHEC System Deputy Director

Dr. Brewer provided an overview of "Examining New York State Nurses: A Regional Analysis of the 2000 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses." The report analyzed data by each of the four AHEC regions (western, central, eastern and New York Metropolitan) and statewide in the following areas: demographics (race/ethnicity, gender, age, income, education and employment), job satisfaction, unemployed/nurses in transition and nurse educators. The report included a discussion of the implications of the analysis and recommendations for state, regional and local actions. The full report may be accessed on the New York State AHEC System website www.ahec.buffalo.edu.

Dr. Thomas C. Rosenthal, Director, provided an update on the status of the New York State AHEC System. Accomplishments of the Hudson-Mohawk AHEC, Central New York AHEC and Bronx-Westchester AHEC (the newest centers that had not yet reported to the Advisory Board) were provided by executive directors Tim Christensen, MS, Joanne Borfritz, and Odalis Ortiz, MPH respectively.

pharmacist I know that I can do it. At first I thought that I could not, but now I know that I can." As a result of his determination, his grades have improved significantly this semester, he is more confident, and focuses more on his school work. Within the next five years Leonel sees himself completing a college degree and pursuing a graduate degree.

Appreciative of the positive experience, Leonel is more than willing to be a spokesperson for the Bronx-Westchester AHEC summer internship program. "This program has meant everything to me," stated Leonel. "I have met friends and I have learned a lot of things... the program will do you much good."

AHEC Helps Form Rural Health Association

Peter Beatty, PhD,
Central Region Office Director

Representatives from the New York State AHEC System played key roles in the establishment recently of the New York State Association for Rural Health, as well as in the presentation of the new organization's first annual meeting. Peter Beatty, PhD, Director of the NYS AHEC System Central Region Office, and Kenneth Oakley, PhD, CEO of the Western NY Rural AHEC, served on the steering committee for the Association for the past year. Beatty was named treasurer of the Association for the coming year at its first annual membership meeting.

The Association, which is a chapter of the National Rural Health Association, is a not-for-profit, non-partisan grassroots membership organization working to preserve and improve health and human services in rural New York State.

The Association's annual meeting was also the occasion of its first annual conference, a two-day affair held in Binghamton on November 6-7, 2002.

The Association... is a not-for-profit, non-partisan grassroots membership organization working to preserve and improve health and human services in rural New York State.

The conference included a keynote address by Marcia Brand, PhD, Director of the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, and a legislative forum and public hearing moderated by State Senator Patricia McGee. The conference was attended by more than 140 health care professionals from across the state. Attendees included representatives from a wide variety of organizations, including the Business Council of New York State, the NYS AHEC System, the NYS Department of Health, rural health networks, acute and long-term care providers, health profession educational institutions and public health agencies.

Nurse Reinvestment Act

Mark Shilling, MPA, MS, New York State AHEC System Grants Specialist and Carol Brewer, PhD, RN, New York State AHEC System Nursing Director

On August 1, 2002, President Bush signed into law Public Law 107-205, the Nurse Reinvestment Act. This legislation creates numerous activities where AHEC programs can provide assistance. While AHECs themselves are not eligible for direct funding under most of the Act's provisions, there exist many clear opportunities where AHECs can collaborate with nursing schools and healthcare providers. According to the office of California Congresswoman Lois Capps, who sponsored the legislation, funding for the new law will be a top priority when the 108th Congress convenes in January, 2003.

While AHECs themselves are not eligible for direct funding under most of the Act's provisions, there exist many clear opportunities where AHECs can collaborate with nursing schools and healthcare providers.

Highlights of the new law include:

EDUCATION: The Act authorizes the Department of Health and Human Services to award grants to increase nursing school enrollment, develop nursing internships and residencies, and innovate new technologies (such as distance learning) in nursing education.

PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT: The Act also establishes grants to provide nursing care for medically underserved populations, expand practice arrangements in "non-institutional" settings (such as private medical practices) and to improve primary care in underserved communities.

RETENTION GRANTS: One facet of the Act that has generated substantial attention is the creation of a "career ladder program" which will be established to help nurses obtain more education. The Act authorizes federally supported career counseling, mentoring and pre-nurse education programs, and programs to increase collaboration among professionals. The Act also creates an "Enhancing Patient Care Delivery Systems" program, targeted toward promoting greater collaboration between nurses and other healthcare professionals.

GERIATRIC NURSING EDUCATION: The Act includes grants to be offered for training and continuing professional education for geriatric care nurses. Elements of this section include financing for the development and dissemination of geriatric nursing curricula, and training in geriatrics for nursing school faculty members.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS: In addition to developing media to promote nursing as a career option, the grants will fund Public Service Announcements (PSAs) to encourage underrepresented groups to enter the nursing field, and publicize sources of financial aid. The Department of Health and Human Services will define eligibility for the PSA grants.

Other programs established by the Act include new nursing scholarships, loan repayment and partial loan for nurses who agree to work in health-care facilities with a critical shortage of nurses or to teach at nursing schools after graduation.

Major Foundation Grant Awarded

Kenneth Oakley, PhD, Western New York Rural AHEC CEO

The Western New York Rural Area Health Education Center (R-AHEC) is proud and pleased to announce the receipt of a major local foundation grant intended to fund a Wyoming County based initiative titled "From Pipelines to Practice." Agreeing to support at least the first year of a proposed multi-year project, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo has awarded the R-AHEC (and its partners) \$136,000 to create and implement a wide array of health career awareness and workforce development programs seeking to assure a strong and dynamic healthcare delivery system within Wyoming County.

Working in close cooperation with the New York State AHEC System Statewide Office, the various health professions schools of the University at Buffalo and Daemen College, the R-AHEC has already begun initial outreach to existing community-based resources. The early objective of this

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initiative will be to engage existing local resources (i.e. healthcare

providers, schools systems, health and human service organizations, government, and workforce development groups) in meaningful dialog and assessment of present and projected health workforce needs for the county as a whole. This unique opportunity was made possible through the generosity of the Community Foundation (and the Wyoming County focused Thiel Trust that it administers on behalf of county residents). The R-AHEC is extremely pleased and honored to be able to facilitate and coordinate what is intended to be a truly innovative community-academic partnership in health workforce development.

Northern AHEC Summer Scholars Program: A Successful Hands-on Approach to Career Exploration for Teens

Anita Merrill,
Northern AHEC Associate Director

Last spring, Jessica LaVarnway was unsure of the direction she wanted her life to take. High school diploma in hand and with substantial office experience, she felt as though she was missing out on something important. Tucked away in a little corner of the Adirondacks, Sandy Brown felt high school had nothing left to offer. A drop-out at sixteen, her plans for the future were ill defined. Farther north, Kim Lashomb, a spunky red-head, dreamed of a future in Physical Therapy and Erin Corcoran faced an important decision – should she pursue a lengthy and expensive career in Pharmacy or not?

Four different girls – each at her own crossroads – interviewed with NAHEC for positions as Summer Scholars. In all, 26 teens were chosen for the six week paid summer work experience program. Twelve hospitals and nursing homes played host to students they hoped would consider pursuing a career in the health professions.

Shadowing health professionals in their area of interest and seeing first hand the challenges and rewards health care has to offer, helped NAHEC Summer Scholars to make some important decisions about their future. Holding a new born baby in her arms, Jessica found the satisfaction in helping others that was missing from her office job. Her experience at the hospital helped her to discover her calling to the nursing profession.

Jessica LaVarnway discovers her passion for nursing as a NAHEC Summer Scholar at Alice Hyde Hospital, Malone, New York.



Listing her interest in “organizing things” and “talking on the telephone,” Sandy was willing to try a placement in the medical records office of a local hospital. After her initial experience, Sandy went on to try out yet another health care profession and placement. She is currently working in the Activities department of a nursing home and has found great satisfaction in working with the elderly residents. Sandy’s summer experience helped her to take control of her future. She is working on her driver’s license, pursuing her GED, and looking to begin her career as an Activities Aide.

For Kim Lashomb, the NAHEC summer experience she called her “dream job” further cemented her desire to become a Physical Therapist. An old hand at NAHEC sponsored programs for teens, Kim participated in Summer Scholars, as well as Mini-Medical Conference (a distance learning lecture series with faculty from Upstate Medical Center) and Brittany’s Knee (a problem based learning program through Clarkson University’s Physical Therapy Department). In September, Kim presented at the NAHEC Annual Conference and pre-conference dinner to share her experiences and the value of Northern AHEC in her life and career plans.

Like Kim, Erin Corcoran was also able to make a concrete decision about her future. Spending six weeks under the direction of a hospital pharmacist gave Erin a realistic look at the demands and rewards involved. Erin’s experience confirmed her earlier direction. She has definite plans to pursue a degree in pharmacy, confident the investment in time and money to follow her dream will be well worth it.

As Jessica, Sandy, Kim, and Erin can attest, providing hands-on, experiential learning opportunities has proven a highly successful strategy for AHEC in helping teens to discover or reaffirm their interest in health care careers.

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The program’s success is reflected in the students’ comments:

“Today I shadowed a nurse... I had a misconception about nursing: it isn’t just giving needles and getting vital signs. It’s definitely good to get field-work to see if a field is right for you.”

“The most shocking news to me was that AIDS cases involving young black women in New York are increasing every year and at very young ages. Myself and a fellow student were assigned to write a flyer addressing AIDS in Brooklyn among Black and Hispanic youth. This project made me want to continue working with the Brooklyn Alliance after AHEC has ended.”

“Today’s occupational therapy session was the most interesting and ‘coolest’... there are individuals out there who have a disability but they are able to survive thanks to occupational therapists.”

“Today’s didactic concerned racism in medicine. To my astonishment, racism does exist in the medical world... as a result, life expectancies between whites and people of color vary. I know when I grow up, I will not forget to serve all those who are in need.”

The experience, overall,
was the best educational
summer of my life.
I loved it!

“I actually got paid to learn! That was wonderful! As a matter of fact, the stipend helped me pay for my fall 2002 semester tuition.”

We thank the program directors who helped to make last summer a huge success: Molly McNees, PhD, Staff Anthropologist, Sunset Park Family Health Center Network, Lutheran Medical Center and Rosalind Wilson, MSW, Director, Health Science Academy at the Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, for coordinating the Brooklyn summer program. We are also grateful to the many preceptors who made the summer program special for each AHEC participant. See you next summer!

Youth Respond Favorably to M.A.S.H. Camps in CNY

Terry Gefell, MEd, Central New York
AHEC Program Director

Youth at Cortland Memorial Hospital held brains, intestines, gall bladders, and kidney stones as part of a workshop on anatomical pathology. This is just an example of the many fun and interactive workshops youth participated in as part of the M.A.S.H. (Medical Academy of Science & Health) camps held this past summer in the Central New York Area Health Education Center's 14 county region.

Four M.A.S.H. camps were held in July and August of 2002. In total, 66 youth attended camps at Cortland Memorial Hospital in Cortland County, A.L. Lee Memorial Hospital and Oswego Hospital in Oswego County, and Schuyler Hospital in Schuyler County. Participating youth represented a cross section of public, private, and home-schooled students in grades 7 - 9. Each camp was two days long and incorporated a variety of activities to help youth learn about the many health professionals who help make a hospital function as it should.

Sporting hospital scrubs and name badges, youth circulated from workshop to workshop for two days learning about the inner workings of a hospital.

Reflecting on the M.A.S.H. Camp experience, Carrie Fellows, Assistant Director of Nursing at Oswego Hospital,



Students at Cortland Memorial Hospital find it very fun and interesting to handle body specimens from the pathology department.

stated "It was evident by the enthusiasm of the students that they thoroughly enjoyed their camp experience. We found that the more hands-on, the better it was received by the students. We are looking forward to some changes in activities to make next year's program even better."

Erika Vidler, an eighth grade student at Tully Junior High School in Onondaga County attended camp at Cortland Memorial Hospital. When asked what she thought was the most important thing learned at camp Erika commented, "I realized how many different medical fields there are to help people who are sick. I also saw that there is a lot of opportunity in the medical field from microbiology to physical therapy or obstetrics if you want to work closely with people." Erika also stated that she would recommend camp to

her friends because it's a good opportunity to see what health professionals do each day.

According to Carrie Fellows, hospitals should take some responsibility to promote the health professions to youth. "We felt as an organization, the sooner the youth of our county find out about health career opportunities, the better. We felt this was an excellent opportunity for us to reach out to the youth, invite them in, and hopefully expose them to a side of health care they have never seen before," states Fellows.

...workshops in physical therapy, the operating room, pathology, labor and delivery, and general tours of the hospital ranked highest among the favorite camp activities.

An informal survey of youth who attended camp indicated that workshops in physical therapy, the operating room, pathology, labor and delivery, and general tours of the hospital ranked highest among the favorite camp activities. This information will be used to help plan M.A.S.H. camps for summer 2003. Next summer, each of these hospitals will host their second annual camp and four additional camps will be implemented at other interested hospitals in the CNYAHEC region.

Erie Niagara AHEC

An Interim Planning Board, comprised of a broadly representative, diverse group of individuals from health care, education, community, business and government sectors in Erie and Niagara counties has met to establish the parameters for the Erie Niagara AHEC. Like all other New York State AHECs, the Erie Niagara AHEC is to be an independent community-based organization that reflects local needs and local solutions,

in a manner that is consistent with the goals, objectives, and activities of the New York State AHEC System.

The Interim Planning Board has established criteria for selection of the center and the provisions for the Request for Proposal (RFP) process. Applicants must propose to establish the AHEC as an independent and freestanding non-profit organization with its own governance structure. The successful applicant will demonstrate strong community partnerships and

Mary J. Sienkiewicz, MBA, New York State
AHEC System Deputy Director

collaboration among organizations in the region. Further detail about the RFP, criteria and timeline can be found on the New York State AHEC System website www.ahec.buffalo.edu.



Interim Planning Board members establish priorities and selection criteria for Erie Niagara AHEC.

UB School of Medicine & Biomedical Sciences Primary Care Externship Program 2002

Jade Tan,
University at Buffalo Medical Student

7/1/02 R.P. is a 10-year-old male who complains of a one day history of fever, frontal headache, and emesis. The symptoms began acutely in the middle of last night and have progressively worsened since.

The temperature was taken by his mother last night to be 103°F (orally) and fever has remained high since. Headache is located frontally, and is described as deep, throbbing and, constant. Patient has vomited 13x since yesterday, mostly clear fluid; he reports that eyes are bothered by light; also admits slight neck pain on flexion. Patient has no appetite; urinating normally; symptoms getting worse according to mom and patient.

After being referred to the Children's Hospital ER by the West Side Health Center, this patient was diagnosed with aseptic viral meningitis. R.P. was only one of the plethora of patients that I was fully able to interview and examine during my Primary Care Externship at the West Side Health Center. I attempted my best to get an accurate and complete history, and to examine him for a myriad of pathological symptoms. While I was not able to diagnosis R.P.'s illness myself, I was able to realize the crucial fact that R.P. was very sick and needed immediate attention, and after discussing the patient with my preceptor, we both assessed his potential diagnosis. I also had the opportunity to follow-up with R.P. a week later to see his complete recovery. It was this patient's change from sickly and fragile one day, to smiling and active soon after that made my externship a wonderful experience. There were multitudes of other patients, ranging from newborns to adolescents, which I had the opportunity to interact with and learn from.

The West Side Health Center is a large pediatric outpatient clinic, affiliated with Children's Hospital, in downtown Buffalo, New York. Most patients are Hispanic or African American, and most require Medicaid to be able to receive health care. I found that this

patient population was extremely receptive and gracious, and I thoroughly benefited from working with them. Not only did their complaints and presentations provide me with valuable and irreplaceable medical knowledge, preparing me for third year, but more essentially, working at this site further exposed me to the basis of what Primary Care is all about: being the first individual a patient depends on in a time of need. Not only is the primary doctor responsible for important medical diagnoses and decisions, but they must address social problems, ensure preventive medicine, and give anticipatory guidance, something that other doctors less often face. It was the patients: the new-born premature baby hooked up to apnea/bradycardia monitors and who was here for his first visit; the 15-year-old female here for possible pregnancy and who needed STD/safe sex counseling; and the 18-year-old male who had a history of acute renal failure, but had no insurance or money for medications, whom I will remember most.

My preceptors were all excellent physicians. Each had a special manner of taking a history, a slightly different method of performing physical examinations, and contrasting personalities. However, each preceptor was a role model. Each made me feel like a member of the medical team, not just another rotating student. They allowed me to spend as much time as I needed with a patient and, after presenting the patient to them, together we contemplated the assessment and plan. I believe that their guidance, patience, and expertise have helped me markedly improve my ability to communicate with patients, to take a history, and to perform both focused and complete physical examinations. I have realized that Pediatrics is an exciting specialty, and I may just enjoy it as a life-long task.



Jade Tan, UB
Medical Student

Technology for the American Outback: H-MAHEC Connects School, EMS Squad and Others

Tim Christensen, MS,
Hudson-Mohawk AHEC Executive Director

In a region of New York State where black bears may outnumber humans and the rural landscape renders cell phones useless, 21st Century communications technology may seem light years away. Enter the Hudson-Mohawk Area Health Education Center. By brokering a creative partnership, H-M AHEC has coalesced parties who individually could not afford high speed Internet access, but through a coalition, are soon to enjoy this high-tech benefit.



The Big Dig – High tech can be dirty. Installation of a high-speed Internet connection begins with installing underground cabling. The HM AHEC in partnership with several town agencies has brought high-speed Internet connectivity to the Indian Lake EMS squad, community health center and the local school.

The hamlet of Indian Lake (population just under 1,500) sits at the virtual epicenter of the six million acre Adirondack Park. Its rural setting presents significant travel difficulties for continuing education for healthcare professionals, EMS staff and others. The lack of a significant population meant even high-speed Internet access was at best, years away.

In July, H-M AHEC convened a meeting with the Indian Lake Central School District, the local rescue squad, community health center, county public health, home health, mental health
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agencies, and several representatives from town and county governments. The agenda – can these groups form a coalition to bring high-speed Internet connectivity to Indian Lake in a cost-effective manner?

Working in partnership with the Adirondack Area Network and Questar III BOCES, H-M AHEC brokered an agreement that brings a high-speed (T1) Internet line into the EMS squad and, in turn, the EMS squad “down

streams” the signal to the school. The arrangement reduces the school’s current 56K dial-up fees by more than 90%, while increasing their connection speed by a factor of 24. Once fully operational, the line will provide the Indian Lake EMS squad with two-way audio/video connectivity with Albany Medical College’s EMS continuing education program. Other healthcare professionals can access the system as well.

Less than four months following that initial July meeting: fiber optic cable

connects the school, museum, community health center, rescue squad, library and town hall; the T1 line is on order; and AHEC-provided video conference equipment is on-site at Indian Lake EMS and a second set of equipment will be installed at the Indian Lake Central School by year end. The stage is set for the next act, the recruitment of trainees for the home health aide and basic EMT training programs.

The black bears have nothing to fear however.

New York State Area Health Education Center (AHEC) System

Statewide Office

Director: Thomas C. Rosenthal, MD

Associate Director: L. Thomas Wolff, MD

Medical Director: John Brewer, MD

Education Director: Denise McGuigan, MSED

Project Manager: Andrea Nikischer, MS

Deputy Director: Mary J. Sienkiewicz, MBA

Nursing Director: Carol Brewer, PhD, RN

Education Specialist: Thomas Feeley, PhD

Central Region

Medical Director: L. Thomas Wolff, MD
Regional Director: Peter G. Beatty, PhD

Department of Family Medicine
SUNY, Upstate Medical University
475 Irving Avenue, Suite 204A
Syracuse, NY 13210
(315) 464-7027

Eastern Region

Associate Director: Mary Smith, PhD
Regional Director: Steven Schrieber, PhD

Department of Family and
Community Medicine
Albany Medical College
1 Clara Barton Drive
Albany, NY 12208
(518) 262-9902

New York Metropolitan Region

Medical Director: Neil Calman, MD
Regional Director: Nadege Dady, MSED

The Institute for Urban Family Health
16 E. 16th Street
New York, NY 10003
(212) 633-0800

Northern AHEC

Executive Director: Richard K. Merchant, MA

SUNY Potsdam
511 Raymond Hall
Potsdam, NY 13676
(315) 267-3329
www.careersinhealth.org

Hudson-Mohawk AHEC

Executive Director: Tim Christensen, MS

One Broad Street Plaza
Glens Falls, NY 12801
(518) 480-2432
www.HMAHEC.org

Bronx AHEC

Executive Director: Odalis Merchant, MPH

c/o Bronx Overall Economic
Development Corp.
198 E. 161st Street
Bronx, NY 10451
(718) 590-6429

Central New York AHEC

Executive Director: Joanne Borfritz

10 Kennedy Parkway
Cortland, NY 13045
(607) 756-1090

Western New York Rural AHEC

CEO: Kenneth L. Oakley, PhD, CHE

4156 West Main Street
Batavia, NY 14020
(585) 344-1022
www.r-ahec.org

New York State AHEC System Statewide Office
University at Buffalo
Department of Family Medicine
462 Grider Street • Buffalo, NY 14215
Phone: 716.898.4699
Fax: 716.898.3536
www.ahec.buffalo.edu

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