

# UPDATE

## The Hispanic & Latino Nurses Program: A Model for AHEC and Higher Education Collaboration

Gabrielle Kersaint, MSPH, Brooklyn-Queens-Long Island AHEC Executive Director

The Brooklyn-Queens-Long Island AHEC (BQLI AHEC) and Long Island University-Brooklyn Campus have embarked on an exciting initiative to address the shortage of Hispanic and Latino nurses in medically underserved communities of New York City.

To address the great disparity in the number of Hispanic/Latino health professionals, the BQLI AHEC has collaborated with the Long Island University (LIU) School of Nursing and the New York City Chapter of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses in launching the “NYC Hispanic & Latino Nurses Program.” The program is designed to develop and implement activities to increase recruitment, retention, graduation

and entry into professional nursing practice among Hispanic and Latino students in order to meet the health care needs of New York City’s traditionally underserved communities.

New York City is the most ethnically, racially and culturally diverse city in the United States. In 2000, the city’s foreign-born population of 2.87 million was at an all-time high and represented 36% of its total population of 8 million (source: The Newest New Yorkers, 2000, New York City Department of City Planning). The largest numbers of those recent residents born



Participants in the NYC Hispanic & Latino Nurses Program

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## Evaluation Affirms Success of Manhattan-Staten Island AHEC (MSI AHEC) Partnership Strategy

Mary J. Mitchell, MPA, Manhattan-Staten Island AHEC Executive Director

The MSI AHEC strongly believes in the power of partnership and collaboration as a major strategy to support our students, community health care providers and the community at large in connecting students to careers, professionals to communities, and communities to better health. Developing and maintaining these types of relationships is also a significant component of evaluating our effectiveness.

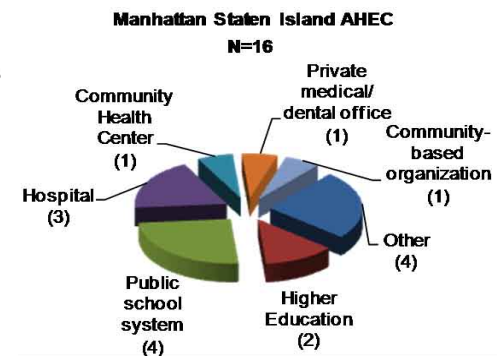
To this point, I am happy to share with you MSI AHEC results from the most recent NYS AHEC System Survey of Community Organizations (2007).

Background: As part of the NYS AHEC

System’s statewide evaluation in 2007, a survey was developed to assess the scope of AHEC-community collaboration, including types of programs, satisfaction, opportunities for further collaboration, and perceptions of major health workforce needs in the community. The survey was developed by a work group including all AHEC Directors, as well as Region Office and Statewide Office representatives, and it was administered by the Statewide Office.

Methods: The Statewide Office mailed surveys to 26 community organizations that have collaborated with MSI AHEC. Sixteen surveys were returned, yielding a 62% response rate.

Figure 1: Types of organizations involved



See *Partnership* continued on page 4

## Manhattan-Staten Island AHEC Marks 5th Year of Accomplishment, Thanks Partners

Mary J. Mitchell, MPA, Manhattan-Staten Island AHEC Executive Director

In our fifth year of operation, the Manhattan-Staten Island (MSI) AHEC has had a highly productive program year. The Board of Directors continues to evolve, adding new talent from the City University of New York (CUNY). Join us in welcoming Elliott Dawes, Director of the CUNY Black Male Initiative, located at City College. As a group, the Board has been focusing their efforts on fiscal sustainability of the organization.

Our primary catalyst behind each year's success is partnership and collaboration. We are grateful to those individuals and organizations who continue to work with us to bring about successful programs and activities that promote increased diversity in the health care workforce, increased exposure to health careers for underrepresented youth, and ultimately improved health outcomes.

Over this past year, we have had the privilege of working with several dynamic individuals and groups toward achieving our goals. We want to thank our ongoing partners for their commitment and dedication to our work:

- Commission on the Public's Health. MSI AHEC was a proud co-sponsor of the Manhattan events in Celebration of the 100th year of Child Health Clinics in New York City. We also worked with the borough coordinating agency, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corp., to include MSI AHEC-SHIP students in focus groups which would gather input to support a new child/teen health policy agenda.
- Institute for Family Health — the New York Metropolitan Region AHEC office
- IS 49/Staten Island University Hospital — Middle School Academy for Health Careers

- Washington Irving High School — Mentor Connection Program
- New York College of Osteopathic Medicine — Community Health Experience Program
- Our Summer Health Internship Program sites: Bellevue Hospital Center; Clove Lakes Health Care & Rehabilitation Center; Gouverneur Hospital, Harlem Hospital Center; Metropolitan Hospital Center; New York Presbyterian Hospital, Ryan/Chelsea-Clinton Community Health Center; Staten Island University Hospital, Upper Manhattan American Cancer Society, YAI/National Institute for People with Disabilities Network
- Our Community Health Experience Program sites: Community Health Action of Staten Island, Commission on the Public's Health

See *Accomplishment* continued on page 4

## BW AHEC Hosts 2008 Health Leadership Academy

Edwin Martinez, Bronx-Westchester AHEC Executive Director

The Bronx-Westchester AHEC hosted its second annual leadership program during five weeks this past summer. Participants in the leadership program were selected from Summer

Health Internship Program (SHIP) alumni and from SHIP College students who demonstrated a high level of maturity and equally high interest in health care leadership.



One of the highlights of the leadership program was the opportunity to interact with 1st year medical students at the weekly didactic sessions hosted by each of the NYC Metropolitan area AHECs.

Students in this year's cohort will be entering very impressive health studies programs, such as Columbia University's Neuroscience Program and the Upstate Medical Radiology

Program, to name a few. The majority want to pursue careers as physicians.

Using a variety of learning methods and training approaches, such as role playing, facilitated interaction and case studies, leadership students participated in workshops on team building, decision-making and change dynamics during their summer experience. In addition to attending training workshops, each student mentor was assigned the task of mentoring a Summer Health Internship participant at their respective placement sites. Program benefits include gaining knowledge and skills that will help the participants adapt to various workplace environments in their future professional endeavors.

## Community HealthCorps at the Institute for Family Health/Metro AHEC Regional Office

*Olivia Perrotta Hare*

*Institute for Family Health HealthCorps Program Coordinator*

The Community HealthCorps program is a national AmeriCorps program, founded in 1995 by the National Association of Community Health Centers. Consistent with the NYS AHEC System, its goal is promoting health care for the underserved while developing future health care workers.

HealthCorps members engage in a variety of projects that provide access to health care and health information in medically underserved communities. At the same time, participants are exposed to the field of community health and encouraged to choose health careers working with underserved populations. The Institute for Family Health/New York Metropolitan AHEC Region Office (Metro AHEC) and the Manhattan-Staten Island AHEC host eight full-time and three part-time HealthCorps members. The full-time members each

volunteer approximately 1,700 hours over the course of the year. Members receive a living stipend and, at the end of their term, an education award toward student loans or future education costs.

Each member is assigned to a specific project for the year. Projects include conducting education sessions at community health centers on topics such as nutrition, diabetes, asthma management, and reproductive health; working with a community-based coalition on activities designed to eliminate racial disparities in health outcomes; providing health education at a school-based health center; and enrolling patients in pharmacy assistance programs.

The members provide valuable enrichment to current Institute projects, such as using electronic health records to improve quality of care.

HealthCorps graduate Anish Parikh, who is now attending medical school, recalled:

“In my placement, I worked with a team made up of clinicians and administrators to develop a project that uses electronic health records to identify patients at high risk for colorectal, breast, and cervical cancers. I am now in the process of reaching out to these high-risk patients, providing them with education and support as I attempt to convince them to get screened for the cancer(s) for which they are at risk. This outreach is done over the phone, through the mail, and in person.”

Most HealthCorps members are recent

college graduates or community members who have an interest in health care and working with underserved populations. The HealthCorps program provides them with the opportunity to learn about community health, serve their communities, clarify their career goals, and to develop skills and knowledge that they will bring into their future careers.

Another recent graduate, Shawna Finkbeiner, who worked at a school-based health center, says:

“I’ve learned a lot from my placement. Working with adolescents has been fun and rewarding. I’ve improved my teaching skills and have learned that communicating with adolescents is much different than with other populations!”

The third group of Institute/AHEC HealthCorps members began this September. Most are planning on health careers working with underserved populations, and they see HealthCorps as a valuable way to gain “on the ground” experience while serving their communities.

Of the eight full-time members from the 2007-2008 group, three have entered medical school; one is studying occupational therapy; one is in an accelerated nursing program; one is a research fellow with the City University of New York-Community Partnership for Public Health and is also working at the NYC Department of Health; and two are applying to medical school (one of them has remained in her placement as an Institute employee for the coming year).

Maxine Golub, AHEC Metropolitan Regional Director, noted that:

“In addition to their individual projects, members also receive valuable training on a range of pertinent topics such as cultural competency, the role of community health centers in caring for the underserved, and community-based health advocacy. These trainings are designed to help members navigate their service experiences, but they also provide an invaluable foundation for

### Institute for Family Health Receives Excellence Award

The Institute for Family Health, home of the New York Metropolitan Region Office of the NYS AHEC System, has received the New York Times Company Nonprofit Excellence Award for Excellent Use of Technology and Focus on Mission.

Dr. Neil Calman, founder, president and CEO of the Institute and Medical Director of the Metro AHEC Office, said: “I am thrilled by the Times’ acknowledgment of the Institute’s management expertise and our use of health information technology to provide care to the underserved. In these competitive times, when funds are so difficult to obtain, those of us who are committed to the public good must also be committed to working as efficiently and effectively as possible to ensure the sustainability of our efforts.”

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## Nurses Program

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outside the United States were from Latin America (32%), with people arriving daily in significant numbers from the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Ecuador and Columbia.

According to the report “Socioeconomic Indicators Among Foreign and Domestic Born Latinos, NYC, 2005” (City University of New York, Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies, 2005): “New York City Latinos lag behind all other groups in terms of family income. Comparatively lower income levels among Latinos may be explained by lower reported level of educational attainment compared with Asian, Black and Non-Hispanic Whites. Approximately two-thirds of New York City Latinos over the age of 25 reported having no college education.”

Hispanics and Latinos have the highest high school dropout rates, lowest college matriculation rates, and the lowest graduation rates of any ethnic group entering and completing college (source: “Where We Stand Together,” 2002).

As a result of low income levels and limited education, many immigrant families are faced with daily challenges related to housing, employment, child care and health.

It is no surprise then that these challenges have resulted in great disparities in the numbers of Hispanics/Latinos in the healthcare professions. Latino/Hispanic doctors, nurses and other health professionals are noticeably absent in hospitals and health centers throughout the city. Hispanics are the most underrepresented ethnic group among hospital-based nurses in New York State (source: NYS Education Department, 2003).

The NYC Hispanic & Latino Nurses Program targets Hispanic and Latino high school and college students and engages them in activities to increase their awareness of nursing as a career and their access to nursing professionals. It also supports their admission, retention and graduation from a baccalaureate nursing program.

## Partnership

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Results: The 16 respondent organizations were very diverse, including one community-based organization, one community health center, one private medical/dental office, four public school systems, three hospitals and two higher education institutions (Figure 1).

Three of the 16 respondents have been involved with MSI AHEC for three or more years. Five of the 16 have been involved with MSI AHEC for two to three years; five of the 16 have been involved for one to two years, and the remaining three respondents have been with the MSI AHEC less than one year.

When asked to describe the capacity in which they have worked with the Manhattan-Staten Island AHEC, seven respondents indicated health career exploration programs, while six have collaborated in clinical placements (Figure 2). Fifteen of the 16 respondents affirmed that their involvement with the MSI AHEC has been worthwhile. When asked, “In what ways?” 12 respondents elaborated—most emphasized the importance of health career exposure and educational programming for students (Table 1).

Figure 2: Programs with which respondents are involved (N=15)

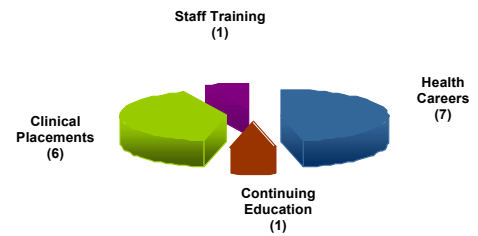


Table 1: In what ways has involvement with AHEC been worthwhile? (N=12)

Opportunities for Students	Excellent collaboration style, great opportunity for medical students to gain public health perspective
	Harlem Hospital Center is a teaching hospital. It has afforded the facilitator the opportunity to expose young adults to a professional health care setting. Hopefully this experience will help them to make an informed career choice.
	For the school and community
	Good student placements, good job/work on health access
	Our high school students receive one-on-one attention and authentic learning experiences
	Highly motivational to senior students
	Introducing students to health care professions in acute care setting/field of mental retardation/motivated by enthusiasm of student
	Mentoring, Future leaders
	Playing a critical role in the growth/development of our center; providing training, education opportunities for minority youth.
	Students give agency a different view/approach in providing services
	Students helpful in the hospital community, fulfilled assignments, punctual/responsible with completing assignments
	The health career programs have connected several of our students to possible career paths

## HealthCorps

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their future work as health professionals.”

Members also participate in trainings with other HealthCorps groups throughout the city, allowing them to learn about community health in other settings, make connections with one another, and attend public health lectures and conferences in the city to learn more about the field. Upon graduation, members are strongly encouraged to stay in touch with their supervisors and program coordinator. A recent graduate and current medical student has expressed serious interest in returning to the Institute for her residency—a true Community HealthCorps success story!

## Accomplishment

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A very special acknowledgment of thanks goes out to those who we have had the privilege of establishing new collaborations with this year:

- City University of New York—Black Male Initiative
- Community Health Center of Richmond—SHIP Placement Site
- Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine—Community Health Experience Program
- Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation—Community Health Experience Program Site.