



A publication of the  
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# WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY

## *M.P.H. CONNECTIONS*

SPRING 2012 ISSUE

### MPH Students' Trip to the SOPHE Summit

By Leann Marcinek, MPH Student & VP of the MPH Student Advisory Board

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The Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) is an independent professional association that promotes healthy behaviors, healthy communities, and healthy environments through its membership, its network of local chapters, and its numerous partnerships with other organizations. MPH students Chibu Anyanwu and Leann Marcinek attended the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual SOPHE Health Education Advocacy Summit, held March 3-5, 2012 in Washington DC at the Washington Court Hotel. Chibu, Graduate Student Association (GSA) president, informed MPH students of a grant available to reimburse conference expenses for up to \$300, which made attending the summit more affordable for the students. The summit had lectures on advocacy and priority issues; then on March 5 the attendees marched to Capitol Hill to advocate to their representatives on the issues discussed at during the previous two days. Summit attendees included representatives from the Association of Chronic Disease, DC Department of Health, American Public Health Association, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), American Heart Association, National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc. (NCHEC), among others, and traveled from as far away as California to attend.

The Summit lectures included: *Advocacy 101: Introduction to advocacy*, *Advocacy 201: After Your Meeting Will They Remember your Message*, *Incorporating Advocacy in Professional Preparation*, *Social Media and Messaging*, *Effective Hill Visits*, and *Challenges and Opportunities in the 112th Congress*. These lectures took place on the first day in the hotel ballrooms. Attendees had the option to choose between the Advocacy 101 and Advocacy 210 sessions, depending on advocacy/work experience.

Day Two consisted preparation for the "Hill Visits." Attendees were grouped by state, so everyone from Pennsylvania was seated together, etc. Prior to the Summit, those planning on visiting Capitol Hill as part of their Summit experience made appointments with their respective congress representatives to guarantee the opportunity to advocate their chosen public health message

to the representatives face-to-face. Conference packets were stuffed with literature on the priority issues facing the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress: Prevention and Public Health Fund, Preventative Health & Health Services Block Grant, Recommendations for the Reauthorization of ESEA/NCLB, Community Transformation Grants. Lectures were held on the top priority issues of the Affordable Care Act and its relationship to the Prevention and Public Health Fund and Community Transformation Grants. After lunch on Day Two, attendees returned to their state groupings to plan the messages to present to state representatives. The goal was to choose a priority issue and decide on wording to dispense a cohesive message to congress to ensure the representatives got the message and would vote in favor of the issue.

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## SOPHE (Continued from pg. 1)

Day Three began bright and early with a march to Capitol Hill to make all the planning of the previous days and weeks come to fruition. Summit attendees met with their representatives at their scheduled time to deliver their priority issue messages. Since there were Summit attendees from as far away as California, Congress representatives from across the country were targeted with repeated messages on these priority issues, in the hopes that there will be national movement on the issues for the benefit of public health.

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## M.P.H. Student Awarded Position in Nutrition and Cancer Research Prevention Practicum

Dara Dirhan, RD, LDN, MPH student in the nutrition track was awarded a position to participate in the Nutrition and Cancer Research Prevention Practicum. The Nutrition and Cancer Research Prevention Practicum was a one-week learning session focusing on the role of diet and bioactive food components as they relate to cancer incidence and tumor behavior. Included in the practicum were hands-on workshops at the NIH Clinical Center Department of Nutrition, a tour of the Metabolic Kitchen at the USDA, and lectures on bioenergetics, nutrigenomics, pre-clinical and clinical studies, ethics, and cancer trends. The Practicum was sponsored by The *Nutritional Science Research Group in the Division of Cancer Prevention at the National Cancer Institute*, and The *National Institutes of Health and the Department of Nutrition at the Clinical Center, National Institutes of Health*. The Nutrition and Cancer Research Practicum was held March 12 through March 16, 2012 in Rockville, Maryland. Dara is a 2010 graduate of West Chester University's Nutrition and Dietetics Program.

### REMINDER

Students are strongly encouraged to submit news, views, and experiences for publication in the M.P.H. Connections.

Please contact

The Health Department ([health@wcupa.edu](mailto:health@wcupa.edu))

## MPH Featured Alumni

*MPH-Environmental Health Students... Where are they now*  
 By Leann Marcinek, MPH Student & VP of the MPH Student Advisory Board

In the last newsletter, you heard from recent past, present and future MPH-Environmental Health (MPH-EH) students. This time around, interviews were conducted with MPH-EH alumni who are a few years post-degree and practicing as Environmental Health professionals. We asked them to share their perspectives on their Applied Learning Experience (ALE) projects and how their advanced public health degree changed their careers.

### ALE Experience



Joy Dvornichich – National Disaster Medical System Area Emergency Manager, VHA Office of Emergency Management



Amy Braunlein – Senior Environmental Health & Safety Specialist, QVC



Kristina Early – Project Scientist, Avatar Environmental LLC

Joy's ALE consisted of a Hazard Vulnerability Analysis (HVA) of a state laboratory. A HVA is an assessment which hospitals must complete annually, and conducting HVAs is now a part of her current job. Her ALE work directly applied to safety, one of her main areas of interest.

Amy's ALE took place at QVC, a large television-based shopping network located in West Chester, and her project created an H1N1 pandemic preparation protocol. She worked with their Human Resources and Occupational Safety departments. Her manual was approved by the president of the company and can be used to prepare for future outbreaks.

Kristina tested the **Spatial Analysis and Decision Assistance (SADA)** package, an EPA risk assessment tool. She was tasked with assessing its value for use at Avatar, her employer and ALE site. The experience gave her confidence in public speaking and in research which helped her advance in her career.

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## Alumni (Continued from pg. 3)

### Career Path

Joy's work history consists of positions as a U.S. Navy corpsman and laboratory technician, clinical laboratory medicine (Hematology, Chemistry, Blood Bank, Microbiology), a specialist in bioagent detection laboratory testing for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and a consultant public health Subject Matter Expert (SME). Currently Joy works as a public health emergency manager for eastern PA and DE. In this position she coordinates patient movement from the site of a disaster's impact to the City of Philadelphia where patients would receive medical care at local hospitals. Her MPH degree allows her more independence and she no longer needs to work under direct supervision. In addition to her MPH she is a Certified Emergency Manager (CEM).

Amy earned both her undergraduate and graduate degrees at WCU. Upon earning her BS in Environmental Health she was hired as a safety and risk manager for Shaw Environmental, a contract employer for the government. Amy then accepted a position with QVC and began working on her MPH degree in the Environmental Health track. The MPH degree allowed her to move to senior level corporate position, where she now influences the health and safety of employees nationwide. She has oversight responsibilities and leads more projects. She recommends becoming a Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH) to supplement the education received in the MPH program.

Kristina also earned her BS in Environmental Health at WCU. She began working at Avatar and eventually entered the MPH-EH program to advance in the field. She moved through the ranks holding positions as Risk Assessor, Assistant Project Scientist, Associate Project Scientist, to her current position as Project Scientist. The MPH degree made her more marketable and gave her more confidence to take on additional work tasks. While in school she earned the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) Student Research Award and earned the graduate certificate in Emergency Preparedness. She also completed the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) compliant HAZWOPER (Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response) training.

### Advice for MPH students for setting themselves up in the field

Joy suggests volunteering and taking internships with organizations within the federal government, the medical reserve corps, or other community involved organizations. This builds your network of colleagues and improves your capabilities which can apply nationally.

Amy says you should "be well-rounded in your education and keep learning!" Be open minded about learning possibilities because you do not know where they can lead you in your career. Be prepared and be flexible in your work so when new learning experiences are offered you take the initiative to learn about the task and do a good job.

Kristina offers the advice to take advantage of every network. Dr. Shorten and Dr. Sheehan are very active in the environmental health community. Use them as a resource to get involved, become members of organizations, and attend conferences.

### Why Environmental Health?

Joy is able to work collaboratively with other governmental agencies to prepare for, plan for, and prevent disasters. There may not always be immediate rewards but if everyone is healthy and safe, a good job is being done. Working in the Environmental Health field allows her to be focused and to work with others who are passionate about preventing and responding to disasters.

Amy works in a job that allows her to care about others' well-being. She prevents outbreaks and injuries that would affect the employees at QVC and sets up organizational best practices protecting the health and safety of a large population. She also has the freedom to support her own interests by enhancing environmental sustainability on the corporate level.

Kristina enjoys having a positive impact on the environment, making big changes, and making sure the world doesn't become a "messy place". She gets to prevent unethical practices that could have a negative impact on the environment while being true to her natural proclivity toward math and science.

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Environmental health is an important field that affects the health of every one of us daily. These three women have taken the initiative to take on the important job of protecting health by improving the environment. They have found that hard work and passion pays off in this incredibly important and sometimes challenging field. Each of these women works in a different area of environmental health, demonstrating the breadth of public health. Be proud to call these women your colleagues and be proud of yourself for choosing a public health career path that can take you on an exciting journey of positive impact on the world!

## Faculty/Student Scholarship and Presentations & Faculty News

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### Faculty Research and Presentations

**Bill, D., Gilboy, MB.,** Phillippy, M. West Chester University: Latino Communities Conference, Workshop: "Key Informants Report Facilitating Factors and Barriers to Healthy Eating Among Mexican-American Families." Thursday March 22, 2012, West Chester University, Sykes Auditorium.

**Bill, D.** "West Chester University Invited Faculty Panel on How the Study of Ethnicity Influenced Professional Career Development," West Chester University: Office of Ethnic Studies, Phillips Library, Friday March 23, 2012.

**Bill, D.,** and Gilboy, G., and Phillippy, M. Society of Public Health Education Mid-Year Scientific Meeting, "A Needs Assessment of Latino Service Providers on the Subject of Nutrition," April, 11, 2012, Nashville Tennessee.

**Bill, Debra,** Professor, MPH Community Health Track Director continues to serve Chair of the Society of Public Health Professions (SOPHE), Anthropology and Public Health (APH), Communities of Practice (CoP) Group (APH COP) for the Society of Public Health Education Meetings and Organization. She will be facilitating the Roundtable Luncheon on behalf of APH CoP Group at the 2012 **Mid-Year Scientific Meeting**, April 13, 2012 Nashville, Tennessee. The topic is Qualitative Research Strategies.

**Sankaran, G.** (2011). *Addressing Current and Emergent Global Health Issues*. Invited presentation for residents and other medical staff at Christiana Care Health System, Newark, Delaware on Tuesday, December 6.

Moriconi, C., **McCown, D.**, & Williams, C. (2012). Mindfulness and self-compassion in health care education. *CIESUP/Knowledge Crossing Borders 2012 Conference*, West Chester University of Pennsylvania, May 30 – June 1.

**McCown, D.** (2012). Exploring the Ethical Space of the Mindfulness-Based Interventions. *10th Annual Conference: Integrating Mindfulness-Based Interventions into Medicine, Health Care, and Society*, Norwood, MA, March 28 - 31.

### Symposium Participation

**McCown, D.** *Elevating Standards and Widening the Circle: A Symposium on the Education and Training of MBSR Teachers*. Invited participant. UMASS Center for Mindfulness, Norwood, MA, April 1-2.

### Scholarly Activities

**Sankaran, G.** (2012). Invited reviewer, abstracts submitted to the International Health Section for the 140<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of American Public Health Association, San Francisco, October 27-31.

**Sankaran, G.** (2012). Invited presentation, *Clinical Medicine and Public Health: Unleash the Power of Collaboration!*, Transition to Residency program, School of Health Sciences and Practice, New York Medical College on March 29.

**Sankaran, G.** (2012). Invited presentation, *You...Student Leaders and Social Justice!*, at the Enterprise Rent-A-Car Global Leadership Series for Student Leaders at West Chester University, West Chester, Pennsylvania on February 3.

**Sankaran, G.** (2011). Invited presentation, *Addressing Current and Emergent Global Health Issues*, Christiana Health Care System Global Health Series, Newark, Delaware on December 6.

### Professional Development Activities

**Sankaran, G.** (2012). *The Human-Animal Bond and its Impact on Health--2012 Integrative Health Conference* at West Chester University, West Chester, Pennsylvania on March 30-31.

**Sankaran, G.** (2012). *ADHD at Home, at Work, and in the Classroom--The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual ADHD Conference*, West Chester University, West Chester, Pennsylvania on February 15.

**Sankaran, G.** (2012). Certificate of completion of *Online Faculty Development Program* from the Office of Distance Education, West Chester University, West Chester, Pennsylvania (January 4-15).

### Book Publications

**McCown, D.** with co-author Marc Micozzi, MD, *New World Mindfulness: From the Founding Fathers, Emerson, and Thoreau to Your Personal Practice* was published in January by Healing Arts Press, Rochester, VT.