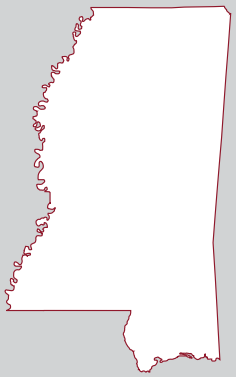
AWARENESS

A NEWSLETTER OF MS COMMUNITY HEALTH COALITIONS



Message from the Coordinator

As the year ends, faces have come and gone. One face that will be missed immensely is Mrs. Rachel Welborn. She served in numerous capacities at the state and community level promoting health coalitions, which in turn helped to create healthier communities. Her service also included many other tasks, one of which was publisher of this newsletter. Rachel, "hats off to you for a job well done!"

I am honored to take the publisher's pen and have the opportunity to work with Mississippi communities at the county, city and state level. As we continue to fight against obesity, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes, educated professionals and programs such as Mississippi In Motion are available to help tackle these chronic diseases. Mississippi in Motion is a twelve-week program that can aid in promoting healthier lifestyles. More about this program is outlined inside this newsletter.

If you have a child or know of children that are middle school age or teenagers that are completing their junior year in high school and are interested in medicine, keep reading! Two exciting programs await that promise a challenging glimpse into the field of medicine.

The Mississippi Shine Project Network has been actively promoting diabetic awareness in communities around the state. The Mississippi Chronic Illness Coalition will be sponsoring the sixth annual Capitol Day on March 6, 2007.

Finally, this issue highlights a new program, Master Health Education Volunteers, developed by the Mississippi State University Extension Service. It is a volunteer leader training program with the mission of "promoting healthy living through community connections".

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A Service of

Mississippi State University Extension Service

National Health Observances

January
Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

Birth Defects Prevention Month

February
American Heart Month

National Children's Dental Health Month

March
National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

National Nutrition Month

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DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

Rural Mississippi is underserved in the number of health care professionals available to meet the needs of our residents. Mississippi State University Extension Service is working to improve that situation by developing a pipeline of future health care providers. Two programs, Rural Medical Scholars and Delta Futures, encourage high school and middle school children to consider medical or health-related careers.

The Rural Medical Scholars program is sponsored by the Mississippi Rural Health Corps, a joint effort of MSU's Extension Service and the state's 15 community and junior colleges. Thirty high school students, between their junior and senior year, with an ACT composite score of at least 25 will take two pre-med courses on the Starkville campus -- zoology and pre-calculus -- and observe doctors at practice from May 28 until July 3.

The intense, five-week Rural Medical Scholars summer program at MSU aims to identify the state's future primary care doctors and help them become members of the medical school class of 2017.

"Mississippi has the second to lowest number of physicians per capita in the nation," said Bonnie Carew, rural health program leader for MSU's Extension Service. "Clearly, this limits access to care for the state's citizens and contributes to many of the negative health status indicators plaguing the state."

"To date, 194 students have participated in the Scholars program, with most planning health-related careers. Fifteen of our graduates have reached the point in their academic career where they are enrolled in medical school and our first two physicians graduate in May. The program is clearly meeting the need that the program was designed to accomplish—assuring the availability of primary care physicians throughout rural Mississippi."

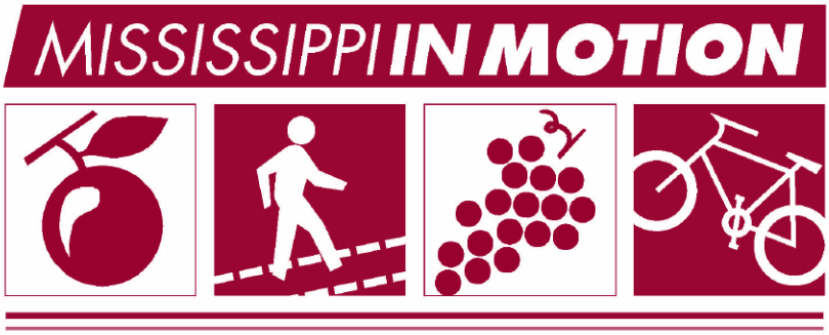
The selected Scholars will receive tuition, housing and meals during the program. A $40 registration fee is required after acceptance. Each of the state's community and junior colleges will select and sponsor candidates from their districts. Applications must be submitted by March 16. Interested candidates should contact a high school guidance counselor or the nearest community college for more information or an application. Applications and program details also are available online at http://www.RMS.msucares.com

The Scholars program is aimed at students that have already developed an interest in medicine. To encourage younger students to begin considering a career in the broader field of health, a new program is under development. Delta Futures is targeted at encouraging middle school children in the Mississippi Delta to consider a career in health care. The program is currently in the planning stages and will begin in 2007. "The state's problems relative to poor health outcomes and insufficient access to health care professionals is magnified in the Delta", said Margaret Cotton, Delta Futures project coordinator. "We hope to expose local children to the opportunities and benefits of pursuing a career in nursing or an allied health profession."

A series of three two-day camps will provide students an opportunity to assess their career interests, be exposed to the opportunities in the field of health care, engage in activities targeted at helping them to better understand and make healthy lifestyle choices, build leadership skills, and participate in a service learning opportunity related to improving local health. Contact Margaret Cotton at 662-325-6792 or mcotton@ext.msstate.edu for more information on the Delta Futures program.

MCIC NEWS

The sixth annual Capitol Day sponsored by the Mississippi Chronic Illness Coalition (MCIC) is scheduled for Tuesday, March 6, 2007, in Jackson from 8 to noon. Prior to the special day, state legislators and the public are invited to visit the MCIC exhibit set up in the Rotunda of the Capitol building. Details of Capitol Day 2007 are currently in the planning stages. The event traditionally features information about the impact of chronic illness in the state and the importance of dealing with it. Also, specialty items are furnished by MCIC member organizations, and refreshments are served. MCIC will advertise the event via newspaper, television, and radio. Over 100 organizations make up the MCIC membership, including the Mississippi State University Extension Service.



Mississippi leads the nation in rates of Mississippi leads the nation in rates of obesity, cardiovascular deaths, and infant mortality. Three-quarters of Mississippi adults have a least one of the six major risk factors (smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, being overweight/obese, diabetes, and lack of exercise). Many health indicators are directly related to life-style choices in addition to the lack of access to primary care physicians in the state. Mississippi In Motion, conducted by the Mississippi State Extension Service is designed to address many of these health indicators and to assist people in making healthier choices for life. The program goal is to improve the overall health of Mississippi residents through key prevention strategies: increased physical activity and improved nutrition. This year Mississippi In Motion is supported and funded through the Delta Health Alliance in 10 Delta counties and by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Mississippi in 10 counties outside the Delta. The majority of the programs are slated to start at the end of January and the first of February, 2007. All participants must be 18 years of age or older and the program is voluntary and is for the general public. The program is 12-weeks long with sessions on nutrition, physical activity, and strength training, along with information on chronic diseases. Social support is a key concept in helping people make these positive lifestyle changes and participants may form teams of 3 to 5 people or choose to participate as individuals in the program. The program kicks off in the community with a local health fair, where body mass index, blood pressure, and in some cases glucose and cholesterol tests are taken to help inform people of their current status. At the end of the sessions a follow-up body mass index and other health screenings are taken to document results. Our previous program results indicate that participants have significantly increased their fruit and vegetable consumption and increased their physical activity. According to the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, programs promoting step goals- such as walking 10,000 steps per day can encourage people to exercise enough to reap positive health benefits.

For more information, contact your local county extension office or Pat Owen, Project Coordinator, at 662-325-6772, powen@ext.msstate.edu or Dr. Jane Clary, Associate Extension Professor Health Specialist, 662-325-5014, jclary@ext.msstate.edu

MS SHINE Projects Take Action During Diabetes Awareness Month

Diabetes has become an ever growing epidemic. In order to address the issues related to the disease, several of the MS Shine Projects held diabetes awareness events during the month of November. Health education information and free blood sugar screenings were provided to the participants. Central Mississippi Rural Development Network, Kudzu Delta Health Network, Southwest Opportunity, Inc. Network and Western Hills Health Partnership all held similar events at various locations in the state. Some of the encouragers presented programs emphasizing detection and self-management of diabetes. HSIY Health Network has begun placing diabetes educational literature at provider sites, cookbooks and educational videos in the library and compiling a registry of diabetics located in Humphreys County.

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Extension Service

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Healthy Mississippi
Summit 2007

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MASTER HEALTH EDUCATION VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The Master Health Education Volunteer Program is designed to increase the local Mississippi State University Extension Service 's capacity to reach targeted audiences with effective health education. The program provides volunteers with an opportunity for high-quality, health-related, community service through a specialized course of training and practice. The well-trained Master Health Education Volunteer (MHEV) will serve as a unique connection to people who experience barriers to good health. Initial training is 40 hours in length and is divided into several sessions. Master Health Education Volunteers agree to give 40 hours of community service back in exchange for the training received. MSU-Extension Service partnered with the American Cancer Society, AskMed Inc., Mississippi Chronic Illness Coalition, and Mississippi Department of Health for portions of the curriculum.

Twenty-four participants recently graduated from the first class representing thirteen counties. The Area Health Agents serving these counties are Ann Twiner and Kimberly Smith-Russ. Three of the Mississippi Shine Project Networks are participating in the program; Central MS Rural Development Network, Western Hills Health Partnership, and Kudzu Delta Health Network. The other participants are involved with EC HealthNet and a Head Start program, Friends of Children of Mississippi, Inc. If you would like more information about the program, contact your county Extension office or Ann Sansing, MHEV Coordinator at 662.325.4043 or asansing@ext.msstate.edu.