

# Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center Update

Linking Our Community and Academic Partners

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The University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, Denver, CO

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## Gearing up to Launch the School Environment Project

In our first newsletter issue (April 2004), we introduced readers to the San Luis Valley (SLV) School Environment Project. This project has several goals:

1. to facilitate environmental level and policy changes aimed at increasing physical activity and healthy eating in the school setting;
  2. to adapt a comprehensive planning process, Intervention Mapping, to be used as a community-based participatory research tool; and
- to evaluate if Intervention Mapping leads to environmental and policy changes and whether those changes lead to increased activity and healthy eating among elementary school students.

In March 2004, a Steering Committee was convened to oversee the project. Members include: Elaine Belansky, Rachel Brown, Robert Chavez, Vivian Gallegos, Marcella Garcia, Michelle Hashbarger, Mark Lara, Jerry LeBlanc, Carol Keith, John Naranjo, Julie Schraeder, John Tillman, Terry Uyeki. The vision of this committee is to “celebrate healthy active children living in environments where the entire community creates a cycle of lifelong physical activity and healthy eating”. We meet monthly to discuss issues ranging from research design, recruitment strategies, food service rules and brain-based learning activities in Physical Education. In September, Carol Keith and Elaine Belansky participated in a discussion on community-based participatory research at the Colorado Public Health Association’s Annual Meeting. In November, Michelle Hashbarger introduced the school project to SLV Superintendents. In April, the Steering Committee will begin recruiting elementary schools throughout the SLV to participate in the project, and the intervention will begin Fall 2005.

We are wrapping up our pilot project with Valdez Elementary School in Denver. The purpose of the pilot was to gain understanding and experience in using the Intervention Mapping approach in a community-based participatory research setting. This proved to be an invaluable opportunity with many lessons learned. As a result of the planning process, Valdez made several important changes to its environment: such as attempting to sell only healthy snacks in the School Store that meet the recommendations in State Bill 04-103 (Nutritious Choices in School Vending Machines). In the lunchroom, when possible, fresh fruits and vegetables have replaced canned and frozen produce. In addition, lunchroom monitors and cafeteria staff encourage kids to eat fruits and vegetables. Moreover, foodservice staff are working hard to prepare and serve fruits and vegetables that look and taste good. Sara Beth Johnson, the art teacher, had an opportunity to talk about the group’s accomplishments with State Senator Paula Sandoval, the lead author of the vending machine bill.

Over the next few months, we will be working hard at recruiting SLV schools, finalizing our evaluation plan, and re-packaging Intervention Mapping. For more information, please contact Elaine Belansky, Project Leader at (303-315-0861) or Robert Chavez, Project Coordinator at (719-589-5801).

Elaine Belansky, RMPRC



## Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center’s Vision

*Healthy families and communities that advocate and partner for social and physical environments that support active, healthy lifestyles.*

# The Director Dispatch

Since our August 2004 Update, we have been working hard on on-going projects of the RMPRC (see Connections and Project Updates), developing new partnerships and reshaping the infrastructure to support those projects. Our SLV Community Advisory Board has developed a handbook to more formally delineate the Board's role and operating principles. The board membership will be expanded over coming months.

We have increased collaborations within the School of Medicine with CDC funding of three special interests projects and one career development award: Dr. Cindy Bryant (Preventive Medicine) was funded to continue national collaborations with the Healthy Aging Research Network and to develop research relevant to older citizens in the SLV; Dr. Alison Kemp (Pediatrics) will be studying vaccine delivery policy; Dr. Jack Westfall (Family Medicine and Associate Dean of Rural Health) was funded to study methods to increase colorectal cancer screening in rural Colorado; and Dr. Jill Litt will be studying community design and health with a focus on community gardens in low income neighborhoods in Denver. With joint funding from the RMPRC and the School of Medicine, we are currently advertising for a behavioral interventionist who will direct the RMPRC's Intervention Core as well as hold a faculty position in Preventive Medicine and Biometrics.

While we continue to grow, we have also said 'good-bye' over the last six months to several RMPRC investigators and staff who helped shape our organization during the first six years. Cathy Morin is writing grants and developing programs to meet the current and future needs of the SLV Regional Medical Center, and Dick Hamman has stepped down as co-Director of the RMPRC in order to concentrate his efforts on developing and funding a regional School of Public Health in Colorado. We anticipate that the RMPRC will play an important role in community-based prevention research and teaching as plans for the new school move forward. Dr. Jim Sallis has stepped down after 6 years providing sage advice to our projects through his membership on our State and National Advisory Council. Thank you all! We appreciate your service to the vision and mission of the RMPRC.

Internally, we have been reorganizing to respond to the needs of on-going and new projects. The RMPRC has taken over administrative responsibilities for prevention studies in the San Luis Valley that are affiliated with the Department of Preventive Medicine and Biometrics. We are pleased to welcome aboard Sue Davis into a dual role as Program Manager for prevention studies based in Alamosa and as the RMPRC staff person overseeing the development and fostering of community academic partnerships in our partner community (see RMPRC staff updates). Transition provides openings to new opportunities.



Julie Marshall, RMPRC



## CONNECTIONS Partner Highlights



Nationally, childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past three decades. There are immediate physical, social, and emotional health consequences for these children as well as increased risk for chronic health problems as adults. It has been estimated that 30 to 40 of every 100 children born in 2000 will develop type 2 diabetes during their lifetime. This risk is even higher among Hispanic, African American and Native American children. It is now a national priority to prevent childhood obesity and will require individual, family, community, corporate and governmental commitments to alter the course<sup>1</sup>.

In Colorado, we have numerous initiatives to address this issue. However, there is currently no systematic collection of height and weight information to answer the question, "Is there a problem with overweight among our children and youth?" The RMPRC is collaborating with the Colorado

Department of Education, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the UCHSC Center for Human Nutrition to develop a method for systematic collection of information on height and weight in school age children.

We are working toward a web-based data entry system which generates summary reports for local schools as well as maintaining a centralized data surveillance system. At the local level, these data can be used for program planning, to obtain funding and for assessing effectiveness of programs or policies. With an eye to the health of all children in Colorado, these data will allow monitoring of underweight, healthy weight and overweight by region, over-time and in high risk populations. It will be useful in defining program needs and in assessing progress toward Healthy People 2010 goals.

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## Connections – Partner Highlights (cont.)

Initially, we gathered information on methods for obesity surveillance being used in other states. Within Colorado, we conducted key information interviews and a web-based survey was sent to all school nurses. We are using this information to conduct a pilot in 20 schools this spring. The pilot will help us assess feasibility and develop the methods and materials needed to collect heights and weights in children from a representative sample of schools statewide in the 2005-2006 school year. The RMPRC is also developing a module for surveillance of school level policy and environmental data related to physical activity and nutrition that can be used along with collection of heights and weights.

<sup>1</sup>For information on preventing childhood obesity, go to [www.iom.edu](http://www.iom.edu) and 'click' on Focus on Childhood Obesity.

Julie Marshall, RMPRC

# Colorado Physical Activity & Nutrition Policy Updates

In March 2004, Denver Public Schools (DPS) Board of Education approved the formation of the Commission on School Nutrition and Physical Activity, co-chaired by Dr. Reginald Washington, Pediatric Cardiologist and co-chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics National Task Force on Childhood Obesity, and Elaine Gantz Berman, DPS Board Member. The scope of work of the Commission was to develop recommendations for the establishment of nutrition standards and their implementation for all food and beverages within DPS, review and revise DPS standards for physical education, examine feasibility of the recommendations, and identify appropriate outcomes. The 17-member commission included pediatricians, registered dietitians, physical education teachers, university researchers, public health professionals, and a representative from the office of Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper.

On December 16, 2004, the DPS Committee submitted its final report to the Board of Education and included the following recommendations:

- 1) Adopt healthy lifestyles as a strategic priority for the DPS school community over the next three years, consistent with the Local Wellness Policy of the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004;
- 2) Create a Board of Education policy for district-wide nutrition standards for all food sold on school campuses;
- 3) Develop guidelines for portion size and nutrient content for all beverages provided in school vending;
- 4) Develop an integrated health education program that will include behaviorally-focused nutrition education;
- 5) Require that all students participate daily in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity;
- 6) Establish daily recess in addition to lunch recess, and have recess before lunch;
- 7) Assure that physical education is standards-based, and increase and/or improve physical education for middle and high school students;
- 8) Implement the CDC model for Coordinated School Health;
- 9) Create a DPS Health Research Committee to develop and monitor research;
- 10) Establish a consolidated data collection and shared data system, including BMI measures.



At the national level, Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts introduced Senate Bill S. 2894 to prevent childhood obesity. The bill aims to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for the coordination of Federal Government policies and activities to prevent obesity in childhood, to support State childhood obesity prevention and control programs, and establish grant programs to prevent childhood obesity in homes, schools, and communities. For more information, please visit <http://thomas.loc.gov> and search under S.2894.

Jill Litt, RMPRC

# Healthy Aging Network Update

As part of the Healthy Aging Research Network (CU-HAN), a PRC special interest project, Valley seniors and senior service providers have been working with CU Assistant Professor Cindy Bryant to combine academic research, senior service, and public health resources to promote healthy aging in the Valley.



Based on local results from a HAN survey conducted in the seven HAN members' partner communities in 2003, we produced a "Physical Activity Guide for Seniors." In the two photographs, Judy Egbert,

Alamosa City Clerk and physical activity instructor for Alamosa Family Recreation Center, demonstrates one of the many physical activity programs available to Valley seniors that are listed in the guide. Her demonstration was one of several during the roll-out of the guide at Senior Fun Day at the Alamosa Senior Center on August 3; the guide also is available at various locations around the Valley and on the RMPRC website (<http://www.uchsc.edu/rmp/rc/pa.pdf>). Activities at Senior Fun Day also included a healthy eating and cooking demonstration by Mary Ellen Fleming of the County Extension Service, using MoKi, the Healthy Habits mobile kitchen. Participants in these pictures also include Sandra Blevins, director of the Alamosa Senior Center, and three "non-seniors" from the Denver area who have professional or family connections with the RMPRC and CU-HAN. All of them helped distribute the guide and collect evaluation information (and then later in the week partnered with Valley seniors to pilot test a HAN "audit tool" that will make it possible to identify physical environmental barriers - things like broken or no sidewalks, loose dogs, traffic - that make it hard for seniors to walk in and around their neighborhoods). South-Central Colorado Seniors Inc. rewarded these activities with a delicious, nutritious Fiesta lunch, followed by an afternoon of dancing.



Cindy Bryant, UCHSC

# Community Design and Health Project Update

In September, Dr. Jill Litt, assistant professor of environmental health at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center and PRC investigator, was awarded the Health Protection Research Mentored Research Scientist Development Award (K01) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This three-year grant will provide support for training and research activities in the area of community design and health. This study, entitled 'Community Design and Health: Starting from the Ground Up', will focus on three overarching questions:



- How does the built environment influence human behavior and health outcomes?
- What environmental correlates of health are amenable to intervention?
- What are cost-effective environmental interventions that will promote health for individuals and communities?

Through in an interdisciplinary approach that includes methods from environmental psychology, criminology, urban planning, and anthropology, Dr. Litt and colleagues will study an established community recreational activity, community gardening, for its potential to promote public health through increased physical activity, nutrition, social engagement, and cognitive stimulation with the long-term public health goals of disease prevention and health promotion. The overall objectives of the proposed study will be to 1) identify points where community gardens and gardening might be leveraged into specific diet, physical activity, and social engagement interventions and 2) to pilot and evaluate a community intervention(s) to increase community participation in gardens, fruit and vegetable intake, physical activity, and social networks.

Academic and community partners include the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center (Jill Litt (PI), Julie Marshall (primary mentor), Lori Crane (secondary mentor)), UCD College of Architecture and Planning (Fahriye Sancar, (secondary mentor)), Denver Urban Gardens (Michael Buchenau and Judy Elliott), Groundwork Denver Inc. (Harry Ford), and Front Range Earth Force (Lisa Bardwell). For more information, please contact Jill Litt at 303-315-7595 or by email at [jill.litt@uchsc.edu](mailto:jill.litt@uchsc.edu).

Jill Litt, RMPRC

# San Luis Valley Healthy Family Project Update



The Healthy Family Project is an NIH funded trial being conducted in the San Luis Valley. The project objective is to determine the effectiveness of a home visit program in promoting healthy lifestyles that have been shown to prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes and its complications (For more detail, see Project Update, Volume 1, Issue 1.).

The first, development-packed year of the Healthy Family Project drew to a momentous close in Sept 2004 with the hiring of Family Lifestyle Coaches Cynthia Daniels, Kim Tauber, Rose Vialpando and Judy Wagner. These coaches, charged with delivering a 16 home visit, family-based intervention to prevent diabetes and its complications, bring to the Project a wealth of skills and experience, including graduate training in counseling. In addition to their job skills, their enthusiasm, cooperative spirit, and dedication have made them true assets to the Healthy Family Project and the Prevention Research Center already. After months of training, working with pilot families, and helping to develop and refine the intervention, the coaches are excited for study enrollment to begin in March.

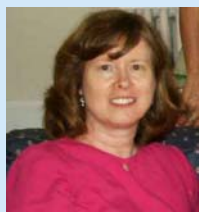
Julie Marshall, RMPRC

## RMPRC Staff Updates



**Sue Davis** joined the Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center in Alamosa in January. She is the San Luis Valley Program Manager. Sue received her BA degree in Business Administration emphasis in Management from Adams State College, Alamosa. She formerly was the Human Resources Director at Adams State and Human Resources Manager at University of Northern Colorado. The past three years she has been the Director of a local nonprofit organization. She is a National Council member for the Boys and Girls Clubs of America and has been on the SLV Boys and Girls Executive Board for 10+ years. Sue's hobbies are traveling, golfing, and enjoying her grandchildren.

**Cathy Morin**, one of the "founding mothers" of the Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center and the Community Projects Director for the PRC in the San Luis Valley, resigned last September. She has moved on to working in the local health care sector as Health Information and Program Coordinator for the San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center. With apologies to the pastured poultry that she raises in her home business, Valley Pheasants, one might say that she has gone on to explore other "pastures".... Cathy, ever full of energy, continues to work as chair-elect with the San Luis Valley Diabetes Summit Partners, a local partnership working to address prevention of diabetes and its complications, as well as seeking funding for expanding and improving hospital infrastructure and services. Cathy enjoys backcountry skiing and boating (depending on the season) and is starting her annual spring hatchlings for game birds, turkeys, and chickens. We all miss her joyful exuberance and enthusiasm for making a difference in the health of communities, epitomized by "the Laugh".



**Michele Price** has moved on to other professional opportunities after four years with the PRC. As Program Assistant, Michele was responsible for coordinating administrative activities for the entire Center: from scheduling meetings to reimbursing people for travel expenses to ensuring that our projects were up to date with Internal Review Board. One of Michele's greatest talents was in the area of conducting literature searches. She developed a rich and extensive database of journal articles, books, and other publications in the areas of community-based participatory research, prevention of Type 2 Diabetes and obesity. Michele was instrumental in processing grant submissions and never hesitated to stay late, come in on weekends, or do whatever was necessary to meet deadlines. We are extremely grateful for all of Michele's contributions to the Center over the years. She will be missed greatly.

## RMPRC Staff Updates (Cont.)



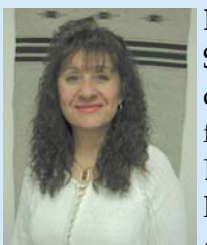
**Jennifer Atencio** joined the RMPRC as a part-time employee in October 2004, and became a full-time employee in January 2005. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Adams State College. She is a Professional Research Assistant and is a recruiter and data collector for the San Luis Valley (SLV) Healthy Family Project. Jennifer has been employed by the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center for the past 3 years and has worked on different studies including the **Gentic ENvironment Interaction (GENI)**, and **Southwest Hormone Insulin Nutrition and Exercise (SHINE)** study. Jennifer is a native of the SLV and enjoys riding motorcycles, reading, and spending time with family and friends.

**Cynthia Stone Daniels** joined the RMPRC on September 7, 2004. She is a Family Lifestyle Coach with the SLV Healthy Family Project. Cynthia received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Art History and Art Photography from Adams State College in 2002. In 2004, she received her Master of Arts in Community Counseling. Cynthia has alternated living in Alamosa and Southern California; she considers both her homes. She has two children: her son, Jello, (like the food) is 14 years old, and Heather is 17 years old. Cynthia and her husband, Adam, have 3 dogs: Dozer, Kookie and Shorty.



**Kim Tauber** joined the RMPRC on September 1, 2004. She is a Family Lifestyle Coach working on the SLV Healthy Family Project. Kim received her Bachelors degree in Social Justice from the University of Illinois/Sangamon State University, and an M.S.Ed. in Counseling Education from Illinois State University. Kim's primary background has been working in counseling programs with kids and families. Kim enjoys bike riding, swimming, and hiking. She loves to travel and explore.

**Judy Wagner** joined the RMPRC on September 1, 2004 as a Family Lifestyle Coach for the SLV Healthy Family Project. Judy received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Ottawa University and a Master of Arts degree in Community Counseling from Adams State College. She is a Registered Nurse and Licensed Professional Counselor. In addition to her half time position with the Center, Judy does contract work for the Departments of Social Services and Adams State College. She also serves on the Board of Directors for the Valley Food Coop. Judy enjoys reading, traveling, hiking, and especially, being a mom to her 17 year old daughter, Elizabeth. She plans to join the Peace Corps some day.



**Rose Vialpando** joined the RMPRC on September 1, 2004 as a Family Lifestyle Coach for the SLV Healthy Family Project. Rose is a Licensed Professional Counselor with a background in community counseling. She received her BA in Education and MA in Community Counseling from Adams State College. Rose is also a Certified Addictions Counselor (CAC III). She is a San Luis Valley native, is married to Albert, has a son named William Michael and a daughter-in-law named Andrea, and recently became a grandmother for the first time to two beautiful twin girls, Charis and Rebecca. Rose enjoys hiking, fishing, camping, and cross-country skiing. She also enjoys the art of weaving, loves to sing, and play her guitar. She recently released a Spanish Music CD with five of her own compositions and other music selections. Rose is a past member of the Naval Reserve Force and served in the Persian Gulf during Operation Desert Storm. Rose is also involved in community organizations.

## PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITIES AND RESEARCHERS

### RMPRC Partners present on CBPR at Regional Conference

This past September, the RMPRC was represented on a panel discussing “Tools for Community Engagement in Public Health: A Panel on Community-Based Participatory Research” at the annual Public Health in the Rocky Mountains Conference in Breckenridge, Colorado. The conference was hosted by the Colorado Environmental Health Association and the Wyoming Environmental Health Association.

Bringing their knowledge from working with communities in the San Luis Valley to the forefront were RMPRC staffers Elaine Belansky, Terry Uyeki, and Cathy Morin, and community member, Carol Keith. The goals of the panel were to provide an overview of CBPR and its benefits and to offer strategies for promoting partnerships with community stakeholders. Over 80 public health professionals and researchers at local, state, and regional levels were in the audience. Facilitating the panel discussion were Kaia Gallagher and Kim Riley of the Center for Research Strategies who provided an overview of the principles and benefits of community-based participatory research (CBPR). They emphasized the critical contributions that community can bring to each stage of the research, and spoke about the need for CBPR as a tool for developing effective interventions, despite the perceived obstacles to doing it.

Cathy and Terry followed, sharing some lessons learned in partnering with community stakeholders in the form of practical techniques for developing equal and effective partnerships between community stakeholders and research teams. In considering the elements needed for forming equal partnerships, audience members were advised to consider how the organizational structure and group process of the partnership can influence participation and decision-making. Despite the challenges of using a CBPR approach, such as researchers perceiving a loss of control (of a project), shared project “ownership” with the community can lead to the rewards of greater sustainability. Cathy emphasized the importance of co-creating public health agendas, roles, and responsibilities, as well as the need for increased attention to sustaining public health interventions. As a case-in-point, she cited the Diabetes Summit Partners, which initially focused on specific short-term goals of hosting an annual community summit. The group has recognized the need to develop

more formal structure within the partnership in order to extend and sustain their outreach in the community.

Describing the “how to’s” and advantages of forming a community-based project steering committee, Elaine shared the podium with Carol Keith, a school food service director from the San Luis Valley who serves on the steering committee that is overseeing the development of the School Environment Project. Elaine and Carol described the recruiting process for the steering committee and how the use of such “tools” as developing a memo of understanding, meeting norms, and decision-making rules, have promoted more effective meetings that seek to fully “tap into” the expertise of these school leaders.



Sharing tips for developing enthusiasm within the community, were Stephanie Phibbs and Charlene Ortiz from the Colorado Health Outcomes Program at the CU Health Sciences Center. Presenting a case study on the POWER Project for Women’s Health in four western U.S. cities, they found that providing training and short-term jobs for community members in recruiting, interviewing, and program evaluation to be keys to the success of the program. Researchers learned how to engage and communicate with community members in ways that developed enthusiasm and buy-in by the community and established important connections with the community that may open the door for future work in the area of women’s health.

Wrapping up the panel were Gene Marsh and Lauren Clark from the University of Colorado School of Nursing, and Kristine Rimer, with the Chaffee Public Health Nursing Service, who described a community academic partnership formed in Chaffee County to complete a community assessment. The nursing students and faculty used a model-based approach to community assessment, solicited key informant and primary informant data, and integrated that data with secondary data gathered from other sources. Gene stressed the importance of community empowerment and how capacity building can be furthered by community-campus partnerships. In sum, panelists’ varied experiences about the successes of trying CBPR provided inspiration to uninitiated members of the audience to “plunge ahead.”

Andrea Wismann & Terry Uyeki, RMPRC

# Dates to Remember



**February 7–May 1, 2005:** The Coming Alive Worksite Health Fitness Program is conducted annually in the San Luis Valley, Colorado and lasts 12 weeks. For more information call or email Trina Rivera at (719) 589-5801 or [Trina.Rivera@uchsc.edu](mailto:Trina.Rivera@uchsc.edu).

**March 25:** 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Epidemiologic Research Exchange. Keynote Speaker: Robert E. Fullilove, III, Ed.D. Theme: Social Epidemiology. For more information contact Kristie Fields at 303-315-8811 or check <http://pmb.uchsc.edu/>.

**April 8-9:** Mary Scott Lecture Series - The Obesity Epidemic: Etiology, Prevention and Treatment, Fort Collins, CO. For more information contact CSU Food Science and Human Nutrition Dept., 970-491-3663.

**May 9-10:** RMPRC State & National Advisory Committee (SNAC) Meeting, San Luis Valley, CO.

**June 9-10:** Lillian Fountain Smith Conference with sessions on Maximizing Healthy Bones and Muscles, Strengthening Communities through Local Foods, and Omega 3 Fatty Acid Controversies, Fort Collins, CO. For more information contact CSU Food Science and Human Nutrition Dept., 970-491-3663.

**June 17:** 2005 Active Living Leadership Conference, Denver, CO.

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