

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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Healthy Changes at Moffat School

For the past few years Moffat School has been involved in various ways with the Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center (RMPRC) in Alamosa, Colorado. As Principal of Moffat School, I was invited, as well as other valley principals, school nurses and food service directors, to be a part of the School Environment Project Steering Committee to provide oversight and direction to this valley wide project. The steering committee's vision, that drives this project, is "celebrating healthy, active children living in environments where the entire community creates a cycle of lifelong physical activity and healthy eating."

I have thoroughly enjoyed being a part of this dedicated group that has helped us make the environmental and policy changes within our school that support healthy eating and physical activity.

Through the work of our Moffat School Task Force, along with the researchers from the RMPRC, we have implemented many positive, healthy changes within our school environment. Through an Intervention Mapping Process, we have determined the improvements needed in our school environment to help us increase the physical activity and healthy eating habits of our elementary students.

This process has helped Moffat School in the many ways listed below:

- * No pop sold on campus
- * More fruit and vegetables in the cafeteria and less desserts
- * Wellness Policy approved and implemented throughout the school

- * Healthy expectations, health related articles and "Nutrition Nuggets" included in newsletters to parents
- * Sun Shelter built on the playground and sunscreen available for student use (with parent permission)
- * PE teacher attended the SPARK PE training and is beginning to implement Health modules in PE curriculum
- * Implemented recess before lunch (working well!)
- * Nutritious and healthy food choices in our vending machines

One of our goals for the School Task Force was to bring back an old tradition...the Moffat Elementary Field Day....and last school year we did just that! The students and staff had a great time participating in this new "old" tradition.

As you can see we have made many changes that will make a difference in our students' lives. Last school year was an exciting year at Moffat, and we will continue to implement the changes that will help our students make healthy choices!

Michelle Hashbarger, Moffat School Principal



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.

Director Dispatch

Transition can provide the opportunity for broader behavior and systems change.

We are in the midst of such an opportunity as we move toward a school of public health for Colorado and the Rocky Mountain region. First, the Colorado School of Public Health Initiative (CSPHI) is a collaborative of the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center (the lead institution), Colorado State University and University of Northern Colorado with across campus coordination and resource sharing underway and showing promise for expanded collaboration in public health research and education. Second, the Center for Public Health Practice, to be housed in the CSPH, is comprised of state and local partners in public health practice and will create a hub for workforce development and practice-based education and research. Third, the work of our Rocky Mountain Prevention Research



Julie Marshall, RMPRC Director

Center is informing the 'why' and 'how' of community-based research and education and will play an important role in linking community partners with the new CSPH. In the past year we have developed a course in Evidence-based Health Promotion (described below), increased our collaborations with Adams State College in Alamosa (example on page 4), contracted with local partners to build capacity in program evaluation (example on page 6), continued collaborations with state partners toward coordinated surveillance systems at the child and school level, and continued our studies of behavior, environment and policy in school and family settings (examples on pages 1 & 6). With a new Colorado School of Public Health on the horizon, we are looking forward to being part of a more coordinated public health system.

Evidence-Based Health Promotion

“Evidence-based” programs seem to be the trend these days in the world of health promotion and health education. Many funding agencies are requesting that communities use evidence-based approaches while developing and implementing their health promotion programs. However, local community organizations have voiced a need to strengthen their capacity in identifying and applying evidence-based approaches to public health. To meet this need, the RMPRC sponsored, in partnership with the Colorado Prevention Partners and the San Luis Valley Prevention Coalition, an Evidence-Based Health Promotion workshop in November of 2006. The workshop was held at Adams State College in Alamosa, CO. Over 30 individuals representing various community organizations from CO participated in the one day workshop (spread out over two ½ days) which included didactic sessions, a library tutorial integrating hands on experience, and facilitated group work sessions. During the workshop, participants learned to explain what evidence-based health promotion (EBHP) is and why it is important in health promotion program planning. They also learned how to identify and locate sources of EBHP and apply these findings to create effective community programs. Based upon evaluation feedback from the participants, the workshop was deemed a success. Participants especially liked the “comprehensive approach”, “computer hands on experience” and the “facilitated workgroup sessions”. As one participant stated “You made a complex process very simple to follow”.

If you would like to learn more about the EBHP workshop or other learning opportunities sponsored by the RMPRC, please contact Jenn Leiferman, Intervention Director at jenn.leiferman@uchsc.edu or by phone at 303-315-0731.

Jenn Leiferman, UCDHSC

Community Advisory Board Corner



Helen Lester

The Community Advisory Board (CAB) members form a diverse group of dedicated people who want to assure that the RMPRC performs research that is meaningful to our local area and results of such research are put into practical use. We continue to strive in this endeavor, although there is much to learn about the whole process!

Last fall we had a joint meeting of the CAB, RMPRC staff, members of the project steering committees and members of our national advisory board. With the theme of a "Family Reunion", our goal was to help all participants find their place among the branches of the PRC family tree. It was fun to hear real and exciting stories of the activities performed by the core projects of the RMPRC as they conduct research.

We have another outstanding event planned for September 10-11, 2007. A dynamic speaker, Yvonne Lewis, from the University of Michigan Prevention Research Center Community Board, will illuminate the function and responsibilities of a successful CAB. We have named this event "Setting the Table" with the idea that Steering Committee members and CAB members will learn more about 1. what they bring to the table (using "the table" as a symbol for our meetings and activities), 2. what we share at the table and 3. what we take back to the community.

Helen Lester, RN, is our new Chair-Elect. Helen is the Director of the Oncology & Infusion Center at the SLV Regional Medical Center. She brings a wealth of professional knowledge and community insight to our CAB. I want to thank her and Past-Chair, Theresa Rudder, for helping me to lead the CAB this year. We would like to express our deep appreciation to Charlotte Bobicki and Carla Garcia as they end many years of valuable participation on the CAB.

I would like to introduce four new CAB members:

- Reg Garcia, San Luis Valley BOCES Migrant Education Director
- Freddie Jaquez, SLV Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Executive Director
- Michael Maestas, Trinidad State Junior College Vice President
- Frank Mestas, Alamosa County Commissioner

On behalf of the CAB, I want to express gratitude to the CDC and the University of Colorado for choosing our area as a vibrant, diverse community in which to conduct research and to transform study results into a healthier community!

Suzanne DeVore, CAB Chair



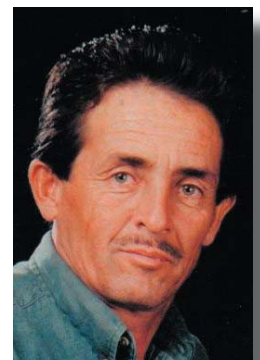
Reg Garcia



Freddie Jaquez



Michael Maestas



Frank Mestas

Personality and Health

Ever wonder how your personality influences your health? Do you want to know if your emotions are connected to your health? If so, you are not alone. Researchers in psychology and in the health field have recently begun to investigate questions such as these. They suggest that there is a strong link between your personality, your emotions, and your health. Studies have shown that cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity can be influenced by aggressiveness, anxiety, and pessimism. In one study, individuals who were prone to aggression were more likely to develop cardiovascular disease. Moreover, these individuals were less likely to respond to treatment. Other research indicates that individuals high in neuroticism, or negative emotion, are more vulnerable to stress and disease. On the flip side, positive personality traits may be beneficial to health. Studies indicate that optimists are less likely to get

ill. Individuals who rate themselves as happy tend to experience fewer health problems.

Soon, the RMPRC will begin to investigate if these relationships exist in the San Luis Valley. The RMPRC will add a new dimension to the Healthy Family Project through a collaboration with Gina Mollet, Ph.D. Dr. Mollet is a second year professor in the psychology department at Adams State College. Her previous work has examined the relationship between personality traits and brain function. In this project, the RMPRC and Dr. Mollet will examine how personality influences overall health and health related behaviors.

The project marks the first scientific collaboration between the RMPRC and Adams State College. The collaboration will provide both Dr. Mollet and the RMPRC with new opportunities for conducting research in the San Luis Valley.

Gina Mollet, Adams State College

Jim Ruttenber...

our Colleague, Mentor and Friend, will be missed!

Dr. Jim Ruttenber, a member of the UCDHSC's Department of Preventive Medicine and Biometrics for 16 years, died unexpectedly June 16, 2007 in Mexico, where he was working to set up a medical student exchange program with the University of Colima. Dr. Ruttenber, a physician who also held a doctorate in human ecology, was interested in many aspects of environmental and occupational health, including arsenic in water supplies and radon gas development in domestic housing. He worked with the Colorado Department of Health and Environment on a study of the health effects of exposure to plutonium on 16,000 Rocky Flats workers. The study found that persons with higher exposure to plutonium had higher death rates from cancer of the lung, brain, stomach, rectum and soft tissue as well as certain anemias and tumors of the nervous system. Dr. Ruttenber met with the CAB on several occasions, in recent years, to explain how his research interests might coincide with those of the CAB and the RMPRC. He received a letter of support from the CAB for one of his proposed studies. Dr. Ruttenber mentored students and graduates on environmental health projects that included the San Luis Valley.

Dr. Ruttenber received a B.S. degree in Biology from Emory University in Atlanta and continued his education there, earning his Doctor of Medicine and his Doctor of Philosophy degrees. He worked at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with the Epidemiologic Intelligence Service until he moved to Denver and joined the University of Colorado at Denver & Health Sciences Center in 1991.

Dr. Ruttenber was known and is remembered for his dedication to students, guiding their learning, creating opportunities for them to establish quality and confidence in their research endeavors, and challenging ideas and their own thinking. He is survived by two daughters, two stepchildren and his wife, Margaret. He is truly missed.



Gardens for Growing Healthy Communities

Gardens for Growing Healthy Communities (GGHC) is in its fourth year! The project, which is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is examining the health and social benefits of community gardens and importantly, how environmental changes at the neighborhood level can promote active and healthy lifestyles. Over the past year, the GGHC team has gathered information about neighborhood environments and health status among 470 residents randomly selected throughout Denver. Additionally, our outstanding team of researchers has completed a detailed audit of the physical characteristics throughout the neighborhoods where surveys were completed. Results from the survey will be forthcoming!

In support of our community engaged research process, the Healthy Neighborhood Network of residents, researchers, and community organizations continues to meet monthly to improve garden-neighborhood connections and accessibility to gardens. Network members have been busy preparing grant applications to support their

five action areas and work with Denver Urban Gardens and other organizations to promote the development and enhancements of gardens as a model for healthy and active living.

In May, 2007, Ellen Teig completed her Master's of Science degree in Public Health. In partial support of her degree, she completed a thesis project entitled "Collective Efficacy in Denver, Colorado Community Gardens: Implications for Healthy Living". Through her analysis of GGHC key informant interviews data, Ellen aimed to better define factors that might link community gardening to greater willingness to intervene for the common good of the neighborhood, also called collective efficacy. In most gardens, the gardeners represented a cohesive group of people who were willing to look out for each other and intervene when trouble arose. The relationships that grew out of the garden were relied upon for more than assistance with weeding and watering the garden plots. Gardeners looked out for one another during illness or other difficult times; they also united to protect

the garden or the well-being of the neighborhood. This work illustrates the potential for community gardens to mediate health through the mechanism of collective efficacy. Specifically, it shed light on how an environmental change at the community level can impact community health and the role of intervening social processes to realize these benefits and sustain them over time. Wendy Peters Moschetti, GGHC Project Coordinator, presented these findings at the annual conference of the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) in Sacramento, California earlier this summer.

Jill Litt, UCDHSC
Wendy Moschetti, UCDHSC



Drinking Water and Health

The Drinking Water and Health Study is a new project that will determine the distribution and concentration of potentially toxic chemicals in drinking water and evaluate whether exposure is associated with risks for diabetes or heart disease. This study is being conducted by researchers at the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Approximately, 475 participants from the original San Luis Valley Diabetes Study will be contacted to help us learn more about drinking water sources in the San Luis Valley.

Water quality testing at the participant's residence, combined with historical water data and a brief interview to assess residence history and drinking water consumption habits, will be used to describe arsenic exposure by location and over time in the San Luis Valley. Participants will receive a complete analysis of metals, fluoride and nitrates and a detailed explanation of the results. This study should provide a better understanding of the range of exposure to arsenic and other metals experienced among long term residents of the San Luis Valley.

Those residents selected for the study will be contacted over the next year with an invitation to participate in the 20 minute interview and water sample collection. The Project Leaders are Kathy James (UCDHSC) and Julie Marshall (RMPRC, UCDHSC). For more information about this project, please contact Kathy at Kathy.James@uchsc.edu.

Kathy James, UCDHSC

Healthy Family Project

The Healthy Family Project intervention is in full swing! Families participating in the intervention were assigned a Family Lifestyle Coach and receive up to 16 home visits. The coaches all have counseling backgrounds and are trained in Motivational Interviewing, a communication tool that is family centered, collaborative and honors each family member's resourcefulness and ability to make his/her own decisions. Families receive a handbook with general information about nutrition, physical activity, weight loss, diabetes self-management and community

resources. Research has shown that losing as little as 5 to 7% of total body weight lowers the risk of developing diabetes, yet it is up to each participant to decide his/her personal weight loss goals. Through a mix of hands-on activities and discussion, coaches work in collaboration with families to identify goals and implement strategies that can lead to better health. Some families have expressed that they often find themselves making more changes than they would have expected. The coaches share with families that changing lifestyle

behaviors may be challenging, and obstacles are common. Coaches stress to families that finding strategies that work best for them is important. The Family Lifestyle Coaches are dedicated professionals traveling throughout the San Luis Valley, often through snowy nights and on country roads dodging rattlesnakes. Experiencing the highs and lows with families as they transform personal attitudes and behaviors is a unique and rewarding experience.

Cynthia Stone Daniels, RMPRC
Judy Wagner, RMPRC
Rose Vialpando, RMPRC

Valley-Wide Health Systems Receives Grant to Encourage Residents to Eat Better and Move More

Alamosa County has received a grant in the amount of \$166,238 to support programs and activities to encourage residents of Alamosa County to eat better and move more.

The grant was awarded to Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc. by LiveWell Colorado, a new partnership that is providing nearly \$3 million dollars to communities to help reverse the state's obesity trends and reduce related chronic diseases. Valley-Wide is one of 12 communities to receive funding under the initiative. LiveWell Alamosa will promote healthy eating and active living through policies, programs and environmental changes in schools, at the worksite, within healthcare and other community settings.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, obesity is the single greatest public health threat to the nation! In fact, poor nutrition and lack of physical activity are the second leading preventable causes of death in the U.S. and Colorado. Those who are overweight and obese are put at risk for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension and asthma.

Valley-Wide will use the grant funds to support increased breastfeeding, physical activity opportunities for seniors, school based physical activity curriculums, collaborative worksite wellness programs and increased use of the walking and biking paths, recreation center, community gardens and greenhouses by students and community members.

These and other activities will be guided by the LiveWell Alamosa Coalition comprised of representatives from several sectors of the community. The partnering

organizations include the San Luis Valley Mental Health Center, Colorado State Cooperative Extension, Alamosa County Nursing Services, San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center, Alamosa and Sangre de Cristo School Districts, Alamosa Community Greenhouse and Gardens and others. The collaborators hold to a vision of success where:

Alamosa County is a place in which people have a positive attitude about physical activity and nutrition and are actively engaged in healthy behaviors as individuals, employees, families, and communities; our workplaces, schools, and community environment fully support physical activity and healthy eating; and there are varied and plentiful opportunities that are affordable and accessible for all people and cultures; the results are that people of Alamosa County have healthy BMIs and are physically and

mentally healthier; our community is healthier with increased active transport, community gardens and less cars; and students are succeeding, have good test scores, and are graduating at higher rates.

Claire Stuebe, Evaluation Coordinator at the Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center in Alamosa will be conducting, and at times creating, the evaluation process in each of the eight sectors of the grant. The project is being coordinated by Liza Marron. The LiveWell

coalition meets monthly with its next meeting slated for September 14th at 8:30am. All interested are welcome. Healthy refreshments are served and participants are asked to dress comfortably to include a bit of exercise during the meeting. For more information call Liza Marron at 587-1034.

Liza Marron, Valley-Wide Health Systems

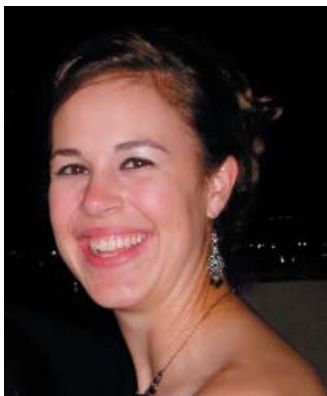


RMPRC Staff Update



Elesha Goad started with the RMPRC as a temporary intern from Adams State College in January 2007 and then became a member of our staff as a Professional Research Assistant on July 15th. Most of her time is spent with the Healthy Family Project doing data collection and data entry. She is currently working on a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology with emphases in Criminology and Social Welfare and will graduate in May 2008. Elesha enjoys spending time with family and friends, fishing, camping, snowboarding and playing with Yogi, her Chinese Shar Pei, and Oscar, her Siamese cat.

Claire Stuebe began working at the Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center in November of 2006 as the Evaluation Coordinator. She has a Bachelors degree from Duke University and earned a Masters degree in Counseling from Adams State College. Professionally, she has a wide range of experience in administration, program development, and evaluation. Her responsibilities at the Center include program evaluation, data collection, and contract evaluation for a variety of community-based grants in the valley. She grew up in North Carolina and has lived in the San Luis Valley for nine years. She enjoys playing in the backyard with her kids, being walked by her dog, and good food.



Emily Elliott, now **Emily Brown**, resigned in June 2007 from her position as Office Coordinator for the RMPRC. She managed day-to-day office business in Alamosa, helped with research for the School Environment Project, and worked closely with the Community Advisory Board, as well as other office staff and projects. Emily thinks highly of the RMPRC and their work, and she will value the experiences she gained from her time there. Emily married Kyler Brown on June 30 in a beautiful wedding on the continental divide near Wolf Creek Pass. They are making their home in Reno, Nevada where Kyler is working as the resident horse trainer for the High Desert Equine Center. Emily is currently searching for the right job in the Reno area and is looking into attaining her Masters degree. Emily and Kyler, along with their Border Collie, South Paw, are enjoying the excitement of building a future together and exploring new places, but they will always be drawn back to the beauty and great friends in the San Luis Valley.

Sue Davis provided management support to RMPRC projects and facilitated connections with community partners from January 2004 until March of 2007, making lots of contributions to the work of the RMPRC. Upon leaving the RMPRC, Sue has been quite busy with activities with her family and friends, traveling and a little work. She continues to volunteer with several community organizations: the Healthy Habits group, the Healthy Aging Research Network, Boys and Girls Clubs of the San Luis Valley and her church. She has completed two projects with her Interior Design business and has two others in progress. This Fall she will be doing contract work as the Citizens Corps Coordinator for the San Luis Valley. She is looking forward to the many opportunities that are available for her this coming year.



Dates to Remember

September 10-11, 2007: RMPRC CAB Retreat, Alamosa Family Recreation Center, Alamosa, CO

September 17-19, 2007: CPHA Annual Conference, Hilton Hotel, Fort Collins, CO, <http://www.coloradopublichealth.org/>

October 12, 2007: Culture of Data Conference, Tivoli Center at Auraria Campus, Denver, CO; to register go to www.ColoradoHealthInstitute.org/resourceEvents/eventsaspx

November 3-7, 2007: APHA Annual Meeting & Exposition, Washington, DC

March 25-27, 2008: Prevention Research Center National Meeting, Atlanta, GA

March 26-29, 2008: Society of Behavioral Medicine Annual Meeting & Scientific Sessions, Manchester Grand Hyatt, San Diego, CA



RMPRC Editorial Staff:

Phoebe Barton, Director, Translation Core
Trina Rivera, Editor

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RMPRC Alamosa Contact Information:

Robin Liston, Program Manager
204 Carson Avenue
Alamosa, CO 81101
Phone: (719) 589-5801 or 1-877-257-5184
Fax: (719) 589-6126
Email: Robin.Liston@uchsc.edu

RMPRC Denver Contact Information:

Julie Marshall, RMPRC Director
Julie.Marshall@uchsc.edu
(303) 315-7596
Elaine Belansky, Assistant Director
Elaine.Belansky@uchsc.edu
(303) 315-0861

Website: www.uchsc.edu/rmprc

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**Rocky Mountain
Prevention Research Center**
Alamosa Office
204 Carson Avenue
Alamosa, CO 81101