



# voices for a healthy future

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The Public Health Institute promotes health, well-being, and quality of life for all people through research and evaluation, training and technical assistance, and by building community partnerships.

## Engaging Youth

### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

SHELLY MASUR

For all of us who went to public health school and took program planning, one of the first things we learned was to engage stakeholders in the planning process. Talk to the people in the neighborhood, have them suggest solutions, include them on a steering committee. Historically that advice has not been heeded in program planning for young people.

But that is changing, as peer educators, youth-friendly clinics, and youth-led advocacy efforts are more often supported by adults. Young people are valuable because they have firsthand knowledge of their school, family, and community environments. They can conduct youth outreach and collect data in ways that adults cannot. Youth often provide pragmatic and fresh

perspectives that challenge and expand traditional thinking. Their refusal to be constrained by conventional parameters and their ability to give a firsthand account of the issues make youth effective in helping plan new programs that really meet their needs.

The Adolescent Health Collaborative has made this approach a core part of its beliefs. The programs highlighted in this edition showcase the value of involving youth. Now all we need to do, as public health leaders, is to follow the recommendations of our introductory classes. When planning a program for young people—involve them.

The Adolescent Health Collaborative of the Public Health Institute is sponsoring the Bay Area Adolescent Health Conference on May 18–19, 2006 in Oakland, California. The theme is health rights. There will be a track specifically for youth leaders to allow them to exchange ideas and learn from and support each other in their work.

# Engaging California's Youth in Health

SUSAN WELS

California's children are on the front lines of a nationwide obesity and health crisis. More than a quarter of the state's fifth, seventh and ninth graders are overweight, and African-American and Latino children are especially at risk for obesity. Since obesity is a leading risk factor for Type 2 diabetes, experts now predict that nearly one in two Latino and African-American babies will develop diabetes in their lifetimes.

For the first time, if these trends continue, this generation of California's children will live shorter lives than their parents' generation.

In response to this growing health crisis, The California Endowment has launched Healthy Eating, Active Communities (HEAC), a \$26 million, multifaceted, four-year initiative. The effort will increase opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating for children and families, especially in low-income and rural communities. It will also develop state and national policy changes to reduce the risk factors for obesity and diabetes. The Partnership for the Public's Health at the Public Health Institute serves as program office for the HEAC initiative.

HEAC has local and statewide components that will engage youth, families, community leaders, health professionals, schools and neighborhoods to create healthy eating and physical activity environments. Many low-income areas, for example, lack supermarkets that sell a wide array of healthy foods or do not have parks or safe environments that allow residents to participate in physical activity.

Six local collaboratives—composed of community-based organizations, school districts and public health departments throughout the state—will:

- train youth advocates to educate students about the importance of adopting healthy food choices and participating in physical activities;
- encourage school districts to adopt nutrition standards that promote healthy choices;
- reduce or eliminate neighborhood-level marketing of unhealthy foods to children.

In Alameda County, for instance, *San Antonio Neighbors for Active Living* collaborative in Oakland will use part of its HEAC funding to train young people, for the first time, to lead a community-wide nutrition and physical activity campaign. In schools, after-school programs, communities, health care delivery, marketing and advertising, HEAC will bring the best thinking and most promising models to bear on the work ahead and will demonstrate what is needed, locally and statewide, to end the growing health crisis facing California's children. ■



Voices For A Healthy Future is a biannual publication of the Public Health Institute. This newsletter is posted at [www.phi.org](http://www.phi.org). For more information on the PHI community of programs and projects, contact:

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# Emerging Youth Leaders in Central America

ESTHER TAHRIR

Rudolf Khendis Ellis celebrates after a successful presentation to the Summit Foundation board of directors.

Rudolf Khendis Ellis, a 27-year-old English teacher at Orange Walk Technical High School in Belize, is transforming the young lives of his students and neighbors.

Ellis is a pioneer Summit Fellow in International Health Programs' (IHP) Youth Leadership in Sexual and Reproductive Health Program (GOJoven). Working with his team, Ellis mobilizes and trains peer support groups on adolescent sexual and reproductive health practices. They organize marches for HIV/AIDS prevention and care, provide family planning along the Belize-Guatemala border, and conduct health fairs that provide hundreds of adolescents with life-saving sexual and reproductive health information and services.

Ellis works as a trainer for incoming Summit Fellows. His peers have recently selected him as their representative to highlight the success of GOJoven at the Summit Foundation's board meeting in Washington, DC. With IHP staff, Ellis presented the program's achievements to more than 100 participants at the Global Health Council annual conference. His leadership, curiosity, commitment and passion to improve health of Belizean youth impressed the audience including Public Health Institute President and CEO Joe Hafey, and Summit Foundation President Vicky Sant.

"We are thrilled with GOJoven – the program is changing the lives of young leaders, their communities, their countries, and the region by strengthening youth leadership in the field of sexual and reproductive health" said Sant.

Ellis is increasing the impact of GOJoven in Belize by working with the Ministry of Education to train public high school teachers on adolescent sexual and reproductive health. He is excited to expand GOJoven into the Belizean education curriculum and to share his leadership vision and commitment.

"As a result of participating in GOJoven, I have become more confident, more ambitious and more dedicated," said Ellis. "One of my goals is definitely to become the Minister of Health or even the next Prime Minister of Belize. I can definitely say that my attitude toward society has changed. We are becoming the emerging leaders of today, tomorrow and for years to come."

GOJoven, an IHP project at the Public Health Institute (PHI), conducted in Spanish in collaboration with local organizations, builds the capacity of young professionals and in-country organizations to improve adolescent sexual and reproductive health in Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Quintana Roo, Mexico through the Summit Fellowship for Youth and Institutional Strengthening program.

For information on GOJoven, visit [www.gojoven.org](http://www.gojoven.org) or go to the PHI website at [www.phi.org](http://www.phi.org). ■

"We are thrilled with GOJoven—the program is changing the lives of young leaders..."

# Diversity of Focus

## Population Leadership Program Initiates Faculty Sabbatical Fellowship

ROBERT LEONE

Locally and globally, PHI shares evidence, promotes prevention, and builds community in a broad range of public health areas, including:

- Healthy Aging
- Alcohol Abuse / Tobacco Abuse / Substance Abuse
- Chronic Diseases: Asthma, Cancer, Cardiovascular, Diabetes
- Communicable / Infectious Diseases, including HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis
- Community Health
- Disability
- Environmental Health
- Family Planning / Reproductive Health
- Genetics
- Health Policy Research
- Homelessness / Indigent Care
- International Health
- Lead Poisoning Prevention
- Leadership Development
- Managed Care
- Maternal & Child Health
- Media Advocacy
- Mental Health
- Nutrition / Physical Activity / Obesity Prevention
- Occupational Health
- Pharmaceutical Access
- Program Evaluation
- Rural Health
- Social & Behavioral Science

Rosalee Martin, a tenured professor of sociology at Huston-Tillotson University in Austin, Texas has recently completed her 10-week HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) fellowship with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and its cooperating agency, Opinion Research Corporation Macro. As part of her sabbatical, Martin traveled to Guyana to conduct HIV/AIDS research.

"In my sabbatical, I'm looking to be creative with the information that I have access to," said Martin, a faculty sabbatical research fellow with the Population

Leadership Program (PLP). "I want to be able to disseminate data on family planning, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS in a way that faith-based organizations and my students will find useful."

PLP Recruitment Manager Joyce Prescott managed the sabbatical program which is the fulfillment of a USAID goal to work more closely with the HBCU community. ■



Rosalee Martin, PLP's HBCU Faculty Sabbatical Research Fellow, at the Global Health Council annual meeting in Washington, DC.

## One-e-App — A new addition to the PHI Fold

CLAUDIA PAGE

One-e-App is an innovative web-based system that provides a one-stop approach to enrollment in a range of public sector health programs such as Medicaid. One-e-App streamlines the enrollment process by collecting data from a family once, instead of multiple times (often at different locations).

Information is then transmitted electronically instead of by mail. The California HealthCare Foundation and The California Endowment created the One-e-App Program Office, housed at PHI, to provide strategic leadership on governance and adoption, technical support for implementation and software development, enhancement and maintenance. For more information on which counties are using One-e-App and to see a demo of the application, visit [www.oneeapp.org](http://www.oneeapp.org). ■



# PROFILES

These PHI program leaders have contributed tremendously to promoting and engaging youth in health, domestically and internationally.



**Desiree Backman, DrPH, MS, RD**, is the manager of the *California 5 a Day—for Better Health! Campaign*. She directs program planning, implementation, and evaluation of community-based interventions designed

to increase fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity among Californians.

The programs under Backman's direction focus on outreach to children through the *Children's 5 a Day—Power Play! Campaign*, the *Latino 5 a Day Campaign*, the *African American 5 a Day Campaign*, the *5 a Day Retail Program*, and the *5 a Day Worksite Program*.

Backman works with researchers to design and implement formative, process, and outcome evaluations and was awarded a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Cancer Institute to formally evaluate the *Latino 5 a Day Campaign*.

She has served on a variety of expert panels at Yale University and the National Cancer Institute.



**Maria Campbell Casey, MA, MEd**, has been executive director of Partnership for the Public's Health since July 1999. Before joining the Public Health Institute, she was president and CEO of the

Urban Strategies Council in Oakland, California. She is a founding board member of the National Community Building Network, a founding member of the Interagency Children's Policy Council of Alameda County, president of the Perinatal Council Board and a member of the Head Start Advisory Panel for the City of Oakland. She received her bachelor's degree at Morgan State University, and master's of education at Harvard University.

**Claudia Page** is the director of the One-e-App Program Office where she oversees education, policy analysis, operations and implementation of an innovative web-based enrollment system for



publicly-funded health programs.

Prior to joining PHI, Page was a senior program officer in the Health Information and Technology area at the California HealthCare

Foundation in Oakland, California. She was also a policy analyst at the Foundation's Medi-Cal Policy Institute. Previous work focused on reproductive health at Planned Parenthood in Washington DC and the San Francisco Department of Public Health.



**Shelly Masur, MPH**, is the director of the Adolescent Health Collaborative (AHC), a public-private partnership working to improve the health and well-being of teens in California. Prior to joining AHC, she served as

the associate director of the Teen Pregnancy Coalition of San Mateo County where she created sexuality education, youth advocacy, and parent-child communication programs. Masur served on the board of directors of the Society for Public Health Education. She has worked as a consultant for the American Civic Liberties Union on sexuality education policy and the California Coalition for Reproductive Freedom for whom she developed a toolkit for communities to implement a family communication campaign.



**Esther Tahrir, MPH**, directs the GOJoven Project. From Guatemala, she manages the International Family Planning Leadership Program, Latin America, for the International Health Programs (IHP). She has more than 10 years

experience working in public and reproductive health throughout the world, including five with IHP, focusing on leadership development.

Tahrir received honors for her undergraduate work in community studies at the University of California at Santa Cruz and a master's degree in public health from the University of California at Berkeley where she was awarded the Henrik L. Blum Award for Distinguished Social Action. Tahrir speaks Spanish, French and Portuguese.

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### New Awards

#### ■ Inventory/Assessment of Environmentally-related Disease and Environmental Databases in California/Baja California Border Region

Project Director: Paul English  
Funded by: US Environmental Protection Agency  
This project conducts an inventory and assessment of health, hazard, and exposure databases unique to the California/Baja California border region which could be used in a border environmental and occupational health surveillance system. The project also identifies and obtains data on key environmental health indicators for the border region. A second component develops a database and Geographic Information System warehouse of all environmental and health data products, including environmental health indicators already assembled by the Environmental Health Investigations Branch, California Department of Health Services and the Pan America Health Organization for the border region, in a website for public access.

#### ■ Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative

Project Director: Bob Prentice  
Funded by: The California Endowment  
This Initiative is a collaboration of nine public health departments with a mission to 'transform public health practice for the purpose of eliminating health inequities using a broad spectrum of approaches that create healthy communities'. The work includes operational support for an internal capacity committee. The purpose of this committee is to develop trainings and peer processes among public health department staff to help re-orient them to the mission of public health and social justice.

A program committee works with communities and schools in low-income communities of color to reduce the burden of disease associated with poor nutrition and lack of physical activity. The Initiative also works with the Berkeley Media Studies Group, a PHI program, on media and other advocacy strategies.

#### ■ Asian American Network for Cancer Awareness, Research and Training (AANCART)

Project Director: Kurt Snipes  
Funded by: University of California, Davis from the National Cancer Institute  
AANCART is the first national cancer prevention and control research initiative funded by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) specifically targeting Asian Americans. AANCART work to increase cancer awareness, research, and training among Asian Americans throughout the United States.

Current AANCART regional sites include San Francisco, Sacramento, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Honolulu. AANCART's overall goal is to increase community knowledge and capacity to reduce the burden of cancer in these communities; to train more Asian American health workers about cancer prevention; and to formulate and implement grant-funded research and collaborative efforts.

### Recent Publication

#### Accelerating Policy on Nutrition: Lessons from Tobacco, Alcohol, Firearms, and Traffic Safety

With support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The California Endowment, Berkeley Media Studies Group (BMSG) convened researchers and advocates with years of experience in various public health issues and asked: What can we learn from your field that would apply to nutrition? During these meetings, four key ingredients for creating social change on food and nutrition emerged: Policy Goals, Framing, Political Opportunity, and Resources. The four fit together like pieces of a puzzle; they present a complete picture for a comprehensive approach toward changing social norms and policies relating to food and nutrition. To download a copy of "Accelerating Policy on Nutrition," go to [www.bmsg.org](http://www.bmsg.org). Lori Dorfman is BMSG's director.