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## Diné College Summer Research Enhancement Program

*Elizabeth Van Mil, Ph.D.*

This summer, the fourth annual Summer Research Enhancement Program (SREP) had the largest number of participants from across the country. The program emphasized diabetes prevention as the public health issue that attracted these students to apply. SREP, with classroom instructions held at the Tsaile, Arizona campus of Diné College, was co-sponsored by Diné College and the Southwest Diabetes Prevention Center (SDPC), one of the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (CHPDP) programs. SREP pays for participants' travel plus housing and meals in the college's facilities at Tsaile. Each student received a stipend of \$2500 for other expenses. They also received academic credit for their participation, which may apply to their degree program at their home institution. The program director is Dr. Mark Bauer, a faculty member at the Shiprock campus of Diné College and a member of the PRC Community Advisory Council.

During the first three weeks the 17 participants, all American Indian college undergraduates, were immersed in coursework daily from 8-5 that provided in-depth knowledge emphasizing diabetes prevention, and research design and methods, and from 7 p.m. until as late as 11 p.m. learning computing software programs such as Excel and Access. Then, during the next six weeks, each student was placed in a research setting, many in their hometown, to obtain significant experience with a research mentor on a diabetes prevention research project. Weekly assignments needed to be completed during the practicum plus article reviews, and they



**SREP students Andrea Abeita and Candace Watts with mentors Nancy Hood and Leslie Cunningham-Sabo**

were expected to prepare an in-depth presentation to be given during the tenth and last week of the program, when they were once again on the Tsaile campus of Diné College.

Four of this year's participants were from the Albuquerque area, and they were assigned internships at sites in Albuquerque to work on research projects that provided hands-on research experience. Two worked closely with CHPDP researchers, and they talked about their reasons for participating and how valuable the program was for their personal and professional development.

### **Andrea Abeita, mentored by Nancy Hood**

Andrea Abeita, a member of the Isleta Pueblo, learned about the program from her mother, who is a Program Coordinator for the UNM School of Engineering. Andrea will be a senior at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, and expects to graduate in 2004 with a double major in History and

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# Highlights of June 26, 2003 PRC-CAC Meeting:

Sheri Lesansee

The University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center (UNM PRC) and its Community Advisory Council (CAC) members met on June 26, 2003. The meeting took place in the UNM Health Sciences Center Vice President's conference room in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Special guests included Candace Watts and Andrea Abeita, students from the Diné College Summer Research Enhancement Project (see article, pg. 1).

The purpose of the meeting was to give a report to the CAC on the National PRC reapplication proposal, to provide an update on three projects at the PRC, and to obtain feedback on a presentation developed by PRC staff.

The CAC members were acknowledged for their input in reviewing and providing feedback on the proposal that was submitted for the reapplication. A copy of the UNM PRC abstract, logic model, and collaboration and partnership plan was distributed to all CAC members present. CAC members were informed that they may request a copy if they wish to view the entire proposal.

After each member provided an update of their program activities in their communities, PRC staff provided updates

on the activities of three projects. Michele Suina provided an update on the Circle of Life (COL) project, which is a wellness education curriculum for American Indian and Alaska Native middle school students that was developed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Indian Health Service (IHS), and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This project is supported with a contract from the New Mexico State Department of Education.

Dr. Leslie Cunningham-Sabo, Henry (Hank) Haskie, and Alberta Becenti provided an update on the Healthy Path project. This project is a community-based research partnership among the Navajo Area Agency on Aging, the Eastern Navajo Agency, the Navajo Area IHS – Crownpoint Service Unit, the Special Diabetes Project – Crownpoint Area and the UNM PRC. The goals of the Healthy Path project are to provide and sustain effective nutrition and physical activity programs for Navajo elders.

Dr. Cunningham-Sabo also gave a PowerPoint presentation, entitled "*Trends In Obesity And Diabetes Among Children: Sharing Information For Action,*" and asked the CAC

members to provide feedback and input on how to disseminate the presentation. It was developed by Leslie Cunningham-Sabo, Shirley Pareo and Lydia Montoya, who are all nutritionists at the PRC. The presentation focused on obesity and diabetes in children, sharing information for action.

Christine Hollis presented the first edition of the *Navigation Guide for Teachers* and distributed copies to CAC members to share with their communities and they provided information to her about how the PRC should disseminate the guide. The guide was prepared through Special Interest Project 14-99, Coordinated School Health, which was initially developed with assistance from the CAC. The goal of this project was to help prepare teachers and health professional students for what they could expect in classrooms that involved school health issues. The guide is available online through the PRC website: <http://hsc.unm.edu/chpdp>, click on "Publications" and then "Navigation Guide."

Members of the CAC will be informed about the next meeting date.



## Thank you CAC Members: *For Your Assistance with the Reapplication*

*Gilbert Quintero, Ph.D. and Sally Davis, Ph.D.*



**Gilbert Quintero leads CAC through PRC logic model development**

We recently marked a major milestone in the growth and development of the

Center. This past June we submitted an application for a competitive renewal to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center. This was the culmination of a process that included the development of a set of performance indicators and logic model that will shape the direction and identity of the Prevention Research Center for the next five years and beyond. Throughout this entire

process you played an important role. You reviewed the grant application and offered feedback. You provided input on the Center's plan for the future. You offered letters of support for our efforts. You offered us your good thoughts and best wishes. For all these acts and many others, we thank you!

## Community-Based Health and Risk Assessment for Navajo Nation Communities Impacted by Uranium Mining/Milling Activities (Uranium Impact Study)

*Perry H. Charley, Director, Uranium Education Program, Diné College*

Since the discovery of uranium-containing deposits on the Navajo Nation in 1918, and the opening of the Reservation to mining and prospecting in June of 1919, communities and community members throughout the Navajo Nation have experienced the impact of uranium ore extraction and processing activities. Although these events continue to affect the health and well-being of communities and individuals, the full extent of their impact and how they may be related to current health concerns and ongoing or future risks have not been fully determined. Community and governmental decisions about medical services, health screening and surveillance, environmental restoration, and compensation require this knowledge.

The objectives of the Uranium Impact Study (UIS) are: 1) to document health symptoms and illnesses among adults and children living in communities affected by past mining and milling practices; 2) to examine the relationship between these symptoms and illnesses, and the environmental exposures; 3) to estimate the continuing risks and needs for remediation, medical screening or

surveillance programs, and compensation; and 4) to provide feedback to the Navajo Nation government and to recommend remedial programs. In other words, the aim of the ongoing project is to relate *sources of contaminants* and their presence in the environment to human *exposure, absorbed dose, susceptibility, and health effects*.

To accomplish these objectives, a three-component project has been initiated. The components of this project are interrelated in that the results of each component will support and enhance our understanding of the results of the other components of the project and, ultimately, of the overall impact of the uranium industry on communities and community members within the Navajo Nation. The project components include a community health assessment, an ecological risk assessment, and a DNA damage study.

The Project staff are conducting the Ecological Risk Assessment in the same communities, concurrently with the Community Health Assessment phase of the study. A "DNA damage" study will be conducted only if (a)

the Navajo Nation approves genetic research on the Nation (there is a moratorium on such studies on the Navajo Nation) and (b) the necessary funding can be obtained. A study protocol and informed consent documents have been developed and approved by the Navajo Nation Health Research Review Board. This application applies specifically to the "Community Health Assessment" component of the UIS study. The study will assess community member health in both "impacted" and "control" communities by evaluating the results of health surveys, focus group discussions, and health trend data available from Indian Health Service, tumor registry, and State Health Department records. Five communities have been selected as the initial study communities, having provided letters to confirm their resolutions of support. Other communities may be added as time and funding permit.

*This is an article featuring a Community Advisory Council member's program. Perry H. Charley is a member of the Navajo (Diné) Nation.*



# Future Teachers See How School Health Can Improve

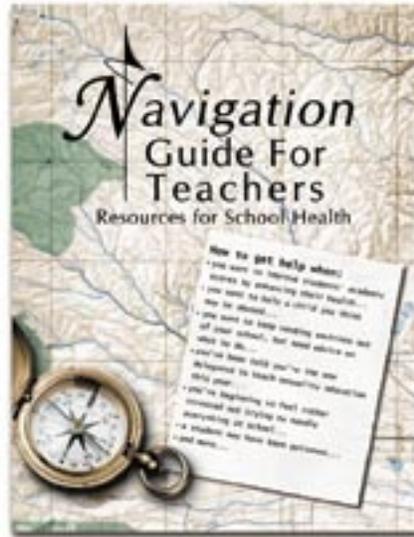
## Academic Performance

Chris Hollis, M.P.H., M.P.S. and Breda Bova, Ph.D.

On March 1, 2003, thirteen enthusiastic undergraduate and graduate students attended a first-ever UNM College of Education seminar on coordinated school health entitled *Reality-based Class Performance: How Improving School Health Improves Academic Performance*. One student said, "It would be wonderful if this could be made available to all teaching certificate students." The seminar is offered through a partnership of the UNM PRC, the UNM College of Education (COE), the New Mexico Department of Health and New Mexico State Department of Education, and Albuquerque Public Schools (APS).

Professor Breda Bova, Associate Dean of the UNM College of Education, leads the effort to include school health in the teacher training program. She said the reason for offering the innovative seminar is that "many teachers and school administrators leave their profession, *not* because they don't want to be educators, but because they have *not* been trained to adequately handle the multitude of health and safety problems that keep their students from learning, and contribute to poor school performance or low test scores." This pilot seminar addressed that issue.

An interdisciplinary faculty team, including UNM PRC staff, facilitated the 6-hour seminar. Sessions were lively with students participating in interactive exercises and tossing questions at faculty. Dr. Kristine Meurer, Director of the State Department of Education School Health Unit (SDE-SHU), described the state's coordinated school health program and previewed issues that teachers face in the classroom. SDESHU's Dr. John Moore, speaking on safety and environmental issues, was "interrupted" by a role play that demonstrated how their teachers'



classroom lessons can be sidetracked by student health issues. Penny Holland, APS Mental Health Resource Coordinator, described how mental and behavioral health issues are major learning barriers and provided ways to deal with them in class.

Professor David Wittenburg, UNM Department of Physical Performance and Development, described the importance of current physical education and physical activity and had participants practice simple, fun ways to "get moving" and to measure their activity level with pedometers. Professor Donna Lockner, Department of Individual and Family and Community Education, spoke about school nutrition, including how food service people can provide more nutritious student meals, and how to manage school vending machine issues. Cheryl Brubaker, APS Special Education Resource Nurse Specialist, led a discussion of potential school health case study situations that teachers might face and explained how school nurses can help. All seminar participants received the new *Navigation Guide for Teachers: Resources for School Health* developed by UNM PRC staff.

The students gave the seminar high marks. Ninety-two percent (12 of 13) stated that the UNM pre-service teacher training program should include training in school health issues, and that the seminar prepared them better to handle student health problems they may encounter. All either strongly agreed or agreed that the seminar showed how school health is related to academic achievement.

Almost all participants indicated that this seminar should be provided to more COE student teachers. Several were surprised about some things they learned, for example, that physical education program support had declined in recent years. One said, "the workshop has made me more aware of things that I can do to promote a healthy classroom, and that is so important. As a student teacher, I am seeing some unhealthy practices [and] this workshop has been so reassuring that I can do better and make a difference." Another recommended that the seminar should be made into a course, or integrated into another teacher education course.

### Funding Source:

This project is part of Special Interest Project 14-99, "Effective Coordinated School Health Programs," funded by the Division of Adolescent and School Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

### Contact Persons:

Christine Hollis, MPH, MPS, Health Education Manager, UNM PRC. (505) 272-4462, and Breda Bova, Ph.D., Associate Dean, UNM College of Education, (505) 277-8178.

# Research!America Provides Advocacy Training for PRC Community Advisory Council Members

Sheri Lesansee



**Members of PRC NCC at advocacy training in Washington, D.C.**

**Mary Woolley, President of Research!America, facilitates a training session**

On July 23, 2003, Research!America held an advocacy training in Washington, D.C., for members of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Prevention Research Center (PRC) National Community Committee (NCC). Research!America is a national, not-for-profit, membership supported, public education and advocacy organization working to make medical and health research – including research to prevent disease, disability and injury and to promote health – a much higher national priority (Research!America, 2003).

The University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center (UNM PRC) recently received an invitation from Research!America for its community advisory council members to attend the training. Three members--Lonnie Barraza, Henry Haskie, and Vinton Zunie--along with community liaison,

Sheri Lesansee, attended the advocacy training.

The morning sessions included overviews of Research!America, the Prevention Research Initiative, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the federal budget. Mary Woolley, President of Research!America, facilitated a session on *Elements of an Effective Advocacy Strategy*. Karen A. Goraleski, Director of the Prevention Research Initiative, facilitated a session on *Developing Your Prevention Research Message*. And Shannon Leary, Manager of the Prevention Research Initiative, facilitated a session on *Advocacy Tools: The Polls*.

The afternoon sessions consisted of more information on advocacy principles and skills and interactive sessions. Information sessions were

presented by Michael Kharfen, Sylvia Hacaj and Bill Wasserman of M & R Strategic Services in Washington, D.C., a public advocacy group. The interactive sessions provided an opportunity for trainees to work together and brainstorm about how to build advocacy skills; how to develop messages that are short, simple, and clear; and ways to work with decision makers and community leaders to promote PRC-sponsored events in their communities. As a start in using the skills learned, trainees were encouraged to invite decision makers to their meetings and events to inform them of the PRC's prevention efforts.

For more information about Research!America visit their website [www.researchamerica.org](http://www.researchamerica.org), or call (703)-739-2577.



Native American Studies. She chose Dartmouth because of its tight family American Indian community that includes a residence house and a support network.

Andrea was especially interested in the SREP program because of her family history and to prepare her for her chosen career. Andrea, her mother and grandmother as well as numerous members of her tribe suffer from diabetes, and her great grandmother suffered severe disabilities and died from diabetes. A good friend of hers died recently of diabetes. In addition, she believes that the research skills she learned will be beneficial for her as a pre-law student, for taking the law school entrance exam, the LSAT, and for law school because it requires extensive and thorough library research and problem-solving skills.

For the internship experience, Andrea's interest in children's health enabled her to be assigned to the *Cooking With Kids* program, under Nancy Hood's supervision. Andrea said that it has been a very productive learning experience. She has learned how to conduct a pilot test with pre and posttests and how to analyze the results of the pilot to plan a full-scale study. She researched resources on cognitive interviewing, especially with children, and wrote the protocol that describes the procedures to be used.

In working with Nancy and other staff, Andrea stated that the primary benefits for her included being able to work with and for some very neat people, and networking with others. Furthermore, she said that her participation in the program has inspired her to be more serious about treating and controlling her own diabetes, to take her medications, to recognize and avoid risk factors, and to be confident that she can have children and can help them to avoid contracting diabetes.

### **Candace Watts, mentored by Leslie Cunningham-Sabo**

Candace Watts, with her interest in elder health, was assigned to the *Healthy Path* project, supervised by Leslie Cunningham-Sabo. She will be a sophomore this year at Sweet Briar College in Lynchburg, Virginia. She chose Sweet Briar College, she said, because it met nearly all of her criteria: it is a small, all women's school with few distractions so she could focus on school and allow her to consider more carefully what she wants to do in life, and it is well connected to its alumnae, including some at UNM. Initially when she applied, she was going to major in biology and potentially go to medical school, but a high school teacher convinced her to go into chemistry. Now that she has participated in the SREP, she is thinking that she might pursue an advanced degree in public health along with an M.D.

Candace's interest in SREP, as a member of the Navajo Nation and a chemistry major, is that diabetes has affected members in her family and many people in her community. She thought the content knowledge and research methods would be helpful in her science education. She said it was a valuable and unique experience to work with other American Indian students. The experience also was an eye opener to her because she has been involved in all aspects of research: the research, tools, instruments, analysis, representations, etc. and it has all been very exciting.

Candace indicated that the *Healthy Path* project is amazing, with the diversity of people involved in it, the various viewpoints and talents and how they all work together, nothing like she had experienced before. She thinks the methods used are amazing, including the use of exercise videos and the food models. She participated in evaluations of the trainings, and en-

tered, analyzed and then presented the results of pre and posttest data. She said that SREP offers more focused and detailed information about public health than Sweet Briar can. With the combination (Sweet Briar and SREP and the internship) she said that everything is being "nailed in place" with connections being made obvious in terms of diabetes as a health problem for Native Americans, and learning where and how the information is collected and disseminated about the risk factors and the interventions. An additional advantage of her participation in SREP is that her internship enabled her to become more familiar with UNM, especially the HSC north campus, and she hopes to experience more of it as a graduate student in a public health field.

Her long-term goals are to give back to the community that has given her so much, not only SREP but also her Indian Health Service (IHS) scholarship. The scholarship supports her in attending college with the first two years free, and the next two years (and even graduate support) paid back through working in the community. She said she would love to be doing what Leslie Cunningham-Sabo is doing, and talks every night with her mother about this option and how fortunate she feels. Ideally she would like to make her community a healthier place to live, to have it resemble more closely what her grandfather described as a place to "walk in beauty" with planting corn, running in the morning, and other healthful lifestyle habits. To achieve broad impact will require collaboration with other groups, other tribes, and people who have other skills. She hopes to continue to network with her peers in the SREP program and to encourage them to participate in this kind of collaboration in the future.

## PRC Welcomes Two New CAC Members:



**Lonnie Barraza** is the HIV Program Prevention Administrator for the New Mexico State Department of Education. In this position, she coordinates efforts concerning HIV issues in New Mexico schools. Additionally, she continues to provide technical assistance for health education curricula and Family, Schools, and Community Partnerships as these address issues about keeping children safe. Previously, she worked as the Consultant for the Safe Schools Program. In this position, she assisted school districts in the development and updates of the Safe Schools plans that each district was required by New Mexico law to prepare.

Lonnie taught health for over 18 years. Before coming to SDE, she held the position of the Sandoval County Healthier Schools Program Coordinator. She created and developed the program and provided leadership regarding health issues in the four school districts and surrounding communities in the county. During this time with Sandoval County, Lonnie's priorities were Family, Schools and Community Partnerships and Violence Prevention. She was instrumental in bringing groups together that were concerned with violence prevention in schools and communities. Lonnie left Sandoval County after five years to take a position in the School Health Unit of the State Department of Education.

As an avocation, Lonnie is a songwriter and occasionally a performer. She has released two CDs of her music. Many of her songs relate to social concerns such as child abuse, parenting issues, lost children, as well as everyday life songs.

As Lonnie likes to say: Make it a safe day!

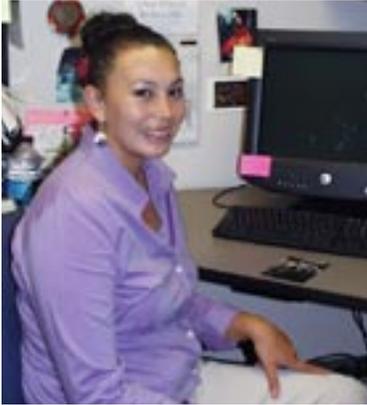
**Vinton Zunie**, a member of the Zuni Tribe, is a Coordinator for the Pueblo of Zuni School Healthy Lifestyles Program. He is responsible for the integration of Diabetes Prevention activities in K-12 schools, and exercises oversight responsibility for all activities of the School Healthy Lifestyles Program.

Vinton has six years of experience working with disabled individuals from his previous affiliation with Vocational Rehabilitation and has his certification in benefits planning from Virginia Commonwealth University. His focus now is to address diabetes within the Zuni community. He served as a Plenipotentiary, a diplomatic representative, for previous Governors in Pueblo Nations, consulting with the Hierarchy of Spain, and presently is a Coordinator of an interesting Cultural Exchange Program with the Indigenous People of Hawaii.



## PRC Staff Updates:

### *New Faces-Welcome Aboard!*



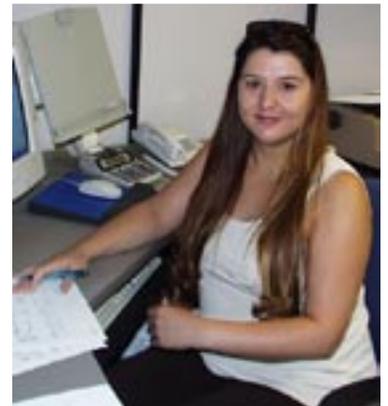
**Paula Feathers.** After living in Zuni for about 14 years, Paula moved to Albuquerque recently where she lives with her fiancée and their two children. Paula is Pawnee and Cherokee, and the oldest of four girls. Her parents currently live in Oklahoma.

Paula graduated with her Bachelor's degree from the University of New Mexico, and then worked in Zuni as the Teen Wellness Director for about two years. In this position, she collaborated with Zuni community programs such as the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, the Wellness Center, the Recovery Center, Juvenile Justice, Z-21, and the Circle Project to implement prevention activities for the youth in Zuni. Her aspiration to work with Native American communities in prevention education inspired her to seek employment in health education. Paula started working at the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention in January 2002 as a Health Educator with the ACL (Acoma-Canoñcito/To'Hajiilee-Laguna) Teen Centers. Her primary role is to provide sex education and the Botvin Lifeskills Program at Laguna Middle School and the elementary schools at To'Hajiilee, Laguna, Acoma, and Cubero. Most recently, she was assigned to coordinate the Dare to Be You Parenting Program for the upcoming year.

Aside from her professional career, Paula likes home and garden activities such as redecorating and painting. She is also currently preparing for her LSAT and hopes to enter law school in three years and study Indian law.

**Yvette Garcia** is a very welcome addition in the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (CHPDP) business office. Yvette began in mid-June working full-time as an Accounting Tech. She is taking accounting classes at TVI, and expecting her first child in the fall. She emphasized that she is learning a lot working with Rob and Kari on accounting projects and budget management tasks at CHPDP, and considers this a great place to work and grow.

Yvette was born and raised in Albuquerque, graduating from high school in 1995. She worked in accounting and office positions, first for the Albuquerque Public Schools, then in the private sector and 5 years for UNM. Her long-term goals are to be an accountant for a department or the UNM general accounting office. In her spare time, she enjoys softball, spending time with family and amateur photography. And for vacations, she enjoys the beaches at Long Beach, California, and appreciates all the green vegetation and the palms of this area.



**Geetha Indiramma.** In early April, 2003, Geetha joined the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (CHPDP) staff as the Coordinator for Community Education for the Southwest Diabetes Prevention Center. Her role was to arrange the details of the Rio Grande Institute, Diabetes Prevention Certificate Program, and Crownpoint training workshops that are scheduled until the end of September. She states that she tremendously enjoys working with the program participants, and that they have expressed appreciation for her efforts by bringing Native foods to share with her.

Geetha has a Bachelor's degree in Engineering and a Master's degree in Business Administration from the University of Kerala, India. Following graduation, she was employed as the Programme Coordinator and Human Resource Coordinator for Nirmithi National Institute of Habitat Management, responsible for training programs for unskilled and unemployed individuals for positions in construction and maintenance fields.

Then, in April 2000, when her husband was hired for a position in Albuquerque, Geetha and their infant son came to the U.S. Life here is quite different from India, but she enjoys the challenges of her current job. In her spare time, she likes doing things with their 3½ year old son. Another favorite pastime of hers in India was vegetable gardening, but she hasn't attempted gardening in New Mexico yet.

## PRC Staff Updates, Cont'd:



**Linda Penalzoza.** After being gone for 26 years, Linda is glad to be back. Originally from Los Alamos, she left for college and didn't move back until this spring. She lived in Texas, Minnesota and Wisconsin, where she obtained degrees in Sociology and her Doctorate in Mass Communication. Her expertise is in population studies, public participation, public opinion and public health policy formation. With over 22 years as a survey researcher, she is a welcome addition to the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (CHPDP). In her previous work, she used qualitative and quantitative surveys and analyses as Director of the University of Wisconsin Extension Survey Research Laboratory, and in her own business, Real World Research.

Since she began in March, she has been successful in preparing three proposals and helping with a fourth, all of which were funded: the Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey, the School Health Education Profile, and the School Health Education Institute Evaluation, all for the State Department of Education; and the Tobacco Evaluation Resource Team project for the Department of Health

(Tobacco Use Prevention and Control).

Linda plans to develop innovative ways to promote research and the expertise of CHPDP professionals to help state agencies and not-for-profit organizations strengthen their public health efforts. Asked about her dream job, she said her CHPDP position is nearly ideal, because she can design and conduct research, do grant writing, have an impact on important public health policies, and work in an academic setting. She would also like to teach, probably in journalism and mass communication. For recreation, she enjoys exploring New Mexico on her motorcycle, craft work, gardening and reading.

**Pamela Sedillo** joined the center in January 2003 as an Administrative Assistant. She is originally from both Colorado and New Mexico, raised in both states. She has been married for eleven years to John Sedillo, who is a fire fighter, and they have two children, Carley (9 years old) and Joshua (5 years old).

Before joining the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (CHPDP), Pam worked in the human resources department at Bueno Foods for five years. Pam provides assistance to six projects: SIP 7-00—the Obesity Prevention Network, SIP 7-00—Examining the Contributions of Prevention Research Toward Improving Public Health Practice and Policy, Healthy Path, Circle of Life, Southwest Diabetes Prevention Center and Cooking with Kids.

Aside from her job at CHPDP, Pam is a sales representative for Pampered Chef, a kitchen products outlet. She likes to do gardening and cooking, and also likes to spend time at the lake with her family. When time permits, Pam volunteers at her children's school and with their church.



Pam is currently taking classes toward completing a Bachelor's degree in Nutrition from the University of New Mexico. She was inspired to pursue a degree in nutrition because she recognized the importance of nutrition for her children and other children in schools and how it plays such a key role in their health and education. In pursuing her degree, she would like to focus on childhood nutrition and the special needs of this population.



## PRC Staff Member Graduates:

*Sheri Lesansee*

**Charlene Poola-Williams** graduated with a Master's degree in Social Work from New Mexico Highlands University in May 2003. Charlene is Navajo and Hopi and is married with one child. She lives in Albuquerque with her family.

Charlene has worked with the ACL (Acoma-Canoñcito/To'Hajiilee-Laguna) Teen Center since October 2001. Before then, she was employed at the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (CHPDP) as an Administrative Assistant for the Prevention Research Center. Currently she is working with the Teen Center Prevention Component to coordinate the Dare To Be You parenting program, which she has been doing for two years. This program consists of facilitating 10 parenting sessions to educate middle school children and their parents on basic parenting skills. The program provides free meals and childcare to help parents to attend. In addition, Charlene facilitates life skills classes at the To'Hajiilee Community School and supplements the curricula with experiential activities that her colleagues have shared with her.

When asked what inspired her to pursue a degree in social work, she said it was her desire to work in Native communities and to assist people with accessing resources. Charlene's future plans are to become a licensed independent social worker (LISW) to start a private practice. She is also thinking of pursuing a Doctoral degree to conduct research to build stronger Native American community-based programs. When asked what her dream job would be, Charlene stated that it was "working within Native American communities with the youth by providing education about life skills for living on and off the reservation and also to provide resources to enhance educational opportunities and social services of the Native people."

Aside from her professional career, Charlene likes to be outdoors to jog, hike, and swim. Her priority, though, is to spend more time with her son and family.

Charlene's work at CHPDP has enabled her to gain experience in building stronger networks, which is important in Native communities. She stated she has met great people in the communities she works in and appreciates the camaraderie of her colleagues.



## PRC Student Updates:



**Deanna Sanchez** graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science in May 2003. Deanna began working at the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (CHPDP) in September 1999. She worked on all Center projects as an assistant to the business office and the administrative team.

Deanna is currently working in Washington, D.C., as an intern with Senator Pete Domenici's office. She is working with a committee on the Senator's bills and amendments, and helping to contact the Senator's New Mexico constituents and to respond to their concerns. In addition, she also assists with writing press releases to inform the public of the Senator's positions on issues and writes letters and press cuts to inform New Mexicans about questions that constituents send to the Senator.

When asked what the future holds for Deanna, she stated she would like to continue working in government. After gaining a few years of experience, she would then like to pursue a Master's degree in Business Administration and join a huge corporation to continue to work in the business world.

The CHPDP staff would like to congratulate Deanna for her achievement and wish her well in attaining her goals in the future.

# Erin Sisk Receives Master's Degree With Honors, And Earns a Prestigious Internship

Elizabeth Van Mil, Ph.D.

In May 2003, Erin Sisk was awarded her Master's degree in Nutrition and Dietetics, with distinction, from UNM. "With distinction" signifies that her thesis committee determined that she excelled, not just with grades and the quality of her master's thesis, but overall. She also received the award, 'Outstanding Student Achievement' from the College of Education, an award that requires nomination and selection by faculty members. Only one undergraduate and one graduate student per semester receive this award in each department.

Erin has lived in Albuquerque all her life. She received her B.S. in Nutrition from UNM, and then worked four years at the General Clinical Research Center at UNM on various clinical nutrition research projects. In May 2002, she began to work at the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (CHPDP), assigned to SIP 17-00, a research utilization project. She was involved with conducting an extensive literature review, and collected data for one New Mexico case study. In August, she visited the St. Louis University PRC to collect data on several community-based research projects. In this project, she interviewed research subjects from one project in St. Louis and two projects that were conducted in the Missouri bootheel (southeast Missouri).

Erin has exciting plans for the next year. At the end of July, Erin moved to Boston, Massachusetts, for a dietetic internship at Brigham and Women's Hospital, an affiliate of Harvard Medical School. The primary objective for the 11 month internship is to enable Erin to earn her credentials as a Registered Dietitian. This program is one of the most prestigious in the country,

extremely competitive, and she will be one of 12 students in this intern cohort. Her internship will involve clinical rotations in cardiac surgery, cardiac rehabilitation, oncology, obstetrics, nutrition consultation, food service and clinical research. She is thrilled with this opportunity because it was her first choice of programs.

When asked why she chose nutrition as her field, she said that she had always been interested in health fields and helping people to be healthy. As an undergraduate pre-med student majoring in biology, she took a nutrition class that was listed as an elective. She discovered that the course content "came naturally," so she took another class, and she decided that this field was perfect for her. She could still work with people to help them maintain good health, and nutrition offered more diversity in career options. She could go into research, or do clinical work, or be a free-lance writer.

When she completes her internship, her dream is to be involved in clinical research, to study childhood obesity and the metabolic syndrome. And, although eventually she thinks she will return to New Mexico where most of her immediate family lives, she would like to travel awhile with positions elsewhere "to get her feet wet" first.

Erin attributes her success to her entire family, her older brother and parents. They were good role models, and supportive of all her endeavors. Her 84-year old grandmother also inspires Erin, since "nothing slows her down."

Among the most memorable Center activities for Erin was her one day trip with her supervisor, Leslie Cunningham-Sabo, to Ramah, New

Mexico. There they interviewed community members who had participated in the CDC-sponsored Seal-up Project that studied how to prevent hanta virus. Erin described this as among the most exciting new experiences, which involved a wonderfully productive research day and working with very interesting people. Among the most important people at the Center, Erin expressed special appreciation for the mentoring experience with Leslie Cunningham-Sabo. She also emphasized the significance of Sally Davis's role in the SIP 17-00 activities. Erin emphasized that she was "a tremendous role model, keeping everyone on track, and inspiring us to be creative." She said she appreciated greatly having had the opportunity to work with all those involved in the SIP 17-00 project.



Erin Sisk with mentor, Leslie Cunningham-Sabo





The Connection is a production of the newsletter workgroup:

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Elizabeth Van Mil, Ph.D.

Sheri Lesansee

Andrew Rubey, B.F.A.

The Connection is a quarterly newsletter that features programs, provide updates, reports on program activities and announces upcoming events for the University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center and the Community Advisory Council. Direct inquiries and correspondence to Sheri Lesansee by mail or by phone.

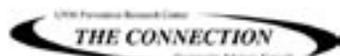
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The University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center (UNM PRC) is one of 28 Prevention Research Centers funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop and carry out scientifically-based, innovative chronic disease prevention research to improve the health of Americans. The mission of the UNM PRC is to address the health promotion and disease prevention needs of New Mexican communities through participatory science-based research, and through collaboration, training, dissemination, and evaluation activities. The UNM PRC has a long history of partnering with communities in New Mexico and the Southwest. The UNM PRC has a Community Advisory Council (CAC), whose members serve in an advisory and advocacy capacity, and represent the public health interests and concerns of New Mexico communities. Through collaboration and communication, these two entities work together to carry out the goals of the Center.



**The University of New Mexico**

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# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Employment:

***Health Education Coordinator:*** The Pueblo of Zuni, Division of Human Services, Healthy Lifestyles Program seeks an experienced health education coordinator for its Health Education Program.

Qualifications:

Bachelor's degree in Health Education, Physical Education, Nursing or a related field plus two (2) years work experience in fitness or health education programs OR Associate's degree in a health related field with four (4) years of work experience in the field of health education, diabetes education and treatment, or physical fitness.

Duties and Responsibilities:

Coordinate and supervise the daily operation of the Zuni Health Education Program through direct communication and collaboration with the Healthy Lifestyles Program Manager, the Zuni Public School District Administrators and Principals, and staff of the health and wellness programs. Plan, develop, organize, direct and maintain program goals and objectives; schedule daily activities and supervise program staff on assigned duties and responsibilities; promote healthy lifestyles by serving as liaison between the Pueblo of Zuni, Zuni Public Schools, parents, service providers, and the community; and maintain professional knowledge and certification by attending seminars, educational workshops, college classes and conferences.

Location: Zuni, New Mexico

Closing Date: Open until filled

**For a full job description and additional information, contact Mrs. Ruby Wolf, Zuni Healthy Lifestyles Program Director, at (505) 782-2929 or Mr. Stephen Kennedy, Personnel Department, Division of Human Services, at (505) 782-7083.**

***Nutrition/Breastfeeding Coordinator:*** The Pueblo of Zuni, Division of Human Services, Women and Infant Care Program (WIC) seeks an experienced nutrition/breastfeeding coordinator for its WIC program.

Qualifications:

Master's degree in Public Health or Nutrition with three (3) years of related work experience in the nutrition field OR Bachelor's degree from an accredited college/university in Food Service, Nutrition, Dietetics, or Home Economics, with a minimum of nine (9) semester hours in Food Service and Nutrition courses, with five (5) years of related work experience in the nutrition field.

Duties and Responsibilities:

Plan, organize, and develop a nutrition curriculum for implementation and evaluation; perform work related to all aspects of nutrition services delivery to Zuni WIC Program clients; responsible for all areas of nutrition education including development of materials, and food demonstrations; provide individual and group nutrition education sessions; develop and implement nutritional care plans for participants based on assessment of nutritional needs and available resources; and adhere to all program policies and procedures relating to nutrition services delivery.

Location: Zuni, New Mexico

Closing Date: Open until filled.

**For a full job description and additional information, contact Mrs. Ruby Wolf, Zuni WIC Program Director, at (505) 782-2929 or Mr. Stephen Kennedy, Personnel Department, Division of Human Services, at (505) 782-7083.**