



Community Health Center Inc.'s Innovative Family Nurse Practitioner Program Inspires New Health Reform Legislation

Training Program to be replicated in Section 5316 of National Health Reform Bill



2009-2010 Nurse Practitioner Residency Class, from left to right: Miyoshi Smith, Bonita Thibault, Sarah Faith and Kandree Hicks.

The federal health reform bill, Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, includes authorization of a demonstration project that will replicate Community Health Center's residency training program for family nurse practitioners.

Mark Masselli, President and CEO made the announcement along with Margaret Flinter, APRN, VP and Clinical Director of the organization. With more than four decades of experience in building and expanding a statewide community health center, they recognized several years ago that the complexity of the FQHC setting and the value nurse practitioners bring to the role of primary care providers warranted a significant increase in the investment in training to ensure that new NPs thrived in this setting.

In 2005, CHC launched the country's first formal post-graduate residency training program for new family nurse practitioners, graduated the first class of four in August, 2008, and will soon accept the fourth class. CHC, Inc.'s staff nurse practitioners and physicians, along with specialists inside and outside of CHC, Inc., serve as preceptors and teachers in the program. Graduates of the residency have gone on to practice as primary care providers in FQHCs around the country.

Commenting on the health reform legislation that was recently signed by President Obama, Masselli says that "CHC is proud that Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii had championed the program and submitted an amendment, Section 5316, for 'Demonstration Grants for Family Nurse Practitioner Training Program,' which establishes a program of three year grants to be awarded to eligible entities (FQHCs and Nurse-managed health centers)."

Margaret Flinter, as founder of the residency program, acknowledged the support of many leaders in health care, policy and government, starting with the Connecticut legislature, which unanimously approved a bill in support of the residency back in 2007.

Flinter clarifies the unique challenges faced by primary care providers in community health centers, saying "I don't think post-graduate formal residency training is necessary for all practice settings, but our experience and that of our colleagues in health centers around the country clearly supported our assessment that this was a next step in the evolution of the proud tradition of nurse practitioners in community health centers. We want to recruit the best, the brightest and the most committed new family nurse practitioners, and we want them to thrive in this setting. We think providing this transition from student to primary care provider for new NPs is the best way to do that."

Masselli notes the powerful voice of Senator Inouye of Hawaii, Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee had in driving the legislation forward. Masselli states, "He is concerned about the shortage of practitioners across America and in his own state of Hawaii and understands we need to do everything possible to assure a vibrant and strong primary care workforce."



Building a **WORLD-CLASS PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM** focused on special populations.

Community Health Center, Inc. is a private, non-profit agency. Since 1972, we have been building a world-class primary health care system, that is committed to caring for special populations, and that is focused on improving health outcomes for our patients as well as building healthy communities. We bring many resources to this task but there are three critical components—First, is our commitment to excellence in the provision of primary care. But we are also engaged in Research and Development. We believe we have an obligation to improve primary care through both formal research, and through testing innovations in care delivery. Finally, we support the future leaders of primary care through our own health professional training initiatives.

CHC Clients and Staff Meet the Next Governor at Video Town Hall Meetings



Dan Malloy

PIZZA & POLITICS!

Connecticut's next Governor faces many economic and social challenges. CHC invited the Gubernatorial candidates to explain how they will try to meet those difficulties and move Connecticut forward. Using state-of-the-art video and audio links that connect CHC sites in twelve cities, candidates presented their ideas and visions to hundreds of clients and staff during six different lunchtime sessions this spring. While the candidates were simulcast live from CHC's New Britain location, staff and clients across the state were able to watch and listen to the candidates presentation, and pose questions to them immediately afterward.

While the concept of such a town meeting is old, CHC managed to take it to a whole new level using technology to bring the event to a much larger audience all across the State. "Civic engagement is a critical part of who we are in our local communities across Connecticut. This series allowed our patients and staff the opportunity to break bread and to interact with Connecticut leaders—listening and discussing matters vital to our neighborhood" said Mark Masselli, President/CEO Community Health Center, Inc.

Each candidate toured the CHC of New Britain site prior to the session and had an opportunity to hear from staff about CHC's innovations and model of care. The Pizza & Politics! events featured declared Candidates Mark Boughton, Oz Griebel, Dan Malloy, Mike Fedele, Tom Foley and Ned Lamont. All events were very well attended with staff and patients from CHC sites in Clinton, Danbury, Enfield, Groton, Meriden, Middletown, New London, Norwalk, Old Saybrook, Stamford and, of course, the originating site in New Britain. "Many of our staff commented that they have never had a chance to hear directly from a candidate for governor before. This was an exciting and engaging process for all of us," said Alejandro Melendez-Cooper, Director of CHC Groton and New London.

"While we're not sure who might win the election, one thing is certain; one of these candidates will be the next Governor of Connecticut and he will have an understanding of Community Health Center, Inc.'s commitment to building a world-class primary health care system for special populations, and that is focused on improving health outcomes for it's patients as well as building healthy communities" said Masselli.



Top row, left to right:
Tom Foley;
Ned Lamont pictured with
CHC, Inc.'s Leadership;
Mark Boughton;
Oz Griebel;
Lieutenant Governor
Mike Fedele pictured with
CHC, Inc.'s Leadership

CHC Nurse Practitioner Jean Palin Earns Coveted "Nightingale Award"

Palin Inspires New Britain Teens to Lead Healthy Lives

Community Health Center, Inc. Nightingale Award honoree Jean Palin couldn't be more enthusiastic about her successful career in nursing, a field she describes as "great" because of its fulfilling challenges, flexibility and variety.

On May 8, 2010, Jean Palin received the Nightingale Award for Excellence in Nursing, Connecticut's largest statewide nursing recognition program. The program was originally developed by the Visiting Nurse Association of South Central Connecticut to celebrate outstanding nurses and elevate the nursing profession. Today the goals of the program are to encourage retention, inspire future nurses, focus public attention and recognize the breadth and scope of the nursing profession in Connecticut.

As a nurse practitioner at the Community Health Center, Inc., she is assigned to CHC's New Britain High School School-Based Health Center, a dynamic school with over 3,000 students. Palin was selected to win this award because of her clinical excellence, spirit of innovation, and commitment to mentoring the next generation of health professionals. Palin does this as a family nurse practitioner that is preparing generations of New Britain teen-agers to lead healthy lives, not just now, but long into their adult years. Jean Palin is an example of the Community Health Center, Inc.'s spirit, commitment and vision of building a world-class primary care organization focused on improving outcomes and building healthy communities for special populations.

A graduate of St. Joseph College and the University of Virginia, nursing has become one of her life's most fulfilling and challenging achievements. When asked about the news of the award Palin said, "This is very humbling,



there are so many great nurses at CHC and Connecticut." Palin says her success is attributed to not only the forward thinking of Community Health Center, Inc., but keeping up-to-date medically, not being judgmental, common sense and most importantly—being a good listener.

"The kids give back to me everyday. That's what is most rewarding about this job." Palin acknowledges. What Palin offers to underserved teens is invaluable, as she helps teens make better health choices while maintaining the boundaries and dignity that teens need. Jean is an essential link to primary healthcare for many students at the high school who are often experiencing very adult-sized health problems and concerns. She manages diabetes, but also works to reverse obesity and thus prevent new cases of diabetes. She treats tension headaches while counseling students on healthy lifestyles and ways to manage stress. Palin considers great communication skills key to success in the field, and hones those skills everyday serving the diverse population at New Britain High School.

Jean can usually be found in her primary care suite at the high school, but you may also find her in the classroom, in teacher conferences, mentoring nurse practitioner students, or collaborating with physicians and nurse practitioners in the community. In the summer she eagerly works at all of the other CHC's sites, enjoying the variety of nursing applications Palin so prizes. Yet, Jean can also always be found in a very special place... the hearts of her patients.

Scouting for Health at CHC

Cub and Girl Scout Packs Explore Healthy Activities at CHC Sites

The Community Health Center, Inc. has partnered with several local scouting troupes to educate youth about healthy practices in fun and entertaining ways.

In early Spring, CHC of Danbury sent out Access to Care AmeriCorps members Angelica Camacho and Rachel Piontak to lead a Girl Scout meeting on the importance of healthy eating and proper hand washing. The Danbury scouts learned about the benefits of various "trail mix" ingredients and were allowed to create their own concoctions of fruits, nuts and grains. The girls then moved on to the ever-popular "black box" demonstration for hand washing. They were amazed and had a great time examining the glowing "germs" accumulated in their fingernails. The meeting came to a close with Camacho's impromptu test of hand washing importance and procedure, which the girls passed with flying colors. CHC brochures, health-related coloring sheets and refilled bags of trail mix were distributed to the parents before the meeting ended.

During the spring outreach to scouts, Cub Scout Pack 732 of New Britain toured the CHC New Britain site. In this visit, the young health explorers learned about good medical and dental health habits, met with CHC health care professionals and were treated to balloons, pencils and other novel CHC items. Due to the success of these events, CHC will look forward to future opportunities with other troops at CHC sites and communities. It is not often local Girl and Cub Scout troops are considered as an audience for outreach, but they were among CHC's most eager learners.

The partnership between CHC and scouting is a powerful one. Scouting, also known as the Scout Movement, is a worldwide youth movement with the stated aim of supporting young people in their physical, mental and spiritual development so that they may play constructive roles in society. "Supporting and engaging in partnerships with scouting is just one of the many ways CHC helps build healthy communities. By providing positive role models and mentoring to future generations of children, CHC is making a difference in helping to contribute to the positive development of these young individuals" said Paul Mayer, Director of Communications for CHC.



SUMMER 2010

Healthy Change

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CHC and AmeriCorps—"Takin' it to the Streets"

Every day thousands of Connecticut residents hop in their cars and travel well-worn paths to work, extracurricular activities and various appointments. What about those who are economically or physically unable to travel between home and elsewhere at their leisure? For many, this lack of access to places is realized far beyond a missed outing: it could very well affect health and physical wellbeing. Many of CHC's patients do not own cars, and some are required to walk long distances to their appointments. The elderly, disabled and economically disadvantaged are especially vulnerable to transportation problems.

In honor of those who walk, and to raise awareness about the difficulty of access to quality healthcare for the lower-income populations, CHC AmeriCorps members respectfully followed in their footsteps. AmeriCorps is a national program that supports volunteers who meet needs in education, public safety and other critical areas. CHC, Inc. is the only organization in Connecticut that successfully applied for and received an AmeriCorps/community health corps award. Every year during AmeriCorps Week, members conduct events all over the country to raise awareness about AmeriCorps opportunities and their various projects. CHC AmeriCorps members came up with this idea and moved forward...literally.

Armed with colorful Community Health Corps flags and CHC/AmeriCorps shirts, the Community Health Corps members took to the streets on the morning of May 11 and

walked for all who struggle to access affordable and quality healthcare. The dedicated walkers traveled the 9-mile route between CHC Meriden and CHC Middletown. In doing so, they raised awareness about the presence of Community Health Centers in the area and promoted AmeriCorps involvement at the same time. The walk started at the CHC Meriden parking lot at 8AM and concluded successfully around noon at CHC Middletown. The group was even joined by a fellow Community Health Corps member from New York.

Rachel Piontak, Access to Care: AmeriCorps Member at CHC Danbury who participated and helped organize the event said, "Everyone in the group pulled through quite well. Our mission for this walk was successful; I have no doubt that we clearly represented CHC and AmeriCorps through our matching gear, and if nothing else, raised awareness." Walkers and participating members also distributed collateral materials and information about both CHC and AmeriCorps to spread the message that all deserve quality health care. "The event concluded as tired and hungry walkers sat down to an informal AmeriCorps potluck in the Family Wellness Center and reflected on their accomplishments and ability to create an added awareness and understanding of the importance of their work and missions.

Next year CHC looks forward to continuing the partnership with AmeriCorps when they will go from 9 to 14 volunteers.

