



THE CONVENER

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Words from our Executive Director

The new academic year is well underway and brings with it fresh opportunities, new organizational challenges, and a number of prospects for the Champlain Valley Area Health

Education Center (CVAHEC) to increase its ability to address the critical **healthcare quality, access, and distribution issues** facing Vermont's Champlain Valley.

I am pleased to report that CVAHEC is making great progress this year in each of the three healthcare areas indicated above. In terms of influencing the **quality of healthcare**, CVAHEC has partnered with a host of regional organizations and healthcare institutions to ensure that current providers are receiving opportunities to attend conferences and trainings that offer the most current research findings and provide the most up-to-date training protocols.



Ensuring that the region's providers have the means and opportunities to enhance their professional skills and knowledge is essential to the development of a first class healthcare

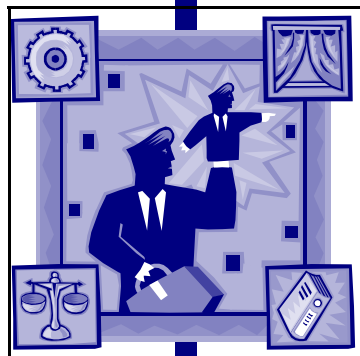
system.

Increasing **access** to quality healthcare is essential to all residents of the Champlain Valley. To this end, CVAHEC is continuing its vital work of initiating and supporting region wide programs and projects designed to reach those individuals and families with the greatest barriers to first class healthcare. Through support of dental health programs, through the work conducted by the CVAHEC UVM Social Work Scholar, and through support of community based initiatives, CVAHEC is removing obstacles to quality healthcare for all residents of the Champlain Valley.

To ensure access to quality care, **distribution** of healthcare services must be widespread and appropriate across all service areas. As such, CVAHEC is continuing its efforts at recruiting and re-

taining providers through the primary care loan repayment program and additional efforts as need arises. Key long range strategies in ensuring that healthcare distribution is appropriate for regional needs are CVAHEC's myriad workforce development and healthcare introduction initiatives. These initiatives, and many others, are highlighted in the following pages.

Improving the quality of healthcare, increasing access to excellent healthcare, and working to ensure an adequate and appropriate workforce healthcare distribution are the guiding principles behind all the initiatives conducted by CVAHEC. I am confident that CVAHEC will make great strides this year in addressing these vital concerns.

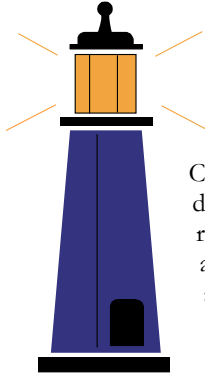


Special points of interest:

- CVAHEC Organizational Notes
- Loan Repayment Awards
- National Conference on Tobacco or Health
- Health Careers Showcase
- *aka Science*
- AHEC Scholar Report

CVAHEC Organizational Notes

“... it is evident that CVAHEC is well positioned to meet the challenges of the healthcare quality, access, and distribution issues facing Vermont’s Champlain Valley...”



This year brings many large scale organizational ventures. The CVAHEC board of directors is currently undergoing a self assessment, and reviewing recommendations for new committee structures and

new board member roles and responsibilities as a means of increasing the effectiveness of the board to meet CVAHEC’s mission.

Deb Eckert, the new CVAHEC Education Resource Coordinator was hired on November 21, and



started in her position during the first week of January 2003. Deb is responsible for oversight of the medical library at Northwest-

ern Medical Center in St. Albans and of the Culturally Competent

Resource Center at the Community Health Center in Burlington. Deb also oversees Freeman medical student’s summer projects, and develops CVAHEC’s culturally competent trainings and continuing education programs for health professionals.

Also, Vermont’s AHEC programs were assessed as part of a Congressionally directed national AHEC evaluative study to identify the characteristics, factors, and methodologies employed by successful AHEC’s; and factors, barriers and impediments in areas where AHEC’s have not been as effective. Successful programs as identified through the study offer the following:

- Have clearly defined goals.
- Demonstrate a balance of state and local priorities.
- Show a track record of progress toward goals.
- Exhibit high productivity.
- Have fiscally sound operations.
- Coordinate activities.

- Have effective monitoring and measurement systems in place.
- Have clearly defined roles and responsibilities for internal stakeholders.
- Have committed internal stakeholders.
- Have a satisfied set of internal stakeholders.

We are pleased to report that while individual programs were not provided with direct programmatic feedback, CVAHEC demonstrates a number of the characteristics identified with the more successful AHEC programs. While CVAHEC needs to do more in some of the identified areas, most notably in measurement and evaluation, it is evident that CVAHEC is well positioned to meet the challenges of the healthcare quality, access, and distribution issues facing Vermont’s Champlain Valley. CVAHEC is privileged to be a part of a national and state network that is dedicated to improving all aspects of public health access, distribution and quality.

Vermont Loan Repayment Program Awards for Primary Care Providers

“This year the Vermont Legislature approved \$70,000 to be distributed to qualifying providers by CVAHEC.”

Once again, Vermont’s legislature has demonstrated its commitment to the recruitment and retention of health care practitioners in underserved areas of the state through the Vermont Primary Care Loan Repayment Program. Administered by the Vermont Department of Health in collaboration with the AHEC Program, this loan repayment program awards up to \$20,000 per person, per year with the inclusion of local or employer matches.

This year the Vermont Legislature approved \$70,000 to be distributed to qualifying providers by CVAHEC (out of \$250,000 statewide). Qualifying providers include primary care physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, certified nurse midwives, psychiatrists and psychiatric nurses. The \$70,000 will be given as twelve awards—two awards of \$10,000 each and ten awards of \$5,000 each to providers in our service area of Addison, Chittenden, Franklin and Grand Isle counties. The only obligation to the recipients of the award is that the provider remain in

practice in Vermont for the year (calendar year 2003) or the money needs to be returned. Each primary care provider can receive up to six years of awards.

In addition, CVAHEC is distributing an additional 36 awards from the Freeman Foundation totaling \$250,000. To qualify for a Freeman Foundation award, a provider must be a medical doctor in either primary or specialty care.



News from the National Conference on Tobacco or Health

"More than 3,000 people attended the conference and heard leading political and scientific figures speak on tobacco control and prevention."

Jenney Samuelson, Program Coordinator for CVAHEC, attended the 2002 National Conference on Tobacco or Health held in San Francisco, California from November 19-21. More than 3,000 people attended the conference and heard leading political and scientific figures speak on tobacco control and prevention.

As an attendee at the conference, Jenney had a chance to do the following:

- update knowledge of current research in tobacco control;
- discover new literature resources for provider education materials;
- explore new cessation methods and tools, including the use of the Internet and handheld computers;
- increase knowledge of skills providers can use to engage the tobacco user in cessation;
- explore provider tobacco education models including similarities to the Red Cross training programs and Department of Defense comprehensive tobacco program.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Hu-

man Services, tobacco is the single greatest cause of disease and premature death in America today, and is responsible for more than 430,000 deaths each year.

Nearly 25 percent of adult Americans currently smoke, and 3,000 children and adolescents become regular users of tobacco every day. The societal costs of tobacco-related death and disease approach \$100 billion each year. However, more than 70 percent of all current smokers have expressed a desire to stop smoking. If these smokers successfully quit, the results will be immediate and provide long-term health improvements. Clinicians have a vital role to play in helping smokers quit. CVAHEC has a vital role to play in providing support for clinicians. Through attendance at conferences like this one, we at CVAHEC continue to broaden our knowledge and improve our ability to support clinicians.



CVAHEC and Local Agencies Sponsor Health Careers Showcase

"The Health Careers Showcase offered a unique opportunity for attendees to participate in health careers exploration in a comfortable and inviting atmosphere."

On November 13th, CVAHEC, Fletcher Allen Health Care, the University of Vermont, Vermont Adult Learning and the Vermont Student Assistance Corp. sponsored the Champlain Valley Health Careers Showcase.

This free event took place at the Champlain Mill in Winooski and offered information about dozens of health occupations, many of

which are experiencing staff shortages. Almost 100 adult participants attended the Showcase and employers, educators, health care workers, and representatives from professional organizations were on hand to discuss the requirements for entering various health care

careers and the rewards and challenges of working in this growing field.

The event featured two panel discussions, "Employment Opportunities and the Employee Perspective" and "Education, the Student Perspective and Financial Aid." In addition, exhibits covered fields such as nursing, dental assisting, respiratory therapy, medical

technology, radiology, medical records, and alternative medicine.

According to CVAHEC Program Coordinator Jenney Samuelson, the event was a success. "The Health Careers Showcase offered a unique opportunity for attendees to participate in health careers exploration in a comfortable and inviting atmosphere. This uniqueness was evident in the diversity of adult learners who attended the event."



CVAHEC Initiates *aka Science* Program in Champlain Valley



CVAHEC is proud to introduce the *aka Science* program. *aka Science* is a fun and exciting way for students from preschool to sixth grade to explore science.

The program, provided by Hands On Science Outreach, Inc., builds on children's natural curiosity for examining the world around them through an informal and interactive environment. *aka Science* uses the widely respected Hands On Science Outreach curriculum that is consistent with national science standards. It also reinforces the Vermont science



content standards and benchmarks.

CVAHEC recently assisted in planning a New Eng-

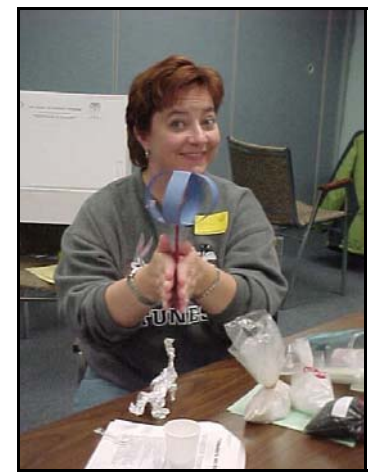
land based *aka Science* training for 10 AHEC staff representing New Hampshire, Vermont, New York and Connecticut AHEC's. Two trainers from the Oregon Health Career Center, Sarah Anderson, Program Coordinator and Gary Wappes, Executive Director, facilitated the training. CVAHEC Program Coordinator Jenney Samuelson attended the training and earned certification for CVAHEC to host *aka Science* regionally.

CVAHEC's goal in sponsoring *aka Science* is to ensure that students maintain their enthusiasm for exploring the world around them and encourage a desire to succeed through positive environment and role models. We intend to do this by offering students a network of support from elementary school through college and beyond.



Each dollar collected through user fees is put back into continuing our programs.

We have begun to recruit schools to host *aka Science* and have serious potential candidates in both Franklin and Addison counties. In future months we will continue to report on the ongoing progress of the *aka Science* program.



New Look, New Name, Same Mission

We are proud to introduce a new look and new name for our CVAHEC newsletter. The new name, *The Convener*, is a reflection of how we view our role in the Champlain Valley.

Last year an interesting word began percolating around the CVAHEC office: "convener." Program Coordinator Jenney Samuelson explains, "We bring people to the table who might not otherwise sit down together." Imagine direct healthcare services as dots on a piece of paper. The convener is the hand that connects those dots. More connections means a clearer picture of healthcare in the



Champlain Valley.

Our role as a convener has developed over time, as our fledgling organization—founded in 1998—has begun to mature. It is as a convener that we can best fulfill our primary goal of strengthening the healthcare infrastructure in the Champlain Valley.

"As a convener, CVAHEC brings together disparate groups and organizations to address critical healthcare issues, such as access, distribution, and quality," states Executive Director Rob Trachtenberg. We hope *The Convener* informs you of all we are doing to make this happen.



AHEC Scholar Report: Three Cathedral Square

January 2003

As the AHEC scholar during the fall semester of 2002, I had the opportunity to participate in an interdisciplinary collaboration as well as attend several seminars on health care and the aging population. Students from the UVM College of Nursing and Health Sciences and the Department of Social Work collaborated with four residents of Three Cathedral Square, a residential senior community in Burlington.



The objective was to complete a RCHRAT (Residents and Residential Care Home Assessment Tool) assessment. This evaluation would identify the seniors' needs as they prepare to transition into Cathedral Square's assisted living apartments.

Through this multi-disciplinary approach, my colleagues and I were able to share our knowledge and skills to create an integrated approach to the assessment process and to gain a better understanding and respect for the roles of each others' disciplines.

The 16 students participating in the group project were divided into four teams. I was part of a team with three nursing students. The assessment took place one day a week over a period of twelve weeks. The first few weeks included training on the use of the assessment tool by professionals in the field. Following this training, each team worked on integrating its interpersonal and inter-professional communication skills, engaging in teamwork, goal setting, and deciding how to approach the patient interviewing process.

The interview portion of the assessment took place over the course of four weeks. In a final evaluation of the assessment, one resident we worked with said, "This process was wonderful. I never imagined an assessment could be so thorough but enjoyable. I truly benefited from getting to know you all and to see what each student and their profession brings to our work together."

In addition to working with the people of Three Cathedral Square, I also had the unique opportunity to participate in seminars that hosted many experts in the field of gerontology. The issues they addressed in their presentations ranged from mental health and advocacy to end of life care. We were also fortunate to hear an inspirational presentation by the late Armin Grams, whose topic, appropriately, centered on the many things that elders can teach us.

Sharon M. Coleman
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**Champlain Valley Area
Health Education Center**

Putting People into Public Health

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Vermont's AHEC Program is a statewide network of the Northeastern VT AHEC, the Champlain Valley AHEC, the Southern Vermont AHEC, and the UVM College of Medicine.