Staff Spotlight

Suzanne Letellier, Milwaukee AHEC

Throughout her 12 years at Milwaukee AHEC, Suzanne Letellier has demonstrated true dedication to the mission of AHEC and a passion for community outreach that improves health. During her tenure, Suzanne has trained community health workers, led initiatives to improve health in the Milwaukee area, and empowered students to pursue careers in a wide array of healthcare fields.

Prior to her current role as the program manager for Milwaukee AHEC, Suzanne worked for 10 years as the nutrition coordinator for Guadalupe Head Start Center in Milwaukee, and three years in the healthcare business field. She first gained an interest in public health when she discovered the University of Wisconsin - La Crosse’s Community Health Education Program. Suzanne earned a Master’s Degree in Education and brings her expertise in both fields of health and education to AHEC.

The Wisconsin Community Health Worker (CHW) Alliance is one of the comprehensive programs Suzanne coordinates. It was established to bridge community members and the healthcare system. This program addresses the need for community health workers to promote health and self-care management at a community level. Participants of the program take part in a 100-hour training session where they...
learn concepts and principles of basic public healthcare. Since its founding in 2010, Suzanne and others trained Community Health Workers. These CHWs are the front line of public health and encourage community action.

Youth Health Service Corps (YHSC) is another program Suzanne coordinates. It is designed for high school students interested in health careers. Students in the YHSC are able to experience real-life healthcare experiences to guide them in choosing a health career they are interested in. The program currently partners with three inner-city Milwaukee schools: Riverside University, Rufus King High School and James Madison Academic Campus.

Suzanne helps to implement the Milwaukee Community Health Internship Program (CHIP), an eight-week internship for health students that focuses on community health. The Milwaukee program develops urban and inner-city health projects for interns. This program is a catalyst for change in community health statewide by introducing students to the unique healthcare climate and resources in Milwaukee.

Wisconsin Express is another program that benefits from Suzanne’s leadership; Suzanne organizes a weeklong immersion experience centered on urban health in Milwaukee.

Lastly, Suzanne works closely with Polaski High School in the Milwaukee Public School System to provide diabetes education and access to resources for underserved students.

Thank you, Suzanne, for your ongoing dedication to AHEC and your outstanding contributions to making all of these programs successful!

Program Highlights

**Wisconsin Express Winter Break 2016: Women’s Health Course (Madison / Beloit)**

In January, 24 undergraduates interested in public health participated in the first offering of a women’s health-focused Wisconsin Express program. Throughout the one-week course, students met community organizations and experts in the field to broaden their understanding of women’s health on a local and global scale. These included:
- Dr. Allen, University of Wisconsin PATH Clinic
- Dr. Ehrenthal, Director of the Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families
- Dr. Higgins, Professor of Gender & Women's Studies
- University of Wisconsin LGBT Resource Center
- Domestic Abuse Intervention Services
- Jan Miyasaki, Director of Project Respect
- A panel of birthing experts in the Madison community

Guest speakers met with the class on campus at the Health Sciences Learning Center at UW-Madison. The students also visited health centers and organizations in Madison, Janesville and Beloit, including the YWCA, House of Mercy Homeless Shelter, Madison/Dane County Public Health Department, Access Community Health Center, and Planned Parenthood. Conversations during the week covered numerous health topics, including pregnancy and childbirth, homelessness, intimate partner violence, sex trafficking, health disparities, and mental health. While learning from community members and guest lecturers about these issues, students developed a deeper understanding of how social inequalities limit access to healthcare.

The program offered participants unique insight into these communities, and the students expressed appreciation for the opportunity to learn about the people and the organizations in Madison and Beloit that make healthcare possible for all women. One student reflected on this experience, noting in her evaluation comments: “This program has been incredible - life changing, empowering and so eye-opening. I feel like I’ve learned more here than I have in most classes throughout my life. And having the field trips and going out in the community was so necessary and crucial.”

Additional photos from this program can be found at: goo.gl/PDgo5g.
In March, 17 students packed their bags and headed north on Wisconsin Express spring break trips to Minocqua and Rusk/Barron.

This is the first time the Minocqua site was offered during Spring Break, and 10 students participated. The “Northwoods Experience” trip included tours and educational sessions conducted at the Native American reservation Lac du Flambeau and in Rhinelander. This site was initiated at the request of members of Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA)-UW. The HOSA component of the itinerary included outreach to the local high school chapter of HOSA (Northern Pines HOSA), which was established through support from Northern Highland AHEC. Additional outreach activities included visiting the health department, critical access hospital, domestic violence shelter, and substance abuse recovery program; meeting with residents at the Avanti Health and Rehabilitation Center; and completing a training session in “Question, Persuade, Respond” skills for intervening to prevent suicide.

One participant, Alyssa Joachim, a student at UW-Madison, remarked her favorite aspect of Wisconsin Express was its differing experiences. “The variety we saw - a hospital, a domestic violence center, a drug rehab center - there were so many unique opportunities!” Alyssa, whose interests lie in pediatric medicine and public health, also said observing many examples of interprofessional collaboration helped her “realize the importance of networking and expressing your opinions so you can have good, meaningful discussions.”

Across the state on the western border, the Wisconsin Express trip to Rusk/Barron was offered during spring break for the third time. This site offers an immersion opportunity that explores rural health with an emphasis on experiences of the Somalian immigrant community.

Laura Belmonte, a UW-Madison student studying microbiology and global health, said the experience in Rusk/Barron “definitely shed light on a culture I knew relatively little about and opened my eyes to the ways other people experience health care - an asset to life we often take for granted.” As part of the curriculum, students visited free clinics, hospice programs, hospitals, long-term care facilities, a domestic abuse shelter, public health offices, the Health Care Academy and the International High School, among others. Laura added: “This experience has shown how vital it is for every person in a team to be willing to express ideas, and stemming from that, how important it is to take into account different perspectives on an issue.”

The summer session of Wisconsin Express will run from May 15 - 20, with 12 regional sites. For more information: http://ahec.wisc.edu/wisconsin-express.

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**Essay Contest: 24th Annual $2,500 Prize for UW’s Best Rural Health Paper**

The Wisconsin Rural Health Cooperative invites essays from anyone who has been a student at the University of Wisconsin within the preceding year (all campuses, programs, graduate, undergraduate, part-time, non-degree included). Essays should be relevant to rural communities, innovative, practical, multi-disciplinary.

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE:** June 1 to Monica Seiler at MSeiler@rwhc.com. See requirements: [www.rwhc.com](http://www.rwhc.com).

A participant’s essay about Wisconsin Express won this prize last year!
Teaching and Learning

**Students attend third annual global public health training workshop**

South Central AHEC collaborated with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Global Health Institute, students in the Globe Med club, and the Global Health certificate program to hold the third annual **Global Public Health Training Workshop** for high school students. The event took place on Friday, November 6, and provided an opportunity to learn about global health and network with university departments and groups.

The full-day workshop welcomed high school students from eight different schools, an expansion from the previous two years. Last year, five schools attended and four schools attended in 2013.

“The day is meant to introduce high school students, teachers, and other staff members to the topics of global and public health, and explain how they are interrelated,” said Wendy Hinz, South Central AHEC Health Careers Educator.

While many students might believe they need to go to another continent to experience global health, the workshop helps students recognize that their own country, state and local community are part of the global health network.

“We want to ‘plant the seeds of questioning’ about the topics of global and public health, and to reach as many students as possible to increase their questioning about these topics and what we can do within our own communities,” Wendy added.

For more information regarding the health of specific communities on both the state and national level, visit ahec.wisc.edu/healthserviceareas. The health survey maps on Wisconsin AHEC’s website are a direct result of what the participants stated about their health practices. The maps represent a growing understanding of the health concerns local populations face in their own backyards.

*Photos from this event can be found on Wisconsin AHEC’s Facebook page: [https://goo.gl/z4reOY](https://goo.gl/z4reOY).*

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**“Live from the Heart” - High school students observe live heart surgery**

Northern Highland AHEC, in partnership with Nicolet College, sponsored a viewing of **Live from the Heart**, a live open heart surgery broadcasted via teleconference. Over 300 high school students, teachers and staff from nine high schools in northern Wisconsin watched remotely as a surgical team performed a heart bypass procedure at the Museum of Science and Industry and Advocate Medical Center in Chicago. The students were able to talk to the surgical team during the procedure, and also learned about heart health. The teleconference lasted about two hours.

The second component of the event included a panel of health care professionals who spoke about their careers. In addition, Nicolet College set up a Health Care Occupation Event for students to network with healthcare businesses and colleges from around the state.

The 2015-16 sessions of Live from the Heart interactive videoconferences conclude on June 1, 2016. The videoconferences are offered every Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and are intended for students grades 9 - 12. There is a $300 registration fee.