

The Minnesota Area Health Education Center (MN AHEC) supports the health professional workforce needs of rural and urban underserved Minnesota communities through strong community-campus partnerships among academic institutions, health care organizations, communities, and others committed to improving the health of the people of Minnesota.

The MN AHEC is a collaboration with the University of Minnesota Academic Health Center's six health professions schools, features a statewide Program Office with regional AHECs representing Central, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, and Southern Minnesota, as well as urban underserved communities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

Since its establishment in 2002, the MN AHEC has worked with:

18,843 K-16 students

2,100 Health professions students

15,064 Health care professionals and community members

■ Building the Health Careers Pipeline: Programming for K-16 Students

- Intensive summer camps for high ability students with a specific interest in health careers are offered by Southern, Northeast and Urban MN AHECs. 311 students have participated in these camps since 2007.
- Two Bemidji State University pre-dental students were accepted into the Rural Dentistry Track Early Admission program through the UMN School of Dentistry. As part of the program, both students are starting community service projects during their undergraduate career under the guidance of Dr. Brandi Larson of Indian Health Services in Cass Lake.



The Minnesota Urban AHEC provided 22 scholarships for youth to participate in the Urban SCRUBS Camp. The camp was a five-day residential experience for youth in grades 9 -12 interested in health related careers.

■ Connecting Health Professions Students with Communities

- Since 2005, MN AHEC has provided financial support to 1,596 health professions students living in rural communities.
- Each year more than 100 dental and dental hygiene students care for underserved patients in one of three outreach dental clinics affiliated with the UMN School of Dentistry. The clinics are located in Minneapolis, Willmar and Hibbing.



Central MN AHEC Executive Director Laurissa Stigen (left) with medical student Mark Vukonich and Central MN AHEC Regional Specialist Lori Larson at the Day 1 event for the AHC IHealth initiative.

A Student Perspective:

Medical Student Dedicated to West Central Minnesota

UMN 4th year medical student Mark Vukonich is a native of Underwood, MN and his medical education is driven by a goal to return to practice in the region. He said that it is “something I have always wanted to do. I see myself practicing in a rural hospital setting.” Vukonich has worked with Central MN AHEC to arrange several clinical experiences and community engagement opportunities in Fergus Falls. His time in Fergus Falls began between his first and second year of medical school when he participated in the Summer Internship in Medicine Program (SIM) and continued in his third year when he participated in the Rural Physician Associate Program (RPAP). Vukonich is currently applying for a family medicine residency.

■ Fostering Measured Growth of the Health Care Workforce in Underserved Areas

- Central MN AHEC partnered with West Central Initiative, the UMN School of Nursing, 10 regional schools of nursing, and other local partners to form the Partners Investing in Nursing and Geriatrics’s Future (PIN-G) initiative. With \$348,480 in grant funds from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and local funding partners, the program will address the professional nursing and geriatric workforce needs for the growing elderly population in central Minnesota.
- Southern MN AHEC sponsors health care cultural competency trainings focused on Somali and Latin American populations, as well as Spanish language medical interpreter training within the region. 104 interpreters have been trained to date.
- In 2010, Northwest MN AHEC supported the successful recruitment of a dentist to Thief River Falls. The dentist’s spouse is a Registered Nurse, so the community is actually gaining two new health practitioners.

■ Interprofessional Practice and Education

- 14 Community-based Interprofessional Practice and Education (IPE) projects have been established by MN AHEC since 2004.
- Each IPE project focuses on a community identified topic with measurable community health outcomes.
- The IPE projects support interprofessional practice development and provide interprofessional experiential learning opportunities for University of Minnesota health professions students.

1Health: Interprofessional Education in Action

1Health was launched at the University of Minnesota Academic Health Center Fall 2010. 1Health is a vision for interprofessional education in which all AHC students entering into professional schools at the AHC must demonstrate competency during three phases (Phase I: start of the program, Phase II: basic knowledge and Phase III: clinical/experiential education) of their pre-professional development.

To prepare for Phase III: clinical/experiential education, Minnesota AHEC sponsored a two-day retreat in August 2010 for nearly 100 representatives from the education, health systems, and government sectors. The group was convened to define the attributes of health professionals in today's and the emerging health environment to inform the AHC schools how to better align their curricula in and across schools to meet the emerging demands. For more information, visit <http://www.ahc.umn.edu/1health>.



John Gilbert, PhD, FCAHS, Canadian Interprofessional Health Collaborative, George Isham, MD, MS, HealthPartners, and Commissioner Sanne Magnan, MD, PhD, Minnesota Department of Health participate in a panel discussion at the 1Health: Collaborating with Partners retreat.

Collaborating to Improve Palliative Care Practice

The MN AHEC Network was successful in securing a three-year \$600,000 grant through the Health Resources and Services Administration of the US Department of Health and Human Services for mnHEALTHnet, a rural health care collaborative that is a program of the Northeast MN AHEC, to launch the Palliative Care Initiative (Pall CI).

The goal of Pall CI is to train, support, recruit and retain primary care and allied health care professionals who have a commitment to providing palliative care. The Staples IPE project's focus on palliative care was the catalyst for the focus of this grant.

Objectives supporting this goal include:

- Strengthening the ability of mnHEALTHnet to facilitate knowledge sharing and educational training, as well as support the recruitment and retention of health professionals in medically underserved areas.
- Supporting disciplinary, interprofessional, community-based education for health professions students in exemplary educational settings in medically underserved areas.



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