

MPH Alumni Newsletter

Summer 2008; Volume 2, Number 2

Public Health Connections from the Last Frontier



Faculty Profile: Nancy A. Nix, MD, MPH&TM, MEd, CHES

We are pleased to welcome Dr. Nancy Nix as a new MPH program faculty member. Dr. Nix has been at UAA since July and will begin teaching classes in the fall semester. She received her MD in 1982 at the Universidad CETEC, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, and her MPH&TM in 1988 at Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, with a focus on tropical medicine and international health. Her postdoctoral work was in immunoparasitology at Vanderbilt University and Meharry Medical College in Nashville, TN. She received an MEd in international teaching at Framingham State College in Framingham, MA (1998) and is a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES).

Dr. Nix became interested in public health while serving as a Peace Corps volunteer environmental sanitation and health promoter in El Salvador in the late 1970s. This experience and her diverse background (her undergraduate work was in geography and anthropology) broadened her public health interest to include global health. She favors a broad, integrated approach to public

health practice that engages people across disciplines to solve health problems. She has worked on various community health projects in Mongolia, Guatemala, Bolivia, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic.



Most recently, Dr. Nix worked as a public health consultant focusing on global maternal and child health issues and served as Associate Peace Corps Director for Health and Environment in Mongolia (2003-2005). She also worked as the Health Education Program Manager at Eielson Air Force Base.

So why would someone interested in tropical medicine and parasitology want to work in Alaska? Dr. Nix came to Alaska because she says there are unique opportunities here that are not found in other areas in the Lower 48.

Dr. Nix likes the cross-cultural aspects of the state and is impressed with the good models of public health practice that have been developed here. Besides, there are parasites and public health concerns with global implications in the circumpolar north.

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Public Health Book Club Meets Again This Fall!

The Public Health Book Club will begin holding monthly meetings again, beginning this fall semester. Potluck meetings are usually hosted at a member's home. Books are suggested by and agreed

upon by members and have some connection to public health. New members are always welcome!

For more information, and to check out the current book possibilities, visit the Public Health Book Club discussion thread on Blackboard under the MPH Home Base. 👍

Visit the MPH web site: <http://health.uaa.alaska.edu/mph/>

Nancy Nix (continued from front page...)

In the fall semester, Dr. Nix will be co-teaching Principles of Epidemiology (HS 626) with Dr. Buchan and Circumpolar Health Issues (HS 624) with Dr. Rhonda Johnson. In Spring 2009, she will teach Public Health Emergencies and Disasters (HS 630) and Environmental and Occupational Health (HS 610). She is also devel-

oping a global health course which will be taught in Summer 2009. An additional global health offering may involve an international study tour; stay tuned for more information.

Besides her various teaching and research interests, Dr. Nix enjoys gardening, walking with her dog, camping, hiking, canoeing, and kayaking. 🍷

Jessica Stevens Scholarship

A memorial scholarship in honor of Physician Assistant Jessica Stevens has been established for UAA MPH students in good academic standing. About \$250 will be awarded in Fall 2008. Criteria for selection include financial need, academic excellence, and commitment to addressing the health concerns of the under-



served. Those interested should submit a brief 1-2 page essay summarizing how your receipt of this award would be consistent with the legacy of Ms. Stevens. The application deadline is October 1.

Jessica Stevens was an inspirational public health leader whose commitment and service improved health care services in the community of Talkeetna over the course of 14 years. Jessica's work extended outside of Alaska; she volunteered in rural Nepal to help build an orphanage. Over the span of her public health service, Jessica was recognized for her achievements with the Alaska Personal Care Attendant "Sockeye Award" for dedication to clinical quality in Alaskan Community Health Centers. She was also the Alaska Rural Health Conference's first recipient of the Philip Nice Award for Excellence in Improving a Community Health System.

To submit an application, or for more details, contact Dr. Rhonda Johnson at 786-6545 or afmj@uaa.alaska.edu. 🍷

Alumni Profile: Gail Schiemann

Gail Schiemann graduated in the Spring of 2005 and was the first MPH student to defend a thesis in our program. At that time, Gail was working for the Rural Alaska Community Action Program as the Wellness Education Coordinator, managing their Early Decisions Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) education/prevention project. In 2006, with her new MPH in hand, she began working for the State of Alaska Tobacco Prevention and Control Program as the Community Prevention Grants Manager. In this capacity, she managed 20 grantees statewide working on tobacco prevention policy initiatives.

Recently, Gail was promoted to Program Manager for the Tobacco Prevention and Con-

trol Program in the Section of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion within the Division of Public Health. She is also an active stakeholder with the National Network on Tobacco Prevention and Poverty.



Gail enjoys spending time with her family and traveling. Over the last year, she traveled throughout the Lower 48 to cheer for her 9 year old daughter, Jocelyn, who was entered in eight Irish Dance competitions. Jocelyn is really happy that her mom is out of graduate school! If anyone would like a hood or gown for their very important commencement day, contact gail.schiemann@alaska.gov.


Coordinator's Corner (continued from back page...)

Thanks to everyone who completed the MPH Alumni Survey this spring and provided feedback. We will submit our self-study this fall for review, with our site visit tentatively scheduled for Spring 2009. This will provide another opportunity for alumni to get involved. Site visitors will want to meet with at least some of our graduates as part of their review process. We will keep you posted on the opportunities available to alumni and others for providing input into the accreditation process.

In October 2008, Dr. Cheryl Easley, our Dean, will begin her term as President of American Public Health Association (APHA)

at our national meeting in San Diego. This is an ideal time to bring public health issues in the north to the attention of a wider audience, and to strengthen our ties to other public health professionals working to "assure the conditions in which people can be healthy."

As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions, and would like to hear about your public health successes and challenges.

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Alumni Profile: Mark Peterson

Mark Peterson received his MPH in December 2007. He is interested in international health, and developed this interest by visiting the developing world to provide health care. He quickly realized that in countries with very limited resources it is far more cost-effective to combine clinical care with a population-based public health approach. Specifically, his thesis project outlined an approach to treating HIV in rural Kenya.

Since graduation, Mark has continued to work as a family physician at SEARHC, the

Alaska Native health corporation in Juneau. He has also continued to provide short term health care in the developing world and plans to return to Honduras again this fall. Mark has two children who have either completed college or are in graduate school, and his youngest daughter will soon finish high school. Once his home nest is empty, Mark plans to start his second career working in the developing world.



Alumni Profile: Tammy Zulz

Tammy Zulz graduated from the MPH program in August 2007. She is one of the founding members of the MPH Alumni Association, and is a member of the Public Health Book Club. She also serves on the admissions committee. Tammy continues to work as a Public Health Analyst at CDC's Arctic Investigations Program in Anchorage.

Tammy's thesis work focused on the circumpolar tuberculosis surveillance project, which continues to mature. One of the goals of this project was to engage the Russian Federation in sharing tuberculosis data with other circumpolar countries; in April, Tammy and

several colleagues spent two days outside Moscow meeting with Russian epidemiologists to further this goal. Tammy co-authored three articles in the January 2008 issue of Emerging Infectious Diseases, which focused on the International Polar Year. She also recently presented her work at international infectious disease conferences in Atlanta and Barcelona. Tammy is currently contemplating further graduate work in public health.

In her spare time, Tammy enjoys cooking, traveling, and having time for all the things she didn't do while in the MPH program.



MPH Alumni Newsletter

Join Us for the MPH Alumni Gathering and Seminar Day in Early December

The second annual MPH Alumni Gathering will take place in early December (tentative date December 4) at the Moose's Tooth Brewpub in Anchorage. Alumni and current students and faculty are welcome to join us for this casual networking social event. Come share your public health triumphs and challenges (and some good pizza and brews!) with people who understand!

This year, the MPH Seminar Day will take place on Friday December 5, following the Health Summit (December 1-4). Stay tuned for more details. If you want to help organize the fun, please contact:

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Tammy Zulz, Vice President, MPH Alumni
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Coordinator's Corner

Happy Autumn! The fireweed is getting high and the snow level is getting lower, so it must be the start of a new fall semester. As noted in our last newsletter, we are pleased to welcome several new faculty to our program.

Dr. Nancy Nix (profiled in this issue) joined us in July as Assistant Professor of Public Health. Dr. Nix brings a wealth of public health experience to her new faculty role. She is a physician and a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV) and staff member who has particular interest in global health, environmental health, community based participatory research, and the unique challenges of frontier/rural practice.

Dr. Gabe Garcia, who spent much of his youth in Anchorage, returned to Alaska after the successful defense of his doctoral dissertation at the UCLA School of Public Health. He brings familiarity with Alaska to his new role as Assistant Professor, as well as expertise on tobacco, health communication, research methods, and interest and experience with the Asian Pacific Islander community.

Dr. Jenny Miller, our third new Assistant Professor, joins us from Michigan. She is an experienced public health nurse with interests in maternal and child health and family systems of care. Dr. Miller completed her doctorate in public health (DrPH) from Tulane University

more than 15 years ago with a focus on Health Services Administration.

Dr. David Driscoll, an anthropologist and epidemiologist, joined UAA in August as the new Director of the Institute for Circumpolar Health Studies; he also has a faculty appointment as Associate Professor of Public Health in our department. We anticipate that Dr. Driscoll will contribute to our research, teaching, and service activities, with a particular emphasis on building our research capacity and reach.

We were recently approved for at least one additional faculty position, so we will once again begin recruiting at this year's APHA conference in San Diego. We have also added a few new affiliate faculty this summer; several have circumpolar health expertise, including two from Canada. Check our UAA MPH website faculty listing for updates:
http://health.uaa.alaska.edu/mph/mph_fac.htm

We expect the new influx of faculty members will expand opportunities for collaborative research and teaching, as well as opportunities for students (and alumni) to become involved in ongoing projects. Our new faculty members also provide us with the resources to begin planning our first Public Health Institute for 2009. Stay tuned for more information as our plans evolve, and let us know if you would like to be involved.

We continue to make progress toward Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) accreditation.

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