



Scholarly Pursuits

NEPHLI

Autumn - Winter
2006 - 2007

Northeast Regional Public Health Leadership Institute

"Today the need for leaders is too great to leave their emergence to chance."

The Future of Public Health, Institute of Medicine - 1988

In Focus

By Dwight Williams, Director

Weeks ago, when I began to write this column for *Scholarly Pursuits*, my theme was to focus on leaders, who through events in their lives and sometimes due to circumstances beyond their control, were able to re-define themselves. My thoughts were directed toward uncompromising individuals who decided to organize various levels of dissatisfaction; create a new and shared vision and develop strategies to overcome resistance to change. I was going to emphasize how in many instances, they were chastised, ridiculed and treated indifferently because of their activism and promotion of social justice.

I am talking about people we have often read about, perhaps cheered and maybe even booed for the stances they took. My list included Muhammad Ali, who refused to accept conditions of the military draft and was later stripped of his heavyweight boxing title. Today, he is the most recognized face in the world and heralded as an iconic leader of the 60's. There is also former President Jimmy Carter, whose administration is often remembered for its role in the Iranian hostage struggle, with the hostages finally being released on the day of the inauguration of his successor, former President Ronald Reagan. As I write, Jimmy Carter is now an international ambassador of human rights and social justice. He is also fondly appreciated for his domestic efforts in providing homes for humanity, notwithstanding one's social class.

My list also would have referenced former President Bill Clinton who faced impeachment and now, in some circles, is considered one of America's most popular leaders. And there is last (but not least), former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani. Prior to 9/11, the former Mayor's life was complicated not only by challenges to his political agenda, but also those related to his personal life and his health. After 9/11, who can forget his exemplary demonstration of crisis leadership when the country needed it most?

<i>Inside this issue:</i>		Undoubtedly, your list may identify others and add to the debate on whether events shape leaders or leaders shape events. Again, this column will not even attempt to delve into those matters.
Poets' Corner	Pg. 2	
New Citizen	Pg. 2	
World's Window	Pg. 3	My intended focus on re-defined leaders changed last month, when I received an e-note from Kevin Sumner, NEPHLI Class of 2005, informing me of the death of Clement R. Ferdinando, Jr. Clem, as some may remember was an inaugural
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NEPHLI Class of 2007 Begins its Journey



Front row, l - r: Jackie McLaughlin, Charlotte Bethoney, Angeles Davila, Jane Hosmer, Smita Pamar, Brenda Kirkwood, Alysia Mihalakos, Christine Chuck, Gretchen Berger-Wabuti, Gretchen Van Wye. Middle: Deb Spicer, Kathy Noonan, Katie Borschle, Candace Young, Sandra Akers, Maureen Spence, Cindy Thomas, Annemarie Beardsworth, Liz Peterson, Ellen Donovan, Richard D'Arrigo. Back row: Donna Arias, Bill Oleksak, Mary Nelson, Waheed Bajwa, Don Perry, Dwight Williams, Eric Rude, Derrick Tallman, Henry Leibovitz, Nkechie Oguagha, Marilyn Kacica, Lani Rafferty.

From July 17th thru 21st, 2006 the Northeast Regional Public Health Leadership Institute (NEPHLI) welcomed its tenth class of new Scholars, who are employees of state and local public health departments and of public-sector hospitals throughout the Northeast. This five-day retreat, held at the Rensselaerville Institute, was the initial step in a year-long learning effort that will strengthen the leadership and organizational skills of the Scholars.

They were instructed by nationally known experts on team building and personal leadership skills, and were given the opportunity to interact and share experiences and ideas with their colleagues in public health from neighboring states. This collaborative program, involving New York and seven partner states, with support from the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, will continue through July, 2007 with additional learning experiences in October at the University of Rhode Island and in March, 2007 at the Rensselaerville Institute. In addition, each Scholar will be working on a team project throughout the year, with the results to be presented at next July's retreat as part of the introductory program for the next class of NEPHLI Scholars.

NEPHLI Class of 2006 Graduate's Farewell

Bridget Ahrens, a member of the NEPHLI Class of 2006, added a light touch to the graduation ceremonies held on Tuesday, July 18, 2006 at the Rensselaerville Institute. As she accepted her diploma along with her classmates, she addressed the gathering with a farewell message. She first noted that she had been considering two options for this occasion: she was "either going to write a poem or do an interpretive dance. You're in luck" she then said. "I decided to go with the poem" Here is Bridget's farewell:

"The outlook is quite sunny
for the NEPHLI grads today.
They've done their senior projects
and will soon be on their way.
They'll go with understanding
and with new skill sets too.
They'll go with about 7 pounds
of extra weight—it's true.

They've seen themselves as leaders
and it's been an awesome sight.
To see the growth of colleagues
thru the MBTI light.
From here they'll move toward futures
full of promise, burning bright.
They'll step right up and change the world.
They've seen the NEPHLI light!"

Bridget concluded with a "Thank you to Dwight, to all the excellent speakers, and all the NEPHLI staff." In turn, we want to say Thank You to Bridget for her numerous contributions to her classmates and the NEPHLI program.

NEPHLI '06 Graduate Becomes U.S. Citizen

Maria Wah-Fitta, Class of 2006, took the Oath of Allegiance during a Citizenship Ceremony in Providence, RI on Monday, June 26. As Maria recently wrote us: "Thus, I became a Citizen of the United States of America, and I have now exercised my right to vote in my first primary election... Can't wait until November!"

For further information on the great strides made in recent months by Maria and other NEPHLI Alumni, check out the "Alumni & Scholars On the Move" section on pages 3 and 4 of this issue.

Another Gem From The Poets' Corner

Henry Leibovitz, Ph.D. of the Rhode Island Department of Health, a member of the NEPHLI Class of 2007, has responded to the poetic challenge presented by Bridget Ahrens. As the week's activities were drawing to a close on Friday, July 21st, Henry submitted the following poem along with the Evaluation forms for that day's presenters:

Not Just Another Evaluation

Public Health Leaders we strive to be.
Leadership skills are the tools we need.
Do we have the Right Stuff?
That is the question.
Undoubtedly we must have some affection.
If not we'd be moving another direction.
We've learned Trust is one key
to leading with success.
And Vision is the key to being
better than the rest.
We learned not to make assumptions
and not to stereotype.
A powerful concept is "Character Type".
Thanks MBTI for turning on that light.
How do we get there?
NEPHLI has pointed the way.
Be passionate. Communicate.
Ask questions. Be bold.
Listen to all the answers,
and all that you are told.
As the fog is lifting
from our scholarly minds,
We'll see our projects emerge
somewhere down the line.
And one year from now
the Vision we'll be seeing
Is this NEPHLI experience
has given our lives new meaning.

Thank you, Henry. Now that you have done the poem, does that mean we should expect an interpretive dance next July at your graduation?

An Update on World's Window, Inc.

Denise Stasik, Class of '02

On November 8, seven volunteers from New York and one from Illinois will be traveling to Chikandakubi Village, Zimbabwe on a humanitarian aid trip for World's Window, Inc. World's Window is a nonprofit organization reaching out to those most in need. Our team will be meeting with the local Ministry of Health to discuss the ongoing project of providing malaria netting to all pregnant women, and also a new proposal to test the villagers for malaria. This last project is a collaborative effort with the Laboratory of Fungal and Parasitic Disease at the New York State Department of Health. Once sample collection and analysis are complete, data will be collated for use in assisting the village with appropriate medical treatment, and for use in support of grant applications to expand World's Window's ability to sustain the local medical clinic. The project will also support the overall long-range goal to assess the extent of human parasitic infection in Chikandakubi residents, in order to develop strategies for delivering appropriate treatment of these infections. Other research will focus on well water, sanitation practices, AIDS education, etc. These efforts are directed to creating a self-sustaining environment in the village. World's Window has partnered with more than 5 New York State public schools, creating programs in which the children in US schools directly support efforts to improve the lives of children in Zimbabwe. This year, one middle school raised enough money to initiate the animal breeding program, providing the village with pigs, cows, goats, and rabbits, which are now a source of milk and an income (selling the offspring) for the villagers. The men's workshop and women's empowerment groups will be a focus of this trip, supplying materials and instruction to the adults who are creating beautiful wood, knitted, woven, and crocheted items that can be sold in the city, bringing sorely needed food to the family table. Additional Moringa trees – the tree of life – will be planted to continue the ongoing natural supply of vitamins and minerals. And we will treat as many people as possible each day at our small medical clinic

During an earlier trip to Zimbabwe in February 2006, the school-aged children were asked three questions as part of a poetry exchange with a New York State school. One 13 year old boy answered this: What is your family like? "I have none" (like so many young children, he is an orphan). What is your favorite thing to do? "Sit long and think hard." If you had one wish, what would it be? "To die nicely." This young boy had witnessed the very difficult deaths of his entire family, and he thought a great deal about that. So much, that his one big life wish is to "die nicely." His simple honest answers, and the starkness of his world are an example of what motivates World's Window to bring relief efforts to this village, working within the culture, and with the permission of the village elders and Ministry of Health.

If anyone wants to learn more about our work, you can contact me at dstasik@nycap.rr.com, or visit our website at www.worlds-window.org. Dwight Williams has asked me to share more about our findings after we return from our November trip, so look for an update in the next *Scholarly Pursuits*. Public health leadership, which is the heart of NEPHLI, is at work in these projects.

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Alumni & Scholars On the Move

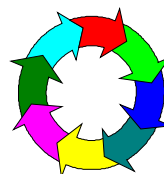
'98 Margaret Rivello reports: I was promoted late last year - I now have the title Public Health Administrator (still with the Chester County, PA Health Department) and am responsible for the environmental and administrative components of our Department. Also, I'm serving as Team Leader for a chronic disease prevention initiative - Activate Chester County. It's a spin-off from the YMCA of the USA's initiative - Activate America. Our local motto is "Move more. Eat Smart. Create supportive communities." It's the typical public health program where we're encouraging people to exercise more and eat appropriately. Plus, we're working with communities, businesses, and schools to create environments where people can exercise safely and easily and make easy/smart nutritional choices.

'00 Paul Meissner, MSPH, Director of Program Development, Montefiore Medical Center, Department of Family and Social Medicine, has been elected President-elect of the Public Health Association of New York City (PHANYC). His term begins January 2008. He would like to encourage all New York City NEPHLI graduates to join PHANYC and participate in PHANYC events. See www.phanyc.org for more information.

'00 Chuck Vukotich is now a Senior Project Manager and an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the Center for Public Health Practice, Graduate School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh. Chuck is the manager of a project to assist Northampton County, PA to develop a county health department. He is also currently teaching "Managing in the Real World of Public Health" and a medical school rotation in public health, and developing publications, reports and teaching modules based on a Hepatitis A outbreak in 2003.

'03 Barbara J. Mancill reports: In addition to my work with the Chester County, PA Health Dept., I have been teaching research methods to political science majors at West Chester University for the past year and a half. I also accompanied a group of WCU faculty and honor students to South Africa, both in 2004 and 2006, to conduct qualitative research on households affected by AIDS. The first study focused on grandmothers who are raising their orphaned grandchildren and the second on adolescent head-of-households (due to parental death caused by AIDS). It's been an amazing experience!

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Stay Connected to NEPHLI

Alumni & Scholars On the Move

(continued from Page 3)

'03 **Ana P. Novais, MA**, was promoted in March '06 to Associate Director of Health, in charge of a newly created Division of Community Health and Equity in the Rhode Island Department of Health. This large division includes Chronic Care and Disease Management Programs, the HIV/AIDS Office, Health Promotion/Risk Reduction and Wellness Programs, and the Access to Care, Health Disparities, and Refugee Health Programs.

'03 **Vera Walline** reports: "This has been a busy summer for us here at the Northeast PA Area Health Education Center. Our previous executive director, Pat Lawless, (also a NEPHLI scholar) left the organization for a new position as director of Mercy Hospice and, after a short period as acting director, I was hired as the executive director of the AHEC. Through this process, I've been very happy to draw on books such as *The Leadership Challenge* and ideas we discussed in NEPHLI training. Although these changes slowed our research progress, we continue to work on phase two of the Rural Physician Survey, our ongoing effort to better understand the needs and perspective of the physicians who serve our 7 rural counties. At this stage we are crunching numbers from the second survey, and expect to have interesting information to share soon. This second phase is being carried out via a partnership with Rhonda Waskiewicz, associate dean of the Panuska College of Professional Studies, University of Scranton, and students there."

'05 **Maria-Luisa Vallejo, MA, M.Ed., MPH**, is a Senior Public Health Promotion Specialist with the Rhode Island DOH. Maria reports: "The Institute provided me with an opportunity for growth in many aspects of leadership. When we ended our one year of meetings and the final project, I had a great feeling of accomplishment. No promotions in sight. Nonetheless, and after many months of negotiations, I was transferred to the Office of Minority Health. As part of my responsibilities, I work with the immigrant and refugee populations in Rhode Island." In April, Maria completed a "Literacy Book for Refugees" and a "Providers' Manual."

'06 **Maria Wah-Fitta** reports: "During my NEPHLI experience (in December, 2005) I was appointed Public Information Officer by the Director of Health (Dr. David Gifford). In my new role I am part of the Executive Committee for the Rhode Island Department of Health, and I meet directly with Dr. Gifford on a daily basis. It is a fascinating process to see how the strategic planning for the Department is crafted, as well as the enormous amount of effort that it takes to effect real cultural change in an institution like the Rhode Island Department of Health."

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NEPHLI Scholar, Class of 1998. Not only do I fondly remember this Class, which started the NEPHLI Experience without the benefits of an established history, but began solely on the thirst of the Scholars to expand their boundaries to become better leaders and their belief in the organization's vision (and perhaps a fairy tale to some at that time). Thirty-two individuals from our partner states committed themselves to a year-long experiment and continue to support NEPHLI as recruiters, leaders and advocates.

But there was something special about Clem. At that time, he was the Health Officer for the Randolph Township Health Department in New Jersey. He had earned an M.P.H. from Rutgers University and had been practicing public health for more than 24 years. Already in a leadership position, he nonetheless decided to give NEPHLI a try. After completing his NEPHLI Experience, he became an active recruiter, directing others from New Jersey to the program. Later, as a member of the Advisory Committee, Clem continued to promote leadership development. As a Past-President of the New Jersey Health Officers' Association and other organizations, Clem continued to promote NEPHLI.

He was thoughtful in suggesting ways to sustain and increase the visibility of NEPHLI – always seeking opportunities for decision-makers in New Jersey to recognize the importance of leadership development. When we started the Advanced Leadership Institute, Clem was there to "sharpen the saw." He rarely missed our conference calls for NEPHLI Advisory Committee meetings. However, he did miss the last call – and for very understandable reasons. His health was failing.

I will miss Clem - and so will NEPHLI.

Wishing all of you the very best in the New Year.



Clem Ferdinando, Class of 1998, (center), accepting his NEPHLI Certificate of Completion from Barbara DeBuono, former NYS Commissioner of Health and currently, Senior Medical Advisor for Public Health and Policy Group, Pfizer Corporation (left), and Dwight C. Williams, Director, NEPHLI.

On December 21, 2006, the University at Albany School of Public Health sponsored a Satellite Broadcast and Community Forum on: [AIDS: 25 YEARS LATER - FROM EPIDEMIC TO PANDEMIC](#)

Featured speakers included Doug Fish, M.D., Medical Director, AIDS Treatment Program at Albany Medical Center Hospital, and Frank Oldham, Executive Director, National Association of Persons Living With AIDS. The live broadcast of their one-hour discussion was viewed by hundreds of interested persons via the University's satellite network. Over 120 individuals also participated in the local Community Forum held at the School of Public Health Auditorium.

Member of the NEPHLI Class of 2007 Expands Youth Risk Behavior Survey to Include R.I. Middle School Students

Donald K. Perry, M.P.A., School-Based Health Surveys Manager for the Center for Health Data and Analysis in the Rhode Island Department of Health, and a member of the NEPHLI Class of 2007, has recently announced plans to administer the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) to middle school students in 2007. This marks the first time that middle school students will participate in the survey since Rhode Island began administering the YRBS to high school students in 1995. The expansion of the survey to include middle schools was made possible through a collaborative leadership effort involving planning and financial support from the Division of Family Health and the Division of Community Health and Equity in the RI Department of Health, the RI Department of Education, the RI Department of Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals, and the state Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

This planning process also serves as a prime example of effective team building and further demonstrates the positive impact of a shared leadership vision. The achievement is even more notable considering that there is little ongoing funding for the youth survey effort in Rhode Island. In a period that has seen severe budget cut backs and constraints within the federal and state governments, the coalition of public agencies was able to mobilize sufficient resources, not only to maintain the high school YRBS in 2007, but also to assure this expansion of the survey to the middle school level.

NEPHLI Scholar Project Presented at Brown University

Maria-Luisa Vallejo, MA, M.Ed., MPH, Class of 2005

Our NEPHLI Scholar Project "Listening to Improve Public Health" (Project LIPH) offered an insight into the pluses and minuses of the knowledge Latinos and African Americans have regarding public health. The project was innovative and well received. There have been only two similar studies nation-wide, published in 1998 and 1999. Since the two other studies were geared toward the general population and conducted through telephone interviews, our study continues to be the only such study conducted face-to-face with Latino and African American populations in New York and Rhode Island.

The project was accepted and was presented in a poster session at a Brown University (Brown Medical School) Public Health Program Research Day in April of this year. Contributors to the Project included Maria-Luisa Vallejo, Rhode Island DOH, Tamara E. James, NYSDOH, and Habibetu Allanah, of the Nassau County DOH in Mineola, NY. The three NEPHLI Scholars were advised on the Project by JoAnn Lindenmayer, MPH, DVM, an epidemiologist formerly with the R.I. DOH and now at Tufts University.

For information: Marialuisa.Vallejo@health.ri.gov

2006 NEPHLI Scholar Recognized by the American Cancer Society

William Clark, Class of 2006, Vermont Department of Health, reports: My NEPHLI classmate, John Olson (class of 2006) was the recent recipient of an award from the American Cancer Society. The following story is from the Sept. 29, 2006 issue of the Vermont DOH *VOICE*:

John Olson, our Comprehensive Cancer Control program coordinator, has received the American Cancer Society Volunteer Leadership Award. John's invaluable contributions and leadership are nicely summed up in the ACS statement of nomination: "John Olson has created and nurtured the statewide cancer coalition, Vermonters Taking Action against Cancer. This initiative has created new partnerships and a place where collaborations can take place that haven't happened before. In particular he has shown commitment to cancer patients and survivors. He has really listened to people who have recently experienced or are currently experiencing the ordeal of living with cancer. John attends more of the Relay for Life events than anyone but our Vice President for Development, I believe. And he uses this as an opportunity to connect with cancer survivors. He shows a real dedication to improving the lives of people who are battling cancer and their families. Under his leadership, a new cancer survivor network has been established that is a new set of resources for people with cancer."

Congratulations John! VDH is fortunate to have public health leaders such as you making a difference for the people of Vermont.

NEPHLI is also proud of John Olson's accomplishments, and grateful to Bill Clark of VDH and the VDH *VOICE* for this opportunity to pass along such good news!

Here's the Bad News: Where Germs *Really* Thrive

Excerpted from *Smart Moves* (Fall 2006)- a quarterly Newsletter published for Members of Capital District Physicians' Health Plan (HMO) Albany, NY

Quick Quiz: Which surface holds more germs, the top of your desk or the toilet seat? Yes, you know where this is going: A typical desktop carries 400 times more bacteria than the average toilet seat, say researchers from the University of Arizona.

The common infections that plague us this time of year - colds, flu, diarrhea - are often transmitted by the surfaces you touch every day, but not the ones you think. Microbiologists found that door handles, even inside public restrooms, contain far fewer germs than a computer keyboard. Like keyboards and computer mice, telephones are often havens for bacteria, especially if they are shared. Bathroom sinks are high-germ areas, too. Clean laundry can contain loads of bacteria if it wasn't washed in hot water. Viruses can often survive even the dryer cycle.

Researchers suggest cleaning the phone, computer keyboard, and top of your desk regularly with a disinfectant wipe. And of course, don't forget to wash your hands.

Editorial: The Disaster that Could Have Been

By Richard D'Arrigo, NEPHLI Program Volunteer

We recently observed the fifth anniversary of the attacks on September 11th. Among the many documentaries that were presented by various media, one that stood out was a 64-page insert in the New York Daily News on Sunday, Sept. 10th. Filled with "then" and "now" photographs, it updated the story, in a compelling way, not only of the attacks, but also of the heroism of those who responded unselfishly to get as many victims as possible out of the burning towers, and of those who worked to rescue victims trapped in the rubble after the buildings collapsed.

Interestingly, the insert ended with a full-page ad placed by the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, representing the members of the New York City Police Department. It's theme was: "Lest We Forget?", and it reminded us of the sacrifice made by the 348 firefighters and dozens of police officers and Port Authority security personnel who gave their lives to save others on that day. It then asked the reader to consider why the surviving first responders were now being denied medical coverage and disability benefits for respiratory ailments many of them incurred while working to rescue survivors and to recover remains of their fallen comrades. The ad ended with: "Five years later, the death toll from 9/11 continues to rise. We need the federal, state and city governments to recognize that appalling fact and do something about it. Lest we forget? Or have we already forgotten?"

The implications of such a lapse on the part of elected officials need to be considered by all of us who are working to enhance public preparedness for the next disaster that may befall an American city. How much worse will such a disaster be if first responders hesitate to respond at all, worried about the impact of their actions on their own health as well as on the future of their own families?

Disastrous as 9/11 was, how much worse would it have been if the FDNY and NYPD and Port Authority Police had not run to rescue others, heedless of the danger they were placing themselves in? Instead of inspiring an entire nation by their heroism, would they have instead left us all with a feeling of disgust at the pervasive selfishness of "public servants" who refused to serve the public in its greatest moment of need? Don't think it couldn't happen. Over 100 New Orleans municipal buses were abandoned in the parts of the city that eventually flooded, instead of being used to evacuate those without access to autos.

Performance Management DVD Released

Marie D. Miller, Office of Local Health Services,

NYSDOH, NEPHLI Class of 2002

Through the month of September, video conferences were held with local health departments to premiere the DVD entitled, "Understanding the Turning Point Model."

This was a DVD produced by Robert Wood Johnson's Turning Point Performance Management Collaborative. The DVD features Paul Halverson, DrPH, MHSA, known to many as the past Director of CDC's Division of Public Health Systems Development and Research in the Public Health Practice Program Office, and the current Health Officer for Arkansas.

Dr. Halverson reviews the four elements of the Performance Management Model and the tools developed by the Collaborative to assist local health departments and others interested in employing a management approach to performance that utilizes standards, measures, reporting, and quality improvement strategies.

A mailing of the four documents developed by the Collaborative and the DVD was sent mid September to local health departments to assist them in learning about performance management and training their staff. The documents and the DVD are available for purchase at the Public Health Foundation's Web site: www.phf.org.

Schedule of Class of 2007 Retreats

March 28-30, 2007 Rensselaerville, NY
(Note: This date was reported incorrectly in the last edition of *Scholarly Pursuits*.)

Graduation: Class of 2007: July 16-17, 2007 at Rensselaerville Institute

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Scholarly Pursuits is a publication by and for the Scholars and alumni in the Northeast Regional Public Health Leadership Institute.

Richard D'Arrigo, Editor