

F A L L 2 0 1 5 N E W S L E T T E R

Virginia Tech Center for Public Health Practice and Research



Virginia Tech
Center for Public Health
Practice and Research

What we do, who we are, who we serve

The **Center for Public Health Practice and Research** (CPHPR) at Virginia Tech engages interdisciplinary faculty, staff and students at Virginia Tech and community organizations to enhance public health practice and research in the region. The Center is housed in the Department of Population Health Sciences, Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine.

The Center supports community-based projects by collaborating with community partners to compete for and secure funding, as well as providing public health content and service expertise such as research studies, external evaluations, needs assessments and document writing.

Through the Public Health Network, the Center partners with faculty, staff and students at Virginia Tech. The Center collaborates with university partners on grant writing, study design, implementation and evaluation and offers technical public health expertise.

The overarching goal for the Center is to enhance public health practice and research, particularly in Southwest and Southside Virginia, Central Appalachia and across the region.

Workforce Development:

The center has distributed a workforce development needs assessment and analyzed the results. We are working to better serve your public health continuing education needs by creating new professional development opportunities. Check our website for upcoming events.

www.cphpr.mph.vetmed.vt.edu

It's Official! The New River Academic Health Department

In May 2015, the official New River Health Department was created. Virginia Tech President Timothy D. Sands and Virginia Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Marissa Levine signed a memorandum of agreement to establish the New River Academic Health Department. Both agencies will collaborate and share resources, including student and faculty collaborative research projects. The agreement will encourage interaction, collaboration, and coordination of projects between the two. "We have already taken the first step with our Master of Public Health students who have completed their practicum with the New River Health District and our faculty members who are working together on research and outreach projects, but now we will be taking another step to expand these efforts," said Dr. François Elvinger, head of the Department of Population Health Sciences, which administers the Public Health Program.



From left to right are Dr. Cyril Clarke, veterinary college dean; Virginia Tech President Timothy D. Sands; Dr. Molly O'Dell, director of NRDH; Dr. Marissa Levine, Virginia commissioner of health; and Dr. François Elvinger, head of the Department of Population Health Sciences.

CPHPR Recently Completed Projects

Youth Risk Behavior Survey Analysis & Reporting

CPHPR implemented, analyzed and wrote YRBS reports for three schools this summer. The YRBS survey records the frequency and prevalence of alcohol, tobacco and other drug usage activities, exercise and dietary behaviors, violence-related activities, sexual behaviors, and a variety of other health and safety related activities among middle and high school students. YRBS survey services are available throughout Virginia.

Montgomery County, Virginia SPF-SIG

Through SAMHSA-funded Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) State Incentive Grant (SIG) Program CPHPR partnered with New River Valley Community Services to assess drunk driving tendencies among young adults in Montgomery County. Data were collected through a series of focus groups, community forums, and quantitative data analysis.

Chronic Disease Self Management Evaluation

The New River Health District (NRHD) and the New River Valley Agency on Aging are jointly offering the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) to residents of the New River Valley. CPHPR conducted an outcome evaluation of the CDSMP workshops to analyze effectiveness of the workshops and to assist NRHD with designing a sustainable program model.

Family Wellness Initiative Martinsville

CPHPR conducted the evaluation of the Strengthening Families program in Martinsville. Strengthening Families is an evidence based parenting program delivered by the Piedmont Community Services Board.

RAYSAC evaluation

CPHPR analyzed ten years' worth of Roanoke Area Youth Substance Abuse Coalition (RAYSAC) data and developed a comprehensive report, presentation and brochure summarizing all evaluation data.



The Center is excited to have Kristen Vacca, a first year MPH student, join us as a graduate assistant this year. She will assist in several of our projects and will be remodeling the center's website. Kristen graduated from Southern Connecticut State Univ.

with a bachelor's degree in public health.

Public Health Project Coordinator

Farewell to Shantal, Welcome to Hannah Menefee

We are extremely sad to say goodbye to Shantal Hover who has served as project coordinator the past 15 months. Shantal has been accepted into the very competitive CDC Public Health Associates Program and is headed to California. We are so proud of her but will miss her and her dedication! Best of luck to her!

On October 5, Hannah Menefee will be starting as our new project coordinator. Hannah graduated in May 2015 from the University of Virginia with an MPH in Research in Practice. Hannah will spend most of her time with the Center focusing on workforce development activities. Welcome Hannah!





CPHPR Current Projects

Obesity Prevention: Town of Christiansburg

The New River Health District, in collaboration with the Town of Christiansburg, the Planning District Commission, PATH/Healthy Citizens, and CPHPR, has received an obesity prevention grant to address obesity in the New River Valley. The work is addressing the identified need to enhance infrastructure to allow Christiansburg residents more access to safe walking and biking routes. The grant also facilitates the re-establishment of Healthy Citizens, a community coalition working to address all aspects of obesity and health in the New River Valley. CPHPR is conducting the evaluation.

Community Recovery Program- Piedmont Community Services Board

CPHPR is conducting the evaluation of the Community Recovery Program. The primary focus of this program, run by Piedmont Community Services, is helping individuals who have achieved at least 3-6 months of sobriety to continue their path of recovery by offering assistance in the areas of education, employment, sobriety, and more.

Family Wellness Initiative- New River Valley Community Services Board

CPHPR is evaluating the Strengthening Families program in the New River Valley. Strengthening Families in an evidence based parenting program delivered by the New River Valley Community Services Board.

CDC PPHF: West Piedmont Health District

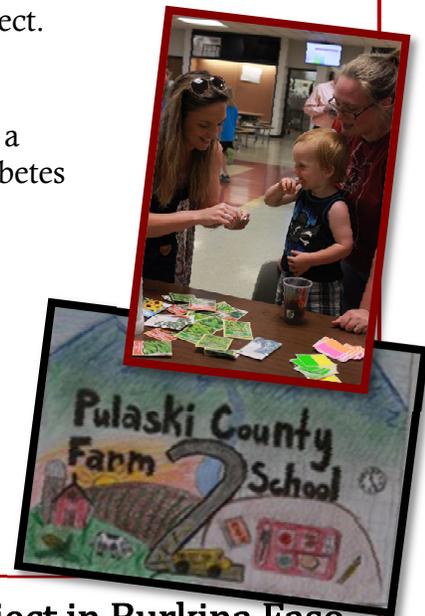
The Center for Disease Control and Prevention is funding the Virginia Department of Health to implement the *PPHF: State and Local Public Health Actions to Prevent Obesity, Diabetes, and Heart Disease and Stroke* in West Piedmont Health District and four others in Virginia. CPHPR has been contracted to conduct the evaluation of the West Piedmont Health District project.

Balanced Living with Diabetes: Cooperative Extension

CPHPR has partnered with Virginia Tech's Cooperative Extension program on a USDA funded project to implement and evaluate the Balanced Living with Diabetes program throughout rural low income counties in Virginia.

Pulaski County Farm to School

The Pulaski County School Nutrition Team, with assistance from the New River Health district was awarded a Farm to School planning grant. This grant facilitates the initiation of Farm to School activities in Pulaski county schools. Pulaski County Farm to School works to connect schools with local farms in order to serve healthier food options, support community health and nutrition, and provide agriculture and nutrition education opportunities. CPHPR works as an academic partner and is conducting the evaluation of the project.



Interdisciplinary water research project in Burkina Faso



Sophie Wenzel, Assistant Director of CPHPR, traveled to Burkina Faso as part of an interdisciplinary research team focused on visualizing water services for decision making. Sophie offered public health and community participatory research expertise and French interpretation. The project was funded by ISCE.

Combining Engineering and Public Health in Practice: *A Student's Perspective*



Introduction: Ashley Taylor is a graduate student in the MPH program and mechanical engineering department. Her graduate research is on improving access to medical devices in low resource environments. She has also worked on improving the quality of care for patients with neonatal abstinence syndrome. Her research interests include maternal and child health, global health, and substance abuse prevention.

What are you currently working on with the Center? I'm currently working with the Center on a project for the Roanoke Area Youth Substance Abuse Coalition (RAYSAC), a community-based group that promotes substance abuse prevention in the Roanoke Valley and Southwest Virginia. I'm assisting the Center with analyzing and reporting on RAYSAC program data from a Drug Free Communities (DFC) grant, funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. I also just joined the Tazewell County Cancer Assessment project with the Center, which I am really excited about.

Can you tell us about your experience working at the intersection of public health and engineering? I am an avid believer in the power of collaborating across disciplines! I first became interested in public health through several field research experiences in Malawi, Africa. My team was working on reducing infant mortality through designing more robust, sustainable resuscitation

equipment. While in Malawi, I realized that while my team understood the technical specifications needed to solve the problem, we were missing the bigger picture. We needed to understand how to work at the community level to foster real change. Learning from the expertise of the MPH faculty has given me a new perspective on how to contribute to problem solving. Upon return this year I was able to apply public health knowledge about working with communities to identify needs and promote health. As a result, our trip was much more successful!

What is the most valuable thing that you learned while working at CPHPR? My experience working with CPHPR has emphasized the strength of communities and the necessity of working at the community level to foster positive change. My research has been focused internationally, but my work at the Center has allowed me to work closely with communities in Appalachia, my home and a place very near to my heart. I have been inspired by the amazing work happening in our local communities, and I believe that the CPHPR provides the knowledge and resources to help community-based efforts be even more effective.



Sophie Wenzel,
MPH
Assistant Director,
CPHPR

Letter from the Director & Assistant Director:

It's been another great year at the Center. We have expanded our reach throughout the region and the State, and even participated in an International research project. Our partnership with the New River Health District continues to grow strong thanks to the support of our new Academic Health Department. We continue to partner with organizations around the region to write grants and conduct evaluations and enjoy the opportunity to travel throughout the state meeting partners. We have worked with some very dedicated students- Ashley's experience is highlighted above.

If you'd like to work with us, or would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact us, we'd love to hear from you.



Kathy Hosig,
PhD, MPH, RD
Director,
CPHPR

A special thanks to Virginia Tech's Institute for Society, Culture and Environment (ISCE) for continued support!

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