Commitment to Community
Improving the health of Iowans through collaborative partnerships.
WHEN IT COMES TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS, every community has its strengths and needs—and nobody knows what those local resources and challenges are better than the people who live and work there. As part of the College of Public Health’s commitment to community engagement, our faculty, staff, and students frequently visit towns and cities throughout the state to share information, learn about local needs, and establish collaborative partnerships that build on existing strengths to address health concerns.

In this issue of InSight, we take a closer look at several of these partnerships, including a community-based research project focused on physical activity in Ottumwa. The college has also established the Business Leadership Network, an initiative that engages Iowa businesses and communities with our college for collaborative opportunities in education, service, and research.

We also introduce Brandi Janssen, the new director of Iowa’s Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (I-CASH), which is collaboratively run by the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, Iowa Department of Public Health, and Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

Another unique partnership is the new cooperative degree program developed by the College of Public Health and Grinnell College. This program enables Grinnell students from any major to earn both a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master of Public Health degree in just five years, instead of the usual six.

The college is also home to a new Iowa Institute of Public Health Research and Policy that will bring together researchers, public health practitioners, community leaders, private partners, and policy makers to expand the scope, scale, and impact of public health research at the University of Iowa.

Partnering with local residents, community leaders, schools, and businesses is the foundation for our excellence—our students gain hands-on experience outside the classroom, communities gain information about ways to improve living and working conditions for residents and employees, and other communities and populations benefit from our research findings.

It’s an exciting time to be in public health, and I’m grateful for all the support and energy our alumni and friends provide as the college continues to grow.

Warm regards,

FROM THE DEAN
Connecting with the Latino Community
Several projects are focusing on improving the health of Ottumwa’s growing Latino population.

The Business of Better Health
The Business Leadership Network engages the college with Iowa communities to share ideas and best practices for health and wellness.

Cultivating a Culture of Safety
I-CASH director Brandi Janssen, who has a background in both agriculture and anthropology, discusses the center’s statewide partnerships to make farming safer.

15 HAPPENINGS
News and research findings.

20 IN MEMORIAM
Kathryn Chaloner, Professor and Head of Biostatistics

21 CLASS NOTES
Alumni news and notes.

22 GIVING
Honor Roll of Contributors

24 GALLERY:
ORANGUTANS, RAINFORESTS, AND RESEARCH
DVM/MPH student Brandon Woods writes about research he conducted in Borneo as part of a summer internship.

26 SPARK:
A PASSION FOR PUBLIC HEALTH
2014 Hansen Award recipient William Foege shared insights from his career in global health while visiting the college.

On the cover: Ottumwa residents enjoy the area’s extensive parks and trail system.
Photo: Tom Langdon
The survey, conducted in 2012-2013 by the research center with more than 1,000 Ottumwa residents, showed that 35.8 percent of respondents reported being obese, compared to 29 percent of Iowans in general. One-third (36 percent) of respondents said they participated in the CDC’s recommended amount of weekly physical activity, compared to 43.9 percent of Iowans. Respondents living at or under median income level were less likely to have met the physical activity guidelines (25 percent) compared with respondents living above (50 percent). Mental health also arose as an issue, which Parker notes is entwined with physical health.

Evidence-based physical activity interventions have been tested in inner-cities and suburban areas, but Parker points out similar efforts in rural communities have been scant. “While we’re focusing on Ottumwa, we feel what we do can be disseminated and serve a larger regional focus,” she says.

Desiree Johnson, president and CEO of the United Way of Wapello County and a member of the Community Advisory Board, says she appreciates the center’s work.

“We are very honored to have the Prevention Research Center staff here,” she says, adding that the center has opened an office on Ottumwa’s Main Street, another sign of its commitment to the community.

By Cindy Hadish

Changing physical activity habits on an individual level can be challenging enough, but the University of Iowa Prevention Research Center (PRC) seeks to go beyond the individual level by improving the health of an entire community.

Ottumwa was chosen by the center for a special community-based research project focused on physical activity. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes that regular physical activity can help reduce the risk for chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. The research project will inform community innovations to enhance the health of Iowans and residents of rural towns elsewhere.

“We considered several communities,” says Edith Parker, principal investigator and director of the PRC, which is based in the UI College of Public Health and funded by the CDC. “We realized we wanted to go where there was a need but also strengths to build upon, and Ottumwa had both.”

With nearly 25,000 residents, Ottumwa, the county seat of Wapello County in southeastern Iowa, was selected because of its health needs, as well as “their willingness to work with us,” says Parker, who also heads the college’s Department of Community and Behavioral Health. A Community Advisory Board was established to collaborate on identifying concerns, developing a community survey, and partnering with the center on other initiatives.

Survey Results

The survey, conducted in 2012-2013 by the research center with more than 1,000 Ottumwa residents, showed that 35.8 percent of respondents reported being obese, compared to 29 percent of Iowans in general. One-third (36 percent) of respondents said they participated in the CDC’s recommended amount of weekly physical activity, compared to 43.9 percent of Iowans.

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ACTIVE OTTUMWA

Johnson says the goal is to see Wapello County, currently in the lowest quartile of Iowa in measurements of health, move up to the next quartile in the next 15 years. To meet that goal and as part of the project’s next phase, called Active Ottumwa, residents will work toward becoming active for at least 150 minutes per week, she says.

Some of that activity will take place on the county’s extensive parks and trail system. The project does not provide funding for “bricks and mortar” infrastructure, but works to train lay leaders in evidence-based health practices, says Barbara Baquero, co-principal investigator and deputy director of the PRC.

“That’s the biggest thing we’re going to build,” explains Baquero, who directs the Active Ottumwa research project, “advocates for health in their own community.”

Baquero says at least 20 UI faculty, staff, and students have been involved in the project so far, with that number expected to grow.

“The community engagement approach is not new,” Baquero says. “But how we’re putting it together has never been done before.”

“That’s the biggest thing we are going to build—advocates for health in their own community.”
Some of the issues—limited access to healthy foods, mental health issues such as depression, drug abuse, and domestic violence—are due to the lack of services available and because of the ways people cope with stress, she says.

The project will work on preventing those problems for the long-term and will create evidence-based protocols that can be replicated in other Iowa communities, as well as the Midwest, Baquero says, “So this is not just a one-time thing.”

The study also will follow residents over time to assess the community-wide impact of the program. “Our commitment to Ottumwa is long-term,” Parker says. “We want to establish a lasting relationship. That’s our promise.”

“Our commitment to Ottumwa is long-term,” Parker says. “We want to establish a lasting relationship. That’s our promise.”
Can you describe your role with the Ottumwa project and some of the activities you’re involved with?

ERIN: I’ve had a few different roles with the project over two years. A main principle of community-based participatory research (CBPR) is that it’s important to share research results with the community of interest, so my first role was to assist in the development of our dissemination plan. I developed the template for our final report booklet, which was used to explain the survey results in great detail but also in a community-friendly manner. Additionally, I created PowerPoints that were used in community presentations.

We’re now in the planning and development phases of our intervention, Active Ottumwa, and my current role is to identify evidence-based strategies to increase physical activity that we can use in the intervention. I’m developing an intervention manual that describes each of the identified activities and explains how each should be implemented. I’ve also written literature reviews, assisted in manuscript development, and created research posters for events.

CHRISTINE: I help to coordinate and facilitate meetings to discuss the project and plan for next steps. These meetings are led by Dr. Barbara Baquero and are attended by staff, other research assistants, and student volunteers. I’ve also been working with these student volunteers to guide and assist them with the activities that they’re involved in. I’ll continue to work with both Dr. Baquero and Dr. Sato Ashida to determine how and where to recruit lay health advisors—persons in the Ottumwa community who will be responsible for carrying out the activities that seek to improve levels of physical activity. I’m also involved in developing a training curriculum that will be used to train lay health advisors once they’re recruited. Once the curriculum is complete, I’ll be involved in the training.

What does a hands-on experience like working in Ottumwa offer to you as a student?

ERIN: Mainly, this experience has given me the opportunity to see what a true CBPR project looks like out in the community. In my classes I read articles about this research approach often; however, this project gives me a firsthand look at the successes and challenges that come along with developing research in collaboration with community members. This project also helped me improve my writing, presentation, and communication skills and has bolstered my confidence in my ability to apply a CBPR approach in my future work.

CHRISTINE: Active Ottumwa is providing me with a great opportunity to see the health promotion intervention process in its entirety. Because I’m coming in at the beginning, I’ll gain experience in how to develop, implement, and evaluate a health intervention. At the same time, because I’m involved with coordinating meetings and student volunteers, and will eventually be involved in training the lay health advisors, I’m building my communication and leadership skills. Lastly, as someone who plans on doing community-engaged research in the future, working on this project provides me with a hands-on learning experience in how to build, develop, and maintain community partnerships.

What do you hope to do after graduation?

ERIN: I plan to pursue my PhD in the area of community and behavioral health. Throughout my doctoral studies I hope to further refine my purpose within the field of public health and conduct research on food injustice and/or social injustice.

CHRISTINE: I’d like to develop and evaluate worksite health promotion interventions, paying special attention to worksites that would normally lack the resources to carry out such an intervention, and/or worksites that employ a large proportion of socially disadvantaged (e.g., low-income) employees. In doing so, I hope to reduce the health disparities that exist between these and other employee groups. I also hope to develop workplace policies that will assist in reducing the population’s smoking rates.
part of the Prevention Research Center’s project focuses on Ottumwa’s Latino population, which has grown from just 200 residents in 1980 to represent nearly 12 percent of the town today. Himar Hernández, a member of the Ottumwa Community Advisory Board, says some of that increase is from Cargill’s recruitment of workers for its meat processing plant in Ottumwa. More than 30 nationalities are represented at the plant.

New immigrants, from places like Mexico, El Salvador, and Honduras, have not adjusted their diets and activity to reflect the more sedentary lives they lead in the United States, he says, especially those who left rural areas where walking was the primary mode of travel.

“There is a lot of education we need to do,” says Hernández, associate director for community and economic development for Iowa State University Extension & Outreach. The Latino population is generally younger, with more children but less education and lower income compared to the rest of the population, Hernández says. Some also work the night shift or multiple jobs, which makes leisure activity more challenging.

Hombres Necios
One of the projects the center has conducted with the Latino community is a men’s health group called Hombres Necios (Stubborn Men).

The Hombres project engaged Latino men in a series of discussions around their understanding of what influences or impacts their health as both Latinos and small town residents in the Midwest. The group was led by Hernández and Jason Daniel-Ulloa, assistant research scientist for the PRC.

The project used the Photovoice methodology, which involves giving participants cameras to record aspects of their lives, in this case images of the food they ate and their physical activity. Diets tend to be high in fat, and soda has become a staple. Some of the workers also immigrated without their wives and children. “The men end up eating out and eating a lot,” Hernández says. “It’s not a good recipe for health.”

Participants in the group are informal community leaders—church volunteers, business owners, and others—who will be able to share “best practices” developed for Ottumwa with residents who trust them, Hernández says.

“We don’t want them to give up their culture,” he says. “But do we always have to have a soda at home or watch TV as we eat dinner?”

The participants presented the Photovoice results at a community forum, and the experience has helped the Hombres participants to better understand health issues, establish a social support group, and increase their confidence and social standing in their community through their newly acquired knowledge, says Daniel-Ulloa. The group is currently exploring next steps, including finding resources for a larger applied health intervention.

Redes de Salud
Another project, Redes de Salud (Network of Health), explored community-based places and networks that Latinos in Ottumwa trust and rely on to conduct business, obtain services, and connect with other Latinos. The study investigator, Barbara Baquero, first established a Latino advisory committee to work with her in developing and implementing the study.

The purpose of the study was to both introduce the UI College of Public Health and the Prevention Research Center to the Latino community in Ottumwa and to explore the social networks, sources of influence, and community-based places that would be important for subsequent health promotion and disease prevention programs for Latinos.

In the study, staff interviewed customers, clients and patrons, managers, and owners of these community-based businesses and services to obtain their perceptions of the important
community structures for the Latino population as well as the resources available and the needs of the community overall to address the recent influx of Latinos in Iowa.

The *Redes* study provided valuable information to develop community-based intervention strategies to address Latino health in Ottumwa and other communities. The information has also been used in establishing partnerships with the Latino communities of Iowa City and West Liberty. These studies have not only galvanized the Latino community and stakeholders in Ottumwa to address their health needs and concerns, says Baquero, but also have helped “the Latino community in Ottumwa to establish strong and positive relationships with UI researchers and students.”

The experience has helped the Hombres participants to better understand health issues, establish a social support group, and increase their confidence and social standing in their community through their newly acquired knowledge, says Daniel-Ulloa.
The Business Leadership Network engages the college with Iowa communities to share ideas and best practices for health and wellness.
mall and mid-sized businesses are the foundation of many Iowa communities—the hubs of activity that are plugged into every aspect of community life. They sponsor softball teams, contribute to charitable organizations, and support the local schools. These businesses also rely on a productive workforce, and their leaders understand the value of creating livable communities with healthy populations.

In 2011, the UI College of Public Health rolled out a new initiative, the Business Leadership Network (BLN), designed to engage Iowa businesses and communities with the training, service, and research opportunities offered by college. The BLN currently encompasses 46 counties throughout the state with the ultimate goal of engaging all 99 counties. The BLN provides participants with opportunities to connect with other business and industry leaders throughout Iowa around public health priorities, and to share ideas and best practices for community health and wellness.

PLACE-BASED PUBLIC HEALTH

“We understand that public health is place-based,” says Sue Curry, dean of the College of Public Health, “and we wanted to establish a network that would help us create and foster mutually beneficial relationships with businesses and communities around the state.”

According to Curry, the great strength of the network is its flexibility. There is not a menu of prescribed public health programs or a list of services. Instead, the course and shape of the business and community relationship with the college is guided by local needs and priorities.

“The concept of ‘network’ is really central to the initiative,” Curry explains. “We want people to view it as a way to share information, exchange ideas, and explore opportunities for collaboration, not only between the college and various businesses, but from business to business and community to community as well.”

The network has a steering committee of 10 businesses leaders who have an intrinsic interest in public health and a strong commitment to their own communities.

“These people are the ones who make the network function,” says Mitch Overton, Business Leadership Network coordinator. “They open doors for us, help us organize meetings and events, and essentially function as our liaisons to help identify people in their own communities and networks who should be involved in any public health-related discussions.”

In addition to the steering committee, the network has grown to include more than 300 business, community, and health care leaders across Iowa.

HEALTHY AND SAFE EMPLOYEES

Gerald Edgar is the health and safety manager for Mitas Tire North America in Charles City and serves as a member of the BLN steering committee. According to Edgar, the connection with the UI College of Public Health is an important one for both his company and his community.

“Having healthy and safe employees is important for any company, and working with the college and other businesses to share information and expertise is a real benefit,” says Edgar.

“In any field, there is a gap between what is known and what is practiced. The Business Leadership Network helps to fill that gap in public health by serving as a conduit for information and resources between the College of Public Health and Iowa businesses and communities.”

Don Woodruff, President
Woodruff Construction, Ft. Dodge Member,
BLN Steering Committee
Through Edgar’s connection with the BLN, Mitas Tires and the college are discussing opportunities for students and faculty to conduct research that could be useful in creating a safer work environment for Mitas employees.

**CREATING RELATIONSHIPS**

The BLN has focused on creating relationships in two areas of the state where the college has not traditionally had a strong presence: north-central and south-central Iowa. In the past two years, the Business Leadership Network has hosted eight community forums in these regions, taking CPH faculty and students on the road to present information and, most importantly, engage participants in public health-related conversations that lead to new collaborations.

Curry says the forums have been a beneficial experience. “Members of our faculty have given presentations on important topics such as the Affordable Care Act and cyberbullying, but to me, the highlights of every forum are the group discussions among community members, faculty, and students,” she says.

Topics for these discussions have included aging populations and the workforce, community health and wellness, and workplace health and safety. While the discussion groups are given a topic, they have no specific agenda and participants are free to explore ideas. According to Overton, CPH faculty have established some potentially productive relationships with community members at these forums.

“By simply getting the college together with these community leaders and sharing information and ideas, we’ve started a dialog that can lead to valuable collaborations and innovations to address public health issues in Iowa,” he says. “That’s exactly how a network is supposed to work.”
BUSINESS LEADERSHIP NETWORK STEERING COMMITTEE

Jill Baze, Van Gorp Co., Pella
Gerald Edgar, Mitas Tires North America, Charles City
Maureen Elbert, Kossuth/Palo Alto Economic Development, Algona
Mona Everson, Life and Health Care, Webster City
Greg Fenton, Lee Container, Centerville
Claudia Gates, U.S. Bank, Ottumwa
Michael Halley, Natural Selections, Fairfield
Kevin Klemesrud, American State Bank, Osceola
Rich Paulsen, Creston News Advertiser, Creston
Don Woodruff, Woodruff Construction, Ft. Dodge
Cultivating a Culture of Safety

BY DEBRA VENZKE

A lifelong Midwesterner, Department of Occupational and Environmental Health faculty member Brandi Janssen brings a unique blend of agriculture and anthropology to her new role as director of Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (I-CASH).

"I come from both an ag background and a social science background," says Janssen, who grew up on a cattle farm in Missouri and has lived in Iowa for many years. She graduated from Grinnell College with a BA degree in anthropology, then went on to the University of Iowa where she earned an MA and a PhD in anthropology. She joined the UI College of Public Health as a clinical assistant professor of occupational and environmental health in May 2014.

The overarching goal of I-CASH is to make farms and farming safer, and much of Janssen and her colleagues' work centers on prevention and education programs.

"More people are killed and hurt in agriculture than in any other industry in our state, but it doesn't have to be that way," says Janssen. "We want people to say, a farm should be a safe place to be, and not, oh well, if you farm, you're going to get hurt. We want to encourage that culture of safety."

FARMER-TO-FARMER COMMUNICATION

Janssen believes one way to promote that message is through farmer-to-farmer communication. "I think it's really important that farmers talk to each other. The social science literature tells us that a farmer is usually a credible source of information for another farmer," says Janssen. "For example, people telling their ‘near miss’ stories [of hazardous incidents on the farm] can be very powerful tools. Farmers sharing stories with each other is a powerful way to improve the safety culture on farms."

In addition to her family farm background, Janssen has worked closely with Iowa farmers while conducting her dissertation research. "My research focused on local food production and how local food producers in Eastern Iowa meet all their different markets, how they interact with the conventional farming system, and how much overlap there is. I spent a lot of time on farms, working with and talking to farmers."

She also has served as the president of Field to Family, a local non-profit dedicated to developing new markets for local farmers, and as the Iowa City Community School District’s Farm to School Coordinator.
Janssen was named director of I-CASH earlier this year after the retirement of longtime director Kelley Donham, professor emeritus of occupational and environmental health.

A STATEWIDE COLLABORATION
“I-CASH is unique. It's a product of legislation—we're here because the Iowa State Legislature identified this need for agricultural safety and health,” says Janssen. “It's not just an internal center, our job is to engage throughout the state.”

Created in 1990 and based in the UI College of Public Health, I-CASH is collaboratively run by the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, Iowa Department of Public Health, and Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. In addition, the center’s advisory board is made up of some 30 representatives from private and public agricultural health and safety organizations from across the state. “We have a really diverse set of participants who sort of drive the program,” says Janssen.

“Agriculture is one the most important industries in Iowa, yet one of the most hazardous,” adds Mark Hanna, a member of the I-CASH Board of Advisors and agricultural engineer with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. “Advancing measures to protect the health and safety of Iowans working in agriculture ensures a better quality of life for these workers and our entire state. Collaboration among state groups provides an infrastructure to help support ag safety and health efforts.”

THE CHANGING FACE OF AGRICULTURE
Although the center is currently in the midst of its strategic planning process, Janssen anticipates the continuation of its most successful programs. Those include funding small grants for projects aimed at youth injury prevention, a rural roadway safety campaign to prevent crashes on rural roads, and ATV safety.

“We also need to attend to aging farmers and beginning farmers,” Janssen adds. Beginning farmers are defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as those who have been farming less than 10 years. Nationwide, about 25 percent of farmers fall into this category.

“Farmers are aging and retiring, so we need a new crop of farmers to take their place,” Janssen explains. “There’s a lot of anxiety about it in the state—can we maintain our production? There’s a growing number of beginning farmers, who tend to start on smaller tracts of land, and many are doing a mix of crop production and direct marketing. A lot of them aren’t lifelong farmers, so it’s new to them as well. We need to address their needs.” Janssen adds that beginning farmers tend to be more diverse than older farmers, with more women and people of color entering agriculture.

ALWAYS LEARNING
One aspect Janssen enjoys about her move to public health is seeing the process of basic research move into action.

“[Public health] goes from really hard science to people like me, social scientists who work with a specific population. I’m thinking about how we translate messages and how we use research to either affect people’s behavior or develop systems that are better for them. It’s a remarkable opportunity to see that whole process, to go from basic research to ‘how does this operate in the real world?’ You have to be scientifically oriented, but you also have to be culturally competent. It’s interesting and exciting to think about things that way.”

During her off hours, you’re likely to find Janssen playing banjo, bass, or guitar as part of a duo with her husband Marc Janssen or with one of several area bands that range in style from early country music to old-time bluegrass and early New Orleans jazz. Although her husband is a longtime musician, Janssen learned to play several instruments as an adult, practicing in the evenings after their two kids went to bed.

“When the kids were little I thought, why don’t I learn to play the banjo? There’s not much else to do; you know, you’re not going out anymore,” she says with a laugh. “It just kind of developed. It’s been loads of fun.”

“Farmers sharing stories with each other is a powerful way to improve the safety culture on farms.”
Iowans are experiencing real impacts from climate change, including heavier rains and increased flooding. Human health effects from climate change are just as real and are already being felt in Iowa, according to a statement released by a statewide group of 180 science faculty and researchers from 38 Iowa colleges and universities.

“Climate change is negatively impacting our water quality, increasing exposures to allergens and air pollutants, introducing new infectious diseases, and imposing increased stress on Iowa families,” says statement co-author Peter Thorne, professor and head of the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health in the UI College of Public Health.

In the fourth annual statement, “Iowa Climate Statement 2014: Impacts on the Health of Iowans,” the scientists say the health-related effects of extreme weather events are the most obvious, immediate, and direct. These events are increasing in frequency and severity as our atmosphere warms and holds more moisture.

“Repeated heavy rains increase human exposure to toxic chemicals and raw sewage that are spread by flood waters,” says David Osterberg, associate clinical professor of occupational and environmental health, who also helped write the statement.

Thorne and Osterberg presented the statement at the State Capitol and led a statewide webinar on the topic. The statement is posted on the Center for Global and Regional Environmental Research web site, cgrer.uiowa.edu.
Doctoral Student Developing Software to Predict Spread of the Ebola Epidemic

The Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa is the largest Ebola outbreak in history and has captured global attention as the disease continues to spread. The current outbreak is the first Ebola epidemic the world has ever known, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The outbreak is being studied by Grant Brown, a fourth-year graduate student from Clive, Iowa, who is seeking his doctoral degree in biostatistics in the UI College of Public Health. Working with Jacob Oleson, associate professor of biostatistics, Brown is developing open source software called libspatialSEIR to model and predict the spread of the Ebola epidemic in the region.

“This is a living document, as the Ebola epidemic is rapidly evolving,” Brown says of the project, which includes interactive maps illustrating the estimated and predicted spread of the virus over time. The document will continue to be updated as the epidemic progresses, reflecting new data and potentially additional analysis techniques.

“This has been an interesting and challenging problem to work on, especially given how quickly things have been changing on the ground and how uncertain the reported case counts are,” Brown says. “I think there’s going to be a lot of really interesting retrospective work done on this epidemic to try to figure out the best way to keep such a disease from getting so out of control in the future.”
IN MEMORIAM

The College of Public Health is deeply saddened to note the passing of Leon Burmeister, professor emeritus in the Department of Biostatistics, who died at his home in Iowa City on Oct. 29, 2014. The college extends its most sincere condolences to Leon’s family, friends, students, and many collaborators in Iowa and beyond. Leon was born in Davenport, Iowa, and grew up in Stockton on his family’s farm. He graduated from Muscatine High School in 1960, where he was class president and an all-state performer in football, basketball, and baseball.

Leon continued his education at Iowa State University, earning a BS in 1964, an MA in 1966, and a PhD in statistics in 1972. He began his 42-year career at the University of Iowa in 1969 and was a highly respected biostatistician and professor who dedicated his expertise to an extraordinary range of studies that exemplified his love for his home state and deep desire to improve the lives of fellow Iowans. Leon retired from the UI in August 2011, concluding his distinguished career as a professor of biostatistics and associate dean for research and academic affairs in the College of Public Health.

New Program Accelerates Students’ Path to Careers in Public Health

The University of Iowa College of Public Health and Grinnell College have developed a new cooperative degree program that allows Grinnell students interested in public health to begin their careers more quickly.

The program enables Grinnell students from any major to earn both a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master of Public Health (MPH) degree in five years, rather than the customary six. Believed to be the first public health program of its kind involving coursework at two different institutions, the Grinnell–UI MPH program will begin admitting students in spring 2015.

“Grinnell College is an exceptional partner for this academic collaboration,” says Mary Lober Aquilino, associate dean for MPH and undergraduate programs in the College of Public Health. “Grinnell’s core value of social responsibility aligns well with the basic tenets of public health, including social justice, equity, and sustainability. The University of Iowa College of Public Health will benefit from the ability to draw from a diverse and highly qualified student group. The public–private agreement demonstrates a model for future academic alliances in Iowa.”

The program adds to the CPH’s growing set of Undergrad to Grad programs already established with several of University of Iowa departments. More information is available at cph.uiowa.edu/degree-programs.
UI RESEARCHERS FIND EARLY PREDICTOR FOR PREECLAMPSIA

University of Iowa researchers have discovered a biomarker that could give expecting mothers and their doctors the first simple blood test to reliably predict that a pregnant woman may develop preeclampsia, at least as early as six weeks into the pregnancy. Gideon Zamba, associate professor of biostatistics in the College of Public Health, was part of the research team.

Preeclampsia is a cardiovascular disorder generally occurring late in pregnancy and often resulting in an early delivery, creating immediate and potentially lifelong risks to both mother and baby. It causes high blood pressure and protein in the urine, and is typically diagnosed in the late second or third trimester of pregnancy. Between 5 and 7 percent of all pregnancies in the United States are affected with preeclampsia, equating to roughly 4,000 pregnancies in Iowa or around 500,000 in the United States per year. More than 100,000 women worldwide die from the disease each year.

Wright Studying Variations in Observation Care

Each year, about 1 million Medicare beneficiaries who visit the emergency room find themselves held for observation rather than being admitted to the hospital. Researchers have found the rate of observation care—a hospital-based outpatient service used to evaluate and treat acutely ill patients for extended periods—has increased nationally over the past decade, and it has become a common alternative to full hospitalization. This outpatient care saves hospitals money, but does it benefit the patient?

According to Brad Wright, assistant professor of health management and policy in the UI College of Public Health, critics suggest observation care costs patients more and may result in reduced quality of care. Previous studies also point to racial and geographic variations in the use of observation care. In a national study funded by the National Institute on Aging, Wright and colleagues from Brown University and the University of Michigan will analyze Medicare claims data from 2007-2011 to determine the causes and consequences of racial and geographic disparities in observation care among Medicare patients.

“We want to see if the variation in who receives observation care occurs within or between hospitals,” says Wright. “Are certain hospitals more likely to use observation? Or is there an inherent racial bias no matter which hospital you go to?”

Wright will also investigate whether observation care leads to better or worse health outcomes, examining mortality rates and how many patients return to the emergency department or get readmitted within 30 or 90 days.

“Are there important quality outcome differences?” asks Wright. “Maybe they don’t get the level or intensity of services they need and end up coming back. Or are they more likely to be admitted because more observation leads to better clinical decisions?”

Wright hopes the study’s findings will help inform changes in hospital policy and Medicare coverage of observation services.

CPH Researchers’ Work Named ‘Abstract of the Year’

An abstract titled “Evaluation of the Implementation of Anti-Bullying Legislation in Schools,” authored by Marizen Ramirez, Laura Schwab Reese, Erica L. Spies, Corinne Peek-Asa, and Angela Onwuachi-Willig, has been recognized by the American Public Health Association’s Law Section as Abstract of the Year for 2014. Ramirez received the award at the APHA Annual Meeting.
**Study Examines Servicewomen’s Reporting of Sexual Assault in the Military**

Sexual assault in the military has come under increasing public and congressional attention in recent years, as studies show sexual assault is significantly underreported, both in U.S. civilian and military populations. While the Department of Defense has promoted greater reporting of sexual assault, service women remain reluctant to come forward due to perceived and real barriers, according to a study by the University of Iowa and the VA health-care system in Iowa City.

“These findings support the need to address both the process and outcomes of reporting sexual assault in the military,” says Michelle Mengeling, associate research scientist in internal medicine at the UI and affiliate investigator with the Iowa City VA Health Care System. “Underreporting these crimes reduces the likelihood that offenders will face legal consequences, which undermines trust within units and jeopardizes the health and safety of all military personnel.”

“The lack of reporting is still a major problem,” echoes James Torner, CPH professor and head of epidemiology and a study author. “The service women interviewed believed there were multiple adverse consequences of reporting.”

Reasons cited for not reporting sexual assault included concerns about lack of confidentiality, negative effects on careers, an adverse work environment, and the belief that nothing would be done. These concerns were not unfounded, as the study showed reporters’ experiences validated non-reporters’ perceptions of negative outcomes.

The study, published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, was funded by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

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**Examining Adolescents’ ATV Safety Behaviors**

Researchers at the University of Iowa recently published the results of research examining all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use, crash prevalence, and riding behaviors among adolescent students in a rural state. The study was published in the *Annals of Family Medicine*.

Regardless of rurality, at least 75 percent of students reported having been on an ATV, with 38 percent of those riding daily or weekly. Among ATV riders, 57 percent had been in a crash. Most riders engaged in risky behaviors, including riding with passengers (92 percent), on public roads (81 percent), or without a helmet (64 percent). Almost 60 percent reported engaging in all 3 behaviors; only 2 percent engaged in none.

“We believe this data illustrates the critical need for promoting safer behaviors among youth,” says Karisa Harland, a study co-author and researcher with the University of Iowa Injury Prevention Research Center. “Robust ATV injury prevention efforts are more widely needed, including training and well-enforced legislation, while primary care clinicians could play an important role in decreasing pediatric ATV-related injuries and deaths through routine anticipatory guidance.”

Support for this study was provided by a grant to the University of Iowa Children’s Hospital from Kohl’s Cares, a program of Kohl’s that supports kids’ health and education initiatives nationwide.
Kathryn Chaloner, Professor and Head of Biostatistics


The courage and determination that Kathryn demonstrated throughout her illness also defined her as a distinguished leader, researcher, colleague, mentor, and friend. As a scientist, Kathryn gravitated toward the most demanding and difficult challenges in her field. When the science surrounding HIV/AIDS was still in its early stages, Kathryn began developing pragmatic clinical trials for HIV and AIDS therapies. Later, she became an invaluable collaborator on investigations of other infectious diseases, lung health, and other biomedical projects with colleagues across the University of Iowa and around the world. Her creative, innovative spirit will continue in these ongoing research endeavors.

Perhaps Kathryn’s most lasting legacy in the College of Public Health—indeed, in the field of biostatistics and far beyond—will be her dedication to the twin principles of mentorship and diversity. Kathryn was a passionate advocate for women, junior faculty, and students. Her commitment to furthering the careers of others, particularly those who faced institutional, cultural, and gender barriers, not only shaped her own Department of Biostatistics, but the College of Public Health, the University of Iowa, and, most importantly, the lives of all those she touched.

“Kathryn’s commitment to equity encompassed the idea that pathways to scientific careers must be opened to all, with special attention to underrepresented and underserved populations,” says CPH Dean Sue Curry. “And she ensured that equity initiatives remained at the fore of our agenda. She challenged leaders to do more. She fought for funding. She recruited outstanding people, nurtured them, and celebrated their inevitable success. The impact of those she advised, taught, mentored, and supported will be felt for years to come.”

“I first met Kathryn in 2007,” says Phil Kutzko, UI professor of mathematics who collaborated with Kathryn on several diversity initiatives. “The UI math department had a grant from the National Science Foundation that supported a summer program for minority college students, and Kathryn was interested in starting a summer program with similar goals in biostatistics.

“By way of background, the profession of biostatistics graduated about 100 PhDs in 2007, about half of these students coming from other countries,” Kutzko continues. “The number of U.S. minority students receiving these degrees was negligible. So Kathryn was taking on a daunting task, but one which had the potential to transform her profession.”

The first biostatistics summer program at the UI took place in 2008, and later received funding from the National Institutes of Health to expand. Between 2010 and 2013, a total of 43 minority students attended the program, 19 of whom are now attending graduate school in biostatistics.

“I think it is fair to say that, at the time of her death, Kathryn was well on her way to changing the demographics of her profession so that they might reflect our country’s ever more diverse population,” Kutzko says. “Her work will live on in the lives and accomplishments of the students that she introduced to biostatistics and then ensured that they would have the opportunity to achieve their potential.”

A memorial fund has been established in honor of Kathryn through the University of Iowa Foundation to support underrepresented minority students in the College of Public Health Department of Biostatistics. Contributions to this fund can be sent to: Kathryn Chaloner Student Scholarship Fund, UI Foundation, P.O. Box 4550, Iowa City, IA 52244-4550.
Travis Andersen (MA ’95) has been named president and chief executive officer of Columbia St. Mary’s (CSM) in Milwaukee, Wis. Prior to joining CSM, he served as president of St. Elizabeth Hospital in Appleton, Wis., and oversaw Calumet Medical Center, a critical access hospital located in Chilton, Wis.

Richard Armstrong (MHA ’10) was named CEO of the Iowa City Heart Center. He has been with the heart center since 2012 and previously served as the health informatics director and assistant administrator.

Jim Atty (MHA ’09) was selected by Waverly (Iowa) Health Center’s Board of Trustees to serve as the hospital’s leader beginning on Sept. 8, 2014. He previously served as the chief executive officer of Humboldt County Memorial Hospital in Humboldt, Iowa.

Jennifer Braun (MPH ’12) was recently promoted to program manager at the American Hospital Association in Chicago, Ill.

Patrick Cannon (MHA ’12) was recently promoted to principal associate at von Briesen & Roper, s.c., where he focuses part of his practice on assisting health care clients, including integrated delivery systems, community hospitals, imaging centers, physicians, and ancillary suppliers, among others, with physician contracting, business transactions, and fraud and abuse regulatory compliance.

Anthony R. Eves (MHA ’12) is currently an administrative fellow at Kaiser Permanente in San Diego, Calif.

Jim FitzPatrick (MA ’87) has been named the permanent president and CEO of Mercy Medical Center in Sioux City, Iowa. FitzPatrick has served as interim CEO of Mercy – Sioux City since late March. Prior to that, he served as senior vice president for network development of Mercy Health Network.

Alexis Barbour Florczak (MHA ’06) is the president and founder of Synthesis Healthcare Group in Chicago, Ill. It is a consulting firm that focuses on ambulatory network development, clinical and ancillary service line development, neurosciences, and oncology business development and operations.

Christina Freese-Decker (MHA ’02) has been appointed president of Spectrum Health System’s hospital group. She previously was Spectrum’s senior vice president and chief strategy officer, and has also served as president of two Spectrum hospitals. Freese-Decker has been with Spectrum since 2002.

Denyse Gipple (MPH ’08) was recently named the clinical support director for Davis County Hospital in Bloomfield, Iowa. She is responsible for infection prevention, accreditation, credentialing, and utilization review.

Seunghyug Kwon (PhD ’11) is currently a medical student at the St. George’s University School of Medicine in Grenada.

Jessica Mills (MS ’13) is serving as the health and safety specialist at Freeport-McMoRan Copper and Gold, Inc. in Phoenix, Ariz.

Ellen Paasch (MPH ’13) recently joined Healthways in Des Moines, Iowa, as an intern on the Blue Zones project. She was also a recent presenter at the International Communication Association Conference, presenting results of an ongoing research study entitled “Facebook and College Women’s Bodies: Social Media’s Influence on Body Image and Disordered Eating.” She was a co-author of the study, which was featured in 137 news stories in more than 20 countries.

Andrew Patzke (MHA, MPH ’13) recently joined the Cleveland (Ohio) Clinic as an administrative fellow.

Martin-Jose Sepulveda (F ’85) IBM Fellow, and vice president, health systems and policy research, IBM Research, IBM Corp., Somers, N.Y., has been elected to membership in the Institute of Medicine.

Jim Skogsbergh (MA ’82) is the next chair-elect of the American Hospital Association and will begin as board chairman in 2016. He is currently the CEO of Advocate Health Care based in Downers Grove, Ill.

Erica Spies (MS ’09, PhD ’13) recently began a position with the Division of Violence Prevention, Research and Evaluation Branch, Child Maltreatment and Sexual Violence Team at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Ga.

Philip Van De Griend (MPH ’07) will join the medical team at Orange City (Iowa) Area Health System next summer. He will provide family medicine services as part of the health system’s team of 17 family practice providers serving the hospital, emergency department, and medical clinics in Orange City, Hospers, and Paullina, Iowa, and on the campus of Northwestern College. He also will join seven of his colleagues in offering prenatal and birthing/OB services.

Jennifer Whited (MHA ’04) is currently serving as engagement director/senior manager at Accenture in Tampa/St. Petersburg, Fla.

IN MEMORIAM

Barbara Davidson (MPH ’03) passed away on Sept. 21, 2014. She earned degrees from the University of Iowa in English, anthropology, journalism, and public health. She worked as assistant director of the Upward Bound Program of Student Services at the University of Iowa Hospital School as well as a teaching assistant in anthropology.

SHARE YOUR NEWS

Have you started a new job, received an honor or award, or achieved a noteworthy career milestone or accomplishment? Share your professional news and updates with fellow College of Public Health alumni! Submit your news to mitchell-overton@uiowa.edu with Class Notes in the subject line.
COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH HONOR ROLL OF CONTRIBUTORS

COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH HONOR CLUBS

The College of Public Health 1847 Society
The following living alumni and friends have informed the UI Foundation of their intent to provide a deferred gift, of any size, to benefit the College of Public Health (and approved this public listing in the honor roll of contributors). Members of the College of Public Health 1847 Society as of June 30, 2014, include:

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22 INSIGHT FALL 2014

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23 INSIGHT FALL 2014
Brandon Woods spent the summer of 2014 in Borneo on an internship sponsored by EcoHealthNet, a training program for graduate students interested in multidisciplinary health and infectious disease research. Woods, a student in the DVM-MPH combined degree program offered by the Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine and the University of Iowa College of Public Health, wrote about his adventure.

Orangutans, Rainforests, and Research

Spending the summer hiking through the tropical rainforests of Borneo conducting research on one of the most endangered Great Apes in the world seemed like an incredible dream when I applied for the EcoHealthNet research exchange. When I discovered that I was accepted for this project, my jaw dropped and I was grinning from ear to ear. After researching rainforest packing lists and bidding farewell to my family and friends, I boarded the plane and was bound for an unimaginable adventure.

The two goals of my project were to study the abundance of endangered wild orangutans in different habitat gradients and survey for the prevalence of viruses and parasites. My project was divided into three stages: collecting samples in the field, testing the samples in the lab, and analyzing the results with my research mentor. Working with a small team of forest rangers and brushing up on my Boy Scout orienteering skills, I conducted four line transects in each of nine sites. During each transect, I searched the jungle canopy to count orangutans and their nests, recorded my observations, and collected fecal samples.

Trekking through thick rainforests across rough terrain made my sweatband soggy, but the diversity of wildlife and plants that I saw kept my spirits high and dry. After my fieldwork ended, I moved into the air-conditioned and immaculate laboratory, which was a refreshing change from the mud, heat, and humidity. With help from a lab scientist, I applied my knowledge of microbiology and extracted DNA, conducted Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) for virus screening, and performed diagnostic parasitology.

My project wasn’t all work and no play; I also got a taste of the local cuisine and culture—spotting Proboscis monkeys on a Kinabatangan River cruise and savoring some of the best seafood in the world were two of my highlights. Saying goodbye to the colorful country of Malaysia was bittersweet, but I spent one week at the EcoHealth Alliance headquarters in New York City collaborating with my mentor on the project’s conclusions.

As a veterinary medicine student, this multidisciplinary research project epitomized my professional goals. I’m interested in the crossroads of human and animal health, and gaining ground-work experience learning about emerging zoonotic diseases is a jump-start to my career. Collaborating with experts in wildlife conservation and international public health reinforces my goal of earning a dual DVM-MPH degree. My EcoHealthNet research exchange on orangutan conservation in the jungles of Borneo was an outstanding educational experience!

Reprinted with permission from EcoHealth Alliance.
I’m interested in the crossroads of human and animal health, and gaining ground-work experience learning about emerging zoonotic diseases is a jump-start to my career.
A Passion for Public Health

William Foege shares insights from his career in global health.

THE COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH HONORED WILLIAM H. FOEGE, MD, as the recipient of its 2014 Richard and Barbara Hansen Leadership Award and Distinguished Lectureship. Foege is an acclaimed epidemiologist and global health leader who helped conceive and lead the successful worldwide campaign to eradicate smallpox.


Comparing the current Ebola epidemic to smallpox, he noted, “Ebola is not the new face of public health, it’s the old face returned. We face Ebola with scientific tools we’ve never had before. But the approach to Ebola is the same as for smallpox: surveillance and containment.”

Foege interwove his remarks with stories of his own experiences working in the field, and sprinkled in advice for students. “The fuel of global health is unwarranted optimism,” he said. “People go into public health because it’s a passion you can’t even explain.”

View videos of the Hansen Lecture and book discussion online at cph.uiowa.edu/2014-hansen-award.