

UNLV SCHOOL OF COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES



Message From The Dean

In honor of the School of Community Health Sciences' ten year anniversary and our rapid growth into a school containing 28 full-time faculty, over 100 employees, and 1,200 alumni, I am pleased to share with you the SCHS newsletter. Please enjoy the following successes and outstanding stories regarding our faculty, staff, and students.



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The \$1 Million Partnership

UNLV's Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy Receives \$1M Grant for Children's Advocacy

How thrilling would it be to receive a phone call that had the potential to transform early childhood education in Nevada? For Tara Phebus, executive director of the Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy (NICRP), that is exactly what happened.

The call came from Todd Klunk of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. Klunk had researched NICRP and reached out to encourage the center to apply for a \$1M grant funded by the foundation that helps to educate parents, policymakers, and the community about the need for and benefits of high quality early childhood education.

After months of meticulous work preparing a concept paper, receiving a financial evaluation, and then submitting a fully detailed application, the grant was finally awarded to the center and its partner, the Children's Advocacy Alliance (CAA).

"Quality early childhood education reduces the need for remediation and intervention in later years," said Phebus. "We are excited to have the support of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in promoting early childhood education in Nevada and have already begun planning a number of activities designed to build support for quality programming."

Earlier this year, the NICRP and CAA collaborated to create and distribute the 2015 Children's Legislative Briefing Book to state lawmakers to educate them on important issues surrounding early childhood education in Nevada. They will also host events at the Nevada Legislature, provide policy makers with research and policy briefs between sessions, and create a business guide for employers outlining options for them to support early childhood education in Nevada as well as available resources for families.

"Before we can see significant improvement in policies and practices for high quality early childhood education, we must first develop broad-based awareness of..."

continued...

NEW FACES

Introducing New Faculty And Staff

**ANTONY
CHEN**



Dr. Chen is an assistant professor who focuses on atmospheric aerosols and co-pollutants from natural and anthropogenic sources. He is also interested in environmental health issues in developing countries and their global implications.

**MARYA
SHEGOG**



Marya Shegog, Ph.D., MPH, CHES is a newly appointed SCHS' assistant professor. She is also the Director of Health Programs at the Lincoy Institute. She focuses on identifying and addressing health disparities in order to achieve health equity for everyone.



THE \$1 MILLION PARTNERSHIP CONTINUED

the need, current services and available resources,” said Denise Tanata-Ashby, CAA executive director. “This added support will help us arm parents, educators and policy makers with the latest research, information and best practices so they can make informed decisions.”

All parties involved agree that this grant is imperative to enhancing early childhood education throughout the state.

“This is an important effort to engage more stakeholders – including parents, businesses and community members - in conversations to assure more of Nevada’s children receive affordable, high-quality, early childhood education,” said Carla D. Thompson, vice president for program strategy at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. “We believe this partnership offers a strong base to better connect local and state organizations toward improved educational outcomes for Nevada’s children.”

Grant funds will also expand current statewide programs and partnerships, including Step Up for Kids and Nevada’s Strong Start for Children Campaign, which emphasize the importance of high quality early childhood education in Nevada and connect parents with available resources and services.

The next Step Up for Kids event will be held at the Springs Preserve on Monday, September 28 from 3 to 7 p.m. It is a community resource fair for education that will be a fun event for families and all members of the community. The first 100 children will even get free passes to the Springs Preserve Museums.

If you would like to become involved with the NICRP, Tara asks that you reach out to the center. “Call us. Send an email. We have community tabling events, programs for student workers, anyone can donate. There are so many ways to become involved.”

For more information on the center and it’s events, please visit their website at <http://nic.unlv.edu/>.

upcoming EVENTS

NEVADA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

SEPTEMBER 24/25

See www.apha.org
for more information.

NEVADA HEALTH CARE FORUM

OCTOBER 27

Head to
www.nevadahealthcareforum.com
for more info.

COMMUNITY HEALTH TAILGATE PARTY

NOVEMBER 21

See
www.unlv.edu/publichealth
for more info.



CATCHING A BREATH

Ph.D. Candidate Jennifer Lucas Shares How to Help Your Family Combat Two Leading Diseases

Approximately 25 million people in the United States are affected by asthma, and one third of the country's youth fall under the category of overweight or obese. With statistics like these, it is no wonder that asthma and obesity are two of today's most common diseases in America. And Nevada is especially suffering.

Lucky for Las Vegas, under the advisement of Associate Professor Dr. Sheniz Moonie, UNLV SCHS graduate student Jennifer Lucas focuses her doctoral dissertation on the relationship between these two frequently coexisting diseases in children.

According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, in the past year Las Vegas dropped ranks from 54th to 40th "most challenging" city in America to live in with asthma, and the city's youth are being hit the hardest. Due to the dust bowl that is the Great Basin region, children in Nevada are experiencing asthma as early as three and four years of age and are becoming allergic to plants that do not typically produce allergens for the rest of the country, such as pine. Furthermore, over 22,000 kindergarteners in Nevada struggle with obesity, which can intensify the effects of asthma.

In her research, Lucas examines a new theory, essentially an obesity-influenced asthma, in which physiological changes in the airway due to inflammation from obesity cause asthma to be more severe and harder to manage. Additionally, one of the most common types of long-term asthma-control medications, inhaled steroids, have been found to be less effective in obese people. This is possibly due to the fact that the steroid has to work harder to get the right area of inflammation-- the airway-- instead of the inflammation caused by excess fat cells.

According to Lucas, because it is difficult for children with asthma to exercise, especially when they are obese, weight loss can be nearly impossible. However, since weight loss helps improve asthma by reducing symptoms, severity, and exacerbation, combating one may work for the other- as long as children with asthma can handle the physical activity.

"I am also working with Children's Heart Center Nevada to evaluate a physical activity and nutrition intervention program," said Lucas. "I want to see if asthmatic children who tried the intervention could do it. If they can... it means there is already a program that works."

Through her research, Lucas strives to bring awareness to asthma and obesity and the connections between them. She hopes to help parents realize that they plant the seeds to their child's attitudes towards health.

"Parental attitudes can change children's attitudes about exercise...if parents [are] afraid of their children getting asthma attacks during physical activity, children become more afraid too," said Lucas. "My advice would be to see the doctor, even when you're feeling well, to make sure you or your child knows what the triggers are or how to lessen the severity of an asthma attack. Kids who have well-controlled asthma have much better quality of life, and that's one of the most important things when you have a chronic disease."

"I can't say anything about obesity that hasn't been said," said Lucas. But the advice she does give is the best out there. "Work together as a family to make healthy choices, stay active together and eat healthy together."

- **Las Vegas is the 40th "most challenging" city in America to live in with asthma.**
- **Children in Nevada are experiencing asthma as early as three and four years old.**
- **More than 22,000 kindergarteners in Nevada struggle with obesity.**

“Parental attitudes can change children's attitudes about exercise.”

-Jennifer Lucas

**GE LIN
KAN**



Dr. Kan is a professor who was trained as a spatial demographer and spatial epidemiologist. Through extensive training in geo- and health-informatics research, he has also become a data scientist in health disparities.

**QING
WU**



Dr. Wu is an associate professor of biostatistics who has extensive experience in multidisciplinary collaborative research and statistical consulting in biomedical research.

**MAXIM
GAKH**



Assistant Professor Max Gakh, JD, MPH, is a joint hire with the Boyd School of Law. His research centers on the intersection of law, policy, and public health, and how legal mechanisms and policies can improve (or hinder) the health of communities.

BALANCING ACT

Michelle Chino's Life
as Both a Tribal
Woman and an
Urban Professional



Tending sheep. Making tortillas from scratch. Turning down Stanford. These are just a few incredible secrets of the SCHS' newly retired, Michelle Chino. But what is Chino's best-kept secret? That despite being one of the most hardworking scholars and professionals around, she's also, well, down to earth.

Born and raised on the Laguna Pueblo American Indian Reservation in New Mexico, Chino spent her days essentially living in two worlds- one as an Indian woman "on the rez" and one as a student turned professional in the city.

"I push my professional foot forward, but I'm still just a kid from the 'rez.'"

-Michelle Chino

During her years on the reservation, Chino balanced working at the local high school and raising her three children DeeJay, Phillip, and Jacob with attending the University of New Mexico, carpooling an hour into the city to attend classes. Upon completing her bachelor's degree in Anthropology, Chino was offered the opportunity to attend Stanford for graduate school, declining the offer in favor of staying with mentors whom she knew could provide better opportunities at home.

She was right. After finishing her master's in biological anthropology and her Ph.D. in human evolutionary ecology, Chino worked for the Albuquerque Area Indian Health Board before heading to the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of New Mexico to run an injury prevention program.

If providing for her family and pursuing her professional dreams weren't enough, Chino also spent her time helping develop tribal programs saying, "It's just what you do. It's one of those traditional concepts that when you've been given something, you then have to give back. You have to contribute to your people, to your community, to your colleagues."

Even though she and husband John left New Mexico in 2000, Chino continues to weave these selfless ideals into her life. After arriving in Las Vegas, she began her role as Director of the Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy (NICRP). At the same time, she also developed the programs and became the director of both the American Indian Research and Education Center (AIREC) and the Center for Health Disparities Research (CHDR) before transitioning into a professor and then department chair for the UNLV SCHS. To continue to pay it forward even after retirement, Chino has personally funded fifteen dissertation enhancement grants to be awarded over the next few years.

When asked if it was difficult transitioning back and forth between two radically different lifestyles, Chino responded, "Being able to do that shift- to be firmly grounded in where I came from but very much open to becoming an accomplished professional in the..."

continued...



Three of the authors, Matthew Kappel, Ashlie Waters, and Tanviben Patel

“**Eradication is nearly impossible unless you drain the lake and start over again.**”

- Matthew Kappel

Saving Lake Mead One Book At A Time

SCHS Students' and Faculty's Newly Released Book Exposes Destructive Mussels in Lake Mead

With more than 320 trillion non-native adult and microscopic veliger “babies,” quagga mussels have taken over Lake Mead, altering ecosystems and costing millions of dollars.

Luckily, the studies of six School of Community Health Science students and three SCHS faculty over a seven-year period provided enough data to compile information ranging from biology and detection of the mussels to policy and prevention.

The current and former SCHS students who participated in writing chapters ranging in subjects from thermal tolerance to boat decontamination include Sean Comeau, Patricia Delrose, Richard Ianniello, Matt Kappel, Tanviben Patel, and Ashlie Watters. Also featured in the book are former UNLV faculty members, Chad Cross, Ph.D. and Wai Hing Wong, Ph.D, and dean of the SCHS, Shawn Gerstenberger, Ph.D. The authors agree that the resiliency of the quagga mussels along with their ability to quickly spread was among the most frightening qualities of this invasive species.

“It takes a lot to expunge and deter settlement of veligers,” said Watters.

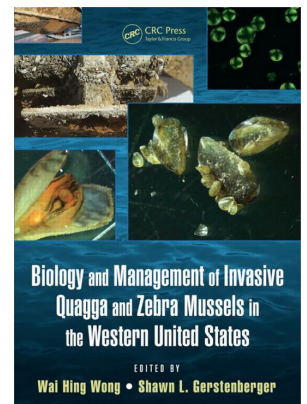
“I got to work with the Nevada Department of Wildlife and go scuba diving in Lake Mohave,” said Ianniello. “You can really see the impact of the mussels down there. Pretty much anything hard, anything other than silt or sand under the water, you can’t see the surface of because it’s completely coated with quagga mussels.”

Surprisingly, the mussels were only recently discovered in bodies of water west of the 100th meridian. Found in Lake Mead in 2007, the invasive species are swiftly spreading, wreaking havoc in nearby bodies of water such as Lake Mohave and Havasu and even reaching waterways in California and Arizona. Besides overpopulation, another issue related to the mussels is their potential effect on striped bass, which have not been surviving the winter since quagga mussels were introduced to Lake Mead.

So what is the solution to combating these aquatic invasive species?

“Eradication is nearly impossible unless you drain the lake and start over again,” said Kappel. “The chapters in this book help our understanding grow and provide us with more information to help improve current protocols on prevention and mitigation measures.”

Edited by Gerstenberger and Wong, the 566-page *Biology and Management of Invasive Quagga and Zebra Mussels in the Western United States* was published in May.



Dean Gerstenberger displays a sample of the quagga mussels.

The textbook, edited by Dr. Wong and Dean Gerstenberger, was published this spring and can be purchased at www.crcpress.com.

ABOUT YOU!

You're a part of our family, so we would like to know what's going on in your life. If you've moved up, moved on, or had a major announcement, please head to www.unlv.edu/news/classnotes to update us!

NEW FACES

ECHEZONA EZEANOLUE



A professor of Pediatrics and Public Health, Dr. Ezeanolue's research focuses on the use of implementation science and a community-based participatory research approach to enhance the quality and effectiveness of population health services and reduce health outcomes disparities.

COURTNEY COUGHENOR



Dr. Coughenor is an assistant professor whose research focuses on the relationship between health and the built environment. Her research interests include the area of Health & Place, specifically the influence of community design on health behaviors.

BALANCING ACT CONTINUED

mainstream- I can do it fairly seamlessly, but I know it is a struggle for a lot of people. For some reason I have an advantage, and I don't know what it is that lets me go back and forth. Both are who I am, and it's easy to get caught up in one and totally forget about the other."

Upon retirement, Chino recently moved to Hawaii, but she says that even though she lives in paradise, she is "not ready to totally transition to being an island girl."

You can bet your bottom dollar that when she's not gardening, taking ukulele classes, and snorkeling in paradise, Chino will still be mentoring students as an Emeritus Professor, leading research projects, and teaching online courses for UNLV, maintaining a delicate balance of the natural and professional worlds because as she says, "I push my professional foot forward, but deep down I'm still just a kid from the 'rez.'"

FACULTY PROMOTIONS

We would like to send a heartfelt congratulations to the following faculty members who recently received promotions:

Mark Buttner, Ph.D.

Chris Cochran, Ph.D.

Patricia Cruz, Ph.D.

Melva Thompson-Robinson, DrPH

Paulo Pinheiro, MD, MSc, PhD, CTR

Professor, Interim EOH Department Chair

Professor

Professor

Professor

Associate Professor

ADVENTURES OF A FEMALE MEDICAL DETECTIVE

From international travels to book tours to her continued support of UNLV, stay tuned for our next issue where we delve into the adventures of Dr. Mary Guinan, our favorite female medical detective.

MORE NEW FACES

We are growing quickly! Check our next issue for even more new faces where we will introduce you to new Health Care Administration faculty, the SCHS' Director of Development, and more.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Your support means a great deal to us. To discuss the many ways that you can make an indelible impact, including joining our new Alumni Association, please reach out to Joseph Strother at (702) 895-3429 or joseph.strother@unlv.edu or head to <https://netcommunity.unlv.edu/givetocommunityhealth>.

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