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THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

The Connection

Connecting the UNM PRC and Community since 2002



Fall 2015 - Volume 9, Issue 1



Photo credit: Renée J. Robillard



UPN students Hannah Torres, Abigail Velasquez, Courtney Thornton, and PRC Director Sally Davis

UNM Prevention Research Center welcomes summer interns, 2015

Renée J. Robillard



For 10 weeks during the summer of 2015, the PRC hosted four delightful, enthusiastic, and dedicated student interns: Courtney Thornton, Hannah Torres, Abigail Velasquez, and Quirin (“Q”) Martine. The students came to us by way of two different programs partnering with the PRC.

Courtney, Hannah, and Abby were participants in UNM’s Undergraduate Pipeline Network (UPN) summer research experience. The

purpose of the UPN program is to provide training in basic research skills. With mentoring by a faculty member and help from other research staff, UPN students conduct independent research and present their results at a poster session to which the entire university community is invited.

Q is participating in the Continuing Umbrella of Research Experience (CURE), a 2-year program for American Indian students supported

by partnerships between UNM and several high schools and colleges. CURE students attend seminars and lectures at UNM and conduct a research project in community, public, or environmental health under the mentorship of a UNM faculty member. At the end of the program, the students share what they have learned with their school and community in a “creative way”—for example, in a poster, painting, story, poem, song, or dance.

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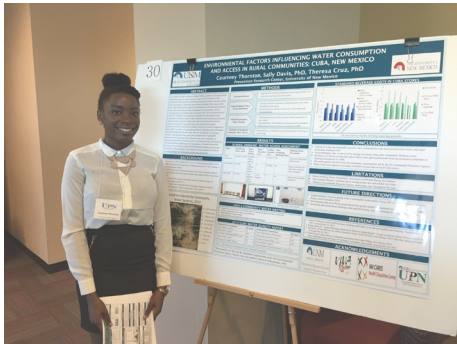
Prevention Research Center (UNM PRC)
Prevention and Population Sciences
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Albuquerque, NM 87131 prc.unm.edu

During their last week at the PRC, the four students generously took a break from their busy schedules to talk about their experience at the PRC and their plans for the future.

Courtney Thornton

Courtney Thornton, whose home is in Santa Clarita, California, came to

Photo credits: Felipe Amaral



UNM after a UNM recruiter visited her high school and the university offered her a generous scholarship. Asked what she thinks of New Mexico, Courtney said, “it’s growing on me—it has charm.” Courtney is sharing her time in the Land of Enchantment with Murphy, her guinea pig.

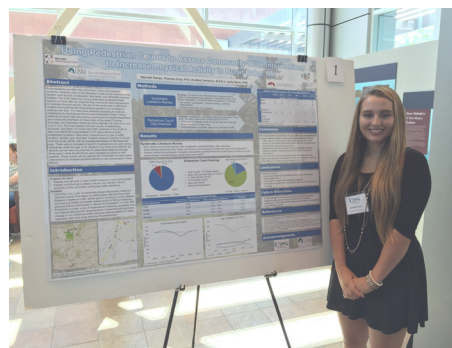
Courtney applied to the UPN program because she liked a previous summer research experience she had at a diabetes center in Denver. At the PRC, Courtney studied factors influencing drinking water consumption in Cuba, NM, a rural community that is the focus of much of the PRC’s research. Courtney chose this project because “water is so basic to nutrition.” Her most interesting research discovery was what “a big deal” increasing water consumption is in a place like Cuba because of the need to address so many issues, including taste, affordability, the local culture, and

recycling bottles.

The best things about Courtney’s PRC experience were “I learned so much, much more than I did last summer [in Denver]” and “I met a lot of people who are passionate about what they do.” Was there any downside? Said Courtney, “I would have liked to have gone to more meetings about the various PRC projects—to learn more about them and get more involved.”

After she graduates from UNM in 2016, Courtney intends to pursue a master’s degree in public health nutrition. She noted that being at the PRC “reinforced my interest in doing more research on nutrition” and that public health nutrition appeals to her because it provides an opportunity to be involved with “policies that affect a lot of people.”

Hannah Torres



Hannah has lived in both Chicago and New Mexico, but she prefers it here because of the much warmer weather. New Mexico also feels like home because of her grandparents: they own the popular Luna Mansion and Teofilo’s restaurants in Los Lunas.

Hannah applied to the UPN program because she thought she needed some background in research

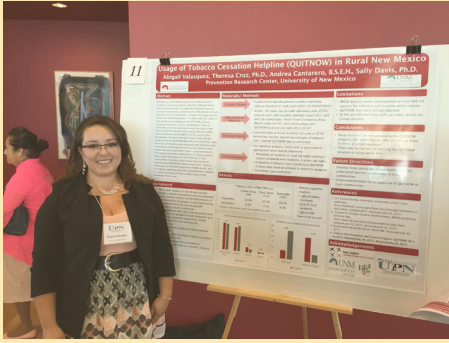
to support her future application to medical school. Her time at the PRC “totally changed” her view of research, which she had previously pictured as primarily involving labs and rats. She was impressed by the “variety of projects at the PRC” and the fact that they are “constantly moving forward” and being “applied right away.” Hannah especially appreciated the exposure to subjects that have long intrigued her but that she hasn’t had time to study, especially population science, epidemiology, and anthropology: “Julia’s [Hess] work with refugees is so interesting.”

At the PRC, Hannah analyzed results from a database of pedestrian counts done at several locations in Cuba for the past 5 years. She chose this project because she is “passionate about fitness” and understands the importance for “health outcomes of getting people to be more active.” All the PRC UPN interns spent several days in Cuba doing field work. For Hannah, visiting Cuba was “a life changer” because she was unaware of the lack of resources in rural areas.

As a direct result of her PRC experience, Hannah is thinking of applying to UNM’s MD/PhD program so that she can take courses in subjects she was introduced to during the summer. Was there anything about the UPN program that Hannah didn’t like? “I wish we had more exposure to Cuba, more time in the field, and could participate in the focus groups and surveys that are planned,” she said, and added (laughing), “working 8 to 5; I never did that before.”

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Abby Velasquez



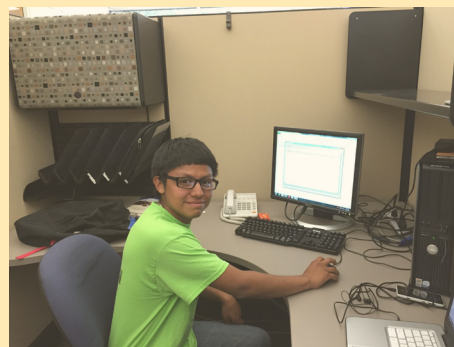
Unlike Hannah, Abby is a small-town gal. She hails from Anton Chico, NM (population about 200), although she went to high school in Roswell, where she was elected “Miss Roswell Outstanding Teen” in 2013. Regardless of where she is, Abby demonstrates her love for Latin dance. “If the music’s on,” she said, “I’ll be dancing.”

Abby became interested in the UPN program because she had no experience with research but wanted to try it. She described her internship at the PRC as “beyond expectations” and “amazing.” Her project focused on use of the tobacco-cessation helpline (QUIT NOW) in rural New Mexico. Abby selected this project because she has long been active in the anti-tobacco movement: in middle school, she was “an advocate against big tobacco” and even promoted her cause in the NM State Legislature. Abby thinks that the most interesting part of her project was working with Andrea Cantarero

to extract information from several databases on tobacco use and cessation attempts in rural and urban areas.

According to Abby, the best thing about her experience at the PRC was that “everyone was helpful; they all made time to help if you asked.” She does wish there had been more opportunities for field work and that she could have observed focus groups in action. Overall, the experience has made Abby think about changing her major—to anthropology.

Quirin Martine



Q is part Navajo and, he said, “part four different pueblos.” He attends the Native American Community Academy (NACA), an Albuquerque charter school that currently enrolls students from 29 tribes. Q likes NACA’s focus on community and the fact that teacher-mentors remain with the same students throughout their time at the school.

Q applied for the CURE program

because he wants to be involved in addressing the problem of chronic diseases in American Indian communities. He has started a dance group at NACA (his favorite dance types are hip-hop and “animation”) because he sees dance as a way to improve health and “ignore things we are faced with.” Q wants to expand the group because he’s observed that the students to whom he has taught dancing have “a new fire within them to learn.”

At the PRC, Q worked with Andrea Cantarero to create profiles of nearly 200 small communities in New Mexico with a high prevalence of risk factors for such health problems as cancer, diabetes, suicide, and tobacco use. Q enjoyed learning to work with databases containing a lot of information, but the best part of his PRC experience was “the support of the staff—Sally, Andrea, Theresa, and Emily.” At the end of the summer, Q presented a poster describing his work to the PRC staff.

Q plans to go to college somewhere outside of New Mexico—“to be somewhere different.” What about career plans? Said Q, “physical therapy, dance, or video-game design.” Meanwhile, he will be in the CURE program for another year and will continue to work at the PRC for a few days a week.

From the Editor

Welcome to *The Connection*, the newsletter of the UNM Prevention Research Center (PRC). The purpose of *The Connection* is to broaden communication among the PRC, the PRC’s Community Advisory Council (CAC), and the communities in which CAC members and PRC researchers work. Each issue of *The Connection* will be emailed to all CAC members, PRC faculty and staff, other community partners, UNM research partners and administrators, the network of 26 PRCs in the United States, funding agencies, elected officials, and others interested in the activities of the CAC and PRC. *The Connection* will also be posted on the PRC’s website. I am honored to be serving as Editor of *The Connection*, in consultation with Sally Davis, PhD, Director of the PRC. Sally and I invite and urge all CAC members to consider writing an article about a health promotion/disease prevention project, program, or community activity in which they are involved. Our aim is for *The Connection* to provide an equal balance of news about PRC activities and those of our CAC.

Joint Summit of UNM Centers Concerned with Health Disparities

Renée J. Robillard

Photo credit: Felipe Amaral



Brady Horn of the RWJF and Sally Davis of the PRC at the joint summit

The first “joint summit” of the PRC, the New Mexico Center for the Advancement of Research Engagement and Science on Health Disparities (NM CARES) at UNM, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Center for Health Policy at UNM, state officials, and others concerned with the human and financial costs of New Mexico’s high rates of chronic disease, obesity, and other health disparities was held on August 13, 2015, in the Science & Technology Park on UNM’s South Campus. The purpose of the summit was to forge a consortium of the three centers and other partners to address and advance the health status of New Mexicans through prevention, policy, and practice.

The summit was planned by Sally M. Davis, PhD, Director of the PRC; Robert L. Williams, MD, MPH, Director of NM CARES; and Gabe Sanchez, PhD, Executive Director of the RWJF Center. Administrative support for the event was provided by Denise Ruybal, Crystal Krabbenhoft, Leslie Trickey, Linda Beltran, Felipe Amaral, Antoinette Maestas, Nicole Krawic, and Connie Biemer. Leslie, the PRC’s unit administrator, had a 100% success rate in getting speakers to adhere to the 5-minute limit for their presentations. Felipe, the PRC’s instructional media specialist, ably handled the projector, microphones, and audio recording. Linda, a science research administrator at the PRC, provided photography services.

The summit began with self-introductions by all attendees—approximately 80 people, including researchers and staff at the three centers and aides for US Senator Tom Udall and US Representatives Ben R. Luján, Michelle Lujan Grisham, and Steve Pearce. Each director then provided a brief overview of the structure, goals, and funding of his or her center. This was followed by presentations, given by the researchers involved, on three specific projects that are under way or have recently been completed. The format for the afternoon was similar, except that five projects per center were presented, followed by “rolling round tables” that allowed all attendees to interact with each speaker for about 10 minutes. The interactions were usually enthusiastic and often included multiple exchanges of contact information as a first step toward possible collaboration.

During lunch, the summit welcomed Retta Ward, MPH, Cabinet Secretary, NM Department of Health (NMDOH). Secretary Ward spoke about the NM State Health Improvement Plan, which was published in May 2104 and outlines strategies for addressing 10 priority health issues in the state. She also discussed the NM Health System Innovation model, which is being developed by NMDOH and the NM Human Services Department with funding from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The model will use a triple-aim approach: enhancing patients’ experience of care, reducing health care costs, and improving population health. Model design is proceeding with input from hundreds of collaborators, including community and tribal partners, who are serving on committees and work groups.

Summit attendees and speakers represented an exceptionally broad spectrum of disciplines: prevention, family and community medicine, economics, health policy, environmental health, political science, psychology, sociology, health education, pharmacy, oncology, nutrition, epidemiology, and more. In addition, many of the speakers were graduate or medical students, indicating that the passion for addressing health disparities has already been passed down to the next generation of researchers.

For a complete list of summit speakers and their topics, please email Leslie Trickey at LETrickey@salud.unm.edu.

Report from the Field: Survey Time in Cuba Again this Year!

Emily A. Lilo

The last week in August and first week in September are always survey time for the PRC's core project, Village Interventions and Venues for Action (VIVA), in Cuba, NM. The weather was excellent this year; the sun shined every day but one, when we had a few sprinkles but no big storm.

Photo credits: Alejandro Ortega



Emily Lilo, PRC Associate Scientist (left), surveys a resident of Cuba, NM

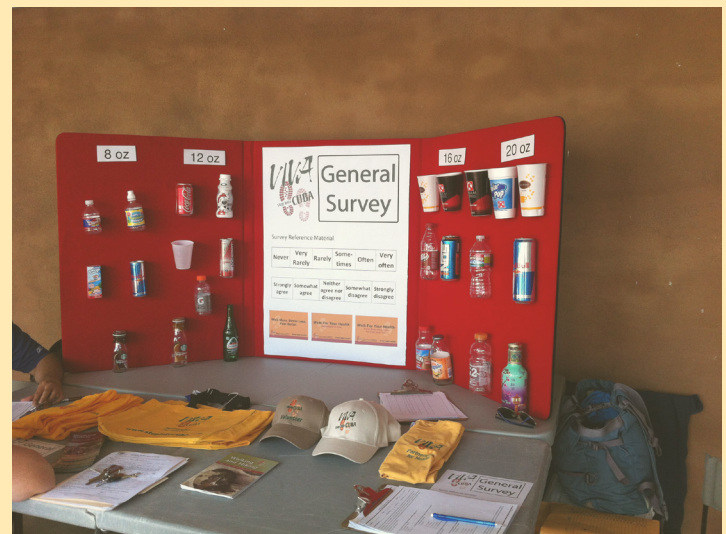
Residents of Cuba know by now that if they see us sitting in front of various locations around town—the Public Health Office, Village of Cuba Office, Mickey's Save-Way, or Family Dollar—we want their input. This year, Alejandro Ortega and I spent 6 days interviewing folks, collecting their opinions about healthy lifestyles. The survey is offered only to those who live or work in Cuba or within 5 miles of the village, so we always have many disappointed people who want to give us their opinions but are ineligible because they are from much farther afield. In fact, because Mickey's is the only full-service grocery store carrying fresh produce between Farmington and Bernalillo, some people travel up to 60 miles to shop in Cuba.

This year's survey was a little different from those done previously because of the progression from the original VIVA-Step Into Cuba project to VIVA II in the PRC's new funding cycle. The initial project focused primarily on increasing venues for physical activity. Although VIVA II continues to address

physical activity, we are expanding our efforts to encourage drinking more water and fewer sweet drinks and to use the New Mexico Department of Health's QUIT NOW program for tobacco cessation. We thus have a new set of questions that ask about what people normally drink and a new giant drink display that attracted a lot of attention from passers-by. We also added questions to find out whether people are aware of QUIT NOW and the services it provides.

People who take our survey get a free VIVA-Step Into Cuba cap, T-shirt, tote bag, or fan. This year, adults of all ages (18 to 75 years of age and older) participated. Many people stayed around to chat, particularly the senior citizens, who enjoyed telling us stories about the old days in Cuba.

Thanks for sharing with us, until next year. . .



General survey display of sample drink sizes and gifts



PRC CONDUCTS THE NEW MEXICO YOUTH RISK AND RESILIENCY SURVEY

Renée J. Robillard and Linda Peñaloza

This fall, as in the fall of every odd-numbered year since 2003, the New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (YRRS) is being conducted by a team at the PRC in partnership with the NM Department of Health (NMDOH) and the NM Public Education Department. The YRRS assesses the health risk behaviors and resiliency (protective) factors of high school and middle school students in the state. It is part of the national Centers for Disease Control Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, but its results have widespread benefits for New Mexico at the state, county, and school-district levels. According to Linda Peñaloza, PhD, who heads PRC's YRRS team, the survey provides the only comprehensive surveillance and



Photo credit: Felipe Amara

The PRC YRRS team prepares a survey for shipping to a school

epidemiology data on health behaviors of NM high school and middle school students. Data from the YRRS are used by thousands of organizations to plan—and obtain funding for—public health work involving NM youth.

The YRRS questionnaire, which students complete voluntarily, anonymously, and with parental consent, includes up to about 100 questions on alcohol and drug use, unintentional injury, violence, suicidal ideation and attempts, tobacco use, sexual activity, physical activity, and nutrition; resiliency factors such as relationships in the family, school, community, and with peers; and health status issues such as body weight and asthma. Most of the questions remain the same from year to year, but a few are added, and others are removed, each time the YRRS is given. This year, the survey contains new

questions on use of e-cigarettes and flavored tobacco, hours of sleep, and helpful friends.

Students complete the survey in a single class period, often taking about 20 to 45 minutes. Volunteer in-school survey coordinators and the students' teachers receive gift certificates to thank them for their help. The YRRS is offered to all 89 NM school districts. This year, 80 accepted, and the survey will be conducted in 68 middle schools and 149 high schools. An average of 150 to 200 students in each school complete the survey—a total of more than 9,000 middle school and 22,000 high school students. Conducting the YRRS is a huge undertaking that includes obtaining permission to administer the survey from school superintendents, scheduling the survey day, preparing the survey materials, getting the materials to the schools on time and the completed surveys back to the PRC, cleaning up the answer sheets for scanning, meeting with the YRRS steering committee, and more. Fortunately, the PRC YRRS team—Linda Peñaloza, Eric Chrisp, Courtney FitzGerald, Erinn Flynn, Laura Gutman, Danielle Mascareñas, Marlene Muñoz, Karen Lopez, and Leslie Trickey—is energetic and dedicated.

After all the pencils have been put away, data analysis begins. PRC and NMDOH staff work together to process the enormous amount of information gathered and to report it to the school districts and others as soon as possible.

The monthly YRRS newsletter, *YRRS Connections*, which is produced at the PRC by Linda Peñaloza, Courtney FitzGerald, and Laura Gutman, is one way in which the data are distributed. The newsletter covers one topic each month. *YRRS Connections* and the YRRS findings from 2003 to 2013 are available at www.youthrisk.org.

The PRC YRRS team has also been involved in a pilot program called the Risk/Resiliency Assessment Project for Students (RAPS). RAPS engages students in using and understanding YRRS health data to improve their own health and that of their community. The project included a photography component in NM high schools. Students who participated took the beautiful, evocative, thoughtful photographs that graced the walls of the PRC office all summer.

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The Connection is published by the Prevention Research Center (PRC), Prevention & Population Sciences, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. The purpose of *The Connection* is to provide reports and updates on programs of the PRC and those of its Community Advisory Council and other partners.

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The University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center (UNM PRC) is one of 26 PRCs funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The mission of the UNM PRC is to address the health promotion and disease prevention needs of New Mexican communities through community- and evidence-based research. The PRC fulfills this mission through collaboration, training, dissemination, implementation, and evaluation activities.

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