



# HealthCorps Happenings

**March 2013**

**Special points of interest:**

- Learn more about the special events HealthCorps members participate in.
- Meet Melissa, our newest HealthCorps member!
- What projects are HealthCorps members working on?  
Read all about them!

**Inside this issue:**

- Meet Melissa, Our 2  
Newest HealthCorps Member
- AmeriCorps 2  
Week is Coming Up!
- Reading and Dis- 2  
cussion with Dr. Bryant Williams
- What's the Breast 3  
Way?
- Too Sweet and 3  
Gay: LGBTQ Diabetes
- That's a RHAP, 3  
Folks!
- What is 4  
Community HealthCorps?

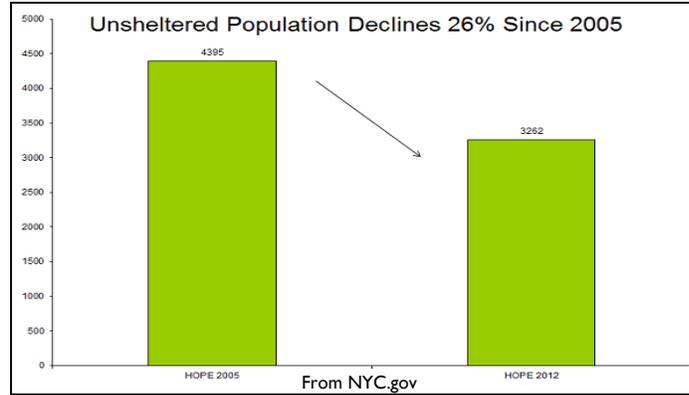
## Raising HOPE

On the night of January 28th, Institute HealthCorps members could be found walking the streets of the Bushwick neighborhood in Brooklyn, NY survey-

ing the area for individuals who may not have a safe or warm place to sleep. HealthCorps members were not the only ones to attend; hundreds of city dwellers all over New York engaged in helping the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) to gather information, determining where to focus their efforts in reducing homelessness across all of New York City.

The Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE) was introduced in 2005, after the DHS noticed an incredible shortage of homeless services, and a lack of public knowledge around homelessness. By enlisting New Yorkers in volunteer efforts, a greater sense of accountability is formed, as well as an increased understanding of city-wide services. Since HOPE's inception, the number of homeless individuals living in public places has decreased by 26% from 4,395 to 3,262.

Twelve HealthCorps members attended this event, staying up 'til the wee hours; armed with



a clipboard, pens, warm clothing, coffee, and a police escort! They surveyed every person walking the streets, acknowledging that anyone could be experiencing homelessness. This event was a great experience, and a wonderful and challenging

time to get a better understanding of what it's like for people living on the streets. While members didn't cross paths with anyone requesting services, they still felt that they were making a difference, and raising awareness.

To learn more about HOPE, or to look into volunteer opportunities, check out their website:

<https://a071-hope.nyc.gov/hope/welcome.aspx>



Shara, Sarah, Desi, Melissa, Christine, & Allison

## Give it up for HealthCorps, class of 2012-2013!

### A word from our Program Coordinator, Miriam Wood

The Institute for Family Health is delighted to have Community HealthCorps members serving with our organization for the 2012-2013 program year. HealthCorps Navigators have been placed at various sites throughout the Institute for the past six years. They have become an integral part of our sites—providing necessary health education and vital support for many of our projects.

This year, two members are spearheading committees within our organization on Breastfeeding support and LGBTQ health. These committees would not be the same without our HealthCorps members. Other members are pioneering Diabetes Prevention Programs for patients and community members alike across a number of our sites. We would not be able to provide these, and many other

services, without our HealthCorps members!

In the 2012-2013 program year we have 17 full time members. Our members are driven, passionate young adults who have given a year of their lives to national volunteer service. The Institute for Family Health is extremely thankful for all of their hard work, commitment, and dedication to serving underserved communities.

## Meet Melissa, our Newest HealthCorps Member!



Melissa, a recent graduate of Psychology and Sociology at Stony Brook University, was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. She joined HealthCorps in December to take on the Transitions of Care position at the Institute, where she assists in directing patients to appropriate health services in their community, enabling them to remain at home, and ensuring that they do not return to the hospital after being discharged.

As part of this position, Melissa

participates in a home visiting program, traveling to the patient, rather than the patient traveling to the clinic. She says that often times that patients feel much more comfortable and are more likely to open up to her than in a clinic setting where everything is unfamiliar. She enjoys visiting with patients, and relishes the chance to see and hear their life stories.

Melissa notes that it can be difficult to be in the position of providing guidance and support,

while ultimately leaving health-care decisions to the patient. At the same time this is a wonderful chance to empower individuals to be in charge of their own healthcare!

When Melissa is not at work she enjoys reading, traveling, expanding her knowledge of cultures, languages, and religions, and discussing these topics with friends over a tasty meal! Melissa plans to return to school for a master's degree in Public Health Education, as well as a degree in Midwifery.

*“AmeriCorps Week will help to connect past and current members with one another as well as to communicate the impact that AmeriCorps has on communities, and on the nation as a whole.”*

## AmeriCorps Week is coming up (March 9-17)!

AmeriCorps Week takes place every year in March to acknowledge the tremendous work that is conducted by AmeriCorps volunteers around the country. This year's AmeriCorps Week theme, **AmeriCorps Works**, will help to connect past and current members with one another, as well as to communicate the impact that AmeriCorps has on communities, and on the nation as a whole. AmeriCorps members tackle

America's most difficult problems every day: Disaster Services, Education, Economic Opportunity, Healthy Futures, Veterans and Military Families, and Environmental Stewardship! HealthCorps members at the Institute for Family Health will be participating in a variety of events, including Hurricane Sandy Relief, healthy food surveys with a few other HealthCorps groups, and joining up with the Ryan-Chelsea Health-

Corps group and the Parks Department to help rehabilitate parks for the spring and summer months.



HealthCorps members participating in Reading and Discussion.

## Reading and Discussion

Reading and Discussion is a program that engages AmeriCorps volunteers in dialogue about the nature of service, justice, and the public good, helping them to reflect on why, how, and who they serve. Reading and Discussion at the Institute is funded by a grant through the New York Council for the Humanities.

HealthCorps members at the Institute participate in monthly discussions with Dr. Bryant

Williams, faculty in the Beth Israel Family Practice Residency program at the Institute. Curriculum has included writing by Ryan Williams, Jennifer Egan, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Charlotte Perkins Stetson, and Etheridge Knight.

A favorite reading for some of our members was *Cancerland*, by Barbara Ehrenreich, discussing the Susan G. Komen foundation and the impact of cancer on our society. This piece of

writing allowed for a great conversation about business ethics, and created a platform to discuss whether this type of enterprise was an effective and compassionate style for supporting those affected by breast cancer.

Recipients of this program enjoy hearing one another's perspectives on health and wellness, feel that it helps to prevent burnout, and assists in member connectedness.

## What's the Breast Way?

HealthCorps member, Allison Larimer, representing the second and third years of the Breastfeeding Education position, is leading the way in creating a Breastfeeding-Friendly Initiative for Health Centers at the Institute for Family Health! She provides education, counseling, and support services to new moms and families, as well as to employees at the Institute.

Last year, Allison worked with the Institute's Breastfeeding-Friendly Initiative to write an IRB proposal to develop a training program for all levels

of staff. This year, she has helped to implement the training curriculum, educating almost every Institute employee (about 1000!!!) on how to promote, counsel on, and support breastfeeding. The results of the pre and post training surveys are in the process of being evaluated, and it is hoped that there will be an increase in positive breastfeeding attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors. Allison is also working with a number of community groups, attending meetings, and helping to plan events and conduct outreach.

Allison has been very successful at getting staff trained at all levels, has been a strong leader in the community, and has providing breastfeeding support for many nursing mothers.

When asked about her position, she says that she feels truly blessed to have the opportunity to help women to feel empowered, meet their breastfeeding goals, and show off their beautiful babies.

This position is three years in, and the Institute looks forward to seeing more successes like this in the future!



## Too Sweet and Gay: Diabetes and the LGBTQ Community

Members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) community have specialized needs within the healthcare system. Many LGBTQ individuals experience discrepancies in the care they receive, directly related to discrimination and prejudice concerning their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Those who are LGBTQ identified are more likely to be uninsured, and more likely to delay seeking out medical care, meaning that they are less likely to receive regular check-ups, such as dia-

betes screenings. Some health risks that can lead to diabetes include: being overweight, smoking cigarettes, feeling depressed, drug and alcohol use, and psychological distress and chronic stress. While these are areas that elevate anyone's chances of becoming diabetic, LGBTQ communities are more likely to experience these risk factors and delay care.

For diabetes providers, and educators working with the LGBTQ community, including HealthCorps members, it's

important to keep in mind that this community has a history of oppression, and the best way to approach care is with sensitivity and understanding. While it may seem that the care provided shouldn't be any different, incorporating relevant LGBTQ health information can be greatly beneficial. The Institute's five diabetes HealthCorps members, and our LGBTQ health pilot program, are sure to raise awareness, and make a positive difference in the health and wellness of our LGBTQ patients.

*“Those who are LGBTQ identified are more likely to be uninsured, and more likely to delay seeking out medical care than their heterosexual counterparts.”*

## That's a RHAP, Folks!

Lia, our Women's Health Advocate HealthCorps member, participates in a number of projects at the Institute.

Three days a week, Lia works with the Attendings and Residents at the Procedure Clinic, providing Doula support to patients who may benefit from support and more information regarding their procedure, or who may be especially nervous. This usually takes place during IUD insertions, but can be

made available for other procedures as well. She keeps track of all IUD and implant insertions and assists in making this available to our billing department and our grant funders, to ensure that this free service remains accessible to patients.

In addition, Lia is assisting with multiple research studies, working to keep documentation up to date, to make sure that surveys are accurate, and that compensation is given to

the patient.

She writes and develops the Contraceptive Pearl, a monthly evidence based contraceptive-focused e-article available through the Reproductive Health Access Project website.

As is evident, Lia is a very busy HealthCorps member; this incredible opportunity is sure to provide Lia with the education and skills to help her complete her future career goals in adolescent reproductive health!





Institute for Family Health  
 16 E. 16th St  
 New York, NY 10003  
 Miriam Wood,  
 Program Coordinator  
 Phone: 212-633-0800 ext 1379  
 mwood@institute2000.org

For more information visit the HealthCorps blog!  
[www.ifhhealthcorps.blogspot.com/](http://www.ifhhealthcorps.blogspot.com/)

This newsletter was written and designed by Community HealthCorps member, Alia Gehr-Selover, and edited by Program Coordinator, Miriam Wood.

"I know my experience will help me to become a more thoughtful and compassionate provider - to be more aware of how my patients' background and resources can affect their access to care and their ability to be "compliant" with medical recommendations." — Christie

"Being in HealthCorps has helped me a lot in achieving my career goals. Being able to work directly with patients without having a medical degree is a great way to experience what being a medical provider is like." —Dede

"I am proud to serve my country and it's a good feeling to contribute back to my community!" — Jourdan

"HealthCorps is giving me valuable experience and knowledge to be a more qualified young health professional in order to address the challenges in health care coming ahead." —Luis

"HealthCorps has enabled me to work one on one with adolescents. They're my favorite people to talk to and I sometimes think that I can learn more from them instead of the other way around. This work has given me unique experiences that I wouldn't have been able to get anywhere else." —Lianne

"I have learned so much more about the conditions that underserved communities face on a regular basis and what is currently being done to help alleviate these problems." — Kelechi

"By being a HealthCorps member you are given a tremendous amount of responsibility, direct patient care opportunities, and an experience not many others can say they've had." — Sarah

"Never in one million years did I think I'd learn as much as I have personally, financially, and career wise as I have learned in my 2 years with HealthCorps." — Allison



"These opportunities have helped me grow personally and professionally and will certainly be useful as I move forward with my career." — Christine

## What is a Community HealthCorps Member?

Founded in 1995, Community HealthCorps is the largest growing health-focused national AmeriCorps program. Community HealthCorps works with young people interested in gaining experience in health-care fields, and who are interested in pursuing health related careers. Members are placed with a specific initiative, spearheading projects within that initiative. The Institute for Family Health has implemented Community HealthCorps positions in a variety of health fields: Diabetes Education, Breastfeeding Education, Prenatal Education, Reproductive Health, School-based Health, LGBTQ Health, Homeless Care, Health Outreach, and Care Management. While members gain skills in their



Ranisha listens to Shara and Christine read a story during MLK day

project areas, they also develop a better understanding of what it's like to work in a large non-

profit health organization, developing professional skills, furthering their education and career aspirations, and getting opportunities throughout the year to attend and participate in conferences, events, programming, and volunteer opportunities.

