



A New Kind of Training: **CULTIVATING ADVOCACY LEADERS IN EVERY COMMUNITY**

By Amanda Pears and Lynn Williams

In 2010 NACHC initiated the Advocacy Leadership Program (ALP) to develop and cultivate the skills of health center advocates in building a stronger grassroots movement on behalf of America's Health Centers and their patients. ALP was launched as a six-month learning program to develop the skill sets for effective advocacy leadership covering a broad swath of topics from basic advocacy and understanding the legalese and procedures of policymaking, to voter registration as well as the application of new social media and video tools in advocacy. The program was open to all health center staff as well as board members, patients and volunteers – in addition to existing advocates interested in updating and enhancing their advocacy skills sets.

The inaugural class of the ALP gathered for a daylong session at the NACHC Policy and Issues Forum last March. The intensive session included advocacy strategies and tactics and application and discussion of case studies led by the NACHC Advocacy Team. Participants left the session ready to begin work at home and committed to meeting the program's goals and specific requirements:

- Participation in four to five advocacy training webinars focused on National Health Center Week, Social Media, Voter Registration, Advocacy and the Media, and Video Editing;
- Creation of an Individual Advocacy Action Plan to be implemented at their health center upon completion of the program webinars; and
- Submission of an advocacy video project communicating some aspect or component of their advocacy training.

The first official graduating class of the ALP has been designated *Advocacy Masters*. NACHC's Advocacy Team and graduates applaud the success of the program. Stan Chavis, a Board Member at Franklin Primary Health Center in Mobile, AL and recent graduate of the ALP remarked, "[The ALP] helped me to better tell our story...especially to people I now ask to become advocates." Stan recently was a featured speaker at a session for the second ALP class, held during this year's NACHC Community Health Institute in San Diego. Chavis shared his advocacy experiences and a video he made that captured his health center's National Health Center Week celebratory golf tournament — showcasing sponsors, golfers and staff of Franklin Primary Care Center.

Another powerful benefit of the Advocacy Leadership Program has come in the form of shared advocacy leadership among health center executive staff and board members. Dennis Kruse, Chief Executive Officer of Family Care Health Centers in St. Louis, MO, was part of ALP's inaugural class along with Abbie Kennedy, a board member from his organization. "Getting a board member active has been a real benefit of this program," said Kruse. Kennedy spearheaded a complete story-bank project for the health center, featuring patients recommended by health center doctors and front desk staff. One long-time patient and community member's moving story was of surviving cancer showing "the health center has partnerships for all the care you need... The whole (ALP) process was useful," she said. "It's a way that board members can get involved and help out, and cross over to work closely with staff."

Others in the first graduating class have expressed similar sentiments regarding the value of the ALP. Willie Matis, Development/Marketing Coordinator at HealthNet, Inc., in Indianapolis, IN, had experience in social media and blogging before ALP, but now has been able to engage more active support from health center staff after having featured them in a video celebrating their work during National Health Center Week. "I'm getting a lot of feedback from staff realizing social media is an advocacy tool and that's worth a ton," he said. "It will help us reach a broader on-line base."

Marc Wetherhorn, NACHC's National Advocacy Director summed up the importance of the program saying, "Powerful grassroots advocacy requires effective grassroots leaders who are able to go home ready to lead and recruit other advocates. Developing that kind of leadership is why we need the ALP."

With no shortage of challenges facing the Health Center Program, health center grassroots advocacy has become more important than ever. With one ALP class graduated, another in progress and a third planned for next year's Policy and Issues Forum, a new cohort of advocacy leaders is helping to power the charge in their communities to ensure the ongoing viability of community health centers and access to affordable and cost-effective health care for all Americans.

The Advocacy Leadership Program will be offered again at the Policy & Issues Forum, March 21 – 25, 2012, in Washington, D.C. It is open to anyone involved with or recommended by a community health center. A small fee and advance registration are required. For more information contact Yvette Ammerman, Associate Director, Western Operations at (505) 252-0872 or yammerman@nachc.org.

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2011 ADVOCACY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM GRADUATES

POLICY & ISSUES FORUM CLASS

- Ellen Adlam, Board Member, Peninsula Community Health Services, Soldotna, AK
- Diana Ames, Board Member, Community Health Net, Erie, PA
- Gloria Brown, Executive Administrative Assistant, Piedmont Health Services, Carrboro, NC
- Howard Castay, Board Member, Teche Action Board, Inc., Franklin, LA
- Stan Chavis – Board Member, Franklin Family Health Center, Mobile, AL
- Marsha Conroy, Director of Policy & Advocacy, Aunt Martha's Youth Services, Olympia Fields, IL
- Edward Delone, Sr, Board Member, Teche Action Board, Inc, Franklin, LA
- Alfreida B. Edwards, Executive Assistant, Teche Action Board, Inc, Franklin, LA
- Cleveland Farlough, Board Member, Teche Action Board, Inc, Franklin, LA
- Abbie Kennedy, Board Member, Family Health Care Center, Saint Louis, MO
- Renée Louzon-Benn AZ, Director of Community Outreach, Sun Life Family Health Center, Casa Grande, AZ
- Debra Markley, Project Coordinator, Piedmont Health Services, Carrboro, NC
- Willie Matis, Marketing & Development Coordinator, HealthNet, Inc., Indianapolis, IN
- Melanie Mudrinich, Public Relations Coordinator, The Primary Health Network, Sharon, PA
- Warren Scott Parker – Director of Collaboration, Western North Carolina Community Health Services, Asheville, NC
- Tina Tvedt, Grants & Policy Administrator, North Coast Clinics Network, Eureka, CA
- Rich Watson, Board President, Columbia Valley Community Health, Wenatchee, WA
- Leroy Willis, Board Member, Teche Action Board, Inc., Franklin, LA