

URBAN HEALTH RESEARCH

THE DIRTY TRUTH: ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO HEALTH IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

MAYOR FRANKLIN TAKES PERSONAL INTEREST

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The Dirty Truth Campaign (DTC) represents a group of residents of Neighborhood Planning Unit-V (neighborhoods in Atlanta near Turner Field) and partner organizations who want an end to the trash, construction debris and vacant properties that are plaguing the community.

The Dirty Truth Campaign was born out of the Accountable Communities: Healthy Together grant and the Photovoice intervention. The mission of the DTC is to bridge residents and policymakers to improve the health and quality of life of residents of NPU-V. The Campaign is committed to eradicating trash, construction debris, and vacant properties in NPU-V that contribute to poor health, crime, and unaffordable housing.

In 2006, approximately 20 residents of NPU-V used a process called Photovoice (see www.photovoice.com) to take pictures, tell stories, and reach policymakers about the issues that concern them the most. The theme that kept resurfacing was the impact of the built environment on residents' quality of life. The technical assistance request to The Neighborhood Data Advisory Group revealed that 1296 vacant or unoccupied properties exist in NPU-V, representing 42% of all properties.

An additional component of the ACHT intervention was a calling campaign. Assisted by Dr. Alayna Blash, Partnership for Urban Health Graduate Research Assistant, Ms. Kimberly Austin, Institute of Public Health student, and other volunteers and residents participated in the "The Numbers Don't Work" project. Residents were asked to take pictures of properties that needed to be cleaned up,



Mayor Shirley Franklin (left) with Dr. Marshall Kreuter (right) and Dirty Truth Campaign volunteers at Earth Day in Grant Park.

report them to the appropriate City office via telephone, and track what happened (or did not happen) to the property over a 4 week period. Of the 21 properties that were reported, only 3 were abated during the campaign period. This campaign was able to heighten awareness regarding property code violations and underscored the need for better code enforcement by the City of Atlanta.

On Saturday, April 21, 2007, the DTC participated in the City of Atlanta's Arms Around Atlanta Earth Day Celebration. Volunteers conducted outreach at the Grant Park event to raise awareness of the impact of vacant and abandoned properties on the residents of NPU-V. The Dirty Truth Campaign members went through NPU-V giving out water bottles and asking residents and volunteers to sign their petition calling for more assertive code enforcement by the City of Atlanta. There was also a bus tour

on Friday, organized by IPH student Jessica Howell for policy makers, city officials and residents. Most of them did not know the extent of the problem of blight in NPU-V before hand. Some were emotionally moved by what they saw.

DTC members collected more than 300 signatures for the petition. Mayor Shirley Franklin was one of the first people to sign the petition. Mayor Franklin spoke with members of the Dirty Truth Campaign about the problem of abandonment and the environmental risks it causes to residents of NPU-V. She shared her insights on the many challenges faced by the City, including concerns about the high cost of code enforcement and the need to coordinate with other agencies when addressing critical health issues like the presence of rats and other vermin on vacant properties. When asked

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TEACHING URBAN HEALTH: IN AND OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

Each spring semester, the Institute of Public Health offers graduate students an opportunity to further explore the health of those living in urban areas. The Urban Health course (PH7300), currently taught by John Steward of IPH, offers that experience. It provides an overview of various urban populations and their related health issues and showcases the re-

search of the Partnership for Urban Health Research (PUHR). The class takes advantage of GSU's downtown location. Students experience firsthand the health concerns of urban dwellers in urban settings.

Some of the topics studied in the course included understanding the concept "urban," the built environment, the social environment, community-

based environmental health, violent crime, urban penalty, and urban advantage. Many class sessions were comprised of guest speakers from various agencies in the Atlanta area. They shared knowledge regarding real life challenges and rewards of working with urban populations.

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VOLKAN TOPALLI: A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF VIOLENCE



Dr. Volkan Topalli

Volkan Topalli, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Criminal Justice, has initiated a project to examine "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design" (CPTED). In cooperation with other faculty members Dr. Joel Meyers, Dr. Chris Henrich, and Dr. Gabe Kuperminc, Dr. Topalli was awarded a contract from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to determine the role of the school environment in preventing crime.

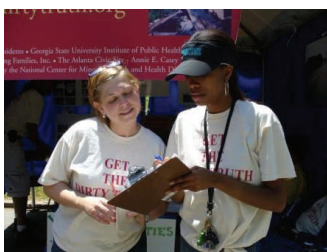
CPTED is a multi-disciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior. CPTED strategies rely upon the ability to influence offender decisions that precede criminal acts. It is based on the premise that some environments may promote or prevent violence. By developing built environment features designed to prevent violence, we may be able to prevent crime. CPTED was originally coined and formulated by criminologist C. Ray Jeffery in 1971 and has been emerging as an important concern. As of 2004, elements of the CPTED approach have

gained wide international acceptance due to law enforcement attempts to embrace it.

There are four strategies of CPTED: Natural Surveillance, Territorial Reinforcement, Natural Access Control, and Target Hardening. Natural surveillance increases the threat of apprehension by taking steps to increase the perception that people can be seen. Natural surveillance occurs by designing the placement of physical features, activities and people in such a way as to maximize visibility and foster positive social interaction among legitimate users of private and public space. Potential offenders feel increased scrutiny and limitations on their escape routes. Territorial reinforcement promotes social control through increased definition of space and improved proprietary concern. By using buildings, fences, pavement, signs, lighting and landscape to express ownership and define public, semi-public and private space, natural territorial rein-

forcement occurs. Natural access control limits the opportunity for crime by taking steps to clearly differentiate between public space and private space. By selectively placing entrances and exits, fencing, lighting and landscape to limit access or control flow, natural access control occurs. Target hardening is another CPTED principle that reinforces natural barriers. Tresses, fences and natural shrubbery are all examples of the use of target hardening.

Dr. Topalli's CPTED school survey will be used to rate the physical parts of the school which may have an impact on youth fear and aggressive behavior. This study will begin in the fall of 2009, and it will include several Georgia schools. Upon completion of this study, we may be able to determine which CPTED principles affect school violence the strongest, and provide recommendations for violence prevention in schools throughout Georgia and, possibly, nationwide.



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if she would be willing to meet with the DTC, Mayor Franklin indicated that she would provide the leadership in assuring that the right members of her office connected to the Campaign.

Update: Less than one week later, a young woman was raped near an abandoned house in the Pittsburgh section of NPU-V. This traumatic incident only reinforces the need for taking action to eliminate blight and dangerous conditions. To learn more "dirty truth" and about the Campaign, point your web browser to www.dirtytruth.org.

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Additionally, the class took field trips to the Atlanta Community Food Bank, DeKalb County Jail, Grady Hospital/Trauma and EMS, Decatur Housing Authority and the Atlanta Regional Health Forum. One class consisted of a "windshield tour" of NPU-V led by a community organizer, followed by a meeting with residents of NPU-V. Students were challenged to complete class projects to apply health promotion strategies to address a disparity within the community. This experience proved rewarding for the class, as they were able to work directly with the residents and community-based organizations. Projects included addressing the absence of a local grocery store, urban blight, and the hardships encountered by ex-offenders seeking employment.

This eye-opening course is recommended for any graduate student who has an interest in a real-world perspective on research and programs for urban communities.



JOHN STEWARD (SECOND FROM RIGHT) AND URBAN HEALTH STUDENTS (FROM LEFT) JENNIFER ZORLAND, CAROLYN REYNAUD, NATALIE WILKINS, ALAYNA BLASH, AND KIM AUSTIN TOUR GRADY HOSPITAL IN ATLANTA. THE CLASS HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE NEW AMBULANCES WITH THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY. GRADY'S EMS AND TRAUMA SERVICE ARE EXAMPLES OF THE "URBAN ADVANTAGE."

The class takes advantage of GSU's location downtown. Students experience firsthand the health concerns of urban dwellers, in urban settings.

FACULTY UPDATES

Dr. Jim Emshoff, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, has gathered a team of four graduate students and two undergraduates to evaluate the Education and Community Services Engagement Linkage (ECSEL) program, an intensive case management program for frequently institutionalized homeless persons with a serious mental illness. The innovative program at Grady Hospital, currently funded by the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta (UWMA), follows an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) based model in which clients are provided with housing and comprehensive services (e.g., psychiatric care, substance abuse counseling, psychological counseling, social work) within their own communities and settings. The evaluation uses an experimental and longitudinal design in which clients within the ECSEL program are being compared to clients obtaining treatment services as usual over time and are assessed on a variety of domains including, psychological well-being, housing and homelessness, incarceration and legal system involvement, substance use, quality of life, and physical health. Along with an evaluation of client outcomes, Dr. Emshoff and his team have been examining program processes (e.g., the nature of services provided to the clients) and the cost effectiveness of the program.

Dr. Erin Ruell, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, and PUHR, received a Faculty Mentored Award with **Dr. Kirk Elifson, Ph.D.**, for "Explaining Racial Health Disparities: The Effects of Community Racial History and Community SES."

Dr. Elizabeth Beck, Ph.D., Associate Professor, School of Social Work, has released a book entitled, *In the Shadow of Death: Restorative Justice and Death Row Families* with co-authors Sarah Britto and Arlene Andrews. She has also received a grant to start the Georgia Council for Restorative Justice.

Dr. Richard Rothenberg, MD, MPH joined the Institute of Public Health and the Partnership for Urban Health Research faculty on May 1st. With a strong career with CDC and Emory in his background, Dr. Rothenberg is rich in public health knowledge and research experience. He will bring with him the acclaimed *Annals of Epidemiology* for which he is the editor. Dr. Rothenberg's research interest is in the context of social networks and sexually transmissible diseases (STDs).

Dr. Derek Shendell, D.Env, M.P.H., AB, Assistant Professor, Institute of Public Health, was the invited speaker for the May 2007 meeting of the Healthy Places Research Group (HPRG) at the Georgia Tech Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development. Dr. Shendell, Danna Sanders, a graduate student research assistant, and Carla Jeffries, M.P.H., DeKalb County Board of Health, summarized the status of four projects. They focused on characterizing, quantitatively and qualitatively, built (physical) environment and chemical exposure factors including those related to urban sprawl. For project titles and more information, please see <http://publichealth.gsu.edu/research.asp>. HPRG meets the first Tuesday of each month at 7:30 - 9:00 a.m. For more information, see <http://www.cggrd.gatech.edu/hprg/index.php>.



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Richard Rothenberg,
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Update:

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About PUHR

The Partnership for Urban Health Research (PUHR) at Georgia State University represents a university-wide commitment focused on the amelioration of health disparities that confront urban communities. Launched in fall 2004, PUHR is an interdisciplinary urban health research program developed in partnership with the College of Health and Human Sciences, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the College of Law. Situated in the heart of Atlanta, Georgia State University is uniquely poised and has a vested interest in the health and well-being of the surrounding community, particularly the vulnerable populations who reside and work in underserved areas.

The Partnership is funded from the Provost's Areas of Focus Initiative. It provides resources for 16 tenure-track faculty and 30 graduate research assistants in the Colleges of Health and Human Sciences, Arts and Science, and Law. Research interests include Chronic Disease and Aging, HIV/AIDS and Infectious Disease, Injury and Violence, and Substance Abuse and Mental Health, as well as cross-cutting issues..

Mission:

The PUHR seeks to understand how the urban environment affects the health and well-being of people who reside and work in the metropolitan Atlanta area. We focus our efforts on populations that bear a disproportionate burden of illness and disease using an interdisciplinary approach to research. In partnership with surrounding communities, we will create and disseminate knowledge that is both meaningful and beneficial to the communities that participate in the process.

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EVENTS AND REMINDERS



Upcoming Events of Interest:

At Georgia State:

May 17, 2007
12noon–1pm
Urban Life Building, Room 170
Dr. Susan Bachrach, Ph.D
“Deadly Medicine: Creating the
Master Race”

May 30, 2007
9AM

749/750 Andrew Young
Building

“Disaster Management Work-
shop: Before Disaster Strikes:
Emergency Planning and
Preparedness”

Nationwide:

May 10, 2007
New York, NY

Women as the Face of AIDS: 2nd
Annual Iris House Summit on
Women Living with HIV/AIDS
[http://www.irishouse.org/
Summit2007.html](http://www.irishouse.org/Summit2007.html)

August 26– 28, 2007
Denver, CO

17th Annual CityMatch Urban
MCH Leadership Conference
[www.citymatch.org/Conference
2007](http://www.citymatch.org/Conference2007)

October 31 –
November 2, 2007
Baltimore, MD

6th Annual International Society
for Urban Health Conference
www.icuh2007.com

Reminders:

- ◆ Please continue to send updates on your research and events to Kimberly Glenn at kglenn1@student.gsu.edu
- ◆ If you or your department is sponsoring an event and you would like for PUHR to help spread the word, please contact either the PUHR Program Manager, John Steward (jsteward@gsu.edu) or Kimberly Glenn (kglenn1@student.gsu.edu)

