

Current information about the CHA/PA Physician Assistant Program at the University of Colorado Denver.

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## CHA/PA Newsletter

CHA/PA students are engaged in track activities that work with the underserved and provide health insurance education. Our Interim Director received a national PAEA award and graduates are making the news here in CO and beyond. Local schools have been visited by our students who have shared their knowledge and skills through CPR, health topic presentations, and one-on-one demonstrations. Students, faculty, and graduates have been involved in so many activities over the last months – read on to hear the details!



### A Student's Motivation for PA School

Sarah Davis did not take the direct route to becoming a Physician Assistant, despite having an early interest in medicine. One experience that had a profound impact on her



### Interim Director Jonathan Bowser Presented with the Rising Star Award

Interim Director Jonathan Bowser was presented with the Rising Star Award at the national PAEA conference in November. The Rising Star Award is given to a program faculty or staff member with three to seven

was the illness of her niece, Amberlyn. Amberlyn was hospitalized most of her short life due to biliary atresia, which is a life threatening condition in which the bile ducts inside or outside the liver do not have normal openings. As a junior in high school, Sarah visited little 11-month old Amberlyn at Children's Hospital in Seattle as often as she could. Sadly, Amberlyn ultimately passed away due to complications from a liver transplant. Witnessing the care that the health professionals provided to her niece and family further impassioned Sarah toward the medical field.

Yet, family expectations redirected Sarah to choose a different path out of high school. She obtained an undergraduate degree in Technical Sales and a master's degree in business with an emphasis in marketing. After working several years as a sales representative, sales director, and a marketing manager for a publishing firm on the east coast, Sarah found herself unsatisfied. She found outlets for her medical aspirations and desire to help the underserved where she could. While pursuing her MBA, she chose to participate in a volunteer project that focused on expanding a non-profit healthcare micro franchise in Ghana. Additionally, she spent time at the 4th Street Homeless Clinic in Salt Lake volunteering. Eventually, Sarah felt it was time for a change; life was too short to not do what you love. She opted to pursue a

years of service for demonstrated contributions or accomplishments in teaching, research or other scholarly activities, administration, and professional service.

According to the nomination letter from Celia Kaye, MD, PhD, senior associate dean, University of Colorado School of Medicine, the CHA/PA Program does not have teaching awards, but the students may honor faculty members with an invitation to be the class commencement speaker. Bowser has been selected four times for this honor. "He is a thoughtful and insightful human being, and he brings these qualities as well as patience, humor, and persistence to everything he does," wrote Kaye. "The students love and respect him, and the faculty members honor his dedication and leadership. We are tremendously fortunate to have him here, and I know he will continue to serve the profession, our school, his patients, and our students faithfully and well for a long time to come."



PA degree, rather than a MD as she had originally planned. She felt the PA field enabled her to help others, practice the art of medicine, and engage in a lifetime of learning and challenge—without some of the downfalls of other fields. The University of Colorado’s program interested her in particular, as it is a three year program that includes a year of rotations that provide extensive clinical experience and exposure. She joined the Class of 2015 in the summer of 2012. CHA/PA offers four track options, one of which is the CU–Unite track, which focuses on serving the uninsured and those with limited access to health care in urban areas. PA, MD, and Nurse Practitioner students work in teams on various topics that provide an understanding of healthcare disparities and inequities, the multifaceted role of the healthcare provider in urban communities, and the health issues of specific populations of patients in urban areas. Sarah chose to participate in the CU Unite track primarily based on her experiences volunteering at organizations like the 4th Street Homeless Clinic and the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program. Sarah encountered one gentleman during her time at the 4th Street Clinic who lacked consistent work, thus access to healthcare. He had been arrested many times for drugs and had suffered the life consequences of his decisions. Sarah found herself judging this man until she learned

## Sharing the Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Campaign with High Schoolers

Throughout this past fall semester, the CHA/PA Class of 2014 was hard at work initiating, developing and presenting Community Education Projects as part of our Professional and Clinical Practice course. Dividing the class into groups of four, our teams created and enhanced thirty-minute presentations, with topics ranging from Sport Related Concussions to Sexually Transmitted Infections. Teams then presented their projects to various venues within the greater Denver area. Ryan Candee, Chelsea Williamson, Luke Swank, and I collaborated with Jackie Sivahop, one of our amazing faculty members and pivotal co-creator of the Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Campaign. After researching the campaign and rehearsing the “Never Shake a Crying Baby” presentation, our team set out to speak to the sixth period health class at Green Mountain High School in Lakewood, CO. Our project went remarkably well, and by the end of the presentation, all of the students felt they had learned something new. Designed to develop our skills as health educators and inform the community of important topics, these projects served as an entertaining and educational tool to both parties. I greatly enjoyed the ability to educate on a medical topic in order to improve community health. I felt we

more about his life. He shared with her that he was introduced to drugs at thirteen by a parent. Sarah found herself humbled by his story and the stories of many others that she encountered.

Sarah is thriving in her first year at CHA/PA. She has found herself challenged and pushed intellectually, and she loves it. Yet, her favorite aspect of her time at CU has been the relationships that have developed with fellow students. “The thing I’ve enjoyed the most is the friends I’ve met! There are so many incredibly talented, intelligent, and great people in this program. I’m amazed every day by their stories, experiences, and accomplishments.”



### Affordable Care Act

Anna Christenson and Luke Swank are participants in LEADS, which is one of the four tracks CHAPA offers its students. This past semester they had the pleasure of developing a service project through LEADS, in partnership with students in the MD program. The project was a three-part lecture series which educated attendees about health care in the

learned so much through preparation, presentation, and working with each other, and I truly felt these projects ignited a small, but substantial, chain of spreading medical wealth.

If you have not done so already, please check out [calmacryingbaby.org](http://calmacryingbaby.org). This campaign is an incredible resource to both healthcare providers and patients—and will absolutely save lives.

**Lauren Vetter**  
**Class of 2014**



### Clinical Transformations

As part of the relatively new Interprofessional Education (IPE) curriculum, second year CHA/PA students are participating in Clinical Transformations, a simulation encounter that allows us to integrate with students across campus. I participated this fall and greatly enjoyed the experience! For this project, we were split into groups of five. My group consisted of medical, dental, nursing, and pharmacy students. We started off the day with training in TeamSTEPPS (Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety). This training taught us about team

United States. The first of these lectures was “Health Insurance 101,” and detailed the basics of how insurance came to exist in our country, the different types of plans that patients have (PPO, high deductible, HMO, etc.), and the cost schema associated with an episode of care (copays, lab fees, meeting out of pocket maximums, etc.). The second of the series focused on the health insurance exchange in Colorado. Advocates of this online resource believe that it will help to simplify the process of buying insurance and make it more accessible for all through subsidies and market competition. The final lecture addressed the details of Medicaid, with an emphasis on the pros and cons of coverage for different demographics. All students on campus were invited to these lunch lectures and the turnout was highly interprofessional in nature. Anna and Luke reflect on this experience as an opportunity to share knowledge with their peers and provide them with the tools to better understand barriers to care, advocate for the under or uninsured, and increase health literacy in their future patient populations.

structure, leadership, situation monitoring, mutual support, and communication. A skill I found helpful was the “check-back.” To do this, any verbal instructions are repeated and confirmed before performing the task. Sounds simple, but it’s an effective way to improve communication and minimize mistakes.

After the classroom portion of the day, the real fun began! We ran two patient scenarios in which we interacted with live actors and SimMan (an advanced robotic patient). The goal was to see how well we could apply our new TeamSTEPPS skills under the stress of a realistic patient case. Essentially, can you work together effectively to deliver the appropriate care? Even while our patient was having a heart attack, I have to say my team did quite well! In addition, we conducted team meetings before and after each simulation to plan and to discuss what went well and how we could improve.

I appreciated this exercise because it gave me an opportunity to explore my role as a PA. I greatly benefited by seeing how I will fit into a modern healthcare team of multiple specialties. This team approach can make difficult patient cases not only easier, but also more rewarding. You can learn more about the IPE curriculum [on their website](#).

**Hannah Sellnow  
Class of 2014**



### Food Drive for Chuck's Kids

This December, the Silver Society Community Service Committee orchestrated a food drive benefiting Chuck's Kids, a non-profit in the Aurora area. Started in 1986, Chuck's Kids has been collecting donations to give to families during the holidays. Each year, they pack more than 1,500 boxes of groceries and give each family a turkey, a gallon of milk, and ten pounds of potatoes. This year, the first and second year students along with their CHA/PA faculty "tributes" competed in a friendly, Hunger Games-themed food drive to collect groceries for the organization. Donations ranged from cans of soup to pasta, beans, rice, oatmeal, peanut butter and toothpaste. At the end of each day, donations were tallied and emails sent out to encourage more competition and thus more donations. The second year students got off to an early lead but the first years came back later in the week to give them a run for their money. In the end, the ultimate victors were the families who will enjoy the more than 220 items donated by generous CHA/PA students. Chuck's Kids was incredibly grateful at the amount of donations



### Sharing the PA Profession with At-Risk Youth

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee, along with around 30 other CHA/PA students, have been volunteering their time to do community outreach presentations. In an effort to raise awareness about the Physician Assistant profession and increase diversity on our campus, the committee decided to approach the task from square one, by educating kids. With the target audience of at risk youth, the committee teamed up with local organizations such as middle and high school AVID programs and The "I Have a Dream" Foundation. Multiple presentations were given to hundreds of 6-12th grade students. The presentations focused on encouraging the students to do well in school, attend college, explain what a Physician Assistant does, and how to become one. There were also some one-on-one demonstrations showing the students how to use a stethoscope and other tools a PA may use on a daily basis. Although the effects of these presentations will not be seen on our campus in the near future, we have already seen some promising evidence that we have

from the CHA/PA program and hope to work with us again next year.

**Kaitlin Ahern  
Class of 2014**



### **HANDDS Program**

CHA/PA students participated in the CU Denver HANDDS Program at the Paris Elementary Health Fair in late October. HANDDS stands for High Arrest Neighborhood to Decrease Disparities in Survival. This program is an interdisciplinary student organization that is also associated with the CU Emergency Medicine Department and the Denver Health Emergency Medicine Department. Neighborhoods have been identified in which there are higher than expected rates of cardiac arrest and low rates of bystander CPR. The primary mission of the HANDDS Program is to help combat these statistics through educating the community regarding sudden cardiac arrest and hands-only CPR. In addition to taking this direct approach, students are also working on numerous other projects to improve the health of our

made a small impact.

We began doing the presentations last spring of 2012, and have only received positive feedback from both the kids and CHA/PA students who were involved. With future presentations already scheduled for this semester, we are looking forward keeping the program going, and hopefully, someday seeing a few of those kids in the clinic with us as our future colleagues.

**Chelsea Williamson  
Class of 2014**



### **Calling All CHA/PA Graduates**

Are you interested in helping to determine who is accepted into the CHA/PA program? We could use more graduate volunteers who are interested in reviewing applicant files. The only requirement is that you graduated in 2009 or earlier. You can review files from the comfort of your own home! The commitment is only about a half hour a week over the summer and fall. Interested? Email Kay Denler at [pa-info@ucdenver.edu](mailto:pa-info@ucdenver.edu) and she will give you more details.

surrounding communities. HANDDS has many ongoing projects, such as teaching hands-only CPR and basic first aid, educating low income families on healthy shopping choices while staying on a budget, and hosting an annual coat drive and canned food drive for Servicios de la Raza.



### AAPA Annual Conference

We will be having a CHA/PA Alumni Reception at this year's AAPA conference in May. More details to follow!



### Denver Post Profiles CHA/PA's Oral Health Curriculum

The Denver Post profiled CHA/PA's oral health curriculum in their article "CU Physician Assistant Program among nation's pioneers for dental education". Kelly Gann, a CHA/PA graduate, shared her experience with dental care at the Salud Family Health Center. Additionally, our Director Jonathan Bowser discussed the importance of dental training. "Physician assistants are often the first line of defense — and education — for



### Health Begins at Home

J'nelle (Harvey) Ruscetti, Class of 1997, works at Wilmington Health's office in Porters Neck, NC. She launched an eight-week program called Family Fitness Challenge to help families learn and practice behaviors that promote healthy weight and physical fitness. The Family Fitness Challenge is based on SuperSized Kids, a program in Ruscetti's native Colorado. Find out more about her efforts in the [Wilma Magazine article](#).



### CH/PA on Facebook

["Like" us on Facebook](#) to keep up with developments here at the CHA/PA program!



Samantha Kisicki, Hannah Sellnow, and Kelli Cooper at the Jingle Bell 5k to benefit

the poor, who may not normally visit a dentist and seek services such as cleaning or fluoride varnishes," noted Bowser. [Read the article](#) for more information about the importance of oral health care training and the organizations that made it possible.

the Arthritis Foundation

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