Grants & Awards

The Adolescent Education Program/Teens Helping Each Other received a $20,000 renewal grant from the Church Avenue Merchants Block Association (CAMBA) to continue its peer-led sex education and prevention services to at-risk teens residing in Crown Heights and Flatbush. Christine Rucker, MA, is the Project Director.

The Educating People at Risk (EPAR) project of the STAR Program has been awarded $908,424 over 3 years, beginning March 1, 2007, from the Medical and Health Research Association of NYC, Inc. The purpose of the grant is to provide community-based rapid HIV testing and to facilitate entry into care for those identified as HIV+.

Jayashree Ravishankar, MD, is the Project Director.

The Family, Adolescent and Children’s Experience at SUNY (FACES) Network (Birnbaum, PI) was awarded $1,680,744 in Ryan White Title IV Women, Infants, Children and Youth (WICY) renewal funding.

The Health and Education Alternatives for Teens (HEAT) Program (Birnbaum, PI) received three renewal grants: 1) $385,000 from the Ryan White Title IV Youth Services Initiative; 2) $375,000 for its Specialized Care Center from the NYS Department of Health AIDS Institute; and 3) renewal funding of $119,963 over two years from CDC/WESTAT for the Longitudinal Epidemiologic Study to Gain Insight into HIV/AIDS in Children and Youth (LEGACY), a nationwide study enrolling 3,000 children, adolescents and young adults from birth to age 24 infected with HIV who are followed in HIV pediatric and adolescent specialty clinics in order to assess trends in disease progression, complications of HIV infection or treatment, and monitor potential factors related to secondary transmission in adolescents.

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STARS HEALTH CENTER OPEN HOUSE

Dr. Jack A. DeHovitz (1st row, second from left) and staff in the new STAR Health Center location in Suite J, on the 1st floor of University Hospital. Photo, M. Lainez.

IN A POST LABOR DAY CELEBRATION, THE STAR HEALTH CENTER (SHC) BRIGHTENED THE WAINING DAYS OF SUMMER WITH AN OPEN HOUSE ON SEPTEMBER 5, 2006. The event marked the relocation of the SHC from Nursing Station 72 on University Hospital’s 7th floor to Suite J on the 1st floor, where SHC joins a host of ambulatory care programs in the Outpatient Department. Prior to the SHC’s move, the space was occupied by Ophthalmology, which has moved to University Hospital’s Midwood Health Center satellite facility. The beautifully renovated Suite J is now home to both Otolaryngology and the SHC. SHC patients and staff are now in close proximity to other medical subspecialty services as well as to the cafeteria and public transportation on Clarkson Avenue. Many patients have described the new space as being more convenient.

Led by Dr. Jack A. DeHovitz, the STAR Program maintains a research, health care, and outreach enterprise in Brooklyn that is recognized for excellent performance at city, state, and federal levels. Alexa Kazim, Administrative Director of SHC and Adult HIV Services, whose vision and stewardship contributed greatly to the success of the move, spearheaded the transition. Visitors from Kings County Hospital Center, CNR Healthcare, Caribbean Women’s Health Association, the NYS Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), and other internal and external facilities toured the new clinic.

SERVING LIFE’S REAL DEALS ON WHEELS ✪

“Free HIV testing, results in 20 minutes!”
“Free Condoms, Male and Female!”
“Condom Demonstrations, Male and Female!”
“Ladies, learn how to protect yourselves. You do have a choice.”
“Get your free HIV test, no waiting, results in 20 minutes.”

These are just a few of the phrases used to attract people during outreach activities from a mobile unit on loan from SUNY Downstate’s Asthma (Continued, page 2)
Center of Excellence which the STAR Health Center uses for HIV testing. Since its “maiden voyage” in front of Costco on June 27, 2006 (National HIV Testing Day), over 125 HIV tests have been conducted on the mobile unit. One such event, which was held outside of Albee Square Mall, was so successful (51 persons tested), that a return date was planned before the mobile unit left the premises.

Comments from persons being tested included: “I don’t have to take time off from work to do this;” “It’s great that I don’t have to wait two weeks anymore;” “I’m a little scared, but since you’re right here, I may as well do it;” and “Are you going to be here next week? I’m going to tell my friend to come and get tested.”

In addition to the appeal of obtaining HIV test results in just 20 minutes (using the rapid test), the condom demonstrations, particularly those of female condoms, proved to be quite popular. At least 80% of the women had never seen or even heard of a female condom, and the vast majority of those who did had no idea how to use it.

The need for this type of outreach is evident from the vast numbers tested and overwhelmingly positive community response. Getting the message out that HIV testing saves lives is the mission and goal of the SHC Mobile Outreach Team, whose motto is: “If you can’t or won’t come to get the ‘real deal,’ we will wheel the real deal to you.” SHC Mobile Outreach Team Members include: Mary A. Crymes, RN; Carolyn Ferdinard, Garry Graham, MA, CASAC; Tracey Griffith; Ellen Honey, LMSW; Sean Lowe; Pam Neely. Standby team members include: Patricia DiFusco, RN; Alexa Kazim, MPA; and Jayashree Ravishankar, MD.
Michelle Mullany, MSW, joined the STAR Program as a Trauma Counselor in August 2006. Her duties include working with women who have experienced psychological trauma or interpersonal violence, as well as leading support groups. Ms. Mullany received her Bachelor of Science in Social Work from George Mason University and her Master of Social Work from the University of Pennsylvania.

Pamela Neely, Community Liaison Worker, Educating People at Risk (EPAR), was recently appointed to the NYS HIV Prevention Planning Group.

Edeline Renois-Dure joined the STAR Program as an HIV Counselor in the Emergency Department Rapid HIV Testing Program. She has a Bachelor’s degree from CUNY and is currently attending NYU School of Social Work. Previously, she worked at Little Flower Children and Family Services as a Family Care Case Worker.

Magna A. Robinson, MA, LMHC, CASAC, ADS, obtained her Mental Health Counselor’s License from the NYS Department of Education in July 2006. Ms. Robinson has worked as a Senior Counselor in the STAR Health Center since 2003, where she specializes in substance abuse and psychiatric issues.

Joni Watson joined the Adolescent Education Program as a Program Assistant. Ms. Watson has a Bachelor of Science degree from Brooklyn College in Health and Nutrition Science. She previously volunteered with the Teens Helping Each Other (THEO) Peer Education Project as a Community Health Intern. She plans to attend Hunter College next fall in preparation for medical school.

Jameela Yusuff, MD, has recently joined the STAR Health Center as an attending physician. Dr. Yusuff earned her medical degree from Mount Sinai School of Medicine. She also recently completed an Infectious Diseases fellowship at Beth Israel Medical Center. Dr. Yusuff is very active in medical journalism and contributes regularly to the Guyana Monitor, a newspaper serving the Guyanese community. She is proud to join SUNY Downstate and looks forward to meeting and working with her new colleagues.

### HIV CENTER STAFF PUBLICATIONS


The HIV Center will soon distribute the HIV Link electronically. If you are interested in remaining on our mailing list, please send your email address, along with your name and mailing address, to hivcenter@downstate.edu

For the HIV/ID Seminar Series and the latest employment opportunities visit our website at: www.hivcenter.org

Drs. Sheldon Landesman (PI) and Hermann Mendez (Co-PI) have been awarded approximately $550,000/year (exact amount being determined) for 4 years from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) to participate in the Pediatric HIV/AIDS Cohort Study Surveillance Monitoring for Antiretroviral Treatment Toxicities (SMARTT). This study will assess long-term potential for anti-retroviral induced mitochondrial toxicity in HIV negative infants and children given anti-retrovirals to prevent perinatal HIV infection.