

THIS WEEK
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MC's new Area Health Education Center meets challenges of rural healthcare

BY NANCY THORNE
Public Information Department

There is a shortage of healthcare providers in Texas that is predicted to worsen as the baby boomers retire. MC has always been adept in addressing the healthcare needs of the Permian Basin and with the recent acquisition of the Permian Basin Area Health Education Center (AHEC), the college furthers that mission. The four women of the Permian Basin AHEC—Elisa Williford, Patty Murphy, Ann Houston and Pam Cotte—are doing everything in their power to assist the medically underserved areas of rural West Texas.



The Permian Basin AHEC team, from left, Center Director Elisa Williford, Health Career Coordinator Ann Houston, Community Based Education Coordinator Patty Murphy and "Girl Friday" Pam Cotte

AHEC's Health Care Coordinator Ann Houston works to promote healthcare careers with junior high and high school students in 27 counties. She does this through their "Hands-on Science" program, Health Career Camps and Job Shadow/Mentoring programs. The goal is to give students real-world, hands-on experience in healthcare careers, and thereby encourage them to enter a healthcare profession once they finish high school.

Patty Murphy, AHEC's Community Based Education Coordinator, calls herself a "clinical liaison," as she works with college students to promote health careers and helps place medical students into their clinical rotations in hospitals all over Texas. Once medical students have finished their education, it is key for the AHEC staff to have doctors and nurses seriously considering a career in the Permian Basin.

AHEC Center Director Elisa Williford is savvy to the challenges rural areas face when hiring doctors and nurses. Young medical residents are often lured by the bigger cities, perceiving that such places offer more excitement and money. What they might not know, however, is how attractive offers can be from rural hospitals. In addition to offering salaries competitive with larger markets, many will offer "forgiveness loans"

in which they repay the doctor's medical school loans ... no small matter considering most medical school debts are between \$100,000 - \$200,000.

AHEC hosts "Health Matches" so that representatives from rural communities may meet face-to-face and make offers to Texas Tech medical residents. Some offers are not just enticing, but ingenious: Bronte and Robert Lee—the two main towns of Coke County—have combined forces to recruit a physician. In doing so, they have gotten commitments from the residents of both towns to provide home-cooked meals for their new doctor. In addition to warm food and hospitality, Elisa encourages her clients to showcase the outdoor activities—fishing, hunting, camping and hiking—integral to life in the country.

Elisa has been so effective in her job that one day she, too, will join the ranks of the rural healthcare provider. "I've recruited myself!" she said. She goes to her MC nursing classes at night, and is gradually earning her Associate Degree in Nursing. Practice as a rural travelling nurse or a care flight nurse are of particular interest to her, as she anticipates the charms and challenges that rural healthcare offers.

The Permian Basin AHEC was founded in 2004 and serves 27 counties in West Texas, 17 of which are designated as "Medically Underserved" by the federal government. Their funding is provided by the Department of Health & Human Services, which allocates grant money to Texas Tech University for its rural healthcare needs, as addressed by the F. Marie Hall Institute for Rural and Community Health. Further funding is provided by the state of Texas and AHEC's "host" institution, a role Midland College assumed this past September. For further information about their services, please call (432) 685-8306.

Engineering students build solar oven

Texas Tech University Professor of Engineering Dr. Mary Baker wanted her students to have a chance to build something fun, but also show how engineering is about helping people. Three parabolic variations on the solar oven assignment resulted: one was made of poster board, one of foam core and another built inside the shell of an umbrella! The students in Dr. Baker's Introduction to Engineering class watched last Monday as their solar ovens slowly raised the temperature of their cups of water. The assignment was to calculate the energy of the sun's rays in order to predict how long it would take for their water to boil.

While the solar oven might not be the most efficient heating mechanism—it took about an hour for their water to finally boil—they are incredibly light, cheap and easy to ship. "This would be an ideal solution for a disaster site," said Dr. Baker. "It would help developing countries, where people are dying from dirty water," added Patience Njunga.

These Midland College students have been able to take this Texas Tech University course on MC campus via streaming video, with the assistance of MC Instructor of Mathematics Sonia Ford, who has served as a liaison and teaching assistant. "One of Tech's missions is to research alternative energy ... it's really great that our students are being exposed to this kind of energy problem solving," said Instructor Ford.



Introduction to Engineering students with their solar oven, from left, Jake Payne, Roberta Afrifa, Patience Njunga and Garrett Nichols

Local weatherman visits Meteorology class



FOX News weathercaster Darrell Ward visits with students in Lori Manship's Meteorology class

Darrell Ward of FOX News joined Lori Manship's Meteorology class last Wednesday to share his experience as a weathercaster. Mr. Ward grew up in Oklahoma, where his exposure to severe weather sparked his interest in weathercasting. Part of his presentation to Instructor Manship's class was a discussion of "dry lines" (a front of moist humid air on the east colliding with low humidity on the west, creating instability in the atmosphere) which cause the violent thunderstorms so common to our West Texas spring.

Briefly

84 Nursing students to be honored in pinning ceremony
A ceremony at 6:00 p.m., on Thursday, December 11 at Chaparral Center will celebrate the accomplishments of the 64 students who completed Midland College's Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) and the 20 students who completed the Licensed Vocational Nursing (LVN) programs this fall. The ADN program is a two-year nursing program leading to the degree of Associate in Applied Science. The LVN program is a one-year program leading to a certificate.

"Get a Life!" Career Night scheduled for December 3
The Midland College Advanced Technology Center (ATC) will once again host the "Get a Life" Career Night with the Midland Chamber of Commerce. This year's event will be held on December 3 from 4:30 - 7:30 p.m. at the ATC. Students in grades 8 - 12 will be get to visit with business people and MC faculty to learn about careers and high school courses to prepare them for college and career training. Please call (432) 697-5863 for more information.

"Get Clients NOW!" offers simple ideas for marketing
Discover how to increase your sales and marketing success by using the "Get Clients NOW!" system. Over 60,000 businesses have found success through this system and now you can use it to build a thriving business, just by completing a few tasks each day. The course costs \$54 and will meet from 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 10 at the ATC. Online registration is available at www.midland.edu/workforce or by calling (432) 681-6326.

BEDC to host Tax Seminar
Small business owners will benefit from this "Year-end Tax Strategy" seminar with Certified Public Accountant Martha Dunham, who will discuss tax planning and tax law changes for 2008. The seminar is sponsored by MC's Business & Economic Development Center (BEDC) and the Midland Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and will be held at Cogdell Learning Center Lecture Hall, 201 W. Florida, on Wednesday, December 10, from 11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. The \$20 admission fee includes lunch. Please call (432) 684-4309 to register.



Winter Interim begins Dec. 15! **Midland College** Spring Classes begin Jan. 12!

REGISTER NOW for Winter Interim and Spring 2009 in person** at 3600 N. Garfield or online on Campus Connect at www.midland.edu

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