

# Public Health Practice



## Stories from the Field

The University of Texas School of Public Health  
*Student Practicum Experiences*  
Spring 2015 – Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences

Prevention diabetes safe kids clean water policy disaster response  
cancer adolescent sexual health HIV/AIDS research obesity  
alcohol empowerment vaccinations maternal & child health

The practicum experience is an integral part of the MPH and DrPH curricula. Public health students are provided with the opportunity to apply their classroom knowledge to real world settings through which they make a meaningful contribution to a public health organization.

Under the guidance of a community preceptor and faculty sponsor, students from all divisions gain a deeper understanding of public health practice, interact with professionals in the field, and expand their repertoire of professional skills.

This sixteenth-edition e-magazine showcases student practicum experiences throughout the Spring 2015 semester. (Prior semesters may be accessed through the e-book, a collection of student abstracts and e-magazines describing their experiences.)



# Practicum Topics

Number of Students: 6

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Hours per Week per Student	Approximately 12
Campuses (Houston)	1
Division	1

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Student

## Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences

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Food Policy in Texas	Daphne Hackenberg
Mammography Screening in Galveston County	Jessica Hua
Disaster Relief and Preparedness	Lauren Ibekwe
Eliminating Health Disparities	Amanda Looman
Health Communications & Corporate Wellness	Emma Welch
Teen Pregnancy Prevention	Ann Marie Wilke

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# Food Policy in Texas



*Inside the Texas Capitol. Photo courtesy of Daphne Hackenberg.*

## Special Events & Highlights

- Connecting with other Texans passionate about food policy on Local Foods Day on March 13th
- Attending a public hearing by the Public Health Committee on April 21st

## Advice for Future Students

- Be confident talking to legislators and their staffers about policy issues. You're not wasting their time -- you're helping them do a good job!

## Promoting Small-Scale Farmers and Food Producers in the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislature in Texas with FARFA

I got to spend several days inside the Texas capitol, walking office to office handing out informational fact sheets and talking to legislators and their staffers about bill proposals related to food policy. These bills varied in subject, but mostly revolved around Texan farmers and making it easier for them to produce safe and healthy food for Texans. I was personally most interested in HB 91, a bill that if passed

will allow raw milk sales at farmers markets, and HB 2600, which if passed will allow for more home-based food businesses, like those that prepare tamales and canned vegetables at home.

## Public Health Significance

I worked with FARFA to inform, educate, and empower people about food and health issues in the state. We worked to mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems and promote policies that support community health.

I educated people about food policy issues by talking to legislators and their staffers in the capitol. FARFA helps develop policies that support community health by promoting policies that support local and small-

scale farmers, who are necessary for a healthy and sustainable food system.



An abundance of healthy foods at a farmers market. Photo courtesy of the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance at [www.farmandranchfreedom.org](http://www.farmandranchfreedom.org)

# Mammography Screening in Galveston County



*Coastal Health & Wellness Center where patient interviews were conducted.  
Photo courtesy of: J. Hua*

## Practicum Highlights

- Being able to collaborate with community partnerships
- Being able to hear women's personal stories and their experiences with mammograms

## Komen Houston Community Profile 2015: Qualitative Assessment of System-level Barriers and Facilitators to Mammography Screening in Galveston County

By: Jessica Hua

Available data on breast cancer incidence indicate that women in Galveston County are at an increased risk for late-stage diagnosis of breast cancer and maintain higher mortality rates than the general Texas population. This practicum examined the continuum of care efforts across the system of breast healthcare in Galveston County, and aimed to provide Susan G. Komen Houston

recommendations to improve mammography screening in the area.

I served as an interviewer where we took weekly trips to the Coastal Health & Wellness Center in Galveston to conduct patient interviews. A total of 15 women were interviewed to identify barriers within the system to further improve on providing access. Results will be analyzed and finalized by the end of this summer, where it will be presented in the Komen Houston Community Profile 2015.

## Public Health Significance

By collaborating with the Galveston Healthy County and Susan G Komen, this practicum was able to address multiple Public Health Essential Services. (PHES). This includes but is not limited to:

*\*Evaluating effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population based services.* This was done through the conduction of patient interviews. Since patients are users who experience first-hand what barriers exist when accessing mammography

services, they provide important insight in being able to address the gaps existing within the system. A qualitative analysis was conducted from the transcribed interviews to categorize data into common themes to address the main barriers.

*\*Research new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.* From the results of the qualitative analysis, ideas and recommendations will be made to improve mammography access based off patients' experience to improve care.

## Advice for Future Students

- Don't be afraid to learn! Before coming into this practicum, I had no interviewing skills and was very afraid of "messing up." But you learn as you go and not only do you build upon your skills, but also your confidence and experiences!



*Patient interviewer and Principle Investigator at site.  
Photo courtesy of: D. Chambers*

# Disaster Relief and Preparedness

## An Opportunity of a Life Time: Service and Philanthropy

By: Lauren Ibekwe

In January 2015, I began working as an intern at the American Red Cross Greater Houston Chapter. This humanitarian organization provides disaster relief and preparedness, assistance to military personnel and their families, health and safety courses, and transportation to people in need. They give support to more than 6 million people in the Texas area every year.

People often only think of the Red Cross when large disasters, such as Hurricane Ike and Katrina, strike. However, they provide education and assistance to their community 365 days a year through disaster preparedness courses, CPR training, financial counseling, and several other programs. Many do not know that the ARC is funded solely through financial gifts and donations.

Red Cross needs their community's help. Because they provide services year around, they not only need financial support when major disasters arise, but they also need it to give assistance to thousands of community members every day. As an intern, I was responsible for researching foundations that may be interested in donating to ARC, reaching out to those potential supporters in an effort to foster lasting relationships, and requesting materials that would enable of us to apply for grants. Specifically, I used several databases to research organizations in the Texas area and eventually created a foundation proposal template, which I sent to prospective donors. Eventually many of them responded to my proposal and sent more detailed information about their foundation and the materials needed to apply for their grants.

## Public Health Significance

This practicum mostly relates to one essential service of public health which is to "inform, educate, and empower people about health issues".

A major part of cultivating relationships with foundations was educating them on what the American Red Cross does to link people in the community to health and safety services.

The foundation proposal not only served as a means to foster relationships with potential financial supporters, but was also created to give insight on the deeper purpose of ARC and the impact they have on the communities they serve.



## Special events

**Tour Du Rouge** In addition to my duties as a fund development intern, I also assisted with the coordination of ARC's annual signature event called Tour Du Rouge. This is a six day bicycle tour from Houston to New Orleans which raises money for the Red Cross.

## Advice for Future Practicum Students

**"There is no better feeling than giving back."**



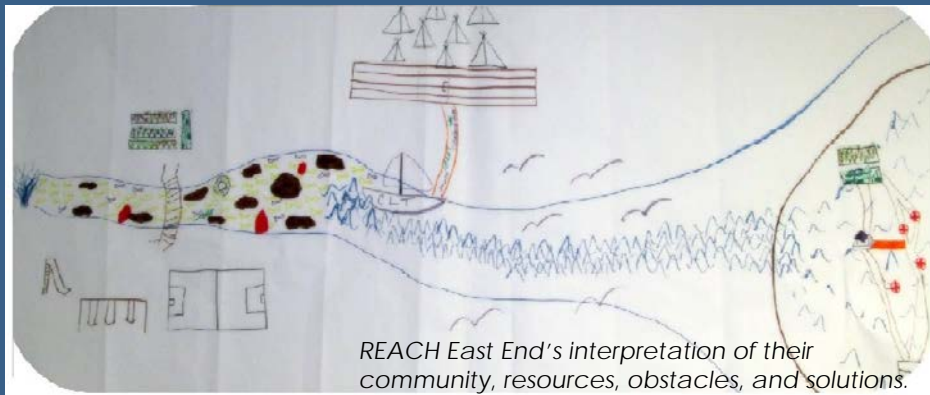
## Tour du Rouge

Houston to New Orleans  
May 3-8, 2015 • Ride 533 Miles in 6 Days



Logo courtesy of  
<http://www.tourdurouge.com/>

# Eliminating Health Disparities



REACH East End's interpretation of their community, resources, obstacles, and solutions.

Image Courtesy of REACH East End, website

## Helping Hispanic/Latino Communities REACH a Healthy Weight, Proper Nutrition, and Physical Activity

By: **AMANDA LOOMAN**

East End REACH Su Comunidad (RSC) is a community-based participatory approach project (CBPA) charged with increasing physical activity, promoting proper nutrition, and improving healthy weights in Houston's East End Hispanic/Latino community.

The REACH Community Leadership Team (CLT) fulfills its mission by way of interorganizational collaboration, participant engagement, education dissemination, environmental modifications, as well as systematic

### Public Health Significance

My practicum experience related to many of the Essential Services of Public Health; however, most specifically, to informing, educating, and empowering people about health issues. Moreover, the REACH project and CLT epitomized the service of mobilizing and activating partnerships to identify and solve health problems.

The REACH project aims to accomplish its objectives by utilizing existing resources and engaging community stakeholders. I had the privilege of collaborating with organizations such

changes while utilizing existing community resources.

My core duties included conducting multiple walkability assessments, collaborating with the CLT to establish the Walk the Parks final route, and assisting in the event's planning, orchestration, and implementation.

The inaugural event occurred November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014 in partnership with the Hispanic Health Coalition's annual "Vive Tu Vida- Get Up, Get Moving" wellness fair.

as the Hispanic Health Coalition, BOUNCE, Greater East End Management District, Walgreen's, Gus Wortham Golf Course, Harris County Flood Control District, etc while planning and implementing the Walk the Parks event.

Also, during the event, the CLT and student distributed reflection materials related to physical activity. Also, made we made the public aware of underutilized green space while emphasizing its ease of use and accessibility.

## REACH-East End's First Annual Walk the Parks Event

- Collaborated with over a dozen varied, well established, and trusted organizations in Houston's East End.
- Observed over 200 individuals discover and utilize unknown green space for physical activity.

### Advice

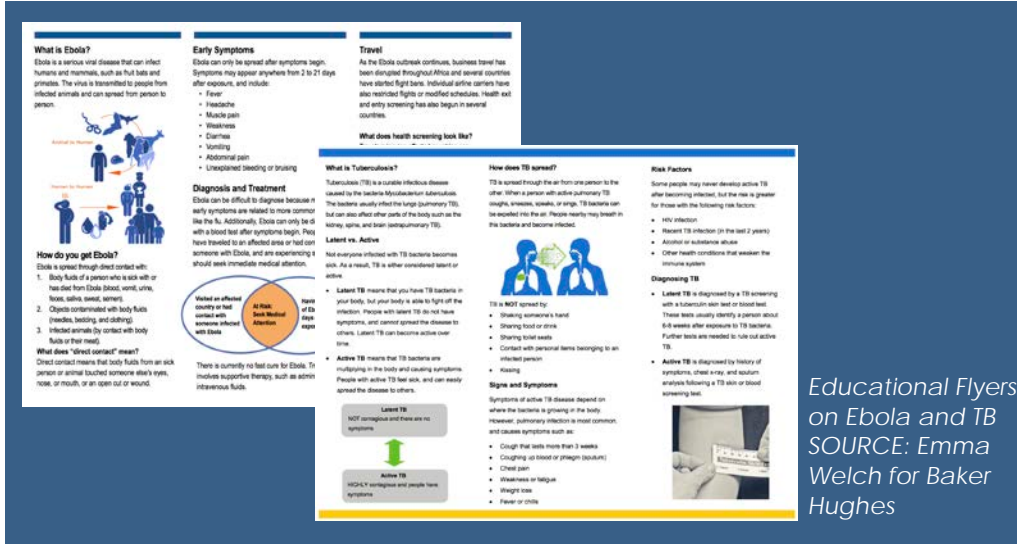
- Never underestimate the wisdom your target population can offer-Let them drive your interventions.
- Take inventory of the resources and organizations that exist within your target population-Network and collaborate.
- Be humble, integral, work hard, learn, teach, and have fun!



Photo of UT SPH student, Amanda Looman, manning a "refueling" station during REACH-East End's First Annual Walk the Parks Event.

Courtesy Amanda Looman

# Health Communications & Corporate Wellness



Educational Flyers on Ebola and TB  
SOURCE: Emma Welch for Baker Hughes

## Special Events/Duties

- Published informational flyer on Ebola to all Baker Hughes Employees
- Wrote monthly health messages about chronic diseases relevant to employees
- Advertised Health Stations program

## Lessons Learned

- Don't be afraid to communicate frequently with your preceptor and other coworkers- It is better to ask a lot of questions when it comes to communicating health information, than to give the wrong information to a lot of employees!

## Perfecting the Art of Communicating about Health

By: Emma Welch

I worked as a health administrator in the Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) department at Baker Hughes. In this role, I was responsible for globally communicating with all Baker Hughes employees regarding their health. This included creating travel alerts to notify traveling employees about potential risks in the locations they were going to, reviewing exposure monitoring results and creating notifications for

employees, and writing monthly health messages related to different chronic illnesses that affect employees. I also helped communicate about the health stations at Baker Hughes. Additionally, I worked with industrial hygienists to design handouts that could be given to workers in the field to quickly and easily tell them where over exposures could occur and which protective equipment to wear. Finally, I maintained the Health webpage.

## Public Health Significance

The Baker Hughes HSE department monitors employees' exposures to potentially hazardous chemicals and instruct them on how to prevent over exposures. In this way, they are monitoring health status and informing people about health issues. I had a role in this by creating the over exposure notifications given to employees. They also served to mobilize their employees by advocating for health and wellness. One of the ways they did this by creating health stations. I helped this

effort by creating the informational materials about health stations and promoting them through the webpage. Finally, Baker Hughes creates policies to support employee health. For example, one of their rigs needed a policy and protocol in place related to TB testing and treatment. I had a role in this by doing the preliminary research about TB standards and I created an informational handout to accompany the policy proposal.



Health Station at Baker Hughes Office in Houston, Texas  
SOURCE: Emma Welch for Baker Hughes



## REAL Talk Sexual Health Education Programs Empower Teens To Make Healthy Choices

By: Ann Marie Wilke



Middle school students enrolled in REAL Talk practice setting and communicating their personal rules about sex

Image via: <http://www.hollyclark.org/2014/03/28/finding-your-passion/>

During the Spring 2015 semester, I participated in a Public Health Practicum with LifeWorks Austin's REAL Talk Program. The program uses evidence-based curriculums to address sex and sexuality in an age-appropriate and comprehensive manner for middle and high school students in Austin.

Using the "It's Your Game" curriculum, I co-taught a semester-long sexual health education class for sixth grade students and conducted fidelity observations for a long-term, five-year evaluation of the program.

In addition to implementing "It's Your Game", I assisted in the development of the logic model for a grant application to implement evidence-based sexual health education programs at additional middle and high schools in Austin and Manor.

Throughout the semester, I worked alongside REAL Talk staff members to develop a new summer program for rising seventh graders. The program will consist of a two-week teen leadership camp where teens will get to build on what they learned in the sixth grade about healthy relationships, sexuality, and pregnancy and STI prevention. In addition, teens will engage in hands-on projects and weekly field trips. My activities included developing camp curriculum, communicating with outside organizations to schedule field trips, and creating parent letters and registration forms.

### Public Health Significance

My practicum experience aligns most closely with the third Essential Public Health Service: "Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues". My activities related to this Service include: 1) teaching health education classes; and 2) assisting in grant and program development to inform and educate teens and their families about sexual health and pregnancy and STI prevention.

In addition, REAL Talk contributes to Essential Public Health Service one, four, and nine. Program directors and prevention specialists must stay informed about community health problems related to teen pregnancy prevention including the needs and concerns of teens and their families in the community. REAL Talk works closely with community partners including schools, city departments, and other non-profits such as Planned Parenthood to address teen pregnancy prevention. Finally, REAL Talk is committed to evaluating the effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of their services. They are currently involved in a five-year evaluation to determine the effectiveness of their implementation of It's Your Game.

### Practicum Highlights

- Co-taught a semester-long, 6th grade sexual health education class using an evidence-based curriculum
- Gained experience in answering students' sensitive questions
- Helped develop a logic model for a grant application to expand REAL Talk programming
- Worked alongside REAL Talk team to develop a new, teen leadership camp
- Attended the 2015 Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy Conference
- Made professional connections and new friends
- Got to see public health interventions in action

### Lessons Learned

- Meet with the site preceptor frequently throughout the semester
- Ask lots of questions
- Seek information outside of the practicum
- Get to know other people working in your field of interest in the community
- Check in with yourself periodically to determine if you are meeting your personal goals for the practicum. If not, explore what can change.

For more information regarding  
The University of Texas School of Public Health,  
Office of Public Health Practice  
and the practicum program, please visit:  
<https://sph.uth.tmc.edu/practicum/>