

Health & Medicine
POLICY RESEARCH GROUP

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Improving Health | Developing Leaders | Creating Change



In April, the 2019-20 Schweitzer Fellows convened with Schweitzer staff, student mentors, and the Advisory Council at Orientation to learn about the Program, develop their project goals, and connect with each other over their shared passion for community health.

Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellows Program

Summer 2019 Newsletter

Service Project Highlights: Building Pathways to Health Careers

Nicole Paprocki, National Health Service Corps Scholar, Medical Student at the Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine, and Schweitzer Fellow For Life (FFL), received a FFL Seed Grant last year to sustain her Scholars de Salud Mentoring Program.

“One’s zip code, race, or class should not affect access to health education or culturally-competent care” - Nicole Paprocki

For the past several years, the Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellows Program has offered seed grants to Fellows for Life interested in beginning, sustaining, and/or building on innovative community projects that help underserved Chicago communities. Nicole Paprocki received a second FFL Seed Grant in order to sustain her program designed to increase interest in and access to careers in healthcare and science among low-income urban Chicago high school students through enrichment activities and mentorship. The program also aims to empower high school-aged youth to be advocates for health in their community, and increase the cultural competency of physicians-in-training through a sustainable partnership with a diverse community. In surveying some of the 21 students who completed the program this year, Paprocki found that 73.5% of scholars shared that they could identify one professional health mentor they feel comfortable contacting to ask questions, 80% of students reported an increase in their confidence in professional situations, and 100% reported an increased knowledge of health information.



A total of 14 sessions with students, and additional planning meetings and exchanges with mentors, speakers, and community partners, have allowed for a long-term interdisciplinary approach to addressing health education access in low-income communities. One example of collaboration is a partnership with the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA). Dr. Ankeeta Mehta, a general surgeon, invited participants of the program to the LMSA Conference, where they met with various medical students from many backgrounds and medical schools, as well

as other healthcare professionals. Many Scholars de Salud said it was inspirational for them because they saw people who looked like them and had similar experiences, like being undocumented, who were achieving their dreams in medicine.



Maria, a student who was part of the Scholars de Salud program, will be attending the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana this fall. The program empowered her to develop leadership skills, offered her support in applying to colleges and scholarships, and gave her leadership opportunities which helped her get involved in internship programs at Rush and Lurie. As she prepares to start college this fall, Maria is drawing on the expertise of program mentors who attended the school and are giving her

advice on housing, organizations helpful for Latinx students, and getting involved with research and teaching assistant positions that will prepare her for medical school and beyond.

Through the program supported by the Schweitzer Fellowship Program and FFL Seed Grant, Paprocki has been able to nurture sustained, meaningful mentorship relationships with students, recruiting them at the end of 9th grade and seeing them graduate and move on to college to pursue pre-med and nursing tracks.



The Schweitzer Fellowship is a year-long service learning program for graduate students in health-related professions who design and implement innovative direct-service projects, aimed at improving the health and well-being of underserved Chicago Area communities. Each year, 30 outstanding Fellows are selected from Chicago’s top graduate programs. Visit hmprg.org for more information and to apply.



30 Fellows
200 Service-hours
4,000+ Alumni network

Fellows for Life (FFL) is a network of Schweitzer Fellowship alumni that stretches all over the country, with more than 4,000 alumni. The FFL program aims to provide opportunities for networking, community engagement, leadership, and professional development. Chicago FFL are leaders in service and participate in programming through our Schweitzer office, ranging from Seed Grant projects, to networking events, and service days. They have taken leadership roles on a local scale on our Advisory Council, and were recently featured on a webinar that reached a national audience.

Fostering National Learning

In June, FFLs hosted a national webinar. This is the second in a series of webinars featuring FFLs around the country, connecting their expertise and expanding their learning.

The webinar, “To Combat Loneliness, Promote Social Health”, featured Dr. Sachin Jain (FFL Boston '03-04), CEO of CareMore Health System, Forbes contributor, and Stanford University faculty. In the webinar, he described how his experience being a Schweitzer Fellow helped him make meaningful relationships he maintains to this day, as well as how his Fellowship project supporting a healthcare clinic for homeless patients in Harvard Square inspired him to pursue a career working towards connecting communities. He also provided an overview of CareMore Health and discussed the importance of social support for health. He outlined CareMore Health’s Togetherness Program, an initiative aimed at intervening to address the loneliness among senior patients. The Program has three channels of intervention: virtual via Phone Pal, in-person at home, and in-person at a Care Center. Since initiating this Program, CareMore has given over 1,200 referrals to resources and programs, saw a 57% increase in participation in exercise programs that engage participants, and provide opportunities for social connection, and noticed a 21% decrease in hospital readmissions.



FFLs Give Back to the Schweitzer Community

Our Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellowship Advisory Council consists of dedicated FFLs and health professionals committed to service and to a strong and equitable workforce. FFL Sue Etminan, DMD, MPH is a new member of our Advisory Council and talked to us about her work, the Fellows Program, and what inspired her to join the Council.

Dr. Etminan is the dental director at the Mile Square Health Center, an FQHC primarily based in Chicago's South and West sides. She finished dental school in 2009, and started working in community health centers, completing her Master of Public Health in 2013 with a focus on Health Policy and Administration. Dr. Etminan was a Schweitzer Fellow as an MPH student in 2012-13, and her project helped Erie Neighborhood House add an oral health component to their after school curriculum. She also completed dental screenings for the students at the end of the year, expanding her initial project into a science program for area high school students to participate in during the after school program.

Dr. Etminan shared that the Fellowship gave her a wealth of experiences and skills that she uses every day in her role as dental director, such as how to design a project from the ground up, how to engage stakeholders, how to have meaningful conversations with community members, and how to effectively lead and bring people together. She also learned about how to build a sustainable program, as the project carried on for a few years after her Fellowship year ended.

Joining the Advisory Council came as an opportunity to give back to the organization that helped her grow and get to where she is today, she said. She is constantly picking up new things, either from the Fellows or other Advisory Council members, and hopes to learn new methods that she can take back to her clinic to help better serve the community.

“Schweitzer Fellows think holistically about what makes a person healthy and their projects often address the ‘upstream’ factors that dramatically affect people’s well-being and health outcomes,” Dr. Etminan shared. “Whether they are tutoring kids in school or helping people with chronic diseases better understand how to maintain their health, Schweitzer Fellows are infusing their ideas and energy in communities that are lacking resources and all too often overlooked. The Fellowship helps strengthen the skills and confidence of these young idealists to become lifelong leaders in service. I know it did for me and many of my cohort - I’m still in touch with Fellows I met years ago who are now working in nonprofit settings like mine. It’s so nice to be part of this vibrant, caring community of health professionals committed to making change.”





Your Donation Counts

The impact of our direct-service, community-centered work relies on your generosity. Consider donating today to support this work. We can't do it without you!

No donation is too small, none too large.

Give as you are able, give today!

Donate online at hmprg.org or contact us for a donation envelope.

Meet the 2019 Schweitzer Leadership Award Winner



This July, the Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellowship and Health & Medicine Policy Research Group gave Amber Smock, Director of Advocacy at Access Living, the 2019 Schweitzer Leadership Award. The Award honors an individual who has done significant work to mitigate the social determinants of health in their community, and whose commitment to service has influenced and inspired others.

Amber Smock has served as the Director of Advocacy at Access Living since 2010. Amber is responsible for executing Access Living's advocacy vision through policy, community organizing, leadership development, and issue education. She stewards Access Living's strategic advocacy partnerships and significant networking efforts at the local, state, and national levels across a range of disability topics, including healthcare/home and community based

services, housing, education, transportation, racial justice, immigration, and incarceration of people with disabilities in jails. Amber is the facilitator of the federal-state working group Disability Power for Community Integration. Amber is a skilled presenter and trainer, a member of ADA25 and Leadership Greater Chicago, and a recipient of numerous local and national awards for her disability advocacy. She is also a proud member of the Deaf community who grew up in mainstreamed schools, learned ASL as a young adult, and now relies on ASL interpreters and video relay technologies as well as lipreading for communication access.

Roll Call



Health & Medicine and the Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellows Program welcome Rebecca Ozaki as our new Schweitzer Program Associate!

A native Chicagoan, Rebecca is dedicated to transforming Chicago into a city where all people and communities can thrive. Most recently, she worked as a community organizer alongside older adults to address housing and language justice issues in Chicago. Her previous experience includes various programmatic roles with local and national Asian American civil rights, advocacy, and education based organizations. Rebecca holds a Master of Social Work from UIC Jane Addams College of Social Work and received her Bachelor's in Human Development Family Studies from the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana.

We are thrilled to have her on board!

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