Community engagement is one of the cornerstones of the Center for Health Equity. This fall, we had several research training and education opportunities for community members. Most notable was the Community Research Institute. This initiative formed out of community organizations expressing a need to conduct research and to secure grants in order to continue their health equity work. In collaboration with the Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute and the Program for Health Disparities Research, the Center is proud to be hosting the inaugural Community Research Institute at the University of Minnesota. The Institute will consist of presentations from several senior faculty as well as one-on-one consultation sessions to work with community organizations to tackle research questions specific to their projects. We are thrilled to be able to assist 11 organizations doing integral health equity work, and with such a great response from the community we look forward to hosting the institute again next year.

As part of our community engagement work, the Center collaborates with several community partners and has official partnerships with WellShare International and Stairstep Foundation. Our partnerships are purposeful relationships with other groups or organizations who are committed to pursuing the goal of health equity and establishing an environment to foster mutual benefits. Building partnerships is essential in addressing social determinants of health because health equity requires changing social, economic, and environmental factors. It is through leveraging partnerships and relationships that we are going to be able to make a difference in the health of many of our communities.
**DIRECTOR’S UPDATE, CONTINUED**

In addition to the opportunities we offered for community members, we also had a terrific end of the summer poster session featuring the Center’s summer scholars. We are proud of the work they did at the CTSI annual conference and anticipate more great work from these scholars in the future. I also have deep gratitude for their dedicated mentors. We will be releasing the RFA for 2013 summer programs later this fall. For more information, please visit our website: [http://www.med.umn.edu/che/Students](http://www.med.umn.edu/che/Students)

We hope that you will join in our work to reach health equity. If you would like to become more involved, get more information, or join our listserv, e-mail us at umn-che@umn.edu. Wishing you a wonderful fall season.

**COMMUNITY RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

The Center, along with the Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute and the Program in Health Disparities Research is hosting a six-week Community Research Institute that will kick-off on October 25th with 28 representatives from 11 urban and rural community organizations. The goal of the institute is to enhance the capacity of community organization staff in conducting health research by increasing research methodology skills, developing an understanding of appropriate resources available for carrying out health research, applying these skills and knowledge to a real-world project, and networking with other community-based and university-based researchers. The community leaders from each organization bring a project they would like to work on during the institute to directly apply the skills they learn throughout the six weeks. We look forward to hosting the institute again next fall. For more information, please visit: [www.ctsi.umn.edu/community/community-research-institute](http://www.ctsi.umn.edu/community/community-research-institute).

**CTSI RESEARCH CONFERENCE**

The Center’s Undergraduate and Advanced Research Program Scholars presented their posters at the CTSI Research Conference. During the evening poster session, each scholar was judged on the quality of the poster and the scholar’s ability to see where their work fit in the research process and what steps it will need to go through to be translated. The Center and the CTSI awarded travel funds to three pre-doctoral scholars in the Advanced Research Program and to four Undergraduate Research Program Scholars to present their work at a national meeting.

Congratulations to: Elizabeth Aby, Suresh Agarwal, Mercy Konchellah, Hai Nguyen-Tran, Sarah Parker, Kendra Radtke, and Uygen Truong.

**Pictured above: Advanced Research Program scholar, LeeAnna Pederson discusses her poster with Kelvin Lim, M.D.**

**Pictured below: September 11th CTSI poster judging event.**
CHE COMMUNITY PARTNERS

WELLSHARE INTERNATIONAL

Over the past three years, CHE has been working with WellShare International, which conducts health outreach and research, primarily focused in the Somali community. Their mission of: “Improving the health of women, children and their communities around the world” fits well with CHE goals. Since smoking is perceived as a growing problem among Somali community members, we have focused the past two years on smoking prevention and cessation in the Somali community. We recently completed key informant interviews with Somali community leaders and focus groups with Somali smokers. The information gathered is currently being analyzed and will inform a culturally targeted Somali smoking cessation intervention. The results from the key informant interviews and focus groups will be disseminated to the community through the Center for Health Equity’s Community Dialogue Series. In parallel with the smoking cessation activities, the partnership will devote the next two years to smoking prevention outreach among Somali youth. “WellShare International is pleased to be partnering with the University of Minnesota, Center for Health Equity. Over this past year, our staff participated in several capacity building workshops held at the University of Minnesota including learning more about scientific writing, how to publish in a peer review journal, and research methodology. We very much look forward to continuing this partnership with the University of Minnesota next year as we reach out to the Somali community to develop culturally appropriate tools to reduce tobacco use in the community.” -Diana Dubois, Executive Director, WellShare International

STAIRSTEP FOUNDATION

The Center for Health Equity also partners with the Stairstep Foundation, a collaboration of 23 predominantly African American churches in the Twin Cities with the goal of improving community health. Through the partnership with Stairstep, the Center for Health Equity has been involved in the implementation of Body and Soul, a culturally tailored program aimed at increasing fruit and vegetable intake among African American parishioners. Nine churches have completed the Body and Soul program and have shown marked increases in the participants self-reported fruit and vegetable intake. Recently, the Stairstep Foundation has embarked upon a new intensive program developed by the Center for Disease Control called, I Can Prevent Diabetes. This new program will serve as a complementary addition to the Body and Soul program and will intensify the efforts of the Center for Health Equity and the Stairstep Foundation to improve the health of African Americans. Alfred Babington-Johnson, Executive Director of the Stairstep Foundation recently remarked on the evolution of the partnership with the Center for Health Equity, “Our collaboration with the Center for Health Equity began as all such partnerships should, Dr. Okuyemi [CHE—Community Engagement Core Director] agreed to assist us on a project we instigated in our community [Body and Soul]. His willingness to respond to our call and the professionalism he demonstrated created a platform of trust and good feelings leading to our openness to other enterprises.”
STORYTELLING AND COMMUNITY DIALOGUE WORKSHOP FEATURING THE VOICE PROJECT

The Center for Health Equity collaborated with the City of Minneapolis, the Clinical and Translational Science Institute, the Program in Health Disparities Research and the Health Disparities Work Group, to host a workshop aimed at disseminating information about The VOICE Project. The project, Valuing Our Individual Cultures through Engagement, was conducted by the Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support between June 2011 and January 2012, and consisted of a series of video-recorded VOICE dialogues with members from the American Indian, African American, Latino, Hmong, and Somali communities. Maria Sarabia, a CDC Research Fellow, Jared Erdmann, an Epidemiologist, and Gretchen Musicant, the Commissioner of Health for the City of Minneapolis presented the project to a group of community members and university faculty, staff and students. The workshop served as an avenue to display the findings of the VOICE project as well as outline the creative and powerful method of using stories to collect data. One desired outcome of the workshop was to introduce the storytelling method of data collection as a way for University researchers to better connect with the community.

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