



COMMUNITY
HEALTH
partnership

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COMMUNITY HEALTH PARTNERSHIP NAMES 2005 GENIUS AWARD WINNERS

Awards honor achievements and contributions to improving public health in Oregon

PORTLAND, Ore. – Although Community Health Partnership’s 2005 recipients, Mitch Greenlick, Barbara Alexander-Brown, Sharon Johnson, Thomas Aschenbrener and Elaine Severson, have different areas of expertise, they share commitment, innovation and a spirit of collaboration in improving the health of Oregon residents.

Community Health Partnership (CHP) sought nominees from throughout Oregon whose work has resulted in significant and lasting change in the field of public health. The Genius Award is intended to recognize and acknowledge those who demonstrate responsiveness to Oregon residents in need, and whose work is distinguished by creativity, risk taking and boldness toward forging permanent improvements in the health of the public.

Mitch Greenlick, State Representative (Oregon District 33), is the recipient of the **2005 Genius Award**. An academician, researcher, visionary and tireless practitioner of collaboration, he is responsible for improving the public’s health through policy, practice and workforce development. He is founding Director of the Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research, a resource center for the production of systematic reviews and related projects in evidence-based health care. As Chair of the OHSU Department of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, he was a major force in the creation of the Oregon Master of Public Health Program, a unique three university program currently serving 300 students. He also founded the Oregon Health Policy Center as a mechanism to encourage non-partisan research through coordinated efforts between Oregon Health and Sciences University, Portland State University and Oregon State University. Upon retiring from OHSU, Mitch Greenlick turned his attention to the legislative process and won election to the Oregon House of Representatives. As a member of the Health and Human Services Committee, he has quickly developed a reputation as a health care expert and leader as he currently works to qualify an initiative for the November 2006 ballot to place a clause in the Oregon constitution stipulating that health care is a basic right for all Oregon residents.

Barbara Alexander-Brown is the recipient of **2005 Exceptional Achievement Award**. In the words of nominator Jennifer Boyd, Ph.D., Director of Communications in the OHSU School of Medicine, “As a third year medical student, Barbara Alexander-Brown represents the future of medicine. Like most medical students, she is excited and nervous. Uniquely, however, Alexander-Brown is already working diligently to shape the future in ways that will better serve underserved minority populations.” Recognizing access and outcome disparities for minorities, Alexander-Brown took the initiative to apply for a grant from the drug company Pfizer. As a result of her compelling proposal, she was awarded a \$50,000 unrestricted educational grant for multicultural activities. Alexander-Brown has used the money to organize and stage the “Bridging the Gap Health Care Conference.” The conference addressed health care disparities in

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Genius Award

Oregon minorities with a practical, hands-on approach. Upon graduation, Alexander-Brown is considering a training path toward Emergency Medicine and public health research related to minority health access and outcome disparities.

Sharon Johnson, a **2005 Merit Award** recipient, is recognized for her dedication and leadership in addressing the health needs of older adults in Jackson and Josephine Counties. As an Assistant Professor and Field Faculty member at the OSU Extension in Central Point, OR, Johnson identifies needs, put together practical and well-evaluated programs and works at a broad community level to impact overall community systems. This approach is exemplified by the program, Maximizing Brief Encounters: Realizing Measurable Gains, an 8 week training program for community volunteers who deliver food to home-bound elders. Johnson writes a weekly column in the Medford Mail Tribune, "Healthy Aging" and is host of a monthly community cable television program, "Healthy Aging Through the Lifespan." For the past two years, she has organized an Optimal Aging Conference which attracts 200 seniors from Southern Oregon.

Thomas Aschenbrenner, President of the Northwest Health Foundation and a **2005 Merit Award** recipient, has been instrumental in establishing a new model of philanthropic investment in the community to strengthen the not-for-profit health sector. He has forged a vision of service that has involved the health community as a true partner, not merely the passive recipient of funds. Under his leadership, NWHF has supported organizations serving minority and underserved populations, sparked national interest and investment in the health of Oregon citizens, stimulated dialogue among funding organizations about the importance of quality health care, and convened educational sessions for grantmakers. Similarly, NWHF works to enhance the technical knowledge and expertise of grant seeking organizations by providing learning laboratories on program development, grant writing, business planning and program evaluation. NWHF has also done groundbreaking work in defining and confronting the nursing shortage in Oregon and is currently exploring new partnerships with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to address the nursing shortage and other critical issues in nursing at the state and national level.

Elaine Severson, recipient of a **2005 Merit Award**, has spent the past 23 years identifying needs of women and children in Deschutes County and creating sustainable programs in response. Severson brought together a diverse community coalition to create Grandma's House, a residential program which provides a nurturing shelter to homeless and/or abused pregnant teens and teen mothers and their babies. Severson was instrumental in developing the school-based health center in LaPine to serve low income medically underserved students and has worked to have the clinic certified as an expanded school-based center coalescing partnerships with the state, school district and community. Although recently retired from the Deschutes County Health Department, Severson continues to serve teens with her involvement in the county's Teen Suicide Prevention Project. In the words of nominators Dan Peddycord, Director of the Deschutes County Health Department and Catherine Quas, DMD, "Complex planning and community coalition building are perfect for someone with Elaine's compassion, creativity and skill. She brings together diverse services to weave a wonderful fabric of care."

CHP will honor this year's recipients at the fourth annual award breakfast in Portland on October 21, 2004. The event is open to the public. To purchase tickets for the awards breakfast or for more information, please contact Community Health Partnership at 503-416-3690.

Community Health Partnership, founded in 1999 as Friends of Public Health, is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to improve the health of Oregonians through advocacy and support of effective public health policy and activities. The organization is currently focused on improving Oregon's children's nutrition and physical activity.

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