At the UNC CFAR, we are constantly seeking new ways to encourage student interest in HIV/AIDS research, and foster ingenuity around approaches to HIV/AIDS. This past winter, Madison Hayes, Director of the UNC CFAR CODE Office, facilitated an alternative winter break trip through the APPLES Service Learning Program, matching students with seven HIV/AIDS organization around North Carolina. “The trip was a pilot of an HIV/AIDS community-based learning initiative,” said Hayes. “By connecting theory with practice, students have an opportunity to use unique, real life circumstances and settings to inform what they have learned on-campus.”

Co-leades Meg Foster and Josh Bradley supported a group of undergraduate students as they spent the week working with some of CFAR’s most powerful and effective community partners around the state. Volunteers put together safe sex kits at CAARE Inc. in Durham. They worked with the Carolina CARES Partnership in Charlotte to learn about HIV prevention counseling and linkage to care programs and assist them in assembling holiday gift baskets for HIV positive clients. At Shelter Health Services in Charlotte, students learned about the connection between homelessness, poverty and HIV, and at Loving Food and Resources in Asheville, the volunteers stocked and organized the food pantry and learned more about the Western North Carolina AIDS Project. In Durham at the North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition, students helped assemble overdose kits, called legislators to educate them about harm reduction, wrote Op-eds and helped to brainstorm for social media campaigns focused on the HIV epidemic as it relates to drug and needle use in North Carolina. “There are so many faces of HIV/AIDS, and communities’ responses to them are innovative and inspiring,” said Hayes. “Students have unbridled creativity, and a lens that is fresh and valiant. Providing them development opportunities to encourage their pursuit of HIV/AIDS-related careers is not only necessary, but a responsibility.” We spoke to some of the student volunteers to find out how this trip impacted their education at Carolina and their outlook on the future of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Josh Bradley, co-leader of the trip, shared that this trip had a record-breaking number of student applications for the APPLES alternative winter break program. He explained that the community partner organizations “welcomed us with open arms and gave us the opportunity to work with them and learn more about what they do in the fight against HIV/AIDS”. In between volunteer opportunities, the group spent a great deal of time discussing HIV/AIDS related issues, watching documentaries like "How to Survive a Plague" and discussing what service means.

Yasemin Cole, a sophomore at UNC, said that this trip was “one of the best college experiences” she has had. She was excited to see “how these nonprofits are impacting the community around them”.

Continued on Page 2
Before this trip, Yasemin had focused on the HIV epidemic as it affects mothers and children in Uganda. She shared, “this trip made me realize the impact of HIV/AIDS in NC and how there is a need to promote changes here too. Humans not only deserve dignity, but also justice: Health is a human right. This trip made me even more passionate about HIV/AIDS, especially in NC. This semester I joined UNC FACE AIDS as the advocacy chair to bring about awareness, outreach, and to spark discussion about HIV/AIDS in the Chapel Hill community.” She feels grateful to apply what she learned in the classroom at UNC by spending time out in the community.

Clara Williams, a sophomore at UNC, explained that this trip allowed her to explore the different models and methods of outreach that these organizations use “for preventing transmission and supporting people living positively - from outreach and education with WNCAP in Asheville, to holistic care and support groups with Triangle Empowerment/CAARE Inc. in Durham, and harm reduction among intravenous drug users in Chapel Hill”. She said it was “an eye-opening and uplifting week which took me out of the classroom and into the workplaces of people who are serving their communities on a daily basis.” She felt inspired to learn more and contribute to their efforts after the trip.

“Community-based learning approaches like these are heralded for their strength in developing young folks to become committed, compassionate, and action-oriented agents of change”, said Hayes. “From the feedback we collected, the most transformative aspect of this trip was that it opened students’ eyes to the challenging realities that communities in North Carolina face, while simultaneously instilling an overwhelming sense of inspiration, hope, and motivation.” The CODE office is so excited to facilitate these eye-opening experiences for young activists in North Carolina! We look forward to continuing to partner with GlobeMed at UNC and the APPLES program to offer future Alternative Winter Break trips focused on community engagement and support for the HIV/AIDS network of care in this state. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Madison Hayes: madison_hayes@unc.edu.

Parallel Epidemics: HIV and Prison in NC

NC Health News has published a fantastic new article on HIV and Prisons in NC featuring UNC doctors Carol Golin, health-behavior researcher at UNC-Chapel Hill’s Gillings School of Public Health, and David Wohl, co-director for HIV Services for the N.C. Department of Corrections and an associate professor at UNC-Chapel Hill.

The article explores the challenges that HIV-positive persons face when they are released from prison. Although patients are provided with a 30-day supply of medication upon release, many struggle to find social and medical support outside of the state system.

Learn more at: http://www.northcarolinahealthnews.org/2014/06/02/parallel-epidemics-living-with-hiv-and-a-criminal-record/

SAVE THE DATE: Shades of Pride is hosting a 3-day LGBTQ pride event in the Triangle in July! Find out more at http://triangleblackpride.org

Join our facebook community to learn more about HIV-related news and events in the triangle: http://www.facebook.com/UNCCFAR

Come follow us on twitter for easy updates and news at: http://twitter.com/UNCCFAR

- UNC CFAR Website: http://cfar.med.unc.edu/
- Ronald Swanstrom PI: riscunc@med.unc.edu
- CODE Office Contacts: Dr. Ron Strauss (ron_strauss@unc.edu) & Madison Hayes (madisonh@email.unc.edu)
- Newsletter compiled by Danielle Strauss
- Disponible en Espanol: contactad Madisonh@email.unc.edu