

F A L L 2 0 1 4 N E W S L E T T E R

# Virginia Tech Center for Public Health Practice and Research

## What we do, who we are, who we serve

The **Center for Public Health Practice and Research (CPHPR)** at Virginia Tech partners with an interdisciplinary group of faculty, staff and students at Virginia Tech and community organizations to enhance public health practice and research in the region. The Center is housed in the Department of Population Health Sciences, Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine.

The Center supports community-based projects by collaborating with community partners to compete for and secure funding, as well as providing public health content and service expertise such as research studies, external evaluations, needs assessments and document writing. Through the Public Health Network, the Center partners with faculty, staff and students at Virginia Tech. The Center collaborates with university partners on grant writing, study design, implementation and evaluation and offers technical public health expertise.

The overarching goal for the Center is to enhance public health practice and research, particularly in Southwest and Southside Virginia, Central Appalachia and across the region.

## Announcements:

### What are Your Workforce Development Needs?

The center will be distributing a workforce development needs assessment in order to better understand how we can serve your public health continuing education needs.

#### Current Workshops Offered by CPHPR:

Appalachian Cultural Competency, Grant Writing, Technical Writing, and Working with the Media

**To be  
distributed in  
early 2015**

**Trainings will  
begin in 2015**



## New River Academic Health Department

In Spring 2015, we will be officially announcing the creation of the New River Academic Health Department (AHD). Our AHD will represent a formal affiliation between Virginia Tech Department of Population Health Sciences and the New River Health District. This relationship is the public health equivalent of the “teaching hospital” affiliation found between medical schools and hospitals. This collaboration will enhance public health education and training, research, and service and will offer a variety of benefits that extend beyond our organizations to the community as a whole. The AHD will serve as a site for joint research and practice, enabling us to work together to build the evidence base for public health and better deliver the essential public health services.

(Adapted from [www.phf.org](http://www.phf.org))



Virginia Tech  
Center for Public Health  
Practice and Research



# CPHPR Recently Completed Projects

## Youth Risk Behavior Survey Analysis & Reporting

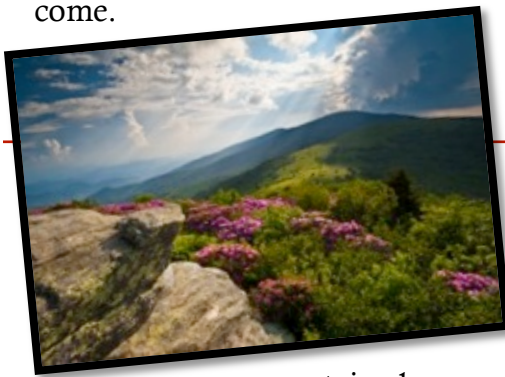
CPHPR implemented, analyzed and wrote YRBS reports for two schools this summer. The YRBS survey records the frequency and prevalence of alcohol, tobacco and other drug usage activities, exercise and dietary behaviors, violence-related activities, sexual behaviors, and a variety of other health and safety related activities among middle and high school students. YRBS survey services are available throughout Virginia.

## Martinsville HEY Collaborative Dashboard

CPHPR conducted a process evaluation of Martinsville's HEY collaborative (<http://www.heycollaborative.org/network-20>) and produced a Key Performance Indicators dashboard. The dashboard measures processes, outcomes, financial data, youth and partner satisfaction and includes an interactive map of services.

## Regional Suicide Prevention Plan

CPHPR was contracted by the Community Services Boards of Region III East to develop a community-driven suicide prevention plan. By incorporating the beliefs and perspectives of key suicide prevention stakeholders from throughout this area and reviewing comprehensive data, CPHPR developed a 5 year plan supporting effective and appropriate local prevention strategies for the years to come.



## A Special Thanks to Virginia Tech's Institute for Society, Culture and Environment (ISCE)

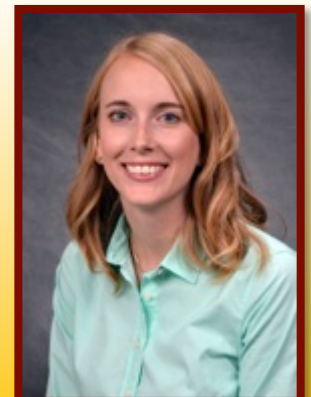
CPHPR would like to extend a special thanks to Virginia Tech's Institute for Society, Culture and Environment (ISCE) for its sustained support. ISCE supports targeted creative, interactive, multi- and interdisciplinary research endeavors involving the social sciences, humanities, and the arts. With ISCE's support, CPHPR is able to pursue similar goals, with a community based public health focus, fostering interdisciplinary, collaborative public health practice and research activities at Virginia Tech and among public health agencies, organizations, practitioners, and researchers.

## Staff Addition: Public Health Project Coordinator

**Shantal Hover, MPH**

Shantal Hover serves as the Center Project Coordinator, where she promotes workforce development throughout the region and assists in the design, implementation, and evaluation of Center-led projects and collaborative opportunities.

Ms. Hover earned both her MPH in Infectious Diseases and her B.S. in Biology from Virginia Tech. She conducted her master's level research and practicum on Herpes Simplex Virus prevalence and knowledge of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among college students in a rural area. Her research and practice interests are in adolescent health, STIs and sexual health, community engaged research, and global health.





# CPHPR Current Projects

## Tazewell County Cancer Assessment

The Tazewell County Board of Supervisors is funding CPHPR to conduct an in-depth analysis of cancer in Tazewell County. An interdisciplinary team from Virginia Tech is conducting town hall meetings, focus groups, key informant interviews, surveys, a photovoice project, GIS mapping, data analysis and an environmental risk factor analysis. A final report and educational strategies will be submitted to the Tazewell County Board of Supervisors in June 2015.

## Montgomery County, Virginia SPF-SIG

Virginia Commonwealth University provides funding to New River Valley Community Services to administer the SAMHSA-funded Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) State Incentive Grant (SIG) Program. CPHPR is partnering with New River Valley Community Services to assess drunk driving tendencies among young adults in Montgomery County through a series of focus groups, community forums, and quantitative data analysis.



## NRHD Tobacco Use Control Project

CPHPR is partnering with the New River Health District (NRHD) to implement the Tobacco Use Control Project. The project, continuing through February 2015, is designed to engage community partners and coalitions to promote positive and healthy behaviors to prevent and end tobacco use particularly in teens, young adults, and pregnant women. Project activities include a needs assessment of the tobacco policies of local businesses and college campuses, educational sessions about the health impact of tobacco use and nicotine addiction, tobacco policy review for the local school systems, and clinical training in the use of the Virginia 1-800-Quit Line to aid in tobacco use cessation.

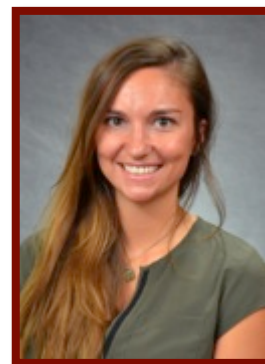
## Chronic Disease Self Management Evaluation

The New River Health District (NRHD) and the New River Valley Agency on Aging are jointly offering the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) to residents of the New River Valley. CPHPR is conducting an outcome evaluation of the CDSMP workshops. Topics covered include: 1) techniques to deal with problems such as frustration, fatigue, pain and isolation, 2) appropriate exercise for maintaining and improving strength, flexibility, and endurance, 3) appropriate use of medications, 4) communicating effectively with family, friends, and health professionals, 5) nutrition, 6) decision making, and, 7) how to evaluate new treatments. This Center-led evaluation will be used to help the NRHD design a sustainability plan and evaluate the effectiveness of the workshops. If you are interested in attending a CDSMP workshop, contact Elizabeth Fontaine at [elizabeth1.fontaine@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:elizabeth1.fontaine@vdh.virginia.gov)





## Conducting Community Based Public Health Research within CPHPR: *A Student's Perspective*



**Introduction:** Shelly Rasnick is a second year MPH student at Virginia Tech, where she is concentrating in health education. Shelly currently works for the Center while conducting her MPH practicum. Her interests range from physical activity, behavioral and social risk factors in cancer prevention, and working with youth. Shelly also currently works at Hokie Wellness, the employee workplace wellness entity on Virginia Tech's campus.

### What are you currently working on with the Center?

I am currently working on two projects in the center. The first one is the Martinsville Dashboard. This summer I collected data related to youth programs that are being implemented in the community by interviewing collaborative partners and youth in the community.

I have also been working on the Tazewell County Cancer Assessment project. My involvement in this project consists of helping distribute and collect survey data, facilitating Facebook based focus groups, and assisting with the Photovoice project.

### Can you tell me about your experience working in these communities?

Working in the Tazewell community has been more personal for me. My dad's side of the family is from Tazewell and my cousin died from cancer there a few years ago. Having that connection to the project has

helped me to understand and relate to the community's concerns in a deeper way.

Alternatively, I was much less familiar with the community during the Dashboard project. This gave me the opportunity to do a lot of background research to familiarize myself with the community and the different youth programs offered.

### What is the most valuable thing that you learned while working in these communities?

Working in communities has helped me to make much better connections between class work and real world application of public health. Additionally, learning to make adjustments while in the field based on the needs of our clients and what information is available has helped me gain a deeper understanding of public health practice.

### How will you take this learning experience beyond your MPH?

Having the community-based practical experience of doing fieldwork at different levels within CPHPR has helped me to feel more comfortable working in public health, made me more confident in my future job search, and expanded my interests in public health.



**Sophie Wenzel,**  
MPH  
Assistant Director,  
CPHPR

## Letter from the Director and Assistant Director:

It's been a productive year for the Center. Sophie started working at the Center in July of 2013 and has been busy building relationships with community and faculty partners. We have enjoyed traveling throughout the region to meet community members and learn about the public health challenges they face. We enjoy the opportunity to assist community organizations on public health projects and have worked on a variety of projects this past year.

The Center has written several collaborative grants with the New River Health District, the Roanoke Prevention Council, Pulaski County Schools, Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Virginia Department of Health; and Virginia Tech collaborators such as the School of Education, the School of Construction and the Department of Psychology. We have been fortunate to work with some wonderful, dedicated students this year- Shelly's experience is highlighted above.

Please be in touch with us, we'd love to hear from you.



**Kathy Hosig,**  
PhD, MPH, RD  
Director,  
CPHPR

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or  
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