Welcome Back Initiative Newsletter

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Welcome Back Initiative Update

At our last retreat, in January, it was suggested that we develop an initiative-wide electronic newsletter as a way to keep each other updated on our activities, so here we are! Thanks to Rolando for suggesting it and to Amelia for putting it together.

In regards to the overall activities for the Welcome Back Initiative as you know the main focus of our work this year will be in the policy arena. To that end, we have entered into a partnership with the California Primary Care Association (CPCA) which represents over 600 community-based clinics across the state.

The three center directors and the evaluation team met with CPCA's executive director,



Carmela Castellano, and their policy specialist, Elia Gallardo, last month to hammer out the details of the partnership and to plan the next steps. The key outcome of that meeting was the decision to hold a major stakeholder meeting in Sacramento on May 12th where we will have representatives from the three sites plus other allies from the areas of policy, education, regulators and professional associations. At this meeting we hope to develop a grounded and realistic understanding of what opportunities we should pursue in order to remove some of the structural barriers that prevent our participants from re-entering the health field.

We are focusing our work on the three largest groups of professionals we work with: physicians, nurses and dentists. We are confident that this approach of engaging all the key players will yield positive outcomes. I am looking forward to working with you on this exciting endeavor.

Welcome Back Participant Case Vignette—San Diego

Ricardo Mera MD is from Colombia, S.A. He has been a member of Welcome Back since 2000. When Ricardo first came to learn about the Welcome Back Program, he was employed by Laidlaw Transportation Co. as a bus driver for handicap passengers in the Chula Vista area. His daily routine would begin at 4 am as he began a commute on public transportation to arrive at work by 6 am in order to receive the list of passengers to be picked up for the day. He typically drove the ADA compliant bus from 6am to 6pm and returned home around 9pm to prepare for the next day. This job enabled him to provide for his family but it was not a position that utilized his professional skills, nor his level of education.

While he was still working as a bus driver, he obtained a CNA license at a private college. With the help of the contacts and network that began to develop as a result of participating in Welcome Back, he found entry-level employment and worked at several community clinics. He is currently working as a Case Manager at the Mid-City Community Clinic. Ricardo was selected as one of the members of the first cohort of students who completed the 14 month accelerated registered nursing program at Grossmont College on November 2004. He is well underway to complete his nursing degree and challenge the NCLEX-RN examination.

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Welcome Back Center—Los Angeles



"The (Los Angeles Welcome Back) center has a new project Director, Elizabeth Duncan."

The Los Angeles Welcome Back Center is eagerly embracing the challenges of this new program year. The center has a new project Director, Elizabeth Duncan. Ironically, Elizabeth was the first project director, so we're pleased to have her rejoin our team.

Some of the exciting ventures for the L.A. Welcome Back Center include:

Study Groups by professions, MD, DDS and RN: These study groups are coordinated by a discipline specific facilitator and peer led. It provides a structured forum to study and prepares participant for taking specific licensure test.

Alternative Career Pathways: Many participants are pursuing alternative careers (i.e., Masters Public Health, Physician Assistant, Teaching Credentials and Nursing). These options provide viable careers, with high livable wages and contribute to the labor shortages in healthcare.

Newly Funded Project: The LA Center has augmented its Registered Nurse services by receiving a grant from The California Community Foundation for "Pathway to Licensure". This project is designed to provide local solutions to a critical identified need in our community, which impact the health care delivery system and health education system, the tremendous shortage of licensed Registered Nurses, and also addresses the cultural disparity of nurses within our community. The proposed project provides job creation and employment opportunity in both of these areas. This project will recruit and train 120 Board Eligible graduates who have completed their R.N. course but failed to pass the licensing exam and provide a comprehensive NCLEX Training course and support to assist the candidate in becoming licensed. Applicants will be drawn from the RHORC's "The Welcome Back Program", which serves foreign trained health professionals who are from under represented groups, underemployed or working in non-health related occupations and from staff of local hospitals and facilities, who have passed course work but are currently working in other areas of the hospital, and other marketing efforts. Participants will be recruited from all over L.A. County.

Training and Institutionalizing of Case Management Activities: The L.A. Center will host a county-wide training seminar in the fall of 2005 for Counselors from all education institutions serving the L.A. service area. Counselors in include ESL counselors, Admissions, and career guidance counselors, and related deans, supervisors and staff. The Training module developed by the San Francisco Welcome Back Center will be utilized as the training content and disseminated to all 21 community colleges and universities in the area.

Advocacy Work: The L.A. Center is hosting local focus groups to identify local issues which impact participants in pursuing their desired occupational goals. These group meeting comprised of program alumni and current participants provides a structured forum for the participants to vocalize their specific barriers/issues. The outcome garners staff and peer support for solutions as well as developing and reinforcing specific targeted activities to pursue options, alternative careers, and work opportunities.

Additional state wide task force activities include the identification and selection of representatives from both the educational and private sector to serve on this task force.



Courses Offered and Events At The Welcome Back Center—Los Angeles

- Study Group for Foreign Physicians (Basic Skills and Sciences)
- Study Group for Nurses
- English for Health
- Introduction to US Healthcare
- NCLEX Review
- Task force for the Participants (6 participants in attendance to discuss local WB issues, barriers and recommendations)
- Advisory Task Force currently being developed

Welcome Back Center—San Diego

Nursing Updates

A recent award $295,935 was provided by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in July 2004 to Grossmont College, San Diego Welcome Back Center. "Internationally Trained Health Care Workers (ITHCWs) will have multiple opportunities to enter into a nursing career pathway", says Anita Holt, R.N., M.S.N., Program Coordinator.

This grant allows for increased recruitment and assistance of ITHCWs into programs such as the Nursing Career Ladder (CNA-LVN-RN). This program creates an upward mobility in academic and clinical practice for those who are interested in a gradual immersion into the nursing field.

Another opportunity made available by this grant is the Board approved (April 2003)-14 Months Accelerated Registered Nurse (ARN) Program developed by Dr. Elisabeth Hamel, Associate Dean of Nursing at Grossmont Community College for ITHCWs. Thirty-five participants completed the Nursing Program and were present at a pinning ceremony during the month of December 2004 at Grossmont College. This generation will be taking the NCLEX exam Feb.- Mar. 2005. Some have taken NCLEX-RN boards and have passed successfully.

A second cohort of 28 participants has already been recommended and contingent upon funding starting date is anticipated for Summer 2005.

An internationally trained nurse has an opportunity for assistance in submitting transcripts and application to the Board of Registered Nursing in order to determine eligibility to take NCLEX-RN exam. While he or she is waiting, participants can enroll in a ten weekend NCLEX Review class offered by Welcome Back. This class includes both live lectures by Nursing Specialists and computer practice. After the class, the participant will have an opportunity to take a predictor test similar to the NCLEX-RN to determine his or her readiness.

The team at the Welcome Back Center led by Dr. Rolando Castillo, Director of the Welcome Back Center and Mr. Bob Yarris, Director of the Grossmont College Regional Health Occupations Resource Center (RHORC) has tapped into this under utilized human resource ITHCWs to assist in meeting the nursing shortage needs of the San Diego community. The programs developed offer alternate career pathways to these ITHCWs. Newly licensed nurses will not only have a rich medical background, body of knowledge and a nursing mind set, but they will also integrate their linguistic and cultural attributes in service delivery of patient care.

Imperial Valley Visit

Welcome Back Center (WBC) in San Diego launches first stage of program training in Imperial Valley.

Upon request of One Stop Business and Employment Center in El Centro, Imperial Valley, Welcome Back Center held a first general assembly for the year 2005 on Wednesday, January 26th. A large number of International Healthcare Workers in the region, wanted to learn how to join forces with WBC in their efforts to revalidate their International Credentials, access a level of professional training and work



with under-represented communities. An immediate response has been provided by WBC, and a Prep To Prep Immersion Course for Spanish-Speaking International Nurses has been scheduled to start on March 30th. Participants will be meeting on Wednesday from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. for six weeks. A drop-in Computer Lab. will be available to access NCLEX 3000 in preparation to take NCLEX exam in the near future. Course registration will be taking place on Wednesday, March 16th. at One Stop Employment Center from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Tonie Brown, R.N. course Instructor and Pearl Lopez, WBC Educational Case Manager encourage those interested to call (619) 409-6417or 409-6272 for more information. CORRE LA VOZ.

Our special thanks go to One Stop Center Administration and Camilo Garcia who provided logistical support

Courses Offered and Events At The Welcome Back Center—San Diego

- Introduction to U.S. Healthcare (Spring 2005)
- English for Healthcare Professionals (Spring 2005)
- Medical Assistant Certification Program (Starting February 23rd, 2005)
- Accelerated C.N.A. Program (Start date January 28, 2005)
- NCLEX Review Course (Beginning March 5th, 2005)
- Prep-to-Prep NCLEX Review Course (for Spanish speaking participants)
- Nurses Refresher/Re-entry Program (RN License Required)
- EMT Certification Course (IMG's Only)

General Informational Assembly (Friday, March 18th 2005 at 6:00 p.m. at Grossmont College, Room 220)

Welcome Back Center—San Francisco

Letter from the San Francisco Welcome Back Center Director



It is a privilege for me to join the Welcome Back team as the new director of the San Francisco Center. I have been extremely impressed by the dedication of both the staff and participants I have met. I hope the months ahead will provide opportunities for me to meet and work with many of you in person.

By way of introduction, I would like to tell you a little about myself. I grew up in Colombia, South America and came to the U.S. after graduating from high school. It was not easy for me to adapt to life in the U.S. and, as soon as I was able, I returned to South America and worked in Brazil and in Costa Rica. I returned to the U.S. to attend graduate school at Tulane University in the field of anthropology. I then spent two years doing my doctoral fieldwork in Highland Ecuador.

I have known about the Welcome Back Initiative since it began and have even referred individuals to its centers. As a medical anthropologist, I have worked on various health-related projects involving underserved populations. The health providers who most impressed me by their outreach and patient care often came from other countries. Because of their background and language skills, not only were these individuals able to communicate effectively with the populations they served, they were also instrumental in communicating patient needs to staff within their organizations. In this way, they were fulfilling a dual role: providing competent health care while educating their colleagues on how best to serve their patients.

It was clear, however, that this important cadre of health providers were not being fully utilized because they did not have the requisite credentials. Ironically, at the same time, medical and hospital directors reiterated how needy their institutions were for linguistically and culturally competent health care providers. Consequently, when I first heard about the Welcome Back Initiative, I was overjoyed. Here was a plan that made sense at every level and from which all parties—from health care providers to patients—benefit. I am grateful to now be a part of an effort that meets so many needs and makes such a positive contribution—both at individual and institutional levels.

New Management Assistant at the San Francisco Welcome Back Center

After two years at the Welcome Back Center, Amelia M. Martínez C., has left the position of Management Assistant to work as the new Research Associate for the Welcome Back Initiative Evaluation Team.

Teresa Meléndrez has joined the San Francisco Welcome back team as the new management assistant. She previously worked for a non-profit affordable housing developer, coordinating an after-school program. She has a BA in Ethnic Studies from UCSD and a Masters in Multicultural and International Education from University of San Francisco. Teresa is originally from Brawley, California and is of Mexican heritage. Her father is from Sinaloa and her mother's family comes from Guanajuato. Teresa considers herself bilingual and bicultural. She is the eldest of four children and the first college graduate in her family. She loves good food, travel, and dancing to all types of music—especially Latin American, African, and Caribbean. She currently lives in the Mission District.

Teresa enjoys her new position with the SF Welcome Back team because she enjoys meeting people from different parts of the world and because the work involves empowering individuals from immigrant communities. She looks forward to working with the Welcome Back Initiative in further developing the program and making resources for participants more readily available. Teresa has a great aptitude for analytic thinking and has contributed in helping the Center develop more accurate data collection, clearer guidelines for case management, and compiling information about the Center that ensures its smooth operation. She looks forward to acquiring more of the skills that would enable her to work as a case manager in the future.

Courses Offered and Events At The Welcome Back Center—San Francisco

- Introduction to the US Health Care System
- English for Health Professionals
- English Health Train *
- Vocational English courses available through Jewish Vocational Services
- Residency Training in the US for IMG's

* *currently in pilot phase*

