



▶ THE 2006-07  
SCHWEITZER FELLOWS  
SHARE LESSONS LEARNED



▶ SCHWEITZER PROGRAM  
COMPLETES ALUMNI  
SURVEY



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○ ISSUE 2    ○ VOLUME 3    ○ SPRING 2007

# Chicago *Schweitzer Fellows*

## Turning to Hip-Hop to Promote Health

*Ed McDonald, a 4th year medical student at Northwestern University, was once a professional dee-jay. He is training hip-hop and spoken word artists to raise awareness of health care issues facing African Americans.*

“**K**eeping it real” is a recurrent theme in hip-hop, often signifying staying true to one’s past, locale, and/or beliefs. The group De La Soul, with their song, “Stakes is High,” keenly critiqued this theme by encouraging the abandonment of a detrimental sense of ‘realness’ for a more advantageous way of life denoted as ‘keeping it right.’ My fellowship has exposed me to the notion that relentlessly ‘keeping it real’ can negatively impact one’s understanding of health. In my experience, ‘keeping it real’ can be manifested as an unyielding mistrust of Western medicine. This mistrust is a vestige of the infamous Tuskegee syphilis study and a byproduct of an intricate relationship between mistrust and a sense of voicelessness. Since hip-hop and spoken-word are rooted in providing a voice for the voiceless, the artists can harbor a sense of mistrust that extends to their views of medicine. Ironically, providing a voice for the voiceless, despite potentially engendering mistrust, is a significant reason for hip-hop’s potential in addressing healthcare disparities. As a DJ and medical student, I serve as an arbiter between ‘keeping it real’ and ‘keeping it healthy,’ constantly transitioning between stethoscopes and headphones.



Ed McDonald deejaying at Munchies, a popular hangout



Karen Meyer with site mentor Dustin Covarrubias

## Nursing Fellow Establishes New Fitness Center

Karen Meyer, a Schweitzer Fellow pursuing a nursing degree at DePaul University, is focusing on childhood overweight and obesity, serious health problems that are alarmingly prevalent among inner city youth in Chicago. “I feel the need to take action,” Karen said. “One in four overweight children are susceptible to Type II diabetes, and 60% have at least one risk factor for heart disease.” Karen is conducting her project at William H. King Elementary School on Chicago’s near west side, (Cont. p. 4)

## First Schweitzer Survey: Alumni Remain Service-Focused

Since 1996, the Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellows Program has provided service opportunities and support for health professions students interested in working with underserved communities in the Chicago area. Our vision is that the Schweitzer Program helps Fellows develop themselves as leaders and embark on life-long careers of humanitarian service.

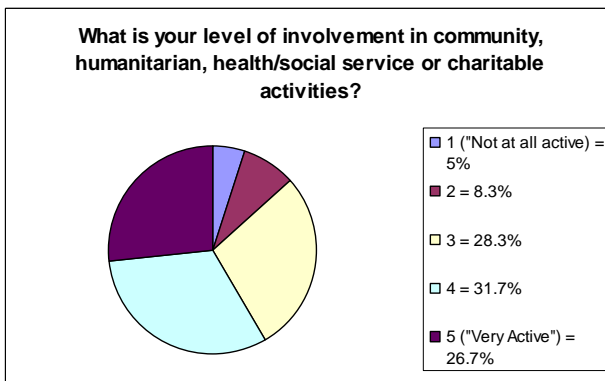
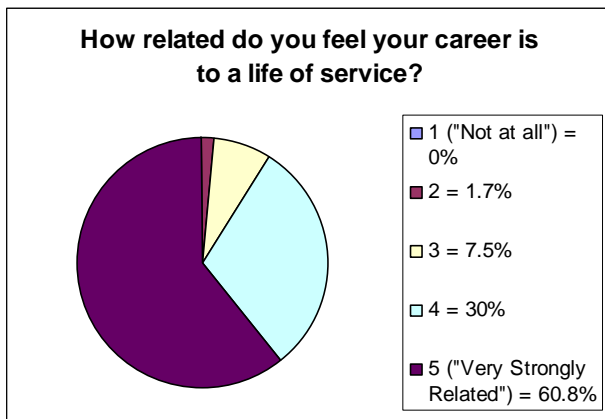
Last year, during the program’s tenth anniversary, we conducted our first longitudinal survey to examine whether the Fellowship experience continued to influence the alumni. We were also interested in gauging interest in an alumni network that could continue to encourage and support the altruistic instincts of former Schweitzer Fellows. We strongly suspected that “Fellows for Life” have a need to associate with – and be reinvigorated by – like-minded idealists. Furthermore, a “Fellows for Life” program could ultimately be a resource for alumni – and possibly their respective organizations – to collaborate on projects to help underserved communities. We launched the survey in January, 2006 and also began planning additional activities including networking events, a community service day, and focus groups.

The survey has confirmed that the Schweitzer Fellowship experience remains deeply influential in the lives and careers of our alumni. Through their careers, volunteering and community involvement, their lives still clearly exemplify the ideals of leadership, humanitarian service and altruism that the Program seeks to instill. However, our alumni lead busy lives. Many have started not only careers but families, and some (over 50%) are even pursuing additional training and degrees. “Lack of time” is perhaps the greatest challenge they face in fully leading the lives of service they wish. Yet, the overwhelming majority (87%) are very involved with community, humanitarian and charitable pursuits, and most (66%) volunteer monthly. Despite their full schedules and present level of involvement with community work, 66% of the alumni say they want to do even more service than they are currently doing.

Fellows for Life are appreciative and deeply loyal about the original Fellowship Program. In the survey and focus groups, the alumni responded enthusiastically when asked if they would consider recommending the Program to prospective applicants or funders, or if they themselves would like to get involved with recruitment or mentoring new Fellows. A majority stated they would be interested in donating money to help the Program. Supporting the original Fellowship was clearly an important priority for the alumni and should be a major focus of future alumni activities.

Despite being cautious about adding to their already heavy commitments, Fellows for Life indicated strong interest in the potential of the new alumni network, and are highly likely to consider participating in a variety of future leadership activities that we’ve proposed. They are also strongly attracted to opportunities to tap each other for knowledge, support and encouragement, and they desire ways to stay informed about each other. Our goal in the year ahead will be to design and schedule relevant networking, leadership training and service activities for the alumni and to gradually build the program over time.

*The report analyzing the Fellows for Life survey will be available on the HMPRG website.*



## Megan Foody's "Sole" Obsession: Helping the Homeless



**I** hate feet. Really, I do. My brothers used to put theirs in my face as the ultimate childhood torment. Ironically, for my Schweitzer Fellowship project, I found myself drawn to DePaul University's homeless outreach clinic, which focuses on foot care.

I became a nurse not for my own edification but to respond to a need in the world. Here in DePaul's rapidly gentrifying neighborhood, many homeless people have remained and are in desperate need of foot care. They walk throughout their day, often wearing tattered donated shoes. Diabetic clients with ill-fitting shoes, a lack of accessible hygiene opportunities and freezing winter temperatures are especially at risk of potentially serious foot complications. We carefully tend to their feet, pass out socks and toiletries, and talk with them about personal wellness and other important health concerns. We also provide our clients with physical assessments, needs assessments, and referrals to local clinics and resource centers.



Megan Foody (right) with site mentor Carol Blendowski (a Schweitzer alumna)

Perhaps the greatest gift we offer is our time and concern. We provide them a needed respite from the daily drudgery of life on the streets, a chance to sit and talk, and to relieve pain whether from the pressure of a swollen toe or a traumatic existence. Our setting allows us to listen to the clients, thoroughly answer their questions, and develop creative treatment and prevention strategies that are realistic for each individual situation. Our clients have come to trust us, and to rely on the clinic for the community atmosphere and the peace of mind from having their concerns heard and acted upon. As I witness the barriers and obstacles that our clients face daily, I am reminded of what Albert Schweitzer wrote in *The Ethics of Reverence for Life* some seventy years ago: "I am life which wills to live, in the midst of life which wills to live."

The clinic provides needed services to the community, serving a population with little means. But as one client taught me when she showed up last week in a brand new coat "an old friend on the bus" gave to her, the clinic nurtures something else in the community: hope. My disdain for feet has not left me completely, but my enthusiasm towards my chosen profession and the mission of the clinic are now, much like this client, wrapped up in a spirit of generosity.

*Megan Foody is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year graduate nursing student at DePaul University*



### Fellow Counsels Parents

The realities of raising children in the US, particularly in inner cities, are very complex. In trying to raise children, immigrant families face problems that range from being single parents, alcohol and substance abuse, domestic violence, gang involvement, and little access to social programs. A lot of the energy parents have goes towards making a living and dealing with these circumstances.

*(Continued on page 6)*

Alejandro Olayo (right) with parents from Cristo Rey



E. Altgrace Douge

## A Fellow’s Food for Thought

While conducting my Fellowship project at Theresa House on Chicago’s far south side, I met some fantastic people and had amazing experiences. At first, I thought teaching nutrition to low income families would be a good match – I like to cook and people living in shelters need all the help that they can get. Families at Theresa House are offered a maximum stay of 120 days, during which time job training, education, counseling, day care, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation are offered. Although all families are provided with Food Stamp assistance, there is little education offered on how to spend the money effectively. Many families depend on junk food and pre-packaged meals for sustenance and are incapable of maintaining healthy diets once they leave the shelter environment. The cost of these foods is prohibitive and most families quickly exceed their Food Stamp limit.

Many of the ladies at the shelter clearly have a lot going on in their lives. But when we got together and started cooking each woman seemed transformed right before my eyes. It was as if I was talking to an old friend or the nice lady I always see in the supermarket. We shared a common ground – we all enjoy good food. Talking about health and nutrition became a natural part of our time together and we all walked away from my cooking workshops a little fatter and a little wiser.

My biggest fear about this project was how I was going to connect with the women and their families. The word ‘authenticity’ gets thrown around a lot and I really wanted to be authentic. I wanted to earn the trust of women I’d never met and who would have no reason to believe in me. But while I was waiting and hoping for them to relax and invite me into their worlds, I also found myself doing the same. I thought that it was my job to relate to them, because I’ve been there and I know what it is like. They’ve never gone to medical school but I’ve certainly gone long periods without food. It did not occur to me that they could fit into my world just as easily. Now, after spending such great afternoons with the families at Theresa House, I think I get it. These things that challenge us and even break us sometimes don’t get in the way of who we truly are as people.

*E. Altgrace Douge is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year medical student at UIC*



## New Fitness Center (cont. from p. 1)

a community plagued by violence, drugs and gangs, and a scarcity of safe places for children to play. King students have physical education classes just once per week, and their facilities are extremely limited. Karen coaches a girls’ basketball team in shared gym space with the boys’ team and other after school programs. She contacted dozens of companies seeking donations to establish a badly needed fitness center at the school. On January 31st, the Life Time Fitness Foundation responded with a donation of eight elliptical machines – valued at \$25,000 – to King Elementary School.



Seventh grader Devonte Johnson was one of the first to try out the new Body Trek machines. “It is fun to work out on the equipment because it is good exercise,” he said. “When I get older I want to keep exercising so I have a good body.”

“These machines will get the students and staff excited and interested in working out and living healthy lifestyles,” said health and physical education teacher Dustin Covarrubias.

King Elementary student Jennifer Redmond tries out the new machines.

## Uplift Students Measure Up!

“So we get to help students make healthy choices? I can’t believe we get to be teachers!” How inspiring and exciting it has been for me to partake in the enthusiasm of a select group of freshmen and sophomores learning their roles and responsibilities as health promoters at Uplift Community High School. They’ve become known as the Health UPLIFTERS, assessing the needs of the Uplift student body and designing interventions geared toward decreasing childhood obesity.

Uplift is a new Chicago Public School that has a deep-seeded mission rooted in social justice and creating agents of change. It takes the mission of creating “upstanders,” not bystanders, very seriously as they incorporate service-learning opportunities that will affect the dynamic nature of the Uptown neighborhood. Many students come from families that are new to this country who are working hard to create a positive difference for the next generation. I have met students who are in transition at a homeless shelter, others who have to hurry home after school to care for their younger siblings while their parent(s) are working at their 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> jobs, and students fortunate enough to have at least one parent home to help them with their homework. The students’ range of literacy is likewise varied as many have had to focus their attention on overcoming the hardships of poverty. Working with the health promoters and answering their questions has been a valuable and humbling challenge that motivates me as a health educator and rising public health nurse.



Recently, after assessing the needs and knowledge base of the student body through a mass lunchroom survey, the Uplifters learned that the student body had little knowledge of what BMI (Body Mass Index) meant. Too few realized they were overweight, let alone obese. To increase awareness of the obesity epidemic, we conducted a BMI day during which the promoters offered their peers a chance to calculate and discuss their BMI numbers. They created a poster that provided a visual representation of BMI as a balance of activity and nutrition and a goal sheet where students could write down how they wanted to maintain or improve their BMI with nutrition and exercise related goals. Approximately 60 students participated!

**“Working with these students has been a valuable and humbling challenge that motivates me as a health educator and rising public health nurse.”**

The health promoters spent much of the first semester learning the basics regarding exercise and nutrition. Now they have shifted to applying that knowledge to activities such as organizing the BMI day, improving school lunches, teaching target heart rate at a health fair (Dia De Los Ninos), mobilizing the school body to participate in a nationwide action of exercise, and advocating for improved health services in their school. They have already collaborated with other Chicago schools to meet with the Governor’s staff to discuss the need for School Based Health centers. They have grasped the cycle of poverty and understand that if people are sick, they are unable to learn, work, care for themselves, and participate in serving and mobilizing their community. They realize the need for continued advocacy and education efforts.

We have explored some ways in which the UPLIFTERS can shadow and partake in exploring various career fields as some have stated career aspirations in nursing, education, and biomedical engineering. Through my Schweitzer Project, I have been honored to witness students empower themselves as they seek knowledge and leadership skills to serve as health promoters for their school community. I could not have anticipated the ways that they would consistently measure UP!

*Rachel Reichlin is a Rush University Nursing Student*

## Assisting Girls Transitioning from Foster Care

My project was at the Jane Addams-Ellen Gates Starr House, a facility for girls in long term foster care placements. The house assists girls with developing life and transitional skills needed for placement into their own independent living arrangements. It also provides educational, social, medical, and mental health support. The skills that the girls acquire at Starr House are essential as they will ultimately reach the age of maturity and move on to lead their lives on their own.

I developed discussion groups and workshops as a means of peer-to-peer support for the girls. The girls would self identify the barriers that they encountered in their everyday lives. We met once a week to review the goals that the girls set as a part of their transitional plan. Participants were provided with a certificate of attendance that they could use in staffing meetings, court proceedings, and administrative hearings. My workshops were designed as an open forum to discuss the barriers in a group living facility. This was done to create a common thread among the residents in the facility and to establish the peer-to-peer support among the participants. By encouraging a buddy system among the participants, my goal was to increase emotional support and to overcome lack of trust and relational issues.



I also held individual interviews with the participants to gain their perspectives on their experiences with the foster care system and their placement in a transitional living facility. I wanted to understand how their level of functioning was impacted as they transitioned into adulthood. Conducting the interviews provided a way for the participants to narrate their own stories with their own voices. My fellowship enabled me to work with young women whom I would have otherwise never had the opportunity to engage with. More importantly I was provided with the unique opportunity to encourage and support a vulnerable group that is all too often marginalized due to their race, gender, and class status within the larger society. My fellowship experience has helped me decide to write my dissertation on the schooling of African American girls within long term foster care and how their experiences impact their transition into womanhood.

*Sonia Kennedy is a PhD student in Education and Social Work at DePaul University*

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### Counseling Immigrant Parents (Cont. from page 3)

**“The parents are capable of enormous sacrifices even at the expense of their own needs.”**

During the past 6 months I have been providing counseling services at Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago’s Pilsen neighborhood; and I have also been evaluating a curriculum called “*Escuela para Padres*” (Parenting School) run by the school. My initial idea was to assess the curriculum and to increase awareness about self care and preventive mental health among parents. I gradually realized the parents are not really concerned with their own self-care. They have some sense of its importance, but it is not a priority for them. Their main concern is raising their children to someday become good men and women in this world. Working with parents, I came to realize they are capable of enormous sacrifices even at the expense of their own needs.

My social work training has taught me that “one needs to meet the client where he is at.” Being faithful to this principle has been a challenge as I have been working on this project. I remember that in one of the sessions a parent came to me and said “my priority is my children’s education and well being, keeping them out of trouble so they can have what I did not have.” The challenge is to be respectful of this need. It is meeting the parent where he or she is at, and at the same time to help them to realize that they need to take care of themselves so they can provide for their children. The truth is that parents set their priorities. At this point, I am still trying to find out the best way to have both.

*Alejandro Olayo is a Loyola University of Chicago Social Work Student*

## Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellows Program Announces 2007-08 Recipients

April 5, 2007 - In a competitive selection process, thirty graduate students from Chicago area health and human service schools are the recipients of the 2007-2008 Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellowship. Honoring the legacy of Nobel Peace Laureate Dr. Albert Schweitzer, the Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellows Program encourages students from diverse health and social service fields to “make their lives their argument” by serving the most vulnerable members of society. Now in its twelfth year, the Fellowship addresses the serious and life-threatening needs of Chicagoans without sufficient access to health care services while encouraging aspiring professionals to honor their idealism. The new Fellows’ projects will address such needs as violence prevention for adolescents, tutoring programs to help inner city students do well in school, health education for senior citizens, and prenatal education. The Fellows will also work together to organize public symposia and community service days.

### **The 2007-08 Schweitzer Fellows are:**

Kiana Andrew, UIC College of Medicine  
 Suzanne Jean Barker, West Suburban College of Nursing  
 Toni Bush, NIU Program in Public Health  
 Rose Chidaushe, DePaul University Nursing School  
 Christopher Edwards, UIC Pharmacy School  
 Deresha Gibson, Loyola University School of Social Work  
 Randy Hall, UIC School of Public Health  
 Adrienne Hampton, Northwestern University Medical School  
 Stephanie Holifield, Loyola University School of Social Work  
 Jessica Horwitz, DePaul University Nursing School  
 Tanuja Jagernauth, Pacific College of Oriental Medicine  
 Jane Jih, UIC College of Medicine  
 Michelle Kendrick, School of the Art Institute of Chicago  
 Leah Knight, Rush University School of Nursing  
 Saranya Kurapati, Loyola University Medical School  
 Tanya Melich-Munyan, Rush University School of Nursing  
 Cristiane Mohallem, School of the Art Institute of Chicago  
 Vipani Nikore, UIC College of Medicine  
 Elisha Peterson, Rush University Medical School  
 Galina Radunsky, Midwestern University College of Osteopathic Medicine  
 Nadia Razaq, Loyola University Medical School  
 Jason Reinking, Loyola University Medical School  
 Lisa Reyes, Rush University Department of Occupational Therapy  
 Chastity Rolling, University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration  
 Janna Stansell, UIC School of Public Health  
 Mosmi Surati, University of Chicago Medical School  
 Cristina Thorsen, UIC College of Medicine  
 Kerensa Vinson, St. Xavier University School of Nursing  
 Jason Waldinger, University of Chicago Medical School  
 Jennifer Yeung, Midwestern University College of Osteopathic Medicine

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**Chicago Area Schweitzer  
Fellows Program**

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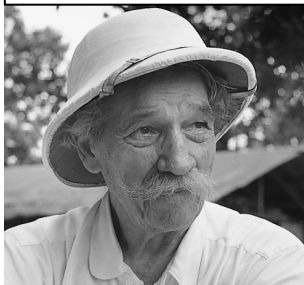
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**Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellowship Events**

**April 24, 2007 (Tuesday) - Schweitzer Annual Event**

A celebration to congratulate the outgoing (2006-07) Fellows for their accomplishments. Reception begins at 6:00pm and features music by The Matt Young Trio. Program begins at 7:00pm. Catharine (Cat) Quinn, BSN, RNC, MPH, will deliver the keynote address: "Leading by Example: Fostering Agents of Change." Please call Health and Medicine for information (312) 372-4292 or email [rsvp@hmprg.org](mailto:rsvp@hmprg.org)

**April is "Reverence for Life/Music for Life" Month**

Music concerts and other events will commemorate the 50th anniversary of Dr. Schweitzer's international radio address calling for an end to nuclear arms testing. For information visit:  
<http://www.reverenceforlife.org/reverence/index.html>

**May 12, 2007 (Saturday) – Spring into Fitness Health Fair**

**Fellows for Life** will assist with an annual health fair serving Cabrini Green residents. Alumni interested in providing screenings or health/social services information should contact Ray Wang at the Program Office at (312) 372-4292 or [rwang@hmprg.org](mailto:rwang@hmprg.org).

**June 23, 2007 (Saturday) – Fellows for Life Networking Dinner**  
(tentative, details TBA)

It is through the idealism of youth that man catches sight  
of truth, and in that idealism he possesses a wealth  
which he must never exchange for anything else.

- ALBERT SCHWEITZER

We express our thanks to:

Alphawood Foundation

Baxter International  
Foundation

Michael Reese Health  
Trust

Northwestern University

Polk Bros Foundation

Rosalind Franklin  
University

Rush University

University of Chicago

University of Illinois  
at Chicago

VNA Foundation

And the many individuals  
and families who  
generously support  
the Chicago Area Schweitzer  
Fellows Program

*Dear Colleagues,*

*Once again, we are excited to document some of the inspired work of the Schweitzer Fellows. During the past year, on top of their heavy course-loads, jobs, and other commitments, each of the Schweitzer Fellows invested 200 hours (or more!) in innovative projects to improve the health of underserved individuals and communities. We hope that you will join us in honoring them for their dedication at the Schweitzer Annual Event at Northwestern Memorial Hospital on April 24th, and that you will also help us spread the word about their achievements.*

*We are also pleased to tell the results of our recently concluded survey of Fellows for Life. While we have long suspected that an overwhelming majority of our alumni would continue to be inspired by their Fellowship experience and remain deeply committed to public service, we are now able to confirm it. We look forward to continuing our relationship with our graduates – once a Fellow, always a Fellow – and helping them to further their potential as leaders in service.*

*Lastly, we warmly welcome the new 2007-08 Fellows, who will begin their projects this May, after an orientation weekend on May 5-6. We look forward to their creativity and dedication to help others.*

*Sincerely,*

*Arthur F. Kehrman, MD  
Schweitzer Fellowship Advisor,  
Advisory Council Chair &  
National Schweitzer Board*