



Atkins Foundation pledges support to Center for Weight and Health

The **Dr. Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Foundation** has pledged \$10 million to the Center for Weight and Health at the University of California, Berkeley, to support nutrition research and obesity prevention programs.

The announcement was made Jan. 24 at the 2007 **California Childhood Obesity Conference** in Anaheim. In recognition of the bequest, the center will be renamed the **Dr. Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Center for Weight and Health**.

The center was founded at UC Berkeley in 1999 by **Pat Crawford, Dr.P.H. '94, R.D.**, and **Joanne Ikeda, M.A., R.D.**, both UC cooperative extension nutrition specialists, and **Sharon Fleming, Ph.D.**, UC Berkeley professor of nutritional sciences and toxicology. It was based solely at the College of Natural Resources until 2005, when it became jointly administered by the School of Public Health. Today, the codirectors of the center are Crawford and **May Wang, Dr.P.H. '93, R.D.**, adjunct assistant professor of community health and human development at the School of Public Health.

"What distinguishes our center is our focus on the prevention of pediatric obesity, and we are so grateful that the Atkins Foundation is supportive of that," said Crawford, who is also an adjunct professor of nutrition

at the College of Natural Resources and the School of Public Health. "With this pledge, we'll be able to continue the important work we've been doing to help reverse the troubling epidemic of childhood obesity in this country."

The Atkins Foundation was established in 2003 following the death of **Robert C. Atkins, M.D.**, whose pioneering, yet often controversial, clinical work and writings popularized a low-carbohydrate lifestyle. The foundation, which is unaffiliated with and operates independently of Atkins Nutritionals Inc., funds independent, evidence-based research examining the role of nutrition and metabolism in obesity, diabetes, cancer and other major health conditions, as well as educational programs, public health advocacy initiatives and endowed professorships.

"This commitment by the foundation will ensure the continuation of long-term programs of the Dr. Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Center for Weight and Health at UC Berkeley," said **Paul Ludden, Ph.D.**, dean of the College of Natural Resources. "We are very excited about the opportunities this will provide for the future. Obesity, especially childhood obesity, is the major health problem facing our society today. Clearly, the foundation recognizes the power of the synergy

between top-ranked programs in nutrition and public health as providing the total package for addressing this critically important health issue in our society."

The center, which does not conduct research evaluating diet plans, brings together experts from multiple disciplines in recognition of the complex mix of contributors to the obesity epidemic. Center researchers emphasize that solutions must involve many sectors of society, including food production and distribution, community safety and design, the health care system, schools and the media.

The center is currently home to some 30 active research projects, including a community intervention program to lower Type 2 diabetes risk among overweight, low-income, African-American children; evaluation of state laws taking effect this year that phase out sodas and sweetened beverages in public schools; and a prospective study evaluating the relationship between the timing of food intake and weight among teenage girls.

"The center at UC Berkeley is a tribute to my husband's belief in the power of influencing public health outcomes, particularly in the battle against obesity," said Veronica Atkins, the widow of Dr. Atkins and chair of the Atkins Foundation's board of directors. "On behalf of the Atkins Foundation, I am proud to partner with a center as active and accomplished as Berkeley's, and excited to support the ongoing advances of its outstanding researchers."

One of the hallmarks of the center is the close connection researchers form with the community.

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—VERONICA ATKINS





Dean's Message

Moving the Health Agenda in California

In mid-January approximately 150 health leaders from throughout the state met at the conference headquarters of The California Endowment in Los Angeles to discuss some of the major health challenges facing all Californians. This first summit focused primarily on communicable disease and chronic illness. I had the pleasure of cochairing the summit with Dr. Tony Iton, director of the Alameda County Health Department. Other school participants included Helen Halpin, director of our Center for Health and Public Policy Studies, Jeff Oxendine our associate dean for public health practice, and Richard Scheffler, director of our Petris Center for the Study of Healthcare Markets and Consumer Welfare.

Participants identified three primary areas for follow-up action: 1) strengthening the health workforce; 2) increasing the health information technology capability of both the public and private health sectors, particularly in regard to the exchange of information between the two; and 3) expanding efforts in chronic disease prevention. Examples of workforce needs identified included expanding the number of trained public health graduates in the state; developing executive education and related continuing education programs for practicing public health and clinical care professionals; and increasing the recruitment of underrepresented minorities into the health professions. On the information technology front, participants identified the need for a work group to address the interoperability of health care and public health data bases. In addition, there is the need to increase the availability of community and county level data to monitor improvements in health outcomes, health services use, and their

associated determinants. These data, in turn, can provide the basis for development of community level health status and health care delivery scorecards. In regard to the challenge of chronic disease prevention, participants noted the need for greater collaboration between the health care delivery and public health sectors, particularly in regard to school nutrition, increasing physical activity, and implementation of the community outreach components of the chronic care management initiatives.

A post-summit planning group led by former state senator Deborah Ortiz and Joe Hafey of the Public Health Institute is working to develop the next steps to address these and related issues and secure the necessary follow-up funding for implementation. The overall vision of the summit is to serve as an annual convener of state health leaders from both the private and public sectors to discuss progress, identify continuing gaps and bring relevant groups together to achieve scalable results. Our School, along with the other schools of public health in the state, will continue to work with many leaders throughout California to accelerate the improvements that need to be made.

Sincerely,
Stephen M. Shortell, Ph.D., M.P.H.

Dean, School of Public Health
Blue Cross of California Distinguished Professor of Health Policy & Management
Professor of Organization Behavior

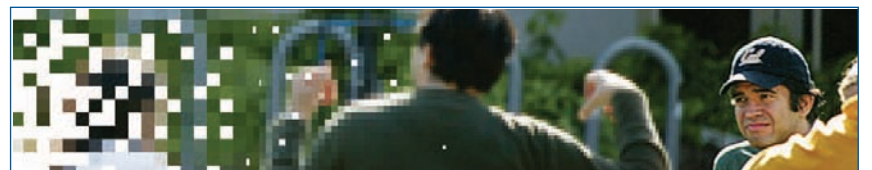
Atkins Foundation..., continued

"Community needs and priorities help drive the research agenda and, reciprocally, research results more effectively inform community action," said Crawford.

It was the center's focus on practical applications to obesity prevention that was particularly appealing to the Atkins Foundation. "The researchers at the center are out in the trenches, in the community, working hands-on to help people have healthier lifestyles," said **Abby Bloch, Ph.D. R.D.**, the foundation's executive director of programs and research. "The commitment of these researchers to this area of research and the translational application into the community are very much on target with the mission and goal of the foundation."

Funding for the center has come from grants to the researchers and administrative support from the College of Natural Resources and the School of Public Health. Upon the death of Veronica Atkins, the center will receive the \$10 million gift from the foundation. Until then, UC Berkeley will continue to provide support for the center.

"The Atkins Foundation support will significantly strengthen our ability to solve one of the nation's most intractable problems—the growing percentage of Americans who are overweight and obese," said **Stephen M. Shortell, Ph.D., M.P.H.**, professor and dean of the School of Public Health. "The foundation's commitment means that we will be able to touch thousands more lives with our interdisciplinary research and teaching that ranges from basic science research to community-wide interventions. The impact will be felt by generations."



Don't lose your network connection

A strong network needs a strong connection. So whether you are networking for fun or for a job, make sure your info is up-to-date in UC Berkeley School of Public Health's online alumni community, **Public Health@cal**.

As an @cal member, you can also visit the new@cal café and create your blog, connect with friends, and set up groups.



great minds online sphalum.berkeley.edu

First-time users: You'll need a PIN to register. It's located beside your name on the mailing label of this newsletter.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Berkeley

"Cal calling!"

SUPPORT THE ANNUAL FUND



Emily Roberts (left) and Melissa Murphy help out at the School's phonathon.

During the upcoming weeks, Cal students may be phoning you to ask you to support the School of Public Health's Annual Fund. Please be generous when Cal calls!

Coming attractions at the School



Spring Alumni Brunch and Silent Auction

Sunday, April 15

Auction starts at 9 a.m.; brunch and program at 11:30 a.m.; Garden Room, Clark Kerr Campus, 2601 Warring Street, Berkeley. For tickets and

information, contact Eileen Pearl, phaa@berkeley.edu, (510) 643-6382.

Gather with colleagues for food, camaraderie, and an opportunity to support the work of the Public Health Alumni Association. The event's guest speaker will be **Michael Bird, M.S.W., M.P.H. '83**, who will discuss "Opening Doors and Opening Your Heart: Diversity and Inclusivity in Public Health." Bird is past president of the American Public Health Association, and the first Native American ever to hold the office. If you would like to donate items for the auction, contact Julie Brown, lavieboehm@aol.com, (650) 571-6690. Donations may be dropped off with Eileen Pearl at 417-L University Hall from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.



Annual Edward E. Penhoet Lecture: Andy Grove

Tuesday, April 10

4-6 p.m., 22 Warren Hall UC Berkeley campus

The Edward E. Penhoet Annual Lecture focuses on how biology, behavior, and envi-

ronment intersect to produce health. This year's lecturer, **Andy Grove, Ph.D.**, cofounder and senior adviser to executive management, Intel Corporation, will discuss the role of technology in solving the crisis in the U.S. health care system in his presentation titled, "**Shift Left: Technology and Healthcare.**"

TransNational Health: New Research on Health and Im/Migration

Wednesday, April 18

8 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Berkeley City Club, 2315 Durant Ave., Berkeley
Registration: immigration.berkeley.edu

The fifth annual "Science & Society" conference, hosted by UC Berkeley's Center for Health Research, addresses the challenges of health and health care in an increasingly global economy. The flow of migrants across national boundaries—especially the boundary between California and Mexico—means that both prevention and care are complicated by linguistic and cultural differences, distinct systems of financing health services, and mobility of patients from country to country, region to region, and workplace to workplace.

Cal Day

Saturday, April 21

9 a.m.-4 p.m., UC Berkeley campus.
Information: www.berkeley.edu/calday/

Take in all that Berkeley has to offer at the campus's annual open house, offering a variety of free activities, lectures, sports, and demonstrations.



Honoring Our Past, Creating Our Future

Friday, May 4

4-6 p.m., 22 Warren Hall, UC Berkeley campus

As the School prepares to vacate Warren Hall, a distin-

guished panel of speakers reflects on the School's illustrious history and looks ahead to exciting plans for the School's future in a new home. Speakers will include **Chancellor Robert Birgeneau, Ph.D.**; former dean and professor emeritus **Warren Winkelstein, Jr., M.D., M.P.H.**; California Dept. of Health Services director **Sandra Shewry, M.S.W., M.P.H. '81**; and a video presentation by CDC director **Julie Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H. '90**.

Annual Appreciation Dinner

Monday, June 25

Morrison Room, Doe Library
Invitation only

At this special dinner, the School takes the opportunity to thank its supporters and volunteers for all they do for the School.

For a complete calendar of events at the School, visit sph.berkeley.edu.



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News and Notes

Public Health Alumni Association to award scholarships in annual competition

In April the Public Health Alumni Association's Scholarship Committee will review entries in the annual scholarship competition and select this year's winners. Chaired by **Jim Devitt M.P.H. '78**, the committee will award 47 scholarships of \$1,500 each to students at the School of Public Health. The scholarship awardees and the donors who made the awards possible will be honored at the annual Scholarship Tea in November.



Health summit addresses key health issues facing California

The inaugural **California Health Strategy Summit** brought together leaders from throughout the state to address the challenges posed by communicable disease and chronic illness. The summit took place at The California Endowment's offices in Los Angeles on Jan. 17. Distinguished participants included **Kimberly Belshé, M.P.P.**, secretary of the Health and Human Services Agency of California; **Anthony B. Iton, M.D., J.D., M.P.H. '97**, director and health officer of the Alameda County Public Health Department and summit cochair; **Deborah Ortiz, J.D.**, former California state senator; and **Robert K. Ross, M.D.**, president and chief executive officer of The California Endowment. **Dean Stephen Shortell, Ph.D., M.P.H.**, also served as cochair. The summit was a collaborative effort of the **Public Health Institute** and the **University of California, Berkeley, School of Public Health**, with financial support provided by numerous sponsoring organizations.

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Highlights

Inside this issue:
**Dr. Robert C. and
Veronica Atkins
Center for Weight
and Health**

Out and About

1 **Alejandro Toledo, Ph.D.**, former president of Peru, and **David Lawrence, M.D.**, past CEO and chairman of the board, Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, at the Advanced Health Leadership Forum (AHLF), held in San Francisco in Jan. 2007. **2** **Osei Acheampong, M.Sc., M.B.A.**, director of operations at the National Health Insurance Council, Ghana, and **Tomorlah Varpilah, M.A.**, deputy minister of health for planning, research, and human resource development for the Ministry of Health & Social Welfare, Liberia, at the AHLF welcome dinner. **3** Students and alumni meet at the annual Career Cafe, held Feb. 8, 2007, at Alumni House. **4** **David Mann, M.D., Carllessia Hussein, R.N., Dr.P.H. '77**, and Professor **Meredith Minkler, Dr.P.H. '75**, at the UC Berkeley Social Hour, held last November at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association (APHA) in Boston. **5** **Giorgio Piccagli, Ph.D., M.P.H. '91**, **Corinne Leach, M.S.**, and **John Troidl, Ph.D. '01**, at the APHA Social Hour.

