

## **REDUCING DISPARITIES FOR THE DEAF/HARD OF HEARING COMMUNITY**

**a.** Creating increased access to health information and health care for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community

Partners: Deaf Community Services of San Diego, Inc. (Leslie Elion, JD and Raymond Trybus, PhD, [rtrybus@dcsofsd.org](mailto:rtrybus@dcsofsd.org) (619) 398-2441 x 103); Rebecca and John Moores UCSD Cancer Center (Georgia Robins Sadler, PhD), Bovee Productions (Michael Bovee, MA), and Gallaudet University (Lynda Lytle, PhD and the late, Barbara A. Brauer, PhD)

**b.** The Deaf community is a minority community that faces all of the challenges of traditional minorities, plus other challenges that are unique to the Deaf community. Because American Sign Language (ASL) is the primary language of Deaf people, the average literacy with English - the community's second language, if learned at all - is between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Also Deaf children, 90% of whom are born into hearing families, experience lifelong isolation from normal familial communication, which exacerbates barriers to obtaining and understanding health information. The partnership conducted research to test strategies to overcome these communication barriers. Deaf workers were employed to create and test a traditional breast cancer education program that was improved by adding more graphics and using simpler English. The partnership gradually learned how to tailor its approach to meet the learning style preferences of the community and published its findings in peer-reviewed scientific journals along the way to help encourage the development of other campus-community partnerships. Through grants secured from the UCSD Academic Senate, the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, Alliance Healthcare Foundation, and the California Endowment, the partnership recruited Deaf actors for six cancer education videos in ASL with open captioning and voice overlay, winning a Finalist Award of Distinction and a Bronze World Medal in the New York Festivals and a Gold medal and two Honorable Mentions in the MarCom Creative Awards.

The partnership also identified communication problems between Deaf persons and their health care providers as a major impediment to accessing health care and information. To address this need, the partnership secured funding from the National Cancer Institute to create and evaluate the nation's first program to train medical students in ASL and Deaf culture within the context of cancer control. To date, 12 medical students have taken part in the training program led by a Deaf person, who also leads a Pre-Health Professional Deaf Club that recruits undergrads interested in health careers to take ASL in fulfillment of their language requirement and encourages hearing students already taking ASL to consider careers in health and science.

**c.** The successes include: a nationally recognized program that is addressing Deaf people's critical need for information; \$2.7 million in funds to progress to this point in our mission; and a nationwide partnership of Deaf community agencies and 140 Deaf-friendly churches to disseminate the educational materials being produced. The National Association of the Deaf's Captioned Media Program lends these videos free. The greatest difficulty has been finding the funds necessary to expand the program. The "unexpected finding" was the realization that the central ingredients that cemented the partnership and determined its success were the trust and the commitment to the mission that developed among the partners.

**d.** The agencies have grown through this successful partnership, but the real gain has come to the community. We have shown that successful strategies can be developed that effectively reach this community in a culturally sensitive and linguistically compatible manner, and that a very real need is being fulfilled by this partnership.