



**SPECIAL  
POINTS OF IN-  
TEREST:**

- CVHN AmeriCorps members volunteering with Habitat for Humanity!
- The Central Valley water supply, is it as clean as it should be? Find out more!
- Public Health isn't something that matters to someone else –Public Health is your health.

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## Habitat for Humanity: Serving the Community

With the housing bubble bursting, many families across the Central Valley are losing their homes.

The city of Fresno ranks 12<sup>th</sup> in the nation with the highest rate of

foreclosures, and over 95 million American families have problems obtaining simple, quality homes. Thankfully organizations such as Habitat for Humanity are giving their time and resources to help deserving families achieve their dreams of owning a home. In Fresno County, Habitat for Humanity strives to unite individuals, families, and communities build decent and affordable housing. Habitat for Humanity has built more than 300,000 houses around the world, providing more than 1.5 million people in more than 3,000 communities with safe, decent, affordable shelter.

On March 27 and 28, CVHN-AmeriCorps members became part of that mission and contributed their time of service. Prior to volunteering, many did not have much knowledge of Habitat for Humanity. Some didn't quite know what the organization did to help the community. But that soon changed after spending time on the construction site, helping

to build the foundation for the home. "I was a little concerned at first, not knowing how I would be

able to help because I, like many of us, had no prior construction skills. I was completely amazed at how after very little instruction we were getting a lot done," states



Erica Mireles.

Working alongside the family members, Habitat for Humanity workers, and fellow AmeriCorps, the work was able to be completed. Not only did the members learn how to build frames, they learned the lesson of teamwork. "I learned the value of construction work and the feeling of camaraderie...

The work done at the construction site, along with the professional workers, family and volunteers gave a true example of bringing a community together for the greater good. I walked away with an eye-opening experience of just how giving, caring and inspiring people can be," states Cynthia Mendez.

For some, it gave them a sense of appreciation that their work is much needed. "Just helping them out for a few hours made them appreciate our help. Even though it was not a lot but, that much made it easier for them. Just knowing they appreciate it, is what makes it work to me," said Sukhvir Rajania who volunteered at the ReStore.

In the end, the members gained a sense of the work that Habitat for Humanity does for the community, the hard work that construction workers do, and a worthwhile feeling that we made a difference in the lives of a deserving



family.

**Written By: Christel Tee Sy**

# Protecting our Environment and Health



The interactions we have with our environment will affect our future!

“Increasing your knowledge of public health can provide you with the information and skills to help yourself, your family and communities.”

In the face of the many technological advances that have led to numerous global changes, many environmental issues have developed, which have in turn affected the health of the public. The interactions between human activity and the environment have presented a vast amount of concern for many of our natural resources, particularly our water systems. Studies have showed that water pollution is one of the leading causes of deaths and diseases in the world today. Our water contamination occurs for reasons such as pathogen invasion, chemical toxicity and thermal pollution from nonpoint or point source pollution. Nonpoint source pollution occurs from cumulative sources and point source pollution occurs when contaminants enter waterway via single sources such as pipes or ditches. Human activities such as oil spills, factory discharge are point sources, as urban or agricultural runoff are the nonpoint source examples proven to contaminate our water and jeopardize our health. Studies show that every year over 4 billion pounds of toxic chemicals are released by industry into the nation’s environment, polluting our water systems,



and our land. In the Central Valley region, the hub of agriculture, field loaded with pesticides have been major culprits in water contamination. In a National Water Quality Inventory study, agricultural nonpoint source pollution is the leading source of water quality impacts on surveyed rivers and lakes, the second largest source of impairments to wetlands, and a major contributor to contamination of surveyed estuaries and groundwater. Chemical by-products and hazardous waste that is introduced into our ecological systems are widely recognized by scientific organizations to be the cause of many types of cancers, immune system impairment, contributions to birth defects, and the lead cause to many other health related impacts. It is without question that Americans value water quality, and it has been demonstrated that U.S. waterways have become cleaner because of pollution controls and regulation, yet extensive water quality problems remain. While substantial progress has been made under the Clean Water Act in reducing point source pollution, many water bodies continue to be polluted by large nonpoint sources that have detrimental effects on our health.

**Written By: Julissa Gonzalez**

## In Public Health the *Community* is the Patient

Many of us may not realize the impact that Public Health has had on our lives, but there are many examples all around us. As defined by [www.whatispUBLICHEALTH.org](http://www.whatispUBLICHEALTH.org) public health protects and improves the health of communities through education, promotion of healthy lifestyles, and research for disease and injury prevention. How does public health affect me and you? Well it most certainly has improved our quality of life. Public health achievements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century have increased life expectancy, reduced infant mortality, and eliminated or reduced many communicable diseases. Vaccinations, motor-vehicle safety, control of infectious diseases and family planning are just a few of the impacts public health has had on our lives. These advances lose significance if we are unable to communicate them and practice them in

today’s society. Public health also tackles this problem by advocating appropriate avenues in which to inform and



educate the community.

One of these avenues is the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research tool: **askCHIS** which is the California Health Interview Survey. The survey is the largest of its kind and every two years it contacts about 50,000 Califor-

nians throughout rural and urban counties via random dial telephone calls. A wide-range of health topics are asked with enough detail to give great insight on the health and health care needs of California’s large and diverse population. This information is FREE and readily available for your viewing at [www.chis.ucla.edu](http://www.chis.ucla.edu) and can be used for your personal knowledge or advocacy purposes for your organization.

Increasing knowledge of public health can provide you with the information and skills to help yourself, your family and communities. As future health professionals and leaders, it is important to take advantage of tools that allow each of us to provide information to our own communities in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner.

**Written By:  
Cynthia Mendez**

## Samira Manzo

Golden Valley Health Centers



**Which do you prefer: High salary or job satisfaction?** Job satisfaction because you get a peaceful environment and many other things that will come with it

**Which is your most favorite book ever?** I really can't say that I have one because there are too many to pick from!

**What television character do you simply adore?** I don't have a favorite TV character because I really don't watch T.V. but I like Horacio Kane from CSI Miami

**What is your taste in music?** I like all genres

**Which is your favorite genre of movies?** Comedy

**If you could have a luncheon with any three people (real or fictitious/ from any time period, dead or alive), which three people would you choose and why?** My grandmother because I would love to see her again. Carlos Santana because of his artistic talents and beautiful music. President Obama so I could express my disappointments regarding decisions made to bail out the banks without considerations at first and talk about better ideas of how to helping people and not companies.

**If given a complete freedom to start afresh, what profession would you choose and why?** Medical, because I love to help my community and there is always something to contribute.

**What is your idea of fun? If given a choice to skip work for a day, how would you spend the entire day?** I will love to stay home and wouldn't do anything for that day.

**If given a choice, which animal would you want to be? Why?** I think I will like to be a bird so I can fly and be free.

**What's been your best experience working at your Health Center?** I think that being able to help other people and see the faces of those people after you help them.

**When do you have the most fun at work?** When I work outside with some other staff members and we work with the little children.

**Who do you enjoy working with the most here? What do you like about them?** With Daniela Dias or other staff because they teach me new and interesting things and I learn so much from them!

**Which manager do you admire the most at your health center? What do you admire about that person?**

Martin Dias because he is very smart and he is always working on new things to help our community. Martin also treats every one with a lot of respect.



## Antoinette Baktiar

Clinica Sierra Vista

**Which do you prefer: High salary or job satisfaction?** Both!

**Which is your most favorite book ever?** Harry Potter.

**What television character do you simply adore?** Definitely Sean Connery!

**What is your taste in music?** I like a wide variety of music but two of my favorites would be Arabic and Persian music.

**Which is your favorite genre of movies?** Suspense and horror, ghost adventures and law & order are two of my favorites!

**If you could have a luncheon with any three people (real or fictitious/ from any time period, dead or alive), which three people would you choose and why?** Sean Connery, Christian Castro, and Alejandro Fernandez because they are all amazing at what they do, and their good looking too!

**If given a complete freedom to start afresh, what profession would you choose and why?** A veterinarian because I love animals, and I think it would be awesome to be able to help and rescue all the different animals.

**What is your idea of fun? If given a choice to skip work for a day, how would you spend the entire day?** I think a fun day would consist of going to the movies with my family and maybe having a nice dinner. If I had a choice to skip work for a day I would probably do the same thing as my idea of a fun day!

**If given a choice, which animal would you want to be? Why?** A bird, because they're free to roam where ever they want, and they can fly anywhere too!

**What's been your best experience working at your Health Center?** My best experience would be meeting all the new people I've met, and helping who ever I can, and seeing the pregnant woman and cute newborn babies!

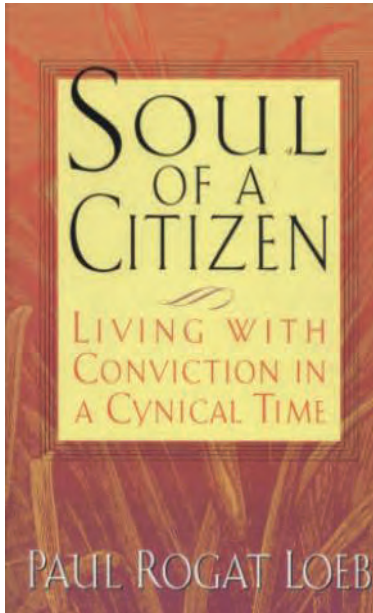
**When do you have the most fun at work?** When my patients come and tell me they've been approved for Medi-Cal and they're happy! Definitely puts a smile on my face.

**Who do you enjoy working with the most here? What do you like about them?** Basically all my co-workers, such as Susan Richard, Della Polanco, Paty from WIC, Mary Jane, and Patty Svetka.

**Which manager do you admire the most at your health center? What do you admire about that person?** I would have to say Alex Rejis, because she's a very strong woman and she's someone to learn from after her 10 year experience as an assistant manager, and she has excellent customer service skills.

# What are *You* Reading?

In the interest of cultivating more and more readers, this section is dedicated to introducing and highlighting an interesting book read by our AmeriCorps



Soul of a Citizen  
By: Paul Rogat Loeb

A book of inspiration and integrity, *Soul of a Citizen* is an antidote to the twin scourges of modern life—powerlessness and cynicism. In his evocative style, Paul Loeb tells moving stories of ordinary Americans who have found unexpected fulfillment in social involvement. Through their example and Loeb's own wise and powerful lessons, we are compelled to move from passivity to participation. The reward of our action, we learn, is nothing less than a sense of connection and purpose not found in a purely personal life. *Soul of a Citizen* awakens within us the desire and the ability to make our voices heard and our actions count. We can lead lives worthy of our convictions.

## What's going on in May?

### AmeriCorps Week Habitat for Humanity Fresno Chapter:

The third annual **AmeriCorps Week**, which takes place May 9-16, 2009, provides the perfect opportunity for AmeriCorps members, alums, grantees, program partners, and friends to shine a spotlight on the work done by members—and to motivate more Americans to serve their communities. Get ready AmeriCorps members and put on your construction hat! In honor of AmeriCorps Week we will be working hard on building a home for deserving family.

[www.americorpsweek.gov](http://www.americorpsweek.gov)

### Asthma & Allergy Awareness Month:

Each year, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) declares May to be "National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month." It's a peak season for asthma and allergy sufferers, and a perfect time to educate your patients, family, friends, co-workers and others about these diseases. World asthma day is May 5<sup>th</sup>. Asthma is a serious health concern in the Central Valley find out what you can do!

[www.aafa.org](http://www.aafa.org)

### Asian Pacific American Heritage Month:

The Asian/Pacific American Heritage Association (APAHA) was formed in 1992 to "promote awareness and increase understanding of the Asian/Pacific American culture and its diversity through education and celebration, focusing on May as the Asian Pacific American Heritage Month (APAHM), and continuing throughout the year." APAHA's main objectives include enhancing racial harmony, promoting cross-cultural awareness, education and appreciation between and among Asian/Pacific Americans and other ethnic groups by outreach to schools, businesses, and other institutions.

[www.apaha.org/](http://www.apaha.org/)

### American Bike Month:

The League of American Bicyclists is promoting Bike-to-Work Week from May 11-15 and Bike-to-Work Day on Friday, May 15. This is the month to promote bicycling for fun, fitness and transportation and work through advocacy and education for a bicycle-friendly America.

[www.bikeleague.org](http://www.bikeleague.org)



Central Valley Health Network

Incorporated in 1998, the Central Valley Health Network (CVHN) is a consortium of 12 Federally Qualified Health Center corporations that provide comprehensive preventive primary care services and advocate on behalf of low-income and medically underserved families throughout the northern, Central Valley and Inland Empire areas of California. In most Central Valley communities, CVHN members are the only safety net provider.

CVHN's mission is to facilitate community health centers' strength in the marketplace and to support member's effective delivery of high quality and accessible health care. CVHN staff support members through: advocacy, technical assistance, program development and administration, and training.

The AmeriCorps Informer is a monthly publication written, edited and reviewed by current AmeriCorps members throughout CVHN. Its purpose is to provide insightful and informative news and current events to our members. The newsletter also serves as a means to stay informed about events or changes happening within the organization. It also introduces all AmeriCorps members to the entire network therefore encouraging networking and collaboration opportunities.

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## Caring For California's Heartland

### Editorial Board

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