AAIP Co-Founder Earns Lifetime Achievement Award

Healthy, Active Native Communities Conference Roundup

AAIP Co-Hosts PAW in Denver

Conquering Diabetes in Indian Country

AAIP NEWSLETTER
The Association of American Indian Physicians (AAIP) will partner with the University of Hawai‘i, Center for Native and Pacific Health Disparities Research to co-host the “Advancing Native Health and Wellness” Conference in Anchorage, AK. The conference, which will be AAIP’s 41st Annual Meeting, will be held July 31 – August 5. The two health organizations will hold their annual meetings jointly.

“This will mark the first time Native Hawaiian physicians and American Indian physicians will come together to share research and ideas on Native health and wellness,” said AAIP President Dr. Donna Galbreath. “This unique partnership and opportunity will bring together ideas and opportunities that can help us all better address the multitude of health issues that are critical to our organizations and to indigenous populations.”

“The gathering of Native health care providers and Native communities from across the U.S. and the Pacific will provide an opportunity to learn from each other and to join our voices together on critical issues related to native health and wellness,” said Dr. Marjorie Mau, Center for Native and Pacific Health Disparities Research Director. “This conference will also embrace cultural practitioners and traditional healers who are key to defining who we are by honoring our past ... as we move forward to take ownership of our health and wellness - and to be proud of who we are today and into the future.”

Galbreath said topics for the conference will include sessions on: traditional healing; workforce diversity in the biomedical and healthcare field; Native-driven research; social determinants of health; public/private collaborations to address wellness; health disparities in Native communities; models of healthcare delivery; and community engaged interventions.

“This will be a great opportunity to share best practices for implementing health and wellness initiatives in our Native communities,” Galbreath said.
Dr. Everett Rhoades, the co-founder of the Association of American Indian Physicians (AAIP) and University of Oklahoma Professor Emeritus of Medicine, was recently honored by the American Medical Association (AMA) Foundation for his community service and dedication to improving access to health care for American Indian people.

AMA Foundation President Dr. Owen Garrick said the honor commends “unsung heroes who work tirelessly to serve the greater good without seeking recognition in return.”

Rhoades, a member of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, was presented the 2012 Jack B. McConnell Excellence in Medicine for Volunteerism at an AMA Foundation meeting in Washington D.C. last month. He was one of six nationwide recipients of the 2012 Excellence in Medicine award. AMA President Dr. Peter Carmel said honorees “exemplify the highest ideals of our profession—altruism, compassion and dedication to patient care.”

Rhoades said the award is an affirmation and recognition of the thousands of individuals, Indian and non-Indian, who have dedicated their lives to improving Native health.

“With the destructive ravages of modern life, the essential Indian concepts of what really constitutes health and disease are worthy of continued thought and discussion by the general public,” Rhoades said.

Rhoades, a tireless and lifelong advocate for American Indian health, established the Oklahoma City-based AAIP in 1971 and acted as the organization’s first president. Additionally, he was a founding member and volunteer physician of the Oklahoma City Indian Clinic, one of the largest urban Indian health centers in the United States.

AAIP’s mission is “to pursue excellence in Native American healthcare by promoting education in the medical disciplines, honoring traditional healing principles and restoring the balance of mind, body, and spirit.”

AAIP President Dr. Donna Galbreath said Rhoades is a beacon of leadership for American Indian and Alaska Native health professionals.

“Dr. Rhoades has excelled in every facet of the healthcare system – from practitioner to administrator to teacher to organizer. Nobody is more deserving of this recognition,” Galbreath said. “We can directly credit his vision for improving the lives of Indian people nationwide.”

Rhoades was the first American Indian Director of the U.S. Indian Health Service (IHS) in the 1980’s and during his 11-year tenure, the organization’s budget increased from $617 million to $1.85 billion, vastly improving the services available to underserved American Indians and Alaska Natives.

A veteran of the U.S. Air Force, Rhoades also served his alma mater -- the University of Oklahoma, where he taught and served as Associate Dean for Community Affairs of the College of Medicine.
AAIP Receives Grant for Careers in Health for Native Students Program

AAIP was recently awarded a $100,000 matching grant by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community to assist American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students pursuing a healthcare career.

AAIP’s Careers in Health for Native Students program was created to increase the number of tribal members in the health and wellness workforce. AAIP will establish an educational healthcare pipeline to assist students navigate their education, training and career development.

“Encouraging Native students to pursue careers as physicians, health professionals and biomedical researchers is one of our primary goals and the gift from the Shakopee Tribe will allow us to continue this critical work,” said Executive Director Margaret Knight. The tribe’s donation will be contributed after AAIP raises the matching $100,000.

Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community Chairman Stanley R. Crooks said, “Our people feel good when they see American Indian physicians and healthcare workers involved in their communities. We look forward to matching this pledge for $100,000.” AAIP President Dr. Donna Galbreath echoed Chair-

We hope other tribes and organizations will support this program so that more youth are encouraged to study the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math fields with the ultimate goal of helping tribal youth become the leaders of tomorrow.

- Stanley R. Crooks
Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community Chairman

man Crooks sentiments on the importance of seeing tribal members in healthcare roles locally.

“Because Native American people suffer from chronic illnesses like diabetes, tuberculosis, pneumonia and influenza at far higher rates than other racial populations, we need to groom our own citizens to be the physicians and prevention specialists,” Galbreath said. “Indian people respond better when their healthcare needs are in the hands of Native physicians and other professionals who understand their culture and value both traditional and Western healing methods.”

From the Executive Director

Creating long-term health and “restoring the balance of mind, body, and spirit” in Indian Country has been the core mission of the Association of American Indian Physicians since its inception in 1971. AAIP programs are dedicated to this theme of creating healthier citizens by being active and eating healthier.

Recently, AAIP joined with the Jim Thorpe Native American Games, Nike N7 and several Oklahoma tribes as host to athletes representing Indian Nations from across the United States and Canada. The Jim Thorpe Games represented an exciting week of athletic competition in the spirit of the ‘World’s Greatest Athlete,’ Jim Thorpe. 10 different sports for both youth and adults that included softball, basketball, baseball, golf, tennis, track & field, cross country, wrestling, stickball, beach volleyball and a 5K run.

At AAIP, we know physical activity can help curb some of the chronic disease disparities we are combating every day. Yes, we talk the talk when it comes to getting active, but we also walk the walk. During the Thorpe Games, AAIP Diabetes Program Director, Heather Levi, won a bronze medal in the 5K run and I earned bronze medals in the Senior Women’s Golf and Intermediate Women’s Tennis Doubles event. I am proud of the staff here at AAIP and even prouder of the role we are playing every day when it comes to improving health and wellness in Indian Country.

Margaret Knight and Heather Levi.
In Memoriam

Dr. Johanna Ghe-e-bah Clevenger, the first Native American woman President of Association of American Indian Physicians, recently passed away in California. Dr. Clevenger has been a role model, mentor and active member of AAIP for 41 years. She was a founding member of AAIP in 1971, served on the board multiple times and was a past AAIP President. She presided over the organization twice - in 1982 and 1992.

Dr. Clevenger was a member of the Navajo Nation and of the Bitterwater Clan. Dr. Clevenger completed her medical school education at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas, TX. After medical school, Dr. Clevenger was assigned to the Bernalillo County Indian Hospital in Albuquerque, New Mexico for a rotating internship 1963-1964. She completed her psychiatric residency at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School/Parkland Hospital in Dallas Texas, 1967-1971.

She was board certified in psychiatry and neurology as well as certification in Addiction Medicine by the American Society of Addiction Medicine. From 1993-1998, Dr Clevenger was Chief of the Alcohol and Substance Abuse Branch of the Indian Health Service in Rockville, MD.

Dr. Clevenger was an active member in various professional societies such as the American Psychiatric Association, American Medical Association, Council of Navajo Physicians, and served on various boards and committees in both Dallas and Oklahoma City. She devoted her career to improving the health of American Indians and Alaska Native people and it is hard to imagine AAIP annual meetings without her presence. She will be missed by all.

Statement of Dr. Everett Rhoades, AAIP Co-Founder regarding the late Johanna Clevenger

Over the years, I was fortunate to work with Dr. Clevenger on a number of projects, ranging from a site visit to D-Q University, to a Native American Church Service at Lame Deer, to innumerable meetings and seminars across the country. I greatly admired her fearlessness in challenging authority, especially our own. During all the hours and days of everyday business, she constantly reminded us that our responsibility was first to Indian people, then to students, and then to Association members. In addition, she insisted that we had the responsibility to conduct Association affairs in accordance with the same attention to ancient and venerable Indian precepts that she employed in her daily life. Every organization needs a conscience and for upwards of a half century, no one reminded us of this more than did Johanna. It is a unique and distinctive legacy and we will honor her memory by reminding ourselves of this important dictum. We will not only miss her message but the distinctive style in which she delivered it.
Entitled “Fostering Sustainable Strategies to Create Healthy, Active Native Communities” AAIP recently hosted a conference in San Diego focused on developing sustainable obesity prevention programs.

A diverse gathering of tribal leaders, health and medical professionals, agricultural sustainability experts and academic researchers gathered in March to share real life examples of what has worked to combat obesity and chronic diseases in tribal communities. The event was part of the mission of AAIP’s Healthy, Active Native Communities program.

“Systemic, environmental, and policy changes that promote access to physical fitness and nutritious foods are really what will make long term positive changes in Indian Country,” said Gary Lankford, AAIP Program Director. “Obesity is an epidemic that is plaguing Indian communities. To fight this battle, we must share ideas and provide templates of programs that have succeeded in one tribe and can be replicated in other communities.”

Among the topics discussed were: food sovereignty, worksite wellness policies, food councils, community gardens, funding resources, youth physical activity, policy development and media campaigns. With a Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) grant, AAIP created the Healthy, Active Native Communities program to help tribal communities and partners develop sustainable obesity prevention programs. The national conference was born from that mission.

Other nationwide CPPW grant winners included the Pueblo of Jemez and the Cherokee Nation. AAIP was “matched” with Cherokee and Jemez through the federal funding. Representatives for both tribes addressed the successes and challenges they have faced in the last year working to curb obesity rates at the grassroots level.

Jemez Governor Joshua Madalena spoke at length about creating long-term benefits for his people via the health education and fitness programs the tribe has started. A community garden, a bike club and community-wide runs coupled the adoption of health policies, including worksite breastfeeding and school wellness, created an environment where healthy eating and daily fitness for tribal youth is the norm, not the exception.

Randy Gibson of the Cherokee Nation said, “This conference was a great networking tool for tribal health officials and other organizations to share ideas in the common goal of promoting public health while keeping sacred our respective traditions and culture.”

AAIP partners Nike N7 and the Notah Begay Foundation lead conversations on physical activity in Indian Country. According to the Center for Disease Control, one in every three children in the United States is obese. For Native American citizens it is even more urgent – tribal members are 1.6 times more likely to be obese than other racial and ethnic groups.

Shane Plumer, owner of Red Thunderbird Athletics, led a yoga session and talked to participants about reframing their idea of employee wellness, or active living in the workplace - by viewing it as an investment in the organization as well as an investment in the tribal community.

“Many employees, especially in Tribal government and health, are the caretakers for many other people in their extended families,” Plumer said. “By teaching the employee healthy habits, healthy cooking and wellness techniques, that information spreads to the family and community in a different way, a more positive way, than the traditional doctor visit.”

Other tribal communities like the La Jolla Band of Luiseno Indians, Yavapai-Apache Nation, Zuni Pueblo and the Cherokee Tribe of North Carolina presented plans and policies that increase access and usage of healthy foods and promote physical activity.

Dr. Tom Faber, of the Zuni Youth Enrichment Program, said the opportunity to establish partnerships and best practices is what resounded for him.

“This conference was a wonderful opportunity to hear inspiring stories from Tribal communities around the country,” Faber said. “It is also a reminder that the problems in Zuni are also being creatively addressed by other Native communities and that we can learn from each other.”
A Native Nutritionist Speaks…

Kelli Wilson, of Native Nutrition Consulting, advises participants on changes in the USDA school lunch and school nutrition programs.

A Community Leader Speaks…

Kevin Welch, Eastern Band of Cherokee, speaks on food sovereignty in American Indian Communities. Welch directs the Center for Cherokee Plants, an organization AAIP sponsored to create a mobile community garden project to educate youth and tribal members on sustainable garden practices.

A Tribal Leader Speaks…

Pueblo of Jemez Governor Joshua Madalena explains how his tribal community has responded to policy, systems and environmental changes aimed to combat obesity. The Pueblo of Jemez was paired with AAIP as a “matched community” through the stimulus grant entitled Communities Putting Prevention to Work.

Community & Youth Involvement…

The Soaring Eagles, sponsored in part by the San Diego American Indian Health and Youth Center, welcome attendees with a cultural demonstration during the Fostering Sustainable Strategies to Create Healthy, Active Native Communities Conference in March.

A Native Nutritionist Speaks…

Kelli Wilson, of Native Nutrition Consulting, advises participants on changes in the USDA school lunch and school nutrition programs.
Twenty-seven students participated in the AAIP and the Four Corners Alliance – the medical schools from the Universities of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah – Pre-Admission Workshop in March. Held at the University of Colorado in Denver, participants received hands-on tips to managing medical school applications, in addition to hands-on medical training via simulation workshops. The students represented 12 different tribal nations, 11 states and 18 higher education institutions.

AAIP & Fours Corners Alliance PAW
Denver, CO
March, 2012

University of Colorado
Anschutz Medical Campus
School of Medicine

Frank Bartley (Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians) examines an X-ray

Michelle Simon (Prairie Band Potawatomi) reads an ultrasound machine.

Jaymus Lee (Navajo), Nikki Williams (Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe) and Delphine Colar (Navajo) practice birthing procedures.
When it comes to making healthy food choices in Indian country, Dr. Dee Ann DeRoin doesn’t mince words: “Stop the pop. Skip the chips. Dump the donuts. Shop, cook and eat together as a family again, instead of everyone ‘grazing’ for themselves. If it’s not healthy for everyone in the family, don’t bring it home from the store.”

DeRoin (Iowa) is a physician at the Kickapoo Nation Health Center in Brown County, KS, and a member of the Association of American Indian Physicians (AAIP). Heredity, poor lifestyle choices and a stagnant local economy are among factors that have led to a high rate of diabetes in the Kickapoo community, the AAIP has found.

“Historically, and for some still today, we ate lean game, fish, berries, nuts, tubers or root vegetables,” said DeRoin. “We did not eat refined sugar, refined flour, refined rice or white potatoes. When these were introduced in our diets, along with decreasing physical activity, health problems, especially diabetes, began to mount.”

The high diabetic rate caught the attention of the AAIP, who selected the Kickapoo Reservation as one of three Indian communities for its National Program to Eliminate Diabetes-Related Health Disparities in Vulnerable Populations, a five-year program funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Other project sites are the Detroit Urban Indian community and the United Houma Nation of Louisiana.

Members of the Kickapoo Nation took a stand in the fight against diabetes at a Diabetic Awareness Walk, May 18 on the Kickapoo Reservation, sponsored by the AAIP.

According to the County Health Rankings and Roadmaps website, Brown County, Kansas is among the least healthy counties in the state, ranking 89th out of 105 counties.

“If it’s not just us who are having the problem,” said tribal member and AAIP Outreach Specialist Janis Simon. “It’s all of Brown County.”

She acknowledged that turning the tide of diabetes will be a long process. “Five years isn’t a lot of time to put into it, but it’s a start.”

Anthony Castro, a Kickapoo who participated in the walk, said it is especially important for young people to make healthy choices and to avoid alcohol and drugs.

Simon said younger tribal members are beginning to develop the disease. “We just lost someone who was 37. It’s getting younger and younger. Here, it’s showing up in their 20s and 30s.”

“I’m most concerned about children and young adults,” added DeRoin. “As we see these young people developing diabetes, we are also seeing them start dialysis in their late 30s and in their 40s.”

The Kickapoo have partnered with the AAIP, and other local entities to create a strategic plan based on a community diabetes-related survey taken in 2011. The survey of 110 tribal members found that more than 100 have diabetes, 86 percent have high cholesterol, 75 percent have high blood pressure and 54 percent are smokers.

The Center for American Indian Community Health has started a free weight loss program on the reservation. The strategic plan also includes renewing a community garden, increasing the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables through the Brown County Healthy Food Coalition and Harvesters, and working with the Kickapoo tribal council to develop policies that support healthy behaviors.

“Tribal leaders can make policy changes to help people get healthy—create playgrounds, walking and biking paths, give tribal employees a place to exercise,” DeRoin said. “Smoking is one of the most harmful choices a person with diabetes can make. ‘No Smoking’ policies in tribal buildings are a big step to help smokers cut down or even quit.”

About 16.1 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives ages 20 years and older who are served by the Indian Health Service have diagnosed diabetes, according to the National Diabetes Education Program.
AAIP and its partners launched the Diabetes in Indian Country Campaign with a walk during the National Indian Gaming Association National Conference in San Diego, CA in April. The walk featured Olympic Gold Medalist Billy Mills, Steve Cadue, Chair, Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas, Donna Galbreath, MD, AAIP President, and Professional Golfer Alexandria Shulte. The walk was held to encourage people to join in this national campaign to prevent diabetes in Indian Country. AAIP invites and welcomes everyone to become involved in this fight against diabetes by donating to this campaign see the AAIP website donation page.

How is AAIP Fighting Diabetes in Indian Country?

AAIP is working with American Indian communities in medically under-served neighborhoods to develop system-based approaches to reduce morbidity and premature mortality, and eliminate health disparities associated with diabetes through this five year National Program to eliminate diabetes in vulnerable populations funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Through the development of community-based coalitions, AAIP will mobilize community partners and assist them to effectively plan, develop, implement, and evaluate community-based strategies to reduce the risk factors that influence the burden of diabetes that vulnerable populations bear.
We are proud to announce that the United States Office of Personnel Management has granted the AAIP official status in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) Charity List for 2012. AAIP’s listing will be CFC #27658.

The CFC mission is “to promote and support philanthropy through a program that is employee focused, cost-efficient, and effective in providing all federal employees the opportunity to improve the quality of life for all.”

Through the CFC, pledges made by Federal civilian, postal and military donors during the campaign season support eligible non-profit organizations that provide health and human service benefits. The campaign is the only authorized solicitation of employees in the Federal workplace on behalf of charitable organizations.

Nationally recognized as a grassroots non-profit organization working to address disparities in American Indian and Alaskan Native health, AAIP staff has worked diligently to achieve CFC certification. The eligibility listing in the CFC will make it easier for employees of participating Federal agencies to donate to the organizations and its mission of improving healthcare and access to medical education in Indian Country.

“We are proud of this milestone because to be nationally eligible for this program, the AAIP needed to meet the very high standard the Combined Federal Campaign has set,” said Executive Director Margaret Knight.

The CFC has an extensive application and screening process to protect Federal employees. Participation in the CFC requires that each charitable organization must be designated as a tax-exempt non-profit organization under section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. To be approved, an organization must provide specific information about their auditing, governance and program functions, as well as provide extensive financial information.

“As a membership-driven organization, AAIP will be putting your donations to work in the way that you intend,” Knight said. “For over 40 years, AAIP has motivated American Indian and Alaskan Native students to remain in the academic pipeline and to pursue a career in the health professions or biomedical research.”

How are donations used?

- To assist American Indian and Alaska Native students in their journey to become a physician. AAIP offers programs for high school, college, and medical students to provide the support system, resources, and services necessary for students to realize their dreams of becoming a physician.
- To address the widely acknowledged health disparities faced by AI/AN people. AAIP health programs include diabetes management and prevention, obesity prevention, and improving healthy lifestyle behaviors.
- To provide programs and services to improve healthy relationships among American Indian and Alaska Native families through relationship skills-building, education, and resources.
- To advocate for policy, systems, and environmental changes at the local and national level to change contexts in which AI/AN live, work, and play so that healthy behaviors are easily accessible and affordable to our Native people.
- To promote American Indian and Alaska Native culture and traditions by providing forums where modern medicine combines with traditional healing to enhance culturally appropriate health care delivery to American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

Donate Today!

www.aaip.org/donations
Video Campaign: AAIP’s Latest Tool in Anti-Obesity Effort

The Healthy, Active Native Communities (HANC) program is launching an Internet-based media campaign (above) to support its mission of assisting tribal partners develop new policies and systems to combat the obesity crisis in Indian Country. Utilizing the talents and humor of the Buffalo Nickel Creative agency, the multi-video campaign, and accompanying posters, are designed to entertain, educate and inspire viewers, especially youth. AAIP’s HANC program is creating long-term, positive health trends and “restoring the balance of mind, body, and spirit” in Indian Country, a core mission of AAIP. By increasing consumption of healthy foods and promoting physical activity, we can create systemic changes and prevent chronic diseases and mortality rates associated with obesity in tribal communities. Visit www.aaip.org for more information.

7th Annual Family Wellness Conference

“Strengthening the Relationships of Native Generations” (S.T.R.O.N.G.)

September 13th-14th, 2012

Reed Conference Center
Midwest City, OK

The conference will provide a unique opportunity for attendees to come together to share, encourage, network and build partnerships to strengthen Native Families in Oklahoma.

Contact Mary Smith msmith@aaip.org for more information.