

# frontier area report

the newsletter of the FRONTIER EDUCATION CENTER

Issue 5

Spring 2006

## New Name

### **The National Center for Frontier Communities**

The name has changed but the goals are the same. Frontier Education Center's Board of Directors approved the organization's name change to National Center for Frontier Communities in spring 2006. The change was made to reflect more accurately the organization's work in support of our nation's smallest and most geographically isolated communities. We remain the only national organization dedicated to the issues and concerns of frontier communities.

Our contacts and website remain the same

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

HCR 65 Box 126, Ojo Sarco NM 87521  
505-820-6732

### **E-Newsletter: Frontier News and Updates**

If you are interested in keeping up with the most current frontier issues and events, sign up for

*Frontier News and Updates* online at

[www.frontierus.org](http://www.frontierus.org) or by email at  
[frontierus@frontierus.org](mailto:frontierus@frontierus.org)

We know that frontier people are busy. This is not a hyperactive listserve; you will not be barraged by emails. You **will** get only important announcements and information about once a month.

---

## **INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

- 1** Name Change
- 1** Frontier and Rural Expert Panel Meeting
- 2** The SPOT for Community Wellness

## Frontier and Rural Expert Panel

### **Border Health and HIT Meeting**

In its role to provide information to the Office of Rural Health Policy on frontier issues, the National Center for Frontier Communities convened a panel of Frontier and Rural experts to consider topics of interest to ORHP. The group held its second annual meeting in Tucson in March. Much of the meeting focused on a review of the role of health information technology (HIT) in border health.

Presentations by Alison Hughes, Arizona Rural Health Office, and Charlie Alfero, Hidalgo Medical Services, in Lordsburg, NM, highlighted the special challenges of implementing health information technology in frontier and border health facilities. The presentations were followed by a discussion led by Susan Kunz and Andrew Lorentine of the Health and Human Services Department of the Tohono O'odham Nation. The meeting report will be available at the Center's website in the near future.

### 2005 Papers Available Soon

At the Tucson meeting, ORHP project officer Emily Cook reported that three papers prepared in 2005 by the Frontier Education Center have received final approval and will soon appear on the HRSA website. These will also be linked from the Center's website. The papers are:

- Impact of Seasonal Population Variations On Frontier Communities: Maintenance of the Healthcare Infrastructure;*
- Training Community Health Workers: Using Technology and Distance Education; and*
- Emergency Medical Services in Frontier Areas: Volunteer Community Organizations.*

## **Impacts of Seasonal Population Swings on the Health Care System**

Jill Sherman, researcher with the Center, continues to work on the important issue of seasonal population fluctuations and their health care impacts. She recently presented her findings on three communities – Skagway AK, Quartzsite AZ and Hinsdale County CO – to the annual meeting of the American Association of Geographers. Sherman's presentation will soon be available on the Center's website.

## **Alzheimer's Care in the Frontier**

In June 2005, Carol Miller, Executive Director of the Center presented a frontier perspective to a meeting of caregivers, state officials and community organizations from seven frontier states who met for the first time to discuss the challenges of caring for Alzheimer's patients in frontier areas. The meeting was organized by the Administration on Aging in Cheyenne WY.

A summary report on the Center's website describes the scope of the problem and offers ideas on how to provide services to clients in an environment of declining resources. Miller noted that demographic changes have left many frontier communities without the people and programmatic resources for quality caregiving.

[www.frontierus.org/documents/Alz.JLowellFinal%20draft.pdf](http://www.frontierus.org/documents/Alz.JLowellFinal%20draft.pdf)

## **Tsunami Aid**

National Center Vice President Caroline Ford was on a teaching assignment at the College of Public Health at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, when the 2004 tsunami struck the region. She quickly joined her public health colleagues in a rebuilding project on Koh Libong in Trang Province.

Because Ford knew the area and the critical need, she agreed to direct the Koh Libong relief effort in the United States. The National Center for Frontier Communities acted as the fiscal agent for this important public health project. Over \$11,000 has been raised through this effort. Our sincere thanks and appreciation to all who contributed.

## **The Spot For Community Wellness**

### **Health Is Your Wealth, Honoring Our Elders, Men's Time, Family to Family, Resiliency Weekend...**

These are all programs offered by The SPOT for Community Wellness, a local project of the National Center for Frontier Communities in cooperation with the Picuris-Peñasco Community Coalition located in a frontier area of north central New Mexico.

The **SPOT** (Strengthening Pride, Optimism, and Trust) was made possible by the efforts of the Coalition and the Center in securing a three year Rural Health Services Outreach Grant from the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Rural Health Policy

### **Programs Well-Received**

Almost two years into the program The SPOT is humming with offerings eagerly embraced by the Community. Three physical fitness classes from aerobics to yoga to weight training with volunteer personal trainers have enthusiastic and consistent turnouts.

A 12-week course, "Family to Family," using a curriculum from the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, has attracted a loyal group. There is now a solid, well-trained support group for families dealing with mental illness.

"Men's Time" is offered alternate Saturdays to allow men to talk about stressful events in their lives in an informal setting. Counseling is available onsite by licensed social workers in cooperation with Taos Colfax Community Services, a regional Community Mental Health Center.

### **Community Recognized Need**

This program was envisioned more than eight years ago when the Council of Picuris Pueblo, a federally-recognized tribe, identified fragmented services, the need for mental health and substance abuse services and for the community to come together as critical issues to address in the service area. They led the way by establishing collaboration among the seventeen villages and all the health and human services providers, churches, the school district and supportive individuals in this remote area of tiny mountain settlements.