

2009 Health Leadership Fellows Directory



Connecticut Health
FOUNDATION

Changing Systems, Improving Lives.

The Connecticut Health Foundation Health Leadership Fellows Program

Eliminating health disparities based on race and ethnicity will require the resolve of local communities.

Comprehensive strategies, creative thinking and strong leadership are essential—both to raise public awareness and develop solutions to this complex problem.

This year, 18 individuals from across Connecticut have made a commitment to increase their leadership knowledge and skills to address racial and ethnic health inequities.

These leaders come from a wide range of fields, including law, education, human services and public policy, as well as health care. They also represent a broad range of cultures, communities, ages and ethnicities, and varying degrees of experience, skill and expertise. Yet they are united in their conviction that Connecticut can potentially become the nation's healthiest state.

The 2009 Fellows are changing public policies, establishing community-based programs, working to empower their neighborhoods to improve individuals' health and conducting research to add to the public health knowledge base.

They are local heroes who often work with few resources and little support. Yet they are driven by their passion for this issue. They represent the best in us and carry the potential for what we all can become.

These leaders are Connecticut's hope for a brighter, healthier and more prosperous tomorrow. The Connecticut Health Foundation (CT Health) is pleased to present these women and men as the fourth class of our Health Leadership Fellows program.

Health Leadership Fellows Program

The Connecticut Health Foundation sponsors the Health Leadership Fellows program to recognize outstanding women and men who are making significant strides to create a healthy, safe and prosperous Connecticut.

The Health Leadership Fellows program is a one-year knowledge and skill-building program designed to create leaders, particularly racial and ethnic community leaders, who will pursue careers in public policy, public health practice, community advocacy, academia or any related field.

Fellows are selected through a competitive process, which consists of submitting an online application and, if invited, a personal interview. Fellows make a one-year commitment to attend two weekend retreats and monthly seminars. They also must participate in a project that either demonstrates, illustrates or replicates a solution to a health issue that affects vulnerable communities.

Benefits include the following:

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- **Fellows will receive a stipend of \$1,500 to aid in their personal or professional development.**
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- **Fellows who are employed by nonprofit organizations will receive a \$500 gift for their organization.**
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- **Fellows will enhance their knowledge and skills of leadership and health issues through two weekend retreats.**
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- **Fellows will meet with national and local health leaders and policy-makers through monthly seminars.**
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Online Application



Online application for the 2010 class of the Health Leadership Fellows program will be available on CT Health's website (www.cthealth.org) in January 2009.

For more information, contact Will Crimi, vice president of program & evaluation, at 860-224-2200 or will@cthealth.org.

About the Connecticut Health Foundation

Established in July 1999, the Connecticut Health Foundation is the state's largest nonprofit grant-making foundation dedicated to improving the health of the people of Connecticut through systemic change, program innovation and public policy analysis. CT Health has funded grants totaling nearly \$37 million.

After conducting focus groups with residents and meeting with state agencies, community leaders and health care professionals, the foundation selected three areas of focus for its resources:

- **Improving access to children's mental health services**
- **Reducing racial and ethnic health disparities**
- **Expanding access to and utilization of children's oral health services**

Aside from directly supporting community-based and institutional grant proposals, CT Health fosters discussions about public health issues by convening meetings, conferences, educational briefings and grantee technical assistance workshops. CT Health also invests resources to conduct objective, nonpartisan policy research on issues important to the public health debate. These include Connecticut's budget spending cap, the state's Medicaid system and expanding oral health care for publicly insured children.

The foundation was created when health maintenance organization ConnectiCare, Inc. converted to a for-profit entity. Under an agreement approved by the Connecticut attorney general, CT Health received 100 percent of the equity in ConnectiCare. CT Health became officially endowed in June 2001 upon approval of the sale of its shares to private investors. The sale resulted in an initial endowment of \$132 million.

The foundation's board of directors made a commitment to examine the underlying causes of poor health outcomes among the unserved and underserved communities in Connecticut. To support the mission, the foundation directs at least 5 percent of its endowment toward grant-making operations annually.

For more information about CT Health, please visit www.cthealth.org or contact Maryland Grier, communications officer, at 860-224-2200 or maryland@cthealth.org.

2009 Health Leadership Fellows

Eric Arzubi, M.D.

New Haven

Ashika Brinkley

New Haven

Janier Cabán-Hernández

Hartford

Pedro Delgado Jr.

New Haven

Desiree Díaz

Storrs

Monika Doshi

New Haven

Karen Eichstaedt

Norwich

Violette O. Haldane

Hartford

Yvette Highsmith-Francis

New Britain

Wilhelmina G. Jackson

Bridgeport

Cristina Lima

Norwalk

Gloria Francesca Mengual

East Hartford

Alyssa Norwood

West Hartford

Jeffrey Shaw

Hartford

Margaret Steinegger-Keyser

Hartford

Donald P. Tutson Jr., J.D.

Hartford

Tawanna Woolfolk

New Haven

Patricia J. Wrice

Bloomfield

Eric Arzubi, M.D.



“

Leaders must have the humility to acknowledge their own limitations and the strength of character to learn from the people they lead.

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Two years as a Bloomberg business reporter in Argentina and six as a bond trader for Morgan Stanley in New York City left Eric Arzubi empty. He chose, instead, a medical career.

“While I was preparing to apply to medical schools, I began tutoring middle and high school students in math and science. I met some fascinating adolescents with mental health and learning disabilities. My relationships with these kids and their families ultimately prompted me to pursue a career in child and adolescent psychiatry.”

Arzubi, whose parents are from Argentina and speaks Spanish fluently, sees a severe shortage of child and adolescent psychiatrists. “The shortfall is affecting underserved communities the most.” He also recognizes only very affluent Connecticut communities can afford to adequately employ psychiatrists.

“During my training at Yale School of Medicine, the racial and ethnic disparities in mental health services became obvious. I hope to use my multi-cultural background and training in psychiatry to address this issue,” notes Arzubi, a resident at the school’s department of psychiatry.

Along with earning his medical degree and bachelor’s in foreign service from Georgetown University, Arzubi is an entrepreneur, founding Raging Knowledge, a Westport children’s learning center. He also created an education initiative at the Clifford Beers Clinic supporting underserved New Haven children, grades K-5; and a literacy and learning initiative at the Hospital of St. Raphael in New Haven for patients from the outpatient pediatric clinic experiencing school failure and behavioral problems.

At home, Arzubi and his wife, whose parents are from Cuba, pass on their rich multicultural traditions to their twin daughters, including teaching them to speak Spanish.

Ashika Brinkley



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Good leadership is about effectively communicating with and understanding the needs of a given population from their standpoint.

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What affects Ashika Brinkley is not only blatant prejudice, but also what she describes as “the more subtle indignities used to marginalize disparate populations.” Brinkley defines these as actions that reduce compassion and increase indifference toward entire groups of people.

“There is so much work still to be done in the area of health disparities and I am eager to be part of it.” Because of her experience, education and cultural background, Brinkley is well equipped to make a difference.

Born in St. Lucia, an Eastern Caribbean island, Brinkley is committed to helping meet the needs of underserved women, most often women of color. While studying for her master’s in public health at Yale University, she focused her thesis on breast cancer disparities in African-American women. She also earned a bachelor’s in chemistry from Morgan State University in Maryland.

Now, as director of the Asthma Initiative Project for New Haven, Brinkley is helping improve the lives of low-income, uninsured and underinsured residents with asthma. “This coalition experience, coupled with other collaborative and strategic planning experiences, has given me the tools to advocate for groups most affected by health disparities.”

Brinkley also is making a difference through community involvement. Along with being president-elect of the Junior League of Greater New Haven, she is Spirit Health Initiative chair of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. The initiative, funded by a three-year Connecticut Health Foundation grant, develops programs to improve the health of African-American women.

All of Brinkley’s efforts have one thing in common—leadership. “Leadership is about serving and empowering others.”

**Janier Cabán-
Hernández**



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Leadership is a process of getting things done, not alone, but by motivating and inspiring others to see your vision and support the process.

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As director of AIDS Legal Network for Connecticut and former community justice program manager at Crossroads in New Haven, Janier Cabán-Hernández’s work is more than business. It’s very personal.

“In 1985, I was burying so many friends to this disease, I became angry.” After joining various activist organizations, “I came to realize those who were dying were the ‘dispensable population,’ gay men and drug addicts, particularly men of color. That’s when I started fighting for people’s rights to equal access to health care and services.”

His response also was motivated by another need. “As a Latino working in the community, I see a strong correlation between the lack of leadership, especially people of color, and the increase in racial and ethnic health disparities. People of color need to be in a position of leadership so that we can effect change.”

True to his word, after earning his bachelor’s in sociology at City College of New York and a master’s in community psychology from the University of New Haven (UNH), Cabán-Hernández stopped studying law to focus on a master’s in public administration from UNH, so he could continue to advocate.

“My life experiences have taught me that I need to advocate, not just for me, but for my brothers and sisters who don’t know what to say or how to say it.”

Even outside work, he advocates—as board member of a local shelter and assisting VIVA Hartford, an organization increasing awareness of Hartford’s cultural diversity. And that still leaves time for gardening, interior decorating and helping friends and family with home improvements.

Pedro Delgado Jr.



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Leadership is the respect, trust and strength that give individuals the best direction, sensitivity and care regarding their lives and the issues affecting them.

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Born in the Bronx, Pedro Delgado Jr. lived in a nurturing Puerto Rican neighborhood where “we were all related.” Not until he left the neighborhood did he realize that “my ethnicity and place of birth were barriers. It made me feel different and I never knew I was poor until that moment.”

As Delgado recalls, this realization ignited his “passion and desire to educate and advocate for individuals who find themselves in similar situations.” Since 1992, Delgado has concentrated on just that.

Serving as training and technical assistance coordinator at The Multicultural Leadership Institute in Wallingford, Delgado's focus is substance abuse and mental health. “My work always includes the voice of the people in our communities to help solve quality-of-life issues that prevent our communities from flourishing.”

Work clearly reflects what Delgado believes: “The only way to help families and individuals is to motivate, educate and advocate for their rights as human beings and the right to live in this nation as others do; to receive care based on need, not insurance; to receive treatment inclusive of their culture and sensitive to their support system.”

A graduate of Springfield College in Massachusetts, with a bachelor's in human services, Pedro also volunteers extensively as part of the statewide U.S. Department of Justice Project Safe Neighborhoods programs against drugs and gun violence. “I have led by example in every aspect of work, school and home.”

Home includes pursuing two lifelong passions, baseball and saltwater fishing, as well as family-oriented community events his wife and four teenagers can enjoy—community events which bring Pedro full circle.

Desiree Díaz



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A leader is one who can see beyond current circumstances and apply insight to that situation, offering suggestions and alternatives that foster resolution.

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Role model. Educator. Agent of change. All describe Desiree Díaz, clinical resource lab coordinator for the University of Connecticut School of Nursing.

“As a first-generation American, I have seen and been involved in situations resulting from health care disparities,” notes Díaz, whose parents are from St. Martin, French West Indies, and Guyana. “This has created a keen sense of awareness about these disparities in my professional and personal life. It also drives my desire to eliminate health care disparities.”

Access to information is key. “When information is provided, individuals are empowered to care for themselves and others. This empowerment may be the catalyst for change within the person and cause a rippling effect in the community.”

Her belief in education and being an educator motivates Díaz to pursue her doctorate in nursing at the University of Connecticut School of Nursing, where she earned her bachelor’s and teaches. She also earned a master’s in education from St. Joseph College, Maine, and is a board-certified medical/surgical nurse.

Before becoming lab coordinator, Díaz developed and implemented an education program for 142 patient-care technicians at Norwich’s William W. Backus Hospital and implemented a graduate nurse program for 39 nursing recruits. “As a nurse leader, I have the ability to shape the minds, skills and behaviors of new practitioners, and to revive existing practitioners’ passion for equitable health care for all.”

She’s also making a difference in the community. At the Pleasant Valley Community of Prayer and Praise in Groton, she works with students in the soup kitchen and conducts health fairs. She also mentors Hartford and Southeastern Connecticut Girl Scouts.

Monika Doshi



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An effective leader adapts to different situations and is innovative, being mindful of how history, culture and tradition influence direction toward a common goal.

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A year-long sabbatical in 2003 from the University of Connecticut catapulted Monika Doshi into public health and a career that combines her passion for health and community service.

As an American India Foundation Fellow, Doshi worked with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, focusing on HIV/AIDS prevention in India, specifically with female sex workers (prostitutes), men who have sex with men, and “hijras” (transgender populations). “That year transformed my life,” says Doshi, who earned a master’s in public health and a certificate in health and human rights from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, Maryland.

“I worked with, arguably, the most marginalized individuals in the country. Caste and class issues overwhelmingly dictated the occurrence of rights violations against them. Both overt and covert discrimination practices against them created barriers to accessing basic amenities, such as housing, food, health care and clean water, resulting in health disparities,” she explains.

“As a public health practitioner, I knew I had to do something and that I could not be a bystander in their reality.” As a result, Doshi spent the next four years in India and continues HIV-specific work as a consultant with the University of Manitoba.

As senior associate with Matrix Public Health Solutions in New Haven, “my work is diverse and allows me to contribute to population health, both domestically and internationally. Independent of place, bias around race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and class perpetuates disparities in health. My goal is to contribute to work that minimizes health disparities and find innovative solutions to sustain equity in access.”

Karen Eichstaedt



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Leadership is the ability to articulate a reality that lifts people to a new level of consciousness and energizes them to be and do more.

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Oppression became a reality for Karen Eichstaedt as a community activist in Amherst, Mass., working on women’s rights in the 1970s with women of color.

A parochial school student through high school, raised in the blue-collar section of Holyoke, Mass., “I was confronted with the realities of my own racism, classism, sexism and ethnocentrism. It was a painful but exhilarating process.”

Today, as director of human resources at United Community & Family Services in Norwich, she’s still working to make a difference, by addressing health care disparities.

“We offer primary care, oral, mental and elder-care services to those in eastern Connecticut, many of whom are uninsured, with limited access to care. I’m learning about language barriers, cultural differences and the disparate numbers of minority populations affected by diseases, such as diabetes and obesity.”

Before joining United Community & Family Services in 2006, Eichstaedt admits her knowledge of health care disparities was limited by media reports. “It was not until I left the for-profit sector and teamed with the 300 or so of us working daily in a federally qualified health center that the enormity, seriousness and pervasiveness of the problem became apparent.”

With her master’s in industrial relations from the University of New Haven and a bachelor’s in human services from the University of Massachusetts, Eichstaedt’s career has focused on human resources.

Away from work, she reads avidly, plays guitar, loves to cook and entertain, and walks often through the woods with her cocker spaniel, Gabriel. “And if I ever retire, I’ll indulge in watercolor classes and music lessons.”

Violette O. Haldane



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Leadership means being able to work and communicate with others respectfully, resulting in desired outcomes.

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Her memory is clear. “I remember arriving in America from the West Indies at age seven and being treated as a ‘foreigner’ because of my accent,” recalls Violette O. Haldane. “I also learned that how people perceive you determines how they treat you.”

Yet Haldane, CIGNA business analyst manager, Bloomfield, has turned those experiences into a 20-year-plus career in health services, working to overcome racial and ethnic health disparities among people of color.

“Having worked in the health care field for so many years, focusing on health care data analysis, I have seen the emergence and decline of health issues in populations due to environment, gender and personal choice.” Issues on the rise for people of color include obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and AIDS, notes Haldane.

“Being an African-American woman, diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure are of great concern to me because they impact my community greatly. However, we have the ability to influence lives, leading to positive outcomes based on communication, education, outreach and advocacy.”

A licensed realtor with an MBA from the University of Hartford and bachelor’s in speech from the University of Connecticut, Haldane’s efforts to create change include helping individuals improve their finances through home ownership and financial literacy. “Economics plays a role in a person’s health choice and care.” She also chairs the scholarship committee for the University of Connecticut African-American Alumni Council and is a member of Jack and Jill of America’s Greater Hartford chapter.

“We can change people’s lives one person at a time with information, commitment and passion,” says Haldane. “That’s why I volunteer.”

Yvette Highsmith-Francis



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A true leader provides vision, courage, innovation, inspiration and direction that spur collective action. A leader inspires others to dream, do and be their best.

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Cancer. Diabetes. Yvette Highsmith-Francis has helped her family members through both. And in those moments, “I have experienced the effects of racial and ethnic health disparities firsthand and have seen their impact on health outcomes.”

Like many African-Americans, Highsmith-Francis has used these experiences as motivation to remove these disparities, not only in her life and those of family members, but also in the community as a whole.

“My entire professional career has been committed to eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities,” says the director of Hartford County sites for the Community Health Center, headquartered in New Britain. “I am passionate about giving people the information they need to make informed choices. I believe that the application of power is knowledge.”

Family is her first passion. “Beyond my family, I enjoy giving back to the community. I was raised in a family and an environment where social justice and equity was everyone’s responsibility.”

Community includes her church in Middletown, where she is youth director and sings with its praise team. She also serves as health committee chair for the NAACP Middlesex County branch.

Although her career path may not be what she had envisioned while pursuing a master’s in management from Cambridge College in Massachusetts and a bachelor’s in psychology from Long Island University, she was motivated to become a certified substance abuse counselor, and an HIV educator, counselor and tester.

In short, she is putting her beliefs into practice. “I believe that everyone should have access to quality health care and that this is an attainable goal.”

**Wilhelmina G.
Jackson**



“

If one is to be an effective leader, then one must have understood the process of being an effective follower.

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Activism and faith go hand-in-hand for Wilhelmina G. Jackson, as a certified nurse in midwifery and an ordained minister.

Jackson is on staff at Bridgeport Hospital's OB/GYN clinic, where she also lectures to and mentors nursing students, physician-assistant students and residents. Away from work, she is active in many groups at her church, including serving as fiscal manager of its health ministry.

“I am in a position to influence, educate and sensitize future care providers to the racial and ethnic health inequalities within our communities,” says Jackson. “I also can help empower women through education to achieve results in an unequally accessible health care system.”

Ministering to those at church and in her community is just as important as work for Jackson. “My church background has had a significant impact on my commitment to serving the community and my desire to positively impact those individuals for change.”

Her master's in midwifery from Yale University School of Nursing, bachelor's in nursing from St. Joseph College, ordination as a minister and dedication to Yale University School of Nursing as adjunct faculty all reflect her commitment to improving the lives of others.

While this passion for caring may be unique, its source is not. “It stems from my love for the oldest institution in history—the family,” which, for Jackson, includes her husband and six daughters. That passion, she adds, can move mountains.

“If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain ‘be removed,’ with the expectation that it will produce results. I am looking forward to the results.”

Cristina Lima



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Leadership means the ability to positively influence others and create changes. In my experience, changes are made one step at a time, helping others to realize a goal.

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Born in Cuba, raised in New York City, Cristina Lima draws on both experiences as coordinator for Latino Outreach at CancerCare of Connecticut in Norwalk.

“I have always been proud of my Cuban roots. This has been a benefit professionally.” As the first Latina at CancerCare, one benefit is her ability to “help those who have difficulty with the English language and adapting to a new environment.”

Assisting others “just comes naturally,” notes Lima. “During my early teenage years, I discovered I was always the one others came to for advice and guidance.”

Serving the Latino community also comes naturally. “My career always has involved working within the Latino community. I feel a commitment to the next generation, ensuring they have an opportunity to excel.”

Moving to Connecticut in 2006, Lima quickly saw how she could serve her community. “I noticed there are few minorities in leadership positions. Despite awareness in Connecticut that there are unmet needs, action to decrease health disparities is slow. This motivated me to do something about it.”

With a master’s in social work from Columbia University and bachelor’s in psychology from Fordham University, the Bridgeport resident assisted patients at the Parker Jewish Institute health care center in Lake Success, N.Y., and Ryan-Nena Community Health Center in New York City, before moving to Connecticut.

Beyond work, there’s travel and “exploring new cultures.” But family is key. “During the summer there are reunions and other gatherings, and in winter the holidays and traditions remind me where I came from and help me to know where I am going.”

**Gloria Francesca
Mengual**



“

True leaders see themselves as a cog, not a cause. Doing ‘with,’ not doing ‘for,’ is vital to achieving success.

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Her desire to write led her to advocate for those experiencing racial and ethnic health disparities. Since then, Gloria Francesca Mengual has stepped up her efforts, working as program director of Everyday Democracy in East Hartford, where she provides technical assistance to communities nationwide addressing these disparities.

“Helping communities address racial and ethnic inequities has moved my focus away from my early passion of advocacy to deliberative decision-making and collaboration to effect change,” she says.

Mengual’s passion for advocacy has roots in her experiences with the health care system. One long episode was her struggle with epilepsy, where surgery finally eliminated her seizures and enabled her to secure full-time employment.

Her experiences, combined with a love for writing, led her to public relations work with the Hispanic Health Council and the Village for Families & Children, both in Hartford. “This brought me closest to working on behalf of the least powerful voices in our society.”

Today, she recognizes that “my efforts or those of a few of us working together are not enough. Collective effort toward change is the key to real progress.”

It’s been a long journey from her days pursuing a bachelor’s in journalism from the University of Bridgeport and “writing stories about individuals with a positive spin.”

True to her desire to help others, Mengual has served on the West Hartford Initiative for Racial and Ethnic Diversity board; as a commissioner for the state’s Commission on Human Rights & Opportunities; and now serves on West Hartford’s school superintendent search committee. And the importance of her efforts isn’t lost on this avid gardener’s teenage daughter.

Alyssa Norwood



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Leadership requires passion to motivate oneself and others; planning to organize like-minded passionate people to effectuate change; and implementation to actualize the desired changes.

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What began for Alyssa Norwood as a path to practice medicine has become a road to a law degree and advocacy to help eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities.

“As a student at the University of Connecticut School of Law, I have translated my desire to eliminate health disparities into action. This includes studying the impact of Medicare privatization on minority health as an intern at the Center for Medicare Advocacy. As a result, I have become committed to eliminating these disparities throughout Connecticut.”

Norwood’s commitment also has translated into community service. In addition to serving on the board of the Connecticut Public Health Association and the University of Connecticut Health Center Ethics Committee, she is chair of the West Hartford Beth David Synagogue Social Action Committee and volunteers at the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp for children with cancer and other life-threatening illnesses.

Along this path, Norwood earned a bachelor’s from Harvard University in neurobiology before pursuing her law degree and master’s in public health, which she hopes to complete in 2009.

“Throughout my graduate education, I have examined racial and ethnic health disparities through three distinct lenses—from a clinician’s perspective, a public health perspective, and a legal and policy perspective. From every angle, the broad view is the same—disparities are pervasive, insidious and violate basic notions of social justice.”

Painting, playing piano and viola, and enjoying nature help Norwood keep life in balance with her education and volunteer work. “But my greatest joys in life are my husband and son.”

Jeffrey Shaw



“

Leadership is the ability to provide a vision for others to follow, through courage, compassion and enthusiasm.

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A master's in American studies from Fairfield University and coaching high school athletics are not what most would consider the “highway” to understanding health issues, but that's the unique road taken by Jeffrey Shaw, legislative aide for the Connecticut General Assembly.

“It was after I completed my master's thesis, exploring the lifestyle trends of American society, that I learned of the pressing need for preventive health practices and promoting healthy lifestyles in public policy discussions.”

To reach consensus on the issues involved, Shaw turns to his sports experience, including coaching football at Hartford's Bulkeley High. “I understand the significance and value of teamwork, sharing ideas and gaining perspectives from others with varying backgrounds, education and experiences.”

Drawing on both experiences, Shaw believes he can make a long-term difference in reducing racial and ethnic health disparities, especially in the area of health literacy and cultural competency. “Although all the causes of health disparities have not yet been recognized, several important factors, such as health literacy and cultural competency, are now apparent. Increasing the societal level of health literacy is an essential action, as is improving the cultural competency of health service providers.”

To accomplish this, government must work with the community. “While legislative involvement is essential to developing sound health policy, active community collaboration is essential to reducing racial and ethnic health disparities.”

In addition to pursuing a graduate certificate in public health at the University of Connecticut Health Center, Shaw is a member of the Fairfield Town Committee and deputy counsel for the Greater Hartford YMCA Youth and Government program.

**Margaret Steinegger-
Keyser**



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My leadership style is shaped by a long-term vision of the group and the world around it; courage; a capacity for listening; and an ability to negotiate.

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Apartheid isn't a faceless issue for Margaret Steinegger-Keyser, executive director of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Coalition for Equity and Justice. “I grew up in South Africa, under the very oppressive apartheid regime.” And she more than survived.

“It created in me a deeply entrenched commitment to devote my life to correct injustices on a variety of levels. This commitment inspires me to constantly assess the context I'm in, with the aim to act for change.” It's also taken her around the world.

“I have worked in South Africa, Canada, Indonesia, Switzerland and Puerto Rico. During 2003-2007, I worked with more than 100 Palestinians and Israelis to bring about mutual understanding, forgiveness and transformation through intense dialogue and skills training.”

As she summarizes her actions, “I am committed to issues of social, political and economic justice, reconciliation and peace.” That now applies to issues impacting U.S. residents.

Over the last decade, here, she has “seen the need for this country to step up in its commitment to its people, especially as it relates to health justice.”

Exposure to groups such as the World Health Organization and the World Council of Churches also has played a significant role in her work. “They have helped me with my understanding of the connection between race and various social issues, including health care.”

Although she loves gardening and music, “particularly African jazz,” what helps her stay “centered and joyful” is her large family, still in South Africa, where she earned her bachelor's and master's in theology from the University of the Western Cape in Cape Town.

**Donald P. Tutson Jr.,
J.D.**



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**True leaders recognize
and aspire to find the
confluence of energy and
skill that will enable
them to influence others.**

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How does one bridge the gap from sports to law to helping the underserved? Attorney Donald P. Tutson Jr. accomplishes that feat through Connecticut sports-based nonprofits.

For more than 11 years, Tutson, who has a law degree from the University of Connecticut and a bachelor's in political science from Syracuse University, has served as counsel for several community-based organizations. These include the Ray of Hope Foundation, established by Boston Celtics and former University of Connecticut star Ray Allen, and Ricky's Relief Foundation, formed by former Major League Baseball pitcher Ricky Bottalico, from New Britain.

“Through my work, I have seen firsthand how systemic poverty, class and racial disparities negatively impact our community at large and our young people in particular.”

His grassroots involvement also keeps Tutson inspired professionally, “because through a relatively small legal contribution, I help sustain organizations that have added exponentially to the framework of larger community action that provides a variety of services to those in need.”

Tutson also has represented patients, doctors and others in the health care system. As a result, he has “seen the shortcomings of a system that is invariably structured to fail many of our most at-risk citizens.” This can be changed, he notes.

“Connecticut attorneys can be a tremendous asset in formulating a strategic plan to reduce and eliminate health care disparities, because we represent each and every participant within that system.”

As winner of numerous triathlons over the last 20 years, Tutson also recognizes that “your physical health directly impacts your mental and emotional well-being.” And he is training to compete in the 2009 Ironman Triathlon.

Tawanna Woolfolk



“

Leadership is the process of acknowledging one's position of power and being willing to utilize it to effect social change.

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For Tawanna Woolfolk, life is a tapestry, “woven together by threads that are symbolic of the leadership and hope of multiple individuals who have invested in my future.”

Their investment has given Woolfolk “a profound appreciation and love for life, social connectedness and social well-being.” It’s a tapestry of “brilliant and colorful threads”—experiences she uses to “understand the challenges and adversity of others” and through that understanding, become “an agent of social change.”

Woolfolk seeks to make these changes by equipping “those who have been traditionally silenced, disenfranchised and afflicted by racial and ethnic health disparities with the tools to become empowered and able to access the resources within their communities.”

As senior clinician at Hill Health Center in New Haven, Woolfolk is bringing about “change” through the Community Living Room Project. Established as a collaborative, Woolfolk says the project provides “grassroots, empowerment-based, gender-responsive outreach and treatment to underserved women in New Haven.” She describes those she assists as “resilient survivors of poverty, homelessness, drug addiction, mental illness and chronic health conditions, as well as emotional, physical and sexual trauma.”

Before joining Hill Health Center, Woolfolk was on staff at Yale-New Haven Hospital’s children’s psychiatric inpatient unit and Yale Psychiatric Hospital outpatient services. She earned her master’s in social work at Smith College, Massachusetts, and her bachelor’s in sociology from Quinnipiac University.

Hoping to weave a tapestry of colors for others, Woolfolk also is investing in her New Haven community, volunteering at the Chain Fund for cancer patients and dedicating two years at The Cove Center for Grieving Children.

Patricia J. Wrice



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Leadership starts with a vision and communicating that vision to others in such a way that they adopt that vision as their own.

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Frustration can be a powerful motivator. In 1997, it helped Patricia J. Wrice organize Building Parent Power, which empowers Hartford parents to address health issues affecting their children.

As executive director of The CHILD Council, a children’s health planning and advocacy organization in Hartford, Wrice developed a report on the health and well-being of the city’s children. “The results showed that even though Hartford is home to some of the country’s finest medical institutions, Hartford children were facing health conditions one would find in undeveloped countries,” she recalls.

“The frustrations of those findings convinced me that the only way those disparities would ever change was to organize the parents of those children.” The result was Building Parent Power, which trained over 100 parents to understand Hartford’s health care system and become their own agents for change.

Today, Wrice is executive director of Operation Fuel in Bloomfield, with over 30 years experience in human services and community organization, including: the New England Health Care Employees Union District 1199; executive director of the Human Resources Agency of New Britain; and program director for the Connecticut Housing Coalition.

She’s also an adjunct professor at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work, where she earned her master’s in social work, and has a bachelor’s in political science and economics from Central Connecticut State University.

Then there’s her involvement in community organizations, such as secretary of the board for Greater Hartford Legal Aid. “Spare” time usually involves reading and her greatest passion: children. “Mine or others, I just love to be around them.”

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