Profiles of Success

Meet Cynthia Huang...

When Cynthia came to the U.S. eight years ago as a Chinese immigrant, she experienced several challenges accessing health care, social services, and higher education, including difficulties in communicating and understanding the bureaucratic system. However, these experiences gave her empathy for and insight into others’ struggles and instilled her desire to become a social worker. During her undergraduate study of Social Welfare at the University of California, Berkeley, Cynthia conducted research into immigrants’ access to health and social services. After graduation, she served as an AmeriCorps member through the San Francisco AHEC program. After serving for two terms, Cynthia plans to go back to the University of California, Berkeley to obtain a Masters of Social Welfare with a concentration in health. She plans to become a public health social worker who provides culturally and linguistically-sensitive health and social services to low-income immigrant families.

“By becoming a social worker I want to contribute to the low-income immigrant families who face difficult circumstances and thus become a part of the solution.”

About the Program

- The Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) program is authorized through Title VII of the Public Health Service Act.

- San Francisco Community Clinic Consortium (SFCCC) serves as an AHEC for San Francisco, California. As one of its health careers “pipeline” activities, SFCCC hosts AmeriCorps members through the National Association of Community Health Centers Community HealthCorps. In 2012-13, twenty-two AmeriCorps members served full-time in local “safety net” health care settings, providing outreach, health education, case management, volunteer coordination, and other needed services. In addition, they received training on a wide variety of health care topics and gained first-hand exposure to community and public health careers. Most are planning to further their education or pursue employment in a related field.

- Find more information at: www.sfccc.org

According to Cynthia...

My experience with AmeriCorps through the San Francisco AHEC is definitely inspiring and life-changing. In my current position as an AmeriCorps Navigator in the Maternal, Child and Adolescent Division of the San Francisco Department of Public Health, I am able to provide a variety of health services to low-income families, such as assisting with health screenings, providing and assisting with bilingual trainings, and translating educational materials into Chinese. All of these activities have allowed me to fully utilize my Chinese skills to provide linguistically and culturally-sensitive services to low-income, monolingual-Chinese immigrant families. I still vividly recall the monolingual-Chinese mother of a four-year-old immigrant girl with severely decayed teeth, struggling to access the needed dental care for her daughter. This mother could neither understand nor begin to navigate the complicated insurance maze, in order to get her child needed dental treatment. It is important that there are navigators just like me who can speak the language, help the family interact with the health care system, and provide the family with necessary health information and resources.