

Peer Educator Program Promotes Healthy Choices

BY JEFF DUGAN
STAFF WRITER

"It's a pretty good bargain for \$20," is what many UNLV students say about the Student Health Center.

Kristena Heard, a staff mem-

ber with the Student Health Center said.

Individual health is more than not catching a cold. The SHC staff emphasizes integrated health issues, including "life-skills," a positive outlook on the self and life; alcohol and drug abuse pre-

vention; nutrition; and sexual health, including the issues of sexual harassment and assault.

SHC has added value to \$20 health fee by augmenting its staff resources with a peer educator program. "We've had about 95 volunteers since we started in 1990," Heard said. "Even though we have only two individuals this semester, we're always happy for more (volunteers)."

According to Heard, both individuals and representatives from campus organizations, such as UNLV sororities and fraternities, have participated in the programs offered by SHC.

Peer educator training is comprehensive. Student volunteers go through a 40-hour training sequence, which includes guest

lecturers, such as Rochelle Sax of UNLV Public Safety, and testing

Once trained and out in the university community, peer educators typically look for informal group settings as the best opportunity to get their message across. "People are more relaxed and more willing to talk," Heard said. "They'll question more, and believe me, this generation (of students) has a lot of questions and not many inhibitions."

SHC conducts most of its formal programs in the residence halls, often at the request of the resident assistants. "Most of the RA's are familiar with what we offer, since this is a continuing program," Heard said. "We get a lot of repeat business, too. I've

already done two different programs for the same (residence hall) floor."

Programs are tailored to suit a group's needs or are modeled on SHC's "theme times" such as the "Great America Smokeout."

Heard encouraged students to stop by the expanded SHC, "still in our same location." Brochures, pamphlets and guidebooks covering a wide variety of health topics are available in addition to medical services and crisis counseling.

Students interested in volunteering for the peer educator program may visit SHC or call Kim Smith, SHC health educator, at 895-3370.

Wine, Rice and Herbs

Why can the French eat all those saturated fats and still manage to avoid the cardiovascular problems that afflict others on similar diets?

One reason cited is their intake of red wine, which includes certain chemicals such as quercetin, epicatechin, and resveratrol, which lower LDL (the bad cholesterol) levels.

But there may be more to the wine story than first suggested by researches. Biochemist and enologist (wine expert) Carlos Muller, of California State University Fresno, cites salicylic acid, the ingredient found in red wine, pretty much ignored up to now.

Salicylic acid is a powerful antioxidant - a substance that helps neutralize cell damaging and potential cancer causing molecules called free radicals (Some doctors often recommended regular daily doses of aspirin to prevent heart problems).

More research is being done on its effect on other health problems (meanwhile, don't suddenly start drinking red wine to get these reported benefits before consulting with your doctor. You may have other conditions which can be made worse with alcohol).

More good news is coming from the food front. We already know that breast cancer incidence is lowest in most Asian countries. Diet, certainly, is a factor here. In Japan, for example, breast cancer is at a minimum among women who follow a more traditional Japanese diet, which avoids saturated fats and concentrates on grains such as rice and legumes, including the soybean.

Researchers have found that soybeans contains important phytochemicals, which appear to lower blood cholesterol and may be an effective preventative of breast cancers.

There's also been some re-

search on the herb rosemary, which, it would appear, not only makes food taste better, but makes it safer to eat because of natural antioxidants that prevent fats from going rancid. This anti-rancid effect also acts on fats in the human body, which could make it an effective way of preventing many ills associated with high fat content in the body.

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Dumb happens.

This Christmas. Crismas. Winter.

