

The Women's Fund of South Alabama Women's Health Initiative Grant Report 2007

(This grant was the result of a challenge grant from the Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham through the W.K. Kellogg Foundation via the Women's Funding Network. The intent was to assist women of poverty and color in their long term recovery effort in communities directly impacted by Hurricane Katrina.)

The grant was used for literacy, culture and Pap testing in south Mobile County to ages 19 and older, serving over sixty females. The program's two goals were: 1) to empower the Southeast Asian community to take control of their health care needs through the use of community based bi-lingual lay health workers, and 2) to assess the literacy levels and relevant culture factors for the Asian population. Dr. Hung Khong from the USA Mitchell Cancer Institute (MCI) worked through Boat People SOS (BPSOS) to implement the program, but they had to earn trust from the local Vietnamese, taking longer than anticipated. MCI completed training BPSOS staff with a focus on cervical cancer and breast cancer that qualified them to train other community people. Community training sessions were held in June and July 2007 that proved highly successful, covering many topics with lively discussions. Fifty-three participants received lay health training certificates who went into homes to help residents complete fifty-four health surveys and functional health literacy tests in Vietnamese or English along with one-on-one in depth interventions and interviews. The survey asked for suggestions on how best to conduct future outreach activities and training sessions. Participants favored videos, larger group sessions and Vietnamese versions of the survey. The survey indicated that Pap test adherence in Vietnamese American women residing in South Mobile County directly correlated with awareness or knowledge about Pap testing and cervical cancer. The rate of prior Pap test adherence was significantly lower than the national rate of Pap test adherence for Caucasian and African American women. One test revealed participants had an adequate functional level of health literacy.

Many things were achieved through this funding that were indirectly related to the original intent of the grant and were not part of the original scope of work. Dr. Khong has been asked to speak regularly at the Bayou la Batre High School and act as a mentor when his schedule permits. Dr. Khong was asked to serve on the national board of BPSOS in VA because of his efforts. Through this program, MCI gave BPSOS needed contacts at other nonprofit organizations in and outside their immediate area. The Mobile County Health Department sent staff to explain to BPSOS staff the forms and requirements for Medicare and Medicaid. Strong ties have been established with the community and BPSOS and MCI staff. The report included general itemization of expenses, the majority of funding going to salaries and contract services. The grant was also used for publications, dissemination of information, and Pap test co-pays for women who can not afford them.