Message from Judy

Dear Colleagues,

Our 30th anniversary party on October 17, 2013 was a wonderful event and enormous success by all accounts. Lots of old friends returned to celebrate with us – Jim Dalen, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Glorian Sorensen, Rob Goldberg, James Hebert, Jean Kristeller, Beth Ewy, Kate Kalen, Nancy Saal, Pat Jamieson, Barbara Donato – to name just a few. Laughter, memorable stories, great food and big hugs were plentiful. I look forward to our 35th anniversary celebration.

As you can see in the list of new faculty and staff noted in this newsletter, we have expanded our capacity to continue to do important and meaningful work; continuing to push the envelope and growing in depth and breadth as a division while contributing importantly to the health of the public. We also have grown in space. Make sure you visit the new space for the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society on the Shrewsbury Campus. It is magnificent. What we do and contribute as a team and individually enriches and helps to provide great meaning and purpose to each of our lives. There are many new and exciting plans in development that you will be hearing about soon. Thank you for all that you do and are and for the commitment, passion, and joy you bring with you each day. It makes my heart sing.

Best Wishes,
Judy
We Celebrated 30 Years!
Preventive and Behavioral Medicine
30th Celebration

October 17, 2013
A Pediatric Practice-based Intervention Linking Practices to a Community Resource to Support Families of Overweight and Obese Children: FITLINE Telephone Counseling

Collaborators: Lori Pbert, Alan Geller (Harvard School of Public Health), Sue Druker, Barbara Olendzki, Victoria Andersen, Bruce Barton, Gioia Persuitte, Jennifer Bram, and Susan Garland

As we hear in the news, the prevalence of childhood obesity has tripled in the US over the past three decades, with 36% of preadolescent children overweight or obese. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has developed recommendations for pediatric practices to help stem the tide of this epidemic, such as encouraging families to focus on improving basic lifestyle choices regarding eating and physical activity. Unfortunately, most pediatric practices are unable to implement these guidelines. The reasons are many: a lack of time and/or knowledge to deliver effective intervention within the practice; limited access to weight loss experts to whom they can refer their patients and families; and the tremendous burden to families in accessing weight loss services due to the distance to programs, transportation, cost, and coordination of parent and child schedules.

A team of UMW-PRC and other researchers wondered if a telephone-based referral program could help families make lifestyle changes. They developed the FITLINE program with components for pediatricians and families. The pediatric practice-based component consists of tools for identifying overweight and obese children of ages 8-12, a brief intervention guide, easy referral to the FITLINE counseling program, and feedback from the FITLINE nutritionist. The parent support component consists of six weekly 30-minute FITLINE counseling telephone calls delivered by nutritionists who provide personalized coaching, along with a parent booklet to guide parents in setting goals while working with their child to make lifestyle changes. The FITLINE phone calls use motivational interviewing and patient-centered counseling to teach key parenting techniques and strategies, providing practical tips and resources to engage their child in addressing recommended dietary and physical activity behaviors. The nutritionists send the pediatricians a summary of family progress so they may support maintenance of an improved lifestyle, or refer for additional intervention if needed.

This past year the team conducted a pilot study of the FITLINE program. The team found that there was a BMI difference of approximately 0.9 BMI units, which is equivalent to about an 8-pound difference over 3 months!

These findings of the efficacy of the FITLINE counseling program in reducing BMI on a short-term basis are encouraging. The team is using these promising results to inform a grant application for a larger trial involving 16 pediatric primary care practices with 512 parents of children. If found effective, the FITLINE program will provide a model for widespread use, contributing significantly to the development of new standards for weight management care in pediatric practice.
After 33 years of outstanding work and service, Phil Merriam retired from the Division on April 1st. Many people came together on March 24th to celebrate Phil and his many contributions, including current and former colleagues from the Division, throughout the Medical School, and community organizations. It was a wonderful celebration with warm toasts and tasty food. We wish you the best, Phil!
In January, the Center for Mindfulness moved into its new location, the Hoagland-Pincus building – a grand and beautiful 25,000 square foot building filled with light and surrounded by acres of trees, lawns, and gardens – providing the much needed space for program expansion and the addition of a research team and lab. With the knowledge that we were moving into space that would accommodate our growth, we began implementing the strategy to:

- Broaden the scope and reach of our clinical care
- Expand our research about the science of mindfulness
- Establish a unique international registry of MBSR research data
- Create a global network of colleagues and their organizations engaged in MBSR professional education, training and research

In support of this strategy, we restructured and filled one new position and several open positions as follows:

**Jean Baril** was promoted to *Program Support Administrator* reporting to Dianne Horgan. In response to CFM’s growth, this new position provides much needed center-wide support of their programs from an inclusive and lateral perspective. Jean has been with UMASS for 25+ years and with the CFM for 16 of those years.

**Jessica Novia** was promoted to *Project Coordinator* in January. In her new role, she provides support to the Executive Leadership Team on strategic initiatives and special projects. Jess has been with the CFM for eight-plus years.

**Debra Mercer**, who originally joined CFM as a temporary employee last August, was hired in February as a full-time *Administrative Assistant*. In her new position, Debra reports to Jean Baril and provides assistance on a wide-range of areas, including the conference, general marketing, operations, procurement, and business administration.

**Jackie Clark** joins CFM as the *Project Assistant II* in the Oasis Institute. She has a BS in International Studies and an AS in Marketing. Most recently, Jackie was the Project Assistant II for Undergraduate Medical Education at UMASS Medical School; and previously the Education Coordinator for the Department of Medicine.

**Diane Lavin** joined CFM as the *Project Coordinator* for the Oasis Institute. Diane has held a variety of professional positions in health care and most recently as Ambulatory Nurse Manager, Boston Medical Center; and Manager, Adult & Pediatric Diabetes and Endocrinology Clinics, UMASS Memorial Medical Center. Diane has a B.S. in Nursing and an M.S. in Nursing, Cardiovascular Clinical Specialist. She has also taken our MBSR professional trainings through Oasis and is able to step into this project coordinator role with the tremendous benefit of knowing our programs well.

**Jean Welker** joined CFM as the *Project Coordinator* for the Stress Reduction Clinic and Program. Since 1990, Jean has been the Coordinator of Employee Fitness Programs for UMASS Memorial Health Care, coordinating events, designing and implementing employee wellness programs, and promoting programs, among many other responsibilities. Jean has a B.S. in Health Fitness and an M.A. in Exercise Physiology.
Advancing Research at the CFM

It has been the express intention of Executive Leadership to invigorate and advance the entire research program at CFM to become fully integrated into all aspects of the Center and across the entire UMMS research community. The first step in that process occurred with the appointment of Judson Brewer, MD, PhD as the new Director of Research at the CFM. Dr. Brewer comes to us from Yale University where he held the post of Medical Director of the Yale Therapeutic Neuroscience Clinic. Dr. Brewer is an Associate Professor and holds joint appointments in the Departments of Medicine and Psychiatry. As Director of Research, Dr. Brewer will be a member of the Center's Executive Leadership Team.

Recent additions to the newly named research lab, the Therapeutic Neuroscience Lab (TNL): Investigating the Mind to Improve Well Being and Realize Human Potential, are as follows:

Dr. Prasanta Pal, PhD joined TNL in January as a senior member of the research team. Prasanta has overseen several team research projects related to the development of neurofeedback tools to both probe the brain mechanisms underlying mindfulness and develop tools to track mindfulness in everyday life. Dr. Pal has an engineering background and a PhD in applied physics from Yale. Growing up in an ashram in India in the Vivekananda meditation tradition, Prasanta was introduced to mindfulness as a young child.

Two research associates also began at TNL in January: Dae Houlihan has a BA in Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology and a BA in Biochemistry; he most recently was the CIRM Brides Fellow at the University of California, Berkeley in Dr. Daniela Kaufer Lab. Rahil Rojiani has a BA in Contemplative Music, most recently was a Lab Manager and Research Assistant at Yale University.

In April, Remko van Lutterveld, PhD joined CFM as a Post Doc in the Therapeutic Neuroscience Lab. Remko comes to us from the Netherlands where he has been a PhD student at the University Medical Center Utrecht, in the Psychiatry Department. His areas of study include psychology, neuroscience and cognition, and fundamental biomedical science.
Congratulations are in order for ... 

Our fearless leader, **Judy Ockene**, was recently selected to receive the 2014 Society of Behavioral Medicine Distinguished Scientist Award! This award recognizes scientists whose careers have been marked by scholarly distinction and who have made a lasting impact on the field of behavioral medicine. Judy was recognized last week at the Society’s annual meeting in Philadelphia.

**Elena Salmoirago-Blotcher** is also being honored by the Society of Behavioral Medicine for their 2014 Spirituality and Health SIG’s New Investigator Award! This award is in recognition of outstanding research contributions in the areas of spirituality and health. Elena has recently accepted a position at Brown University. We wish her well!

**Barbara Estabrook** was chosen by fellow members of the Acton-Boxborough Cultural Council to be the 2013 recipient of the Massachusetts Cultural Council’s Leadership Circle Award. Barbara has been on the Acton-Boxborough Cultural Council for 6 years and has served as co-chair and chair.

**Rashelle Hayes, PhD** has recently received her license to practice Psychology in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Have you seen our new website?

The new Division website is now live! Developing the website involved a great collaboration between our division website team – Esther (who did the yeoman’s work on this), Judy, Milagros, Stephanie, Sherry and Lori – and our IT colleagues Simona Petcu, Sue Girard, and Tony Wareck. Ben Waxman, Elizabeth Frederick and their team laid the foundation for the work that was done to completely overhaul the site.

Our goal is for the website to help our Division achieve greater visibility for the impressive work you all do. Moving forward, Esther will be serving as the Division’s webmaster. Each month she will be sending a friendly reminder to send her news, upcoming events, and announcements you would like included on the website. In addition, please send her any breaking news as it happens and upcoming events as you learn of them. We want to showcase the work of the division and keep the website fresh and timely.

www.umassmed.edu/behavioralmedicine
Our Trip to Paraguay by Amy Borg

This past summer, my family and I traveled to Paraguay to visit my former Peace Corps site and reconnect with old friends. While my husband had accompanied me when I returned 14 years ago as a Peace Corps trainer, we had been waiting to return as a family until our children were old enough to really enjoy the experience. The wait was worth it - we had a wonderful trip!

While in the capital Asunción, we spent time with the young adults who had been my constant companions when they were children. It was gratifying to see them making their way as young adults, raising their own children and working in a variety of professions. One young woman, who I consider my first friend when she was 9 years old, is even finishing law school! We then rode a public bus for 4 hours back to my old site and were welcomed back. Many of the women had been members of the “Mother’s Club” that I established as a Rural Health Extensionist, working as a liaison with the UNICEF Child Survival program. Together, we had tackled some of the most pressing health challenges with gardens, spring protection for cleaner drinking water, immunization campaigns, health education on many topics, a preschool, toothbrushes and fluoride, school milk, and many other projects. The community had changed a lot in my absence, most notably with electricity, running water, a paved road, and cell phones. There was also a strange lack of young adults, as almost everyone in their 20s had moved to seek employment in cities. In other ways, though, it had the same beauty, tranquility, and lifestyle of subsistence farmers.

During the next week, I reconnected with many people, and felt almost as if I had never left. My children and husband quickly made friends, and were invited to do many things, like riding on horses and an oxcart, milking cows, cooking in a brick oven, climbing trees, and playing around with their new friends. The phrase that I heard repeatedly (in Guaraní) was “Nde resari,” or, “you didn’t forget.” I am thrilled that my children now share the same love for this wonderful community and are already planning our return.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the newsletter! The newsletter committee welcomes suggestions and comments. Please feel free to email the committee members:

Jessica Oleski, Amy Borg, Nanette Vitali