CSHConnection

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Photos clockwise from top left: Tonnie Griham (Laboratory), Marcus Jeffery (Clinical Analyst), Satta Moiforay (Urgent Care), Khadijah White (Pediatrics), Stylisha Johnson (Women's Health), Sulemny Rubi Pilar (Internal Medicine) Below, from left: Khadijah White, Monteque Barzay (HTK Architects), Ben Eduwensuyi (Radiology)

High School Seniors Intern at Codman Square Health Center

"The internships shifted how I am thinking about my career and college time.
I didn't know what I wanted to do-- now I have an idea of what I want."
- Sulemy Rubi Pilar, Codman Academy Senior Internship Placement: Internal Medicine -

A group of health center staff meets to examine the rates of male youth presenting for STD testing in order to ensure everyone who needs treatment is receiving it. One member of the team notices something funny about the data. "The numbers spike right after school vacations" -- an important observation for targeting prevention and testing, and a valuable insight from any team member.

However, the observer was not your average staff member, trained in clinical diagnoses, or statistical analyses. Instead, he was an intern from Codman Academy, our in-house partner charter high school.

The Internship Program is the result of a close partnership between the Codman Square Health Center (CSHC) and Codman Academy Charter School (CACS). Since its founding in 2001, the school has been housed within the main health center clinical building, and boasts a 100% college acceptance rate.

The proximity of the school and the health center means that the students can learn about and participate in addressing community health issues. They also have ready access to role models in the health care field, a field that accounts for 1 in 5 Boston jobs, many of which are

Codman Academy Internships!

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well-paying. The internship program serves to deepen the relationship students have with health center staff, as well as expose students to a high caliber professional environment.

For two weeks in December, high school seniors from the school joined the medical care team and their patients in the halls of the Codman Square Health Center. Each student was matched with a health center mentor in one of the clinical departments or community programs. Most of the students had no previous work experience in a professional setting, and had perhaps only worked as babysitters or part-time retail employees. Lisa Graustein, Senior Internship Coordinator explains, "the opportunity to work in a new field and talk about educational and career choices with a professional is a tremendously rewarding experience."

Students tested blood for diseases in the lab, registered patients for their appointments, and learned about the role of x-rays in patient diagnoses. They attended strategy meetings, created marketing materials, and worked with our fitness center HealthWorks for Women. They even developed and instituted a new patient data monitoring system and worked with architects on the models for our building plans in partnership with the school.

The internship program was a formative experience for both the students and their health center mentors. Many of the students were invited back for career mentoring or for extended internship opportunities. Khadijah White and Sulemny Rubi Pilar, in Pediatrics and Internal Medicine respectively, were both encouraged by their mentors to apply for part-time jobs at the Health Center as a result of their internship work. One of the mentors said of her intern, "Tonnie was a delight. We looked forward to seeing him each day. He was not afraid to ask questions and was careful and detailed in his work."

Andre Lawrence, who worked in the Laboratory with Mentor Chris Schromm, says of his experience, "The internship allowed me to realize that this was the working world— what we see our parents go through every day… It allowed us to appreciate what people do. It shows me we can have no excuses. The commitment people take is the reason why we all have to perform at a high level every day." The 18 year old is interested in psychiatry, and has been offered a bi-weekly internship at a local mental health facility as a result of a Boston Globe article that ran about the internship program.

Codman Square Health Center CEO and co-founder Bill Walczak (who also co-founded Codman Academy) says of the program, "This internship program was a huge success from the point of view of both the health center and the school to get to know each other on more professional level. It also allowed both our clinical staff and our students to realize for the first time the potential existing within the walls of both institutions. We intend to build upon the success of this internship to include an even more comprehensive program next academic year."

Photos clockwise from top: Andre Lawrence (Laboratory), Tonnie Griham, Monteque Barzay, Andre Lawrence, Christine Schromm (Laboratory Manager and Intern Mentor), Tonnie Griham

School-Based Dental Clinic A Success

With funding from the Oral Health Foundation, our dental department has implemented a program to expand direct Oral Health care services to students at the Dorchester Educational Complex. Our portable dental program now provides dental services every Thursday morning in our School-Based Health Center at the Complex. Services available include but are not limited to check-ups, cleanings, restorative dentistry, fluoride treatments, and X-rays.

Ricardo Guevara, our Associate Dental Director at the Codman Square Health Center, runs the program, and brings to it experience practicing dentistry for over 15 years. He explains, "Our goal is to provide children in our community who have been victims of Oral Health disparities with a suitable Oral Health alternative in the form of the portable dental home." The clinic's location within the school also serves to minimize the barriers to care from costs associated with transportation and to provide access to dental services for children with MassHealth. Most patient receive all their necessary dental services at school, and serious cases are referred to a dental provider at CSHC.

Local High School Students Become Tax Savvy and Credit Wise Volunteering at Our Tax Preparation Program

By Doreen Treacy

Da'Shawn Carter is a senior at Dorchester Educational Complex with college on his mind. He is also one of twelve Dorchester area high school students who are participating in the DotWell Skills for Life course – a 10-week course that teaches students critical financial and tax preparation skills. "I knew I wanted to study accounting in college and I thought, this would be a good opportunity. I thought 'How many kids are already going to have the experience beforehand? So I took advantage of it.' "

Skills for Life is paired with in a 12-week internship in which the students volunteer with our Free Tax Preparation Program, a service available to all Dorchester residents earning less than $42,000 a year. Last year, $4 million in tax refunds were returned to community residents as a result of the program. This year, Da'Shawn and 8 of his classmates will help make that number even bigger. After the course, all passed the standardized IRS Tax Preparer Certification test on their first attempt, a statistic noted with great pride by their DotWell mentor and Program Manager Shauntell Foster.

On a recent Saturday morning, Ivanna Bennett, a senior at the John D. O'Bryant School, sat at a computer eager to meet her first tax client. "I never thought of myself as being able to do taxes…I thought it would be very hard…but it's easy!"

In addition to the tax skills both students are applying at the Codman Square tax site, the class imparts valuable economic lessons. When asked what their "Aha!" moment was from the financial skills course lessons, Ivanna quickly said, "I learned that savings is really, really important." Da'Shawn, meanwhile, was impressed with the importance of establishing and maintaining good credit. "Once you have bad credit, it can affect you for 7 years. So you need to think about what you're doing."

By the end of tax season, the Skills for Life student cohort will have contributed nearly 300 hours of volunteer tax preparation at the DotWell tax sites, and will have demonstrated to their peers -- and the adults whose taxes they prepare – that it's never too early – or too late – to chart a course for future prosperity by learning basic finance skills like credit and tax preparation. For more information about the Tax Preparation Program or the Skills for Life course, contact Shauntell Foster at 617-822-8171 or shauntell.foster@dotwell.org.

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