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# Massachusetts Public Health Association

*Working for a Healthy Massachusetts*



*Working for a Healthy Massachusetts*

ANNUAL REPORT 2007



# WORKING FOR A HEALTHY MASSACHUSETTS

New leadership presents new opportunities for public health in Massachusetts. The Patrick administration appointed highly-regarded health professionals to leadership positions, making science-based public health a policy and budget priority.

As a result we have greater expectations for what we can achieve. The Massachusetts Public Health Association (MPHA) is rising to the challenge, combining cutting edge Internet activism with time-honored community organizing to strengthen the voice for public health. We're successfully using the media to raise the profile of our organization and issues. MPHA's leadership role in coalitions is helping to strengthen support for public health on Beacon Hill.

This translates into better policies and programs to protect the health of our communities, workplaces, and environment. Because of our work this past year, thousands of children will receive new vaccines, more restaurants and schools will be inspected, and communities are better preparing for disaster. With continued support from our members, our greatest victories lie ahead of us.

## MPHA's key accomplishments this year include:

- Led advocacy to boost Department of Public Health funding by \$74.4 million, including major new funding for immunizations and environmental health;
- Spearheaded a statewide legislative campaign to get junk food and sugary drinks out of schools and led organizing to win a strong school health policy in Framingham;
- Helped lead the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow, a broad coalition championing policies to promote safer alternatives to toxic chemicals;
- Played leadership roles in initiatives to create a regional structure for public health and to promote workforce development for Community Health Workers;
- Organized a statewide series of forums on emergency preparedness for vulnerable populations.

## MPHA FUNDERS

### GRANT & CONTRACT SUPPORT

ABCD/SkillWorks  
Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow  
The Boston Foundation  
Boston Public Health Commission  
Common Stream Foundation  
Department of Public Health

Patrick-Murray Inaugural Committee  
Harvard School of Public Health  
Holyoke Health Center  
Metro West Community Foundation  
Tufts Medical School

### ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS

Arbors at Chicopee & Westfield  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts  
Boston University School of Social Work  
Channing-Bete Company  
Community Catalyst  
Fallon Community Health Plan  
Health Care for All  
Health Law Advocates  
Holyoke Health Center  
Justice Resource Institute  
LUK, Inc.  
MA Assoc. of Community Health Workers  
MA Coalition of School-Based Health Centers  
MA College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences  
MA Podiatric Medical Society

MA School Nurses Organization  
MA League of Community Health Centers  
MA Podiatric Medical Society  
MA School Nurse Organization  
MIRA Coalition  
Northeast Ctr. for Healthy Communities  
Norton Board of Health  
Somerville Health Department  
The Arbors at Chicopee  
The Arbors at Westfield  
The Beal Companies  
Tobacco Free Mass  
Town of Norton - Board of Health  
Trust for America's Health  
UMass Amherst Bahai Club  
Western MA Ctr. for Healthy Communities

### INSTITUTIONAL & CORPORATE PARTNERS

I199SEIU United Healthcare Workers  
Abt Associates  
American Cancer Society  
Audrey Shelton Consulting  
Beacon Health Strategies  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts  
Boston Public Health Commission  
Bouvé College of Health Sciences at Northeastern University  
Boston University School of Public Health  
Cambridge Health Alliance  
Children's Hospital Boston  
The Connors Family  
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute  
DotWell  
E. Catlin Donnelly Associates  
Friends of Brookline Public Health  
GeoVision  
Gravestar Foundation  
Great Brook Valley Health Center  
Harvard Pilgrim HealthCare  
Harvard School of Public Health  
The Health Foundation of Central Mass  
Hill Holliday

Hinckley, Allen & Tringale  
John Snow, Inc.  
MAP for Health  
MA Hospital Association  
MA League of Community Health Centers  
MA Medical Society  
MA Nurses Association  
MassPro  
The Medical Foundation  
MetroWest Community Health Care Fnd.  
Mintz-Levin  
Neighborhood Health Plan  
The Oral Health Foundation  
Partners HealthCare  
Philip W. Johnston Associates  
Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts  
Rasky-Baerlein Strategic Communications, Inc.  
Ropes & Gray  
Senior Whole Health  
Small Business Service Bureau, Inc.  
Rosenfeld & Rafik  
Tufts University School of Medicine  
Tufts-New England Medical Center  
UMass Memorial HealthCare

# MPHA STAFF & INTERNS

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Executive Director

**Sara Kanevsky**  
Community Organizer, Central MA

**Terry Mason**  
Deputy Director for Program and Policy

**Wanda Santiago**  
Business Manager

**Eric Weltman**  
Deputy Director of Policy and Advocacy

**Rebekah Gowler**  
Intern

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Community Organizer, Western MA

**Kara Keenan**  
Membership and Development Coordinator

**Drita Protopapa**  
Community Organizer, Framingham

**Maya Scott**  
Administrative Assistant

**Sonia Alam**  
Intern

## FORMER STAFF AND INTERNS

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**Greer Harewood**, Administrative Assistant and Framingham Community Organizer

**Marco Cornelio**, Tufts University School of Medicine

**Nicole Charon**, Boston University

**Melody Hugo**, Boston University School of Social Work

**Thea Ivester**, Boston University

**Lia Krautmanis**, Boston College

**Angela Maina**, Boston University School of Social Work

**Javeria Mir**, UMass School Public Health

**Jonah Molhberg**, Smith College

**Christine Morrow**, Tufts University School of Medicine

**Rossanna Salazar**, Mount Holyoke

**Sarah Schufreider**, College of the Holy Cross

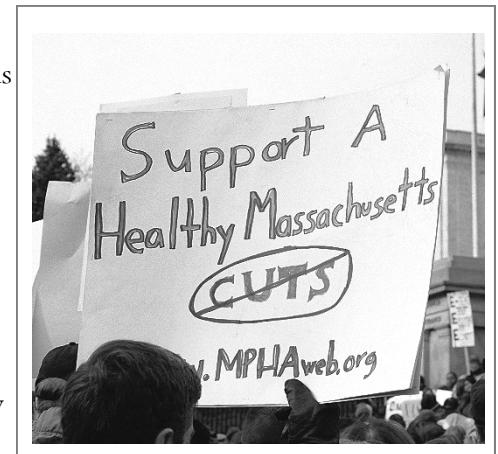
**Juan White**, High School of Science and Technology, Springfield

## BUDGET VICTORIES

In a tight fiscal year, MPHA and our allies won important increases for disease prevention and health promotion in the state budget.

The Fiscal Year 2008 budget contains \$548.7 million for the Department of Public Health (DPH). Legislators approved \$74.4 million (16 percent) more for DPH compared to FY07, including major increases for immunizations, smoking prevention, and early intervention services. Because DPH received over \$40 million in supplemental appropriations for FY07, the actual increase in total available funding approved for public health in FY08 was \$31.6 million (6 percent).

MPHA helped lead advocacy to win a \$12 million boost in the Universal Immunization program, including funding for the new rotavirus and HCV pediatric vaccines. We made Environmental Health Services a high budget priority for the first time, resulting in \$500,000 in targeted new funding for food safety and indoor air quality inspections. MPHA led successful advocacy for the state laboratory and helped lead coalitions for school health services and hepatitis C. We also supported the work of partner organizations to boost funding for tobacco control, teen pregnancy prevention, youth violence prevention, suicide prevention, substance abuse, and other family and community health programs.



MPHA provided a steady stream of budget information and timely action alerts to members and allied organizations, testified at hearings, and held scores of meetings with public officials. Our organizers recruited people to write, call, and meet with their elected leaders. We combined grassroots organizing with effective press work and the use of new, Internet-based tools. We also played leading roles in several coalitions and joined a broad array of organizations in supporting the governor's proposals to increase corporate and local options revenues.

# PREVENTING CHILDHOOD OBESITY

MPHA's campaign to prevent childhood obesity is gaining visibility and strength. MPHA is the lead organization promoting legislation to prohibit the sale of junk food and sugary drinks in schools. "An Act to Promote Proper School Nutrition" has been approved by the Public Health Committee, and is currently under consideration by the Health Care Financing Committee of the legislature.

In the past year, we've generated dozens of letters, op-ed pieces, and news stories, garnered over 80 organizational endorsements, and mobilized hundreds of people to sign postcards in support of the bill. In May, we organized a successful State House media event, featuring DPH Commissioner John Auerbach, followed by a public hearing including testimony from nurses, doctors, and school officials.

MPHA is also taking the campaign to the local level. MPHA has launched an obesity prevention initiative in Framingham, and in April we won passage by the school committee of a wellness policy promot-

ing nutrition education, increased physical education, and higher standards for foods and beverages. In May we celebrated the grand opening of a greenhouse at the Sullivan Elementary School in Holyoke. The greenhouse is a project of MPHA, along with WGBY

television, the Holyoke public schools, and the Holyoke YMCA, and will include a curriculum to teach basic math, botany, and nutrition.



got lunch?



Commissioner John Auerbach speaks out in support of the school nutrition bill

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## OFFICERS

**Harold Cox**, MSSW, President  
Boston University School of Public Health

**Bettye Anderson Frederic**, BSN, MS, Vice President  
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**Ed Marakovitz**, MSW, Secretary/Treasurer  
Boston College School of Social Work

**Judith Kurland**, Past President  
City of Boston

## DIRECTORS

**Myron Allukian**, DDS, MPH  
Boston Public Health Commission (Retired)

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The Medical Foundation

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Dana Farber Cancer Institute

**Alfred DeMaria, Jr.**, MD  
MA Department of Public Health

**Ruth Ellen Fitch**, JD  
Dimock Community Health Center

**Durrell Fox**  
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UMass Medical School

**Charles Levenstein**, PhD, MSOH  
UMass Lowell (Emeritus)

**Mónica Escobar Lowell**  
UMass Memorial Health Care

**Angela Mah**  
United Commercial Bank

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**Vivien Morris**, MPH, MS, RD  
Boston Medical Center

**Frank Singleton**, MSPH, MPA  
Lowell Health Department

**Karen van Unen**, MBA, Med  
Dotwell, Inc.

**Jacob Smith Yang**  
MA Asian and Pacific Islanders for Health

ness, and attracted over 250 people. In April, nearly 300 people joined us in honoring three public health pioneers, Matt Fishman, Zoila Torres Feldman, and Ali Noorani.

Other events over the past year include:

- Forums last fall on emergency preparedness for vulnerable populations held in Somerville, Worcester, Springfield, and Hadley;
- A public hearing last fall on universal health care, co-sponsored by MPHA and chaired by Congressman John Olver, held in Holyoke;
- A reception at the APHA annual meeting, where we honored then-Senate President Robert Travaglini and House Speaker Salvatore DiMasi;
- A budget briefing in February by Noah Berger, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center;
- A reception in April welcoming Dr. JudyAnn Bigby, Secretary of Health and Human Services, and John Auerbach, Commissioner of Public Health;
- The 18th annual Western Massachusetts Elder Care Conference held in May in Springfield, attended by over 325 people;
- A book reading in November by Michele Simon, author of *Appetite for Profit: How the Food Industry Undermines Our Health and How to Fight Back*;
- A forum on substance abuse, co-sponsored by MPHA, held in September in Springfield, featuring a keynote by Michael Dukakis;
- Forums organized by MPHA's Environmental and Occupational Health Section on urban environmental problems, biomonitoring, and immigrant worker health and safety.



MPHA executive director Geoff Wilkinson and Ali Noorani, recipient of the 2007 Frechette Award



Dr. JudyAnn Bigby, MPHA board member Alba Cruz, Representative Gloria Fox, and MPHA board member Art Mazer

## ENVIRONMENTAL AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

MPHA is tackling environmental and occupational health issues on several fronts. We're playing a leadership role in the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow, a broad coalition of health, labor, religious, and environmental organizations focused on preventing exposure to toxic chemicals in consumer products, workplaces, and the environment. Last year, AHT scored a strong victory in passing the Mercury Products Bill.

This year, AHT's legislative priority is the Safer Alternatives Bill, which establishes a program to replace priority toxic chemicals with safer alternatives wherever available. Over half of the legislature is co-sponsoring the bill. At a Mother's Day State House event, the coalition delivered 25,000 postcards to Governor Patrick and legislators, urging passage of the bill.

MPHA also co-chairs AHT's Administrative Action Committee, and has been working closely with the Patrick administration on an executive order to promote government purchasing of less-toxic products and services.

MPHA's Environmental and Occupational Health section has been playing an important role in policy, public education, and coalition work. At a State House hearing in July, three section members testified in support of three



Jean Carmel St. Juste of MASSCOSH speaking at an MPHA forum on immigrant worker health and safety

bills concerning particulate matter, indoor air quality in schools, and environmental justice. The section has also been bringing together colleague organizations and MPHA members to discuss issues of common concern at quarterly meetings. Topics over the past year include immigrant worker health and safety, biomonitoring, and urban environmental issues.

MPHA has also been active in local environmental health initiatives. We're part of a coalition that's piloting Integrated Pest Management (IPM), a preventative approach to reducing both pests and pesticides, in targeted Boston public housing projects. The Healthy Pest Free Housing Initiative has employed and trained community health advocates who are helping residents prepare for



Joanne Treistman, Senator Harriette Chandler, Dawn Clark, Margot Barnet during the Mother's Day Lobby Day

services by IPM contractors hired by the Boston Housing Authority. In western Massachusetts, MPHA helped launch the Pioneer Valley Community Environmental Health Coalition, an environmental justice coalition that is currently exploring brownfields testing in Holyoke.

MPHA is deeply involved in a project to develop a sustainable, regional public health system in Massachusetts. Massachusetts is one of the few states in the nation without a county health system. The objective of the project is to create a regional infrastructure to provide equitable protection and health promotion for all residents, while respecting the existing legal authority of health boards and creating incentives for local participation.

The effort, led by MPHA president Harold Cox, under the auspices of the Boston University School of Public Health, involves local public health officials, academics, representatives of the departments of public health and environmental protection, and legislative supporters. It has included intensive research and several large stakeholder meetings, and its tentative findings were the subject of a legislative hearing last fall. Members of the project "work group," which includes Cox, MPHA board member Frank Singleton, and executive director Geoff Wilkinson, made nearly two dozen presentations to local public health officials, state leaders, and community members across the state this spring. The feedback from these sessions will be incorporated into proposed legislation.

### PANDEMIC FLU PREPARATION

Last fall, MPHA held four successful forums on emergency preparedness for vulnerable populations. More than 300 people attended the forums in Somerville, Worcester, and Springfield and Hadley. The forums provided attendees with information about pandemic flu and resources for preparing for disaster. More importantly, they provided an opportunity to identify the needs of particular communities and discuss how to plan and prepare for vulnerable populations. The diversity of the attendees was a major indicator of the forums' success, with the



Panelists discuss preparing for a flu pandemic at the 2006 annual meeting

safer alternatives to toxic chemicals;

- MPHA provides staff support for the Coalition for Local Public Health, which is championing increased state support for local public health;
- MPHA helps coordinate the Massachusetts Hepatitis C Coalition, which advocates for funding for prevention and treatment programs in the budget;
- MPHA helps lead the Collaborative for School Health, which advocates for funding for school health services in the budget;
- MPHA is represented on the steering committee of the ACT!! Coalition, which is monitoring implementation of the 2006 landmark health care reform legislation;
- MPHA staffs the United We Stand for Public Health Coalition, providing timely information and support to over 100 public health organizations;
- MPHA is a member of the Tobacco Free Mass Coalition, which won significantly increased funding for tobacco control in the FY07 budget;
- MPHA has two appointed members to the Commission on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) Youth, which supports increased state services for this under-served population;
- MPHA plays a leadership role in the Massachusetts Partnership for Healthy Weight, a collaborative of over 100 organizations and agencies;
- MPHA helps coordinate the Community Outreach Workers Training and Network Coalition in western Massachusetts.

### MPHA EVENTS

Across Massachusetts, MPHA organizes conferences, forums, and other events that bring people together, provide inspiration and ideas, support professional development, and strengthen the statewide voice for public health.

MPHA's two signature events are our fall Annual Meeting and our Spring Celebration. The 2006 annual meeting focused on pandemic flu prepared-



Representative Carl Sciortino and Hepatitis C Coalition coordinator, intern Melody Hugo

In addition, MPHA organized and co-sponsored several well-attended forums in western Massachusetts, covering topics such as emergency preparedness, regionalization, and substance abuse.

METROWEST is a new addition to our regional organizing, with a focus on preventing childhood obesity. MPHA's part-time organizer undertook a successful effort to rebuild Framingham's Health Advisory Council. The Council's advocacy resulted in the school committee passing a wellness policy promoting nutrition education, increased opportunities for physical activity, and higher standards for foods and beverages.

## GETTING THE WORD OUT

MPHA is harnessing both mainstream media and web-based tools to educate the public, engage our members, and mobilize action.

In November, MPHA launched a newly-designed and upgraded web site, [www.MPHAw.org](http://www.MPHAw.org). The new site contains information about our current issue concerns and ways to get involved, as well as resources such as a calendar and job listings. More importantly, the site features interactive tools allowing visitors to sign up for our email alerts, make a contribution and join MPHA, and easily email their legislators on policy priorities.



MPHA Board President Harold Cox is interviewed about the school nutrition bill

MPHA is also maintaining a strong presence in newspapers across the state, as well as on television and radio. We've published dozens of letters-to-the-editor and op-ed pieces in the major dailies and local weeklies. And we've staged successful media events at the State House, attracting television cameras with engaging visuals, such as toxic-containing toys and bales of soda bottles.

## WORKING IN COALITION

As the "umbrella organization" for public health in Massachusetts, coalition work is key to MPHA's successes. We lead, support, and participate in a number of coalitions, including:

- MPHA is a lead member of the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow, a broad health, labor, religious, and environmental coalition promoting

elderly, disabled, school officials, immigrants, and the homeless among the participants. Follow up from the forums includes an initiative to restore Worcester's emergency notification system.

In addition, the theme of MPHA's 2006 annual meeting was "Pandemic Flu: Learning from the Past, Preparing for the Future." The keynote address was by Dr. Alfred W. Crosby, author of *America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918*, and was followed by a response panel including then-DPH Commissioner Paul Cote; David Cohen, Mayor of Newton; Stacey DeBoise Luster, Director of HR for the Worcester Public Schools; and Dan Murphy of Mass Mutual Life Insurance.

## PROMOTING HEALTH ACCESS AND REDUCING DISPARITIES

Community Health Workers (CHWs) help underserved communities gain access to health information and care through their understanding of both worlds. Although CHWs have become an important part of the health care system, compensation and recognition for their work remain woefully inadequate. This year MPHA's long-standing support for the efforts of Community Health Workers to gain professional security and opportunity picked up steam. MPHA began conducting policy research and development as part of the Community



Members of the COWNT Coalition with Commissioner John Auerbach at the MACHW annual meeting

Health Worker Initiative of Boston. MPHA is an Initiative partner and MPHA staff co-chair the Policy Development Committee. In April 2007 the Initiative received approval from SkillWorks for a three year workforce development project, funded by a consortium of foundations.

MPHA staff is also working with DPH and Commissioner John Auerbach's Community Health Worker Advisory Council in preparation for a report to the legislature on the effectiveness of CHW's in improving access and reducing disparities. The Advisory Council and report were both mandated as part of the Health Care Reform Act, in acknowledgment of the important role of CHWs.

In Western Massachusetts, MPHA and the Springfield Department of Health and Human Services co-lead the COWNT (Community Outreach Workers Network and Training) coalition. This year COWNT became an affiliate of the Massachusetts Community Health Workers Association (MACHW), for which MPHA remains the fiscal agent.

On August 8, the Commission to End Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities issued its final report calling for a comprehensive approach to ending disparities. Established by law in 2004, the Commission was led by Representative Peter Koutoujian and Senator Dianne Wilkerson. Three MPHA Board members were on the Commission—Harold Cox, then Board President John Auerbach, and Bettye Anderson Frederic (representing Helen Caulton-Harris). MPHA staff Greer Harwood testified at the health disparities hearing held before the Legislature's Joint Committee on Public Health in May of 2007. MPHA Board member Wendy Mariner continues to represent the organization on the Steering Committee of the Affordable Care Today (ACT!!) coalition to assure that health care remains affordable for the lowest income residents of the state. She also represents MPHA on the Mass Health Care Quality and Cost Council advisory committee.

## BUILDING MPHA ACROSS THE STATE

MPHA's commitment to diversifying and strengthening the organized constituency for public health has been crucial to our accomplishments. With full-time organizers in central and western Massachusetts, joined by a part-time organizer in Framingham, we've developed new leadership, identified fresh allies, and engaged a broad range of people in our issue priorities.

IN CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS, MPHA is melding

organizing around local concerns with advocacy on our statewide policy agenda. In February, MPHA held working group meetings to follow up on last fall's forum on emergency preparedness for vulnerable populations. We're working with Worcester community leaders and city planners to assess local agencies' prepared-



Members of MPHA's Central Massachusetts Regional Committee

ness. After this assessment process, MPHA, city planners and community leaders will hold trainings with agency and neighborhood leaders in order to reach out to vulnerable populations. Other action items include researching the efficacy of the municipal siren system, which is no longer in use, to alert the public in the event of a disaster.

MPHA has also identified local activists who are taking the lead in organizing in support of our legislative priorities. Jennifer Moiles, a Worcester public school parent, has pulled together a group of parents to work on improving school nutrition and increase physical activity. Piper Lillard, a UMass Medical School student, helped organize a meeting with physicians to plan ways health providers can support the Safer Alternatives Bill. And in April, we held a meeting with 30 nurses and nurse practitioners to discuss building support for school health services.

IN WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS, coalition building as well as public education events have strengthened MPHA's community ties while fueling strong policy advocacy on school nutrition, the budget, and environmental health. The year's highlight was the grand re-opening of the greenhouse at Holyoke's Sullivan School, a project of MPHA, WGBY, the YMCA, and the Holyoke public schools. The re-opening event featured music by the Sullivan School Jazz Band, led by local Latin jazz luminary and school music teacher Jose Gonzalez. Next steps include planting an "edible garden" and developing a curriculum to teach basic math, botany, and nutrition.

MPHA also played key roles in community health workers and environmental justice coalitions. We helped launch the Pioneer Valley Community Environmental Health Coalition, which is currently exploring brownfields testing in Holyoke. And the Community Outreach Workers Network and Training (COWNT) Coalition trained over 130 CHWs in advocacy and health issues, while becoming an affiliate of the Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers (MACHW).



Students from the Sullivan School celebrate the greenhouse opening