

FEBRUARY 2008

## ISCOPEs: Bread for the City

GW's Interdisciplinary Student Community-Oriented Prevention Enhancement Service (ISCOPEs), a service-learning program comprising graduate health professional students working with a community organization, has a longstanding partnership with Bread for the City. A nonprofit organization in Ward 2, Bread for the City's mission is to help vulnerable residents of Washington, D.C., with comprehensive services, including food, clothing, medical care, and legal and social services, in an atmosphere of dignity and respect. The ISCOPEs Bread for the City team is developing a project to improve health literacy levels.

Last year's ISCOPEs Bread for the City team found that health literacy was a major concern within the population who utilize Bread for the City's services. This year's team is developing picture cards to explain medication directions and increase patients' health literacy level. The cards will be piloted with patients and doctors this spring.

"The Bread for the City team has been a joy to work with," says **Brandi Loomis**, a first-year medical student at GW. "Everyone is eager to do their part for the community, and they keep their focus on the big picture: service to the patient."

## GW Fact

Free depression screenings are being offered to GW community members on a weekly basis until the end of the spring semester. Screenings take place each Monday from 1 to 3 p.m. in the Marvin Center Great Hall, located at 800 21st Street, NW.

## City Official Profile: Mark Bjorge



Josh Lasky

*Mark Bjorge, B.S. '95, currently serves as outreach and services specialist for Ward 2 in Mayor Adrian Fenty's Office of Community Relations and Services.*

**M**ark Bjorge, B.S. '95, was going to be a marine biologist, and GW was preparing him for the career he envisioned. Somewhere along the way, the McLean/Great Falls, Va., native decided to redirect his efforts from the world's oceans to a slightly smaller, yet comparably complex, area: Washington, D.C.'s **Ward 2**.

Bjorge attended GW as a commuter undergraduate student, majoring in biology. Though he was a nontraditional student and lived off campus, he made many connections while working as a teaching assistant. Some of Bjorge's favorite memories while at GW are research trips to Maine, North Carolina, and even the Bahamas with GW professor of biology and well-published zoologist **Richard Knowlton**, to whom Bjorge served as an assistant.

Though Bjorge chose not to pursue a career in scientific research, he graduated from GW with a great wealth of knowledge and experience. "As a teaching assistant, I got into the field of adult education and got a lot of experience," he says. "The training, outreach, and public relations aspects of my work relate directly to the skills I gained while at GW."

Bjorge served on the Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) from 2004 to 2007 in Dupont Circle. The position allowed him to work on planned unit developments and streetscape projects while facilitating neighborhood input.

In August 2007, Bjorge was appointed to his current post as outreach and services specialist for Ward 2 in **Mayor Adrian Fenty's** Office of Community Relations and Services. Bjorge serves as a liaison between Ward 2 and Mayor Fenty, with whom he meets weekly. "We serve as ombudsman within the Office of the Mayor," says Bjorge. "We are always out and about in the ward, attending daily meetings, and responding to emergency scenes. The job is a 24-hour commitment, and our phones are never turned off."

Bjorge enjoys his current work and looks forward to continuing his service in Washington. "The city is a collection of interests, and the goal is to try to maximize happiness for the most people. Ward 2 is my own backyard, and I enjoy helping people here in their day-to-day lives."

Reflecting on his experience at GW, Bjorge says, "I developed a lot of knowledge about how to relate to people, which has been directly transferable to everything I've done since. GW opened doors for me and led me where I am today."

Bjorge's parents are both graduates of GW Law School's intellectual property law program and served in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Bjorge currently resides on 17th Street, NW, in Dupont Circle.

# Hundreds Receive Free Cancer Screenings at Health Expo

Approximately 700 men received free prostate screening exams courtesy of the GW Cancer Institute at the 15th Annual NBC4 Health and Fitness Expo. The Jan. 12-13 weekend event at the D.C. Convention Center drew a record crowd with nonstop lines of men taking advantage of GW's free service. GW's booth was transformed into six private exam rooms in which doctors, residents, and medical students conducted digital rectal exams. Prior to the exams, volunteers and GW staff assisted the men through the process, which included a simple blood test used to measure the PSA (prostate specific antigen) levels.

"This was a highly successful event, and we were able to make a huge contribution to our community," says **Hal Frazier**, clinical director of the GW urologic oncology program. "We were extremely pleased with the response and that we were able to help so many men."

"The response shows that men are taking an aggressive stance on their health needs," says **Fernando Bianco**, head of GW's Department of Urology and the GW Cancer Institute. "We demonstrated our commitment by addressing a serious problem that exists here in the city. We are making a difference—more than 90 percent of attendees responded that the prostate exam was not a regular aspect of their health care."

Nationally, Washington, D.C., has one of the highest mortality rates from prostate cancer. The risk posed to African American men is twice as high as to Caucasian men, and the mortality rate among African American men is nearly three times higher, according to GW Cancer Institute Executive Director **Steven Patierno**. "African American men are more likely to be diagnosed with advanced-stage cancers. Therefore, screenings, such as the one offered at the Expo, are critical," he says.

Earlier in the year, the GW Cancer Institute teamed up with NBC4 to encourage metropolitan area residents to get screened for prostate, breast, and colorectal cancers. The recent campaign includes a series of public service announcements targeted toward the 40-plus age group, emphasizing screenings and early detection in hopes of lowering the mortality rate of cancer and keeping those in the community healthy, says Patierno.



*Doreen Gentzler, NBC4 anchorwoman, interviews Fernando Bianco, head of the GW Department of Urology and the GW Cancer Institute, and Hal Frazier, clinical director of the GW urologic oncology program, at the 15th Annual NBC4 Health and Fitness Expo at the Washington Convention Center, Jan. 12-13.*

The most recent campaign message, "A simple test may save your life," follows on the heels of the successful "Get in the Game" campaign involving GW Men's Basketball Coach **Karl Hobbs**, his wife, **Joann**, and Assistant Coaches **Darrell Brooks** and **Roland Houston**.

"GW is committed to lowering the racial disparities for prostate cancer mortality in the metropolitan Washington area," says Bianco. "Free prostate screenings will continue to be offered every Friday morning at the GW Medical Faculty Associates."

For more information, call (202) 741-3106.

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