

LOCAL TASK FORCE FORMS TO ADDRESS COLORECTAL CANCER Project Underway to Explore Cancer Experiences in the Storm Lake Area

[A recent project funded by the Iowa Department of Public Health Comprehensive Cancer Control program and implemented by researchers at the Department of Geography at the University of Iowa created cancer maps for the years 2000-2005, the most recent years for which data is available from the State Health Registry of Iowa. These maps are available at the following web link: <http://www.uiowa.edu/iowacancermaps/>. The updated maps show that colorectal cancer is still a concern in the Storm Lake area.

Concerned with the high rate of colorectal cancer in the area, a local group of public health, medical and community leaders has formed to address the problem. The group, which calls itself the Storm Lake Area Cancer Task Force, identifies its mission as follows: "To explore and address the problem of colorectal cancer in the Storm Lake area, through research, education and action."

The group meets on a monthly basis at the Buena Vista Regional Medical Center and is currently recruiting new members. "We invite Storm Lake area residents interested in taking a leadership role in addressing colorectal cancer to join us. We welcome different perspectives and hope to build a group representative of the community as a whole," said Julie Meth, a nurse at the United Community Health Center, who is currently acting as Task Force coordinator.

As its first project, the Task Force is partnering with Kirsten Beyer, a graduate student at the University of Iowa's Department of Geography, to investigate reasons for the high rates in the area.

Ms. Beyer is working with the Task Force and research assistants in the Storm Lake area to recruit participants for group discussions of colorectal cancer to take place in mid-October. Storm Lake area residents who are 50 years or older, consider themselves to be White, Hispanic or TaiDam/Lao, and have lived in the area for 5 years or more are eligible. The conversation groups will last 3 hours with an option for two sessions, and compensation is available. Interview and web survey formats are also offered. If interested, please call Angie at (712) 661-9102. For a Spanish language speaker, please call Jennifer at (712) 661-9038. Recruitment is still underway for a speaker of Laotian. Individuals fluent in both Laotian and English interested in a paid research assistantship are encouraged to contact Angie at (712) 661-9102.

"I am grateful to the Task Force for their support and guidance. I hope that the results of this research can be used to guide the Task Force in their efforts to reduce the burden of colorectal cancer in the community," said Ms. Beyer.