



OPTIMUS

# HEALTH NEWS

## REPRESENTATIVE HIMES READS TO STAMFORD CHILDREN



Himes passed out copies of "Falling Leaves" for the children to take home. "Preparing kids so they enter school ready to learn is one of the most important things we can do to help them succeed," Himes said. He also took a tour of the facilities, asking the staff about nutrition and preventative care.

"We want to make sure families know health care options and services. We're working together to make sure children are ready to start school," Literary Volunteers Outreach Coordinator Lucia Cook said.

## Celebrating National Health Center Week

From August 7-13, Optimus Health Care joined providers across the country to celebrate National Health Center Week. The theme for 2011 is "Celebrating America's Health Centers: Serving Locally, Leading Nationally." Optimus hosted two events: "Celebrate Senior Housing Days" at the Fireside and Harbor View Apartments in Bridgeport and "Reach out and Read" at Stamford Community Health Center on August 12.

## Supporting Drug Free Basketball

Swish! For 15 years, the Officer Friendly Drug Free Basketball Camp has provided an opportunity for Bridgeport children and police to interact in a positive manner. Every summer, 500 children attend the camp at Luis Munoz Marin School to learn both basketball and life skills. Optimus Health Care provides free on-call medical service to attend to injured and ill campers.

Participating staff included Esther Mervil, APRN and Dr. Frances Williams from Barnum Avenue and Yale Medical Student Daniel Weisberg, under the supervision of Chief Medical Officer Dr. Richard Torres. "We're here to provide support, a portion of these children are our patients," Dr. Torres said.

Camp Director Lieutenant David Daniels III said, "Optimus' cooperation is extremely important, they save up thousands of dollars, training our staff in first-aid."

In addition to basketball fundamentals, the camp provides lectures from guest speakers. "We're here to teach kids a little about basketball and a lot about life," Lieutenant Daniels said.

On July 19, the Optimus team spoke to the campers. Frank Borres, Communications representative for Optimus talked about careers in media. Dr. Torres shared stories about growing up in the South Bronx as one of five children. "We serve as role models and it gives children an idea of the professions they may want to aspire to," Dr. Torres said.



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More than one-third of American children entering kindergarten lack the basic skills needed for reading. Additionally, 61% of low-income families have no children's books at home. To combat this inequity, the national organization Reach Out and Read partners with doctors to "prescribe" books to children. Starting with the six-month checkup through age five, Reach Out and Read educates parents about the importance of reading and provides a new book to the child with each visit. Together with Literacy Volunteers Stamford/Greenwich, Inc. they provide over 2,500 books to Stamford and Greenwich children yearly.

"That's an average of ten visits during those years and if they have siblings, they're building a nice little library," Reach Out and Read Connecticut Program Director Christine Garber said.

At Stamford Community Health Center, pediatricians have incorporated books into their examinations. "I never enter the room without a book," said Dr. Madhu Mathur. "It takes their mind off shots. When I tell them they can take it home, they can't believe it."

As part of Reach Out and Reach's Summer of a Million Books and National Health Care Week, Congressman Jim Himes visited Stamford Community Health Center to read to 15 four-year-old children. Himes read three books, "How do Dinosaurs Clean their Rooms?" "Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed," and "Book! Book! Book!"

After the first story, Himes let the children vote on the next book, with unanimous agreement from the youngsters. He joked about how rare that kind of response is in congress. After the stories,

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## Mayor Attends Optimus Event

During National Health Care Week, Optimus Health Care presented “Celebrate Senior Housing Day” at the Fireside and Harbor View apartments in Bridgeport.

Over 50 seniors and residents of the Fireside Apartments received blood pressure and glucose screenings and enjoyed refreshments. In attendance were representatives from the Bridgeport Police Department, Optimus President Ludwig Spinelli, a representative of Congressman Jim Himes, and Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch.

“I’m happy to be here as part of National Health Center Week,” Finch told the crowd. “You’re going to be even healthier than you already are thanks to Optimus.”

Optimus CEO Ludwig Spinelli encouraged the group to use their services, “If you don’t have a doctor, we’ll be your doctor.”

Finch entertained the crowd by doing 20 push-ups, if they promised to vote. “I feel good here,” said Alicia Lopez, a resident of Bishop Curtis Homes. “I get to see people I haven’t seen in a long time.”



# 805 Health Fair

State law requires children to receive vaccinations and physicals before entering school. To ensure children are in the classroom, the Stamford Community Health Center schedules special hours to accommodate working families. “We block off three whole days just for back to school,” said Front Office Supervisor Alexandra Giraldo.

Free backpacks were supplied through employee donations from Noble Group in Stamford. Noble Group Human Resources Coordinator Erica Hughes volunteered at the check-in desk, “The response has been great . . . we’ve all learned a lot.”

Over 150 students registered for the screenings and were rewarded with balloons, stickers, and healthy snacks. “Families face challenges in getting the school-required exams. They don’t have the money, time or don’t know where to go,” Site Manager Patricia Gallegos said. “We’re trying to get children in school on a timely basis and even the playing field.”

## Kicking Obesity



To combat the onslaught of obesity among children, Optimus Health Care teamed up with the United Nations Football Club (UNFC) for a free one day Soccer Camp. The event, held at Kosciusko Park was offered to the patients of Stamford Community Health Center.

“The program was an overwhelming success,” Stamford Community Health Center Site Manager Patricia Gallegos said, “The families enjoy it.”

The 70 children (ages 10-14) were split into eight groups and travelled to different stations, earning stickers for learning about nutrition and picking up soccer skills from coaches, professionals and college players. After earning all their stickers, the attendees enjoyed healthy snacks and received an Optimus gift bag with a pedometer and water bottle.

“The kids learned that exercise can be fun, not work.” UNFC project manager Erin McDermott said. “It also focused on healthy eating habits, which is a good tool for kids and parents.”



## Henry Schein Health Fair

On August 27, while most of the state was bracing for Hurricane Irene, volunteers from Henry Schein, Quinnipiac University, and Optimus Health Care gathered at the Beardsley Zoo to get the children of Bridgeport ready for the new school year. Over 100 children attended, each receiving a free shirt.

After learning the importance of hand washing, they visited the various animal-themed screening stations. Adults joined in as they visited the various tables including: the Toucan Asthma, Chimpanzee Blood Pressure, and Bear BMI stations. Henry Schein loaned the screening equipment and 20 students from the accelerated program at the Quinnipiac School of Nursing operated the stations.

“We do a lot of work with Optimus,” said Angela Carrano, Clinical Assistant Professor of Nursing at Quinnipiac University. “I’m glad we have students that were kind enough to volunteer during their one week off.”

Once the stations were visited, paperwork filled out and follow-up appointments scheduled, the children received a pass to the zoo and a ticket for a backpack or a school kit. The students filled their new bags with two free books from the Bridgeport Public Library Bookmobile. “We’ve gotten a great turnout,” Optimus Health Care CEO Ludwig Spinelli, “We’re grateful to Henry Schein for donating all the school supplies and the city for loaning us the space.”



## Howard Smith: Physician Assistant/Filmmaker



Like many providers at Optimus Health Care, Howard Smith wears many hats: Physician Assistant, marketing executive and yes - filmmaker. Growing up in Jamaica, Smith developed a dual love of video production and medicine. He graduated Hahnemann University Physician Assistant program. After working in New Jersey and Norwalk, he decided to come to Bridgeport.

“Part of my dream has been to work in Bridgeport because of its bad rap,” say Smith. “The population looks like me and it’s that connection that lets me have the most meaningful impact.”

In Bridgeport, Smith developed an empowerment program called “Community Family Night”, designed to promote Optimus Health Care within communities of color. The show aired on public access and topics included medical miracles and pharmacy safety.

Smith’s latest project is a documentary on Physician Assistants, where he serves as writer, producer and host. The short feature contains interviews with Optimus CEO Ludwig Spinelli, Chief Medical Officer Dr. Richard Torres, Physician Assistant Maria Perez and Registered Nurse Jennifer Luckey. “Physicians Assistants-Partners in Action” premiered in July at the University of Bridgeport and has been shown at the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) headquarters and universities throughout the Northeast. Screening requests have come from recruiters in St. Croix, Europe and Australia. Smith plans to sell copies through the AAPA, Amazon.com, and transworldpowerproduction.com with proceeds going to a scholarship at the University of Bridgeport for students entering the Physician Assistant program.

Despite his success, Smith is not planning on leaving Bridgeport for Hollywood. “I don’t want to do it [video production] full-time,” he said. “I’m using it to compliment medicine and reach as many people as I can.”



# NEWS in Brief:

### REMODELING ON JFK CAMPUS

Students from High Horizons, Multicultural, Thurgood Marshall, and Bullard Havens schools will soon have a more user-friendly health center on the John F. Kennedy campus in Bridgeport. As part of the ongoing changes at the Palisades Avenue school district, the school-based health center got a physical makeover with more space for the Nurse Practitioner, Social Worker and Dental offices.

### BACK TO SCHOOL

For the eighth year, Optimus has partnered with the Prayer Tabernacle Church for an annual back-to-school event for students in the East End of Bridgeport. Over 350 people attended. Students from St. Raphael School, Paul Laurence Dunbar School and Jettie S. Tisdale School received health screenings and were given school supplies donated by Prayer Tabernacle.

### HEALTH CENTER PLANNED FOR BARNUM SCHOOL

Optimus Health Care’s School Based Health Centers (SBHC) are successful in keeping students healthy and in class. The next SBHC is planned for Barnum School on Waterview Avenue in Bridgeport. The center is currently in the application stages with the Department of Public Health and Optimus is working on getting the necessary licenses to tentatively open in October.

### BRIDGEPORT & STRATFORD ATTACK OBESITY

Obesity is the second leading cause of death in the United States. To combat this growing problem, the communities of Bridgeport and Stratford have formed the Coalition to Eliminate Obesity with the mission of removing barriers to healthy eating and physical activity. Included in the planning stages is the Stratford Community Health Center. “We regularly work to raise awareness and will participate by continuing to emphasize healthy eating and nutrition with our outpatients.” said Site Manager Linda Smith.