

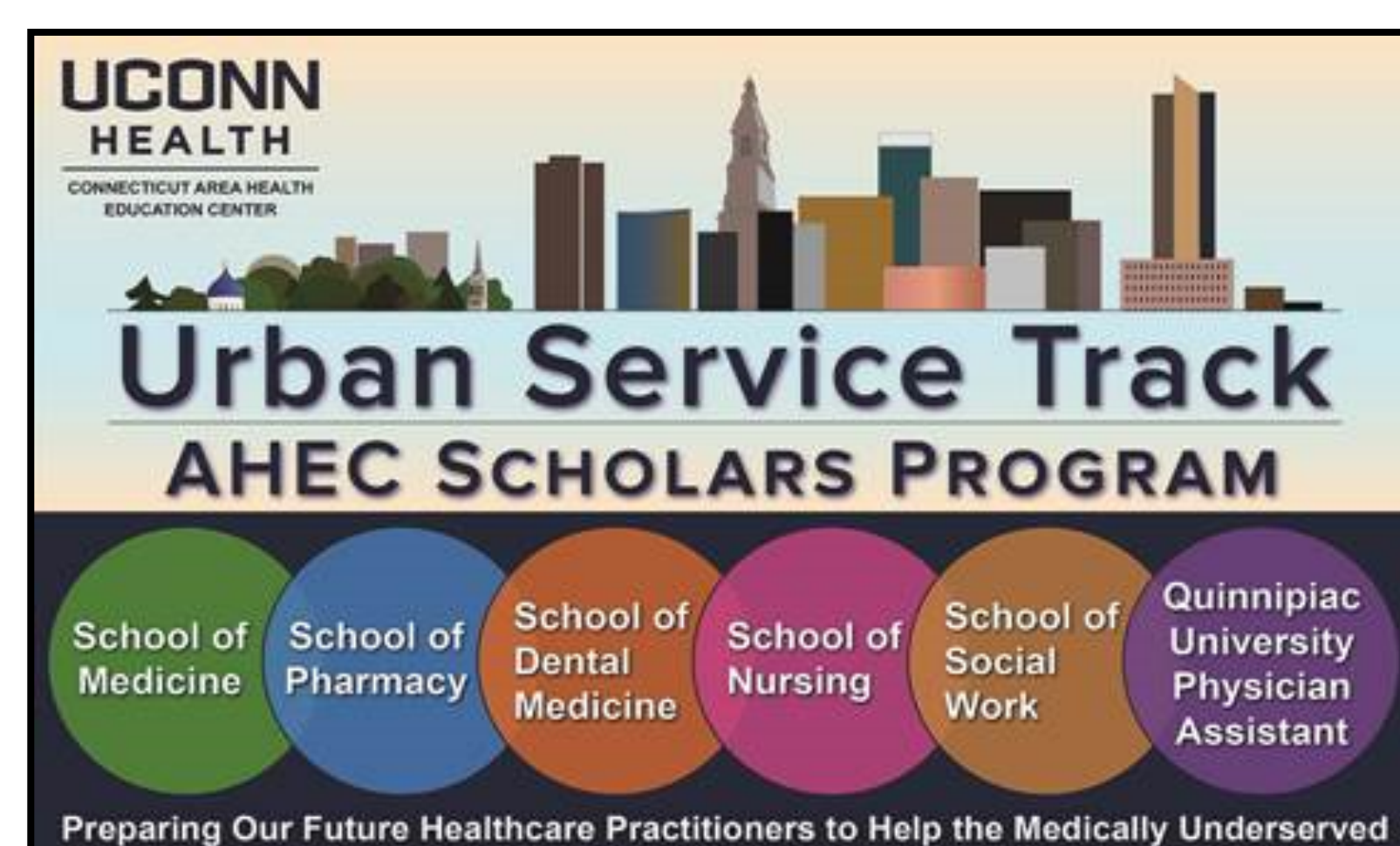
RESPONSE TO COVID-19: An Academic-Community Partnership to Support Older Adults in Hartford, CT

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Introduction:

The Urban Service Track/AHEC Scholars Program is an interprofessional “add on” training program for select health professions of Medicine, Physician Assistant, Dental Medicine, Social Work, Pharmacy, and Nursing. Scholars receive a minimum of 2 years of formal training focused on 11 core competencies and 7 vulnerable populations.



COVID-19:

- Mid-March 2020, professional organizations and health professions schools nation-wide, required all in-person clinical rotations and classes to pause due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- This mandate also included in-person community-outreach provided by the Urban Service Track/AHEC Scholars Program.
- Like many citizens, Urban Health/AHEC Scholars, wanted to make a “difference” in helping community members manage and survive the pandemic.

Scholar/Student Engagement:

- 68 health professions students, including Urban Service Track/AHEC Scholars, have contributed their time and talents to provide support to older adults from the Hartford Senior Centers through the pandemic.
- Their support has included telephone surveillance of COVID symptoms and basic needs assessments, as well as distribution of “Cares Bags” to some of the most vulnerable and isolated residents in the City of Hartford.

Description of Academic-Community Partnership and Activities:

CT AHEC located at UCONN Health in Farmington, CT has a long standing relationship with the City of Hartford. This relationship has traditionally brought health promotion education and screening services to Hartford children, families, and senior citizens.



As a result of COVID-19:

- CT adopted a “stay safe, stay home” mandate state-wide that included:
 - Essential business operation only
 - Closing of community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, schools and colleges
 - Tele remote/commuting of employees across state and private corporations
 - Emergency medical care only for hospitalized patients
- Many citizens, especially older adults, were isolated from critical support systems and resources. This included being:
 - Anxious about seeking medical care in fear of being hospitalized and dying
 - Unable to visit with family and friends
 - Limited access to support services typically available through Senior Centers, Community Nursing Agencies, etc.
 - Reliant on television and radio for information about COVID-19 prevention and best practices



The Services Provided by Scholars

Between April 2020 – November 2020:

- **68 health professions students** have participated in activities to support Hartford seniors – specifically:
 - students deputized as part of CT’s Emergency Medical Corps and assigned to the City of Hartford
 - **providing 500 calls** to members of the South End Wellness Senior Center– connecting with 132 seniors
 - identification and referrals of **25 seniors in need of basic needs**
 - distribution of **600+ “Cares Bags”** to community members which included CDC materials, masks, hand sanitizer, thermometers and physical conditioning supplies (pedometers, exercise bands etc.).

Significance

The integration of health professions students during the COVID pandemic expanded the capacity of academic-community partnerships for vulnerable older adults in the City of Hartford.

In addition to providing essential tele-monitoring of COVID symptoms and basic needs, this project created meaningful ways to connect health professions students with vulnerable communities and provide essential services in addressing COVID-19.

Reference

CT AHEC Program at UConn Health Center
Urban Service Track/AHEC Scholars Program
h.uconn.edu/UST

Acknowledgements

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