

## Path to Evaluation: An Interview with Michelle Kegler

Michelle C. Kegler was an active participant in the founding of the Atlanta-area Evaluation Association in 2000. She is the Deputy Director of the Emory Prevention Research Center and an Associate Professor in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Health Education in the Rollins School of Public Health. She received her doctorate in health behavior and health education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and her Master's in Public Health from the University of Michigan. Dr. Kegler's general research interests are community-based approaches to chronic disease prevention, particularly those that use a collaborative model. She is also interested in tobacco control, program evaluation and community based participatory research methods. Dr. Kegler currently has an NCI funded study to examine how families decide to adopt household smoking restrictions. She is also PI on a community based participatory research project to evaluate a lay health advisor intervention to address childhood lead poisoning with 9 tribes. She recently completed a large-scale evaluation of the California Healthy Cities and Communities Program that involved the study of 20 coalitions and the impact of local collaborative work on community capacity outcomes and an evaluation of the Interfaith Health Program's Institute for Faith Health Collaborations. She teaches program evaluation and will soon be teaching the new doctoral-level course on

interventions in health promotion at Rollins.

### How long have you been in the field of program evaluation?

I started thinking of myself as an evaluator when I began working on my doctoral degree about 15 years ago. I started with a couple of consulting projects at the state health department in North Carolina. I also took an advanced evaluation course, and then co-taught the course the following year.

### Where did you first learn about program evaluation and how did you become interested in it?

I took a program planning course while earning my master's degree and we learned about writing measurable objectives, both process and outcome, and the importance of setting up a way to monitor progress toward meeting the objectives. Then in my first professional job, which was at the state health department in Minnesota, I was in charge of designing and evaluating our diabetes control program. (continue on page 2)



Michelle Kegler, President of AAEA

## New Evaluator's Training



Are you just starting out in evaluation? Would you like more information and tools to conduct evaluation for programs in your organization or agency?

Would you like to brush up or practice your evaluation skills?

The Atlanta Area Evaluation Association is offering three training sessions for new evaluators. The training will provide an overview of the framework for program evaluation in public health and take you through the process.

The first session will be an introduction, including a discussion of the importance of program evaluation, reasons for evaluating programs, and an overview of the CDC's Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health. The second session will concentrate on developing and using logic models. The third session will address selecting appropriate data collection methods, analyzing data, and using your findings. Date and time will be announced for the second and the third sessions.

First session -

When: Monday October 23, 2006, 1:30-4:30pm

Where: Girl Scouts of Northwestern Georgia  
1577 Northeast Expressway, Atlanta, GA 30329

Cost:

Member - \$10 per session; \$25 for 3 sessions

Non-members - \$15 per session; \$40 for 3 sessions

For more information, please contact:

Sarah O'Leary at [eu9@cdc.gov](mailto:eu9@cdc.gov)

### In this issue:

Path to Evaluation: An Interview with Michelle Kegler 1

New Evaluator's Training 1

Path to Evaluation (continue) 2

Atlanta area Evaluation Association

Visit Us on the Web!!!  
<http://evalatl.org>  
email: [info@evalatl.org](mailto:info@evalatl.org)

Learn, Participate, Share, Network and Evaluate.

## Path to Evaluation: An Interview with Michelle Kegler

(continue from page 2)

That helped me realize how important evaluation was in making sure a program was implemented as well as it could be and to see if it was making a difference. When I went back to school for my doctorate, I wanted to be sure to strengthen my qualitative and quantitative analysis skills so I could be a better evaluator. I think evaluation is a great way to combine social science research methods with the real-world. I love doing evaluations because I think they help to make a difference and, even though I am now in academe, I want to keep my projects grounded in practice.

**Programs often perceive evaluation as personal judgment. As an evaluator, have you ever encountered these kinds of situations? What did you do to mediate and resolve this misunderstanding?**

I can't say I've really experienced that myself, except maybe on one project I guess the way to avoid that is to work collaboratively with staff in designing the evaluation and make sure they buy into the evaluation plan and data collection strategies, including the data collection tools. They should also be given the opportunity to help interpret the findings. This approach should minimize any problems with program staff thinking the findings are personal judgments.

**As one of the founding members, how did you get involved with AaEA and why do you think it is important?**

I became involved in the organization mainly because I had recently met the founder, Judith Ottoson, and we realized we had a common interest in evaluation. As a result, she invited me to be part of the group that created the local affiliate. I think the organization is important for two main reasons. First, it provides a structure for

people interested in evaluation to meet people doing similar work. The best way to take advantage of this is to get involved in one of our committees. The other reason the organization is important is because we sponsor great educational events on evaluation topics. These events help people to learn new skills and get exposed to new ideas in the field.

**What is your vision for the organization, as current president of AaEA?**

I don't know that I have a grand vision for AaEA other than to strengthen the infrastructure underlying the good work we do related to offering program events and networking opportunities. We are actively trying to improve the website and its functionality and we are trying to reinvigorate our committees with new members, who might eventually want a leadership role within the organization.



*Iris Smith (left) past President and Michelle Kegler*