

ATTACHMENT A: December 10, 2009

Presentation to Carol Rogers

- Carol Rogers has worked for the Department of Public Health since 1980, and is retiring this month after 29 years of continuous service.
- There is literally not enough time for me to cover all of Carol's outstanding contributions to the health department and to the tens of thousands people of Philadelphia she has helped over the past three decades.
- Carol graduated from high school in 1968, a pivotal moment in history that shaped both her politics and the principles that have shaped her work ever since. Along with much of the rest of her generation, she learned to question injustice and work to change it.
- Carol started her work as a clinician when she became a licensed practical nurse, through a Philadelphia public schools program. Her first job was in the emergency room of a local hospital, where she saw firsthand how many of our patients used the emergency room as a place to access primary care.
- Carol was exposed to a full range of conditions needing treatment in an emergency room. But, Carol says, she learned the most by listening to the stories her patients told her about their lives.
- In search of more training and more autonomy, Carol entered Hahnemann's (now Drexel's) Physician Assistant program. Many people may not remember that the position of PA was designed primarily for returning Vietnam era medics, who had a lot of practical experience, but little academic background.
- Carol's first, and only, job as a PA was for the Philadelphia Department of Public Health at Health Center #1, the City's STD clinic, where she worked for 18 years.
- Carol thought the STD clinic would be a good fit for a beginning PA because the patients served in the clinic were generally pretty healthy. Little did she expect to witness the seeds of a world epidemic, when in 1982 we saw the first patients in Philadelphia with HIV.
- During those years in the STD world, it became very clear to Carol that the primary prevention message—abstinence and the promotion of male condoms—was out of reach for many women. When she learned of a newly developed prevention tool, the female condom, she became very involved in working to get FDA approval for this new device, which put more control into the hands of women.

- After female condoms became available, Carol led the nation in promoting the female condom as an additional tool that could help women and girls protect themselves. Philadelphia became the first city in the world to distribute female condoms on parity with male condoms. This project became a model for the U.S. AIDS female condom project in Africa.
- Many of you may remember that in the late 1980s, the city's health centers were threatened with closure because of budget constraints. (Sound familiar?) Along with other activists, a title that she proudly retains to this day, Carol embarked on a campaign to save the health centers, helping to unite a coalition of health center patients, union workers and community leaders.
- Carol was instrumental in building the community support and political pressure that eventually led to City Council legislation that protected the health centers.
- When Dr. Walter Tsou became Philadelphia's health commissioner, Carol moved to working in the health commissioner's office full time. For the last several years she has been the language access coordinator for the health department, working to ensure that our services are accessible to those with limited English proficiency.
- She has also spearheaded an effort to ensure that everyone in Philadelphia has access to high-quality health care—not a small order, by the way, but one she has taken on with her usual passion and tenacity.
- In November 2003, Philadelphia voters supported a change to the Philadelphia home rule charter, stating that, "...because health care is an essential safeguard of human life and dignity, the City of Philadelphia Health Department shall prepare a plan for universal health care that permits everyone in the City of Philadelphia to obtain decent health care." Since then, she has been working very hard to respond to this mandate.
- Carol has been the driving force behind the formation of "Healthy Philadelphia," a new, non-profit organization dedicated to addressing this mandate, and to collectively planning for the use Philadelphia's considerable health care resources. I know that even after her retirement, Carol plans to remain deeply involved in this project.
- All of you in this room have worked closely with Carol, and I know that we can all agree that she is an irreplaceable force in our department. How lucky Philadelphia has been to have benefited from her passion and her principles for these many years. I know that she will continue to fight for a better, healthier and more humane Philadelphia for years to come.