

## News Releases

# DHEC News Release: DHEC's Petrofes honored for improving public's health

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 13, 2012

### DHEC's Petrofes honored for improving public's health

COLUMBIA, S.C. - A national health advocacy group has named one of the state's public health directors a "public health hero," the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control announced today.

"The United Health Foundation recognizes that Matt Petrofes makes a heroic effort to improve the health of the people of our state," said Catherine Templeton, DHEC director. "Matt knows that good health starts at a very early age, which is why he focuses much of his obesity-fighting efforts on school-aged children. I know they will see great benefits from his efforts for many years to come."

According to Templeton, Petrofes led an Upstate effort through which a variety of community partners could create a program to evaluate body mass index among first-, third- and fifth-grade students. Armed with this information, health officials are more likely to make decisions about policies and other interventions that can impact childhood obesity rates.

"The issue of childhood obesity is critical for public health," said Petrofes, director of DHEC's Region 2 Public Health Offices, which serve Cherokee, Greenville, Pickens, Spartanburg and Union counties. "Thanks to the help we receive from our many community partners, I am confident we can make progress toward ensuring a healthier future for our children."

The process Petrofes created is being touted as a model that can be used statewide. By the end of the 2012-13 school year, DHEC's Region 2 will have facilitated BMI measurements for more than 12,000 students in the Upstate region.

The United Health Foundation provides helpful information to support decisions that lead to better health outcomes and healthier communities. The foundation also supports activities that expand access to quality health care services for those in challenging circumstances and partners with others to improve the well being of communities. To read more about Petrofes' selection as a U.H.F. Public Health Hero, visit

<http://www.americashealthrankings.com/Commentaries/Public-Health-Heroes-2012#SouthCarolina>

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