



## Mailman School Hosts "Moments in Leadership" Book Event

On February 6, students, faculty, staff, and alumni filled Hess Commons to hear long-time colleagues and friends Barbara DeBuono, MD, Jack Geiger, MD, and Allan Rosenfield, MD, discuss the pivotal role public health leaders and activists have played in influencing health policy in the U.S. and around the world. The event kicked off the School's "Learning from Leaders" series for the spring semester. Ian Lapp, PhD, associate dean for Academic Affairs and Education and the organizer of the program, noted that "these events are an essential part of the extended curriculum of the School, bridging classroom learning with the knowledge and experience of leading figures in public health."

The discussion by Drs. DeBuono, Geiger, and Rosenfield was centered on case studies highlighted in the newly published book *Moments in Leadership: Case Studies in Public Health Policy and Practice*, the fourth in a series of books published by Pfizer's Public Health and Government group.

Dr. DeBuono, executive director of Public Health and Government at Pfizer Inc. and one of the book's editors, began by telling the audience why she undertook such an enormous project. "My intention in publishing these extraordinary case studies was threefold," said Dr. DeBuono. "I hope these examples will motivate current and future leaders in the field as they encounter new challenges in their work. I hope the book will energize faculty to incorporate these examples into their day-to-day teaching. And, finally, I hope this book will educate young people entering the field about health policy formulation and implementation as a basic tenet of leadership."

Following Dr. DeBuono's initial remarks, she took a moment to thank Dr. Rosenfield for his life-long commitment to the field of reproductive, maternal, and child health. "Thanks to his pioneering efforts, public health policies are now much more responsive to maternal health, fostering remarkable progress in women's health throughout the world," said Dr. DeBuono. She noted for the audience that they could learn more about Dr. Rosenfield's incredible work in the "Special Tribute to Allan Rosenfield, MD," the first chapter of *Moments in Leadership*.

She then introduced Dr. Geiger, visiting professor of Epidemiology and Arthur C. Logan Professor Emeritus of Community Medicine at City University of New York (CUNY), whose groundbreaking work to establish a community health center in the rural South in the mid-1960s is highlighted as the book's first leadership case study. Dr. Geiger discussed his involvement in the civil rights movement in 1964 and his experience in Bolivar County, Mississippi, one of the poorest black populations in the country. He believed that starting a health center in this area

would help to address the enormous burdens of sickness, malnutrition, and premature death experienced within the community.

According to Dr. Geiger, community health centers at that time had two policy goals: "to remove barriers to access by eliminating ability to pay as a factor, and to unite public health and clinical medicine under one roof." The work of the health center initially encompassed health education, community organizing, public health nursing, and midwifery. It was not long before dentists, environmental engineers, social workers, health educators, and sanitarians joined with the physicians, nurses, and midwives in their efforts to address the health needs of those living in Bolivar County.

Ultimately, Dr. Geiger's center addressed infant diarrheal disease by building hundreds of sanitary privies and the digging of hundreds of protected wells. They also repaired housing and eliminated disease vectors such as rats, mosquitoes, flies, and snakes. They treated malnutrition by writing prescriptions for nutritious foods and, later, when this practice was stopped, by starting a farm coop and teaching families how to grow vegetables instead of cotton.

Dr. Rosenfield, DeLamar Professor and Dean, took the microphone after Dr. Geiger spoke to congratulate both Dr. DeBuono and Dr. Geiger on their work, adding, "Barbara and Jack are among the great leaders in public health. It is truly a special occasion to have them both together to reflect on their own careers and to share with us the lessons learned from this new and exciting book."

The "Learning from Leaders" series is funded in part by a generous grant from Pfizer Inc. and take place every Wednesday during the academic year from 4:00 to 5:30 pm. To view the poster for this event, please visit [http://www.mailman.hs.columbia.edu/news/booktalk/DeBuono\\_02-06-2008.html](http://www.mailman.hs.columbia.edu/news/booktalk/DeBuono_02-06-2008.html).