



DEAN'S MESSAGE

Behind the Headlines

Reading the stories in the Fall 2014 issue of *Harvard Public Health*, I am struck by a well-known truth about our shared calling: When public health touches a raw cultural nerve—from a deadly new epidemic to our daily eating habits—it's a headline event. But most of the time, our ongoing endeavors never reach the news feed.

Like the shoemaker's elves in the Brothers Grimm fairy tale, we are "people who try to make my life, and yours, better—usually without our knowing who they are." So wrote David Hemenway, director of the Harvard Injury Control Research Center at Harvard School of Public Health, in his book *While We Were Sleeping: Success Stories in Injury and Violence Prevention*. In

captures the grand intellectual vision he brings to genomic data mining as well as the early-life adversities that have driven and informed his scientific quest. The portrait of alumna Angela Diaz ties her firsthand experience as a struggling immigrant from the Dominican Republic to her highly innovative—and successful—approaches to helping marginalized teens and young adults in New York City; as a result of her unwavering focus, countless young people have regained physical and emotional wholeness and have found a foothold in society. The feature on HSPH's unprecedented collaborations with public health students in a refugee camp along the Thailand-Burma border likewise reveals

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academia and in the field, we tend to work quietly, behind the scenes. Our progress is measured study by study, insight by insight, person by person, community by community. Eventually, when all goes right, it ripples across populations and around the globe.

For example, the magazine's cover story asks the provocative question "Is Butter Really Back?" The query is enough to tantalize any palate. But as HSPH nutritionists make clear, improving the choices we make about how we nourish ourselves will require sustained scientific study and public education—activities that are largely unheralded and often invisible.

Other articles in this issue also illuminate the individual determination behind the headlines. The profile of computational biologist John Quackenbush

how genuine individual connections in the service of knowledge can make a difference in the world.

Every day, the mission of public health is carried out behind the scenes—small victories that, cumulatively, are distilled into bold headlines. At HSPH, this fact and its inspirational possibilities have helped make the world a healthier place.

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