

## West High Students Learn about Public Health Careers

On Tuesday, December 13, 2011, staff members from the Upper Midwest Public Health Training Center (UMPHTC) introduced some of Iowa City's West High students to public health and the career opportunities in the field. Over the course of the day, 185 students attended the presentations delivered by UMPHTC Director, Dr. Tanya Uden-Holman; the Director of Education and Training, Laurie Walkner; and Instructional Services Specialist, Jennifer Bedet.

The presentation incorporated clips from the recent Hollywood thriller *Contagion* to showcase careers in epidemiology. Movie clips highlighted fictionalized public health workers at the CDC and WHO responding to a pandemic. Because the students in the audience were taking courses in AP Biology and BioEngineering, the presentation emphasized various lab science careers in public health. However, Dr. Uden-Holman, who is also the Associate Dean for Education and Student Affairs at the University of Iowa's College of Public Health, stressed the wide range of careers one can pursue in public health: "If you have a particular talent or interest," she told students, "I can link it to a job in public health. That's one of the things that make the field so exciting." Dr. Uden-Holman described public health career paths in fields such as health management and policy, health education and communication, environmental health and safety, and biostatistics. An interactive portion of the presentation introduced students to the ten greatest public health achievements of the twentieth century. By the end of the session, students had a solid understanding of what public health has accomplished, as well as the challenges it faces today.



*Above: Laurie Walkner introduces students to the ten greatest achievements of public health.*

One of the UMPHTC's goals is to bring awareness of public health careers to high school students. Due to a growing population and shrinking public health workforce, the United States is facing a public health workforce crisis. According to a report released by the Association of Schools of Public Health, another 250,000 trained public health professionals will be needed by 2020.

For more information about the presentation or to inquire about hosting UMPHTC, please contact Laurie Walkner at [laurie-walkner@uiowa.edu](mailto:laurie-walkner@uiowa.edu) or (319) 335-8341.