

Inside

—2—

Director's Message continued

Computer Service Requests Going Paperless

Annual Free Tax Program for Working Families and Individuals Underway

—3—

Environmental Health Waste Tire Program Rolling Along

Website Now Features Greeting Cards for CCRMC Patients

Mental Health Using Survey, Forums to Develop Prevention, Early Intervention Programs

Asthmatics Need to Have Medications on Hand

—4—

Honor Roll

Honor for Longtime Staffer Turns Spotlight on CCS

—5—

Honor Roll continued

Employee Milestones

—6—

Reducing Health Disparities
– FMCH Programs Recognized for Embracing Diversity

– PBS Series Provides New Means to Foster Health Equity

—7—

Reducing Health Disparities continued

– Divisions Share RHD Strategies at LEO

—8—

Regional Health Foundation Gala to Feature Jerry Rice, Leslie Griffith

Kaiser CEO Sings Praises of CCRMC Improvements

These Are the Times That Try Our Souls

We are in the midst of yet another budget reduction process, and as I said recently in a personal letter I wrote to the California Legislature, never in my more than 30-year career as a public servant have I been more discouraged and concerned than I am now about the fate of this extraordinary public health system we have developed. Our Board of Supervisors over the years has provided outstanding leadership and financial support to supplement state funds. Now all of those achievements are in peril.

County budget shortfalls

By now all our Division heads are close to finalizing their plans for reducing expenditures based on targets they've been given. Our total reduction will be nearly \$19 million. The amount is based on local cuts that will need to be made by July 1 to address the county's budget shortfall. This latest crisis involves not only the county's diminished revenues from property and sales tax and other revenues, but also the need for the County Board of Supervisors to put aside money for retiree health benefits.

You probably have all heard the discussion about retiree benefits over the past year. Compared to other counties, Contra Costa has been very generous with retiree benefits and now, with more and more employees retiring, the County must fund those benefits. The Board of Supervisors has established a trust fund into which a minimum of \$40 million will be placed. Funding for this will come out of all county departments' budgets, including ours. This is a major part of the current budget reduction with which we are currently grappling. To avoid much deeper operations cuts in the future, the Supervisors are exploring changes in how retiree benefits are funded in the future.

This is a very difficult situation, and there will be layoffs. We aren't alone. For example, the Los Angeles County health care system

is facing a \$195 million deficit and may close all but one of its 12 community clinics.

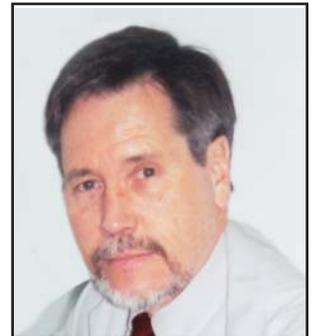
State and federal budget cuts

Unfortunately, at the same time we're dealing with the county funding issue, we also are facing major potential budget impacts from the Governor's plan to reduce the state's \$14.5 billion deficit. The Governor has proposed a 10% cut for all state departments (we reported this in the last Director's Report), including health services, mental health, law enforcement, prisons and schools. State legislators have already approved \$1 billion in emergency spending cuts to help the state deficit. I was present at a Mount Diablo Unified School District budget presentation last month and saw that schools are facing much deeper cuts than they have ever had to deal with before.

Contact elected officials

The California Association of Public Hospitals is working in Sacramento to try to reduce the impact of the budget cuts on public hospital systems like ours. They have asked allies to contact their elected officials and ask them to prevent cuts in Medi-Cal funding. It is certainly heartening when our partners and communities make their concerns known.

At this point, we still don't have a final budget reduction number from the state. We won't know more until the state budget revision



Dr. Walker

Continued next page

DID YOU KNOW

In the first five months of fiscal year 2007-08, there were **177,174** outpatient visits to our Health Centers, an increase of **2,287** over the same period last year.

in May, and we won't know the exact numbers until the final budget is approved in the summer. In addition, we are at risk for another \$8 million in reductions if the federal Medicaid Moratorium is not successfully extended by Congress before May 25.

But we can anticipate that there will be some state reductions that will impact us heavily. This means that we will probably face another round of cuts and layoffs due to state and federal budget reductions.

Tough times ahead

Times admittedly will be tough, but we must keep the long view in mind about what our vision is as a health department, in particular serving those who are most vulnerable in our community with regard to socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity. Because of this mission, the department's commitment to Reducing Health Disparities and Service Excellence must not fall off the table. These are the principles by which we not only survive but thrive, because we are the entity in the county that is most committed to this effort. Though these times will be difficult for us as county employees and contractors, they will be even more difficult for our clients and patients because of the lack of jobs, resources and social supports.

We'll get through this as we always have done before, but not without a painful impact on both the employees who are directly affected and all of us who are invested in serving our patients, clients, customers and the community. We will see significant reorganizations and changes in our services delivery model. Our Personnel office will be providing training in the coming months that will help us work through these difficult times. My hope is that this very difficult year will be followed by better ones.

I will be keeping you updated as I know more. If you have concerns or questions, please speak with your supervisor. And difficult decisions about how to use our limited resources.

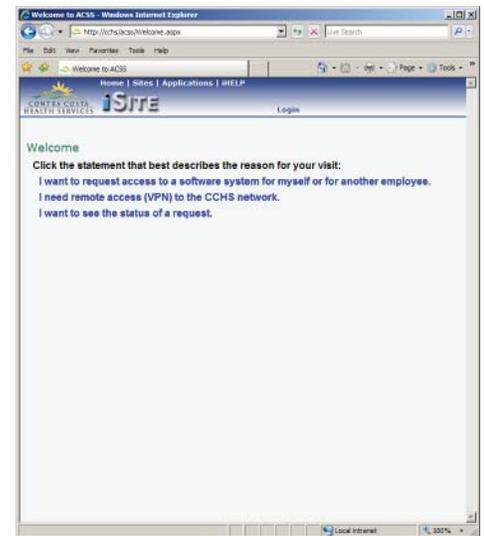
Sincerely



William Walker, MD

Computer Service Requests Going Paperless

Service requests to our Information Systems (IS) Unit can now be made online thanks to the new iHELP feature on iSITE, the CCHS intranet. Once you log in to iSITE, iHELP is a tab at the top of the home page. Clicking on it brings you to a variety of requests: access to a software system, remote access to the network, new or replacement computer equipment, assistance moving equipment, custom programming services or checking the status of a prior request. Marc Miyashiro, IS Documentation Manager, says this new feature has been deployed to most divisions in Health Services. "If you don't see the Service Request tab in iHELP, that means your division has not yet appointed an 'authorizer' to review requests prior to submission to IS," he explained. "The main objective here is to take all those paper forms and get rid of them. Doing it electronically is a lot smarter," he added, noting that many fields in the electronic form will fill in or "populate" automatically, which saves time.



 For more information about using iHELP, visit iSITE or call the Help Desk at 925-957-7272.

Annual Free Tax Program for Working Families, Individuals Underway

The 2008 Contra Costa "Earn It! Keep It! Save It!" (EKS) program is in full swing and runs through April 15. The annual free tax preparation program helps hard-working, low- to moderate-income residents file their taxes and claim refunds. Last tax season, EKS helped more than 2,100 families and individuals receive more than \$2.4 million in tax refunds and credits, such as the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC). To qualify, household incomes must have been less than \$42,000 in 2007. The tax services are provided by trained volunteers. EKS is sponsored by the Family Economic Security Partnership (FESP), a public, private and nonprofit collaboration.

 For more information on the program or to volunteer next year, contact program manager Lloyd Madden with EHSD at lmadden@ehsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-1736. For information on tax preparation sites and what documents people need to bring, visit cchealth.org or call 800-358-8832.

The Director's Report is published monthly. Deadline for the April edition is March 11. Publicize your upcoming events and successes by sending information to Dan Smith at 597 Center Avenue, Suite 255, Martinez 94553, fax 925-313-6219, email: dsmith@hsd.cccounty.us The Director's Report is available online at cchealth.org and on iSITE, our intranet, at cchs.

Environmental Health Waste Tire Program Rolling Along

Our Environmental Health Division is working with other local and state agencies in a partnership to conduct inspections of waste tire sites, investigate the illegal hauling and dumping of waste tires, and educate facility operators and the community. Not only are illegally stockpiled and dumped waste tires unsightly, but they also pose a potential threat to public health, safety and the environment. The California Integrated Waste Management Board is mandated to regulate the more than 40 million waste tires generated annually in the state, and our Environmental Health Division's Waste Tire Enforcement Program is the Local Enforcement Agency responsible for overseeing approximately 686 waste tire sites within the county (but outside of the City of Pittsburg). Funding for program activities is provided through a State grant established with disposal fees on tire purchases. Other partners include representatives from the Sheriff's Office, the California Highway Patrol, the Air Resources Board and other agencies. The Waste Tire Enforcement Program staff includes Agnes Vinluan, Senior Environmental Health Specialist; Jose Avila, Environmental Health Technician; Jeffrey Tipton, Environmental Health Technician; and Sandra Sosa-Morales, Senior Clerk.



For more information about the Waste Tire Enforcement Program, call Agnes Vinluan at 925-692-2569.

Website Now Features Greeting Cards for CCRMC Patients

For most people, being a patient in a hospital isn't a particularly joyful experience, but Contra Costa Regional Medical Center (CCRMC) has found a way to make it a little more pleasant. They are offering online greeting cards at cchealth.org that can be sent to hospitalized friends or family members to cheer them up, encourage them to get well or congratulate them on the birth of a baby. CCRMC volunteers print, stuff and deliver the greeting cards to the patient's room. To promote them, information will be given to visitors and put in patients' rooms explaining how the cards can be sent. Even before being formally launched, patients were receiving cards.



To look at or send a greeting card, go to cchealth.org and click on Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and then Greeting Cards.



CCRMC volunteer Bill Cunningham delivers the first greeting cards printed from our website to new mother Amber Twitchell.

Mental Health Using Survey, Forums to Develop Prevention, Early Intervention Programs

Our Mental Health Division conducted an online survey and, with the Mental Health Commission, held three community forums last month as part of its strategic planning process for continued implementation of Prop. 63, the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). "The plan is to use the survey and forums to help us with our stakeholder process as we develop new prevention and early intervention programs and strategies to help prevent serious mental illness and serious emotional disturbance," said Donna Wigand, Director of the Mental Health Division. "The surveys and forums should provide a good compass to determine what direction we want to head with the Mental Health Services Act," said Kathi McLaughlin, co-chair of the Commission. Prop. 63 was passed by California voters in November 2003 and levies an additional 1% tax on individuals with taxable income of more than \$1 million. Each county is required to work with the community to develop a detailed plan to implement the MHSA.



For more information about the county efforts to implement the Mental Health Services Act, visit cchealth.org and click on Mental Health, then MHSA, or call Kimberly Mayer at 925-957-5132.

Asthmatics Need to Have Medications on Hand

Pittsburg Health Center family medicine physician Dr. Stephen Daniels writes about asthma in a recent installment of our "Healthy Outlook" column, which runs in the Contra Costa Newspapers chain. For many asthmatics, a severe asthma attack can develop suddenly. Not having enough medicine on hand is a common cause of asthma emergencies and deaths so it's important to plan ahead. Dr. Daniels explains the difference between "controller" and "rescue" medicines. For example, some inhalers (and asthma pills) are designed to prevent ("control") future asthma symptoms, not cure ("rescue") the patient immediately. By contrast, rescue inhalers, such as albuterol, work within a few minutes, and are designed to treat an asthma attack quickly. Dr. Daniels recommends that asthmatics should seek immediate medical attention if they are experiencing shortness of breathe despite using all their medicines; having asthma symptoms and are running low on medications but can't get a refill or see their doctor; or having severe problems breathing.



To read more of this and other Healthy Outlook columns, visit cchealth.org and click on the Healthy Outlook link in Items of Interest or on the Publications page.



Dr. Stephen Daniels

GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Honor Roll

Heather Cedermaz, FNP

Public Health Clinical Services

For finding the time to appear on three television shows educating bilingual families about the importance of immunizations for adults and pre-teens – and being an articulate and knowledgeable clinician in front of the camera.

— Nominated by Erika Jenssen

Leilani Dashner

*Senior Clerk
Appointment Unit*

Tanya Tays

*Clerical Supervisor
Appointment Unit*

For their tireless effort in back-to-back training of new employees during a severe staffing shortage and for being responsive and committed through some pretty stressful times.

— Nominated by Rosemary Sandoval

Herb Dungeon

*Mental Health Specialist II
West County Adult Mental Health*

For 35 years of service excellence with Contra Costa County, and for being an outstanding employee and an asset to the community and the Mental Health Division.

— Nominated by West County Mental Health staff

Rene Galvez

*Account Clerk Advanced Level
Health Services Finance*

For going the extra mile, processing invoices with speed and thoroughness, and always being available, happy to help, very organized and a pleasure to work with.

— Nominated by Gary A. Hayes

Kathy Garrett

*Clerk Experienced-Level
Office of the Director*

For her assistance in finding the right person to contact, willingness to get the job done and caring about people.

— Nominated by Kathy Bergstorm

Honor for Longtime Staffer Turns Spotlight on CCS

The County Board of Supervisors took time last month to make a presentation to Marilyn Alford in recognition for her 30 years of service in West County for CCHS. Marilyn is a physical therapist with California Children's Services (CCS) at Castro Medical Therapy Unit in El Cerrito. She has also worked with the Home Health Program and at George Miller Center West. The occasion turned the spotlight momentarily on CCS, a unit in our Public Health Division. California Children's Services is a statewide program that arranges, directs and pays for medical or pediatric care (both in- and outpatient), equipment and rehabilitation therapy for children and young adults. Our CCS office is located at 597 Center Ave., Suite 110 in Martinez. There, a staff of 31 Public Health Nurses, Clerks, Eligibility Workers, a physician and other staff manage the care for almost 3,300 CCS clients and determine the program eligibility for more than 2,000 new referrals a year.



Call the CCS office at 925-313-6100 for more information about the program or referrals.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Honor Roll

Tim Goong

*Information Systems Specialist II
IS Department*

For effectively facilitating varied information technology needs in a communicative, patient and responsive manner.

— Nominated by FMCH Program Managers

Elizabeth Martinez

*Senior Clerk
Appointment Unit*

For stepping up to the challenge of New Employee Training and doing such a thorough and great job.

— Nominated by Rosemary Sandoval

Dale Miller

*Network Administrator
IS Department*

For his responsiveness, professionalism and pleasant demeanor and for repeatedly assisting with Lotus Notes Situations.

— Nominated by Dana Stephens

Cheryl Standley

*Clinical Services Manager
CCRMC*

For being the most gracious, kind, great listener, and loving, compassionate, caring boss I have ever worked with.

— Nominated by Janice Smith

Bill Sorrell

*Administrator
Public Health*

For gathering, presenting and submitting the complicated Health Emergency budget and for always being willing to help Public Health units with preparing documents.

— Nominated by Francie Wise

Lillian Wilson

*Clerk-Senior Level
Public Health Clinic Services*

For her attention to detail, valuable input, care and dedication and serious interest in translation.

— Nominated by Gina Jennings and Mateo Smith

Employee Milestones

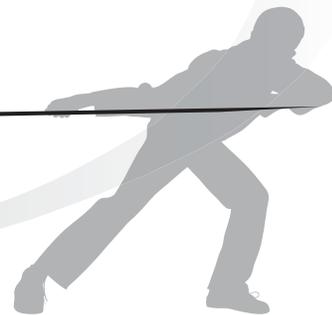
Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Fannie Little, John C. Williams, Kimberly C. Davey, Angelica Barragan, Marina P. Soler, Vicky P. DeJose, Dominique A. Crawford, Christine A. Chambers, Erika L. Barrow, Yolanda Thompson, Victor L. Ramirez, Edwin C. McKetney, Gloria J. Quesada, Debra G. White, Amelia A. Scudiere, Jessica C. Molina, Alexandra J. Dronkers, Michelle L. Flores, Maricel A. Flores, Sonia Eslava, Monica M. Mueller (10 years); Todd S. Chamberlin, Katherine Jackson-Moore, Vanessa Cordier, Candace K. Tao (15 years); Susan Batterton, Stacey L. Tupper, Edward L. Henry Jr., Editha Guevarra, William E. Sorrell, Theresa A. Horvath (20 years); and Katherine M. Kentebe (40 years).

Do you know someone who's going the extra mile?

To recognize a CCHS employee, vendor or volunteer for outstanding Service Excellence performance, submit the "Going the Extra Mile" commendation form, available from every CCHS Division Director, or email your commendation to ServiceEX@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us or fax it to 925-313-6219. The form can also be downloaded from the Internet (About Us page) or iSITE, our intranet.

As part of our Reducing Health Disparities efforts, our divisions are working to achieve outcomes in four categories: consumers/clients/patients/customers; the community; our staff; and our systems. Each month this page highlights what different divisions of CCHS are doing to reduce disparities in health and health care, and what still needs to be done.

Reducing Health Disparities



FMCH Programs Recognized for Embracing Diversity

Public Health's Family Maternal and Child Health (FMCH) Programs recently demonstrated its commitment to Reducing Health Disparities at an extraordinary and dynamic all-staff meeting "Embracing Diversity: Our Commitment." FMCH brought its program staff together to move beyond raising awareness about diversity to genuinely embracing diversity. The meeting, which took place on January 31, included keynote speaker Vicki Alexander, MD, MPH, former Director of Maternal and Child Health Programs for the City of Berkeley. Dr. Alexander shared her recipe for positive change, "a pound of courage, a pound of humility and a whole lot of community."



Family, Maternal and Child Health Programs staff participate in a "balloon toss" exercise at their retreat.

It was a day of reflection in which the group worked to understand what it means to have cultural humility. They shared and discussed differences in backgrounds and upbringings in order to work more effectively with each other and with our communities. Each program was given time to shine with snapshots of their programs and their work. Staff also attended two workshops of their choice designed to engage in meaningful dialogue, discussion and conversation about diversity and cultural humility. Individual FMCH program managers will work with their staff to continue the work that was started at the all-staff meeting. FMCH received a Reducing Health Disparities award to acknowledge its contribution to the department's RHD efforts.



For more information about the meeting contact Cheri Pies, FMCH Director, at cpies@hsd.cccounty.us

PBS Series Provides New Means to Foster Health Equity

Our Reducing Health Disparities (RHD) staff will utilize a new tool to educate and inform staff and communities about health inequities, to heighten awareness about the link between social conditions and health and to form alliances for change. "Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?" is a seven-part series produced by California Newsreel that is being broadcast nationally on PBS. The series explores the ties between socioeconomic conditions and how they impact our health and longevity. It demonstrates how policy changes in the past have had positive impacts on health and how they can produce change now. The series will be used by our RHD staff to sound the alarm about local health inequities and their costs beyond dollars. RHD staff have begun dialogue with various Divisions, partner agencies, community leaders and policymakers. Planning committees are working to organize three regional events in Contra Costa. They are identifying invitees and will assist in promoting the events. All staff is encouraged to watch the series and join the planning committees. Dr. William Walker, CCHS Director, will launch a podcast on iSITE with more information about the series and how staff can get involved.



To join a planning committee or for information about the regional events contact the regional committee leads: East County, Connie James, 925-957-5421; West County, Dawna Vann, 925-957-5436; Central County, José Martín, 925-957-5426





Connie James, RHD Manager, introduces the panel of speakers at the LEO session in West County.



From left, Joan Carpenter from Supervisor John Gioia's office and Public Health Division's Patt Young and Dr. Wendel Brunner discuss health disparities at the LEO session on January 30.

Divisions Share RHD Strategies at LEO

During the Reducing Health Disparities strategic review, the need for cross-divisional strategy sharing was made evident. The Learning from Each Other (LEO) sessions hosted by our Reducing Health Disparities staff are an avenue where various divisions can come together and discuss outreach strategies, success stories and lessons learned. The LEO session held January 30 in West County, "What's the Community Got to Do with It?", had representatives from Environmental Health, Mental Health and Public Health sharing successful outreach efforts and describing how they overcame barriers. The group was also introduced to the "Ladder of Community Participation," a tool used by Public Health programs to engage communities in our efforts. Attendees broke into small groups to discuss how they defined communities, how they included communities in their work, pros and cons of including the community and what segments of the community they had missed. The meeting was taped by Contra Costa Television and can be seen on iSITE, our intranet. LEO sessions are held every two months throughout the county. The next session is planned March 26 and will explore effective ways of partnering with the community and community-based organizations.

**NEXT LEO
MARCH 26**



For more information about LEO, contact Lauren Stoddard at 925-957-5422.

Facts Highlighted in 'Unnatural Causes'

The United States spends the most per capita of any country on health care, but our life expectancy ranks 30th.

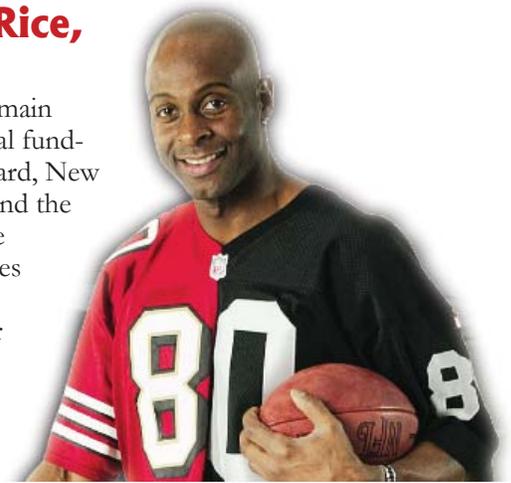
The U.S. ranks 30th among countries in terms of life expectancy now, but in the late '50s the U.S. ranked in the top five.

The level of illness for low-income U.S. adults in their 30s and 40s is similar to affluent adults in their 60s and 70s.

Series Debut
Don't forget to watch "Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?" in its local broadcast debut.
Thursday, March 27, 10 p.m.
KQED Channel 9

Regional Health Foundation Gala to Feature Jerry Rice, Leslie Griffith

Football icon Jerry Rice and veteran TV newscaster Leslie Griffith will be among the main attractions April 5 when the Contra Costa Regional Health Foundation hosts its annual fund-raising gala at Lafayette Veterans Hall. The theme of the event is “Jazz on the Boulevard, New Orleans Style” and it will feature both live and recorded jazz music. Rice, a local star and the greatest pass catcher in football history, will be present during a reception to begin the event, then Griffith will be the celebrity host for the rest of the evening, which includes dinner and a silent auction. Contra Costa Regional Health Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission is to raise community awareness and funds for CCRMC and the Health Centers.



Jerry Rice

 For more information, visit cchf.org or to purchase tickets for the event, call Lynda Gayden, Executive Director of the Foundation, at 925-957-5424.

Kaiser CEO Sings Praises of CCRMC Improvements

Kaiser Permanente Chairman and Chief Executive Officer George C. Halvorson recently sent a memo out to the organization's 125,000 employees that fairly glowed with praise for Contra Costa Regional Medical Center. It refers to the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI), with whom we have been working. We excerpt it here:

“American health care would have a huge hole in it if we did not have both inner city community clinics and public “safety net” hospitals... A couple of years ago, (Kaiser) set up a special scholarship program with the Institute of Health Care Improvement to give physicians and clinical leaders from safety net hospitals and community clinics an opportunity to study process improvement with the Institute...We have had a number of successes and... I would like to celebrate one of them – a scholarship recipient program at the Contra Costa Regional Medical Center (CCRMC).

“How well did Contra Costa do with the IHI interaction and a commitment to improve patient care quality and safety? They did really well. The emergency department improved the time frame for delivery of aspirin to a chest pain patient from 67 minutes to eight minutes, by redesigning its triage processes.

“I can tell you from my own personal heart attack, that getting the blood thinner in me almost instantly helped keep my heart damage down to under seven percent... So I am a special fan of emergency rooms that do what the Contra Costa Community Regional Medical Center did to cut that time from over an hour to under ten minutes.

“The hospital also improved processes to get the number of patients with completely reconciled medications up from 53 percent to 93 percent and — in an extremely important achievement, the hospital put all of the process steps in place to reduce the incidence of ventilator associated pneumonia from 20 cases per 1,000 patients to only 1.3 cases per 1,000 patients.

“For those 18 patients per 1,000 who do not have that extremely painful, sometimes horrible, and often fatal condition, life is much, much better because of that project and that process improvement work done by the Contra Costa caregivers.”

CCHP Adopts Family After Deadly Fire

Contra Costa Health Plan staff has adopted a North Richmond family struck by a tragic electrical fire four days before Christmas. Julian Zaragoza, 5, is clinging to life in a burn center, but his twin brother died from injuries December 25. Wendy Mailer, CCHP Sales/Outreach Manager, was so moved by the story she brought it to the attention of Health Plan executives and the decision was made to adopt the family, especially since they are CCHP members. County Supervisor John Gioia is coordinating donations to the family. CCHP donated all proceeds from its annual Valentine's Day Chocolate Decadence Silent Auction to the family's fund and also put out a donation jar, raising more than \$800 for the family. Donations to the family can be made to the Argueta Rodriguez Fund, named after the boys' mother, at any Mechanics Bank.

 For more information about the Health Plan donations, call Teresa O'Riva at 925-957-7221. For more information about donating, call the office of Supervisor John Gioia at 510-374-3231.