

Inside

—2—

Director's Message continued
Budget Workshop Planned, Final Budget Due May 6
Employee Milestones

—3—

Honor Roll

—4—

Reducing Health Disparities
– Division Directors Discuss RHD Activities
– An Avenue for Sharing – Open to All

—5—

Reducing Health Disparities continued
– PBS Series Stimulates Lively Dialogue
– Health Disparities Topic of CCHS Podcast

—6—

Philippine Medical Mission Accomplished Without Injured Organizer
Mental Health Services Act Providing Money for Housing
Perinatal Services Draws Big Crowd for Training Program

—7—

Health Services Participates in North Richmond Disaster Drill
AODS Advisory Board Seeking 'People Who Make A Difference' Award Nominations
'Silent Killer' Topic of Healthy Outlook Column

—8—

'Transforming Care at Bedside' Efforts Impress Visiting Nurses
Medical Director Hired for Mental Health Adult Services
Health Services Guests Appear on 'Newsmakers' Show

Continuing Our Commitment

I was interviewed recently by the Disparities Institute at Massachusetts General Hospital in connection with their project to develop a tool kit for leaders. The Institute identified us as a pioneer in the field of reducing health disparities. One of the questions they asked me was how we justify our continued commitment to reducing health disparities and Service Excellence in the face of enormous budget cuts. I know some of you are wondering the same thing so I want to share my thinking with you.

At this time of stress on our staff and our programs and with the economy experiencing a downturn, the people we are charged with serving are the ones who will be most impacted when services are eliminated and costs continue to increase. They are losing their jobs, their houses and their health insurance.

Service Excellence – our commitment to treat our patients/clients/customers/ community and each other with respect and responsiveness — is critical at this time. Our constituents as well as our own employees may be upset about the cuts and anxious about the future and the days ahead may challenge our commitment to Service Excellence — while we really need to be at our highest level of empathy and responsiveness.

Our Mission

When you think about who is most affected by a reduction in services, it reminds us of our mission: to care for those who are most vulnerable to health problems and their consequences. If we forget that mission during budget reductions, we've lost our focus. Vigilance to our mission, quality improvement and reducing health disparities is needed to respond appropriately to the worsening social conditions.

We don't have a medical cure for reducing health disparities. We have embarked on a journey and it will require us to look at myriad social and environmental issues and find long-

term solutions to the ones that contribute to health inequities.

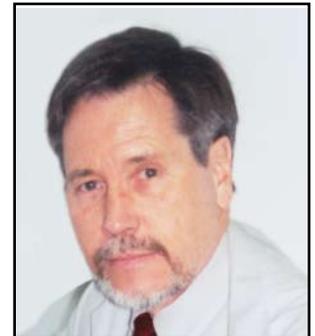
In a budget crisis we sometimes respond by cutting programs that don't generate revenue or are not mandated.

Programs that will not produce immediate outcomes are often cut. We must continue our RHD efforts to improve data collection and analysis, enhance patient and customer experience with our services, expand staff capabilities to work with vulnerable populations and with each other, improve language access and maintain and grow community partnerships and collaborations. And that will be a challenge.

I've learned in my years in the department that our sacrifices over the years to preserve longer-term interventions have served us well. I remember in the 1980s we made the decision – and the Board of Supervisors supported us — not to cut prevention projects. Two years ago, after the Board heard our community health indicators report and saw dramatic disparities, they decided to protect those long-term efforts and I understand why.

Opportunity for education, dialogue

On Thursday, March 27 at 10 p.m., the Public Broadcasting System will air a documentary series called "Unnatural Causes – Is Inequality Making Us Sick?" The seven-part series will provide us with the data and information to document for us that economic



Dr. Walker

Continued next page

DID YOU KNOW

African Americans in Contra Costa have a homicide rate five times that of the county overall and a prostate cancer death rate more than double that of the county.

and social conditions have a profound impact on health outcomes.

The series is touted as a medical detective story aimed at solving the mystery of what's stalking and killing us before our time, especially those of us who are less well off and darker skinned. The investigators – epidemiologists, neuro-biologists, doctors and health workers – keep broadening our inquiry beyond immediate, physical causes of death to the deeper, underlying causes that lurk in our neighborhoods, our jobs and even back in history. The perpetrators aren't individuals but rather social and institutional forces. And these are not impulsive crimes of passion. These are slow deaths – the result of a lifetime of grinding wear and tear, thwarted ambition, segregation and neglect.

The series does offer hope and examples of communities organizing to gain control over their destinies – and their health. The good news is that if our bad health results in part from policy decisions that we as a society have made, then we can make other decisions.

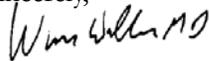
What we're doing

The “Unnatural Causes” series should make us focus on the real factors that impact health disparities. Some of those we have some control over – the kind of care we give, the public health interventions we provide, mental health services and prevention efforts. For many others, we can be a partner at the table, helping to advocate for solutions to deteriorating schools, dangerous neighborhoods, lack of access to fresh foods and adequate housing. And we are at many tables, working with our partners on health elements in the general plans of cities, collaborating to address street violence, improving food labeling, eliminating alcohol outlets and working for environmental justice. In the end, all of those policies – environmental policy, education policy, social policy – are health policies.

To stimulate local efforts, our RHD staff have organized three regional groups to bring stakeholders together to begin to talk about how to work collaboratively to create new policies and strategies. The staff will also be encouraging internal discussion through the Learning from Each Other event in May.

I know from experience that there will be conflict over who gets the declining resources in the County. We've seen those debates in the past. During those discussions and in the months to come, we certainly don't want to change our mission to serve those most vulnerable to health problems and their consequences. In fact, we must redouble our commitment.

Sincerely,



William B. Walker, MD

 For more information about the “Unnatural Causes” series and the local efforts related to it, log on to iSITE, the CCHS intranet, or cchealth.org or call Concepcion James at 925-957-5421.

Milestones

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Melissa Sendelbach, Norma A. Jimenez, Omar V. Carranza, Tia P. Valencia, Dorothy L. Kirkland, Paula K. Zavala, Robert C. Stange, Charles K. Guthery, Corinne L. Concannon, Teresa A. Gregory, Angela K. Estanol, Virginia Reyes, Michelle McConnell, Marcelino G. Matute, Rosa L. Aviles (10 years); Letitia F. Datuin, Antoinette I. Yowakeem, Felisa V. Mendoza (15 years); Kate Colwell, Pamela A. McCoy, Lorraine S. Conner, Shirley Drumin, Jeanette Walker-Johnson, William A. Patterson, Joanne K. Minadeo, Alejandrina Estrada, Deborah Deas (20 years); Arthur Soto, Christine Brietzke, Kathryn Alexander, Bonnie J. Wolfe, Shelley K. Pighin (25 years); Gary Solak, Anthony P. Kraitz and Francyn Molina (30 years).

The Director's Report is published monthly. Deadline for the May edition is April 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.org.

Budget workshop planned, final budget due May 6

On April 8, we will be conducting a workshop for the Board of Supervisors to discuss the implications of making substantial cuts in Health Services budget – particularly in CCRMC/Health Centers. We hope that session will help the Board identify options and solutions. CCHS' formal proposal regarding budget cuts will be made on April 22, when all departments outline what their reductions could be. The Board is scheduled to approve the final county budget on May 6. After that, there may be additional budget hearing after the State budget is finalized in late summer.

Many of our specific proposed reductions are scheduled to be posted prior to April 1 on our website at cchealth.org If your position is on that list, it doesn't mean that you will certainly lose your job. The Board must approve our proposed reductions and the County system includes the right to bump other employees with less seniority. In addition, County Human Resources will be helping employees determine if there are other vacant positions that might be suitable.

I will be keeping you posted through All Staff email messages as more information is available. – WW

GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Honor Roll

Debra Capozzo

*Account Clerk-Advanced Level
Payroll*

For her conscientious attention to detail, cheerful and positive attitude and willingness to extend herself to help employees who have problems with their timesheets.

— Nominated by Mary Anne Morgan

Rhonda Clancy

*Clerical Supervisor
Environmental Health Program*

For responding promptly, professionally and courteously to a large number of questions from chealth.org website visitors about environmental health issues.

— Nominated by Julie Freestone

Gail Doyle

*Senior Health Education Specialist
Lead Poisoning Prevention Project*

For being proactive and making outstanding use of the Internet to get out important messages about lead poisoning issues.

— Nominated by Shawn Eyer

Debbie Nix, FNP

*Pediatric Clinic
Pittsburg Health Center*

For always going above and beyond by providing excellent patient care and referrals to specialty clinics as needed.

— Nominated by Laurie Terranova

Lavonna Martin

*Public Health Program Specialist
Homeless Program*

Ronald Anthony Sanders

*Mental Health Program Manager
Mental Health Services*

Wanda Sessions

*Administrator
Health Services Finance*

For being wonderful in answering promptly and clarifying things related to updating CORD (Contra Costa Online Resource Database). They really know the services they are responsible for.

— Nominated by Mary M. Clark – Contra Costa Crisis Center

Patrick Snider

*Sheriff's Deputy
Richmond Health Center*

For his professionalism and keeping the staff updated during an emergency situation; and help with the evacuation.

— Nominated by Donna Ramirez

Cheri Webster

Clerk-Experienced Level

Clayton Johnson

*Student Worker
Community Wellness & Prevention Program*

For developing a comprehensive training packet for the "Promoting Smoke-Free Families" project to give the FMCH program.

— Nominated by Chandra Gottschall

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 ServiceX@hsd.cccounty.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



Division Directors Discuss RHD Activities

CCHS Director Dr. William Walker and Connie James, Manager, Reducing Health Disparities (RHD), have met with eight Division Directors and will meet with the others soon to discuss their RHD goals and unique focuses for this fiscal year. So far, each division had its own set of challenges but one was universal; deciding how to implement RHD plans with the current budget situation.

Although the directors acknowledged the challenge, they are committed to reducing health and health care disparities, and Dr. Walker reiterated his support for implementing RHD activities. He emphasized that RHD efforts are quality improvement efforts, and by improving our system's ability to provide language access, excellent service, collect and analyze data and respond to disparities, we are improving the health of all those we serve.

RHD staff will meet with each division's leadership and/or all staff to clarify goals for the fiscal year and will assist each division in formalizing its RHD plan. Later this year RHD staff will present a formal report to the Board of Supervisors on CCHS' RHD activities with photos, stories and data.



For more information about the meetings, contact, Connie James at cjames@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-957-5421.

An Avenue for Sharing— Open to All

The Learning from Each Other (LEO) forums, led by our Reducing Health Disparities (RHD) staff, continue to meet every other month to share successes, lessons learned and resources. Developing systems that support and promote access and respectful delivery of services is one of the four long-term goals in the RHD five-year plan. The 90-minute LEO forums create a platform for cross-divisional sharing of information and resources related to diversity and reducing health and health care disparities.

Past forums have discussed various communities and why and how we work with them. Senior staff, representatives from CCRMC and



Hannah Head and Jose Martin discuss reducing health disparities at a Learning from Each Other session.

- Health Centers, Contra Costa Health Plan, Public Health and Supervisor John Gioia's office have participated in the forums, which include an introduction, an overview of the topics, panel discussions and break out sessions to share and brainstorm ideas that address the challenges we face.

- The May forum will be used to play selected segments of "Unnatural Causes" for CCHS staff. Subsequent forums will discuss evaluating RHD programs, prevention strategies and best practices for measuring and responding to staff, patient, client satisfaction.

 Information about LEO forums with dates and topics is available on iSITE. For more information, contact LEO Coordinator Dawna Vann at dvann@bsd.cccounty.us or 925-957-5436.

PBS Series Stimulates Lively Dialogue

- "Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?" hit the local airwaves on March 27. The seven-part series airing on KQED is meant to sound the alarm about socio-economic and racial disparities in health and seeks out root causes. Part one, "In Sickness and In Wealth", looked at the connection between healthy bodies and income and how the choices we make are limited to the choices we have.

- Our Reducing Health Disparities (RHD) staff has been showing part five, "Place Matters", to various groups including Senior Staff, Public Health and Hazardous Materials Division staff and community leaders throughout Contra Costa. The segment includes an interview with Dr. Wendel Brunner, Public Health Director, and highlights Richmond and Seattle. It provoked a multitude of sentiments and opinions about the cities' portrayals and has stimulated dialogue by staff and the community.

- RHD staff has partnered with community leaders to plan three regional events where the series will be used to build alliances, raise awareness, promote advocacy and work with the community towards health equity.

 Detailed information about each episode of the documentary series and which date they air are available on iSITE. For more information about 'Unnatural Causes' or to join one of the planning committees, contact Lauren Stoddard at 925-957-5422.



Dr. Wendel Brunner is one of the subject matter experts in an episode of 'Unnatural Causes.'

Health Disparities topic of CCHS podcast

CCHS Director Dr. William Walker talks about the importance of reducing health disparities and encourages the community to watch the PBS "Unnatural Causes" series in his latest podcast. To listen to the 3-minute piece or to other podcasts, visit the podcast section on our website: cchealth.org/topics/podcast/





Dr. Liam Keating, front, and nurse Mila Leynes, third from right, formed a surgery team with several other health professionals in the Philippines.

Philippine Medical Mission Accomplished Without Injured Organizer

A team including CCRMC nurses and physicians and a CCHS Environmental Health Specialist completed a very successful mission to an impoverished community in the Philippines this spring – and had to do it all without organizer Richard Gutierrez. Gutierrez, a recovery room nurse at CCRMC for 24 years, is the director and founder of an agency called Traditional Healing Ways that has made seven such trips to the Philippines. On the day of the team’s departure, however, Gutierrez was in a serious car accident, and his wife Leonor also stayed behind to care for him. “The greatest testimonial to them is that they had put together an organization that was strong enough that the mission still proceeded and was very effective,” said Dr. Liam Keating. Accompanying Dr. Keating on the eight-day mission to the city of Daet were Dr. Karen Alingog, Dr. Kwan Chun, Dr. Steven Maron,

nurses Mila Leynes and Janet Keaghly and Environmental Health Specialist Ching Yu. The team performed 250 surgeries, gave 1,500 vaccinations and handed out school supplies collected by Dr. Maron’s children. “It really reinforces the reasons we became health care professionals,” said Gutierrez, who was pleased to hear the results as he recuperates from his injuries. “We do a lot of teaching while we’re there, but the education flows both ways.”

Mental Health Services Act Providing Money for Housing

Housing is an important focus of Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) planning and implementation in Contra Costa. During the first MHSA planning process here in 2005, \$1.6 million was set aside for developing new supportive housing. Working with the County Community Development Department, a Request For Proposal process took place in 2006. One of three MHSA-funded projects, Villa Vasconcellos in Walnut Creek, is expected to open late this month. Three units in this new supportive housing development for older adults are set aside for MHSA consumers. A new component of the MHSA statewide is the MHSA Housing Program. Contra Costa is eligible for \$9.1 million in funding. Our Mental Health Division and the Community Development Department will be working with nonprofit housing developers to submit projects – new construction or rehabilitation – for County and State approval.



For more information, contact Kimberly Mayer at kmayer@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-957-5132.

Perinatal Services Draws Big Crowd for Training Program

A daylong conference was hosted February 29 by the Comprehensive Perinatal Services Program support team in Public Health’s Family Maternal and Child Health Programs. The team is composed of Itika Greene, Suzzette C. Johnson and Nancy Hill and the conference was titled “Perinatal Depression: Ways to Help.” Interest in the topic was high and registration for the program was closed at 150. The conference featured as speakers Phyllis Klaus, internationally known researcher and therapist, and Dawn Dailey, researcher and manager of our Medically Vulnerable Infant Program. Both were well received. Gena McCarthy, Linda Wise, Rita Barouch and Rosemarie Aguinaga-Tripp provided information during a panel question and answer session and also helped develop the program.



Dawn Dailey, one of the speakers at the training, greets a colleague.



CCHS Health Emergency Planners Jason Gwaltney (left) and Gerald Tamayo consult during the March 5 drill in North Richmond.

Health Services Participates in North Richmond Disaster Drill

Our Public Health Division participated in a disaster drill on March 5 in North Richmond as part of ongoing emergency preparedness efforts by the community. The four-hour exercise at two local churches included a mock shelter for people and another for their pets, as well as a spontaneous volunteer intake center to practice processing



Public Health Nurse Tiffany Barnes (right) takes a community member's blood pressure during the March 5 disaster drill in North Richmond.

people who might show up to help during a disaster. Nine CCHS employees – including Public Health Nurses Sheilah Zarate and Tiffany Barnes and our Health Emergency Response Team – took part in the drill. Our public health nurses practiced performing medical evaluations on shelter residents with health issues. The exercise was organized by the First African Methodist Episcopal Church of North Richmond, the American Red Cross and the Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services. Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services and Animal Services also participated, along with several other Richmond-area churches.



For more information, contact our Emergency Services Manager Kim Cox at kcox@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6648.

AODS Advisory Board Seeking 'People Who Make A Difference' Award Nominations

The Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board of Contra Costa County is seeking nominations for the annual "People Who Make A Difference" Awards. The awards are designed to recognize people's tireless efforts in helping curb alcohol and other drug problems in Contra Costa. People are encouraged to submit nominations and distribute the nomination form to appropriate individuals or groups. The form is available at cchealth.org on the Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board page. There are six award categories: Volunteer Individual, Volunteer Group, Non-Volunteer Individual, Non-Volunteer Group, Youth Leadership Individual and Youth Leadership Group. Past award recipients are ineligible for nomination so that new and different people can be honored. Deadline for receipt of nominations is Friday, April 11.



Nominations should be sent to Fatima Matal Sol, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services, 597 Center Avenue, Suite 320, Martinez, CA 94553, or by fax to 925-313-6390 or email fmatalso@hsd.cccounty.us

'Silent Killer' Topic of Healthy Outlook Column

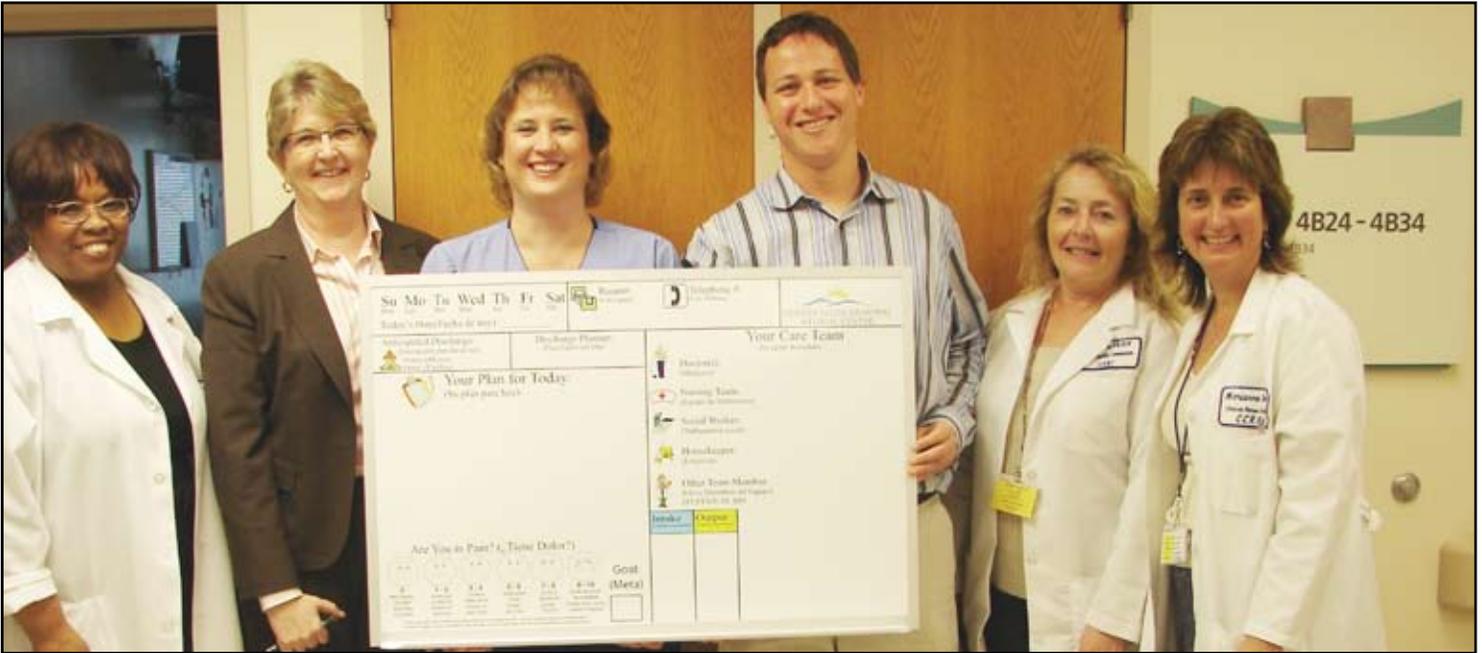
Dr. Oliver Graham, who co-directs the chronic kidney disease clinic at our Pittsburg Health Center, writes about the dangers of untreated high blood pressure in a recent installment of our "Healthy Outlook" column, which runs in the Contra Costa Newspapers chain. High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is called "the silent killer" because people often are unaware they have it or that it's damaging them until something serious or even deadly happens. He writes that it is often difficult to stay motivated to take medicines on a daily basis because reducing a person's blood pressure probably won't make them feel better day-to-day. There are long-term benefits to reducing blood pressure, though, one of the most important being an increased chance of living a long life. Taking medicine, reducing salt intake, becoming aware of "target numbers" for blood pressure and measuring blood pressure can all help control hypertension. Research shows that lowering blood pressure brings 40% fewer strokes, 50% less heart failure and 25% fewer heart attacks.



Dr. Oliver Graham



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.



Posing with a Patient Communication Board are, from left, Ria Brandenburg, Pat Rutherford, Holly Longmuir, Dr. Ori Tzvieli, Donna Garro and Marianne Bunce-Houston. Other members of the team include Liza Buteroc, Donna Garro, Tessie Inton, Sara Levin, Lisa Massarweb, Dr. Jon Stanger, Rosalind Walker and Rose Zambrano.

‘Transforming Care at Bedside’ Efforts Impress Visiting Nurses

A team from the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) visited Contra Costa Regional Medical Center recently to observe a new initiative there called Transforming Care at Bedside (TCAB). It is a group of CCRMC staff in the Medical/Surgery Unit who have been meeting weekly since last spring to evaluate how they deliver care, find ways to avoid redundancy and enhance patient- and family-centered care. One TCAB project was to improve communication between hospitalized patients, their families and the healthcare team through the use of Patient Communication Boards. These boards allow the entire team to work with the patient and family to develop daily goals toward health. The results impressed IHI Vice President Pat Rutherford and the team of nurses from University of Pennsylvania Medical Center.

Medical Director Hired for Mental Health Adult Services

A veteran clinical psychiatrist, administrator and policy expert has joined the Mental Health Division. Dr. Johanna Ferman started March 3 in the senior management role of Medical Director for Mental Health Adult Services. She will be working closely with Victor Montoya, Adult Services Program Chief, and Suzanne Tavano, Deputy Director of Mental Health, and she will report to Donna Wigand, Division Director. A graduate of Wayne State Medical School, she did her residency at Cornell Medical Center-New York Hospital. As Deputy Commissioner for Clinical Programs for the New York State Office of Mental Health, Dr. Ferman built the state’s Division of Clinical Programs to assist in the clinical transformation of the public sector, with responsibility for the medical directors of the 33 state hospitals. Subsequently, as CEO and Medical Director of the Center for Mental Health in Washington, D.C., she designed and built a system of comprehensive, integrated mental health, addiction and rehabilitative services. Welcome Dr. Ferman.



Dr. Johanna Ferman

Health Services Guests Appear on ‘Newsmakers’ Show

For the past four years, program experts from Contra Costa Health Services have been appearing on a five-minute interview show produced by the Comcast cable TV company called Comcast Local Edition. More than two dozen CCHS staff have appeared on the show, which usually tapes in Comcast’s Walnut Creek studios and is tagged onto CNN Headline News broadcasts. Alcohol and Other Drugs Services, Hazardous Materials, the Medical Center, Mental Health and Public Health have all contributed guests to the show. This year, the show has been renamed Comcast Newsmakers. The latest guests from CCHS were Concepcion James, Reducing Health Disparities manager, and Charlotte Dickson, manager of our Obesity and Diabetes Prevention Project.



For more information or to book an appearance on Comcast Newsmakers, contact Dan Smith at dsmith@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6833.