

# DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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## Black History Month

As we celebrate Black History Month, we recognize and applaud the ongoing efforts and partnerships in Contra Costa to improve the health of our communities, especially among African Americans. African Americans continue to experience health care disparities in almost all disease categories, including diabetes, stroke, cancer and HIV disease. Nationally, Health Reform data continue to point out that disparity in health status and health outcome continues to exist in African Americans throughout the country. I wanted to highlight some of the ways we are making strides to change this, but I also recognize that inequities and the ongoing practice of racism remain and have an impact. We must continue our efforts because, to quote Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane."



William B. Walker, MD  
CCHS Director

On average, African Americans experience disability earlier in life and die sooner than other racial and ethnic groups in the United States (see [Health Indicators Report](#), 2010). This trend holds true even when accounting for the differences in economic status, educational attainment and access to health care and health insurance. This suggests that there is an added burden of racism, independent of the effect of other factors, such as socioeconomic status.

## Place matters

Data show that where we live has a direct impact on our health. Healthy communities have access to fresh foods, safe parks and safe pathways to work and school. Many of our low-income communities of color are experiencing "food deserts" and violence. Our Public Health Division has been working tirelessly with farmers markets, city managers, planning departments, city councils and law enforcement agencies to improve the health of all of our communities, and this work must continue as an effective strategy to address health disparities.

## Leveraging the community

Under the direction of our Reducing Health Disparities Unit, the African American Health Initiative (AAHI) is working with African American communities to empower them to take action to address these appalling disparities. Last year, in partnership with residents in East County and other community health agencies, AAHI sponsored the first African American

Health Empowerment Expo in Contra Costa County. The well-attended Expo was a call to East County African Americans to take individual and collective action (See a [promotional video](#) created for the event). This was a first step and efforts continue as they are implementing a survey with residents to better understand effective communication pathways to reach out to African American communities in East County. In partnership with Opportunity West and the City of Richmond, AAHI sponsored with other community agencies in West County a community “Baby Shower” to help young pregnant and parenting moms to learn about improving birth outcomes and how to facilitate innovative change in their environments. Based on the high attendance and enthusiasm around both these events, we know we’re moving in the right direction.

In partnership with The Center for Human Development, we now employ African American Health Conductors, individuals from the community trained to provide culturally sensitive health education, system navigation and peer health support for positive lifestyle changes. Peer support is a model that is receiving national recognition as an effective method to help vulnerable populations access care and reduce disparities.

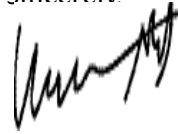
## Racism and disparities

When we started efforts to address health and health care disparities in Health Services, we acknowledged upfront one barrier contributing to disparities: ongoing institutional racism. Alarming to me is the impact that both unconscious and conscious racism have on health outcomes for people of color throughout our country. Studies show that people of color who constantly experience subtle or overt acts of racism are affected by the chronic stress that they

experience. Chronic stress causes anxiety and the release of stress hormones that can harm the body’s organs and systems. It can also cause premature labor in women. Studies also show differences in access for African Americans to advanced medical treatment of heart disease, appropriate chemotherapy treatment for cancer, early interventions in strokes and other important medical decisions. I believe that we cannot appropriately address disparities without acknowledging that these practices continue.

Recognizing progress and acknowledging the history of racism and injustice in our country are important in our attempt to address health disparities. We will continue to educate ourselves and each other. We can and we will make a difference. As Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. said “The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.”

Sincerely,



William Walker, M.D.

The next Director’s Report will be the March issue. The deadline is February 17. Publicize your upcoming events and successes by sending information to Kate Fowlie at 597 Center Avenue, Suite 255, Martinez 94553, fax 925-313-6219, or email [kate.fowlie@hsd.cccounty.us](mailto:kate.fowlie@hsd.cccounty.us). The Director’s Report is available online at <http://cchealth.org/topics/publications/> and on ISITE at <http://cchs/>



Front row, from left, Vernita Travis, Anna Roth, Katherine Heinen, Wendy Katchmar and Don Goldmann. Back row, from left, Health Services Director Dr. William Walker, Michael Roetzer and Miles Kotchevar.



CHDP Director Michelle Williams browses the e-Training Center website from her office.

## Graduating Change Agent Fellows Made Lasting Quality Improvements

Friends, family and colleagues packed our Regional Medical Center's lobby last month to celebrate the graduation of the 2010-11 Change Agent Fellows. Selected for their thirst for learning and a desire to lead change, fellows embark on a 15-month journey to become transformational leaders who can bring about continuous quality improvement for the hospital and our health system. This year's class included Nurse Katherine Heinen, Secretary Wendy Katchmar, Nurse Miles Kotchevar, Employment and Human Services' Director of Administration Michael Roetzer and Clerk Vernita Travis. Regional Medical Center and Health Centers CEO Anna Roth said this year's group was an innovative and bright class that brought valuable improvement processes to the Hospital and Health Centers. The graduation ceremony, which included a video and presentations by the fellows, featured a talk about the future of health care by Institute for Healthcare Improvement Senior Vice President Dr. Don Goldmann.

To find out more about the Fellowship Program, contact Olivia Stringer at [olivia.stringer@hsd.cccounty.us](mailto:olivia.stringer@hsd.cccounty.us) or 925-370-5100.

## e-Training Center Blends Coursework to Better Fit in With Your Schedule

Our Personnel Unit is breathing new life into the eLearning training system by giving it a new name and logo. The newly rebranded e-Training Center will have additional courses, a schedule manager and modules that will help you become better acquainted with cLink, our new electronic health record system. Health Services has relied on our eLearning system for several years and is now hoping to further integrate the e-Training Center for required training and personal career development. The blended-learning system, which includes some online courses followed by classroom instruction, allows for increased flexibility and standardized training. Personnel Officer Dorette McCollumn said that because e-Training Center is available online, employees can access it from wherever they please. Examples of classes offered through e-Training Center are HIPAA training, Disaster Service Worker, computer skills enhancement and much more. To access your account, look for the e-Training Center logo on your computer desktop or visit [www.webinservice.com/ContraCosta/](http://www.webinservice.com/ContraCosta/)

To find out more about this service or to retrieve your username and password, send an e-mail to [etc@hsd.cccounty.us](mailto:etc@hsd.cccounty.us) More information about the e-Training Center will be posted on iSITE in the near future.





Linking best people, best care

### Employees Get Firsthand Look at Electronic Health Record Equipment

Potential new equipment to be used with our cclink electronic health record was put to the test by employees last month at three device fairs. The fairs featured mobile workstations, wall mounts, keyboards, scanners and more. Above left, Public Health Nurse Michelle Sharman and Driver-Clerk Bill Adamo examine a wall-mounted workstation for our mobile clinics. Above right, CCRMC Nurse Benjamin Chaney learns about the new equipment from a presenter. To find out more about cclink, visit [iSITE](#) and click cclink Information Center.

### Regional Health Foundation Receives Epic Donations



Epic, the company behind our new electronic health record, has donated \$3,000 to our Regional Health Foundation. The donation follows a \$1,000 donation made by the company in April to support the Foundation's annual gala. Regional Health Foundation Executive Director Lynda Gayden said she is grateful for the donations and is pleased to see that Epic understands the need to support the services we provide as a safety net health system.

### Public, Environmental Health Investigate Norovirus Reports

Chances are pretty good that you know someone who's recently come down with a stomach bug. There have been hundreds of cases in Contra Costa County and our Public Health Division said the number of reported norovirus cases has been climbing since December—not completely surprising since the winter months are when this gastrointestinal virus is most active. Working closely with our Environmental Health Division, Public Health has responded to a handful of outbreaks in local school districts and businesses. Communicable Disease Program Manager Erika Jensen said the best strategy for preventing norovirus is regular and thorough hand washing. She said it is also important to stay home for at least 48 hours if you do get sick. Classic symptoms of norovirus include diarrhea, vomiting and stomach pain. Although it is sometimes called “stomach flu,” Erika said it is not related to influenza.

To find out more about norovirus, including disinfection instructions, visit [www.cchealth.org/topics/norovirus/](http://www.cchealth.org/topics/norovirus/)



Committee members, from left, Dr. Joanne Bassali, Annabelle Cadiz, Dr. Karen Burt and Dr. Cinnie Chou. Dr. Greta Perez and Estela Cerda not pictured.

### **Childhood Obesity Fight Finds Success in Group Medical Visits**

Latino families and children from East and West County who attend our Healthy & Active Families (previously known as WeCAN) group visits are seeing improved health outcomes. The Healthy & Active Families model consists of five 1.5-hour pediatric obesity group medical appointments. Conducted by a medical provider (physician or nurse practitioner), nutritionist and promotora, appointments cover nutrition and physical activity topics, including sweetened drinks, portion sizes, TV and screen time, parental limits and eating habits to reduce obesity disparities for Latino children. Promotoras follow up with clients to monitor progress and help with any challenges implementing individual action plans upon completion of the program. The visits were initially piloted in Brentwood in 2007–08 by Child Health and Disability Prevention Nutritionist Annabelle Cadiz, Community Health Workers Martha Flores and Ana Palacios, and Dr. Joanne Bassali. These visits are now held at our Brentwood, Pittsburg and Richmond Health Centers. Evaluation reports by Annabelle revealed the visits have had success in decreasing body mass index levels. The success of the program is a result of a collaboration of our Ambulatory Care Division and Public Health’s Child Health and Disability Prevention Program, the Integrative Health Program and the Reducing Health Disparities Unit’s Promotoras Program.

For more information about this project, contact Annabelle Cadiz at [annabelle.cadiz@hsd.cccounty.us](mailto:annabelle.cadiz@hsd.cccounty.us) or 925-313-6153.

### **Alcohol and Other Drugs Treatment Facility Takes a Strong Stance Against Tobacco**

An ashtray sits at the entry of our Discovery House. No longer used by residents who are there for alcohol and other drug treatment, it serves as a last-ditch place for the cigarette butts of visitors and staff. Under a new policy that took effect last month, all tobacco use is prohibited at the only residential treatment facility owned and operated by Health Services. This includes no-smoking in the outside area. Program Manager Curtis Christy said the Tobacco Prevention Project in our Public Health Division helped Discovery House by presenting policy options for going smoke-free, as well as providing materials for clients to get smoking cessation help. So far, Curtis said, clients have responded well to the new policy. Clients are given three warnings before they have to leave the facility.

To find out more about the policy or the Discovery House, contact Curtis Christy at [curtis.christy@hsd.cccounty.us](mailto:curtis.christy@hsd.cccounty.us) or 925-335-3322.



### Learn to Save a Heart on Valentine’s Day

This Valentine’s Day, our Emergency Medical Services Division is asking the Board of Supervisors to share a heartfelt message with you. At the February 14 meeting, the Supervisors are expected to proclaim February as American Heart Month in Contra Costa County. EMS Medical Director Dr. Joseph Barger said heart disease remains one of the top killers in our county and chances of survival are increased if people act in time. It is important to know the signs of a heart attack, a stroke and a sudden cardiac arrest and to call 9-1-1 immediately if someone is suffering a cardiac emergency. The Division and HeartSafe Community partners plan to hand out public awareness materials and to teach Hands Only CPR outside the Supervisors’ Chambers. The Board of Supervisors meeting begins at 9:30 a.m. and takes place at 651 Pine Street in Martinez.

For more information about HeartSafe Community, visit [www.cchealth.org/ems/heartsafe.php](http://www.cchealth.org/ems/heartsafe.php) or call Pam Dodson at 925-313-9547.

### EMS Reporting Program Listed as National Safety Resource

Our Emergency Medical Services Division has produced yet another program that is being very well received at the national level. The Contra Costa EMS Event Reporting Program was recently listed as a resource by the National EMS Culture of Safety, which is a cooperative lead by the American College of Emergency Physicians. EMS Director Patricia Frost said the Event Reporting Program was a collaborative effort between our prehospital agencies to redesign the patient and provider safety reporting. She said the Program helps EMS focus on system-wide issues and improve overall performance and safety. To view the EMS Culture of Safety document, visit [www.emscultureofsafety.org](http://www.emscultureofsafety.org)

To find out more about this designation or the Event Reporting Program, contact Patricia Frost at [patricia.frost@hsd.cccounty.us](mailto:patricia.frost@hsd.cccounty.us) or 925-646-4690.



Dr. Ahmed

### Healthy Outlook: Make Alzheimer’s Decisions Early to Help Cope

Dealing with a loved one who is suffering from dementia can be one of the hardest things to go through. In a recent Healthy Outlook column, our Staff Psychiatrist Dr. Aneela Ahmed said it is critical to learn about the disease and the best ways to support the person. She said memory loss from Alzheimer’s dementia is significant enough to interfere with daily tasks and can cause personality change, depression, fear, anxiety or social withdrawal. When you begin noticing a loved one developing Alzheimer’s dementia, Dr. Ahmed recommends you consider who will make health and financial decisions when the person is no longer able, how his or her care will be handled and where the person will live.

To read more of this or other Health Outlook columns, visit [www.cchealth.org/topics/column/](http://www.cchealth.org/topics/column/)





**Jaspreet Benepal, Jeanette Landucci, Ngozi Emenalom, Sandra Vernell, Helena Martey, Cita Richeson, Frenda Chan, Jane Yimbo, Barbara J Simmons, Holly Longmuir, Margee Dean and staff**

(Please see iSITE for full list of names)  
Nursing Administration

For demonstrating unwavering leadership and engaging in a collaborative process that resulted in a draft of five Service Principles & Behaviors that support Service Excellence and Patient Centered Care. For coordinating staff schedules to permit them time to participate in the development of the principles and behaviors.

◆Nominated by Dawna Vann and Karen Jovin

**Joshua Slattengren**

Environmental Health Specialist II  
Environmental Health

For providing exceptional public educational outreach in local high schools and college career fairs, for being a mentor to college students interested in registered environmental health specialist work, and for his participation in community meetings and with code enforcement agencies.

◆Nominated by Jocelyn Habal

**Kristian Lucas**

Environmental Health Specialist II  
Environmental Health

For developing and providing educational materials and guidance on mobile food facility program in community meetings, and developing and maintaining good work relationships with code enforcement/police agencies.

◆Nominated by Jocelyn Habal

**Amberlyn Ferleman**

Environmental Health Specialist I, Environmental Health

For creating informational brochures regarding temporary food facilities, pools, and medical waste, and for her dedication and service on several committees.

◆Nominated by Jocelyn Habal

**Kimberly Ferlise & Marc Ashford**

IT Security Specialist                      IT Specialist, Information Technology

For going the extra mile to ensure wireless connectivity during a Medical/Health exercise in November at the Department's Emergency Operations Center and the Med/Health Branch of the County's Emergency Operations Center.

◆Nominated by Kim Cox and Kate Fowlie

**Joe Gordon**

Information System Technician III  
Information Technology

For his excellent technical, leadership and customer service skills, and for assisting staff with timely responses to resolve issues and problems for over 3000 callers each month to the customer service center.

◆Nominated by Larry Klein

**Lynda Gayden**

Executive Director  
Contra Costa Regional Health Foundation

For working tirelessly on the grant that makes it possible for us to continue to provide excellent training to our residents and care for our patients in Reproductive Health Care.

◆Nominated by the TEACH program at CCRMC and Drs. Bliss, Levin, Fiereband, Palmer, Wallace, McNeil and Tsang.



### **Anna Roth Appointed to Chair State Safety Net Board**

CCHS is proud to announce that our Regional Medical Center and Health Centers CEO Anna Roth, RN, has been appointed chair of the California Health Care Safety Net Institute Board of Directors. The Safety Net Institute is a national leader in developing innovative programs to improve the quality of patient care and increase efficiency, reduce health care disparities and enhance the patient experience. A past fellow of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, Anna already has developed an international reputation for her innovative work to improve quality and efficiency. Congratulations, Anna!



### **Diana Kato Retires After Two Decades with Environmental Health**

Diana Kato, Assistant Director of our Environmental Health Division, has announced that she will retire next month after more than 20 years with Health Services. Diana has been a pillar in the food and consumer affairs group, first as an inspector, then as a supervisor and finally as assistant director. Environmental Health Director Marilyn Underwood said Diana was instrumental in upgrading the Division's data software, developing the Disaster Field Manual for Environmental Health Specialists and much more. More recently, Diana has launched a major effort to get the division to gain federal recognition for implementing the Food Standardization Program. She will retire at the end of March.

### **Do you know someone going the extra mile?**

Service Excellence nomination forms are available at [www.cchealth.org](http://www.cchealth.org) and <http://cchs/> from any CCHS computer

### **February Milestones**

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Florence F. Chan, Regina A. Cones, Lufel G. Carrillo, Helen H. Cheng, Sonia Jacamo, Ben Y. Kim, Leila F. Villaneuva, Beverly M. Bradley, Deborah P. Tyler, Corlette V. Williams (10 years); Paula J. Williams, Leslie G. David, Kennette S. Mallory (15 years); Shari L. Hollander, John D. Thomas, Daniel J. Cremin, Louise A. Mallory, Denise M. Bishop, Angelo R. Blancaflor, Rommye L. Qualls, Conrado J. Robles Jr., Hala I. Yowakeem (20 years); Mouang Choy Saeturn (25 years); Francine Tinsley and Jo Elliff (30 years).