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A Solid Foundation: CCHP

We're about to begin the annual County open enrollment period for health plans. This time of year, I'm always gratified when I look at the Contra Costa Health Plan (CCHP) and think about how it has evolved.

When I first came to work for Health Services in 1974, health maintenance organizations (HMOs) were just taking off and our Key Plan was one of the few in the state. In 1976, we formally organized the Contra Costa Health Plan with Dr. Bill Ross as Medical Director and Bob Kaplan as Chief Executive Officer. We began the first after-hours, on-call services for our clients - the early version of the Advice Nurse Program. In those days, the Health Plan was still small, with just over 2,000 members.

First in the Nation

Over the next several years, we successfully applied to be a Federally Qualified, Health Maintenance Organization (FQHMO) — the first state-licensed, publicly sponsored health plan in the United States. Becoming an FQHMO allowed us to enroll Medicare members as well as individuals and families, small business members and County employees. In 1980, I became medical director of CCHP.

In 1983, when California moved the responsibility for caring for Medically Indigent Adults to counties, we were able to use the organization of the Health Plan to manage the health care for this population. To do that, the Board of Supervisors created our unique Basic Adult Care program, providing full access to primary care services, case management and the Advice Nurse Program.

Offering the same level of care to everyone has been an important concept all along, even as we've continued to grow and participate in a variety of State-sponsored programs. Adherence to that principle helps ensure quality of care, access and special attention to populations commonly overlooked by other health care systems.

Two-Plan System

In 1995, California made the decision to require 12 counties to create a two-plan system — one commercial option and one "local initiative" — to reduce the cost of Medi-Cal by enrolling medical beneficiaries in managed care.

Two years later, CCHP partnered with our Public Health and Mental Health Divisions, community providers, local hospitals and the Kaiser Permanente Health Plan to become the "local initiative" for Medi-Cal managed care in our community. Other counties, with



— Dr. Walker

Continued next page

Annual Charity Campaign

All employees will be receiving a letter from me encouraging donations to the county's Combined Charities Campaign. Local charities, including several that directly benefit Health Services programs, rely on this Campaign to keep their programs going. If you have questions, contact your Division Campaign Coordinator or JoAnn Bishop at 925-370-5022.

—Dr. Walker

DID YOU KNOW

CCHP's Member Services receives more than **6,200** calls per month from members.

Director's Message Continued...

no experience with managed care, had to create their local initiatives from scratch. Of all the counties in the state, we have done the best job in competing with the commercial plan (Blue Cross) in terms of the number of people who chose our Health Plan as their plan.

Because the employee contribution for CCHP is lower than the contribution for other health plans, County employees have an incentive to enroll. When employees do enroll, the employee health benefit dollars stay in our own health care system, a benefit for all of us.

One of the strengths of CCHP is our integrated health department. We are the only county that has a medical center, eight health centers, Public Health, Mental Health and a health plan under one administrative entity. That provides a more efficient administrative structure and fosters collaboration that includes coordinated case management, Public Health intervention, more accessible Mental Health services and Advice Nurses available to all who use our system. And we all have the same goals: providing quality care, access and a commitment to making sure we maintain our services for the uninsured.

A Model System

To this day, CCHP remains a model that other counties look upon with admiration. Many, including people from other countries, have visited our system to see how they could replicate it. We know it's difficult to create a system like ours elsewhere without the history we have.

We can be proud that we have more than 9,000 County employees and dependents enrolled in CCHP. They've chosen to get their health care with us. We also continue to see our Healthy Families enrollment increasing.

The local initiative is still in place and soon, more categories of Medi-Cal recipients – seniors and persons with disabilities – will have the opportunity to become part of our managed care system. Many seniors and people with disabilities are already using us as their provider of choice.

The state is working with our County to develop an Acute and Long-Term Care Integration (ALTCI) program aimed at providing comprehensive care so that seniors and people with disabilities can stay in their homes and independent for as long as possible. CCHP is the lead agency for that project, working with Employment and Human Services and a number of other partners, building on the unique model we began developing more than three decades ago.

Just a personal note: My family and I have been members of CCHP since the early 80's when county employees were first able to join. We receive all of our outpatient and inpatient care at CCRMC and our Health Centers including hospitalizations for surgery and childbirth. We have always been delighted with the care we receive. Many of our physicians and nurses are also members. I think that speaks to the outstanding quality of care we offer – to all of our members.

Sincerely,



William Walker, MD

Employee Milestones

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Cathy Steirn, Kathryn Terry, Leona Pinto, Joan Roos, Diane Marin, Elizabeth Lestage, Klara Trubin, Lorena Chavarela, Ericka Sexton, Linda Bartlett, Charlotte Standefer, Raymond Crisostomo, Tina Greco, Lawrence Smith, Zenaida Hernandez, Kathleen Lawrence, William Godfrey, (10 years); Richard Weisgal, Charles Flackus, Rosa Venegas, Monica Gallagher, Robert Morris, Phyllis Burgh, Jessie Laborete (15 years); James Wright, Albert Flanagan, Olivia Stringer, Sharon Riccobono, Sirlura Taylor (20 years); Sandra Whitesell, Beverly Belser, Andrea Favolora, Delia Alanis, Thelma Stone, Molly Manross (25 years); Lolita Adona, Dawn Wardlaw-Keys (30 years); and Sandra Cox (35 years). *(We know there are lots of other dedicated employees with long years of service. Because of space limitations, we are only reporting those with 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and 35 years.)*

The Director's Report is published monthly. Deadline for the October edition is September 9. Publicize your upcoming events and successes by sending information to Julie Freestone at 597 Center Avenue, Suite 255, Martinez 94553, fax 925-313-6219, email: jfreestone@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us. The Director's Report is available online at cchealth.org and on the Intranet at cchs.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Honor Roll

Jo Eliff

*Family Nurse Practitioner
Public Health*

For staying late at her Women's Health clinic before a three-day weekend to complete a form for a pediatric clinic client needing a nebulizer.

—Nominated by Jeanette Braker

Emergency Room

*Night Shift
CCRMC*

For being wonderful to a patient (a retired RN) on visits to the ER and for treating her with the utmost dignity and humor and allowing her to state her professional opinion. They made an uncertain situation bearable and humorous.

—Nominated by a patient's mother

Brenda Fields

*Public Health Nurse
Clinic Services*

For using excellent communication skills during an emergency home visit, bringing an infant to CCRMC within an hour to receive necessary tests.

—Nominated by Jeanette Braker

Shirley Guyer and Jerry Tourte
CCRMC Gardeners and Landscapers

For their hard work, head work and team work, spirit and enthusiasm rain or shine in maintaining the grounds. They exhibit a rare breed of unassuming, all purpose, can-do attitude. They labor indefatigably, resulting in the immaculate appearance of the campus.

—Nominated by C.C. Salonga

Erika Jenssen, MPH

Health Emergency Coordinator

For her competent, calm and professional leadership in coordinating the Health Emergency Unit, developing partnerships with a broad range of agencies and making Contra Costa a leader in the state.

—Nominated by William Walker

Christye McQueen

*Administrative Assistant
Health Emergency Coordination*

For her diligent efforts to launch a new web-based Health Emergency Information line (1-888-959-9911). She worked through the evening and at home to ensure that this critical response system became operational.

—Nominated by Francie Wise

Mark Robbins

*Environmental Health Technician
Environmental Health*

For responding promptly to residents' complaints and for a written response that was "above and beyond the call of duty." Your letter was greatly appreciated.

—Nominated by a Clayton resident

Tasha Scott,

*Contracts and Grants Specialist
Finance Division*

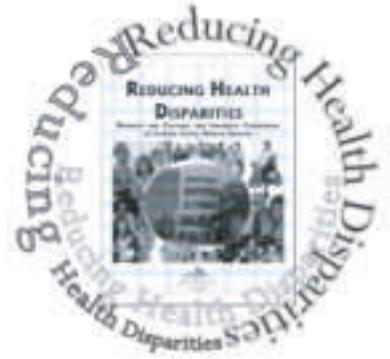
For painstaking efforts, patience and a customer-focus in her daily dealings with the hospital and health center administration, and for being forthright, efficient and personable, and ready, willing and able to address concerns. She's a great team player.

—Nominated by Marcelle Indelicato

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@hcd.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 Intranet. Please be specific about the behavior being recognized.

This page brings news of how the implementation of the CCHS Plan for Reducing Health Disparities is progressing and highlights program efforts. Our divisions have been working on three key areas to reduce health disparities. These are improving linguistic access, implementing educational activities on diversity and cultural and linguistic competence, and developing an organizational climate that values patient, customer and employee diversity.



The division's diversity trainer and ethics services coordinator, Lisa Booker at left, and Mental Health Director Donna Wigand.

Mental Health Developing New Diversity Training

Our Mental Health Division is implementing the Reducing Health Disparities Initiative (RHDI) by improving staff's cultural competence and patients' linguistic access. The division formed a 19-member workgroup to address disparities issues, educated staff about interpretation services and is designing new diversity training for employees. Diversity training helps staff better serve our consumers and their families, said Mental Health Director Donna Wigand, LCSW. "We need to understand other people's values and family relationships to be able to provide them with the best care." Mental Health now has a full-time ethnic services coordinator who will serve as the division's diversity trainer. Lisa Booker, RN, who has

been with Mental Health for eight years, officially assumed the new position in July and is putting together a series of quarterly cultural competency and ethnic diversity trainings for staff. Lisa also is involved in incorporating the RDHI into the implementation of the Mental Health Services Act (Prop. 63), Donna said. "As we roll out new programs from Prop. 63, we have to do it in a way that is culturally appropriate for the communities they are going into. We can't do a cookie cutter approach," Donna said. "Lisa is charged with keeping us on track as we do the program design." Lisa said she sees Prop. 63 as an opportunity for reducing health disparities. "Prop. 63 gives us a framework to do some innovative things especially regarding diversity issues and cultural competence," Lisa said. "The whole premise of the new law is to do whatever it takes to serve the underserved and the un-served. The data shows us is that racial/ethnic communities tend to have large gaps in access to services." Mental Health Disparities Workgroup members include: José Martín, Randall Cooper, Anna Lubarov, Carlos Dreiss, David Cassell, Enriqueta Gomez, Juanita Garrison, Kim Walker, Larry Hanover, Lisa Booker, Matthew Luu, Melinda Dendinger, Melvora Jackson, Michaela Mougengkoff, Nicole Valentino, Saraphi Chawengchot, Sherry Bradley, Somchith Phongboupha and Steve Hahn-Smith.



For more information, call Lisa Booker at 925-646-5645.

African-American Health Disparities

Fifteen CCHS staff attended the African-American Health Summit in Oakland last January. It was distressing to learn about the huge burden of illness and early death among African Americans and also inspiring to experience the strength and resolve of all those in attendance to change the current reality. Those who attended the Summit have had several follow up meetings with CCHS Director William Walker, MD, Reducing Health Disparities Initiative (RHDI) Leader José Martín and CCHS Associate Director Mary Foran (all of whom attended the Summit) to explore how RHDI can more directly address African American health disparities. This group is now preparing recommendations for next steps and has invited others to participate in that task.



To participate or for more information, please contact José Martín at 925-370-5055.

Nominations Sought for Reducing Health Disparities Award

Nominations are being accepted for our Reducing Health Disparities Initiative award, which recognizes CCHS employees who have demonstrated a commitment to the Reducing Health Disparities Initiative (RHDI) in the past two years through projects, events, policies or other efforts in the three priority areas of the Initiative. We began implementation in April 2003 after the Institute of Medicine issued *Unequal Treatment*, a report about the impact of race on health outcomes. The report said that even in settings where providers and programs are clearly dedicated to providing the best care for everyone, race seems to predict who will have less access and poorer outcomes. That report and our own 18-month intensive planning process to address diversity and cultural and linguistic competence led to the formal adoption of the RHDI. Many CCHS employees have worked very hard since then to address the three key areas of the initiative: linguistic access, education and training to foster organizational growth and change, and further developing an organizational climate that values patient, client, customer and employee diversity and addresses health disparities. Nominations forms are available on the Intranet (type cchs in your browser). For more information, call Jose Martin at 925-370-5055. The nomination deadline is September 23. Awards will be announced in early October.



Mental Health Improves Linguistic Access and Makes Discovery

Our Mental Health Division's Sherry Bradley, MPH, Manager of Operations Support, has been working hard to improve linguistic access for non-English speaking clients. She designed an interpreter resource guide for her division and trained staff at all 14 Mental Health sites on how to use department interpreter and translation services. She also started tracking what languages were the most requested and made an interesting discovery: After Spanish, American Sign Language interpreters are the most in demand. "It blew us away. We have identified another area of linguistic access that wasn't on our radar as much before," Sherry said. The data also showed that the hearing-impaired are more likely to receive their care in the field, not in a clinic. "Tracking this type of information will help us determine what needs to be done in terms of providing better access to our clients," she said.

For more information, call Sherry Bradley at 925-957-5114.

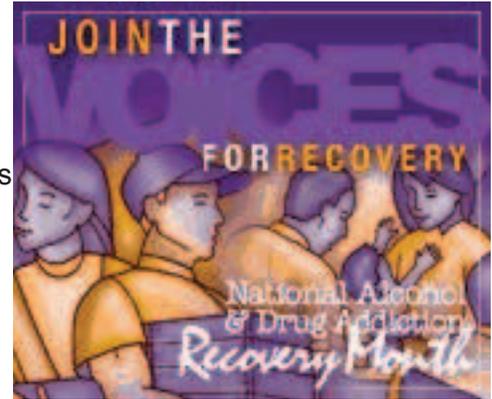


Sherry Bradley, Manager of Operations Support.

Join the Voices for Recovery: Healing Lives, Families and Communities

National Recovery Month is observed each September. This year's theme — Join the Voices for Recovery: Healing Lives, Families and Communities — raises awareness that alcohol and drug use disorders can be treated effectively, and friends, families and communities play a critical role in recovery. Along the road to recovery from alcohol and drug use disorders, people experience amazing life changes. Treatment often plays a significant role in the recovery process. The Recovery Month observance is one way we reach out to the public with the message that treatment is effective and recovery is possible.

On September 13, the Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Advisory Board, the Diablo Valley Ranch's Alumni Association, our AOD Services Division, John Muir Center for Recovery and AOD's System of Care Providers will receive a proclamation from the Board of Supervisors recognizing National Recovery Month. The AOD Services Division invites employees and the public to Join the Voices of Recovery national celebration by participating in the Recovery Walk scheduled for September 17 and by attending the various activities sponsored throughout Contra Costa by the recovery community.



For more information about Recovery Month activities, call Fatima Matal Sol at 925-313-6311.

Community Advocates Aid Asthma Program

The Contra Costa Health Plan Asthma Program began working with patients and families with asthma in 1999 and since then has worked with over 2,000 patients of all ages. The Program provides asthma education, case management and home trigger assessments to help families get their asthma under control and avoid hospitalization. Patient assessments, utilization history and outcomes are documented in the new Asthma Registry that was developed as part of a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant. Last year the Program began working in conjunction with Community Advocates, who are community residents trained to provide in-home asthma trigger check-ups to families with children who have asthma in West County. Since the Spanish-speaking Community Advocate started working with the Asthma Program, the number of Spanish speaking families enrolled has increased from 4% to more than 40% of those newly enrolled. Asthma Program staff include an Asthma Community Advocate, Genoveva Sirlopu, secretary Giselle Bauge, program assistant Shelly Buck, and Good Health Check-up Program staff Cory Bagsby and Michael Cedillos.



For more information about CCHP's Asthma Program, call Donna Kaufman, RN at 925-313-6651.

Program Receives Nearly \$1 Million Grant Toward Ending Homelessness

Our Homeless Program received a grant for \$996,786 last month from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide housing and services to people who are chronically homeless and addicted to alcohol in Contra Costa County. The funding is part of a HUD pilot project in 11 communities around the country through a new program called Housing for People Who Are Homeless and Addicted To Alcohol. HUD and the Interagency Council on Homelessness designed the program targeting people living on the streets for at least 365 days over the last five years and who also have a long-term addiction to alcohol. Research suggests that as many as 150,000 persons experiencing chronic homelessness also often suffer from addiction to alcohol and tend to have the highest utilization of emergency facilities and services. Our Project Coming Home Addressing Addictions to Alcohol program will use the HUD money to provide permanent housing to 40 individuals living within Contra Costa County as well as treatment and services.



For more information call Cynthia Belon at 925-313-6736.

Health Plan Hires Local to Direct Provider Affairs

Contra Costa Health Plan needed a new director of provider affairs and didn't have to look far. The Health Plan recently hired longtime Richmond resident Denise Peebles to fill the position, and for Peebles, it is a homecoming of sorts. She worked years ago as a Mental Health Specialist with Contra Costa County Office of Education before taking positions with the Hayward and Minneapolis school districts and then the West Oakland Health Council and Alameda Alliance for Health here in the East Bay. She has lived in Contra Costa for nearly 20 years and is happy to join the county's groundbreaking health plan. Welcome Denise!



Denise Peebles,
CCHP Director of
Provider Affairs.

Administration Leaving Longtime Home

This month will be a moving experience for Dr. William Walker and the rest of Health Services administrative and finance staff, who are leaving their longtime home at 20 Allen Street in Martinez for nearby offices at 50 Douglas Drive. Administration has been at 20 Allen since at least the 1980s. Their new neighbors at 50 Douglas include the county Department of Child Support Services and the Probation Department. The move, which will be done in stages, means new phone numbers for everyone who is relocating. The new numbers will be included in the online county phone listings (<http://telephone.contra-costa.org/>) as early as possible. In addition, the old numbers will have referrals to the new numbers.

Contra Costa Regional Medical Center Joins National Campaign

Contra Costa Regional Medical Center has received a \$30,000 grant from Blue Shield of California Foundation to participate in the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's 100,000 Lives Campaign. CCRMC joins 2,700 other hospitals around the country in the national campaign to save 100,000 lives by June 14, 2006. The idea is to improve health care in the hospital by using six intervention strategies to help prevent death, including standardizing medication processes to reduce adverse drug reactions, allowing any staff member to deploy rapid response specialty teams to examine a patient at first sign of decline, preventing central venous catheter-related bloodstream infections, averting surgical site infections, stopping ventilator-associated pneumonia and improving standard operating procedures for admitting cardiac patients. CCRMC will use the grant money to help pay for data collection, patient and staff education and to tap national experts as needed. "These interventions involve multi-disciplinary tasks and staff at all levels," said Steven Tremain, MD, CCRMC's Director of System Redesign and Senior Medical Director. "The campaign recognizes that medicine is a team sport requiring everyone to work together."



For more information about CCRMC's participation in the 100,000 Lives Campaign, call Steven Tremain, MD at 925-370-5122.



Are You Seeing Stars?

Employees, clients and visitors will be seeing stars – green ones that is. Vending machines in buildings with county offices will soon display green star stickers next to food and beverages that meet the nutrition standards for the county's Vending Machine Policy. A poster (see photo) "Smart Choices Made Easy" is already on display at Richmond Health Center machines. After recently adding more healthy items to their machines, food suppliers report receiving positive comments from consumers. If you want to see stars on your food and beverage selections, contact the supplier about your request (contact information should be on the machine itself). If you are an employee and stock one or more machines for your colleagues, contact our Food and Nutrition Program and they will send you a packet of posters, stars and helpful guidelines.



To read the county's Vending Machine Policy, visit cchealth.org and click on Health Topics, Nutrition. Requests for stars and posters can be made by emailing dcoit@hds.co.contra-costa.ca.us or by calling 925-313-6843.



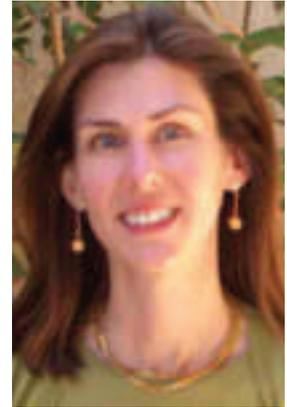
Chris Grazzini

A Farewell to Nursing Administrator

In this month's Director's Report, we bid a farewell to Chris Grazzini, who has been Associate Executive Director for CCRMC and the Health Centers (HCs). She leaves us to focus on her family. Chris began her career at CCRMC (when it was Merrithew Memorial Hospital) in 1985. She came to us from Tulane University as the Director of Nursing Operations with a history of academic accomplishments, including attending the Johns Hopkins Accelerated Management Development Program. She has long been respected at CCHS for her leadership, honesty and her integrity. Best Wishes, Chris.

CCRMC Has New Chief Nursing Officer

The Associate director position at CCRMC has become the Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) position, which has been filled by Lisa Massarweh, RN, MSN, CCRN. Lisa previously worked as the Nurse Program Manager of the CCU/IMCU and brings to the new position critical skills, vision, and leadership. Well respected by her peers, she possesses a thorough and complete knowledge of the current principles and practices of professional nursing and has had extensive experience with training, education, management, and front-line nursing. Congratulations, Lisa.



Lisa Massarweh

CCHP Promotes 'Good Health Check-ups'

Positive results are showing with the Good Health Check-Up program, a new quality initiative of the Contra Costa Health Plan in partnership with our Health Centers. It is designed to improve Initial Health Assessment (IHA) scores and Health Plan Employer Data and Information Set (HEDIS) rates as well as increase Health Plan capitation rates, which are based on number of member visits. Families of CCHP Medi-Cal children are being contacted and encouraged to make a Good Health Appointment for either an Initial Health Assessment or a Well Visit check. The goal is to increase the number of wellness appointments given to CCHP members under 21 years of age while preserving, to the extent possible, relationships with primary care providers. Since the program began late last year, 2,083 appointments have been made with a 78% kept rate. Additionally, in four of the five HEDIS indicators, the Health Plan is outperforming Blue Cross, the county's other provider for Medi-Cal patients.

Deluged by Diesel: Healthy Solutions for West County

Residents of West Contra Costa County are exposed to far more than their fair share of toxic diesel pollution, according to *Deluged by Diesel: Healthy Solutions for West County*. The report, developed by a coalition that included our Asthma Program staff and our Hazardous Materials Ombudsman Michael Kent, was presented this summer at meetings of the county Board of Supervisors, San Pablo City Council, Richmond Public Safety Committee, and the Executive Committee of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. According to the report, there is an estimated six times more diesel pollution released per square mile in West County than in the County as a whole, and 40 times more than in California. Diesel pollution has been identified as one of the biggest health threats related to air pollution in California. This is a serious concern for West County, which in some zip codes has double the asthma hospitalization rate of the county average. The report recommends a number of solutions. Other coalition members include Neighborhood House of North Richmond, Community Health Initiative, West County Toxics Coalition and the Pacific Institute.



More information is available on our web page at cchealth.org or by calling the Pacific Institute at 510-251-1600.