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## Thanks to All of You

About this time of the year, as many of us do, I look back on the past year's experiences — both professionally and personally.

On a personal note, two of my children graduated from college during the past year. I'm sure many of you can relate to my great sigh of relief, mixed with a goodly amount of gratification.

### Struggle over the budget

Professionally, I have similar feelings about the past year. One of the things that stands out vividly in my mind is the budget struggle. I devoted an extraordinary amount of time to this effort, with battles on the state, federal and local level. The prolonged county budget process meant we had to repeatedly make our case about the importance of our programs and the value of funding them.

That same struggle took place at the state level as we and our sister California public health and hospital systems dealt with a total revision of how money flows to us from the state and federal governments. That was acted out around the Medi-Cal waiver, which was finally completed in September after an 18-month conflict. The waiver stabilizes our funding for the coming year but leaves the next four years with considerable uncertainty. Nonetheless, we made it through this year with the current state level of funding and that is something to celebrate.

At the federal level, we followed with dismay the administration's proposal to remove \$10 billion from Medicaid over the next five years. Then the Katrina disaster highlighted for the nation the importance of funding for health care and other services for the poor and uninsured. We had a brief glimmer of hope that Congress would get the message the nation was hearing. In fact, it appears that Congress is proceeding with plans to cut the Medicaid budget and other important programs.

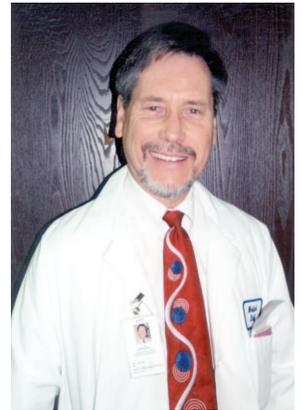
### Allies helped

Even in these often discouraging struggles, we had allies that made the path smoother. At the state level, we depended on the California Association of Public Hospitals and Health

Systems and their excellent staff to guide us. We also had exceptional support from all of our local legislators. At the federal level, nearly all the California Congressional delegation supported our efforts on the Medicaid issue, although they are overwhelmed by the Republicans. But win or lose, it is fitting that we take this time of year to appreciate our many allies, including the Board of Supervisors and the community organizations and local residents who advocated so eloquently to support the services we provide for the community.

### Excellent work by staff

In all of these efforts to defend our budget, I felt proud and was comforted by the excellent work done in so many ways and in so many venues by our employees. We've highlighted many of these efforts in the Director's Report over the past year. Think about the fact that more than half our employees continued to meet the ever-increasing demand for services at the Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and our nine Health Centers. East County outpatient visits and the number of women choosing to deliver their babies at CCRMC are reaching historical numbers. Responding to that increased demand, we celebrated the opening of the new Brentwood Health Center last summer.



— Dr. Walker

*Continued next page*

## DID YOU KNOW

Contra Costa  
Regional Medical Center delivered  
1,747 babies in the **first 10 months**

## Director's Message Continued...

In the midst of this increased workload, Dr. Jeff Smith and Dr. Steve Tremain and their staff are leading a redesign effort at CCRMC and the Health Centers, focusing on patient safety and good outcomes. This is extraordinarily important work that certainly reminds us why we fight grueling budget battles each year.

I look with pride on the collaboration between our Public Health Division and CCRMC/HC on the LEAD project, which uses community residents as *Promotoras* to encourage Latinas to come in early for prenatal care. This work was highlighted last month at a statewide conference and in a recent news article.

### Helping Others

I launched this year's holiday food drive by donating \$200 to the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano. Every dollar we contribute can be used to generate \$6 of nutritious food for local families. Please be generous – 43% of the 53,000 people served each month by the Food Bank are children. Contact your Division Holiday Food Drive coordinator to donate (names are listed on the CCHS Intranet). –WW

### More stellar efforts

I am very pleased with Public Health's Family Maternal and Child Health Programs work on the Life Course model, which is creating new ways to address health disparities in birth outcomes. Public Health's Tuberculosis Program has been extraordinarily effective in reducing the incidence of TB in Contra Costa particularly among people of color.

The importance of efforts by our Public Health Division and their partners in other divisions and in the community has been vividly highlighted in the past few months with emerging infections and pandemic flu. They've rolled up their sleeves and taken on West Nile Virus, flu vaccine shortages and avian flu, submitting plans to the state this year to respond to a variety of public health emergencies.

In the Hazardous Materials Programs, the staff has launched a unique effort to reach out to the community, developing new strategies for getting public participation in the trail-blazing Industrial Safety Ordinance. Haz Mat has also developed models for safety regulations for refineries and chemical plants that are being used across the nation.

The Mental Health Division has done outstanding work to develop a plan for using Prop 63, Mental Health Service Act, funding – about \$7 million for the next year. This effort involved more than 1,000 stakeholders in untold numbers of meetings and dialogues. I thank the community for their participation and commitment. The plan is now in draft and is available for public comment.

The Environmental Health Division said good-bye to its leader, Ken Stuart, who left behind excellent staff to carry on their work.

Our Emergency Medical Systems staff was consumed with the rebidding and implementation of the County's ambulance contract, which is crucial for the 911 ambulance response. A lot of community concern and participation was handled with aplomb by Art Lathrop and his staff. We have a new contract that will carry us through the next decade and that is certainly satisfying to all of us.

While enrollment in our Health Plan continues to grow, staff worked diligently to prepare locally and advocate at the state level for the acute and long-term care integration project which has been long awaited.

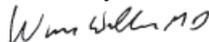
Alcohol and Other Drugs, badly battered by significant budget reductions, has done a remarkable job of surviving, moving forward in creative ways to work with the community and our contractors to provide core services for substance abuse recovery and prevention. Crucial to all of these efforts are the support units: Information Systems, Finance, Personnel, Payroll, Community Education and Information, Medical Records and more.

### Helping the community

One of the department wide highlights this year has been the coalescing of our Reducing Health Disparities Initiative, which I talked about extensively last month. This year it has become obvious that our two goals – reducing health disparities and Service Excellence – and our focus on patient safety all lead to the same place: better service for our community. I think we can be proud of the work we've done in 2005 on behalf of that community.

I thank you all for your efforts during the past year. I'm proud to work for you and with you. I hope you join me in looking ahead to another rewarding year.

Sincerely,



William Walker, MD

# Honor Roll

**Dr. Kim Duir**

*Richmond Health Center*

For her unmatched concern for patients and their families, organizing a grief session and giving strength and comfort.

—Nominated by Leona Pinto

**Kristen Mesa, RN**

*Surgical Clinical Nurse Reviewer  
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center*

For creating an invaluable tool for improving surgical care and for dedication to the National Surgical Quality Improvement Project, nursing knowledge and experience, meticulous attention to detail, excellent communication and interpersonal skills.

—Nominated by Karen Mossman

**Elizabeth Munnely**

*Graphic Artist  
Print and Mail Division  
General Services Department*

For her great artistic talent and dedication to her work. She makes health messages come alive with color, graphic layouts and original illustrations.

—Nominated by the WIC Program

**Paula Fry Gray and Lynnette Krebs**

*Public Health Purchasing Department*

For their courtesy and efficiency in processing our requests for expenditures. Every time we call them, they exceed all expectations.

—Nominated by the WIC Program

**Barbara Sheehy**

*Program Administrator  
California Children's Services*

For turning a stressful situation into a positive experience while reconfiguring staff and space. She was in 10 places at once and achieved superwoman status resolving a problem that cropped up at a crucial point.

—Nominated by Diana Cunnison

**Chris Verdugo, Denise August and Brian Marchiano**

*CCTV*

For their willingness to share expertise and time to train CEI staff in the production of the TV show "Get Ready, Get Healthy," to educate the public about important health issues. Their commitment and patience are greatly appreciated.

—Nominated by the CCHS Community Education and Information Unit

**Founders - Dental Health Action Group**

For their significant contribution to the establishment of the Dental Health Action Group and an unwavering commitment to improving the oral health of children in Contra Costa County.

—Nominated by Lynn Pilant and Padmini Parthasarathy

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## 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.co.contra-costa.ca.us](mailto:ServicEX@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 Intranet.

This page brings news of how the implementation of the CCHS Plan for Reducing Health Disparities is progressing. Our divisions have been working on three key areas; to 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.



## Haz Mat Working on Environmental Justice Issues



Left to right; Randy Sawyer, Maria Duazo (front), and Cho Nai Cheung.

Our Hazardous Materials Programs Division has been working on the issue of “Environmental Justice” as part of the Reducing Health Disparities Initiative (RHDI). Because Contra Costa is home to several large oil refineries and chemical plants, Environmental Justice is a major health concern for us. It’s also a major RHDI issue because many low-income residents and communities of color live near these refineries and plants and so are more likely to be impacted by a release, said Haz Mat Director Randy Sawyer. “There can be health consequences to these releases so it’s important that these communities know how to protect themselves and what we’re doing to help keep

them safe,” Randy said. Two very important components to keeping the community safe are the Community Warning System (CWS) and the Industrial Safety Ordinance (ISO). The ISO provides county oversight of the plants and refineries and requires them to submit safety plans. Sawyer and two of his staff members, Haz Mat Specialist II Maria Duazo and Accidental Release Prevention Engineer Cho Nai Cheung, are working to expand public education efforts about the ISO to both English- and Spanish-speaking communities. Last month, the program held an educational meeting at a local restaurant with members of a Latino community living near a chemical plant in Bay Point. The event was a success and more than 100 community members attended. Haz Mat is working with our Community Education and Information Unit (CEI) and CCTV, producing videos in both English and Spanish to educate the public about how Haz Mat performs safety inspections of refineries. Following a suggestion from the public, Haz Mat also collaborated with CEI to create English and Spanish versions of a comic book explaining the ISO and to expand the English and Spanish website.

Environmental Justice is defined as the elimination of disproportionate exposure to toxic pollution and other environmental factors that affect the public’s health and result in health disparities among communities.

 For more information, including to obtain copies of the comic book, visit [cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org) or contact Randy Sawyer at [rsawyer@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us](mailto:rsawyer@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us) or 925-646-2286.



## Community Warning System Going Multilingual

Hazardous Materials Ombudsman Michael Kent is playing a key role in helping to take the county’s Community Warning System multilingual. Currently the recorded telephone message that advises residents to shelter-in-place during a chemical accident or fire is only in English. After the 1999 fire at Chevron in Richmond, the Laotian community living near the refinery told CCHS representatives they didn’t understand what the sirens meant and many of them didn’t speak English so couldn’t understand the telephone warning to stay inside. An initiative was started with the Laotian Organizing Project to develop a program to provide the shelter-in-place warning in four Laotian languages. Michael is working with the county Office of Emergency Services to distribute special boxes that would be installed on telephones and -- using caller ID -- will give audible alerts in Mien, Khmhu, Lao or Hmong that a shelter-in-place advisory is occurring. A kickoff event was held Oct. 25 and attended by 75 people. The county has 300 boxes to give away for free. “What’s important is that when people get that call, they know what to do.” Michael said. If this project is successful, more languages will be added.

Michael Kent

 For more information, contact Michael Kent at [mkent@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us](mailto:mkent@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us) or 925-313-6587.

## **CCRMC Surgical Clinical Nurse Reviewer Becomes National Role Model**

Last March CCRMC's Kris Mesa, RN began entering surgery data into a national data bank called National Surgical Quality Improvement Project (NSQIP). She is CCRMC's NSQIP Surgical Clinical Nurse Reviewer. CCRMC is currently the only California hospital participating in the national project to improve surgical care. Our participation allows us to compare our surgery outcomes with many other hospitals across the nation, and helps us to see where we need to make improvements. Recently, NSQIP sent an auditor to review the accuracy of Kris' data input as an "interrater reliability review." This exercise ensures that the data entering the NSQIP database from all the various hospitals is valid so that outcomes among hospitals can be compared reliably. Kris' discrepancy rate was less than 0.1%, while NSQIP's discrepancy rate threshold is 5%. This is the best score any of their Surgical Clinical Nurse Reviewers has ever obtained. They are so impressed they are going to be using Kris' nursing education, experience and work background as a model for the type of person best suited for the NSQIP Surgical Clinical Nurse Reviewer responsibility. (Thanks to Karen Mossman for this story and Bob Harrison for the photo.)



*Kris Mesa, RN*



*For more information about NSQIP, visit [acsnsqip.org](http://acsnsqip.org) on the Internet.*

## **Workplaces Honored for Accommodating Breastfeeding Employees**

Three Contra Costa employers were honored at a ceremony last month by receiving Mother/Baby Friendly Awards from the California Breastfeeding Coalition and the Contra Costa Breastfeeding Task Force. The three workplaces – honored for providing extra support for employees wanting to continue breastfeeding their babies after returning to work – include Contra Costa County Administration in Martinez, Contra Costa Children and Family Services in Antioch and The Nurture Center in Lafayette. "With the passage of Assembly Bill 1025, California is one of the first states in the country to reduce barriers to breastfeeding by requiring employers to provide unpaid break time and a private space to express breast milk during the workday," said Nancy Hill, a member of the Task Force and a Public Health Nutritionist with our Family Maternal and Child Health Programs. "Breastfeeding-friendly workplaces have been shown to decrease employee absenteeism for new mothers by 57% due to the health benefits for both mother and baby," Hill added. "Employee retention and productivity are increased along with loyalty and morale."



*For more information contact Nancy Hill at [nhill@hcd.co.contra-costa.ca.us](mailto:nhill@hcd.co.contra-costa.ca.us) or 925-313-6260.*

## **Domestic Violence Death Review Team Issues Report**

Fatal victims of domestic abuse situations in Contra Costa County are sometimes children, but most often are either female homicide victims or male suicides, according to a report presented last month to the Board of Supervisors by the County Domestic Violence Death Review Team. The Team issued the third report of its seven-year history this week, detailing 58 deaths possibly related to domestic violence in Contra Costa between 1997 and 2000. The Team does not review cases until they reach conclusion in the criminal justice system because of the legal sensitivity of open cases, said team member Dawn Marie Wadle, MD. "Without attaching blame, the Team seeks to identify potential gaps in services to households with domestic violence. We believe this helps prevent domestic violence deaths," said Wadle, a family practice physician at our Richmond Health Center. She co-chairs the Team with Deborah Knodell of the County Sheriff's Office. Organizations represented on the 12-agency Team include the county offices of the Coroner, District Attorney, Employment and Human Services, Health Services, Probation and Superior Court. The Contra Costa Crisis Center, Concord Police Department, Kaiser Richmond, STAND! Against Domestic Violence and a community member-at-large also participate.



*For more information, call Dr. Dawn Marie Wadle at 510-231-1337 or 925-603-4080.*

## Holiday Jingle with a Flu Prevention Message

A simple holiday jingle may be one of the best cold and flu prevention tools we have this year. The California Department of Health Services and the California Coalition for Childhood Immunizations sponsored a song about preventing the spread of colds and flu set to the tune of "Jingle Bells." Public Health Division's Dale Jenssen, Nurse Program Manager, thought the song would be perfect for children in the county's Community Services Department Head Start Programs. As a result, children ages 3 to 5 years old at 28 Head Start centers around the county are learning the lyrics, said Christina Reich, Head Start health services manager. The children will sing the jingle at their individual centers at 10 a.m. December 6 to emphasize the importance of handwashing and covering coughs. "It's such a cute jingle and a fun way to raise awareness about ways we can prevent flus and colds," Christina said. To hear the jingle — and an accompanying slideshow created by us, visit our website ([cchealth.org/topics/flu](http://cchealth.org/topics/flu)).

 For more information about the jingle or the Holiday Colds and Flu Campaign, contact Christina Reich at [creich@cccscd.org](mailto:creich@cccscd.org) or at 925-646-5925.

## World AIDS Day: Keep the Promise

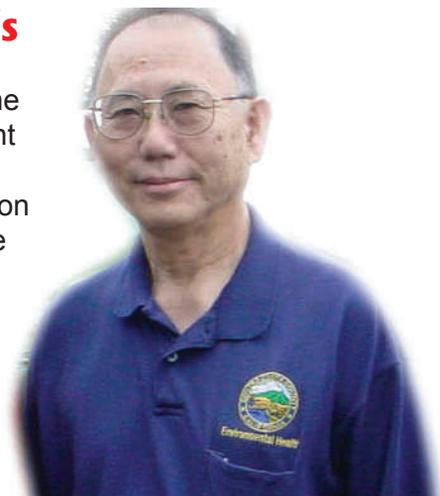
World AIDS Day is commemorated around the globe on December 1. The theme for this year is "Keep the Promise," emphasizing the importance of keeping and meeting the commitments already made by government agencies and policy makers in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Our AIDS Program suggests participating in local events so that elected officials and other community leaders stay aware of local commitments made or needed in the effort to reduce the impact and prevent HIV/AIDS. In Contra Costa, World AIDS Day events include community gatherings/fairs, candlelight vigils, and prayers.



 For information about local events to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS, visit our website ([cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org)) or contact the AIDS Program at (925) 313-6771.

## Environmental Health Supervisor Earns Awards

It has been an award-winning year for our supervising environmental health specialist George Nakamura. First, Underwriters Laboratories (the UL on many electrical appliance cords) gave him a 10-year Achievement Award for his service to their Environmental and Public Health Council. Then, former presidents of the National Environmental Health Association voted George their Past Presidents Award for outstanding service to the environmental health profession over the past 15 years. George also ascended to the vice presidency of the California Environmental Health Association, putting him in line to become association president in 2007. Congratulations both present and future, George!



George Nakamura

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## Employee Milestones

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Susan Biunno, Lacey Friedman, Jacqueline Vargas, Ann-Marie Brown, Marilyn McClain, Judy Nichols, Wallace Posner (10 years); Stephanie Solar, Katherine Lorthridge, Rhonda Barksdale, Jack Rosenfeld, Edward Krebs (15 years); Adila Araya, Carol Fishel, Terrie Kent, Teresa McGowan, Judith Lee (20 years); Elaine Seawell, Ann Annis, Anita Martinez, Pamela Gosling (25 years); Everlita Dwinell, Richard Stickney, Roberta Stern and Bobbie Williams (30 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.)*

## Residents Learn about Food and Exercise

Staff from the WIC program hosted several Fun Shops in the Monument Corridor that gave more than 200 parents and their preschoolers tips about healthy eating and exercise. The action-packed events included crafts, food preparation, active games and more. Participants also received books and other gifts. The workshops, funded by the Office of Supervisor Mark DeSaulnier, resulted from collaboration with many agencies, including the Contra Costa Food Bank, First Five Contra Costa, the Monument Corridor Partnership, Families CAN and others.



Left to right: Henry Gurule, Xochitl Dimas, Carolina Cruz, Diane Marin and Christine Chambers.



For more information, call Beverly Clark at 925-646-5376.



## Employees Can Help Low-Income Residents

The Earn It! Keep It! Save It! Contra Costa Campaign – a collaboration among Health Services, Employment and Human Services, First Five Contra Costa, United Way, the IRS and other organizations – is seeking 200 volunteers to assist hard-working, low-income families and individuals in filing their taxes and claiming refunds and tax credits owed to them. Last year about 25 Health Services staff volunteered their time. No experience is required. Training - an estimated 16 hours - will take place during January. Volunteers will schedule regular weekly commitments throughout tax season or work two or three full Saturdays, with a minimum volunteer commitment of 16 hours. Tax preparation centers will be located at sites throughout the county between January 28th and April 15th, 2006.



Complete the application form online at [cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org) or contact Lloyd Madden at 925- 313-1736. To order flyers promoting the program to residents, call Fowzia Younos at 925-313-6823.

## DHAG Celebrates Five Years of Improving Children's Oral Health

Our Family, Maternal & Child Health (FMCH) Programs' Children's Oral Health Program celebrated last month the fifth anniversary of the Dental Health Action Group, CCHS' community oral health advisory committee. DHAG has greatly improved the oral health of the county's most underserved children by providing education and screening. One of the group's biggest accomplishments has been the creation of the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile, said Padmini Parthasarathy, FMCH senior health education specialist. The mobile dental clinic for children was created out of a partnership among CCHS, La Clínica, Brookside Community Health Center, John Muir/Mt Diablo Community Health Alliance, and the Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Bay Area. "When the group first started there was no county-wide task force looking at oral health issues for children. For the first time, there was a concentrated effort to partner with the county, health care providers and area dentists," Padmini said. With the support of DHAG, FMCH's Children's Oral Health Program has educated 20,796 children and screened 14,448 of them.



Pictured left to right: Richard Sobel, DDS, Christina Reich, Frank Camodeca, DDS, Children's Oral Health Program Manager Lynn Pilant, and CCHS Associate Director Mary Foran.



For more information about DHAG, contact Padmini Parthasarathy at [pparthas@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us](mailto:pparthas@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us) or 925-313-6178.

**The Director's Report is published monthly.** Deadline for the January edition is December 12. 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](mailto:jfreestone@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us). The Director's Report is available online at [cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org) and on the Intranet at [cchs](http://cchs).

## Lesher Foundation Pledges Match to Meals on Wheels Donations

Meals on Wheels of Contra Costa Inc. got a big boost to kickoff its annual “holiday appeal” fund-raising drive when The Dean and Margaret Lesher Foundation pledged \$30,000 to match contributions by new donors and any previous donors who pledge to increase past year’s donations that were between \$25 and \$200. “This very generous donation by the Lesher Foundation will enable donors to our program get more for their money,” said Paul Kraintz, Director of our Public Health Division’s Senior Nutrition Program, a member agency of the nonprofit Meals on Wheels of Contra Costa coalition. “Normally, for every \$2 we raise, we can provide a meal to a homebound senior,” he added. “This grant means that, for every \$1 contributed by new or qualified donors from now until the end of January, they’re buying someone a meal.” Meals on Wheels of Contra Costa is a certified nonprofit coalition of public and private organizations that provide Meals on Wheels services to homebound elders in Contra Costa County. Meals on Wheels volunteers deliver 270,000 meals to these seniors every year.



 People can make donations or request meals online at [mealsonwheelsofcontracosta.org](http://mealsonwheelsofcontracosta.org) and information about the program is available at that website or by calling 1-866-669-6697.

## Prop. 63 Draft Plan Released

After nine months of extensive community effort and input, our Mental Health Division on November 7 released a draft 3-year plan outlining priorities for using new funds from Prop. 63, also known as the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). The Contra Costa Mental Health Commission will hold a public hearing on the Draft Community Services and Supports Plan from 2 - 5 p.m. Wednesday, December 7 in the Board of Supervisors Chamber, 651 Pine Street, Martinez. After incorporating public comment, the county will submit the plan to the state for the approval process, which is expected to take about three months. Contra Costa expects to receive \$7.1 million for the first year of its plan, which is less than expected and means programs will be started in specific areas and later expanded countywide as more money is available, said Kimberly Mayer, CCHS’ MHSA Project Manager. Our Mental Health Division worked with more than 1,100 stakeholders to set priorities for the plan. The stakeholders’ number one priority is supportive housing for mental health consumers, who need a full range of options from emergency and transitional to long-term housing, Mayer said. Because many of the homeless are in West County, efforts initially will be focused there for adults and transition age youth (16-25).

 An executive summary of the plan is available at [cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org) or for more information, contact Kimberly Mayer by email at [kmayer@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us](mailto:kmayer@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us) or by phone at 925-957-5132.

## AOD Division Partners with Youth Groups to Say ‘Lock It Up’

Our Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Division has partnered with two youth groups to produce a media campaign aimed at reducing teen access to alcohol. The “Lock It Up” campaign was developed by a group of students from Carquinez Middle School in Rodeo, called Youth in Power, and a group from Riverview Middle School in Bay Point called Beyond the Youth. The students first surveyed their peers and learned that 65% of teens in their communities get alcohol from older siblings and friends in home environments. Then, they helped develop a key-and-lock logo for the Lock It Up campaign. That logo is now being displayed on buses and in high schools, BART stations and movie theaters. The campaign was linked initially to Red Ribbon Week in October and then DDD Month – Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month – for December.



 For more information or to see the logo, log on to [cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org) or call Laura Pasion at 925-313-6311.