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## Emergency Response

On the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, the County's Community Warning System alerted me to a fire at Chevron's Richmond refinery. The Hazardous Materials team, staff from our Community Education and Information Unit, and I, as the Health Officer-on-call, spent the morning responding.

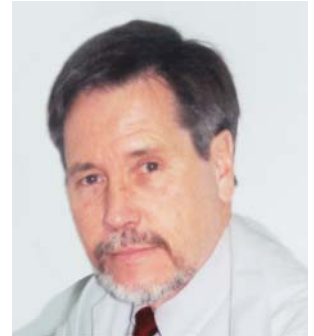
The incident reminded me that many of you might not realize how many Health Services employees respond to emergencies — some big, some much smaller. Because we are an integrated health department that includes the Regional Medical Center, eight Health Centers, Public Health, Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services, Haz Mat, Environmental Health, Emergency Medical Services and the Health Plan, there are many opportunities for us to respond to community and individual emergencies 24 hours a day.

### Hazardous Materials

What usually comes to people's mind when we talk about emergency response is our Haz Mat team, in Level A uniforms that look like they are doing a space walk. We certainly do have an experienced team that is called by the refinery directly or by Sheriff's Dispatch during a crisis. In those situations, we often open the Department Operations Center (DOC). Haz Mat Director Randy Sawyer is DOC Director and the Health Officer on Call — either Public Health Director Dr. Wendel Brunner, Emergency Medical Services Medical Director Dr. Joe Barger or I — will also be there, depending on the size of incident.

Besides those big incidents, our Hazardous Materials team often responds to much smaller incidents, involving hazardous materials spills, leaks and even methamphetamine laboratory concerns. After September 11, they logged many hours responding to white powder incidents and those episodes also required our Public Health Lab Director Rick Alexander or his assistant Melody Hung-Fan to report immediately, no matter what time of the day it was. Last year, the Hazardous Materials

Division handled more than 150 incidents. Randy Sawyer reminds his staff to keep at the ready their "bedside buddies" — resource manuals with maps of refineries, checklists, phone numbers and more.



Dr. Walker

### Health Officer Role

The role of the Health Officer-on-call (HOC) is an interesting one here in Contra Costa. The HOC started in 1978 and was primarily for infectious diseases like rabies. Although all counties have HOCs, it's unusual to have the HOC respond to the range of things we do — from refinery accidents and restaurant fires to communicable disease outbreaks, hospital diversion issues, multi-casualty events and after-hours support for our Health Plan Advice Nurses when they need to talk to a physician or phone in a prescription. We're also responsible for interacting with other hospitals and health care providers, including emergency departments and physicians reporting infectious diseases. Not a week goes by without dozens of calls of one kind or another to whichever one of us is on call; some of the situations can be pretty strange — I recall one involving decaying dead ducks that had to be removed from an East County roadway.

### Public Health

Some of the calls require the involvement of our Environmental Health inspectors or Public Health Division staff. I often tell the story about a busload of Lafayette students who went on an outing on Memorial Day

*Continued next page*

## DID YOU KNOW

Our Hazardous Materials Programs inspected **2,393** businesses that handled hazardous materials last year.

weekend one year. When their teacher came down with meningitis on the way back, our Communicable Disease Program Chief Francie Wise and Communicable Disease Program Manager Sirlura Taylor got antibiotics and rounded up children and parents. Francie, Sirlura, Dr. Wendel Brunner and I administered medication to exposed students that holiday weekend. The Public Health Division also acted immediately in May 2001 when a contaminated batch of medication from Doc's Pharmacy in Walnut Creek was administered to patients at John Muir Medical Center and three people died. Dr. Brunner ordered that the medication be recalled. That initial call also came in on a weekend.

### All of Us


Many of you are also in positions where responding quickly is critical. If you work in the CCRMC Emergency Department, are on the CCRMC Rapid Response Team, or work anywhere in CCRMC and the Health Centers, you face situations daily that demonstrate vividly that we are a 24-hour response agency. And those of you who have no day-to-day emergency response functions know that you are Disaster Service Workers and in a big emergency, you would play a critical role in our response. (A video about the role of Disaster Service Workers is available by calling 925-313-6823.)

### The Value of Drills

To be sure our system is ready to handle an emergency, we have regular drills (see the story in this issue about the Silver Dragon exercise) and training, and develop and review response plans. Sometimes a tragedy leads us to better preparedness. On December 23, 1985, a plane crashed into the Sunvalley Mall while I was shopping there with my mother. As the HOC, I got paged as people were running. After stabilizing a few victims, I went to Sheriff's dispatch to be sure 67 patients were sent to appropriate hospitals according to their needs. That triaging arrangement was a result of a chaotic school bus accident in Martinez some years before where we had no organized way to handle an incident with many injured and dead. The shopping mall disaster response went according to our multi-casualty plan.

When I get an emergency call now, because of our plans and drills, technology like the Community Warning System and a very high level of collaboration with partners like the American Red Cross and the County's Office of Emergency Services, I feel better about our ability to respond. The days of running to a pay phone — hoping we had enough dimes in our pocket, to find out what was happening — are gone. I also feel good knowing I have an incredibly committed, competent workforce that stands ready to be mobilized, whether for a community disaster or an individual emergency. I thank you all for your vigilance and willingness to respond.

Sincerely,

  
William Walker, MD

## Annual Free Tax Program for Low-income Families Underway

The 2007 Contra Costa "Earn It! Keep It! Save It!" (EIKISI) program is in full swing, with one month to go. The annual free tax preparation program helps hard-working, low- to moderate-income residents file their taxes and claim refunds. Last year, EIKISI helped 1,987 families and individuals claim \$2.5 million in refunds owed them, such as federal Earned Income Tax and Child Care credits. The tax services are provided by trained volunteers. EIKISI is sponsored by the Family Economic Security Partnership (FESP), a public, private and nonprofit collaboration including Contra Costa Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD), Contra Costa Health Services, United Way of the Bay Area, First Five Contra Costa, the Internal Revenue Service and East Bay Community Foundation. For more information on the program, contact program manager Lloyd Madden with EHSD at [lmadden@ehsd.cccounty.us](mailto:lmadden@ehsd.cccounty.us) or 925-313-1736.



*The Earn It Keep It Save It program captured \$2.5 million in tax refunds for low-to-moderate income families in Contra Costa last year.*



For information on tax preparation sites and what documents people need to bring, visit [cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org) or call 800-358-8832.

The Director's Report is published monthly. Deadline for the April edition is March 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@ehsd.cccounty.us](mailto:jfreestone@ehsd.cccounty.us) The Director's Report is available online at [cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org) and on iSite, our intranet, at [cchs](http://cchs).

## **CCHS Staff, Volunteers Participate in “Super POD” Drill**

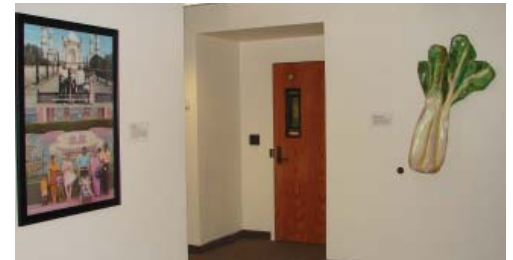
As part of CCHS’ efforts to respond to large-scale health emergencies, we held a drill January 26 to practice opening and running a mass antibiotic dispensing site, known as a “Super POD” (Point of Dispensing), at the Willow Pass Community Center in Concord. The drill was designed to exercise our Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) mass dispensing plan and was part of a Bay Area regional exercise. The drill featured volunteers playing the role of patients needing medication after a simulated anthrax terrorist attack in Contra Costa County. Approximately 120 employees and volunteers participated, including staff from our Public Health, Clinic Services, Human Resources, IS, Finance, EMS and Environmental Health divisions, and the county’s General Services, along with representatives from the county Sheriff’s Office, Office of Emergency Services and Contra Costa Fire. The American Red Cross, Bank of America, Diablo Valley College ESL Program, and the George Miller Centers also provided volunteers. Six other Bay Area counties sent representatives to serve as evaluators and observers. The drill was led by Gerald Tamayo, CCHS SNS Coordinator, with support from other Health Emergency Response Team members including Donna Mann, Christye McQueen, Mila Fairfax, and Kim Cox. The drill was a success because of everyone’s great teamwork! For more drill pictures, visit iSite.




*PHN Wendy Malone and other members of the clinic Medical Consult Unit meet before the drill.*

## **ArtsChange Retrospective Enlivens CCHS Hallway**

Continuing a longtime partnership, CCHS Administration has turned to ArtsChange to arrange a body of artwork to enliven the hallways outside its offices at 50 Douglas Drive. Ann Schnake from the Richmond Health Center worked with artist Rosa Valdez to mount a retrospective of the scores of ArtsChange exhibits over its 10-year history. Ann is a family nurse practitioner at RHC and the Director of ArtsChange, which was originally called the Quilt of Many Colors. The collection of more than 50 pieces at 50 Douglas includes sculpture, photography narratives, silk collage and assemblage boxes. It was installed in January, and it is planned that new pieces will rotate into the hallway periodically. Some of the artists currently exhibited include Consuelo Jimenez Underwood, Ruth Morgan, Terry Acebo Davis, and CCHS employees Shideh Ataii and Ann herself. Additionally, Bob Proctor of Finance is currently collecting photos to illustrate the work in each Division for display in the third floor elevator lobby, along with an attractive new sign showing our logo.



*Among the ArtsChange artwork at 50 Douglas are several large sculptures of produce and an interesting piece composed of two family photos.*

 To suggest an image or submit a photo for the third floor elevator lobby, contact Bob Proctor at [bproctor@bsd.cccounty.us](mailto:bproctor@bsd.cccounty.us) or 925-957-5434. For more information on ArtsChange email [artschange@artschange.org](mailto:artschange@artschange.org) or call 510-231-1348.

## **TB Report Documents Progress, but Warns of Need for Vigilance**

Our Public Health Division’s Tuberculosis (TB) Program is preparing to release its annual Epidemiology Report in conjunction with World Stop TB Day on March 24, and the news is positive but at the same time potentially ominous. The number of new TB cases in Contra Costa declined from 58 in 2005 to 50 in ’06, continuing a nearly continuous trend of the past 10 years. The number of foreign-born residents contracting the disease showed encouraging improvement, declining from 40 in ’04 to 29 last year. Francie Wise, chief of the Communicable Disease Programs, and Dr. Charles Crane, medical director of TB, are warning nonetheless of impending cuts to federal money for state and local TB programs of 25% over the next five years. They note that similar cuts in the 1970s, with an ensuing loss of critical TB Program infrastructure, led to a surge in cases in the ‘80s and early ‘90s for a disease that kills 1.8 million people worldwide each year. The report, prepared by Dr. Juan Reardon and Martin Lynch of the Epidemiology, Surveillance and Health Data Unit and the TB Program staff, warns that protecting Contra Costa from Multiple Drug Resistant and Extensive Drug Resistant TB will require continued vigilance by the highly trained staff of the Public Health Nurses and the TB Unit.

 To view the new TB report, visit [cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org) and click on Health Topics and TB.



# GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

## *Honor Roll*

### **Timothy Tam**

*Detention Chief Pharmacist*

For his extraordinary efforts in initiating the detention medication “robot” and in making adjustments to make it more useful, working on days off, weekends and evenings to plan, educate, troubleshoot and support other staff in implementing the project. His efforts have been ongoing over months.

—Nominated by Kandy Heinen

### **Sue Meltzer**

*Medical Social Worker  
Richmond Health Center*

For always being there for me in my desperate times of need, helping keep my “Tens” Unit and my sanity.

—Nominated by a patient

### **Patrick Wilson**

*Project Manager  
Information Services*

For his continuing “can-do” attitude and willingness to go out of his way to help resolve problems. When a power failure did something to the OmniLink system, he isolated the problem and brought the system back up, working after hours.

—Nominated by Marcia Lopez

### **Dawn E. Dailey**

*Public Health Nurse Manager  
Family, Maternal and Child Health Programs*

For her leadership and development of the Fetal Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) Program from 1998 to 2006, and for her compassion for and commitment to bereaved families. Through her vision, our FIMR is a nationally recognized model program.

—Nominated by FMCH Prenatal Services Coordination Team

## **Employee Milestones**

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Ayore R. Riaunda, Tamara Stanton, Susan B. Meltzer, Thalia L. Siegel, Karen L. Rodrigues, Kathi Schwertscharf, Suzanne E. Thompson, Gloria J. Lafarga, John Ward (10 years); Nenette R. Reyes, Neal C. Price, Violeta Jimenez, Elina M. Webb, Sung Park, Blanca P. Camancho, William E. Fung, Joseph G. Doser Jr., Pirayeh Azari, Richard A. Kraus (15 years); Marlina R. Hartley, Frank E. Wallace III, Sandra K. Vernell (20 years); Ronaldo S. Roque, Sukhinder K. Malhi, Fayechoy S. Chao, Birda Arnold, Peggy L. Green (25 years); John Allen, Heye Kyoung Kim (30 years); and Ednah B. Friedman (35 years).

# GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

## *Honor Roll*

### **Dr. Neil Jaysekera and the CCRMC Emergency Department Staff**

For working feverishly for five hours on a patient who was in septic shock. The team performed beyond the call of duty, an awesome and inspiring job to keep the patient alive.

—Nominated by Bobbie Allen

### **Belinda Veloso** *Experienced Level Clerk Public Health Laboratory*

For managing a huge volume of telephone calls, requests from microbiologists and laboratory technicians, and still finding time and energy to create a training manual for the office.

—Nominated by all her Public Health Lab colleagues

### **Contra Costa Health Services CCRMC**

I cannot say enough for the amazing care I received last year. Kudos for an excellent health care system for those of us that cannot afford care in the private sector.

—Nominated by a patient

### **Michelle Williams** *Acting Nurse Program Manager Child Health and Disability Prevention Program*

For being incredibly accessible and available to help a frantic family transitioning into our health system when their daughter was suddenly hospitalized with juvenile diabetes, showing compassion, understanding, patience and persistence in helping this family navigate our system.

—Nominated by Wendy Cervantes and Mary Anne Morgan

### **Martinez Follow-up Team CCRMC**

For professionalism and dedication, meticulous documentation and going the extra mile to help get the right medications to patients and providers in a timely fashion, processing more than 24,000 refills a year.

—Nominated by Jeremy Fish

## **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 iSite, our Intranet.

As part of our Reducing Health Disparities Initiative (RHDI), our divisions are working on three key areas: 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. Each month, this page highlights what CCHS is doing to address health disparities and what still needs to be done.

# Reducing Health **Disparities**

## **CCHS receives Language Access Award for remote video/voice equipment**

Our Health Care Interpreter Network's (HCIN) new remote video/voice medical interpreting (VVMi) equipment has earned a prestigious state award.

“Using this technology allows us to serve more non-English speaking and limited English patients and improve communication between health care provider and patient so there are less misunderstandings and improved care.” — José Martín

Maggie Nguyen, our HCIN/LEAP (Limited English Action Program) Coordinator, traveled to Marina del Rey on December 6 to accept the 2006 Language Access Technology Leadership Award from the California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems and the California Health Care Safety Net.

To help improve linguistic access as part of our Reducing

Health Disparities Initiative (RHDI), Ambulatory Care, CCRMC and the Health Centers tested the VVMi equipment at Concord and Martinez Health Centers, as well as the Emergency Department and Psychiatric Emergency Services. The equipment is working well and its use is being expanded.

Previously, we had been mostly using bilingual staff or contracted interpreters to provide language assistance for patients/clients. “Most of our interpreters say they will really like the new system. It saves a lot of time because they don’t have to drive from East County to West County to provide their service,” Maggie said.

The new HCIN system allows providers and their patients to access trained in-house medical interpreters via a combination of video and telephone technology. The new system provides quick, simple, reliable access within a standard of no more than five minutes to have an interpreter available, and it will be less expensive than the contracted outside services, said RHDI Leader José Martín.

“Using this technology allows us to serve more non-English speaking and limited English patients and improve communication between health care provider and patient so there are less misunderstandings and improved care,” José said.

This HCIN and VVMi project is a collaboration between Contra Costa, San Joaquin, San Mateo and Riverside counties and Rancho Los Amigos, and is paid for entirely by grant funds raised by the network.



*Maggie Nguyen, our HCIN/LEAP (Limited English Action Program) Coordinator, recently received an award for CCHS.*



For more information about the HCIN system, contact HCIN/LEPA Coordinator Maggie Nguyen at [mnguyen@hsd.cccounty.us](mailto:mnguyen@hsd.cccounty.us) or 925-313-6893.



## VVM expands locations

The new remote video/voice medical interpreting (VVM) equipment will be installed over the next couple of months. There are 13 interpreters in the Health Care Interpreter's Network (HCIN) and they are assigned to different sites where the VVM are being installed. Some are CCHS employees and some are not, and their services are shared among all five partners in the collaboration. Each VVM station includes a camera, video screen, computer and phone. Four stations will be installed in our offices at 597 Center Ave. in Martinez for interpreters speaking Farsi, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese. Two stations for Lao, Mien, Vietnamese and Chinese interpretation will be at the Richmond Health Center. Twenty-five tablet computers with the VVM equipment also will be distributed among the Health Centers. CCHS providers can access the VVM service by dialing the number on the label next to the phone in each station.



*Yvette Mesa with our Health Care Interpreter Network poses with the new remote video/voice medical interpreting (VVM) equipment she uses in her office at the Old Speciality South building on the CCRMC campus in Martinez. She can view clients' faces on video screen on her desk. Yvette said the VMMI equipment makes her job easier.*

## Department Safety Committee has New Leader

The Board of Supervisors (BOS) mandates that each County Department have a designated Safety Coordinator. To comply with the mandate, the Department has designated Personnel Analyst Dorette McCollumn for that role, which for many years was a collective effort at CCHS. The Finance Division's Bob Proctor, who held the job for three years, is still the Department's OSHA Compliance Officer and he will continue to be involved in Department wide safety issues. The Safety Committee, which includes a representative from each Division, is focusing on encouraging units to develop unique Illness and Injury Prevention Plans. The Committee works closely with the County's Risk Management Unit, which promotes a variety of strategies to improve safety and prevent workplace injuries. Every Health Services unit should conduct a health and safety assessment as well as a hazard assessment and then develop plans unique to their operations to protect employees.




Dorette McCollumn

 For more information about the Safety Committee and general safety tips, contact Dorette McCollumn at 925-957-5253 or visit the CCHS Personnel page on iSITE, the intranet. Check the county intranet at <http://intranet.co.contra-costa.ca.us/> for online ergonomics training and CPR classes coordinated by Risk Management.

## Intranet Site Contains Tools, RHDI Review Data

Although use of iSite, our intranet, continues to grow, many employees are unaware of some of the site's special features. One is a phone directory, especially useful to find numbers for staff who are not listed in the county hard-copy directory. This is found by going to the Applications menu at the top of the home page and clicking Phone Directory. Another handy tool is the Dictionary Search, also in Applications. With a single search, it checks more than 20 online dictionaries and provides a definition and links to some of the sources. And a new document that was just recently posted on the site is the Reducing Health Disparities Initiative Strategic Review Data, which is in an RHDI subfolder in the Health Disparities folder.


 To visit iSite, type *cchs* in the browser field of any CCHS computer. For information about how to tailor iSite for your needs, email Marc Miyashiro at [mmiyashi@hsd.cccounty.us](mailto:mmiyashi@hsd.cccounty.us)

## Norovirus the Topic of Health Column

Public Health Nurse Program Manager Susan Farley wrote about norovirus in the most recent installment of our "Healthy Outlook" column, which runs in the Contra Costa Newspapers chain. Norovirus infection is a highly contagious intestinal virus that causes nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Contra Costa and other Bay Area counties currently are experiencing outbreaks of norovirus, which tend to happen in the winter and spring. Though the symptoms can be severe and extremely unpleasant, the illness isn't usually serious for a person who is healthy overall. However, norovirus can be very serious for the frail elderly and very young because these groups are more at risk for severe dehydration. Norovirus is spread through vomit and stool, when a person gets particles on their hand and then puts their hand to their mouth, ingesting the virus. To help prevent the spread of norovirus, make sure to wash your hands frequently, especially before eating and after using the bathroom. When caring for someone who is sick with norovirus, clean and disinfect soiled surfaces as soon as possible, including bathrooms and door handles. Change clothes if soiled by vomit.




Susan Farley

 To read more of this and other Healthy Outlook columns, visit [cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org) and click on the Healthy Outlook link in Items of Interest or on the Publications page.

## CCRMC Auxillary to Celebrate a Very Generous 2006

Ray Ulmer was recently reelected President of the CCRMC Auxillary, which has compiled totals of its impressive contributions to the hospital in 2006. Other officers include Shirley Peterson as Vice President, Pat Ulmer as President Elect and Second Vice President, Barbara Proje as Recording Secretary and Patricia Evans as Treasurer. A total of 71 Auxillary volunteers donated 14,578 hours in '06, which are valued at a total of nearly \$263,000 and which equal to an equivalent of seven fulltime employees. The Auxillary also collected \$7,594 in donations, \$6,111 in fund-raising profits and donated in-kind items such as stuffed animals and layettes valued at a total of \$39,482. That brings the total value of the Auxillary's contribution in 2006 to more than \$316,000, a figure that will be celebrated in a luncheon next month. The luncheon, timed to recognize April 15-21 as National Volunteer Week, was still being planned at presstime.

 For more information or to join or help the CCRMC Auxillary, contact Louise Lawson at [llawson@hsd.cccounty.us](mailto:llawson@hsd.cccounty.us) or 925-370-5440.