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## Sharing Good News

Imagine waiting for a team of people to come and inspect your house, never knowing exactly when the inspection would take place but being sure that every aspect of your home – from your food preparation to how clean every room was – would be scrutinized.

Some version of this is experienced by many of us in our work world since many of our Divisions are subject to periodical inspections and audits from outside agencies and the public.

### Improvement at CCRMC

Our Regional Medical Center has had more than its share of oversight in the past year. You may recall me telling you that last year, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services looked at all departments at CCRMC, including Surgery, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Emergency, Internal Medicine, Intensive Care and Outpatient Services. They found concerns in three departments: Inpatient Psychiatry, Dietary (food services) and Pharmacy. We responded to the CMS survey, submitting a Plan of Correction.

Since then the staff has really stepped up, acknowledging the need to improve some operations, increase staffing, improve policies and procedures and, most important, improve inpatient care and services.

That hard work has paid off. I am delighted to say that recently The Joint Commission (TJC) paid an unscheduled visit – for a week – to CCRMC and our Health Centers and we passed with flying colors. Not only were there only minor issues of concern – none of them involving clinical care outcomes – but TJC recommended that we apply for several awards for best practices. These practices included communication work that the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's "Transforming Care at the Bedside" effort is driving; our antibiotics ordering practices; and our process improvement work with total joint replacement.

### Higher standards

Surveys like this underscore the concept of continuous improvement. The Commission at one time scheduled their inspections. Now they are all unannounced to avoid having facilities "buff" up for their periodic visits. Many of the agencies that oversee our efforts

have also raised their standards, presenting more of a challenge. The bottom line is that we have to be ready all the time, and that's a good thing since providing quality service is our mission.



*Dr. Walker*

There is certainly a reality here that can't be ignored. As a public agency, there are some issues that are beyond our control. Many of the deficiencies identified by TJC have to do with the performance of other county agencies that maintain our facilities and have control over purchasing and human resources.

### Richmond Health Center shines

Surveyors acknowledge some of those barriers. For example, TJC praised the Richmond Health Center for being able to deliver quality care despite the age and condition of the facility. Richmond Health Center does nearly as many patient visits annually as the Pittsburg Health Center with one third as much space and a myriad of physical obstacles. The Commission didn't issue any recommendations for improvement at Richmond, and I consider that to be a tribute to the commitment of the staff to provide quality care.

### Lessons for all of us

Whether it's TJC or the public, we all have someone looking over our shoulders, and I say that's a good thing. Sometimes it takes an outside view to shine light on areas that need improvement which we might not see.

We're learning that in responding to those challenges, the experts we need to get involved are the line staff, who know best what it takes to

*Continued next page*

## DID YOU KNOW

In 2005-06, CCRMC improved patient medication reconciliation from **53%** to **93%** as part of the 100,000 Lives Campaign.

improve operations. CCRMC has learned from their involvement with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and the 100,000 Lives Campaign what it takes to achieve change. (See page 5 for information about change principles.) Dr. Steven Tremain, who is spearheading those change efforts, has been sharing some of the change techniques with other divisions. He is now a nationally recognized expert on change methodology and I encourage you to take advantage of what he's learned.

Even those of us who don't have regulatory agencies scrutinizing our efforts have an obligation to the public to provide the best service possible. An excellent way for us to ensure that everyone is working toward the same goal is for every unit to define what Service Excellence looks like to them. That will help each of us understand the goal we are aiming to achieve. I urge you to begin those efforts now. (That process can begin by reading CCHS' Policy 117A, available on iSITE)

Sincerely

  
William Walker, MD

## Relocating Health Center the Topic of First Podcast

With the discussion about where the Richmond Health Center should be rebuilt in high gear, it seemed a perfect time to reach out to the community with information about the issue in as many ways as possible. To that end, last month I recorded CCHS' first ever podcast on the topic. It was posted on chealth.org, and is accessible from the home page by computers with MP3 capability. This is an important issue for the community and for the City of Richmond, which wants our current site for commercial development. The Richmond Health Center was built in the 1960s and is the only one of our eight Health Centers that has never been replaced. Podcasts on other topics will be added regularly to the website. —WW

## Board Honors Mental Health Young Adult Team

Effective teamwork by our Mental Health Division staff and the Concord Police Department helped bring a troubled Contra Costa resident safely home earlier this year after she talked of suicide and then fled to the East Coast. The 23-year-old woman had been a recent consumer of Mental Health services at a Central County clinic. The County Board of Supervisors gave recognition recently to the police and members of the Mental Health Young Adult Team, who tracked the young woman's travel across country by Greyhound bus and arranged for a New York Police Department officer to meet her upon arrival in New York. Her return home was coordinated by Concord Police Officer Ron Turner. Kudos are in order for Officer Turner and members of the Young Adult Team: Program Manager John Allen and Clinical Specialists Candace Kunz-Tao, Bob McKinnon and Sheryl Wiseman.



*Staff with our Mental Health Division were honored September 14 by the Board of Supervisors for their work with Concord Police in aiding a young Contra Costa woman.*

## Employee Milestones

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Amalia Del Valle Gonzalez, Walter R. Gorski, Kimberlee S. Cox, Lolita B. Lim, Margaret Pytlak, Laura E. Reynolds, Christopher E. Dodd, Anissa Y. Carter, Mary T. Vesey, Denise L. Whittle, Michael L. Shoback, Roya Iranpour, Ma Linda H. Siat (10 years); Gail J. Clark (15 years); Remedios L. Bernardo, Henry S. Ong, Marie C. Servantes-Huie, Irmina A. Gonzales, Mary Puruganan, Cynthia L. Cook-Yoell (20 years); Ernest R. Slye III, Judith K. Smith (25 years); Lily Lestage, Cristeta B. San Jose (30 years); and Jerry L. Kothe (35 years).

The Director's Report is published monthly. Deadline for the December edition is November 12. Publicize your upcoming events and successes by sending information to Dan Smith at 597 Center Avenue, Suite 255, Martinez 94553, fax 925-313-6219, email: dsmith@hsd.cccounty.us The Director's Report is available online at chealth.org and on iSITE, our intranet, at cchs.

# GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

## Honor Roll

### **Jeannie Cummings**

*Detention Facilities Liaison  
FMCH*

For exceeding the First 5 milestones for outreach and case management of pregnant incarcerated women and teens. Also, for being inspirational to clients, and for being instrumental in keeping the dialogue open among correctional facilities and Health Services staff regarding perinatal issues.

— Nominated by Itika Greene and Suzzette Johnson

### **Kate Fowle**

*Public Health Educator/Risk Communicator  
CEI/Health Emergency Coordination*

For her leadership in coordinating the completion of the County's Pandemic Influenza Response Plan.

— Nominated by Kim Cox

### **Donald Gomez**

### **Jotisha Jones**

*Inpatient Financial Services Specialists  
Health Services Finance*

For always being willing to take time out of their busy schedule to help me accommodate patients at the hospital in completing applications for medical coverage. This means a lot to both patients and me. Thank you very much!

— Nominated by Constance Nguy

### **Dave Shoemaker**

*Secretary-Advanced Level  
Public Health Administration*

For his great attitude, dedication and for always being there when needed. He is very organized, positive and very proficient in all he does.

— Nominated by Fowzia Younos

### **Corby Selzer**

*Community Health Worker I  
WIC Program*

For providing outstanding caring support for breastfeeding mothers with special needs, such as the hearing-impaired mother whom she helped with WIC enrollment by a lengthy exchange of text messages to provide needed information.

— Nominated by Nancy Busby Hill

### **Claudia Salmeron**

*Community Health Worker I  
WIC Program*

For quickly and cheerfully responding to requests from Pittsburg Health Clinic doctors and nurse practitioners for breastfeeding assistance for their Spanish-speaking patients, despite a very large ongoing caseload of breastfeeding mothers whom she is supporting with caring counseling.

— Nominated by Lisa Broughton and Nancy Hill

### **Bill Sorrell**

*Developmental Center Director  
Public Health*

For his hard work, great knowledge about the County system and for always being available to help staff with their questions. He is very professional, courteous, positive and easy to talk with. His care exemplifies Service Excellence.

— Nominated by Fowzia Younos

### **Willie Swenson**

*Communicable Disease Program  
Public Health Nursing*

For volunteering to provide emergency cortisol injection training for the Northern California Chapter of the National Adrenal Diseases Foundation on 24 hours notice, and for providing materials on important topics.

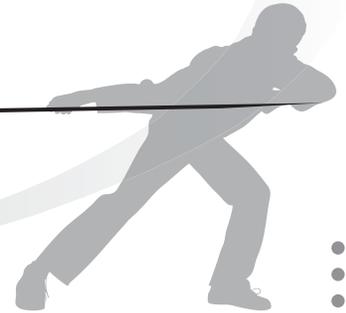
— Nominated by Trice Roberts

## **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 [ServiceEX@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us](mailto:ServiceEX@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 efforts, our divisions are working to achieve outcomes in four categories: consumers/clients/patients/customers; the community; our staff; and our systems. Each month this page highlights what different divisions of CCHS are doing to reduce disparities in health and health care, and what still needs to be done.

# Reducing Health Disparities



*Concepcion James*

## Connie James to Join RHD Team

CCHS Director Dr. William Walker announces that Concepcion James is joining the Reducing Health Disparities team and, over the next few months, will assume the role as RHD manager. Dr. Walker praised José Martín for his groundbreaking work on linguistic access. This change allows José, who has been leading RHD efforts, to focus on the linguistic services component of RHD. Commenting on Connie's new role Dr. Walker said, "Connie's community engagement and resource development skills are an excellent match for RHD's new direction," Connie, who was most recently the Manager of the Bay Point Family Health Center, said, "Building upon the work our divisions are now engaged in, we will work together to document and champion effective strategies to positively impact health outcomes for Contra Costa residents." Dawna Vann rounds out the team, focusing on resource coordination, training and education and staffing the unique African American Health Initiative, which is now a part of RHD efforts.

## Roll-Out Highlighted by Work of Four Groups

More than 70 CCHS staff participated in the recent formal roll-out of the Reducing Health Disparities One-Year Plan and Five-Year Overview. The event capped a year-long strategic planning effort to assess the department's commitment to reducing health disparities. Health Services Director Dr. William Walker traced the history of the commitment – which began as a discussion about diversity and how we treat each other and our patients and clients. Since then, the effort has grown to embrace strategies to reduce both health care disparities inside our system as well as health disparities that affect the community. There is a new focus on what Divisions are doing to improve language access and cultural sensitivity and appropriateness. "The bottom line is that this work has to be incorporated in the

day-to-day work of our divisions. It's not a special project. It sits on the plate of everyone who works in CCHS," said Dr. Walker.

Acknowledging that there are many efforts underway throughout CCHS to reduce health care disparities and health disparities, a few of them were highlighted at the recent event.

- In the area of language access, our participation in the now statewide Health Care Interpreter Network gives us video access to interpreters shared across California by participating health departments, including ours. That gives us access to 20 languages, including American Sign Language. Public Health's Limited English Access



The Promotoras from Bay Point Family Health Center are, from left, Yolanda Costilla, Elizabeth Luciano, Maria Silva and Miriam Medina.



The African American Health Conductors are Evelyn Dodson, left, and LeAndra Turner, right, and they are mentored by Tiombe Mashama, center.

Program staff have now been integrated into the network. For more information, contact José Martín at [jmartin@bsd.cccounty.us](mailto:jmartin@bsd.cccounty.us) or 925-957-5426.

- The African American Health Initiative reported on its continuing efforts to bring the African American community into our efforts to reduce health disparities. They invited programs throughout the department to work with them. For more information, contact Dawna Vann at [dvann@bsd.cccounty.us](mailto:dvann@bsd.cccounty.us) or 925-957-5436.
- Concepcion James, Manager of the Bay Point Family Health Center, and Tiombe Mashama, Senior Health Educator, and the Promotoras and Health Conductors described their efforts to help the community navigate our health system and learn about important health issues.

“There’s a wealth of talent in our community. We have to learn how to tap into it,” Connie said about recruiting residents to extend out reach.

For more information, contact Connie James at [cjames@bsd.cccounty.us](mailto:cjames@bsd.cccounty.us) or Tiombe Mashama at [tmashama@bsd.cccounty.us](mailto:tmashama@bsd.cccounty.us) or 925-313-6826.

- Otilia Tuitin of CCHP described how awareness was raised among staff, leading to training for nearly all employees on Culturally Competent Customer Service. The Mental Health Division’s Kimberly Mayer described how the voter approved Mental Health Services Act is transforming the public mental health system and involving the community in planning to reduce health disparities. For more information, contact Otilia Tuitin at [otuitin@bsd.cccounty.us](mailto:otuitin@bsd.cccounty.us) or 925-313-6063 or Kimberly Mayer at [kimberly@bsd.cccounty.us](mailto:kimberly@bsd.cccounty.us) or 925-957-5132.



From left, CCHS staff Hannah Head, Vidya Iyengar, Sherry Bradley, Jeanne Walker Johnson, Itika Greene and Bill Sorrell discuss RHD.



## 21st Century Change Management: The 14 Principles

Dr. Steven Tremain, Senior Medical Director for CCHS, presented a series of change principles at the roll-out event that can be used a framework for conducting RHD work. “Change doesn’t just happen, it requires knowledge of how to create successful change,” he said, stressing that change has to come from the bottom up. “Change by decree doesn’t work,” he said. He encouraged RHD champions not be afraid of failing at first or of presenting imperfect ideas. “Take small bites, don’t try to solve it all at once,” he recommended. (Log on to iSITE for a complete description of the change principles.)



## Collaboration Allows Diabetes Patients to Attend Conference

For the past four years, Phyllis Howard, a nurse practitioner at North Richmond Center for Health, has checked-in conferees at the yearly “Take Control of Your Diabetes” (TCOYD) conference in Santa Clara — an event which draws 1,200 participants. Since few of Phyllis’ patients could afford the conference fee or arrange a ride to Santa Clara, Dr. Troy Kaji asked Patricia Tanquary, CEO of Contra Costa Health Plan, whether CCHP could use funds for a diabetes patient incentive to cover the registration fee. Once Patricia arranged approval for the pilot incentive project, patients were encouraged to make appointments for diabetes care through Chris Tanaka at CCHP’s diabetes program. Within two weeks, Phyllis and her medical colleagues Drs. Cynthia Carmichael, Kate Colwell, Patricia Glatt and Ann Harvey and Family Nurse Practitioner Cathy Steirn referred 51 patients. TCOYD offered to charter buses and the day of the conference, 23 early risers took off for the event. CCHP will build on the experience of this pilot project to improve participation in next year’s conference. (Thanks to Dr. Troy Kaji for this story.)

*To get involved in next year’s TCOYD planning, contact Dr. Troy Kaji or Chris Tanaka at 925-313-6060.*



*Phyllis Howard registers one of the conference attendees.*



## Project Homeless Connect 2 A Big Success

Kate Schwertscharf, Nurse Program Manager for Health Care for the Homeless at left, and retired Public Health nurse Linda Ray provided adult immunization shots during the second Project Homeless Connect last month at the Willow Pass Center in Concord. About 400 people had access to 80 different types of services during the one-day event, which provides people who are experiencing homelessness with food and medical, dental, employment and other services along with information on housing opportunities. For this Homeless Connect, 168 people volunteered to make the event possible. To see more photos, of the event, visit iSITE, our intranet.



*Joanne Genêt and Gail Doyle*

## Lunchbox, Toy Recalls the Subject of Health Column

Our Lead Poisoning Prevention Project (LPPP) Manager Joanne Genêt and Health Educator Gail Doyle write about the alarming number of recalled lead-containing toys and lunchboxes in a recent installment of “Healthy Outlook” column, which runs in the Contra Costa Newspapers chain. The state Department of Public Health recalled lead-contaminated lunchboxes distributed as part of its Eat 5 (fruits and vegetables) a Day campaign, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission has recalled more than 2 million toys contaminated by lead. Individually, a toy or a lunchbox may not pose a serious threat, but lead from multiple sources can add up to a significant total body “burden” of lead. To help residents safely dispose of the items, LPPP arranged for the toys and lunchboxes to be dropped off at its office as well as County Supervisors’ offices throughout Contra Costa. The column provided information on drop-off sites, lead poisoning prevention and blood lead testing. 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 Intensive Care Unit staff pose for a photographer from *Advance for Nurses* magazine, from left, Mary Bautista, Grace Ma, Ange Estanol, Dr. Pramita Kuruvilla and Rachael Bailey.*

## Magazine to Profile Staff Role in CCRMC Improvements

The CCRMC Rapid Response Team and Reduction of Ventilator-Assisted Pneumonia team were featured in the October 8 edition of *Advance for Nurses* magazine, complete with photos. The article includes a cover photo and a focus on line staff's role in CCRMC being named an Institute for Healthcare Improvement Mentor Hospital for dramatic improvements in medication reconciliation, rapid response, and reducing pneumonia rates in patients on ventilators. These are initiatives drawn from the Institute's 100,000 Lives Campaign to reduce patient mortality in U.S. hospitals. "We are very proud of the improvements at the hospital, which is due to the hard work of many people, especially line staff," said Dr. Jeff Smith, CEO of CCRMC. Smith said particular credit goes to charge nurses Dana Colomb, Sherrie Gordovez, Grace Ma, Virginia Paulino, Amy Alviz, Don Dominguez, Liz Isenberg, Linda Piolo and John Williams; plus infection prevention coordinator Kathy Ferris; all the respiratory therapists and other staff on the interdisciplinary teams. *Advance for Nurses* is a bimonthly publication with a reported circulation of 836,000. It is accessible online at [advancefornurses.com](http://advancefornurses.com)

## County's Industrial Safety Ordinance Inspections Lauded in Congressional Hearings

Contra Costa County was praised recently in testimony to the House Committee on Education and Labor, chaired by Rep. George Miller and in a Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board report. Our Hazardous Materials Program won accolades for how it conducts process safety audits - in contrast to those done by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). "This one county, which is particularly enlightened, seems to be outpacing the rest of the nation," testified Carolyn Merritt, then Chair of the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board. Miller had praised the county similarly in his opening comments at the hearing.

## Popular Turtle

Hazardous Materials Engineer Nicole Alaniz as Wally Wise the turtle is mobbed by fans at Washington Elementary School in Richmond as part of the annual countywide All School shelter-in-place drill conducted last month with the CAER (Community Awareness and Emergency Response) coalition. Fellow engineer Habib Amin, at right, photographs the lovefest.



## Hitting the Streets: Mobile Clinic Expands Health Care Access for Students

CCHS is expanding services to teens via mobile, school-based health clinics, having started this past September at Kennedy High School in Richmond. Further expansions will bring wellness and sick care to children at selected K-12 schools throughout Contra Costa County. For now, the Mobile Clinic is at Kennedy High on Tuesday and Friday mornings seeing enrolled high school students for preventive and primary care. Additionally, the freestanding School-Based Health Center located at Richmond High School has also expanded. It now operates a full morning clinic each weekday that school is in session. The project is a collaboration between Public Health Clinic Services, Family Maternal and Child Health's TeenAge Program, Ambulatory Care, and Pediatrics.



For more information, please contact Susan Nairn, Public Health Nurse Program Manager, at 313-6278.