Backings Our Healthy Message

It might not seem like much of a holiday gift—but we will shortly be issuing a revised Health Services policy that will hopefully benefit all of us in the long run.

Last month we told the Board of Supervisors that we will convert all vending machines at cchs program locations to 100% healthy foods effective April 6. They had previously been at 50% at the direction of a countywide policy approved some time ago by the Board.

I know some of you will be less than thrilled with this change and I think it’s important enough a step to devote this month’s message to explaining why I not only approved the suggestion by Public Health’s Community Wellness & Prevention Program, but wholeheartedly support the urging of a number of our providers, especially Drs. Diane Dooley and Guenter Hofstadler.

What is the problem?

Obesity—especially pediatric obesity—is probably the most critical health issue facing us. I find it particularly disturbing that the lifespan of children growing up today will be shorter than those of their parents because of the rising rates of obesity. Data from last year shows that 40% of low-income children ages 5-19 years old seen in our Health Centers or in the wic program are either overweight or obese.

Surveys among our health professionals indicate 100% of them feel that consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages was a problem in families’ attempts to deal with weight issues. Really upsetting to me is the fact that our providers feel undermined by our Health Centers’ sales of sugar-sweetened beverages. In some cases, such as wic, our staff are in one room actively counseling patients against drinking sodas and eating junk food while these products are being sold at a profit by the Health Center on the other side of the same wall.

We’ve been down this road

Fortunately, we have a track record of dramatic success to look to for solutions. After 1964 when the Surgeon General issued the landmark report on the dangers of smoking, it was two decades before...
California voters approved Proposition 99, providing funding for tobacco control advocacy and education. The results were nothing short of incredible as community after community passed clean indoor air ordinances, youth access measures and thousands of people quit smoking. Although it took some years, all those actions paid off in terms of improved health outcomes. Fewer people die from tobacco-related diseases and there is widespread protection from secondhand smoke.

The message is clear

We’ve only begun to take baby steps in the area of obesity to fight back against the lethal impact of advertising that hawks sugar to our children every day in every way. Most of you know about the very public protest I led with a number of our physicians some months ago to protest the alliance between the American Academy of Family Physicians and Coca-Cola. I think we must do much more of that—all of us—to be sure the message is clear: sugar is killing us and will harm and kill our children.

As providers who serve the most vulnerable of our population, we cannot deliver a mixed message. I agree with Drs. Dooley and Hofstadler and many others, who say that we cannot encourage our patients and the community to avoid sugar, read the labels and choose healthy alternatives if we sell and profit from junk food in vending machines in our program locations.

What we’re doing

To practice what we preach, we have issued a Request for Proposal from vendors to comply with the 100% healthy vending machines. Let me explain what this means:

Community Wellness & Prevention Program Director Tracey Rattray and her staff will conduct “taste tests” in many of your locations over a two-week time period beginning April 7 so you can get a preview of what kind of choices you can expect when the machines and their content are upgraded to comply with the new policy.

Do I believe replacing the vending machines is all that is needed to prevent obesity and improve health outcomes? No. When we began to address tobacco prevention, we realized that it required a concerted effort, involving every band of our Spectrum of Prevention, including policies like these, legislation that would ban sugared drinks on school campuses and elsewhere, providers embracing practices that routinely screen for body mass index and much more community awareness about the causes and solutions.

It’s a first step

This is a good first step. It puts our money where our mouth is as they say. I feel the same way about this issue as I do about health providers getting the flu vaccine—let’s not be hypocrites. For a public health department, we can do no less than serve as a model for the children and families who use our services across the county.

Sincerely,

William B. Walker, MD

Volunteers Needed for Annual Free Tax Preparation Service

Volunteers are needed for the 2011 Contra Costa “Earn It! Keep It! Save It!” (EKS) program. The free tax-preparation service is made possible only through the help of volunteers. People interested in volunteering should register as soon as possible. Volunteer training begins December 11 and the program runs from January to April. Last tax season, EKS helped more than 2,500 low-income families receive more than $3.9 million in tax refunds and credits. Health Services employees are encouraged to volunteer on their own time. No experience is needed to volunteer. To register, visit [www.earnitkeepitsaveit.org](http://www.earnitkeepitsaveit.org) or call 510-412-9290 ext. 17.

The Director’s Report is published monthly. Deadline for the January edition is December 13. Publicize your upcoming events and successes by sending information to Kate Fowlie at 597 Center Avenue, Suite 255, Martinez 94553, fax 925-313-6219, or email kate.fowlie@hsd.cccounty.us. The Director’s Report is available online at [http://cchealth.org/groups/health_services/](http://cchealth.org/groups/health_services/) and on iSITE at [http://cchs/](http://cchs/)
Mass Vaccination Flu Clinics

All Hands on Deck for Public Health Immunization Drive

It was a record for the most vaccines our Public Health Division has ever given in one day. On November 10, the entire Public Health Division—more than 370 Public Health staff—suspended business as usual and with help from Environmental Health and the Medical Reserve Corps, spread out to nine cities, donned vests and set up vaccination clinics where 5,007 people received 8,006 vaccines. For Health Services, the clinics doubled as an exercise in emergency response and the Incident Command System. Public Health Director Dr. Wendel Brunner thanked staff for taking the time to participate in what could become a reality during a real emergency. Immunization Coordinator Erika Jenssen said the clinics remained open until 7 p.m. so working parents and schoolchildren could get a flu shot without taking extra time off. Nursing students from Contra Costa College and Samuel Merritt helped administer vaccine.

This year, one vaccine is all it takes to protect against H1N1 and two other flu strains expected to be circulating. Erika said everyone 6 months and older should get the vaccine. She said it is best to get vaccinated as soon as possible to avoid spreading illness during the holidays. People who have yet to get vaccinated should contact their health care provider or visit www.cchealth.org to find out where flu vaccine is available. Flu vaccine is still available in weekly Public Health Clinics.

To find out more about the flu in Contra Costa, visit www.cchealth.org/topics/flu/

Annual Holiday Food Drive Fights Hunger in Contra Costa, Solano Counties

The Counties Care! Holiday Food Fight between Contra Costa and Solano counties is back in full swing. Donations can be made until December 31 and will help feed thousands of hungry people in both counties. According to the Food Bank, more than 130,000 people are served in both counties every month and numbers are rising. Each dollar raised provides two healthy meals. To make a donation, contact your Division’s Food Drive Coordinator (see isite for contact list) or contact Jackie Peterson at jackie.peterson@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-957-5420.
Joanne Bassali, MD  
Brentwood Health Center  
For making the We Can classes a priority, educating families of overweight children about the importance of exercise and healthy food choices and for giving her time and resources to help parents and children understand the long term effects of being overweight.

◆Nominated by Ana Palacios

Cristina Cruz  
Community Health Worker II  
Financial Counseling  
For going above and beyond her duties, being patient with clients, offering support to co-workers and always having a smile on her face. She is simply a wonderful person to work with.

◆Nominated by Annette Ramirez

Diana Cunnison  
Clerical Supervisor  
Public Health  
For coordinating the complex time study process for Public Health’s H1N1 emergency response funding and for her willingness to help staff navigate through the process - with a smile.

◆Nominated by Kim Cox

Kate Fowlie and the CEI Team  
Office of the Director  
For assisting in highlighting the Breast Feeding Telemedicine Pilot Program.

◆Nominated by Frank Puglisi

Sue Loyd  
Hazardous Materials Specialist II  
Hazardous Materials  
For her effort in helping a resident deal with an indoor air quality problem, reviewing the case history and laboratory results and explaining steps to take to address the problem.

◆Nominated by Michael Kent

Alan Siegel, MD  
Richmond Health Center  
For participating in the “Five Minutes vs Five Days” campaign by creating a catchy and compelling song “Bad Case of Havin’ the Flu” to encourage health care workers to be vaccinated and protect their patients and the community.

◆Nominated by William Walker, MD
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 commendation form by email to wanda.session@hsd.cccounty.us or fax to 925-957-5401. Forms are on our website (www.cchealth.org on About Us page) or isite, our intranet, at http://cchs/ Nominations are subject to approval by Division Directors.

December Milestones Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Tina M. Crummie, Maya W. Maran, Paul Adams, Maria R. Anaya, Hannah L. Head, Mary M. McLain, Steven Montoya, Elizabeth L. Musante, Karen F. Ramirez, Vernita Travis, Ahmad M. Popal, Francisco J. Magana Jr., Karen D. Flynn, Cheryl A. Silveria (10 years); Susan J. Biunno, Lacey A. Friedman, Jacqueline C. Vargas, Ann-Marie Brown, Olga Adams (15 years); Katherine R. Lorthridge, Rhonda R. Barksdale, Jack B. Rosenfeld, Edward M. Krebs (20 years); Adila V. Araya, Terrie L. Kent, Teresa McGowan, Judi A. Lee (25 years); Elaine Seawell, Anita Martinez and Pamela J. Gosling (30 years).
Training Prepares Staff to be Spokespersons for Health Services

The media plays a vital role in getting health information out to the public and Health Services works proactively with news organizations on a regular basis. To prepare staff who might serve as spokespersons for Health Services or their program, our Community Education and Information Unit created a new basic media training, Spokesperson 101. Class participants learn about interview techniques, developing key messages and Health Services’ media policies. Supervising Environmental Health Specialist Vanessa Cordier took the training recently and said it gave her the tools and confidence to prepare for future interactions with the media. In the past few months, 27 employees have gone through the roughly 2.5-hour class, which includes on-camera interviews. CCHS’ communications, Community Education and Information Unit, is available to help employees prepare for working with the media.

To find out more about the training, contact Communications Officer Kate Fowlie at kate.fowlie@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6268.

County Notification Systems Provide Information on HazMat Incidents

When a refinery flares up, as one did at Tesoro’s Golden Eagle refinery in Martinez last month, our Hazardous Materials Division is among the first to respond. As one of the public health agencies of Contra Costa, it is important for HazMat staff to assess any health risks and inform the community. HazMat utilizes several tools to keep the public informed during a serious incident, including through the Community Warning System, which is operated by the Sheriff’s Office of Emergency Services. If an incident poses a health threat, advisories and updates will also be posted to our website at www.cchealth.org and occasionally on our Health Emergency Information Line, 1-888-959-9911. HazMat Director Randy Sawyer said it is important for people to find out what is happening and what they may be instructed to do during a large incident.

To find out about more about our Hazardous Materials Division, visit www.cchealth.org/groups/hazmat/ or call 925-335-3200.

Health Services Doctors Write Material for New Primary Care Book

Several of our current and past physicians have contributed to a new book about primary care. Procedures for Primary Care was published in September and offers step-by-step strategies for nearly every medical procedure that can be performed in an office, hospital or emergency care facility by primary care clinicians. Current CCHS Drs. Jeremy Fish, Stuart Forman, Kim Haglund and Scott Akin, and former CCHS Drs. Jeffrey Smith and Marisha Chilcott wrote material for the book. Drs. Fish, Forman and Smith previously worked with Procedures for Primary Care editor Jack Pfenninger and were asked to recruit the remaining authors.

To read more about the book, visit www.elsevier.com/wps/find/bookdescription.cws_home/724089/description
Conference Celebrates 5th Anniversary of Mental Health Services Act

Mental health services in Contra Costa have been going through something of a metamorphosis the last five years. The state Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) has brought an array of changes—including new programs, new services and a new way of thinking—to our Mental Health Division since 2005. Last month, Mental Health staff hosted a conference to highlight the accomplishments, consumer stories, outcomes and lessons learned from the MHSA. About 272 providers, consumers and community members attended the event. Program Manager Sherry Bradley said the MHSA has bolstered community programs and put a focus on prevention and early intervention, which builds resiliency and increases the chances of a successful recovery.

To find out more about the MHSA, visit www.cchealth.org/services/mental_health/prop63/ or call Sherry Bradley at 925-957-5150.

Emergency Medical Services Adopts New CPR Guidelines, Prepares to Train Staff

If you thought you knew the ABCs of CPR, check again. The American Heart Association recently made some changes to the lifesaving procedure. Our Emergency Medical Services Division has adopted the changes and is working to train first responders and staff. The most notable change is the order in which CPR is to be given. Instead of ABC, the American Heart Association is recommending CAB—compressions, airway and breathing. Prehospital Care Coordinator Pam Dodson said the revised guidelines simplify CPR by putting the easiest step first. She hopes to soon provide materials for county employees who wish to learn the new procedure.

To find out more about the new guidelines, contact Pam Dodson at 925-313-9547 or visit www.cchealth.org/group/ems/

Employee Builds on Popular Mexican Game to Promote Good Health

A new take on an old game is gaining popularity and promoting good health throughout Northern California. Viva Bien Lotería, created by our Public Health Community Health Worker Ana Villalobos, is a spin-off of the traditional Mexican game Lotería, which is similar to Bingo. The game has met with enthusiastic participation at community events, fairs, schools, health clinics and employee conferences and has been sold to Kaiser Permanente. Ana developed and drew the cards for the game that depict healthy diet and hygiene for children. Ana said the purpose is to encourage healthy habits beginning at a young age and in a positive manner.

For more information, contact Ana Villalobos at 925-313-6822.

Ana Villalobos draws a card during a game of Viva Lotería, a game she created based on a popular Mexican game.
Childhood Obesity Summit Highlights Successful Community Collaboration

The news was mostly good for the 120 attendees at a childhood obesity summit last month. Obesity rates for low-income Contra Costa children age 0-5 years declined from 2003-08, but Hispanic children continued to post higher rates than their white and black peers. The Healthy and Active Before 5 Obesity Summit addressed ways to decrease childhood obesity through community collaboration. Healthy and Active Before 5 is a group of Contra Costa agencies whose aim is to prevent childhood obesity. Reducing Health Disparities Manager Connie James said the summit showed promise for reducing disparities in obesity rates. She said community collaboration is a key tenet in our Reducing Health Disparities plan. Speakers at the summit included many past and present Health Services employees. Community Wellness & Prevention Program Manager Tracey Rattray spoke about a new cchs policy to only sell healthy foods at vending machines (See Director’s Message). Other speakers talked about breastfeeding efforts, school-based health centers, physical activity and the West County Healthy Eating and Active Living initiative.

To find out more about the summit or Healthy and Active Before 5, visit www.healthyandactivebefore5.org or contact Dr. Diane Dooley at diane.dooley@hsd.cccounty.us

Regional Medical Center, Health Centers Participate in Great American Smokeout

Our Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Martinez Health Center offered free lung screening last month to mark the 35th annual Great American Smokeout. The Smokeout is a national one-day campaign to help smokers quit. Free lung screenings, smoking cessation information and one-on-one counseling were offered at three locations, two in ccrmc and one at our Martinez Health Center. ccrmc Respiratory Therapist Janyth Bolden said more than 135 people attended the event. She said the free screenings gave people a snapshot of their lung health and could help detect the early onset of some lung diseases. Screening was provided by students from Independence University’s Respiratory Clinical Institute with help from our Respiratory Care Department. In addition to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cancer and other lung diseases, she said smoking contributes to esophageal and stomach cancer; and other health problems like hypertension and diabetes.

To find out more about tobacco in Contra Costa, visit www.cchealth.org/topics/tobacco/ or call Janyth Bolden at 925-370-5107.