Season of Thanksgiving

This holiday season is a time when thoughts of our family, friends and things we are thankful for are prominent in our minds. I, for one, am thankful for the dedication and passion that each of you bring to your job every day and for the important work that you all do for our community. Many of the less fortunate rely on us for their health and survival. In these dire economic times, our role in the community as a lifeline becomes all the more important.

What I am thankful for

As we wrap up another year, I wanted to share with you some examples of the things for which I am particularly thankful, such as our Public Health Division’s Herculean response to the enormous community need for Tdap immunizations following the whooping cough epidemic. A new state law was passed requiring all middle and high school students get the Tdap booster before being allowed to attend school last fall, and our staff provided several free vaccination clinics to help ensure families could meet the requirement. I’m also thankful for Public Health’s annual flu vaccination efforts and its ongoing obesity prevention work, in particular in San Pablo (see story on Page 3).

My gratitude also goes to our Hazardous Materials Division for its critical role in overseeing the safety of our community during accidental releases, such as last month’s oil pipeline leak in Concord (see story on Page 4). Our HazMat staff respond at all hours to assess incidents and monitor air quality to protect the public’s health. Our Environmental Health Division also plays an important role in protecting people, such as ensuring recalled raw milk was pulled from store shelves after a recent E. coli outbreak (see story on Page 3).

I’m also thankful for the all the hard work our Emergency Medical Services Division has done to set up a new Stroke System Program expected to go live next month. This new system will help hospitals and first responders work rapidly as a team to save lives and reduce brain damage for hundreds of people a year. EMS also is recognized for its work on neonatal and pediatric preparedness (see story on Page 4).

Another effort for which I am grateful is our Behavioral Health...
Division’s work in gearing up to assist people being released from prison to the jurisdiction of the county with health, mental, substance abuse, housing and other support services. Additionally, I am grateful for Contra Costa Health Plan’s stellar efforts in bringing thousands of Seniors and Persons with Disabilities into managed care, as well implementing the Low Income Health Plan.

Finally, I am thankful for the many changes and improvements underway at our Hospital and Health Centers with the Delivery System Reform Incentive Payments (DSRIP) Program (see story on Page 5), the innovation work, improvement of care delivery with a patient-centered medical home and the implementation of an Electronic Health Record with help from staff with Information Technology, the Health Plan and other units.

Most of all, I am grateful for you. I know that these difficult economic times have an impact on you and your families. Despite the hardships at home, you still come to work to serve your community. I am always overwhelmed when I see the generosity of our staff in supporting the annual Combined Charities and food drive every year. One of the most important things we can do is to take care of ourselves and our co-workers. We all can be thankful for each other. I know I am thankful for all of you.

Sincerely,

William Walker, M.D.

The next Director’s Report will be the January issue. The deadline is December 16. 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/topics/publications/ and on iSITE at http://cchs/cccounty.us.

Food Drive Fights Hunger in Contra Costa, Solano
The Counties Care! Holiday Food Fight between Contra Costa and Solano counties is back in full swing. Donations can be made until December 30 and will help feed thousands of hungry people in both counties. 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.
Public Health Studies Richmond, San Pablo to Battle Growing Childhood Obesity Epidemic

Childhood obesity continues to rise in Contra Costa and our Public Health Division is working with cities to determine how to buck this troubling trend. The number of school-age children who are overweight or obese in Contra Costa rose by 3.5 percentage points to 33.85% between 2005–10, according to a statewide study by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research and the California Center for Public Health Advocacy. Our Public Health Director Dr. Wendel Brunner said one of the biggest contributors to childhood obesity is sugar-sweetened beverages. Dr. Brunner recently presented to the San Pablo City Council a report put together by our Public Health Division outlining the effects of sugar-sweetened beverages on San Pablo. Among its findings, the report found roughly 52% of San Pablo schoolchildren were overweight or obese in 2010 and more than 90% of San Pablo residents live within a quarter-mile of a sugary beverage vendor. He offered recommendations to the city that could help mitigate the effects of sugar-sweetened beverages. The City of Richmond has requested a similar presentation about its city.

For more information about the study, contact Community Wellness & Prevention Program Director Tracey Rattray at tracey.rattray@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6835. To view news coverage of the studies, visit www.cchealth.org/groups/health_services/in_the_news.php

Environmental Health-Public Health Partnership Proves Pivotal During Recent Raw Milk Recall

When our Environmental Health Division got a notice about raw milk last month, it didn’t hesitate to act. Before receiving an Organic Pastures recall distribution list from the California Department of Food and Agriculture, our Retail Food Program, led by Vanessa Cordier, compiled a list of potential retailers and used its unique partnership with our Public Health Division to collect and test samples. Environmental Health employees Kameisha Waiters, Jangbir Bains, Michele DiMaggio, Ernesto Jacobo, Donald Hwang and Robert Gribben made phone calls and conducted site visits on the night of the recall to ensure the raw milk was off of local shelves. Meanwhile, our Public Health Division’s Communicable Disease Program worked with our Communications Unit to raise public awareness about the recall through the media. The recall was triggered after five California children, including two from Contra Costa County, were infected with the same strain of E. coli after being exposed to milk products from Organic Pastures dairy. Communicable Disease Program Manager Erika Jenssen said the partnership and proactive approach helped protect the public’s health.

For more information about the recall, contact Vanessa Cordier at vanessa.cordier@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-692-2531. To view news clips about the recall, visit www.cchealth.org/groups/health_services/in_the_news.php
IT Works Out for Emergency Exercise

Members of our Emergency Management Team were presented with a problem during our emergency exercise last month that they very well might face during the real thing: technology doesn’t always work as expected. Health Services was taking part in a statewide Medical and Health Functional Exercise focused on a disruption in the public water system. The purpose of this exercise was to test response plans and procedures related to communication, medical surge, information sharing and emergency operations center management. After the exercise, IT staff were praised for their attentiveness and ability to problem-solve. Unique to this exercise was access to a wireless network at the Department Operations Center and videoconferencing between the DOC and County Emergency Operations Center. Exercise lead Kim Cox said IT staff were instrumental in creating emergency management access to these technologies.

To find out more about the exercise, contact Kim Cox at kim.cox@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6648.

HazMat Monitors Oil Leak that Sends Foul Odor Across Concord Neighborhood

Last month, our Hazardous Materials Division closely monitored a crude oil leak from a 16-inch underground pipeline that runs through MOTCO, the former site of the Concord Naval Weapons Station. The leak initially triggered reports of a foul odor throughout the area, but was determined not to pose a serious health risk. Spilled oil and contaminated soil were cleaned and hauled away by ConocoPhillips, the company that owned the pipeline. Assistant Hazardous Materials Director Steve Morioka said HazMat will continue to monitor final cleanup efforts, which could generate odors from the contaminated soil.

For more information about the leak, contact Steve Morioka at 925-335-3211.

EMS Plan and Toolkit Hailed as Best Practice in Canada

Only months after making a splash on the national level, a new plan and toolkit developed by our Emergency Medical Services Division is being upheld internationally. The Pediatric and Neonatal Disaster and Medical Surge Plan and Toolkit has been listed by the Centre for Excellence in Emergency Preparedness in Canada as a best practice document. The plan and toolkit aim to provide the essential foundation to care for infants and children in the event of a medical surge or disaster. EMS Director Pat Frost said successful neonatal and pediatric preparedness relies on a strong network of committed public health agencies, emergency medical services, hospitals and communities.

To find out more about the plan, contact Patricia Frost at patricia.frost@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-9554. To view the plan, visit www.cchealth.org/groups/ems/
Increased Demand, Health Disparities Topics at Recent Women’s Summit
Representatives from Health Services were the only health care panelists invited to participate in a Women’s Summit hosted by the three Assemblywomen (Susan Bonilla, Joan Buchanan and Nancy Skinner) representing Contra Costa County. Our Hospital and Health Centers CEO Anna Roth and Reducing Health Disparities Manager Concepcion James spoke at the November 14 event held to discuss the impact of the economic crisis on services affecting women and children. Anna discussed the increased demand caused by this downturn and how our Regional Medical Center and Health Centers have responded by implementing innovative changes to enhance efficiency and access. Concepcion spoke of how various state and federal cuts have impacted and could further impact public health programs that serve vulnerable mothers and children, such as the Black Infant Health Program. Both women urged the Assemblywomen to continue their staunch advocacy on behalf of the safety net during these difficult financial times. Other panelists addressed concerns in the areas of education and safety.

Hospital, Health Centers Draft Plan to Increase Access, Improve Care
Our Regional Medical Center and Health Centers Division has been a leader in developing smarter and more efficient means of caring for patients—successful efforts that have allowed us to increase access and provide higher quality care while containing costs. These improvements have become all the more necessary as the economy has declined and the demand for care has increased. Unfortunately, limited resources have kept us from developing the infrastructure and systems needed to truly transform our system. This past year we received a potential kick-start that can help us move to that next level. A new ambitious five-year program, called Delivery System Reform Incentive Payments (DSRIP), gives us the opportunity to become more coordinated and patient-centered. By reaching numerous, specified milestones outlined in our DSRIP plan, we will receive funding that allows us to build on the improvements we’ve already accomplished to assure we see patients when and where they need care.

For more information, visit www.cchealth.org/medical_center/culture/pdf/dsrip_summary.pdf

Seniors, Persons with Disabilities Move to CCHP, Community Network
Contra Costa Health Plan has been hard at work expanding our Community Provider Network and partnerships in order to serve an influx of seniors and persons with disabilities (SPDs). California started moving SPDs into a mandatory Medi-Cal Managed Care program on a rolling basis in June as part of health care reform. Since then, CCHP has enrolled 6,469 SPDs with 91 percent of SPDs in Contra Costa choosing to enroll with CCHP. Our CCHP researched patient choice and provider history to match new patients with providers in the CCRMC, CPN and Kaiser networks. Of our Medi-Cal members, 15 percent are seen by Kaiser Permanente, 32 percent in our Community Provider Network and 53 percent in our Regional Medical Center and Health Centers Division. CCHP CEO Patricia Tanquery said SPD enrollment was only made possible by collaboration between CCHP, our Information Technology unit and CCRMC/HCs, particularly with Ambulatory Care Medical Director Dr. Chris Farnitano. CCHP now covers more than 106,000 lives through all its health care programs.

For more information on SPDs enrollment, contact Patricia Tanquary at 925-313-6004.
Staff Send Suicide Prevention Message Via Health Education Show and Column

The award-winning community education television show produced by our Communications Unit, Get Ready, Get Healthy, recently covered suicide prevention. The 30-minute show included two interviews with community members impacted by suicide and featured our Regional Medical Center’s Chief Psychiatrist, Dr. Charles Saldanha, and Behavioral Health Services’ Cesar Court, LMFT, as well as Crisis Line and 211 Director Judi Hampshire. The show, which is produced in collaboration with Contra Costa Television (CCTV), aims to inform viewers that suicide is preventable and that there is hope for recovery. The suicide prevention episode of Get Ready, Get Healthy can also be viewed online at www.cchealth.org. A trailer for the show is available on our YouTube and Facebook pages. Behavioral Health’s Prevention and Early Intervention Coordinator Mary Roy also recently wrote a column about suicide for our Healthy Outlook series. The column also is available at www.cchealth.org

For more information, contact Vicky Balladares at victoria.balladares@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6817.

Cultural Competency Counts When Serving LGBT Communities

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals routinely face hurdles when navigating health systems. These hurdles can lead to increased incidence of depression, drug, alcohol and tobacco use, and some cancers, among other ailments. With this in mind, our Behavioral Health Division sponsored a one-day training to prepare more than 60 members of its staff and community provider network to provide culturally responsive services for LGBT consumers and clients. The training was made possible thanks to a technical assistance grant from the California Department of Alcohol and Drugs Programs, secured by our Alcohol and Other Drugs Program Manager Fatima Matal Sol. Presenter Ken Einhaus informed participants that minority stress experienced by persons who are marginalized in society can create disparities in mental, behavioral and physical health. Our Reducing Health Disparities Manager Concepcion James noted cultural competency is part of the Office of Minority Health Cultural and Linguistic Appropriate Service Standards. She said Health Services must always be prepared to be respectful of our service recipients’ beliefs, values and ways of being. The training was taped and will be available for future Health Services trainings.

To inquire about similar trainings for your Division or Program, contact Fatima at 925-335-3307 or Tony at 925-372-4401.

Staff on the set of Get Ready, Get Healthy.
Phoebe Blaschak, RN
Public Health

For working at a rapid pace as a new employee in our busiest clinics and for performing her work with competence, warmth, humor and compassion for our patients and families.

♦ Nominated by Leigh Pierson-Brown

Patricia Camacho
Clerk – Senior Level
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center

For her willingness to work additional hours to help meet the needs of the Emergency Department and for always going the extra mile to help the department run more efficiently.

♦ Nominated by Lillian Brown

Sally Echevarria
Secretary–Advanced Level

Christine Houser
Medical Staff Coordinator
Cynthia Julian
Clerk–Senior Level
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center

For supporting the 2011 Combined Charities Campaign by stuffing forms and booklets and getting them out in the mail.

♦ Nominated by Teresa Notarmaso

Ron Lucchesi
Information Systems Technician II
Information Technology

For his ability to troubleshoot, identify and fix an ongoing IT problem and for his understanding, patience and compassion.

♦ Nominated by Verona Howie

Lisa Mora
Certified Medical Assistant
Concord Health Center

For her knowledge of clinic information and procedures and for her responsiveness to questions.

♦ Nominated by Magdelena Rodriguez

Sharyn Owens
Secretary – Journey Level
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center

For her willingness to always share her invaluable knowledge and resources with patients and co-workers.

♦ Nominated by Teresa Notarmaso

Frances Marcus Wangerin
Supervising Pediatric Therapist
California Children’s Services

For her many years of service maintaining high professional standards, creating a supportive environment for staff and for assuring children and families receive consistently excellent and compassionate care.

♦ Nominated by Barbara Sheehy
State Recognizes Past EMS Director
Our now-retired Emergency Medical Services Director Art Lathrop was recently named the California EMS Administrator of the Year for his “sustained, dedicated EMS leadership in Contra Costa County and the State spanning over 25 years.” Congratulations, Art!

Doctors Travel to Austria to Present Research
Two of our physicians recently traveled halfway across the globe to Austria to present their research and work in global health care. Drs. Asiya Khan and Scott Loeliger were also joined by former Mark Stinson Fellow Dr. Hideto Saito. They presented at The Network: Towards Unity for Health International Conference in September. Dr. Khan, the current Mark Stinson Fellow, presented on her work around depression management in low-resource and underdeveloped countries. Dr. Loeliger, who oversaw the Mark Stinson Fellowship Program for the last five years and has presented all over the world, talked about his research on the role of family physicians in global health care. Dr. Saito, who currently practices in Ventura County, presented his research on family medicine interest at a medical school in Japan.

To find out more about the presentations, contact Dr. Scott Loeliger at sloeliger@ccfamilymed.com

December Milestones
Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Guenter W. Hofstadler, Julie A. Waring, Brian R. Butler, Noel V. Meneses, Melinda L. Young, Luisa Arguello-Mendoza, David A. Charrette, Maria J.G.C. Banados, Ferdinand A. Uwaechie, Fe C. Villar-Gibson, Arturo M. Cruz, Irene S. Hengst, Denise R. Milosevich, Luz M. Gomez (10 years); Jeff R. Kaufman, Judy M. Stauder, Nancy A. Stothers, Alesia L. Berry, Valerie S. Dickerson, Marian M. Gentry, Brenda L. Simmons, Jovencio D. Tan Jr. (15 years); Zenaida Dougherty-Dos Santos, Alex J. Bantugan, Rhonda N. Goss, Loan T. Hoang, Nancy Phothyphom, Gregory Montoya (20 years); Teresa Igbinadolor, Brigitte E. Imhof, Lorena B. Mercado, Mary J. Murphy, Hector Rivera-Lopez, Maggie L. Nguyen (25 years); Sherlee J. Motquin, April R. Roberts and Ronaldo Roque (30 years).