BOHAC Membership Changes

The Board of Health Advisory Committee (BOHAC) had several changes in membership during the second quarter of 2009. New member Dr. Carin Thomas, a chemistry professor at Central Washington University (CWU), was welcomed at the June meeting. Existing member Dr. Melody Madlem, a health education professor at CWU, resigned her position. The advisory committee also approved the membership of a representative from Aging and Long Term Care and the nomination of Dr. Robert Davis with Valley Vision Associates.

“I’m very pleased that the group will be expanding to include members from health fields that are not already represented,” said Cathy Bambrick, Administrator. BOHAC serves as an advisory committee to the Kittitas County Board of Health, the governing body of the Kittitas County Public Health Department. The group represents the voice of the Kittitas County community.

BOH Holds Public Hearings

The Board of Health (BOH) held two public hearings immediately preceding the June BOH meeting. These hearings were to hear comment from the public on proposed changes to the health department fee schedule and a proposed ordinance prohibiting smoking in public places (see article on page 6).

Following the public hearings, BOH adopted the fee schedule and ordinance as the Board of Health Advisory Committee (BOHAC) recommended. Other actions taken by BOH during the second quarter include approval of funds to be paid to Community Health of Central Washington to carry out the Children with Special Health Care Needs program, a Memorandum of Understanding between the health department and the Retired and Senior Volunteer program allowing volunteers with the program to be placed at the health department, and a contract with the National Association of County and City Health Officials providing funding for the health department to become part of an existing health information exchange network within the county.

BOH receives monthly reports from the business manager, administrator, and health officer. Other items presented to BOH by the health department during the second quarter (in addition to those already listed in this quarterly report) include information about the proposed national accreditation of public health to begin in 2011 and updates on the progress of agreements between Kittitas County and Department of Ecology regarding exempt wells in Upper County.

There are five BOH members. All three Kittitas County Commissioners are members of the board (Alan Crankovich, Paul Jewell, and Mark McClain). The county commissioners are joined by local physician Dr. Don Solberg and Deputy Fire Chief of Kittitas Valley Fire and Rescue Rich Elliott.

A Note from the Administrator, continued

(Continued from page 1)

A Note from the Administrator: Investment in Excellence Training

Eight members of the Kittitas County Public Health Department team, including myself, were able to participate in the recent Investment in Excellence training hosted by Kittitas County.

These team members attended an intensive two-day initial training session with peers from other Kittitas County departments. The focus of the initial training session was to decrease negative self-talk or spoken comments in an effort to increase cooperation and teamwork – items necessary to have an efficient, accountable and responsible workforce. Attendees represented all departments and ranged from elected officials and department heads to program-level staff.

After attending one of the two initial training sessions, which hosted about 35 participants each, smaller groups were formed to discuss areas for improvement specific to Kittitas County operations or employment. How would the government of Kittitas County like to be known? What goals should be set? How will we know when we have reached our goals? Ninety-minute discussions were held by the smaller groups weekly for five weeks to solicit ideas. These groups were led by a trained facilitator. Input from each of the small groups led to the creation of vision and mission statements for operations at Kittitas County as a whole. This is not the final step, however. The entire group of 70 participants plans to meet in mid-July to begin action planning. In the action-planning phase we will identify specific activities to improve operations at the county and we will identify parties responsible for driving the changes that were agreed upon by the group. We have the commitment of the majority of elected officials which is crucial to the success of this project.

I look forward to working for an organization where all employees feel empowered to effect change when they feel change is necessary. The environment that is being created as a result of this training experience and the follow-up sessions is an environment of teamwork and cooperation – just as we had hoped.

Cathy Bambrick, Administrator
Bicyclists and drivers who use 5th Avenue in Ellensburg are encouraged to provide their feedback about the new sharrows by filling out a survey at www.shapeupkc.org.

Lot of Kittitas County residents bike. Biking will hopefully be easier and safer in downtown Ellensburg along 5th Avenue thanks to a newly painted sharrow from the fairgrounds to West... dedicated bike lane. The sharrow symbols do not create a separate bike lane, but allow bicycles and vehicles to share a lane of traffic.

Painting of the sharrows was done by City of Ellensburg in mid-June.

During the 2008 – 2009 school year, 69 youth were trained in how to give presentations to their peers and younger students. Those trainers reached 282 students throughout the county. For this year-end event, tenth grade girls from Morgan Middle School participated in a low ropes course and other team building exercises, including rock climbing and a zip line. In this photo, all ten girls worked together to devise a plan that would allow all of them to stand on a small platform at the same time. These ten girls gave six presentations during the previous school year, reaching about 155 elementary students. Funding cuts to the tobacco program at the state level may reduce the number of TATU activities in the future, though the health department is committed to continuing this valuable program.

Last TATU Event of the School Year

Teens Against Tobacco Use, or TATU, met for the last time during the 2008 – 2009 school year on May 27. TATU is a peer-education program that gives middle school students the opportunity to present information to elementary school students with the purpose of preventing tobacco use. During the 2008 – 2009 school year, 69 youth were trained in how to give presentations to their peers and younger students. Those trainers reached 282 students throughout the county.

Early Intervention Program Aims to Help Parents

The Early Intervention Program (EIP) gives one-on-one help to parents in an effort to reduce the risk of child abuse or neglect within the home after a previous low-risk incident. EIP is a home visiting nurse program that helps parents enhance parenting skills and family self-sufficiency. Families are referred to the health department for EIP services by a social worker from Child Protective Services, Family Voluntary Services, or Child and Family Welfare Services. Referrals are only given when the Department of Social and Health Services has determined that there is low risk for harm to a child if they remain in the home. During 2008, there were a total of 29 referrals that resulted in 51 home visits made by a nurse from the health department. “The parents I have worked with have been very appreciative of the visits. They look forward to using the techniques that we talk about in their own homes,” according to Linda Navarre, Public Health Nurse. “Our main goal is to keep kids with their own parents in a safe environment.”

Concrete Dumping Near Easton

Several hundred “panels”, or concrete slabs, were dumped at a site near Easton without a solid waste pile permit. These concrete slabs were removed from I-90 during road repair and dumped rather than being moved to the location approved in a contract between the road repair contractor and the Washington State Department of Transportation.

Bicycling News in Kittitas County

Bicyclists in Kittitas County attended the annual Bike-to-Work breakfast event at the Rotary Pavilion in downtown Ellensburg on May 15. The event was co-hosted by Shape Up Kittitas County, a program of Kittitas County Public Health Department.

Biking is a great way to stay physically fit and be environmentally friendly at the same time,” said Sarah Bedsole, Health Educator with the Shape Up program. “I’m always impressed by the great turnout at the Bike-to-Work breakfast for our fairly small county.

Children’s Immunization Clinic Held April 18

A free children’s immunization clinic was held on Saturday, April 19 to help bring kids up to date on the immunizations required for school entry. Fluoride varnishes to help prevent tooth decay were also available during the clinic.

Early Intervention Program

Posters 2

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Clean-up is expected to be finished before the end of July.

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The breakfast was scheduled to coincide with national Bike-to-Work Day, the third Friday of May annually, as part of Bike-to-Work Week and National Bike Month.

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As part of the yearly immunization clinic the health department also holds the ‘Hallway to Health’. Activities to keep kids busy before and after the immunizations included seed planting, coloring, helmet fittings through Safe Kids (helmets were sold for $7), and counseling by members of the Teens Against Tobacco Use (TATU) group.

This year a total of 25 children were immunized, receiving a total of 101 vaccinations. Eighteen children received fluoride varnish.

“I am glad that we were able to provide this service free of cost at a time when many people are struggling financially,” said Linda Navarre, Public Health Nurse. “We had incredible support from volunteers who helped with everything from traffic flow to registered nurses providing immunizations.

The clinic has been held for the last several years, but next year may be the last year the event is free of charge to all children due to budget cuts at the state level. Already, beginning July 1, girls under age 18 who have private insurance that covers vaccines are not eligible for state-supplied HPV vaccine. This will expand next year to exclude all children with private health insurance that covers vaccines from receiving state-supplied vaccines.
Stimulus Funds Received for On-Site Sewage Replacements

Stimulus funds will be coming to Kittitas County to replace aging or failed septic systems within the Wilson Creek sub-basin. Kittitas County Public Health Department applied for the funds through the Washington State Water Pollution Control Revolving Fund, with an aim to decrease illness in humans. About $250,000 will be available in the form of forgivable loans to replace eligible septic systems, though eligibility requirements have not yet been set. More information about this project will be available in Fall 2009.

Smoking in Public Places Ordinance Passed

A county ordinance regarding smoking in public places was passed by the Kittitas County Board of Health and the Board of County Commissioners on June 18. The ordinance adopts into county code the existing state law that pertains to smoking in public places (adopted in December 2005), allows more effective enforcement of smoking violations, and expands the definition of public place to include places where tobacco or tobacco products or sold. “Adoption of this ordinance will allow Kittitas County code enforcement to assess fines for smoking violations which previously could only be issued by law enforcement,” according to James Rivard, Environmental Health Manager. The Tobacco Prevention and Control Program of Kittitas County Public Health Department is enthusiastic about the newly adopted ordinance as well. “We are pleased that the Board of Health and Board of County Commissioners support the more effective enforcement that this ordinance allows,” said Kasey Koutonn, Health Educator.

There have been only six complaints regarding smoking in public places reported to the Kittitas County Public Health Department since January 2008. When smoking complaints are received, an environmental health specialist or health educator make a visit to the site of the complaint to provide education about the law. Recent estimates show that about 19% of Kittitas County adults smoke cigarettes; this is similar to the proportion of adults that smoke statewide. Though fecal coliforms are generally not harmful themselves, they are often used as indicators of sewage contamination from humans or animals. One subset of fecal coliforms, E. coli, can cause infection or disease.

Summer Immunization Clinics Planned

Before school starts this fall, incoming students need to be up-to-date on required immunizations. The Kittitas County Public Health Department will be offering three free immunization clinics open to any child under age 19 to ensure all students have a chance to get up to date. Students may attend any immunization clinic, regardless of where they attend school. Immunization requirements for school entry vary by grade level and can be found on the Department of Health website at www.doh.wa.gov/chil/immunize. All grades require at least three doses of vaccine that protects against diphtheria and tetanus. A booster dose of Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) is required at age 11 if it has been at least five years since the last dose of tetanus containing vaccine. Other immunizations which may be required include the varicella vaccine, which protects against chickenpox, the polio and Hepatitis B vaccines, and MMR to protect against measles, mumps, and rubella. There are recommended vaccines that will also be available for free but are not required for school entrance, including meningococcal, HPV (girls only), and Hepatitis A vaccines. HPV vaccine will only be provided free of charge to girls who do not have private health insurance that covers vaccine.

Substance Use Data Presented at Community Planning Event

Assessment Coordinator Amy Diaz presented data on youth and adult substance use to about 40 participants at a strategic planning session held by Kittitas County Community Network on June 10. The session aimed to develop a community plan addressing substance abuse. Data presented was taken from the most recent Healthy Youth Survey, given to kids in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 in October 2008, and the 2006 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, a telephone survey administered at random to adults around the country. Some data specific to Kittitas County residents includes:

- 30.8% of 12th graders reported marijuana use within the past 30 days.
- 64.9% of 10th graders thought that someone who smokes one or more packs of cigarettes daily puts themselves at “great risk” for personal harm.
- Of the 39.3% of 10th grade students who have smoked a cigarette, the average age of first use is 12.2 years.
- About 18% of adults have had five or more drinks in a row within the past 30 days.
- 54.4% of adults who smoke would like to quit.

Perceived parental disapproval

Percentage of students who reported that their parents feel it would be very wrong for them to use...
Health Department Invited to Present at National Meeting

Due to work on a health information exchange network project the health department is working on with local health care providers, a representative from Kittitas County Public Health Department was invited to present at a national public health informatics workgroup meeting in Washington, D.C.

Administrator Cathy Bambrick attended the two-day meeting and presented the work of the health department on April 22. “The response I received was just phenomenal. Kittitas County will be one of the first counties to incorporate their public health department into a health information exchange network so there was a lot of interest,” said Bambrick. The information exchange will benefit both health care providers and the health department. Health care providers will immediately obtain information about services their patients receive at the health department. The health department will quickly receive notification of illnesses that are required to be reported by law, such as salmonellosis and pertussis, so investigations can begin at once.

Summer Food Safety Tips

Picnics and barbecues are popular in the summer, but with these events comes an increased risk of foodborne illnesses. Undercooked meats, cross contamination, and improperly handled food can be a source of illnesses such as Listeria, Salmonella, or E. coli. These illnesses can cause diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, fever, and chills. Young children, people over 50, and those with weak immune systems are at higher risk for serious illness. “The most basic way to prevent foodborne illness is to wash your hands when preparing food and before eating,” according to Kodi Still, Environmental Health Specialist. Other important tips include:

- Keep raw meat from touching other foods, utensils, or preparation areas.
- Wash whole uncut fruits (including melons) and vegetables before cutting or eating.
- Transport salads, freshly cut fruits and vegetables, and other prepared foods in a cooler.
- Throw out food that has been sitting out for more than two hours.
- Remember, when in doubt, throw it out!

Mosquito Larvicide Spread in Areas of Cle Elum

After a horse became the first case of West Nile virus ever to occur in Kittitas County in late 2008, Environmental Health staff took the precautionary measure of larvacing limited areas of Cle Elum to reduce the risk of additional West Nile virus cases in 2009.

West Nile virus is an illness that mainly affects humans, horses, and birds. It is spread by mosquitoes. The larvae of the mosquitoes that were used with West Nile mosquitos before they become full-grown adults that are able to spread the virus and can be purchased at many hardware stores. “We spread larvicide in the general area where the horse became ill last year,” according to Kobi Stoll, Environmental Health Specialist. “We stayed within one mile radius of where the horse lived, on Airport Road.”

Tracking of West Nile virus throughout 2009 showed a high incidence of mosquito activity. In Kittitas County, mosquito samples and certain dead birds reported by the public are tested from July 1 through August 31. Horses or people with symptoms of the illness are tested year-round. If you find a dead bird you can call (509) 962-7539 or report it using the online submission form at www.co.kittitas.wa.us/health/vecror.asp.

Multistate Learning Collaborative: Adolescent Immunizations

Adolescent immunization rates in Kittitas County are the focus of a two-year project funded by the Multistate Learning Collaborative. The importance of adolescent immunizations was highlighted with the recent pertussis outbreak in the county. The first year of the project involves data collection to estimate adolescent immunization rates within the county. In addition, input is being sought from local health care providers and parents of adolescents entering 9th - 12th grade in the 2009 - 2010 school year to determine barriers to immunizations for parents who would like their children vaccinated and reasons for under-immunization among parents who choose not to vaccinate their children with one or more vaccines. Parents of Kittitas County children entering 9th - 12th grade are encouraged to fill out a 26-question survey to share their opinions about immunizations with the health department. The survey is available on the health department website: www.co.kittitas.wa.us/health, in English and Spanish, or on paper at any high school office or the health department.

Survey participants can be entered to win one of four $50 Ellensburg Chamber of Commerce gift certificates. Public Health Nurse Linda Navarre will use the information to develop a vaccine education campaign addressing issues brought up by parents and health care providers. The education campaign will occur during the second year of the project.

Kittitas County Public Health Department employees jumped into the county employee wellness program “Count Your Miles” with both feet on June 2 by taking a three mile round-trip hike to Umtanum Falls. The Count Your Miles program is hosted by the Kittitas County Employee Input Committee and runs for eight weeks during June and July. Participants wear a pedometer every day and report their miles weekly. This is the third year of the program.

Health and fitness experts recommend targeting 10,000 steps per day. Since most people take about 2000 steps in a mile, this is the equivalent of walking about five miles each day. Kittitas County adults are generally active. According to the most recent results from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 57.9% of Kittitas County adults participate in the recommended amount of moderate or vigorous physical activity on a regular basis, compared with 53.7% in Washington State. Way to go Kittitas County!