

# PUBLIC HEALTH CONNECTION

## The Importance of Educating Legislators on the Critical Role of Public Health

On January 22, the Kittitas County Public Health Department (KCPHD) staff attended the 2014 Washington State Public Health Association Legislative Education Day. The day was intended to educate local public health staff about legislative efforts around health issues and to assist staff in communicating with legislators. Communication included the role of public health and advocating for utilization of state funding for the improvement of our local public's health.

KCPHD staff heard from various state representatives, including Secretary of Health Dr. Wiesman, about health topics on the table for the 2014

legislative session, which are opportunities to utilize funding for health prevention.

Staff received tips, talking points, and ways to prepare conversations for local legislators. KCPHD staff then met with local legislators, Representative Judy Warnick, Representative Matthew Manweller, and Senator Janea Holmquist Newbry to discuss the impacts of public health funding on a local level. "I was impressed how our Senator and both Representatives, made themselves available to us, as constituents. They took the time to listen; they really wanted to hear what we had to say and valued our insight about our local community's

health needs," stated Elizabeth Ketterer, Community Health Specialist.



## A Note from the Administrator: Strategic Planning

One of KCPHD's major projects for 2014 is to create a new strategic plan. Our current plan was created in 2009. A strategic plan is used to communicate an organization's high level goals and the actions needed to achieve those goals. It also includes elements such as the organization's mission, vision, and core values.

Our strategic plan is being developed by examining KCPHD's strengths and weaknesses and using input from our stakeholders to forge our future direction. The plan will not sit on a shelf and collect dust. It will have an action plan that will be implemented and

systematically monitored by KCPHD leadership and staff.

As KCPHD gradually recovers from the economic downfall and years of unstable staffing and funding, I am excited to be joining together with staff, the Board of Health, and the Board of Health Advisory Committee to identify new areas of focus that will lead us to a successful future in public health.

Here's a sneak peek into the progress of the strategic plan development:

Priority Strategic Issues:

- Achieve public health accreditation.

- Increase community partnership and public health awareness.
- Develop and implement quality improvement and performance management systems.
- Improve internal collaboration and communication.
- Increase sustainability and stability of public health funding.

-Robin Read, Public Health Administrator

**Department-Wide**

New Grants /Fund Sources	3
Active Volunteers	3
Health Data Requests	6
Quality Improvement Projects Completed	2
Media Contacts	32
Health Provider Releases	16
Community Engagements	216
Code/Policy Updates	6

**Vital Records**

Births Registered	74
Birth Certificates Issued	261
Deaths Registered	23
Death Certificates Issued	52

**Access to Baby and Child Dentistry**

Outreach Contacts	72
Referrals to Dentists	6

**Communicable Disease (CD)**

Tuberculosis Investigations	0
CD Investigations	36
Confirmed CD cases	10
Sexually Transmitted Diseases Reported	60
TB Tests Administered	19

**Immunization**

Total Vaccinations	271
Flu Vaccinations	82
Travel Vaccinations	6
Adults Receiving Vaccine	123
Children Receiving Vaccine	39
Travel Consultations	7

**HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C**

HIV Tests	0
Hepatitis C Tests	0
Syringe Exchange Participants	21
Syringes Exchanged	197
Education Participants	105

## KCPHD Addresses Air Quality in Kittitas County

The Washington State Department of Ecology granted KCPHD \$25,000 in funds to address air quality.

Over the past few years, fine particulate matter (PM2.5) air pollution in the Ellensburg area has reached unhealthy levels several times. This is a concern not only for health reasons, but also because higher levels of fine particles could cause the Ellensburg to violate the federal health-based air quality standard.

The goals for the grant include assessing current practices around air quality and burning in Kittitas County and utilizing the assessment results to develop and implement education and outreach.

As part of the grant received from the Washington State Department of Ecology, KCPHD formed an Air Quality Advisory Committee (AQAC), comprised of many local partners. The goals of the committee are to create and implement an assessment to determine knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and cultural barriers surrounding burning behaviors and other PM2.5 pollution contributors in Kittitas County, survey community members, provide education for best practices for wood stove burning, complete a wood stove inventory of the community, create an education and outreach campaign to reduce PM2.5 levels measured in Ellensburg

by Ecology’s monitoring equipment atop Hal Holmes Center, and create a plan for future air quality projects and goals.

The AQAC held an open house kickoff event on March 18 at the Ellensburg City Hall, which received positive feedback from community members in attendance. Residents were encouraged to attend to learn about air pollution, how it is measured, and options for the reduction of air pollution in Ellensburg and surrounding areas.

The AQAC will meet monthly to continue their efforts to ultimately reduce PM2.5 air pollution in Kittitas County.



## KCPHD Helps Bright Beginnings Re-Open School Garden

KCPHD is well aware of the benefits of children and gardening. The numerous benefits include hands on learning about produce, connecting with nature, getting exercise time through gardening, and increasing the consumption of healthy foods.

So, when Bright Beginnings for Kittitas County, the local Head Start school asked for help with issues surrounding their school garden, KCPHD and others such as the Food Access Coalition and the

Master Gardener program acted to re-open the school garden.

The issue stems from the lack of protocol around regulations and permitting of school gardens. Alisa Spieckerman, Public Health Associate, investigated food safety laws and garden regulations around licensed child care facilities incorporating produce in their meal programs and presented her findings to the Department of Early Learning.

In addition, KCPHD wrote a letter of support and provided them with safe gardening documents. Bright Beginnings for Kittitas County will also provide a garden committee who will track permission slips of students, soil logs, etc. to encourage a safe garden space.

The garden was successfully reopened this spring.

# PUBLIC HEALTH CONNECTION

## Local Public Health Staff Attends Homeland Security Training

Robin Read, Public Health Administrator, and Holly Myers, Environmental Health Supervisor, from the Kittitas County Public Health Department (KCPHD), recently completed a national Environmental Health Training in Emergency Response offered by the Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP), in Anniston, Alabama. The CDP is operated by the United States Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The training was a four day course that focused on environmental issues communities may face during an emergency. The course

trained Ms. Read and Ms. Myers how to identify environmental hazards and threats in Kittitas County as well as emergency preparedness and response activities that fall under the duties of environmental health at KCPHD.

Ms. Myers hopes that she will never have to use the training. However, she states, "People look to the health department to ensure clean water, safe food, and sanitary conditions. Our responsibilities do not change in an emergency, they become more concentrated and urgent." The training provided Ms. Read and Ms. Myers an opportunity to network with people from all over the United States who

have responded to emergencies including Hurricane Katrina, 9-11 and the tornado in Joplin, Missouri. Ms. Myers adds, "With this training we will be better able to respond and act quickly in an emergency affecting Kittitas County."

Training at the CDP campus is federally funded at no cost to state, local, or emergency response professionals or their agencies. The participants in CDP training gain critical skills and confidence to respond effectively to local incidents.

## Successful Health Event at CWU Not Just "Luck"

The Kittitas County Public Health Department coordinated an event at Central Washington University (CWU) on March 12, offering free human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines and free help with enrollments in health insurance to students. The event, titled 'Your Lucky Day', was held in the Student Union building in the pit, a heavy-traffic area where students typically spend time. Among a population that can be difficult to engage, the event proved to be successful. Many students utilized the free health insurance assistance. Nineteen were successfully enrolled in Apple

Health and two signed up for qualified health plans. Eight certified in-person assisters were available to help students sign up for Washington health plans.

"It was a surprise to have so many students interested in investigating their health insurance options" Skylar Griessel, Community Health Specialist said. "We were happy to provide the opportunity, and even more pleased to see students taking advantage of it."

The HPV vaccinations went better than expected as well. Tiffany Beardsley, KCPHD nurse, administered six HPV vaccines and issued dates for

students to schedule their next free vaccine with the health department. KCPHD staff and volunteers provided education about the HPV vaccine to passersby and students in the lunchroom.

"So many people contributed to making this event a success," Griessel said. "Without the music, free coffee, and the university staff, we would not have seen as many participants."

The CWU scheduling office waived the fee for space and provided tables and chairs and coffee was donated by the D & M Coffee Company.

### **Environmental Health (EH)**

EH Complaints	21
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### **Living Environment**

#### *Schools*

Building Inspections	8
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#### *Public Pools & Spas*

Permits Issued	0
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Inspections	8
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#### *Camps & Parks*

Permits Issued	0
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Inspections	1
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### **Solid Waste**

Installation Permits Issued	1
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Inspections	0
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### **On-Site Sewage**

Installation Permits Issued	29
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Finalized Permits	20
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Site Evaluations	20
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Inspections	17
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### **Food Safety**

#### *Permits*

Permanent Food Establishment Applications	12
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Temporary Food Establishment Applications	5
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Food Handler's Permits	527
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#### *Inspections*

Establishment Inspections	115
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Temporary Event Inspections	0
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### **Drinking Water**

Group A Water System Sanitary Surveys	0
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Group B Water System Inspections	0
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Individual Well Site Application Reviews	16
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Adequate Water Supply Determination Applications	57
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Well Delegation Inspections	7
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? **Did you know** ?

- Initiative 502(I-502) licenses and regulates marijuana production, distribution, and possession for persons over 21 in Washington State.
- I-502 states that it is unlawful to open/consume a package of marijuana or marijuana infused product in view of the general public.
- Only people 21 and older can possess marijuana under I-502.
- Providing marijuana to minors at home is a felony.
- There are greater risks of side effects from eating marijuana versus smoking marijuana.
- According to local data, one in four high school seniors in Kittitas County smoked marijuana in the last month. (Healthy Youth Survey 2012)
- An online guide “A parent’s guide to preventing underage marijuana use” is available at [preventionworksinscattle.org](http://preventionworksinscattle.org)



## Board of Health (BOH) Approves New Leased Water Fee

On February 26, BOH approved setting a joint Board of Health/Board of County Commissioners public hearing to consider the new leased water certificate fee.

On March 20, Kittitas County staff provided information about the new fee. After

public testimony, the fee was approved by the BOH as well as the Board of County Commissioners.



## Board of Health Advisory Committee (BOHAC) Elects Members

On January 13, BOHAC nominated new members to the committee. New committee members include Patti Canterbury (Elmview), Monty Sabin (Kittitas School District), Andrew Lyons (Hopesource), and Norm Redberg (ADDS). Two

additional members were nominated in February, Judy Hennessy and Anne Johansen (CWU).



## Quality Improvement

Now that the department is fully staffed, the Quality Improvement Leadership Team (QILT) has started the process for the Quality Improvement Plan and facilitation of projects in the department.

The QILT deliverables have been established with a timeline for completion. To date, KCPHD has assessed

current practices, knowledge of staff, and attitudes about quality improvement. The findings will be generated into a complete report.

Currently, QILT is reviewing quality improvement plans of three other accredited local health jurisdictions as well as assessing and identifying quality

improvement projects within the department that should be incorporated into the plan to create an ongoing culture of quality improvement.

