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'Tis the Season

In this issue of the Director's Report, I hope you read the inspiring story of three employees (page 8) who went out of their way to overcome a computer glitch and ensure that patients in West County could see their providers as scheduled. The employees – Nikita Hughes, Peg Linde and Brenda Moore – worked through the night to get the job done – and no one even asked them to stay and work overtime.

That kind of extraordinary giving is heartwarming and provides a good object lesson, particularly appropriate now when most of us are asked to give to a variety of causes and charities.

A Dilemma

Every year around this time, I am asked by very passionate and committed people if I'll write an All Staff message or put something in my Director's Message about the annual food drive, the charitable giving campaign, the Earn It! Keep It! Save It! tax preparation assistance program and other extremely worthwhile activities that need money and/or volunteers to make them successful.

I wholeheartedly support these efforts. In fact, we commit staff time to making sure they run smoothly and reach their goals. But I must admit that when the requests start coming, especially in the late fall, I have conflicting feelings. When I write about them, it probably appears that I am advocating for employees to give to these programs and certainly by giving you all information, I suppose that is what I am doing. What I'm hoping to do, however, is to provide information and identify opportunities – and leave it up to you.

A Strategy

What I believe about giving and try to apply to my own giving efforts is this: People need to look into their hearts and pick the few charities that touch them and reflect their passions. There are so many worthwhile organizations doing such amazing work that it is a challenge to select a few and support them. But we all have limited resources and decisions must be made,

so targeting those that come closest to your heartfelt commitment may be most effective.

More than Money

I'm also conscious that some of us can't afford to give money – and may be in need of the help that some of the organizations we support provide. But giving isn't about money, as the three employees who worked through the night proved. It's about going the extra mile, reaching out to help. Lori Braunesreither is another great example. Every year, she creates imaginative and effective ways to encourage her Environmental Health colleagues to participate in the annual food drive — as well as a toy drive for homeless children and fundraising for STAND!, a domestic violence program. Her commitment to this effort really illustrates my point about following your passion. Lori says, "Why am I so passionate about these donations? Because at one time, my family needed the help from the many services offered to low-income families – including food from a food bank." (You can read Lori's testament to her single father's struggle to raise her and her sibling on iSITE)

In Health Services, there are dozens of us who are called daily to give far more than our county job descriptions require. During the recent oil spill, our Hazardous Materials staff worked long hours cleaning up oil – responding to other calls and displaying humor and graciousness all the while.



Dr. Walker

Continued next page

DID YOU KNOW

Contra Costa County employees gave an average of **\$11.33** each to last year's holiday food drive.

Director's Message Continued...

I want to acknowledge all of your efforts throughout the year and wish you a happy holiday season

Sincerely



William Walker, MD

Debate Continues Over Richmond Health Center Relocation

We are continuing our efforts to relocate and rebuild the Richmond Health Center so that the West County community will have a modern facility – all of our other Health Centers have been replaced except that one. We are pursuing two parallel options: a site at 23rd Street and Bissell Avenue in Richmond and one adjacent to Doctors Medical Center in San Pablo. We participated in a community forum sponsored by the City of Richmond to get community input about possible sites and also conducted a survey of staff and patients to get their ideas. Most staff and many patients favor the San Pablo location. The City of Richmond is currently supporting a plan for the 23rd Street location. There are many issues related to both sites that must be resolved and I'll keep you posted on progress in the coming months.. — WW

Contra Costa, Solano Compete in County Cup Food Drive

County employees have until December 24 to participate in the annual food drive competition between Contra Costa and Solano counties. Last year, contributions by county employees to the holiday season campaign by the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano totaled nearly \$120,000 in cash and 7,200 pounds of food, and Contra Costa retained the “Big Apple” trophy by averaging more per employee. Prizes will be given to the top three departments in each county. The Food Bank serves some 82,000 people in the two counties each month, and 66% of clients in its emergency food programs have annual household incomes of less than \$15,000. Because of the Food Bank's buying power, money goes about six times as far as food donations. Checks should be made out to Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano County, with “food drive” on the memo line.

 For more information about the food drive, contact Jackie Peterson at jpeters2@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-957-5420. A list of contact numbers for each division's coordinator for the drive is on iSITE, our intranet.

Volunteers Still Needed for Free Tax Prep for Hardworking Families, Individuals

Bilingual volunteers, greeters, screeners, site coordinators and tax preparers are being recruited for the 2008 Contra Costa “Earn It! Keep It! Save It!” (EKS) program. Last tax season EKS, a Contra Costa partnership program, helped more than 2,100 low to moderate-income families receive more than \$2.4 million in tax refunds and credits. No experience is needed, and volunteer tax preparers will receive 16-20 hours of training in January. Volunteers must be at least 18. Return volunteers can do their training online. The deadline for submitting volunteer applications is December 15.

 For more information or an application, visit our website (cchealth.org) or contact program manager Lloyd Madden at Lmadden@ehsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-1736.

The Director's Report is published monthly. Deadline for the January edition is December 10. 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 cchealth.org and on iSITE, our intranet, at cchs.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Honor Roll

Nancy Baer

Manager

Injury Prevention/Physical Activity Promotion Project

For your support and assistance with our first Public Safety Day and for an excellent job establishing and staffing an information booth to discuss safety issues in West Contra Costa County.

—Nominated by Joseph P. Aita, San Pablo Police Chief

Katherine Ellerby

Ambulatory Care Clinical Coordinator

Richmond Health Center

For assisting with Dependent Verification, reconfiguring the setup, and acting as a “Traffic Controller” by directing the waiting employees.

—Nominated by Joni Baker

Holly Longmuir

Charge Nurse

CCRMC Surgical Unit

For exceptional leadership and providing a tremendous amount of support to her staff, patients and families.

—Nominated by Sonia Foster

Nikita Hughes

Manager

Call Center

Margaret Linde

Charge Nurse

Brenda Moore

Medical Records Technician

Richmond Health Center

For working through the night to restore hundreds of patient appointments lost because of a computer glitch.

—Nominated by Dianne Dunn-Bowie

Virginia Reyes

Senior Clerk

Public Health Clinical Services

For remaining positive, calm and responsive to everyone she serves during very busy Public Health Immunization Clinics. Her efficient and organized style keeps the Immunization Clinic running smoothly for both the patients and the nurses.

—Nominated by Erika Jenssen

James Ruiz, RN

Surgical Unit

CCRMC

For always being willing to help with any task in the unit, especially when a patient needs an IV line or PICC line. He is always calm, caring and ready with a big smile.

—Nominated by Myra Millena

Employee Milestones

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Aggie Houshmandi, Ma Isabel Ongkingco, Juan Reardon, Arthur R. Webb, Patricia A. Richards, Lorena C. Ruano, Eleanor L. De Lara, Rosalie C. Gonzalez, Elizabeth C. Balita (10 years); Juliette K. Moore, John A. Mozzetti, Jacqueline Hargis, Rosemarie E. Sutfin, Daniel M. Lively, Rebecca S. Aguilar, Yvonne M. Hoffman (15 years); Dominador A. Pedeglorio (20 years); Cecil E. Seay (25 years); Marilyn C. Alford, Vickie Tisdall, Raymond Neuman, Alynn M. Loucel and LeRoy P. DeLima (30 years).

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 ServicEX@hdsd.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



Patricia Tanquary, center, Director of CCHP, watches Jose Martin record an idea from Suzzette Johnson, far left, during the first Learning from Each Other session.

National Dialogue to Begin on Health Disparities

This spring, the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) will be airing *Unnatural Causes*, a television series meant to sound the alarm about the United States' glaring socioeconomic and racial disparities in health – and to seek out root causes. The four-hour documentary is being produced by California Newsreel with Vital Pictures Inc. Conceived as part of an ambitious public education campaign conducted in partnership with leading public health, policy, and community-based organizations, the producers hope *Unnatural Causes* will help foster a new and hopeful approach to the public's health. Their promotional material says, "As Harvard epidemiologist David Williams points out, investing in our schools, improving housing, integrating neighborhoods, better jobs and wages, giving people more control over their work – these are as much health strategies as smoking, diet and exercise. And these are the stories *Unnatural Causes* will tell." CCHS will be joining dozens of organizations in the Bay Area and across the country in promoting the dialogue and using it to promote local agendas to address health disparities.



Dawna Vann, left, and Denise Dennis, right, dialogue during the first Learning from Each Other.

Creating a Local Agenda

CCHS will be holding three regional meetings in Contra Costa in May for elected officials, community leaders, policy makers and other stakeholders to discuss local health disparities, spotlight efforts already underway to reduce those disparities and begin to develop a local agenda. Dr. William Walker, Health Services Director, says the meetings are timed to springboard off the heightened awareness related to the Public Broadcasting System's airing of *Unnatural Causes* and begin involving the community in the department's Reducing Health Disparities (RHD) commitment. "Our 2007-08 RHD Plan is very consistent with the national dialogue that the PBS special will spark. We want our communities to partner with us to improve the health of our residents," says Dr. Walker. A Planning Committee has been formed to develop the regional meetings. It will hold its first meeting in January. For information or to get involved, call RHD Manager Concepcion James of 925-957-5421. For copies of CCHS' Five-Year Overview and One-Year Plan, contact Lauren Stoddard at 957-5422.

We Start 'Learning from Each Other'

The first session of Learning from Each Other (LEO) launched last month with more than 30 CCHS staff on hand to brainstorm how to involve local policy makers and community leaders in a dialogue about health disparities. Learning from Each Other aims to give RHD champions throughout the department an opportunity to share ideas, strategies and resources.

At this session, Chuck McKetney, manager of the Community Health Assessment, Planning and Evaluation, gave an overview of local disparities. He described the disparities in outcomes for African Americans in asthma hospitalization, cancer and homicides and among Latinos and African Americans for obesity. The next LEO session will focus on community engagement issues.

Read the results of the brainstorm session on iSITE. Contact Danna Vann at dvann@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-957-5436 for more information about upcoming LEO sessions.



Tracy Ann Jones speaks during the small group sessions at Learning from Each Other while Julie Freestone records the group's ideas.

'What's the Community Got to Do with It?'

Learning from Each Other, the new Reducing Health Disparities resource- and strategy-sharing program, holds its next session in January. "What's the Community Got to Do with It?" is the topic, and it will feature a number of successful local programs that engage local residents and organizations in addressing health disparities. Call Lauren Stoddard at 925-957-5422 to RSVP. A more complete agenda will be posted on iSITE by the end of December.

Improvement Seen in Return for Post-partum Appointments

The CCRMC Perinatal Unit is proud to report that the rate of moms and babies returning for timely postpartum appointments has risen from 62% to 79%. Postpartum visit rates for patients discharged from CCRMC are important to assure the health of the mother. Follow-up visits allow providers to support breastfeeding, effective contraception and follow up of perinatal issues, particularly gestational diabetes. With the leadership of Chris Farnitano, MD, Chairperson of the Department of Family Medicine, the Perinatal Quality Improvement committee developed a proposal to give mothers and infants a joint return appointment with the primary care provider at four weeks. The four-week timing was felt to be optimal to assure return before expiration of the health insurance and to support breastfeeding. Reviews of dozens of mothers who delivered at CCRMC in July 2006 and May 2007 were compared, showing the improvement.

Health Services Helps Form New **FALL** **PREVENTION PROGRAM** OF CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

Nurse Program Manager Debbie Card is one of the founding members of the new Fall Prevention Program (FPP) of Contra Costa. The public and private partnership was recently created to raise awareness about falls being the leading cause of accidental injury deaths among Contra Costa residents 65 and older.

In response, the group's mission is to develop fall prevention programs in Contra Costa County. The partnership is currently seeking funding and more partners. FPP includes representatives from CCHS, Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services' In-Home Support Services Program, Contra Costa County Area Agency on Aging, Independent Living Resource and John Muir Health Senior Services.



For more information, contact Debbie at dcard@bsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6117.

Public Health Conducts Safety Training for County Field Staff

Our Public Health Division recently initiated a training program to help field workers be safe in the field in the face of street violence. Two sessions held in October were attended by more than 100 county staff from our Public Health, Environmental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Services divisions and the Public Works, Building Inspections and Agricultural departments. The Richmond Police Department and the Sheriff's Office gave excellent tips for how to be safe when working out in the community and making home visits. Sheriff's Deputies described their new incident hot line field staff can call to find out about any emergent street violence in specific areas of the community. That phone line, 925-370-5989, is updated everyday at about 8 a.m. Mental Health Division staff gave information about what to expect after witnessing violence, and tips for how to help staff and clients through the experience. Public Health's Erika Jenssen led a personal defense activity. Public Health staff plan to offer sessions in East County soon.



For a list of tips for safer field work, visit [iSITE](#), our intranet, by typing [cchs](#) in your browser field. For information about future field worker training, call Mary Anne Morgan at 925-313-6715.

Still A Good Time to Get Vaccinated Against Flu

Public Health's Immunization Coordinator Erika Jenssen says there is plenty of flu vaccine available for those who have yet to be vaccinated, either in shots or nasal spray. Furthermore, it's still a good time to get it, as flu season generally peaks in January or February. As workers in a health care system, many CCHS staff are at high risk for getting the flu. It's better to be vaccinated and thus greatly reduce the chance of passing the flu on to our families, patients and coworkers. For either the nasal spray flu vaccine or a flu shot, employees can go on Friday mornings to the Occupational Health office at 10 Douglas Drive, Suite 110, in Martinez. They cost \$10 (or free to CCHP members) and are available without appointment Fridays from 8-11 a.m. CCHS will also be conducting a free flu vaccine clinic for the general public from noon to 4 p.m. December 1 at Somersville Towne Center in Antioch.



For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease.htm or contact Erika Jenssen at ejenssen@bsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6734.

Information Systems Looks to Improve Through Collaboration

Our Information Systems Unit is heralding a new approach to executing the department's information technology projects by aligning them with the overall business goals of each Division. Jeff Wanger, Director of Information Systems (IS), wrote about the new perspective in the latest edition of Insight Out, the IS online newsletter. "The key component of this strategy," Jeff said, "is good communication, which provides the transparency necessary for clearly establishing project responsibilities and accountabilities as well as for managing change." To read the entire column, visit iSITE, our intranet, by typing cchs in your browser field. Click on the Sites pull-down menu, select Information Systems, then click Insight Out on the left side of the screen. If you are logged on to iSITE, you can subscribe to Insight Out by clicking Subscribe, then clicking IS under Available Publications, then checking the box next to Insight Out, then clicking Save Changes at the top of the page. Each issue of Insight Out will be "delivered" to the My Subscriptions folder on your personal home page (the page you see whenever you log in).

For more information, contact Marc Miyashiro at mmiyashiro@bsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6420.

Environmental Justice Grant Secured for Bay Point

CCHS' Public Health Outreach, Education and Collaboration unit is proud to announce that Bay Point is one of 48 communities nationwide to receive a Community Action for Renewed Environment grant through a partnership between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The two-year, \$90,000 grant will be augmented by EPA staff and is intended to help form a collaboration for reducing the impact of environmental toxins on Bay Point residents. CCHS Community Organizer Wendy Jo Cervantes will be working with Gateway School students to survey the community about environmental concerns. Then, a project will be chosen for the Bay Point Environmental Justice Collaborative to address. Partners in the collaborative include the Bay Point Family Health Center, the Municipal Advisory Council, Mt. Diablo Unified School District, La Clinica de La Raza, the Bay Point Partnership, the Center for Human Development, Todos Unidos and the Contra Costa Interfaith Supporting Community Organization.

For more information contact Roxanne Carrillo, Healthy Neighborhoods Project Manager, at rcarrillo@bsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6810.

A Pre-programmed Cell Phone Saves Time in an Emergency

When you call 911 from a "landline" phone, your call is routed to your local Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), usually located in your local police department dispatch center. Most calls are answered quickly, and both your phone number and address are displayed on a screen for the 911 dispatcher. But when you call 911 from a cell phone there can be frustrating delays, since most 911 cell phone calls in the Bay Area are routed to a single California Highway Patrol (CHP) communications center in Vallejo before being transferred to the appropriate local PSAP. Also, cell phone calls don't trigger a display of accurate location information, so the CHP dispatcher may not know where you are calling from and which local PSAP is closest to you. The solution is to give accurate location information when calling 911 from a cell phone; be prepared to wait and program your phone with the 10-digit emergency phone numbers for the police and fire departments where you live and work. (Thanks to Emergency Medical Services Director Art Lathrop for this story.)



Francie Wise

Healthy Outlook Column Covers Head Lice

Communicable Disease Program Chief Francie Wise writes about head lice in a recent installment of our "Healthy Outlook" column, which runs in the Contra Costa Newspapers chain. Head lice is a common nuisance seen in children throughout the county during the school year. Lice (or a louse in the singular) are small insects which crawl from one place to another. They do not fly or jump. They are very difficult to see, especially on dark hair. An itchy scalp is the usual symptom, which isn't dangerous but can be distracting and interfere with a child's ability to pay attention in school. Head lice can be treated with over-the-counter liquids containing pyrethrin or permethrin. The lice eggs (nits) must be picked or combed out of the hair because the lotion does not kill all the nits. Combs, brushes, bedding, hats and toys need to be cleaned as well. To read more of this and other Healthy Outlook columns, visit cchealth.org and click on the Healthy Outlook link in Items of Interest or on the Publications page.

New Podcast, Photovoice Page Added to Website

The latest additions to cchealth.org, the department website, include the second podcast released by CCHS Director Dr. William Walker and new pages about Photovoice. Both are in the Items of Interest listing on the site home page. The two-minute podcast features Dr. Walker talking about how attitudes about tobacco have changed in the past 20 years as Contra Costa has been at the forefront of the fight to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke and youth access to tobacco. The department's initial podcast, also available on the website, is about the prospect of relocating the Richmond Health Center. The pages about Photovoice include links to documents, websites and photos stemming from the technique of giving disposable cameras to community residents and asking them to take photographs illustrating their perspective of the community. One of the links is an article about the technique written by Cheri Pies and Padmini Parthasarathy of Public Health's Family, Maternal and Child Health program.



Dr. William Walker, CCHS Director, personally thanked Records Technician Brenda Moore and Charge Nurse Peg Linde, from left, at Richmond Health Center for their work in saving patient appointments lost to a computer error.

Teamwork Rescues Appointments Lost to a Computer Glitch

Richmond Health Center Charge Nurse Peg Linde wasn't sure what could be done when Medical Records Technician Brenda Moore's computer went haywire just before closing time on November 7. "It was shaking and going crazy, spraying out this string of cancel tags," said Peg of the 440 patient appointments cancelled by a computer test system that inadvertently went live. Call Center Manager Nikita Hughes came up with a solution: Brenda would stay late to photocopy and fax all 440 cancellation tags to the Call Center, where Nikita and her staff also stayed late to re-enter them into the computer and have all the patient charts pulled. Then, the problem happened again the next morning, and Brenda and Nikita did their magic again. "These employees exemplify Service Excellence, because no one ordered them to stay late and fix the problem — they did it on their own," said Dr. William Walker, CCHS Director.

'Prevention & Early Intervention' New Focus for Prop. 63

The Mental Health Division is beginning the planning stages of a new component of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA, Prop. 63), titled Prevention & Early Intervention (PEI). Funding for Prevention & Early Intervention focuses on strategies to prevent mental health problems, or to intervene early with relatively short duration and low-intensity approaches. During the first several months of 2008, Mental Health will be convening a group of stakeholders to help recommend PEI strategies for the priority populations that have been defined by the State Department of Mental Health. "We are seeking to develop a group that is representative of the diversity within our county and familiar with Prevention and Early Intervention services and needs," said Donna Wigand, Division Director. Additionally, there are participation requirements from the State Department of Mental Health that include participation from underserved communities, consumers, family members and numerous social institutions: education, health, mental health, social services, law enforcement and others.



If you're interested in learning more about Prevention & Early Intervention, visit www.cchealth.org/services/mental_health/prop63/ or send an email to mbsa@bsd.cccounty.us



The "Drill Team," left, helped organize a unique training with mannequins. Drs. Judy Bliss and Ann Lockhart and main nurse Diane Ellen tend to a simulated patient, the "daughter" of anxious "grandmother-to-be" Jane Proctor.



Multidisciplinary Training Simulates Birth Emergencies

About 100 obstetricians, pediatricians, anesthesiologists, nurses and respiratory therapists at CCRMC took part last month in a unique simulation training. Six months in the planning, the training culminated in practicing obstetrical emergencies with "high fidelity" mannequins. The mannequins produce changing vital signs and can simulate emergencies such as difficult airway, high spinal anesthesia and post-partum hemorrhage. Clinical Nurse Educator Michelle Bushong initiated the training with Dr. Francine Jolton and chaired the "Drill Team" that prepared it, including nurses Marlene Apodaca, Beth Brown, Margee Dean, Debby Oehrlein, Molly Porter, Jane Proctor and Diane Ringue. Marlene's husband Chris served as videographer. The mannequins and instruction were provided by Dr. John Vallee, an obstetrician and perinatal safety expert with Kaiser Permanente. The committee plans to evaluate the two days of training results and develop a plan to address areas for improvement.



For more information about the simulation training, contact Michelle Bushong at mbushong@bsd.cccounty.us or 925-370-5305.