



voices for a healthy future



A PUBLICATION OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE

FALL 2003

N

O

I

S

S

M

The Public Health Institute promotes health, well-being, and quality of life for all people through research and evaluation, training and technical assistance, and by building community partnerships.



SAVE THE DATE!
40th Anniversary Gala
Friday, April 16, 2004

Reprioritizing Prevention

The Public Health Institute (PHI) will soon proudly begin its 40th year. As happens with anniversaries of all kinds, planning for this upcoming year is providing us a rare opportunity to reflect on past and present programs and partnerships.

Public health programs are, and have been, successfully operated at PHI by enormously dedicated and inspired leaders and staff. When we looked carefully at these programs, we found that most had made a major contribution to successful prevention strategies. Research projects provide evidence for prevention programs. Surveillance programs provide data that inform health policy and prevention specialists. Education, training, and technical assistance initiatives assure that effective prevention strategies will be implemented in communities. Evaluation and advocacy efforts support policy change, often a major outcome of prevention efforts.

Of necessity, this reflection is being done at a time when the impacts of budget shortfalls are only beginning to be felt. The programs appearing in this edition of our newsletter highlight some of the important prevention efforts currently underway. With years of economic hardship likely ahead for public health, we expect to continue building our focus on prevention.

Prevention is powerful. It saves lives, lessens the human burdens of illness and injury, lowers often unaffordable healthcare costs, and preserves our quality of life. We look forward to beginning a new decade of prevention. ■

"In times of reduced resources, it is even more critical that prevention become and remain our highest public health priority. The biggest challenge today is to preserve and protect funding for prevention efforts and not use these resources for other competing needs."

*—Joseph Hafey, President/CEO,
Public Health Institute*

Watch for
the launch
of our
newly-
designed
website!



CONTACT
INFORMATION



Voices For A Healthy Future is a bi-annual publication of the Public Health Institute. This newsletter is posted at www.phi.org. For more information on the PHI community of programs and projects, contact:

PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE

Communications Department
555 12th Street, 10th Floor
Oakland, California 94607-4046
phone: 510.285.5500
fax: 510.285.5501
email: communications@phi.org
web: www.phi.org

Editors: Donna Sofaer, Vice President for Development, Communications, & Public Relations
Cinderella Lee, Communications Specialist

Design: Ison Design
Printing: Lee Michele Printgraphics

Copyright © Public Health Institute 2003. Permission to reproduce for educational or charitable purposes is hereby granted.

YES! to Building Hope for Tomorrow's Leaders

NANCE WILSON

The Youth Empowerment (YES!) project, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, began last year in four West Contra Costa School District elementary schools that are attended by underserved student populations in California. This three-year project is designed to promote critical-thinking, problem-solving, social action and civic participation, with the ultimate goal of helping children have healthy, fulfilling lives and a sense of hope for the future.

The weekly after-school groups, co-facilitated by U.C. Berkeley graduate students and local high school students, provide 90 fifth graders with an opportunity to practice approaches in which they



YES! students and group facilitators working together on teambuilding by creating a group banner.

become actively and socially engaged in their communities. In one of the approaches, Photovoice, each student is given a camera to take pictures about important things in the school and later in the neighborhood and larger community. Using an empowerment education approach that includes critical dialogue and writing, student groups generate their own understanding about the causes of issues or assets in the social and physical environment, how those things affect their lives, and what they can do about them. The groups begin to focus their understanding of what needs to be promoted or remedied in their communities. This leads to each group's design and implementation of a social action project about a social issue. YES! group social action projects during the 2002-2003 school year included several petition drives, a playground clean-up, photo presentations and skits on positive behavior, the formation of a first aid "Kidpatrol" at recess, and one booklet of photo stories. Each project included a presentation component: the group must propose its project to school staff for approval, then present their groups' work at the school.

"Before the YES! group, I'd get in a lot of trouble. The teacher would walk out! Now I think about, if my life was a picture, how would it look? How do I have to act?"

"I'm working with different people and I've never done that before—people with different attitudes and stuff. You have to learn how to get used to them or accept them."

continuing sixth graders.

To find out more information about the YES! Program, contact the project director, Nance Wilson, PhD, at nwilson@phi.org.

Preventing Obesity

VICTORIA BERENDS, DAWSON WILLIAMS

Defining the Obesity Epidemic in California

California is experiencing an unparalleled obesity epidemic. Poor diet and physical inactivity are the second leading causes of death and disability, resulting in nearly 30,000 deaths each year in the state. California ranks dismally when compared nationally — only nine other states in the nation have higher rates of obesity.

The prevalence of overweight and obesity in California has continually increased in children (35 percent) and adults (66.7 percent) since 1991. California's children are suffering unnecessarily from long-term health and emotional impacts of obesity due to experiencing adult-like medical problems at astonishingly younger ages. With obesity comes increased health risks including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, arthritis-related disabilities, depression, sleep disorders, some cancers and mental health problems. The economic burden of physical inactivity, overweight, and obesity in adults was \$25 billion for California in 2000. It is expected to rise exponentially to \$35 billion by 2005 for medical care, lost productivity, and workers' compensation.

The Surgeon General's 2001 Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity outlines strategies that communities can use in helping to address the problem. "People tend to think of overweight and obesity as strictly a personal matter, but there is much that communities can and should do to address these problems," said former Surgeon General David Satcher. For example, the report recommends approaches in schools that extend beyond education to include school policy, the school physical and social environment, and links among the schools, families and communities.

Policy & Behavior Change Strategies

One Public Health Institute program that works with schools and communities is California Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition) (CPL). CPL's unique focus is on youth empowerment, policy and environmental change strategies, and



community-based solutions. CPL has used media advocacy and research to bring the issue of the proliferation of fast foods and soda in schools to the forefront. The release of the 2000 Fast Food Survey of unhealthy foods on California high school campuses influenced Senator Martha Escutia to introduce the first California legislation to set nutrition standards for all foods sold in public schools. This led to recent California legislation that bans soft drinks in elementary and middle schools and requires informing the public before schools enter into exclusive beverage and food contracts.



Another program connected with leadership from the California Department of Health Services is the California Nutrition Network for Healthy Active Families. The *Latino 5 a Day Campaign* is part of the Network. In May, Fresno Assemblymember Sarah Reyes authored a resolution on behalf of the *Campaign* declaring June 2003 Latino Health Awareness Month. This landmark event drew attention to the high rates of diet-related diseases affecting California Latinos and the state's efforts to improve the community's overall health through increased fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity.

During a statewide media tour in June, the Campaign presented the findings from a formal evaluation study which showed an increase of thirty-seven percent in fruit and vegetable consumption among Spanish speaking Latinos over a four-month period.

Since 2001, the *Campaign's* regional lead agencies have reached nearly 1.1 million people through festivals, farmers'/flea markets, supermarkets, and community-based organizations. The *Campaign* plans to complete a California rollout by 2006.

For more information about these programs, visit www.CaliforniaProjectLEAN.org and www.Ca5aday.com. ■

PHI's Diversity Of Focus

PHI's diverse programs demonstrate our broad approach to improving public health. These programs include:

- Aging
- Alcohol / Tobacco / Substance Abuse
- Chronic Diseases: Asthma, Cancer, Diabetes
- Communicable / Infectious Diseases, including HIV/AIDS
- Community Health
- Disability
- Environmental Health
- Family Planning / Reproductive Health
- Genetics
- Health Policy Research
- Homelessness / Indigent Care
- Lead Poisoning Prevention
- Leadership Development
- Managed Care
- Maternal & Child Health
- Media Advocacy
- Mental Health
- Nutrition / Physical Activity / Obesity Prevention
- Occupational Health
- Pharmaceutical Access
- Program Evaluation
- Rural Health
- Social & Behavioral Science

To learn more, visit www.phi.org.

SELECTED PROJECTS

Legal Tools to Promote Public Health Protection

MARICE ASHE

- Is there a fundamental right to smoke?
- Can a health department put patients with communicable diseases in jail for their failure to follow treatment guidelines? (See answers below)
- How can the number and location of fast food outlets in a city be controlled?

These are just a few of the questions lawyers address to assist the development of public health activities in California. Each question invokes a complex area of the law and each underlies significant public policy effort being waged by local communities.

Whatever the public health problem — tobacco use, obesity and diabetes, communicable diseases — it is grounded in questions of how the government may act to limit personal freedoms for the benefit of community health and well-being. This tension between individual rights, on the one hand, and autonomy and communitarian needs and ideals, on the other, is the realm of expertise for public health lawyers.

The Public Health Institute now has seven lawyers on staff who work with community-based organizations, service providers, government attorneys, and elected officials throughout the state to shape policies and programs to improve public health outcomes. By providing training and legal resources (such as model ordinances, training manuals, and legal memorandum)— these lawyers connect advocates with the legal tools that best advance specific public health goals. For more information, visit www.phlaw.org.

- Answers: No; by enacting zoning controls; probably, under limited circumstances. ■



Torches of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

CONNIE CHAN ROBISON

More than 300 diverse, grassroots women from rural, suburban, and urban communities have participated in the statewide Women's Health Leadership (WHL) program since 1995. Now, through the WHL Alumni Network, these remarkable women continue to carry the twin torches of disease prevention and health promotion as they work in their communities to reduce the inequities in today's health environments and generate social change.

WHL will launch a local replication of the statewide leadership development program in the spring of 2004. WHL Sacramento will use best practices derived from our statewide efforts to create opportunities for targeted, local problem-solving and community and neighborhood collaborations. For more information about WHL, WHL Sacramento, and/or to learn how you can support this important grassroots leadership movement, please contact WHL at 916.498.6960 or www.connectccp.org.



PROFILES



Peggy Agron, MA, RD is the chief of California Project LEAN (CPL) at the California Department of Health Services. The Public Health Institute assists the state in conducting this award-winning prevention program under Ms. Agron's

leadership. CPL works with state and local leaders to create healthier communities through policy and environmental changes that support healthy eating and physical activity. CPL conducted the 2000 Fast Food Survey that was the first survey ever conducted quantifying the proliferation of unhealthy foods on California high school campuses. The release of the survey findings and the media attention it received influenced Senator Martha Escutia to introduce the first California legislation to set nutrition standards for all foods sold in public schools. CPL and its local partners have played a key role in local school nutrition policy implementation including the Los Angeles Unified School District soda ban. Previously, Ms. Agron worked for the Health Education Council, a community-based organization, the WIC program, and other local agencies. She has her master's degree in nutrition from California State University, Long Beach, and is a registered dietitian. Ms. Agron received the California Department of Health Services' Superior Accomplishment Award for the year 2000.



Marice Ashe, JD, MPH, is the director of several PHI programs related to law and public health. **The Medicine for People in Need (Medpin)** program provides policy analyses, training and education

services, and research on improvements to the pharmaceutical management practices of safety net clinics throughout California. **The Technical Assistance Legal Center (TALC)** provides legal information and services to California communities

regarding tobacco control policies including tobacco advertising, sponsorship and divestment campaigns. **The Public Health Trust** manages litigation settlements regarding public health issues. In addition, she teaches public health law at the School of Public Health, University of California, Berkeley. Ms. Ashe is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame, and received a master's in public health and a Juris doctorate from the University of California, Berkeley.



Leonard Syme, PhD, is an emeritus professor of epidemiology at the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley. For the first 25 years of his career, he worked as a "normal"

epidemiologist trying to identify disease risk factors. For the last 15 years, he has been working to develop more effective ways to use this information to improve people's lives. This requires working with people as partners rather than as subjects and preventing problems rather than treating or managing them. Dr. Syme is the principal investigator of the YES! project.



Nance Wilson, PhD, a social epidemiologist, is a co-investigator and the program director of the Youth Empowerment Strategies (YES!) program. Dr. Wilson's work focuses

on the influence of, and the relationship between, the social environment, hope, empowerment and adolescent health. She initiated the YES! project and is the driving force behind its implementation. Dr. Wilson also works on the organizing committee to plan a CDC grantee meeting, "Community-Based Participatory Prevention Research," at this year's American Public Health Association annual meeting in San Francisco.

P

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Robert J. Melton, MD, MPH
Chair
Health Officer (ret.)
Monterey County Health Department
Carmel Valley, California

Mary A. Pittman, DrPH
Vice Chair
President
Health Research & Educational Trust
Chicago, Illinois

David E. Bonfilio, MBA
Planned Giving Officer
National Audubon Society
San Rafael, California

Russell C. Coile, Jr., MBA
Secretary
President
Russ Coile's Health Trends
Washington, Texas

Carmela R. Castellano, Esq.
Chief Executive Officer
California Primary Care Association
Sacramento, California

Jessie C. Gruman, PhD
Executive Director
The Center for the Advancement of Health
Washington, D.C.

Glenn I. Hildebrand, MPH
Deputy Executive Vice President (ret.)
American Cancer Society, California Division
South San Francisco, California

Margaret H. Jordan, RN, MPH
Executive Vice President, Corporate Affairs
Texas Health Resources
Arlington, Texas

Diane Littlefield, MPH
Principal Investigator / Program Director
Representative
Executive Director
Center for Collaborative Planning
Sacramento, California

Henry J. Ongerth, PE, MPH
Chief, Bureau of Sanitary Engineering (ret.)
California Department of Health Services
Berkeley, California

Dr. Roberto Tapia-Conyer, MD, MPH
Vice-Minister
Prevention & Protection of Health
Ministry of Health
Mexico City, Mexico

Robert O. Valdez, PhD
Health Scientist
RAND
Arlington, Virginia

Antronette K. Yancey, MD, MPH
Associate Professor
University of California at Los Angeles
Los Angeles, California

SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Joseph M. Hafey, MPA
President / Chief Executive Officer

The Public Health Institute is widely recognized and respected for leadership in public health.



555 12th Street, 10th floor
Oakland, California 94607-4046

phone: 510.285.5500
fax: 510.285.5501
email: communications@phi.org
web: www.phi.org

"We're changing the way people think about health..."

In Our Next Newsletter Edition:

Using Data: A powerful tool for improving the public's health

Sign up!

To receive this newsletter and other public health information, visit www.phi.org

NEWS New Programs

■ Cancer in the Middle Eastern Population in California

Principal Investigator:
Kiumarss Nasser, PhD, MPH
Funding Agency: National Cancer Institute

Approximately 1 million people with Middle Eastern heritage live in California. The number has almost doubled between the 1990 and 2000 censuses. Patterns of cancer incidence and mortality in this population, as estimated from international sources, are significantly different and generally lower when compared to the white population.

However, because this population is classified in the United States as white, it has not been possible to study the potential for disparities in the patterns of cancer incidence and mortality for this population. With development of a reliable list of common middle eastern surnames, the propor-

tional incidence ratio and proportional mortality ratio for this group can be determined.

■ The Debate on Food and Physical Activity: Mapping Public Industry

Principal Investigator:
Lori Dorfman, DrPH
Funding Agency: The California Endowment
Preventing obesity begins long before we raise the fork from our plate. Policies about food's price, accessibility, and marketing influence our choices about what we eat. To influence those policies, public health advocates must understand how food is being promoted by the industry and discussed in the news. With funding from The California Endowment, Berkeley Media Studies Group will study newspapers and food industry periodicals, mapping the conversations on nutrition, to inform

advocates eager to reshape debate on obesity prevention.

■ Family Planning / Reproductive Health Programs in Central America

Principal Investigator:
Robert Minnis, MA
Funding Agency: Compton Foundation, Inc.
This program aims to increase the availability and utilization of emergency contraception in certain areas of Guatemala and El Salvador. The International Health Programs center in Santa Cruz developed this program and will be responsible for overseeing sub-grants to three NGOs, one in Guatemala and two in El Salvador. Fellows from the International Family Planning Leadership Program conducted in Santa Cruz and Central America will be instrumental in implementing the emergency contraception programs.

Recent Publication

■ "Early implementation of Proposition 36: Criminal justice and treatment system issues in eight counties."

This article, appeared in the *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* in May, identifies county approaches and decisions predicted to affect the Proposition's impact in the areas of treatment versus criminal justice resources, prosecutorial implementation, defendant and defense responses, assessing criminal histories and treatment needs, treatment versus criminal justice supervisory responsibility, and procedural variations and client behavior. Richard Speigman, Dorie Klein, Robin Miller and Amanda Noble co-authored the article. To request a reprint, contact Richard at richards@phi.org or 510.238.8432.