



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Caring today for a healthy tomorrow

Health Matters

Invisible Impact of Public Health



Adam London, RS, MPA

Health Officer

A simple act of kindness can go a long way. Opening a door, or listening to a friend in pain, or lending a hand to a neighbor, can have a profound impact. Every day, our staff at the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) is on the front lines, working to serve, protect, and promote a healthy community for all. Some days, we hear of great efforts by those we serve. Consider this story, recently shared by KCHD Community Clinical Services:

“In July, a family of 4 refugees was informed (through an interpreter) that there would be a \$60 dollar charge for staff to fill out necessary INS forms, so that they could apply for their green cards. The father didn't have the money with him, and said he would go home and get it. Soon after, a man who had overheard the conversation, came up to me and handed me \$60 dollars. He told me he wanted to pay for this for them, but for me not to let the family know it was him. I am deeply moved by this man's kindness and generosity.”

Hearing this story touched my heart. A complete stranger, helping people in a foreign land, made an invisible impact to the family of refugees. It also made me realize the difference KCHD staff make in our community every day, and often, the impact is invisible. Immunizing children against disease and illness gives that child a better opportunity for a healthy life, and protects those around him or her. Spending a few extra minutes with a parent to discuss safe sleep environments could save an infant's life. Educating a restaurant worker about why it is important to use fresh, clean utensils could stop cross-contamination, a cause of food-borne illness. Educating children about life skills can prepare them for a lifetime of good choices, from avoiding substance abuse to developing respectful relationships with their peers. Returning a lost pet to its home can alleviate stress and anxiety for family members. These are just a few of the tasks our staff complete on a regular basis. You may not see the work they've done, only because their efforts stopped or prevented injury, illness or even death. Like the anonymous man who gave \$60 to the family of refugees, you may not see the KCHD staff every day, but they are there, making life easier—and healthier—for you and your family.

Inside this issue:

- Headlines from the Capitol **2**
- KCHD Accreditation Gets National Attention **3**
- Strategic Plan Changes **4**
- West Nile Virus Surveillance Successes **5**
- GVSU Students Complete Capstone Projects **6**



Department Engages Health in All Policies Team

Kent County Health Department is creating a team to implement Health in All Policies (HiAP) in the new strategic plan (*page 4*). HiAP is “a change in the systems that determine how decisions are made and implemented by local, state, and federal government to ensure that policy decisions have neutral or beneficial impacts on the determinants of health,” according to the National Association of County and City Health Officials. We hope to encourage policymakers to look at the public health implications of their decisions, all with the common goal of improving the health of the community. This team will include community stakeholders and staff from the Kent County Health Department. We’ll bring you more as the HiAP team moves forward.

Headlines from the Capitol

Senate Bill 423 Would Cut Health Department Budget

This bill would limit the amount that local health departments can charge for food licenses to a rate set by the State of Michigan. If enacted, this policy would reduce Kent County food license revenue by at least \$82,000 beginning in 2018. These lost revenues from the business owners would need to be replaced by tax revenue from the county’s general fund in order to provide this state-mandated program. The Michigan Association of Local Public Health (MALPH) believes this sort of limitation on county fee setting for state-mandated programs is contrary to the Headlee amendment and to authorizing language in the Michigan Public Health Code.

National Environmental Health Budget Faces Cuts

Subcommittees in the US House and Senate are currently working on the CDC’s 2016 budget. The National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH) is one of the centers contained within CDC. NCEH provides important support to state and local health departments in areas such as drinking water quality, environmental illness, emergency preparedness, toxic substances, and many other topics. As currently proposed, the NCEH stands to sustain cuts between 10.5% (House) and 19% (Senate). The deepest proposed cuts are targeted toward the Safe Water program, the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network which provides essential information about human illness and environmental conditions, the Climate and Health program which provides important information and support in the midst of natural disasters and events, and the Built Environment program.

New “Kicks” for 12 Walkers

The Golden Shoe Campaign wrapped up in late June, and has been called a resounding success! The initiative encouraged walkers to hit the pavement and helped a dozen people win a new pair of shoes. Organizers hid Golden Shoes (*above*) along designated walking routes in the Roosevelt and Garfield Park neighborhoods. Walkers who found one were able to exchange it for one free pair of athletic shoes at Gazelle Sports. “It was a great campaign,” says Jill Myer, supervisor of the Kent County Health Department’s Obesity Initiative. “There were so many people involved, that many have asked for the program to come back next year!”

Even though you can’t win the shoes anymore, the routes are still being promoted. “These routes are being uploaded for the Calvin College ‘GR Walks’ smartphone app, which will be available later this year,” Myer added. The Golden Shoe (or *Zapato de Oro* in Spanish) campaign was made possible through a grant from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Active Living Grant Project.



Presenting on the National Stage: KCHD

The Kent County Health Department (KCHD) is dedicated to creating the best workforce in public health. In recent years, much of that has focused on Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals and the Bioterrorism and Emergency Readiness Competencies for all Public Health Workers. KCHD staff worked to accredit the department through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) and to achieve recognition through the National Association of County and City Health Officers (NACCHO) Project Public Health Ready (PPHR). Both of these programs offer guidelines for improving a public health agency's workforce development efforts

Because of KCHD's unique situation – going through PHAB and PPHR at the same time – Accreditation Coordinator Chelsey Chmelar and Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Karla Black had the innovative idea to tackle workforce development requirements for these two accreditation programs together by creating one plan that met both programs' requirements. The focus of Karla and Chelsey's NACCHO Annual 2015 submission was to share with other local health departments and national support agencies (like NACCHO) the step-by-step process used by KCHD for creating a comprehensive workforce development plan. They submitted an abstract and learned of their acceptance to the conference in March.

Karla and Chelsey co-presented *Two Accreditations, One Workforce Development Plan: How PHAB and PPHR Can Drive an Agency's Workforce Development* on Thursday, July 9th in Kansas City. Their presentation was met with a large crowd and quite a few requests for business cards, resource sharing, and future technical assistance from local health departments as close as Kalamazoo and as far as the West Coast.

When asked about their experience at the NACCHO Annual Conference, Chelsey shared, "Karla and I knew that it might be tough to get an abstract accepted for this conference since it is one of the largest gatherings of local public health professionals in the country. Our acceptance this year shows that KCHD is doing some innovative things that are contributing to the field of public health – people want to hear about what we are doing and that is really exciting!" Karla added "Presenting at a conference of this magnitude with so many leaders in public health is a testament to the excellent work we do at KCHD. NACCHO would like to work with us to expand the reach of our presentation and that shows that KCHD is truly on the cutting edge."

Chelsey and Karla's experience at NACCHO Annual 2015 is just one recent example of how KCHD staff are making contributions to the field of public health by sharing the great work they are doing here in Kent County.



Chelsey Chmelar (left) and Karla Black (right) at NACCHO Annual 2015.



LICENSE YOUR DOG

- Michigan law requires that all dogs over the age of four months are licensed and all new dogs are licensed within 30 days.
- Dog licensing provides funding for animal control to investigate and prosecute animal cruelty and neglect, as well as responding to loose or aggressive dogs.
- One-year and three-year licenses are available at the Kent County Animal Shelter, at many City and Township Offices, and several local veterinary clinics.

Learn more at:

AccessKent.com/KCAS



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Achieving the Health Department's Vision: Efforts to Realign the Agency Strategic Plan

By Chelsey K. Chmelar, MPH

In May, Health Department leaders and key program staff met to discuss the need and strategy for updating the agency strategic plan. The current plan, adopted in 2012 under previous leadership, has been guiding Health Department efforts to address key community health issues and opportunities for operational improvement for the past two and a half years. However, with significant changes in leadership, ever-changing public health needs, and the publication of a new community health needs assessment and development of a new health improvement plan, the agency quickly recognized that a review of the strategic plan was timely and necessary.

Health Department personnel were introduced to a key change in the strategic plan during the May 2015 review session involving the agency's strategic directions. The 2012 plan included seven strategic directions ranging from achieving organizational excellence to health equity. While these strategic directions are all still valid and important, agency leadership determined that all of the priorities, goals, objectives, and strategies of the current plan could just as easily be incorporated into a plan that is guided by the 12 domains of the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), the national public health accrediting agency. Moving forward, the Health Department will align its initiatives with the standards by which it is assessed through the PHAB for national accreditation.

Health Department leaders and key program staff reconvened in late July to continue the discussion regarding revisions to the strategic plan. Since the May review session, staff and managers have determined which current goals, objectives, and strategies remain relevant and a department priority. They have also identified additional goals, objectives, and strategies that should be included in the revised plan. A draft plan is under development and will be shared with additional key stakeholders for input and feedback at the upcoming August Community Health Advisory Committee meeting.

Back-to-School Checklist

- Pencils
- Paper
- Shoes
- Immunizations

All children starting Kindergarten or 7th grade, or new students in any other grade, must show proof of vaccination!

Michigan's Vaccines for Children (VFC) program provides vaccines at no charge to those who qualify (administration fees may still apply).

Michigan's new waiver law requires a visit to your local health department. Call today for an appointment: (616)632-7200 or visit accesskent.com/immunizations.



[Click here to learn about Public Health Internships!](#)



**Michigan Community
Dental Clinics:**
877.313.6232

www.midental.org

Kent County South Clinic
4700 Kalamazoo SE
Kentwood, MI 49508

*Serving those enrolled in
Medicaid and/or below
200% of the federal poverty
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KCHD Grabs State’s Attention for West Nile Virus Surveillance , Success

Sara Simmonds, supervising sanitarian with the Kent County Health Department Environmental Health division, saw her team’s efforts pay off in late July when WNV was identified in a pool of collected mosquitoes.

Since early June, her team has been setting traps in 11 areas across Kent County every week.

The project uses the “gravid” trap (seen on the right) and was partially funded through a grant from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

Surveillance will continue until Labor Day but the threat of contracting West Nile Virus will, in all likelihood, continue until the first frost. Typically that occurs sometime in late October.

The presence of West Nile Virus was

found in the City of Grand Rapids in the 49504 and 49503 zip codes. The Kent County Health Department immediately shared that information with the City of Grand Rapids. The city can use that information to inform its own decision making process regarding eradication efforts.

Kent County saw more than 40 confirmed human cases of West Nile Virus in 2012, but the number of cases has been much lower since surveillance started in 2013. “This is a tool for education and prevention,” Simmonds says of the test. “We feel this information helps residents make informed decisions about protecting themselves and their family members.”

Erik Foster, medical entomologist at MDHHS, noted the good work being done by the Kent County Health Department during it’s ongoing West Nile Virus surveillance. “Kent County issued a press release regarding their WNV detection and they have picked up a lot of good press,” Foster said in a news release sent statewide by MDHHS.

The information was also sent to the state which will compile all findings statewide onto a heat map that can be seen by clicking [here](#).



Sara Simmonds discusses findings with local media.

The Gravid trap (above) lures pregnant female mosquitoes into a false breeding environment. Mosquitoes are collected in a nylon net, then tested for West Nile Virus and other mosquito-borne illnesses. Results are logged along with geographic information to provide a nearly real time picture to health authorities.

GVSU Public Health Students Work with KCHD Staff to Produce Capstone Project Success

By: Chelsey K. Chmelar

Grand Valley State University's Master of Public Health (MPH) program was established in the fall of 2013, with its first cohort of students graduating this spring. Many of the students in the first cohort of this program worked directly with Kent County Health Department staff to complete their practicum experiences and final capstone projects. This spring, students presented their capstone project findings at the first annual Public Health Research Day at the Cook-DeVos Health Science Building in Grand Rapids.

Bree Bode

Bree completed both her practicum experience and capstone project with the Health Department. Chelsey Chmelar, the Quality and Performance Manager at the Health Department served as her preceptor for her practicum. During her time with the Health Department, Bree helped to research and develop quality improvement training materials for staff and drafted a quality improvement policy statement. She also collaborated with Health Education and Promotion staff to conduct sessions of both the Life Skills program with middle and high school students and the Organ Wise Guys program with elementary students.

For her capstone project, Bree worked with Jill Myer, the Obesity Initiative Coordinator for the Health Department, to determine how product marketing can influence food choice among low socioeconomic neighborhoods. Her project focused specifically on the Roosevelt Park neighborhood in the City of Grand Rapids.

Bree's project consisted of several focus groups with different stakeholders in the target community, ranging from grocery store managers to community residents. The data collected and analyzed through her project will be useful as the Kent County community moves forward with implementation of the CDC-awarded Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) grant, which is targeting the Roosevelt Park neighborhood in its first year.



Photo: Jill Myer (left) poses with Bree Bode on Public Health Research Day at GVSU.

Alicia Killinger

Alicia also completed both her practicum experience and capstone project with the Health Department. Chelsey Chmelar served as the preceptor for Alicia's practicum experience and capstone projects. The 2014 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) was the primary focus of Alicia's practicum as she assisted with data entry, writing sections of CHNA indicator profiles, and asset mapping activities related to the topics of violence, safety, and substance abuse.

When priority health issues were selected through the CHNA process – mental health issues, obesity, substance abuse, poor nutrition, and violence/safety - Alicia decided to take a deeper look at violence as a public health issue for her capstone project. She and Chelsey identified communities with high crime and violent crime rates within Kent County, and Alicia worked through key community stakeholders to arrange focus groups in three different neighborhoods in Grand Rapids. These communities included Baxter, Roosevelt Park, and John Ball neighborhoods.

(Continued on page 7)



Photo: Chelsey Chmelar (right) poses with Alicia Killinger on Public Health Research Day at GVSU.



GVSU Public Health Students, *continued*

The questions and process used by Alicia to gather violence-related information in these communities will be important as the CHNA priority workgroup on violence and safety begins to meet and develop long-term goals, objectives, and strategies for addressing this health concern. Additionally, data collected from Roosevelt Park neighborhood members will serve an important role with REACH grant-related work, as well.

Angelina (Gina) Gero

Gina completed her practicum and capstone project in the Emergency Preparedness Program with Karla Black and Pat Draper. During her internship, Gina worked on the Biohazard Detection System (BDS), a system which detects anthrax in mail by sampling pieces of mail that are received by the United States Postal Service. Her capstone project revolved around developing a plan for how KCHD would respond to a positive alarm by the BDS system. This plan included developing an incident command structure, outlining roles and responsibilities for KCHD responders, examining response partner roles in the incident, and developing a point of dispensing (POD) system for prophylaxing people that may have been exposed to anthrax at the Postal Service. Gina worked with Karla to develop a throughput model for the annex building that included

areas for dispensing medications and medical consultation. This plan will be integrated into the Medical Countermeasures Annex of KCHD's Emergency Operations Plan.

For her practicum, Gina developed social media messages related to anthrax exposure at the Postal Service. She then developed a survey to examine which of these messages were best understood by members of the public. This survey was disseminated on the KCHD Facebook page to try to reach a wide range of people. She also held focus groups with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services and The Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired to determine if the messaging was appropriate for people with access and functional needs. The data collected and connections made by this project will be useful for future development of emergency preparedness messages that are accessible for people with disabilities.

Aaron Cooch

Aaron completed his internship in the Emergency Preparedness Program with Karla Black serving as his preceptor for both his practicum and capstone project. Aaron took on the challenging project of investigating the role of public health in a radiological/nuclear event. Parts of Kent County fall within fifty miles of the Palisades Nuclear Power Plant so Aaron worked with Karla to develop a plan

to respond to a release of radioactive material from the plant. These events are very complex so the area Aaron focused on was the ingestion pathway, which includes radiation contamination of food, water and agriculture. The planning process included identifying key staff to fill incident command roles, developing public information messages, researching the appropriate personal protective equipment and determining the actions that would have to be taken to ensure Kent County's water and food supplies were safe. Aaron's plan will be incorporated into KCHD's Emergency Operations Plan.



Photo: (left to right) Jill Myer, Paige Birkelbach, Bree Bode, Aaron Cooch, Gina Gero, Alicia Killinger, and Chelsey Chmelar at Public Health Research Day at GVSU.



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**Kent County Health Department
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Grand Rapids, MI 49503**

Phone: 616.632.7100

KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931.

The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter.

The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids.

www.accessKent.com/Health



Mission Statement:

To serve, protect and promote a healthy community for all.