

the Carrier



Vol. 5 Issue 4, April 1982

Tom Wilson Retires



On February 26, 1982 Thomas S. Wilson was awarded a watch, certificate and "Health Department Retiree" T-shirt in appreciation of 37 years community service controlling rodent and insect problems. Tom's diligence in working to decrease environmental hazards on the waterfront, in local business establishments and in private homes has contributed to "the most liveable city" reputation Seattle has enjoyed.

Environmental Health Division staff contributed information collected over the years to "roast" Tom at his retirement dinner held at Sandpoint Naval Air Station. His friends and colleagues roared with laughter as Tony Bossart (M.C.) related stories about the mishaps of a "professor of rodent control."

The entire staff of the Health Department extends a hearty thank you to Tom and best wishes as he begins to implement his retirement plans of travel, rest and recreation.

STD ADVISORY GROUP FORMS

by Tim Burak

Representatives from the Health Department's STD Clinic at Harborview, the Seattle Gay Clinic, and the Dorian Group held a meeting on March 2nd to discuss the changing health needs of gay men in Seattle and King County. The meeting grew out of a series of exchanges that were sparked by an editorial written by Dr. Hunter Handsfield for the September, 1981 issue of the American Journal of Public Health. Dr. Handsfield hoped to establish an environment in which representatives of the gay community could brainstorm and share concerns in such a way as to help the Health Department to reassess its role and performance in control of STDs in gay men. All participants agreed that the get-together was a success (as was the Chinese dinner, afterwards), and the group will meet on a monthly basis.

The Seattle Gay Clinic is an all-volunteer community based STD screening and referral activity that operates out of County Doctor Clinic two half-days per week. The Dorian Group is a statewide human rights and public information oriented organization that plays an advocacy role regarding public issues that affect the lives of lesbians and gay men. All three agencies hope to maintain an ongoing dialog, and meetings are tentatively set to occur on the first Tuesday evening of each month.

NEWS FROM SOUTHWEST

WEDDING BELLS AT S.W.

by Wilma Snyder

One of our tried and tested single women has bit the dust with marriage vows on St. Patrick's Day. Joanne Megling has been floating through the clinic several feet off the ground. Seems she was taking Aloe Vera Juice for her feet, but instead it went to her heart. She was caught off guard on March 4th, when surprised by S. W. Staff's gift of a cake and beautifully wrapped black lacey nightgown and peignoir set. One of the few times in her life when she was at a total loss for words. She eventually was able to articulate a clear thank you, and also tell us about her friend of many years. His name is Frank Smokowski, and he is owner and operator of Sea-Tac Refinishing. Their first few days together were at the Home Show, where he had a booth. Now that is true love.

CHANGES AT S.W.

Jan Swallow has been promoted to the job of Administrative Specialist II. She was well aware of all the headaches after two months of "Acting" Lead Clerk, but she accepted the job anyway. Congratulations Jan, we know we are in good hands. Congratulations are also in order for Vera Hammerschmidt, who has stepped up to Jan's position of Administrative Specialist I. Moving upward in the same office makes for a very smooth flow, especially when they are so efficient.

WE ARE VALENTINES

The S. W. Office was treated to a Valentine Angel Food Cake with pink frosting and Bing cherries on top, by Sharon Schrenzel of our Dental Staff Team. Also we each got an individual Valentine with our name on it. Such fun! It made us all feel special.

WE ARE APPRECIATED

by Sharon Schrenzel

Karlista Rickerson, W.H.C.S., Southwest Service Center, has received special recognition for her work in Family Planning Education.

A letter from the Principal of Saint Frances Assisi school states that, "They are appreciative of her time and dedication, which has contributed in a vital way to the development of the school's students. Her expertise and rapport with the parents and students have been a fantastic asset to our school."

Thank you Karlista. We are proud to have you be a part of our staff, and you are a tribute to Public Health.

SHOWER TIME

by Peggy Burbridge

Southwest office staff -- "almost all of us" -- gathered at the home of Eunice Stricker to honor Kathy Ulhorn and expected baby Megan Katherine with a shower. We were joined by former "Southwesters" Adele Martz and Arlene Roberts; it was really nice to see them again. The great cooks at Southwest outdid themselves in a sumptuous potluck dinner and a good time was had by all.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

by Jesse W. Tapp, M.D., M.P.H.

Creativity takes many forms in the Health Department, even though an outsider might wonder how new developments could possibly be accomplished in these difficult times of reduced support and staff. We know, however, that these are the conditions that require us to redefine what is most important for our scarce resources and to "do more with less." That takes a questioning approach to the problems we face and a persistence in coping with the impossible, in other words, creativity.

The creation of the new mental illness unit in the jail is such an example. In less than a year the Health Department people serving the King County Jail population have brought on line a service termed a "revolutionary improvement" in the care of their many mentally ill patients in the judgement of federal district court Magistrate Weinberg. Creativity was required to bring together bits and pieces by the Department of Rehabilitative Services, the Mental Health Board, and the Health Department with support from the King County Council to drastically improve the care of these persons in one location instead of being scattered widely in the jail. This program still is not the definitive care required, however, that is not the point. The staff recognized that things had to change and they developed a better service, even though a new jail and adequate community mental health care are still years in the future. Much remains to be done, nevertheless the jail health staff had their days in federal court for the continuing Consent Decree Process and they were recognized for a major accomplishment.

This kind of creativity does not just happen. It requires that staff keep up to date in their various fields and that they study the creations of others. This process of keeping up with the knowledge and skills needed to make changes and to improve the services we offer is never ending, at times even exhausting. Furthermore, learning is best and most effective when the learner can put the lessons to work right away. We might almost say that new knowledge will be wasted if it is not used promptly. So we come back to being creative in our Health Department programs. It all fits together if we can keep up our momentum: learning by adapting to the problems our daily work presents, changing our services to reflect our new understanding, and challenging our product by thoughtful evaluation. In this process, learning, creating, and evaluating are everybody's business because each person plays a part in making the changes which keep our operations alive.

Even as we recognize a discrete development such as the mental illness unit in the jail, we should take note of those who have exercised initiative in maintaining their continuing education credits for their particular disciplines. In this regard I was very pleased to be notified by the Washington State Environmental Health Association of the records amassed last year by a dozen of our environmental health people. In reporting their names to you I am expressing my expectation that they will in turn exercise the creativity necessary to give the credits meaning in practice. Keep an eye on these folks to see how they use their new knowledge: Diane Christensen, Jeff Everest, Bill Heaton, Bob Howell, Larry Kirchner, Bill Lasby, Carol Nelson, John Nordin, Sharon Schoenfeld, Kitty Slagle, Don Wong, and Cheri Zehner.

Dental Strategies Discussed

by Tim Burak

On April 1, the Health Department will host a gathering of dental care coordinators and administrators representing 18 public/nonprofit agencies in the Northwest. The purpose of the meeting will be to exchange information regarding the impact of federal, state, and local budget cuts on dental programs during the past year. Looking toward the future, the group will explore methods of building a combined constituency and of coordinating planning strategies to make the most of limited resources. Representatives include coordinators of five community dental clinics, several hospital-based dental clinics (Veteran's Administration, Public Health Hospital, Harborview, Providence), the Indian Health Service, as well as dental health administrators from DHHS and DSHS.

Controversy Around Birth Control And Parent Notification

by Ellen Phillips-Angeles and Audrey Dickson

On February 22, 1982, the Department of Health and Human Services published proposed regulations which would require that we notify parents of youth aged 17 and under if we give prescriptive methods of birth control, i.e., the IUD, birth control pill, or diaphragm. These are, of course, the most effective methods of birth control. The regulations, if accepted, would have serious consequences for the youth affected and the Health Department.

During 1981, 16% of the total clients served in the SKCHD Family Planning program (or 1,930) were teenagers 17 or under. Of these, 85% (or 1,636) chose prescriptive methods of birth control. Under the new regulations, these teens, who no longer will receive confidential birth control services, will be at high risk of becoming pregnant.

As part of his defense for these regulations, Secretary Schweiker erroneously suggested that these regulations would have two effects: they would deter some teenagers from having sex and they would result in more consistent contraceptive use among sexually active young people. If DHHS is so interested in keeping teens from having sex they should support family life education programs. Numerous studies have shown that teens who participate in a good family life education program choose to delay their first sexual experiences.

According to a study of teenagers 17 and under, published in Family Planning Perspectives, 23% of teens seeking family planning services would no longer do so if their parents were notified.(1) Another study indicated that many teens delay seeking family planning services for a year or more after becoming sexually active because they are afraid their parents will find out. Thirty-five percent of the teens coming for family planning services come because they suspect pregnancy.(2)

The original intent of the regulations was to encourage communication between family planning clinic patients and their families; but their requirements promote talk between family planning clinic personnel and patients' parents. This is a complete breach of the confidentiality we as health care providers must guarantee our patients. It is also totally inappropriate for Congress to mandate communication between youth and their parents.

Family planning programs have always encouraged patients to talk with their parents. We have offered parents opportunities to learn how to, and practice, communicating with their children about sexuality and will continue to do so.

The proposed regulations will only result in increased numbers of pregnancies to the youngest teens, a group which is showing highest increase in pregnancy rate. Health risks of a pregnancy carried to term are more than five times the risk associated with any method of birth control. Many of these young teens will choose to have abortions which could have been prevented had they had the freedom to seek birth control services.

If you would like to comment on these regulations, write to:

Marjorie Mecklenburg
Acting Assistant Secretary for Population Affairs
Room 725H
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

References:

- 1 "Telling Parents: Clinic Policies and Adolescent's Use of Family Planning and Abortion Services." Family Planning Perspectives. Vol. 12, No. 6, Nov./Dec. 1980, pp 284-292.
- 2 "Why They Delay: A study of teenage Family Planning Clinic Patients." Family Planning Perspectives. Vol. 13, No. 5, Sept./Oct. 1981, pp 205-217.

FREE AT LAST

by Kathy Williams

If you follow the careers of Eunice Duncan and Leona Buswell over the past 12 years, you trace the history of the Health Department's Family Planning Program. The Seattle-King County program, the first in the state, began in 1969. So when Eunice and Leona joined the staff in 1970 and 1971, respectively, the Family Planning Program still was very new and experimental.

The Family Planning "Clinic" actually was a van, which packed all supplies for a clinic. It was unloaded in a different location everyday. Make-shift clinics were set-up at University Congregational Church, in Fremont, Ballard and Bothell, and at Firland, the old TB sanitarium. Accomodations were less than comfortable. Large rooms were divided with fabric-covered room dividers, bookshelves, file cabinets, plants or whatever was available to create lab space, exam, counseling and class "rooms". Privacy? That was provided by a radio playing to drown out individual conversations in the "rooms". At one site, exam tables, file cabinets, etc. had to be wheeled down a flight of stairs, then back up the stairs at the end of the day.

If the job of setting up the clinic wasn't enough to exhaust the staff, seeing up to 60 patients an evening probably was.

Finally, in 1974, the van was parked for good. The clinic (and Eunice and Leona) moved to more permanant quarters at Firland. With rugs on the floor and rooms for privacy, the Family Planning staff really felt like it was in the lap of luxury.

Eunice and Leona admit they worked hard in those early days of Family Planning. Those of us who have worked with them know they have worked hard all the years they've been with the Department -- that's their style.

The happy ending to this story is that Eunice and Leona retired in February. Eunice has started a business; she will be a seamstress for wedding parties. In her spare time, she will continue to garden and see more of her husband and family.

Leona's husband also is retired, so they will be doing more boating and spending more time with their children and grandchildren.

Eunice and Leona, two real nice people, will be missed at North.

Freud Visits Department

by Sally Sieg, PHN, and Kit Normark, PHN

Dr. Ernest Freud, grandson of the famous psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, came to Southeast District on March 12th, to meet with Public Health staff. He is a psychoanalyst at Hampstead Child Therapy Clinic - London Institute and is in private practice with Queen Charlotte Maternity Hospital in London. His special interest is the psychological aspect of perinatal care.

He discussed bonding between premature babies and their parents. He is a delightful speaker who confirmed many of the ideas we have been thinking about. Some of these include:

- 1) Mothers do better when they receive adequate mothering themselves.
- 2) Teen-age parents usually have had inadequate role models.
- 3) Pregnancy reduces normal defenses and is an easier time to establish relationships.
- 4) Depreseed mothers don't respond to infant cries, causing symptoms in the baby.
- 5) Antepartum and postpartum care in the home is very important to the wellbeing of the families.

Although he did not add any startling data to our current knowledge, he was a delight to listen to and to watch. Such a mild and gentle man certainly could help a mother of a premature baby by his own example. His way of relating to us seemed to me to be the valuable lesson.

We admired him also for his choice of specialty. He narrowed his famous grandfather's field down to relating to premature infants, and so made a name for himself in his own right.

Campylobacter Study in CD

In the fall of 1981 Dr. Charles Nolan, Communicable Disease Control officer, was awarded a 2-1/2 year contract by the Federal Food and Drug Administration to investigate the source of Campylobacter jejuni infections in King County. Campylobacter is a poorly understood bacterium that has recently attracted interest as a major cause of diarrheal illness in humans. At the present time Campylobacter infections occur more commonly than those due to both Salmonella and Shigella in King County residents. Because Campylobacter is also commonly found in the intestines of animals, FDA is interested in knowing whether foods deriving from animals may be a significant source of human Campylobacter infections.

This contract will allow the Communicable Disease Control section to intensely investigate Campylobacter cases detected by physicians at Group Health Cooperative of Puget Sound. At the same time, we will establish a monitoring system for Campylobacter contamination of food products such as beef, pork, and poultry on retail shelves throughout the county. Finally, we will attempt to make epidemiological and laboratory connections between food and human isolates of Campylobacter in order to ascertain whether food is a source of human infections.

Through this contract the Health Department has been able to expand its staff. A senior microbiologist has been retained by the laboratory section to perform the extensive laboratory work associated with the project. In addition, Dr. Noreen V. Harris, a veterinarian and epidemiologist, has been hired as chief epidemiologist for the project.

We are pleased at this opportunity to help understand the cause of Campylobacter infections and at the same time to lay the ground work for the control of this important infection in King County.

Continuing Saga of Murphy

To err is human -- but more often government.

The probability of someone watching you is proportional to the stupidity of your action.

The shortest distance between two points is usually under construction.

Paper is always strongest at the perforations.

Medical Referrals for Low Income

The King County Medical Society has recently established a new referral system for residents who can't afford the full cost for physician services. More than 1000 local physicians have agreed to see low income patients who may have lost their medical coverage through DSHS or because of unemployment. People who wish to use this service may call 621-9395 and receive a referral to an appropriate physician.

Board Sponsors 3rd Picnic on Aug. 14

At the March 4th meeting of the Seattle-King County Health Department Carrier Board, the Board voted to sponsor the 1982 3rd Annual Summer Picnic. The Board's broad base of representation and its ability to promote the event were major considerations leading to the unanimous decision. In the words of one female board member, "It sure beats a P.I. Sports Banquet." The Board invites anyone interested in assisting with the planning to contact Julia Bassett. See you August 14th.

Correction

Designation of Employer information shown in the March '82 Carrier should read as follows:

The first line printed on your check stub shows a code that indicates who your employer is for tax purposes. PH84 indicates you are a City Employee. KC97 indicates you are a County Employee.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor:

Thank goodness the department has at last shown an interest in occupational health.

What about the efforts starting within our own department? How about the asbestos pipes in the supply room which supply staff with a regular dose of asbestos dust?

Does the noise level within the Public Safety Building meet standards for workers? What is the effect on employees?

Are the physical surroundings conducive to good mental health and productivity? - i.e., lighting, seating, space and color?

How are stress levels for workers assessed within the department? Are stress classes offered for volunteers/employees.

What incentives does the department offer to employees who remain healthy and have low absentee rates? Some thought given to these questions might help us project the image we desire other employers to maintain.

Anonymous

Dear Editor:

Here is my response to a Letter to the Editor from "Choked Up" in the March, 1982 Carrier:

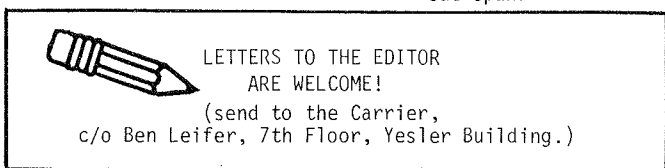
When I go into a restaurant or a lunchroom, I make it a point NOT to sit and chew my sandwich right in the face of someone trying to enjoy a cigarette after their lunch.

Donna Jean Peterson

Response to "Choked Up"

I resent the recent Carrier articles and letters to the editor which are designed to harrass smokers. Being surrounded by nonsmokers, I am not allowed to smoke at my desk. While I may not like the situation, I can accept it. However, as the lunchroom (such as it is) is the only place where I can indulge my habit, I would oppose a no-smoking ban in this area. What's the possibility of getting one of the administrators with a private office to loan it out to non-smokers who want to eat their lunch in a smoke-free atmosphere?

Sue Spahr



NURSING RECOGNITION MONTH

Once again, the King County Nurses' Association invites us to join them in celebrating April as Nursing Recognition Month. During this month, nursing's significant contributions to health care will be highlighted with special features and appearances on television, radio and the newspaper.

Among the activities scheduled for the month will be the announcements of "Nurses of the Day" on KIXI radio. Several nurses from the Health Department were nominated. The Pay'n Save Corporation will also honor these nurses with posters in its area stores and advertisements in the Seattle Times. Several public service announcements, with the theme "Nursing Has Many Faces" and showing the wide range of nursing practice, will be aired on the local television stations. In addition, KOMO TV News will broadcast a five part series on nursing during the month.

Although the celebration is set for April, events will actually culminate on May 6, which Congress has declared National Nurses' Day. On that day, KCNA will announce the winners of its annual Excellence in Nursing Practice and Nurse of the Year awards at its Spring Banquet.

Taking it Off at East

by Clara Kennedy

Some of the female staff from the East District are "taking it off" and shaping up to music through aerobic exercises. Twice a week classes lead by Susan Baker, a temporary Administrative Support Assistant, are well attended in spite of the hard work involved. As if the exercises weren't enough, the participants must move three large tables and numerous chairs before there is room to do any bending or stretching. After an exhausting session the chairs and tables must all go back into place. Oh well, it all helps to "take it off."

Just around the corner and outside the back door the sanitarians are also "taking it off," but this time it's mud. The Jerry B. Cox memorial boot cleaner planted outside the back door by none other than Jerry Cox is reported to be the most effective reliable model around. The brightly colored brushes are effectively placed to clean both sides and sole with one good swipe and the entire mechanism is securely mounted in a smooth square of concrete. Jerry refused to autograph his work however, saying that true artists didn't do such things.

The first daffodil of spring has just bloomed beside the new boot cleaner. Ruth Hockenbery planted the daffodil bulbs a few years back so that she could see some spring color as she moves from one building to another. As you scrape your feet, be careful folks, Ruth has threatened the life of anyone who would do harm to that flower. That's one thing that better not come off.

In the meantime in the closet, Vera Washington is also "taking it off", but this time it's old pamphlets and brochures off the shelf. Vera has been very creative in the use of old boxes to group the pamphlets by subject matter yet keep them neatly in place. Lots of other things are coming off the shelf under Vera's guidance too. Ten years accumulation of junk is getting tossed and 15 years accumulation of old patient records are finally getting pulled down, sorted and sent to proper storage. Don't worry Dr. Tapp, we didn't "take off" any historical material. The box labeled "East District Archives" is still safely on the shelf.

CLASSIFIED ADS

77 Honda CR 125, Assembled in 1980 - Like new \$500. ALSO: 67 Kit Companion 15' LoProfile Trailer - Furnace, ice box, \$900. Call 392-1403 eves. and weekends 392-5674 days.

For Sale: Two Kayaks plus gear, men's wetsuit, women's wetsuit, climbers tent, Ramer mountaineering ski bindings, Nelson sailing dinghy. Call Carolyn Nelson for prices and details 885-1278 or 322-8011 evenings.



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