

# HHSa Connection

JUNE 2009 A Monthly Newsletter for the Employees of San Diego County Health & Human Services Agency

## Agency Cited as National Response Model H1N1 Outbreak Brings National Spotlight

The live television trucks are gone, the international media has stopped calling and a sense of normalcy has returned, but the work surrounding the local discovery of the H1N1 Influenza virus (also known as swine flu) continues.

Although the first cases appeared in Mexico, the first U.S. cases, and the first to be confirmed as the new H1N1 virus, were in San Diego and Imperial Counties.

The initial San Diego County case was a 10-year-old and was announced on Tuesday, April 21. By the weekend, a father-daughter pair and a 7-year-old had also been confirmed as local cases.

County Public Health Officer **Wilma Wooten**, M.D., M.P.H., held daily media briefings to keep the public informed. The entire Agency swung into action, bolstered by assistance from other County departments.

Community partners, including our extensive networks of health providers and medical professionals, helped inform people how to protect against the virus. School officials helped deal with issues involving students.

During the first two weeks of the outbreak, nearly 300 media interviews were conducted by Agency officials with more than 50

different media outlets.

Many other public health entities across the country have referenced San Diego County's response as a model for handling public health emergencies.

The national attention may have waned, but the presence of H1N1 Influenza in our community continues, and Public Health Services continues to monitor the virus through its normal influenza surveillance channels.

### HHSa Multimedia VIDEO



## San Marcos Joins List of EBT Farmers Markets

It was a beautiful sunny day in San Marcos on May 13, appropriately good weather for the opening of a new Farmers Market on the campus of Cal State San Marcos. The Farmers Market drew both curious onlookers and serious shoppers to the two dozen or so produce, food, and specialty vendors.

Supervisor **Bill Horn**, one of the speakers at the opening ceremony, noted how great it is to have Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) at the Farmers Market, citing how it provides another venue for families to get fresh fruits and vegetables using their EBT cards.

The San Marcos Farmers Market is the fifth in the County to accept EBT, a system that allows those enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP (for-

merly known as food stamps) to buy fresh produce using plastic cards that operate similar to debit and credit cards. Participants swipe their card at the EBT machine, in exchange for wooden coins to use at produce vendors.

Strategically located next to the EBT machine is the HHSa North Regions booth. "We not only offer information on applying for Food Stamps, but also on nutrition and other resources, plus easy healthy recipe cards that families can use with their produce from the Farmers Market" said North Inland Family Resource worker **Ann Marie Masino**.

"It's so nice," said one shopper about the market. "I'm so glad it's here."



North Inland Family Resource Center staff **Ann Marie Masino**, **Abel Bautista** and **Xiomy Caliendo** host an Agency booth at the San Marcos Farmers Market.

The San Marcos Farmers Market is open on Wednesdays, 3-7 pm, in parking lot B of California State University San Marcos at 333 South Twin Oaks Valley Road (cross street is Craven Drive) in San Marcos.

# TEAMWORK

## Teamwork: Taking the Score from Good to Great

### *From the Director's Desk*

This spring, my son is playing tee-ball and I've had the great pleasure of being one of his coaches. If you haven't seen a dozen 6-year olds play baseball, you're in for a real experience. For the coaches, it's a lesson in patience, humility, and keeping things simple. For the kids, it's learning all about America's pastime including a critical component of any sport...and the theme of this month's HHS Connection...TEAMWORK.



Nick Macchione

Unlike kindergartners and 6-year-old tee-ball players learning teamwork for the first time, most of us come to our positions with an idea of what teamwork is all about. We start with the understanding that all of our roles are important to the successful operation of our Agency. We learn along the way that "good" teams build each other up. However, we aspire to become a "great" team and we know that "great" teams take personal responsibility for themselves as well as for their teammates.

But what is it that sets high performing teams apart from the rest? Over the past 20 years, I've had the opportunity to work with many different types of teams. I have also seen the development and implementation of high performing teams within our Agency, and I'd like to share with you one in particular that's fresh in my mind. It's our Agency's team that responded to the H1N1 Influenza A (aka swine flu) that hit our county in mid-April. It's never a doubt in my mind that the professionals in the various positions can do their

individual jobs: public health nurses investigating confirmed cases, technicians in the public health lab testing samples, Emergency Medical Services staff distributing medications from the national stockpile, fiscal and clerical staff ensuring the right resources were accessible to the team, public health leaders making important decisions in collaboration with community partners, media specialists putting out daily press releases and our Public Health Officer calming a concerned public through messages on the news and on YouTube, to name a few.

What was most impressive to see with this team was the seamless way with which they addressed the issue at hand. There were no egos or alternate agendas to deal with, but rather a keen focus on the common goal. Now, don't get me wrong, the team had to work really hard in reaching this level in spite of the number of stressful situations they had to endure. However, throughout this entire ordeal there was mutual respect among teammates and straight, honest talk about what was working, and what changes needed to occur to make the team and the outcomes even better. Each relied on the other to do their role, which was recognized as equally important and relied upon in the ultimate effort to protect the public's health.

This high performing team went one step further and incorporated new members to the team as the needs arose, including federal and state officials, school partners, local health professionals and members of our broader County family including the Department of Media and Public Relations and the Office of Emergency Services. As powerful as these in-

dividual entities are, this response team knew that the power of the collective is stronger than any one individual, and that's what made them succeed.

There is a story often told that speaks to the strength of teams working toward a common mission. During the 1960's, President John F. Kennedy's directive to place a man on the moon so permeated the NASA team that everyone was on board. As the story goes, a NASA janitor busy at his job scrubbing the floors during the night shift was once asked why he was so meticulous in his work in cleaning the floors. He promptly replied, "We're putting a man on the moon!"

Although we're not putting anyone on the moon, during these budget challenges we're facing, it sometimes feels that daunting. But now, more than ever, it's important to ensure our own teams are in alignment with our Agency's mission to make people's lives safer, healthier and self-sufficient by managing essential services. From your unit's team, program team, and region/division team up through the Agency and County teams, WE all accomplish the most when we're working TOGETHER toward a cause in which we all believe.

Like those little leaguers who put their hands together at the beginning and end of each game and shout a cheer for their team, I challenge you to do the same in motivating and supporting your team. Build one another up each day. Realize the key role each and every one of us plays in the success of our County and Agency mission, and, like **Chuck Matthews** shares in his article, realize that with trust in your team, anything is possible.



# TEAMWORK

## Trust in the Agency's Team Culture

By Chuck Matthews,

Public Health Services Administrator

There are many views and opinions regarding teamwork and the different characteristics on which to focus. I think about the elements of great teams such as: knowing your team members well, knowing their strengths, knowing what motivates, knowing what de-motivates, defining mission, goals, and values to get behind (or get out in front of) and the value of a quality team leader. While these are all extremely important, the characteristic of teamwork that stands out the most for me in this Agency is trust. If you create the kind of team culture that has trust as its foundation, anything is possible. If you know that you can count on your team member in crisis as well as everyday, you will have a great team.

During this past 6 weeks, the Agency and County was again challenged to respond to a crisis. This time it was H1N1. This trust in our team culture shone through again, just as it has in the past.

This time, trust was demonstrated in many ways:

**Trust in the fact** that Mental Health would volunteer right off the bat;

**Trust in the fact** that Aging & Independence Services, Public Administrator/Public Guardian and General Services would gladly volunteer staff and vehicles to deliver medication;

**Trust in the fact** that front line lab staff would have the idea to obtain a machine to do our own H1N1 testing and that Agency top management would trust the front line and buy it (in 2 hours);

**Trust in the fact** that the Office of Media and Public Affairs/County media would ensure that our staff from the front line to the Chief Administrative Officer were set up to succeed, EVERYDAY;

**Trust in the fact** that the Regions would send

staff including nurses to meet the increasing need, immediately;

**Trust in the fact** that Community Epidemiology, Emergency Medical Services and Public Health would be there no matter how long it took or what had to be done (and still are there);

**Trust in the fact** that if there were any silos before this emergency, they were blown down and now will remain down;

**Trust in the fact** that if a group was not mentioned above, they know that they are appreciated (because they have surely received recognition in some form - that's how we operate).

Lastly, **trust in the fact** that we continue to face and will in the future face more challenges. As we continually meet those challenges and define our team culture, know that it is based on trust and since it is, then "Anything Is Possible".

## Do you work with someone who deserves to be recognized in the Employee Spotlight?

Each month the HHSA Connection Employee Spotlight will feature one of your co-workers. If you know someone who provides excellent customer service, works hard at their job or is just an interesting person with a story to tell, you can submit their name for the Employee Spotlight.

To nominate someone for the Employee Spotlight, simply send an email to [Connectioneditor.hhsa@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Connectioneditor.hhsa@sdcounty.ca.gov) with Employee Spotlight in the subject line.

Tell us the employee's name, where they work and why you think they should be featured in the employee spotlight.

It's that simple!





## Agency Encourages People to Seek Help Breaking the Chains of Stigma

San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) officials, representatives of the Meeting Place, Inc., community partners and mental health consumers brought attention to the stigma associated with mental health during a press event to highlight Mental Health Month in May. At the event, people broke more than 8,000 paper chain links, created by members of mental health clubhouses throughout the county, to shatter the negative image of people suffering from a mental disorder.

“The fear of rejection and discrimination prevents people with a mental illness from getting access to needed mental health services,” said Agency Director **Nick Macchione**. “This demonstration is a clear example of the great progress we’ve made in eliminating the stigma of mental illness.”

Until the late 1700s, people with a mental illness were commonly restrained with chains. In 1797, French physician Philippe Pinel, the father of modern psychiatry, insisted that patients under his care be unchained and given more humane treatment.

One out of every five Americans is diagnosed with a mental disorder every year. A mental illness is a disease that causes mild to severe disturbances in thought and/or behavior, resulting in an inability to cope with life’s ordinary demands and routines. About 57,000 children, adults, and older adults benefit from HHSA mental health services each year. It is estimated that as many as 80 percent of people suffering from a mental disorder can lead productive lives if they receive appropriate treatment.

People suffering from a mental illness can access services by calling the County’s 24-hour, multi-lingual Access and Crisis Line at (800) 479-3339.



Representatives from mental health clubhouses throughout the county prepare to present the chain of over 8,000 links.

### HHSA Multimedia VIDEO



## Polinsky Center Donation is Music to their Ears

The sound of music heard on the campus of the Polinsky Children’s Center (PCC) is the result of a Bose music system donated by Cathi and Larry Richman. Larry is the Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

According to Richman, the Polinsky Center’s continuous soothing music played throughout the campus courtyard and cafeteria will subtly augment the healing character of the Center, its architecture, color schemes, programs and mission.

It is a proven fact that music aids in memory, intellect and development for children. Music can also be soothing, reduce stress and aid in calming agitated or distressed children.



Social Workers **Richard Carino**, left, and **Carol Kozik-Sproule**, get a donated refurbished computer ready for a foster child. San Diego Futures Foundation and the HHSA Foster Home Licensing program distribute refurbished County computers to foster families several times a year. This partnership was initiated in 2002 by the Board of Supervisors, at the direction of Supervisors **Greg Cox** and **Bill Horn**.

## The Economic Crisis and Suicide Connection

May was Mental Health Month and County of San Diego officials kicked it off by highlighting the connection between the economic crisis and suicide.

“These are difficult economic times and the anxiety and strain are bringing more stress into people’s lives,” said County Board or Supervisors Chairwoman Dianne Jacob. “While it’s true that unemployment and economic downturns are associated with increased rates of suicide and suicide attempts, it’s impossible to determine exactly what factors cause people to end their lives.”

In San Diego County, the number of suicides increased 17 percent during the last five years, reaching 366 in 2008. Preliminary data for the first two months of this year indicates that about one suicide is taking place in San Diego County every day.

“The causes of suicide are complex. Research has shown that the majority of people who kill themselves have depression or another mental or substance abuse disorder,” said Jennifer Schaffer, Director of the Agency’s Behavioral Health Services.

Suicide can be prevented. It’s important for people to recognize the risks and warning signs and get help immediately.

Some of the risk factors of suicide include: a mental or substance abuse disorder, adverse life events, family history of mental or substance abuse disorder, family history of suicide, family violence including physical or sexual abuse, or a prior suicide attempt.

Some of the warning signs of suicide include: talking of hurting or killing oneself, hopelessness, divorce or separation, loss of job, increased alcohol or drug use, and isolation from family and friends.

The County is developing many new preventive services to increase suicide awareness and provide early intervention. The efforts will be focused on several different population groups including: older adults, individuals exposed to community or domestic violence, people living in rural or Native American communities, and veterans.

People in suicidal danger should call 911. Help is also available by calling the County’s Access and Crisis Line at (800) 479-3339.



*Jennifer Schaffer, Director of the Agency’s Behavioral Health Services, speaks at the press event highlighting suicide prevention as part of Mental Health Month in May.*

**HHSA Multimedia VIDEO**

[Click here to see the video](#)

**♥ Heart Gallery**

HEART GALLERY  
A project of:  
CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION FOUNDATION  
SAN DIEGO COUNTY ADOPTIONS

The Heart Gallery is a traveling photographic exhibit designed to increase the number of adoptive families for children needing homes in our county. The photographs were taken by local professional photographers who volunteered their time to find the right expressions and angles to let the spirit of childhood shine through. San Diego County Adoptions would like to extend a warm thank you to our Heart Gallery photographers: Luci Dumas, Rose & Bob Jacobson, Sandra Kay, Huy Nguyen and Lisa Peirce.



## Balancing Work and Life

With the increasing demand for services, there is no better time for employees to make their physical, mental and emotional health a priority. Research shows that healthy employees make a happier and more productive workforce.

In an effort to improve employee wellness, the Agency's Human Resources' Work Life Balance Initiative has teamed up with North Regions and the Network for a Healthy California to provide fun and easy steps to help improve employee health.

A pilot wellness program was held at the North Coastal Family Resource Center for six weeks with no-cost fun activities such as food demonstrations, a "Walk Across America" friendly walking competition, sharing of healthy recipes, resources, and more.

The goal of the wellness program was to increase awareness of the benefits of healthy eating and increased physical activity, with plans to eventually expand Agency-wide.

Anne Kashiwa, Network for A Healthy California, gives a healthy food demonstration to the North Coastal Family Resource Center staff.



"This program is fun and good for the staff, good for our health and our morale," explained Supervising Human Services Specialist **Demi Hungerford**. "Plus it builds team spirit and gives us a good reason to get away and take our breaks. Outside in the sunshine, talking things over with coworkers, our problems shrink down to real size, instead of seeming overwhelming."

Over fifty employees participated and seven walking teams took part.

## Agency's TB Control Program Featured

The Agency's Tuberculosis (TB) Control Program is the featured program in the Curry National TB Center's (CNTC) Spring 2009 newsletter.



The CNTC Newsletter is a quarterly electronic newsletter from the Francis J. Curry National Tuberculosis Center that contains announcements, information, and resources for tuberculosis programs and health care providers.

The newsletter periodically highlights TB control programs in the western region of the United States, and this issue focuses on the San Diego TB Control Program.

[Click here to view the newsletter.](#)

## County Psychiatric Hospital and Auxiliary Celebrate 20 Years

During a mental health crisis, when someone could be a danger to themselves or others, they may need to be detained for safe treatment. Sometimes the police will encounter such a situation, or sometimes a family will seek help. At times like this, the San Diego County Psychiatric Hospital provides voluntary or involuntary admission (determined by law) to help patients deal with a mental health crisis, become stabilized, and move ahead to less restrictive care or treatment. Over the past 20 years, the Hospital has provided acute psychiatric crisis help to more than 90,000 people.

Located on Rosecrans Street and administered by Behavioral Health Services, the hospital provides treatment to men and women over age 18. Many patients are homeless and without family or other support. Others are from families who have exhausted all insurance and third-party benefits and must rely on public services.

Treatment teams are led by a psychiatrist, and include psychologists, social workers, nurses, activities therapists and dietitians. Staff works closely with the patient's family when possible, for both emotional encouragement and to educate the family so

they know how to best support the patient going forward. Treatment is geared toward improving each person's skills in managing their own medication, understanding and recognizing their symptoms, and developing improved social skills. Patients are assigned an eligibility worker to help with financial paperwork, including Medi-Cal or other aid programs. Social workers help patients when they are ready to leave the Hospital and work with community resources.

Supporting the Hospital since 1988 is the San Diego County Psychiatric Hospital Auxiliary, an all-volunteer group dedicated to serving the patients and working to educate the greater San Diego community about mental illness. The Auxiliary's primary goal is to help people whose lives have been disrupted by mental illness lead dignified and satisfying lives for many years to come.

They support the Hospital and its patients through a wide variety of activities, fund-raising events and educational programs, including providing clothing for the patients, photo/text exhibits, and therapy dog visitation. For more information about the Auxiliary, or to learn how to get involved, [click here](#).



## Agency Encourages Asthma Action Plan for Affected Children

Agency officials, together with medical and community representatives and parents, launched a campaign on World Asthma Day 2009 to encourage parents, schools, and primary care providers to develop an asthma action plan for children affected by the disease.

“For asthma sufferers, flare-ups can occur at any place and at any time. That’s why it’s extremely important for parents, for schools and for primary care providers to have an asthma action plan for each of their patients,” said San Diego County Supervisor **Ron Roberts**.

“There is no cure for asthma, but people can control it,” said **Dean Sidelinger**, M.D., M.S.Ed., Deputy County Public Health Officer. “Every child—and every adult—with asthma should have an asthma action plan. It should be updated every time the patient is seen by their doctors and the asthma action plan should be available at every place the child spends time, whether at home, at school or at grandma’s house.”

The local asthma task force has been working tirelessly in City Heights, where last fall a middle school student died from asthma complications. City Heights is one of the areas in the county with the highest rates of asthma, asthma deaths, and emergency room visits and hospitalizations due to asthma.

“Everyone has a role in helping people, especially children, con-

trol their asthma,” Sidelinger added. “Complications caused by asthma won’t go away on their own. Uncontrolled asthma may cause permanent damage to a person’s lungs. Asthma flare ups can be dangerous and in some cases deadly.”

It’s important for people to understand that certain conditions or triggers can greatly impact an asthma sufferer. The triggers vary for each individual but usually include smoke, household cleaners, strong odors, cats, and dogs, among many others.

“Asthma can be controlled. It’s important for parents, schools, and doctors to develop an asthma action plan to help people with asthma, especially children, lead healthier lives,” Supervisor Roberts concluded.

### HHSA Multimedia VIDEO



## Attention! Project Management Boot Camp

The Agency held its first Project Management Boot Camp in April. The Boot Camp was a three-day intensive introduction to the field of project management for 26 Agency staff. Participants were selected by the Agency Executive Team.

The class learned about industry best practices for managing a project from initiation through closing. Agency leaders with subject matter expertise served as instructors. The camp covered project management, stakeholder analysis, return on investment (ROI), contracting and assessment.

The Agency is committed to innovation and quality improvement. The training combined those concepts by providing a structure for Business Process Re-engineering and Continuous Improvement projects, as well as day to day internal office projects. The training provided templates, resources, a Project Management Memory Jogger, and a SharePoint site for additional materials and collaboration.

The fast-paced training ended with a celebration for graduates, certificates of completion and a class evaluation. Several graduates put their new knowledge to work and immediately became

project managers for the Agency’s Health Strategy projects.

Plans are already underway for the next Project Management Boot Camp class that will be held in early Fall 2009. Advanced level courses in contract management, risk management, data collection and analysis, budget, and other topics are being planned.

If you want to know more about HHSA Project Management Boot Camp click here.



Project Management Boot Camp 2009 participants



## Third Quarter GMS: Becoming a Knowledge Worker

THIRD QUARTER GMS 2.0 TOPIC: BECOMING A KNOWLEDGE WORKER:

HOW DOES THIS FIT WITH OUR EXISTING AGENCY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY POLICY ON INTERNET USE?

By now you may have heard about the concept of becoming a Knowledge Worker. If you have, then you know that a County of San Diego Knowledge Worker is someone who:

- o Stays current with information, technology and trends in the world around them and in their field;
- o Remains flexible and adapts easily to change in their job and in the workplace;
- o Takes personal accountability and pride in completing their job efficiently and effectively;
- o Demonstrates initiative, innovation and a willingness to contribute whatever it takes to get the job done;
- o Uses organizational acumen and sound judgment at all times;
- o Recognizes that their job is a key part of a coordinated system of individuals, teams, and departments working together;
- o Takes personal responsibility for their individual success, the success of their department and of the County.

One of the many tools that will help you become a Knowledge Worker is the internet. For example, take the first bullet point of being a Knowledge Worker: it expects you to stay current with information, technology and trends. When most of us need information we turn to the internet. While the Agency promotes and supports GMS 2.0 and the Knowledge Worker concept within our Agency, in reviewing our existing IT policies we also realized we need to become more flexible and adaptable in allowing employees to use technology tools to become Knowledge Workers.

To help you become a true Knowledge Worker, we have updated our internet use policy HHSA F-4 Acceptable Use of the Internet to reflect that “HHSA employees are hereby authorized limited and reasonable personal use of County information systems while on personal time and for purposes that do not interfere with County business.”

While we are becoming more flexible, please keep in mind that the following uses are still considered misuse and strictly prohibited. Violation of these or other policies related to County information systems may result in possible revocation of access privileges and disciplinary action:

- o Accessing or using another person’s userID or information
- o Conducting a private business on County time
- o Accessing or downloading pornographic information
- o Gambling
- o Transmitting or communicating defamatory, obscene, offensive, or harassing messages or information
- o Accessing County data or information without authorization
- o Unauthorized downloading of copyrighted or licensed materials including software
- o Soliciting for personal gain or profit

Within the realm of allowable internet use, here are a few web sites that can help you keep current and develop your mental desktop: Voice of San Diego , Union-Tribune , North County Times , FG3 Regional Economic indicators web site - links to economic trend information for San Diego County , USD Index of Leading Economic Indicators - monthly update of local economic indexes compiled by the University of San Diego , Sandag.org - demographic and economic information for the San Diego region ,Governing.com – resources for state and local government officials , Rough and Tumble - snapshot of California public policy and politics , American City & County magazine - resources for city and county officials, Harvard Business Review - the world’s pre-eminent business journal , California State Association of Counties (CSAC) – professional association for counties in California , National Association of Counties (NACO) – professional association for counties across America , CIO Magazine - information technology insight and analysis, TechTerms.com – definitions and explanations of computer and technology terms, TechWeb.com/encyclopedia – searchable encyclopedia of more than 20,000 information technology terms , WhatIs.com – IT encyclopedia and learning center

For more information on GMS 2.0 and becoming a Knowledge Worker please click here.

You can enroll in the online presentation: The Knowledge Worker training in the LMS by clicking here. You may also enroll in this presentation by searching the LMS catalog for the “The Knowledge Worker”.