

JANUARY 2012

WHAT'S INSIDE

What's Not to
"Like" About
Public Health

Living Healthy
Resource Guide

Suicide
Prevention

Health Data
Profiles

Night Skiing in
the Park

Cervical Health
Month

Get Your Plate
in Shape

What's Not to "Like" About Public Health?

By Lowell Johnson, Director, Washington County Department of Public Health and Environment

The Washington County Department of Public Health and Environment will soon officially launch its Facebook page. As Director of the department, I have often told our staff that they are fortunate to work in a profession where our mission "protect, promote and improve the community's health and environment" is almost universally supported. After all, who doesn't like healthy babies, healthy bodies, good food, clean water, safe environments, strong families, and access to health services?

The problem we often have in public health is effectively communicating how, when, and where we are doing the important work that we do. Public health can often be invisible—working in the background. We accomplish our mission by partnering with many individuals and organizations throughout the community. So much so, that at times our identity is blended into the efforts and actions so that the public does not always "see" public health in action. Generally, that is okay- we are used to that and frankly, we aren't looking for accolades or a great deal of recognition. We are proud to partner with others and proud to know that our unseen efforts are critical to the health and safety of our community.

There is however, value in being recognized for the role of public health in the community and in our local government systems. In this time of scarce and precious resources we know that if public health is to be supported (in policies, politics, and finances) we must demonstrate our services. We have to be able to show how our services are delivered, how we measure outcomes, and how these efforts benefit the community. We must communicate more effectively with the public. Social media, in this case Facebook, is a great opportunity to do that!

In January the Washington County Department of Public Health and Environment will begin actively encouraging the public to find us and "like" us on Facebook. We hope to provide interesting and helpful information about



What's Not to "Like" About Public Health? - (cont'd)

our services, public health issues, health resources, environmental topics, calendars of events, and other timely "hot topics". An internal team of employees representing a cross-section of our department services will be updating and monitoring the site regularly. We are very excited to have this means to help demonstrate what the department is doing in our community. And most importantly, to use Facebook to continue to help us meet our mission to "protect, promote, and improve the community's health and environment". After all, what's not to like about that?

Look for "Washington County Minnesota Department of Public Health and Environment" on Facebook!

Living Healthy Resource Guide for South Washington County



The Living Healthy Resource Guide for South Washington County includes more than 100 local wellness resources, many of which are either free or low cost. The purpose of the guide is to help individuals and families connect with health resources in their community focused on active living, healthy foods, and tobacco cessation. The guide is currently being distributed through the Woodbury Health and Wellness Collaborative, the Living Healthy in Washington County website and Allina Clinics in Cottage Grove and Woodbury. Living Healthy in Washington County is looking for a community group to partner with in order to expand the resource guide for the central and northern areas of the county. If interested, please contact the Washington County Department of Public Health and Environment at: PHE@co.washington.mn.us or 651-430-6655. Access the guide in both printable and online formats at: <http://www.livinghealthywc.org/ResourceGuide.html>

Living Healthy
IN WASHINGTON COUNTY

Suicide Prevention in Washington County 2001-2011

For the past ten years, many community members have worked in a coordinated effort in five Washington County communities to address suicide prevention and healthy youth development through the “Teen Health Fund”. Efforts continue and are growing stronger with new community partners through the Suicide Prevention Collaborative of the East Metro area.

Suicide is primarily the result of undiagnosed or untreated mental health conditions. The stigma of mental health and suicide prevention services continues to hinder access to effective treatment,



even as the success of mental health treatment is well documented. Untreated depression is the leading cause of suicide. Suicide is the second leading cause of death in Minnesota for 15-34 year olds and the tenth leading cause of death for all ages combined. According to the Minnesota Department of Health, an average of 469 people die each year from suicide in Minnesota. This is three times as many that have died by homicide.

In Washington County and statewide, the percentage of youth reporting suicidal thoughts between 2004 and 2010 decreased for all ages for both males and females. Despite

this decline, 9th grade girls in Washington County continued to report the highest rates of suicidal thoughts at 18% (compared to 22% for the state) followed by 12th grade girls (12%). Sixth, 9th and 12th grade males followed at 12% for all three grades.¹

Based on the results of the 2001 community health assessment, the Washington County Department of Public Health and Environment (PHE) has supported suicide prevention and healthy youth development for adolescents and young adults by providing staff technical assistance and funding through the Local Public Health Grant to five community areas within the county. The communities of Forest Lake, Mahtomedi, Oakdale, Stillwater and South Washington County each have a local coalition called the “Teen Health Fund” (THF). Coalition members include youth, parents, health care providers, school personnel, mental health and youth serving agencies, suicide survivors, and private mental health therapists. Yearly, each THF coalition assesses their community based on suicide prevention data and coalition input. The coalition uses funding to implement a work plan, evaluation and to seek funding from foundations to supplement funds. In 2005, the Mental Wellness Initiative in Washington County was formed to include more partners. Currently the Mental Wellness Initiative advises and supports local THF coalitions.

Some of the successes in the past five years for the THF and Mental Wellness Initiative include: community education for youth, parents, and school staff; Yellow Ribbon Lifeline peer helper programs; depression screening in three school districts; *Parents as Partners: A Parent's Guide to Suicide Prevention* booklet distribution to parents; development of a countywide online adolescent resource list; collaboration on trainings with the Chemical Health Action Collaborative; *Washington County Youth* website development; and strategic planning and technical assistance.

Suicide Prevention - (cont'd)

In response to suicide deaths in Woodbury and Stillwater in 2010, new community champions for suicide prevention have stepped forward to form the Suicide Prevention Collaborative (SPC). In its first year, SPC developed a strategic plan and website, held a community forum involving youth, created a Facebook page, and raised money through a 5k walk. SPC is currently planning an upcoming free public presentation about youth suicide prevention on the evening of February 28, 2011 at Stillwater's Oakland Jr. High School with national speaker Maureen Underwood, LCSW, CGP; from the Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide. For more information, visit the SPC website.

Volunteer THF coalitions and the SPC have built on the work of the past ten years, and remain active and energized in their communities. New members who have an interest in suicide prevention and healthy youth development are always welcome. For more information, contact the Washington County Department of Public Health and Environment at 651-430-6655.

Resources:

Suicide Prevention Collaborative (SPC): www.suicidepreventioncollaborativemn.org

Teen Health Fund and Mental Wellness Initiative in Washington County:
http://www.co.washington.mn.us/_asset/0dwx6j/FHL-MentalWell.pdf

Washington County Youth-live healthy live happy website: www.wacy.org

Minnesota Department of Health Suicide Prevention: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/cfh/connect/index.cfm?article=suicideprevention.welcome>

Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide: www.sptsusa.org

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education: www.save.org

Source:

¹ Washington County Minnesota Student Survey Trends Report: 1998-2010

Health Data Profiles Now Available

The Washington County Department of Public Health and Environment now has trend data available on their website covering a variety of health topics. Refer to the link below to access data relating to nutrition, physical activity, obesity, birth and pregnancy, alcohol, tobacco, mental health, and other topics.

http://www.co.washington.mn.us/info_for_residents/public_health_and_environment/health_data_profiles/

If you have questions about these profiles and/or you are seeking other health data on Washington County residents, please contact the department at 651-430-6655.

Night Skiing in the Park

Lake Elmo Park Reserve has unveiled the addition of over 200 LED light fixtures along 8.7 kilometers (5.4 miles) of their ski trails for the 2011-12 ski season. The lights, located at the ski trails



Source: Washington County Parks

on the east side of the main road, illuminate at dusk and begin turning off at 9:15 p.m. The outer trail lights on the Lake Elmo and Brown's Pond loops will turn off at 9:15 p.m. to encourage skiers to head back to the trailhead, while the lights on the Northern Lights loop will turn off at 9:45 p.m. The trail lights will "blink" 15 minutes before they shut-off. For more information, visit the Washington County Lake Elmo Park Reserve website at http://www.co.washington.mn.us/info_for_residents/parks_division/hours_and_fees/lake_elmo_park_reserve/.

January is Cervical Health Awareness Month

Approximately 11,000 American women will learn they have cervical cancer this year, and nearly 4,000 will die from an advanced form of the disease. This January, during Cervical Health Awareness Month, the National Cervical Cancer Coalition (NCCC) focuses on educating women about the importance of the Pap test as a screening tool for cervical cancer/HPV and about vaccines that can further reduce the burden of this devastating disease.

It's the start of a new year— a time many reflect on their health. To start the year right, the NCCC encourages women to contact their health care provider to schedule a Pap test to check for cervical cancer. This screening is a crucial part of a woman's health care regimen, yet one that many overlook. "It's important to remember that cervical cancer is a preventable disease— as long as it's caught early enough," says Sarina Kaye, Executive Director of the NCCC.



While routine administration of Pap tests is the best means of detecting cervical cancer at an early stage, vaccines have the potential to protect women from the disease by targeting cancer-causing types of the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV, a virus transmitted through sexual contact, is the single known cause of cervical cancer. Two forms of the virus, HPV 16 and HPV 18, account for more than 70 percent of all cervical cancer cases. Some medical experts believe that through a successful education, screening and vaccination program for women, there may be potential to nearly eliminate cervical cancer in the U.S.

To learn more about the NCCC, visit www.nccc-online.org.

**Washington County
Department of
Public Health and
Environment**

14949 62nd St N
Room 4600
Stillwater, MN 55082-0006

Phone:
651-430-6655

Fax:
651-430-6730

TTY:
651-430-6246

For Subscription Information
Contact us at:
651-430-6655

E-Mail:
PHE@co.washington.mn.us

WEB:
<http://www.co.washington.mn.us/>

**NOTE FROM THE
EDITOR:**

You are receiving
Washington County's
HealthWave Newsletter by
request.

If you have any questions
regarding your subscription,
please e-mail:

PHE@co.washington.mn.us

Include "Healthwave" in the
subject line.

Equal Employment Opportunity
/Affirmative Action

Get Your Plate in Shape

The 2012 theme for National Nutrition Month® is "Get Your Plate in Shape" and includes the following tips for choosing healthy foods and being mindful of portions sizes:

Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.

Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables, especially dark-green, red, and orange ones. Fresh, frozen, canned, dried, and 100% juice sources all count.

Make at least half your grains whole.

Choose 100% whole-grain breads, cereals, crackers, pasta, and brown rice.

Switch to fat-free or low-fat milk.

Fat-free and low-fat milk have the same amount of calcium and other essential nutrients as whole milk, but less fat and calories.

Vary protein choices.

Eat a variety of foods from the protein food group each week, such as seafood, nuts and beans, as well as lean meat, poultry, and eggs. Aim for eating seafood twice a week, and keep all meat and protein portion sizes small.

Cut back on sodium and empty calories from solid fats and added sugars.

Drink water instead of sugary drinks and eat sugary desserts less often. Look out for salt (sodium) in foods by reading the nutrition facts label. Switch from solid fats to oils when preparing food.

Enjoy food but eat less.

Utilize the www.ChooseMyPlate.gov website to determine daily calorie limits and keep that number in mind when deciding what or how much to eat. Avoid oversized portions by using smaller plates, bowls, and glasses. When eating out, choose lower calorie menu options that include vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.

Find more healthy eating tips at:

- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: www.eatright.org
- Choose My Plate: www.ChooseMyPlate.gov
- Kids Eat Right: www.kidseatright.org

Source: <http://www.eatright.org/nnm/>

