

PPHD Financial Statement

Balance Sheet, June 30, 2009

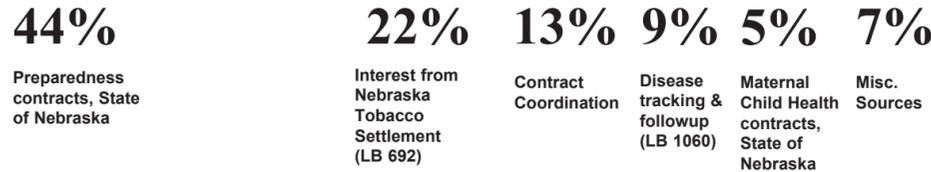
Assets		Net Assets	
Cash & Equivalent	\$ 1,373	Invested in Capital Assets,	
Acct. Receivable	\$ 158,303	Net of Debt	\$ 110,326
Inventory	\$ 1,884	Unrestricted	\$ 351,224
Certificates of Deposit	\$ 225,402	Total Net Assets	\$ 461,550
Property & Equipment, Net of Depreciation	\$ 110,326	Total Liabilities and	
Total Assets	\$ 497,288	Net Assets	\$ 497,288
Liabilities			
Accounts Payable	\$ 15,099		
Accrued Payroll			
Liabilities	\$ 20,639		
Total Liabilities	\$ 35,738		



Sara Sulzbach
Office Manager

Total Operating Revenues \$ 1,089,579
Total Operating Expenses \$ 1,192,971

Where the money comes from . . .



H1N1 virus top health-related story in Panhandle

Imagine planning a social event for hundreds of people in a strange location, with little advance notice and guests aren't even sure they want to come to the party. It may sound like a *Desperate Housewives* version of *Mission Impossible*, but the monumental task of vaccinating people in the Panhandle for H1N1 this fall and winter was a logistical undertaking tackled with grace by Panhandle Public Health District staff and volunteers.



Panhandle Public Health nurses Becky Corman, Kelly Dean and Melody Leisy and partners administered 10,765 doses of H1N1 vaccine across the 10-county area. *On3 Photography*

An outbreak of a novel virus identified as H1N1 in the spring of 2009 started the scramble. Initially, PPHD nurses' primary responsibilities were surveillance of the illness in the communities and working with hospitals, labs and physicians' offices.

While doctors, nurses and labs continued testing anyone suspected of carrying the H1N1 virus, PPHD's concern was mitigating the spread of the virus. No PPHD-area schools were closed, but a scare following a local football camp for area high schoolers began a multi-state investigation that ended happily,

with only one or two young men becoming ill.

Initial information gathering by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's epidemiologists

helped to determine the virus' behavior and most-frequently targeted victim.

At the same time, the creation of a vaccine, a process that takes

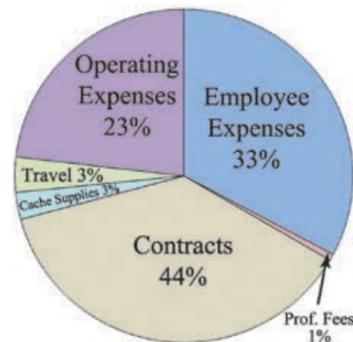
a minimum of six months, was underway. Summer followed, but H1N1 did not take a vacation and neither could the medical professionals on its case.

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Where the money goes . . .

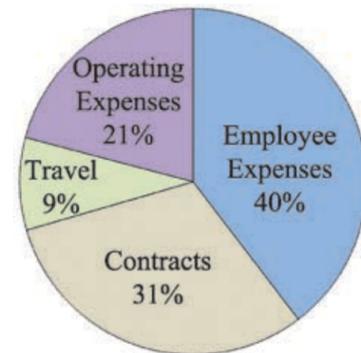
45% Protection

PPHD Preparedness	\$ 164,944
HP Preparedness	\$ 53,438
PCCN Preparedness	\$ 16,517
PRMRS Preparedness	\$ 299,681
Total	\$ 534,580



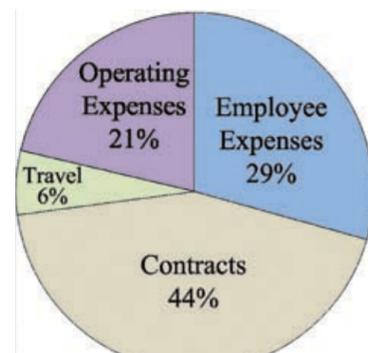
18% Prevention

Cardiovascular Disease	\$ 23,767
Maternal Child Health	\$ 62,141
Environmental	\$ 23,858
Disease Surveillance	\$ 101,127
Total	\$ 210,893



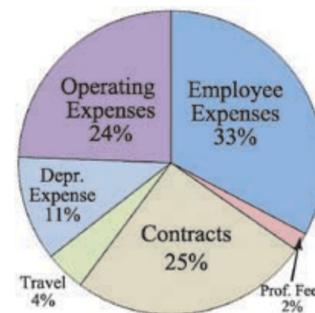
13% Promotion

Children's Outreach	\$ 20,037
Coordination Contracts	\$ 125,538
Podcasting	\$ 6,487
Public Health Nursing	\$ 8,798
Total	\$ 160,860



24% General Admin.

Employee Expenses	\$ 93,834
Professional Fees	\$ 5,637
Contracts	\$ 72,895
Travel	\$ 12,317
Depreciation	\$ 32,016
Operating Expenses	\$ 69,939
Total	\$ 286,638



Wellness program addresses range of worksites

A new wellness program in western Nebraska is touching the lives of individuals, organizations and the communities through activities to increase physical activity, improving nutrition and controlling environmental tobacco issues.

"Our staff is out in the public," Cheyenne County Treasurer Diane Scott said. "We believe actions speak louder than words — when people see we're out walking on our breaks, losing weight and having a better attitude because we eat right and exercise, it'll be contagious. We're excited about sharing wellness programs with our staff and our community."

The worksite wellness program in the Panhandle is just finishing the first year of implementation.

Modeled after an evidence-based program from the Wellness Council of America and modified to fit local needs, the process includes assessment, review of priorities, writing a wellness

and evaluation. The program serves 28 workplaces in all 11 Panhandle counties.

Jessica Davies is the wellness and volunteer coordinator with Panhandle Public Health District. She manages the program in the Panhandle, working in collaboration with agencies in

and 10 of the 11 county governments. Davies is a certified worksite wellness program coordinator and manager.

Western Community Health Resources Director Sandy Roes said a worksite wellness program in their agency has already made a difference in the lives of many staff members. "We have implemented healthy event guidelines, brought information and programs to our staff meetings, including tai chi breaks and stretch bands for easy exercise in the workplace."

One local hospital, Box Butte General Hospital in Alliance, has created a special place

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"We believe actions speak louder than words . . ."

Cheyenne County Treasurer Diane Scott

plan, implementing the plan, ongoing technical assistance

11 counties, including the Scotts Bluff County Health Department

Message from the Board President



Kay Anderson
PPHD Board
President

I cannot believe another year has flown by, but it is a new year once again and time to update you on the progress of public health issues in the area.

Panhandle Public Health District continues to grow – in size, in number of staff members and public health programs. PPHD has two offices, the main office is in Hemingford with a branch office in Bridgeport. Both are valuable members of Main Street USA, not only protecting public health, but contributing to the local economy, as well.

While our committed staff carries on the many programs outlined in this report, there is another group of individuals whose efforts take place behind the scenes. Our board of directors includes a group of committed volunteers from every county in our 10-county jurisdiction. PPHD serves 10 of the 11 counties in the Panhandle, all except for Scotts Bluff County.

Together they give countless hours for the needs of the public (you and me) to protect our health, prevent disease and injury and be better prepared for emergency. The board has responsibility for protecting and promoting the public's health. The three components of this responsibility are assessment, assurance and policy development.

Assessment is making sure programs and systems are evaluated for effectiveness and efficiency of the essential public health services. Assurance is guaranteeing public health policies and programs are in place and working. To accomplish this, the board assures:

- legal authority for oversight
- resources and assets to support its mission
- development and implementation of policies
- accountability through continuous evaluation and quality improvement and collaboration with the public at large and local partners.

If there is any part of the public health message and mission you have questions on, I encourage you to contact a board member or someone on our staff. I want to conclude with a big thank you to the staff – Kim, Jessica, Melody, Becky, Sara, Mary, Janelle, Tabi and Kelly – for making public health work in western Nebraska.

Panhandle Public Health District

Serving the Nebraska Panhandle counties of Banner, Box Butte, Cheyenne, Dawes, Deuel, Garden, Kimball, Morrill, Sheridan, and Sioux

Kim Engel, Director
Sara Sulzbach, Office Manager
Jessica Davies, Wellness and Volunteer Coordinator
Melody Leisy, RN, PRMRS Coordinator, Public Health Nurse
Becky Corman, RN, Emergency Response Coordinator, Public Health Nurse
Kelly Dean, RN, Public Health Nurse
Tabi Prochazka, Environmental Health and Electronic Media Coordinator
Mary Wernke, Training Academy, Communications & Grants Development Coordinator
Janelle Hansen, Community Organizer, Health Educator

Main Office: P.O. Box 337, 808 Box Butte Avenue, Hemingford, NE 69348
Phone 308-487-3600, Toll Free 866-701-7173, Fax 308-487-3682
Branch Office: P.O. Box 1115, 1011 Main Street, Bridgeport, NE 69336
Phone 308-262-2217, Fax 308-262-1317
Website: www.pphd.org

The vision of PPHD: A coordinated system of public health services that promotes and enhances the health status of the Panhandle-wide community.

Essential Services of Public Health -- It's What We Do!

- Monitor health status to identify and solve community health problems.
- Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community.
- Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.
- Mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems.
- Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts.
- Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety.
- Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.
- Assure competent public and personal health care workforce.
- Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility and quality of personal and population-based health services.
- Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

Falls leading cause of injuries

Take a short flight of stairs, add in one loose rug and a cup of nerves and you've got the recipe for the most common cause of injury and hospitalization among older adults – falling.

Falls are the leading cause of injury, deaths and hospitalizations for adults age 65 and older. In the last five years, an average of 130 Nebraskans died from injuries related to falls; more than 8,200 visited an emergency room and 3,200 were hospitalized due to a fall-related injury.

The most common injuries associated with falls are fractures, particularly of the hip, spine, ankle or arm and most falls happen from slipping, tripping or stumbling on a level surface.

"Injuries related to falls are preventable," Kim Engel, director of Panhandle Public Health said. "The easiest and most enjoyable way of preventing falls is to improve strength and balance with exercise such as tai chi (see next page).

There are classes in many Panhandle communities, led by trained facilitators, with programs for those who are able to sit or stand." Other fall preventions methods include reviewing medications with your health care provider for side effects or interactions, get-



ting regular eye exams, improving lighting and reducing hazards in your home.

More than half of all fall-related injuries occur at home. (see box at right for more fall-related facts).

Radon invades home when temps outside most frigid

The last month has brought frigid temperatures to the Panhandle and most folks are happiest snug in their homes, inside the most airtight envelope the homeowner can create.

The toasty seal we put on our homes however, is also the best way to keep radon in our homes. Experts advise checking your home for the odorless, but deadly, gas with a free test kit from Panhandle Public Health District.

"One in every two homes in Nebraska has a radon problem and yours could be one of them," said Mark Versch, environmental health analyst from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. Versch was the featured speaker at three programs on

radon in the Panhandle in January. "Radon is a radioactive gas that cannot be seen, smelled or tasted and is found around the country," Versch continued. "It can enter your house through soil, dirt floors in crawl spaces and cracks in foundations, floors and walls. Once inside, radon gas can sometimes be trapped inside the house."

There are many variables in the levels of radon in your home -- age, locale and heating system have no effect on radon levels, however.

PPHD Environmental Health Coordinator Tabi Prochazka said all houses have some radon, but houses next to each other can

have very different radon levels, so the only way to measure your particular risk is to test your own house.

"Testing your home is very important," Prochazka added. "There are two types of tests: short-term tests take three to seven days, while long-term tests take around 90 days and provide results that are slightly more accurate."

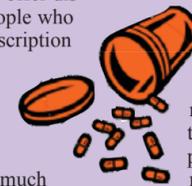
"Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer," she concluded. "Second only to tobacco smoke."

The free radon kits are available by calling PPHD at 308-487-3600 or toll free at 866-701-7173.

PPHD's Prescription Drug Assistance Program

"Most drug companies offer discount programs for people who cannot afford their prescription drugs," said Jennifer Fankhauser of Western Community Health Resources, but often the paperwork and guidelines are too much for the average person to handle.

Instead, Panhandle Public Health District provides WCHR with a portion of the funds to administer the program. This is available through WCHR in Sioux, Dawes,



Sheridan and Box Butte counties.

Fankhauser said the income guidelines are not overly restrictive and the programs can provide a wide variety of name brand prescriptions and even a few generic drugs through the drug companies' charitable program.

She said there are some drugs that are not available through any of the free or reduced price pro-

grams, such as birth control and narcotics.

"The drugs obtained through the assistance program are provided by the drug manufacturers and sent directly to the doctors," Fankhauser said.

She said the program does not meet an immediate need for a prescription that day. Instead, the drugs take four to six weeks to arrive in the first shipment and are refilled over the long term.

Free Lifesaving Radon Test Kit

Get your free radon test kit from PPHD by mailing this coupon to Panhandle Public Health District, PO Box 337, Hemingford NE 69348, calling (866)701-7173, or emailing tprochazka@pphd.org. Be sure to tell us you received this coupon in the annual report!

Name: _____
Physical Address: _____
Mailing Address: _____
City: _____ Zip: _____
Phone Number: _____

By requesting a free kit,
I give my permission for results to be reported to myself and PPHD.

*Must reside within the Nebraska Panhandle to receive free kit.



RSVP volunteers stepped up to help prepare packages for the CIA community campaign, Kids Fitness & Nutrition Days and other PPHD activities. PPHD offers a big thanks to the volunteers!

Go Red . . . continued from page 14

Your waist should measure less than 35 inches and you should get 30 minutes of activity most days. calories is ideal. Eat with others to guard against mindless overeating and only keep healthy snacks around the home and office.

"Eat smart, too," Davies said a balanced diet that is low in fat and

2009 Board of Directors

Banner County Bob Gifford, County Commissioner Marie Parker, Community-Spirited Citizen	Cheyenne County Harold Winkelman, County Commissioner Kelly Utley, Community-Spirited Citizen	Deuel County Clint Bailey, County Commissioner Judy Soper, Community-Spirited Citizen	Kimball County Larry Brower, County Commissioner Kim Woods, Community-Spirited Citizen	Sheridan County Dan Kling, County Commissioner Stella Otte, Community-Spirited Citizen	At Large Dr. Timothy Narjes, MD Dr. Justin Moody, DDS
Box Butte County Charles Weston, County Commissioner Carolyn Jones, Community-Spirited Citizen	Dawes County Roger Wess, County Commissioner Darrel Knote, Community-Spirited Citizen	Garden County Terry McCord, County Commissioner Terri Gortemaker, Community-Spirited Citizen	Morrill County Bill Juelfs, County Commissioner Kay Anderson, Community-Spirited Citizen	Sioux County Greg Asa, County Commissioner Adam Edmund, Community-Spirited Citizen	

CERT: people helping people

Most folks recognize the first responders – police officers, firefighters and EMTs. Not everyone, however, recognizes the volunteer community teams that are readily available in case of an emergency – be it manmade or natural disaster.

Community Emergency Response Teams provide the second line of defense in a busy world where volunteers are often able to pick up some duties to aid the first responders, inundated in times of disaster.

CERT is about readiness, people helping people, rescue, safety and doing the greatest good for the greatest number. CERT is a positive and realistic approach to emergency and disaster situations where citizens will be initially on

their own and their actions can make a difference.

Federally-designated CERT teams are formed already in Dawes, Box Butte and Scotts Bluff counties, with interest in additional teams in Alliance, Gordon, Kimball and Sidney. One team of volunteers, Ponderosa Search & Rescue, specializes in search and rescue using specially-trained horses and dogs. They also train others in the Panhandle on pet preparedness.

Efforts are underway to develop federally-designated Citizen Corps Councils in each of the 11 Panhandle counties, with regional coordination provided by the Panhandle Citizen Corps Council.

In October 2009, Lt. Governor Rick Sheehy and ServeNebraska



Bob Hessler

announced the winners of Nebraska's 2009 Be Prepared awards, in conjunction with National Preparedness Month.

Bob Hessler of Scottsbluff was named as the Citizen Corps Council Member of the Year.

Mass Fatalities training offered locally

Emergency preparedness officials in law enforcement, health care, the clergy, fire service and the media from across the Panhandle joined funeral directors, county coroners and government leaders in an international quality level training in Alliance this past spring. The Panhandle Regional Medical Response System and International Mass Fatalities Center presented Mass Fatalities Leadership Training at the Alliance Library and Learning Center, March 11 and 12, with a continuation of training May 14-15 at the same location.

PRMRS Coordinator Melody Leisy of Panhandle Public Health District described the training. "IMFC trainers Peter Teahen and Gary Huey are funeral directors with more than

30 years experience and leadership roles in more than 40 major disasters throughout the United States," she said. "Teahen is internationally known for his work in critical incident stress management and the psychosocial impact of disasters. Huey worked with Operation Iraqi Freedom, the space shuttle Columbia mishap, the 9-11 Pentagon terrorist attack and Operation Desert Shield."

Leisy said the program included practical exercises in the chaos of a mass fatalities incident, the need for teamwork during a mass fatalities response, the functions performed at the various operational sites, establishing protocols for stress management and integrating a mass fatalities plan into a local multi-hazard plan.

Medical Reserve Corps assist in time of disaster



Melody Leisy
PRMRS Coordinator

Shortly after the twin towers fell in New York City, then President George Bush called for all Americans to volunteer in support of their country.

The response since 2002 has been overwhelming, but there are still pockets of need in rural Nebraska for volunteers to assist in the event of an emergency or disasters, Panhandle Region Medical Response System Coordinator Melody Leisy said.

Leisy, a public health nurse with Panhandle Public Health District, is the regional coordinator for the Panhandle Region Medical Response System, a network of hospitals and other medical providers promoting disaster preparedness.

In April, she spoke at a conference attended by more than 4,000 people at a summit in Dallas, Texas on the Panhandle's regional response to emergency preparedness.

"The Medical Reserve Corps program seeks volunteers to assist with emergency preparedness and response efforts," Leisy said. "Volunteers include practicing, retired or otherwise employed medical professionals,

public health professionals and community members without medical training to assist in administrative and other essential support functions."

Medical and other health volunteers provide important surge capacity during the critical period following a major emergency. Often, local providers are overwhelmed during the first 12-72 hours, she added.

"Front-line medical volunteers include physicians, physician assistants, nurses, pharmacist, dentists, optometrists, veterinarians and emergency medical technicians."

Individuals with a non-medical background typically serve by assisting with administrative or other vital support functions, such as crowd control. Others may help out as drivers, chaplains, coordinators, interpreters or fundraisers.

"MRC volunteers do not have to be available all the time," Leisy concluded.

"Some may only be interested in a minimal commitment. We respect that preference."

There are a few core competencies for the volunteers. One of the state's most recent accomplishments, led by the PRMRS group, was to develop a standardized basic training package.

Go Red for Women Feb.5

Heart Day is traditionally known as Valentine's Day, February 14 across the U.S., but the real heart day - Friday, February 5 - is **Go Red for Women** day to celebrate heart health. The number one killer of women (and of men), has inspired **Wear Red Day**.

"One in three women dies from heart disease. It is the top killer of women, regardless of race or ethnicity," said Jessica Davies, wellness coordinator for Panhandle Public Health District. "It also strikes at younger ages than most people think and the risk rises in middle age. The most common symptom for heart disease in both women and men is chest pain or discomfort. However, women are more likely to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea or vomiting and back or jaw pain. Two-thirds of women who have heart attacks never recover."

Also, you should know your numbers, Davies added. Total cholesterol should be less than 200; LDL (bad) cholesterol, less than 160 and HDL (good) cholesterol, less than 50. Blood pressure should be less than 120/80; fasting glucose, less than 100 and BMI, less than 25.

Davies said to increase physical activity, don't think of it as exercise. "Use the stairs instead of the elevator.

Play with your kids, don't watch from the sidelines. Take breaks at work and instead of drinking coffee, walk for 15-20 minutes.

Park away from the door while shopping and a couple blocks away from work so you can walk the last few steps. Lastly, try hiding the TV remote control," she said.

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Facts about falls

- **Half of all individuals in western Nebraska who are injured severely enough to be admitted to a hospital or who die are injured in a fall.**
- **Adults in western Nebraska over the age of 64 fall most frequently at home. The majority of them are unable to return home after they leave the hospital.**
- **Four out of 10 persons over the age of 65 experience at least one fall annually.**
- **Multiple falls are a major reason for almost half of all nursing home admissions.**
- **In the United States, we spend over \$27 billion annually on fall-related injuries.**

Tai Chi improves balance, relieves stress

Falls are the leading cause of unintentional injury deaths for Nebraska adults age 65 and older, but the practice of tai chi can improve balance and reduce the likelihood of falling. This past summer, Scotts Bluff County Health Department and Panhandle Public Health District partnered with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to offer tai chi training in the Panhandle for a second year.

"*Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance* is a program that focuses on prevention of falls, with the hope of improving balance and reducing the likelihood of falling," said Jessica Davies, wellness coordinator at PPHD. "There are eight single forms in the program, tailored to adults who wish to improve balance and mobility. The forms progress from easy to more difficult, with emphasis on weight-bearing and non weight-bearing stances, correct body alignment and multiple coordinated movements."

"The movements are executed in a continuous, circular and flowing manner. Performance of the movements is closely synchronized with natural breathing," she concluded.

A year ago, more than 30 were trained to offer tai chi in their communities. This year's training updated some trainees and added 10 more to the list of qualified trainers. Already, more than a thousand Panhandle residents have participated in a tai chi demonstration and more than 300 are part of ongoing tai chi classes, from elementary schools to senior centers.

Tai Chi training is available for community, youth and senior groups, businesses and faith-based groups in nearly every county. For more information contact Jessica Davies at PPHD.

Message from the Director

Often, I am asked what it is we do at Panhandle Public Health. This past year, the answer has been more obvious with the H1N1 virus in the news nearly every day for the past nine months. It's been easy to point to H1N1 vaccination clinics and say, "That's public health."

However, what about all the other years that public health has been active in the Panhandle? It is the passage of laws and regulations that protect the public's health, such as standards for drinking water. It's being prepared in case of a manmade or natural disaster to assure people have their basic needs met: clean water to drink, air to breathe, food to eat and access to medical care, if needed.

Recently, the public health colleges in America have launched a campaign to identify public health to the man-on-the-street. Bright red stickers declaring "This is public health" are popping up everywhere. They have been photographed and mapped on the World Wide Web.

You probably see public health all around you every day, without recognizing it. Forty years ago, you wouldn't have given a second thought to your Great Aunt Ella lighting up while holding baby Maureen in her arms. Today, thanks to public health champions in our legislature, the Nebraska Clean Indoor Air Act stops smoke at the door to every business. Most homeowners and families wouldn't dream of allowing someone to smoke in the same home with their children.

"You're only as healthy as the world around you," the campaign above reminds us. And Panhandle Public Health is all around you letting you know public health is your health: healthy meeting guidelines encourage businesses to help employees make good choices; walking paths in communities encourage physical activity; health screenings at worksites complement wellness programs; breastfeeding rooms in businesses make it easier for nursing moms to return to work.

PPHD offers free radon test kits make testing easy and convenient; creates podcasts to serve as a means to get health education dispersed; gathers mosquitoes and birds to be tested to monitor West Nile Virus activity; offers server training makes alcohol retailers responsible. PPHD nurses are on staff to investigate and stop the spread of disease and kindergarteners know the right way to wash their hands.

And so we come full circle to prevention, the H1N1 virus and this simple reminder: wash your hands, cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze and avoid others who have the flu. Take care of yourself, please, and take care of others. That's the easy definition of public health.



Kim Engel
Director

Quiz: Are you at risk for falling?

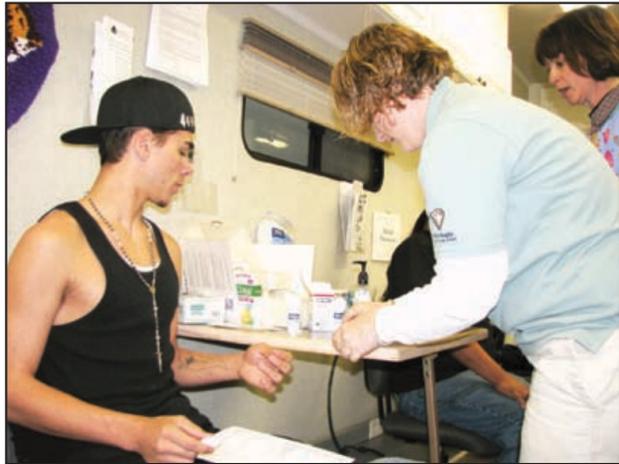
The healthcare community has done a great deal of research to identify reasons why older adults struggle with falling. Risk factors have been identified that help us understand what causes people to fall. Some of the risk factors are obvious, while others require assessment by your local health care provider. Here is a simple test to help you identify whether or not you are at risk for falling.

1. Have you experienced at least one fall in the past year? yes no
2. Do you currently take four or more medications? yes no
3. Do you have difficulty getting up from a chair? yes no
4. Do you feel unsteady when you are walking or climbing stairs? yes no

What does it mean?

If you answered yes to one or fewer questions, your risk of falling is low.

If you answered yes to two or more questions, your risk of falling is moderate to high and you need to visit with your healthcare provider.



PPHD Nurse Melody Leisy and WCHR Director Sandy Roes complete a wellness check with one of the basketball players at the annual Lakota Invitational Basketball Tournament. The tourney is sponsored by PPHD.



Tammy Meier with Memorial Health Center in Sidney helps Cheyenne County 3rd graders understand how to read a food label. Other nutrition stations included portion size, food pyramid, healthy snacks, handwashing and balancing food and activity in a healthy life.

Communities encouraged to “Just Move It!” 30 minutes a day

Sports fans are in for a big surprise when they attend high school athletic events across western Nebraska this season. In an effort to encourage physical activity among all ages, area high school clubs are asking fans to *Just Move It!*

The *Just Move It!* dance is choreographed in such a way that anyone, young or old, can participate in the stands,” said Jessica Davies, Panhandle Public Health District wellness coordinator. “During halftime of high school athletic games throughout the Panhandle, groups in participating communities will lead fans through a series of simple steps set to the tune of *I Like to Move It*, from the children’s movie *Madagascar*.

The dance movement is part of a Panhandle-wide marketing campaign to increase public awareness about the importance of increasing physical activity, improving nutrition and decreasing exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke.

“If we can educate the community at-large that simple lifestyle changes can be fun AND make a world of difference in a person’s overall health and outlook on life, then I’d say the campaign was a success,” said Davies.

“It’s all just a fun way to encourage people to move it,” Davies said. “Exercising just a few minutes a day is the first step to a healthier community. We’re proud to be a part of such an important message.”

The Centers for Disease Control recommends that adults participate in at least 30 minutes of activity on most days of the week. This can be done all at once or broken into segments completed throughout each day. Simply using your work breaks for brief bouts of exercise, parking further away from the store and choosing the stairs instead of the elevator are all great ways to increase your daily activity levels.

Exercise coupled with a balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, dairy, and whole grains has been proven to decrease the risk of developing chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer. Avoiding exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke is also an important factor in chronic disease reduction. For more information on enjoying physical activity, visit www.pphd.org.

Participating groups include Banner County Music Department, Bayard High School Cheerleaders, Crawford Student Council, Hemingford High School Cheerleaders, Leyton High School Cheerleaders, Potter-Dix Close-Up, Sidney High School Danz Team and South Platte High School.



Sidney High School Danz Team sophomore Mariah Mata leads the crowd in a physical activity.

Kids Fitness and Nutrition Day attracts 3rd graders

Each year, Panhandle Public Health District holds a special event for area third-graders to learn about fitness and nutrition. Activities at the events include both non-competitive physical activity and nutrition stations.

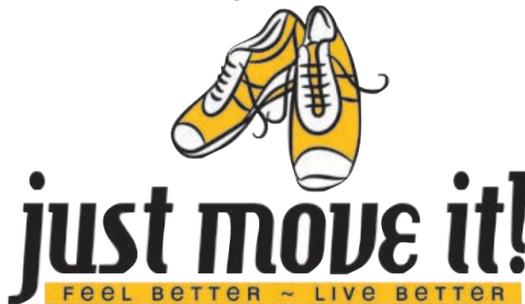
Kids get the chance to try a new dance craze, Zumba and an old favorite, Chinese jump rope. Nutrition stations included information on eating a balanced diet and proper portion sizes.

This year there were three Kids Fitness & Nutrition Days; in Sidney on September 24, in Alliance on September 29 and in Chadron on November 17. Each of the events drew stu-

dents from area schools, with 242 third-graders attending the Sidney event from Leyton, Banner County, Garden County, Creek Valley, Potter-Dix, South Platte, Kimball and Sidney public schools.

The Alliance event had 164 children from Hemingford, Lakeside, St. Agnes and Alliance Public Schools. In Chadron, 118 students from Gordon-Rushville and Chadron Public Schools attended.

This event is sponsored by the Nebraska Beef Council, University of Nebraska Kearney and Panhandle Public Health District.



Lifeguards model use of free sunscreen, sunglasses and hats

There was no excuse for youth (and adults) not to apply sunscreen liberally and often at the local swimming pool this year. Panhandle Public Health District supplied 22 gallons of free sunscreen to pools in the Panhandle, along with educational materials for pool managers and lifeguards on the dangers of sun exposure.

Janelle Hansen, health educator with PPHD said swimming pool staff demonstrated sun safe behaviors such as wearing sunglasses, wide brim hats and reapplying sunscreen on a frequent basis as role models to the youth.

Prime sunburn hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m

The goal of the POOL COOL program, Hansen said, is to increase awareness, motivation and sun protection practices among pool staff and patrons.

Childhood sunburns can cause skin cancer -- the most common type of cancer in the U.S. is largely preventable. Everyone can help prevent skin cancer for themselves and their children by

minimizing exposure to the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., seeking shade from the mid-day sun when possible, wearing clothes, hats and sunglasses to protect the skin, using sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or more and avoiding sunlamps and tanning beds.

Some people feel tanning beds are safer than regular sunbathing, but Hansen encourages people to avoid sunlamps and tanning beds. “A tan is evidence that UV rays have damaged the skin,” she said. Youth are particularly at risk of overexposure since 80% of the average person’s lifetime UV exposure occurs before the age of 18. Even one severe sunburn in childhood or adolescence can double the risk of developing skin cancer later in life, Hansen concluded.

Everyone should practice sun safe behaviors, but some people have a greater chance of developing skin cancer if they have one or more of the following risk factors: spend a lot

of time outdoors, light skin color, hair color or eye color, family or personal history of skin cancer, history of sunburns early in life, live or vacation at high altitudes, have freckles and burn quickly, have lots of moles, irregularly shaped moles or large moles, have had an organ transplant, take certain medications or have certain diseases, such as lupus.

The POOL COOL project is funded in part through a cooperative agreement between the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



Drew Leisy at the Bridgeport swimming pool

Dental Day. . .

Often, the reason children do not receive dental screenings isn’t lack of concern for good oral hygiene, Engel said. More often, children in rural Nebraska do not have insurance for dental care.

“Dental care is the most common unmet treatment in children, according a state report on oral health among third graders. “Tooth decay can be prevented by a balanced diet, good dental hygiene, regular visits to the den-

tist, the use of fluoride and dental sealants,” Engel concluded.

Dental Day began as a challenge for dental college deans to provide outreach into their communities. Dr. Brown said their challenge focused not only on the unmet needs of the children in Nebraska, but also the inequalities of distribution for dental professionals across the state. Underserved children in Nebraska are three to four

times less likely to have dental coverage, as those children who are covered by regular health insurance through their parent’s employers.

Other dentists involved in the prescreening, Bill Printz, DDS at CAPWN Dental Clinic, Tim Jensen, DDS of Oshkosh, Sam Jacoby, DDS of Bridgeport and Hemingford, Tom Low, DDS and Kevin Krueger, DDS of Chappell.

Marquez offers cool pool tips to youth



Jon Marquez wears sunscreen and he’s still “cool” on the warmest sunny day.

Marquez, a 20-year-old CSC student, was a lifeguard at the Alliance swimming pool this past year, along with his brother Dan.

Both young men were required to model safe sun habits like sunscreen, hats and sunglasses for the youth in their charge, but Marquez said he wore sunscreen when sunscreen wasn’t cool.

“I received a really bad sunburn when I was 10 or 11,” Marquez said. “I think about that summer when my back was peeling and it really hurt each time I went out in the sun.”

He said when he was a child, his parents used sunscreen and made sure the boys did the same. But he didn’t know then it was important to reapply the sunscreen often and use waterproof sunscreen when swimming, waterskiing or just enjoying the water.

“Even in the winter, sunscreen, ball caps and sunglasses are important,” Janelle Hansen, health educator at Panhandle Public Health District said. “With the glare off the snow, sunglasses are obvious, but you also need to protect your skin.”

Marquez said when he is a lifeguard, or an educator as he hopes to be one day, the children around him are in his charge and he’s pleased to encourage them to use sunscreen, as well. “I wear sunscreen all the time,” he told a trio of little ones this summer, when they protested interrupting their fun at the pool to apply protection.

He added another interesting fact: people of color must also protect their skin from the sun. Both Marquez and his Hispanic father wear sunscreen; Frank Marquez sports SPF30 on a regular basis, Jon said. The more fair-skinned young man must be more careful.

Hansen says sun damage and skin cancer do not discriminate. “People need to understand the sun is not their friend. No matter your skin tone, everyone is at risk for developing skin cancer. No one is immune.”

“Any amount of sun exposure that changes the appearance of your skin is doing damage. There is no such a thing as a healthy tan.”

Marquez said more than half the kids at the pool wear sunscreen on a regular basis. The sunscreen provided by PPHD as part of the Pool Cool program was near the concession stand, so kids visited the area often and reapplied.

Teens and young adults are usually not a problem either, but he did say he sees many teenage girls sunbathing at the pool with absolutely no sunscreen. “They use tanning oils and go to tanning beds, but they think they are invincible,” he said. “I’m old enough to know better.”

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2009 sees two new faces at Panhandle Public Health District

Prochazka in Hemingford and Dean in Bridgeport



Tabi Prochazka
Environmental
Health & Electronic
Media Coordinator

Tabi Prochazka is the new environmental health and electronic media coordinator. Her responsibilities at PPHD include coordinating efforts to prevent West Nile Virus, radon in homes and improve indoor air quality. A major project this year for Prochazka is helping businesses implement and enforce the Nebraska Clean Indoor Air Act, passed by the legislature this past spring.

Effective, June 1, 2009 the statewide smoking ban provides a breath of fresh air in every workplace across the Panhandle. Joining the PPHD staff in July, Prochazka picked up the reins of the project begun by former environmental coordinator Rebecca Thompson.

She was given the duty of helping businesses understand and enforce the restrictions to protect workers' and customers' health, primarily in the hospitality industry. Other indoor air quality issues also fall under Prochazka's domain – including seldom-seen issues such as mold and rodents or insects in homes and businesses.

Prochazka is a graduate of Hemingford High School and Doane College as a theater major. She remains active backstage, as a rehearsal coordinator for Spoleto Festival USA in South Carolina each spring.

The huge logistic situation she managed there and as a stage manager previously in Milwaukee, New York City and Illinois, gave Prochazka the practical experience to manage the logistics for the 50 H1N1 vaccination clinics across the Panhandle this year.

In addition, Prochazka went behind the camera at PPHD to create a series of podcasts entitled, "Health Tips for Living the Nebraska Good Life."

The healthy living podcasts, produced in cooperation with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, are available for download on the PPHD website or you may request a free DVD (see page five). Prochazka is the lead person for PPHD's geographical information system and website design and maintenance.

Prochazka lives in Hemingford with her husband Shad Bryner.



Kelly Dean, RN
Public Health Nurse

Kelly Dean's new job with PPHD is the stuff super heroes are made of. "I save lives and stomp out disease," PPHD's newest public health nurse said.

Dean joined nurses Melody Leisy and Becky Corman in the Bridgeport office in December of 2009.

Her baptism by fire was immediate immersion into the second round of H1N1 vaccination clinics, what she calls "public health at its best."

"I save lives and stomp out disease."
Kelly Dean

"The clinics really opened my eyes to the impact of public health," she said. "The long lines of people waiting to receive free shots and the questions and comments from them made me realize not only the community's reliance on public health, but also their trust in public health professionals. Seeing this was great!"

Dean's primary responsibility is working with individuals to find medical homes. In cooperation with hospitals, clinics, school nurses and dentists, Dean helps families with insurance questions and making appointments. She found her greatest satisfaction on the job to-date is helping people understand the importance of appropriate access to health care and then connecting them with health care providers.

"It's often difficult to ease some people off reliance on the emergency room for primary care. It is important they have a medical home established, with a primary care physician forming the basis for other health care providers. The continuity results in better care and saves money," she concluded.

Dean and her husband Jerod have two children, Grace and Landon. A graduate of Leyton High School and the University of Nebraska Medical Center, she began her nursing career at Phoenix's Mayo Clinic Hospital and the Poudre Valley Hospital in Fort Collins. Returning to the Panhandle more than a year ago, Dean worked as a resource nurse for Regional West Medical Center and continues to do so on an as-needed basis.

Public health nurse links people to services

Finding a doctor or dentist isn't always easy, especially in a rural area where there may be a shortage of health care professionals. Often, there are other roadblocks to finding the right physician for special situations. Overcoming barriers is a specialty for Public Health Nurse Kelly Dean, PPHD's newest staff member. Dean makes it her business to keep an updated list of community resources and assist with referrals for Panhandle residents seeking a medical, dental or vision home.

"In the public health nurse program, the aim is to assure access to health care and support rural services. The focus is to help families, including those on Medicaid find the appropriate health care providers and dentists." Dean said she could also perform a health assessment on each client's family to determine if further care is necessary.

Having a medical home is important to a family's ongoing healthcare, Dean said. A family should see the same physician for their well-child visits, illnesses and/or yearly exams. "This reduces medical costs and promotes continuity of care. It is also important to maintain regular visits with the same dentist and eye doctor."

Dean said she receives referrals from physician's offices, state Medicaid applicants, Nebraska Healthy and Human Services and hospital emergency rooms.

In some cases, there are language and transportation barriers. Dean links with community resources, such as the county handi-bus and language translators to overcome these barriers.

Another service offered by the public health nurses is to the health care providers themselves. If the hospital or clinic is having difficulty with a client who is often late or misses appointments, the public health nurses can work with the patient to resolve the problem.

Some patients misuse the emergency room for minor medical problems, Dean said. "We can educate patients regarding the appropriate use of the emergency room."

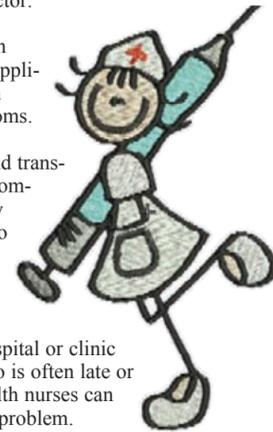
To contact a public health nurse for the above issues or other medical questions, contact Dean at 308-487-3600 or by calling toll free 866-701-7173.

Special populations . . .

continued from page nine

concern is identifying those who are disabled or have special needs due to age or special circumstances such as pregnancy or illness.

The PSPC is addressing that concern, by working to develop a regional database for persons with disabilities and to assure first responders are aware of their needs in case of an emergency and can accommodate them.



Podcasts! Blu-Ray! You Tube! Facebook!

What's a health-conscious (but not tech-savvy) person to do to stay up on things in this increasingly Internet-based information age? Panhandle Public Health Electronic Media Coordinator Tabi Prochazka can wholeheartedly recommend a DVD chock full of health-related information, while offering the same materials for download to your computer, iPod or MP3 player.

The DVD is available for free with the coupon below when you agree to complete short pre- and post-surveys. Email tprochazka@pphd.org or calling Prochazka at 308-487-3600. With each podcast you evaluate, your name will go into the drawing for an iPod Nano.

Prochazka said a lot of effort went into the production of 11 podcasts on health topics from tai chi to diabetes and they don't want anyone to miss a "byte" of information, no matter their IT-level.

From the opening credits to the director's yelling "CUT" at the end of the series, Prochazka, Wellness Coordinator Jessica Davies and staff have created three series of podcasts and a two single podcasts on radon.

The *Taking Charge of Your Health* series of four 35-50 minutes podcasts includes the *Principles of Weight Management*, *Conquering the #1 Killer* (cardiovascular disease), *The Big C* (cancer) and *Blood Sugar, Mood Swings and Weight Loss* (diabetes).

Community members joined presenter Jay Sutcliffe, Ph.D., a nutrition educator from Chadron State College, in the live presentations for two of the programs to pique interest and provide the energy behind a live audience.

The *Tai Chi Easy* series includes simple tai chi movements demonstrated by Davies and Kim Haas, tai chi facilitators, and various members of the community in their workplaces.

The series of three podcasts includes tai chi exercises to complete while seated, standing or in the water. Each of the podcasts lasts 10-25 minutes.



Jay Sutcliffe of Chadron illustrates how plaque builds up in the arteries, using old, cracked, brittle hoses as props. Sutcliffe spoke in Hemingford in May regarding cardiovascular disease. The series of lectures were recorded for episodes of *Healthy Living* podcasts.

The third series was prompted by the H1N1 flu outbreak in the spring and fall of 2009. In one podcast, Public Health Nurse Becky Corman answered man-on-the-street questions regarding the flu, like "Is it deadly?" and "Do I need to get a seasonal flu shot and an H1N1 flu shot?"

Two other H1N1 podcasts include health tips in Spanish and sign-language.

The radon podcast combines *Eddie's Story* and information about the school radon test kit contest in schools Panhandle-wide through March 31.

The hardware, software and staff time to support the podcasts were made available through a grant from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Office for Women's and Men's Health.

Prochazka's theater background lent some expertise to the production of the podcasts. She shot and edited all the videos with a backstage crew of creatives working together on the jingle, logo and creative writing.

SMOKEFREE nebraska

So long smoke. Hello clean air.

The last few days of May 2009 provided a long-awaited countdown to smokefree businesses and public places across the state.

A statewide smoking ban, effective June 1, provided a breath of fresh air in every workplace across the Panhandle. There are no more smoking sections in restaurants and bars; no foul odor from across the room in a large office building; a breath of fresh air for every Nebraskan.

Panhandle Public Health District helped educate local businesses about their responsibility to comply with Nebraska's new smoke-free law. PPHD staff visited businesses in all 10 counties they serve before June 1 with a packet of materials to answer frequently asked questions. A special goody bag for bars and restaurants helped the hospitality industry go smokefree, as well.

"The purpose of the law is to protect the public health and welfare of workers from second hand smoke by prohibiting smoking in public places and places of employment," Tabi Prochazka, PPHD environmental coordinator said. "Only 20% of the Panhandle's residents are smokers, so the *Clean Indoor Air Act* provides relief for the 80% of the population who are non-smoking."

"Smoking is not allowed after hours or when the business is not open to the public," she continued. "The law does not require patrons or workers to maintain a certain distance from the establishment when they do go outside to smoke."

"The individual business owner may also expand the smoke free area to cover their entire property and not just the indoor spaces. This is not a requirement of the *Clean Indoor Air Act*," Prochazka said.

If establishments choose to create an outdoor area that would allow smoking, PPHD can help ensure compliance with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services outdoor area guidelines.

"If individual patrons or staff do have problems with smokers not taking their cigarettes outdoors, it's easy to report," she added. "Simply call local law enforcement or our office," Prochazka said. "You may also complete a form anonymously online at smokefree.ne.gov/ReportingForm.htm, if you prefer. If business owners have any questions about enforcement or penalties, we can also get them information and other resource materials to help enforce the act in their place of business."

**Toll Free Smoking
Quit Line
1-800-QUIT NOW**

**2009 Podcasts are ready for Review
And we need your help!**

Agree to complete short pre and post surveys and we will send you both 2009 podcast series: *Taking Charge of Your Health with Jay Sutcliffe* *Tai Chi Easy with Jessica Davies and Kim Haas* With each podcast you evaluate your name will go into the drawing for an iPod Nano!

Please Print
Name: _____
Address: _____
Email: _____

Please check if you would like to receive survey materials via _____ email or _____ snail mail.

We hope you enjoy the podcasts!

P.O. Box 337 • Hemingford, NE 69348

West Nile Virus attacks humans

With the abundance of wet weather in the Panhandle this past spring and summer, there was more standing water on the ground and in outdoor containers, providing the optimal breeding ground for hungry mosquitoes.

Former PPHD Environmental Health Coordinator Rebecca Thompson cautioned wet weather is also an optimal time for mosquitoes to share the West Nile Virus with their victims.

West Nile is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. Standing water should be drained whenever possible or treated with bacillus thuringensis (BTI) briquettes. Use the briquettes in places where mosquitoes breed such as ponds, birdbaths, unused swimming pools, flower pots, rain barrels, old tires, and any other place where water collects.

To avoid mosquito bites, Thompson recommends:

- applying mosquito repellent containing Deet, picardin or oil of lemon eucalyptus
- wearing long-sleeved shirts, pants and socks
- avoiding going out at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active and
- eliminating standing water to reduce mosquito breeding sites.

With the first report of West Nile Virus in August, locals were urged to take precautions against mosquitoes at the county fairs. Panhandle Public Health District offered complimentary packets of Deet mosquito repellent to individuals at fairs in their jurisdiction. Deet is safe for children, if used according to manufacturer's directions.

Then, when area high school sports fans headed out to cheer on their teams last fall, they needed to be prepared to battle hungry mosquitoes that may be carrying the dangerous West Nile Virus.

"The early fall football Friday evenings are the perfect time to play dodge 'em with a hungry mosquito," Thompson advised. "Don't forget to wear long sleeves and pants in team colors, of course."

Thompson said if you did forget the Deet, PPHD doesn't want you to end up "mosquito meat." PPHD provided free insect spray and personal towelettes containing Deet at all Panhandle high school football games the first week of the season. Supplies were limited, so fans were advised to bring their own insect repellent for the following weekends.



Referees at a Potter-Dix football game don't want to be mosquito meat. They welcome the Deet mosquito-repellent wipes offered through PPHD.

Childrens Outreach Program touches lives of new moms and babies

Most mothers and newborns leave the hospital within 48 hours of a child's birth, even if they are covered by insurance, Jean Jensen with Volunteers of America in Wellen said. Jensen coordinates Children's Outreach Program throughout the 10 county area.

Doctors and other health care providers know the first

few days of a child's life are important for medical, social and emotional reasons.

As part of the Children's Outreach Program, nurses from area hospitals and home health programs visit mothers and their new babies in their home within 48 hours of dismissal.

Home visits offer nurses the opportunity to assess both the

mother and child for medical and social needs and to offer education and support to the new, often young mother.

Jensen said without the outreach program, most moms will not receive their first checkup with the doctor until two weeks after the delivery. The most common concern is breast-feeding. Without

Three WNV-positive birds discovered in Panhandle

Three dead birds from Dawes, Box Butte and Morrill counties tested positive for West Nile Virus this past summer. The three birds, found by local residents and reported to Panhandle Public Health District, were sent to Lincoln for testing and reports were received from the lab by PPHD immediately.

"WNV-positive birds are the first indicator for the presence of West Nile Virus in the area," Rebecca Thompson, former environmental health coordinator at PPHD said. "Finding the virus in birds gives public health officials an indication of the level of virus in the area and the risk to human beings of contracting the disease."

Citizens may call PPHD at 308-487-3600 or toll free at 866-701-7173, if they see a dead bird between June and October. Testing will only be conducted on birds that have died within 24 hours, with no evidence of maggots or rotting.



Birds may be frozen in anticipation of the PPHD representative's arrival. Individuals should avoid bare-handed contact with any dead animals and use gloves or an inverted plastic bag to place the bird carcass in a garbage bag and call PPHD.

Testing on all species of birds will be conducted in the 2010 season.

West Nile includes flu-like symptoms such as fever and muscle weakness.

Only 1 in 150 people become seriously ill with WNV (encephalitis - inflammation of the brain, disorientation, convulsions and paralysis). Twenty percent of those infected show moderate symptoms (fever, aches, nausea and vomiting) and 80% exhibit no symptoms at all. People older than 50 and those with weak immune systems are especially vulnerable to the disease.

"Don't be mosquito meat, use Deet."

Rebecca Thompson

support within a few days, women having problems with breast-feeding will often quit.

At the home visit, the nurse can make referrals for medical problems like failure to gain weight, jaundice, infection or other problems for the child or post partum concerns for the mother.

A family might also need help with health insurance, car seat safety or nutrition programs like WIC (Women, Infants and Children).

The program is voluntary and free to parents. Funding for this service is shared between the hospitals and PPHD.

Worksite wellness . . .

continued from page one

for moms to nurse their infants or express breast milk during breaks from work, lowering healthcare costs for employee's families and absenteeism among breastfeeding mothers, reducing turnover, saving on retraining costs, improving employee morale and productivity.

"A worksite breastfeeding program enhances the corporate image, too," Davies said. "Women employees will view breastfeeding support services as a unique and additional benefit - creating an additional recruitment incentive for businesses seeking new skilled workers and working to retain existing well-trained staff members."

Davies uses a variety of strategies to address nutrition and physical activity in worksites and communities across the Panhandle. Through media sources, the program promotes healthy choices in food, drink and physical activity like walking, biking and taking the stairs.

The Just Move It! community campaign component provides point-of-decision prompts in the workplace and public venues, inviting individuals to take the stairs instead of the elevator at work or pick up some fruits and vegetables at their local grocer.



Heather Kumpf tries some tai chi moves at her desk at Hemingford Telephone Company/Mobius Communications. The moves help relieve stress.

Other worksite wellness programs offer easier access to healthy food and drink at work.

Scott, the treasurer in Cheyenne County, said the courthouse vending machines already include healthy snacks like V8 juice, instead of soda. The county may also increase employees' access to the local community center with incentives related to participation levels.

The event guidelines developed by PPHD (see below), also encourage local caterers to use healthier food products at many events in the Panhandle. This practice, a policy adopted by various agencies in the

Panhandle Partnership, improves access for many individuals in communities across the region to healthier food and drink choices at work.

Davies recently worked with the Panhandle Partnership Training Academy to offer Worksite Wellness 101 trainings in two Panhandle communities and plans three additional events in the coming year.

In addition, she is working with some worksite wellness teams to apply for the Governor's Excellence in Wellness awards to celebrate the successes already achieved.

Healthy Guidelines for Meetings and Events

Improve your worksite wellness or community event by following healthy event guidelines prepared by Panhandle Public Health District staff. As a guideline, meals should contain no more than 600 calories and 15 grams of fat; snacks should contain no more than 150 calories.

Physical activity is also an important part of any event. Consider offering stretch breaks or placing pedometers in a basket at the door -- participants can pick one up on the way in and drop it off on the way out.

Be sure to choose a location that is smoke free, where participants can easily and safely take a walk on their breaks.

Your meeting will be more productive and your staff will be healthier and happier.

If you dedicate a morning and/or afternoon break to physical activity and include it on the agenda, your meeting will be more productive and your staff will be healthier and happier.

The guidelines were developed for and used in conjunction with the Panhandle Partnership Training Academy. For a complete set of healthy event guidelines, visit pphd.org or contact one of our staff. The guidelines were adapted from suggestions provided by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

Training academy offers national trainers in Panhandle

Planning to attend an exciting training is an especially welcome diversion for an employee anxious to learn more and escape from the office for a few days. But the escalating costs of training, especially in distant locales, has driven some supervisors to put the kibosh on too many learning opportunities.

Enter the Panhandle Partnership's Training Academy, with a unique blend of trainings on topics as practical as Microsoft Office and as specialized as Participatory Group Facilitation Methods.



Mary Wernke Training Academy, Communications and Grants Development Coordinator

The Partnership is a mix of more than 60 health and human service agencies who collaborate on trainings, do many planning exercises together and apply for grant funds to finance those projects. Mary Wernke is the Training Academy Coordinator for the Partnership and Panhandle Public Health District.

"Most often, it's impractical to send two or three individuals to an expensive training in California or the east coast," Wernke said. "Instead, we partner to bring the best trainers to the Panhandle and make the training available to dozens, if not hundreds of individuals. Western Nebraska Community College is a major partner in developing for-credit courses and providing resources for other noncredit classes.

The end result of the academy's mission is better trained individuals - a complement to any agency and a service to the consumers they serve.

Western Nebraska Community College is a major partner in developing for-credit courses and providing resources for other noncredit classes.



Jessica Davies is one of many certified Tai Chi instructors in the Panhandle. Contact PPHD for a trainer in your area.

Almost everything you need to know about hygiene, you learned in Kindergarten



Janelle Hansen
Health Educator

One single, simple act you learned as a child could prevent many illnesses, from the common cold to the H1N1 virus – washing your hands regularly. Statistics show only one in three adults washes their hands after using a public restroom, but today’s children are learning differently through a program called “Scrub Club.”

Sometimes Janelle Hansen feels like the hand-washing police. At a recent basketball game, one of the Hemingford kindergartners returned from the restroom with a friend from the visiting team’s crowd. The child stopped to tell Hansen, health educator for Panhandle Public Health District, she’d washed her hands thoroughly, but her friend Susie had not. (Names have been changed to protect the innocent.)

The first girl’s mother said her youngest child has become diligent about washing her hands and brushing her teeth, since Hansen visited their classroom. She has even gone so far as to chastise her big brother for not brushing long enough, the mom said.

PPHD Health Educator Janelle Hansen targets preschool through

fourth grade students throughout the Panhandle to teach the importance of washing up thoroughly and regularly. Hansen said she carries along her own “germs,” a bag of harmless white powder that represents various bacteria and viruses commonly found on everyday items like toys, telephones and doorknobs.

After the children examine the germs, Hansen uses a black light to cause the invisible germs to appear in Technicolor on each child’s hands. The real germs, she points out, are still invisible to the naked eye.

There are six steps to a proper hand washing and special songs to go along with the process. First, the children use warm

water, not hot or cold, to wet their hands. After adding soap, children are taught to scrub for 20 seconds by singing or reciting their ABCs. Hansen and the teachers watch to see the children scrub under their nails, between fingers, on the fronts and backs of the hands and up along their wrists. Rinse, dry and turn off the water using your elbow or the paper towel, not your hand, or you’ll just pick up more germs on the faucet handle, Hansen said.

While hand washing is a year ‘round occupation, Hansen primarily visits day cares, preschools and elementary schools in the late fall and early winter.

More information is available at www.scrubclub.org.

Brush ‘n Up keep kids smiling, teeth healthy

Each year, more Panhandle youth are ready to flash their pearly whites, as they learn proper oral health techniques and receive better access to dental visits. Students and adults should see a dentist at least once a year. If cost is a factor, free dental exams are scheduled each summer locally.

Panhandle Public Health District Health Educator Janelle Hansen is working with PreK-4th graders in the region to learn about flossing, brushing, dental exams and other good oral health practices.

Hansen said it is best to brush your teeth morning and night, plus after each meal, but if the post-meal tooth brushing is a hardship, a simple mouth rinse can help prevent decay.

The very young students in preschool, kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grades enjoy a visit from Freddy Flossisaurus or Buggy Malone,

crazy-clad stuffed animals who extol the virtues of brushing inside and out, way in the back, top and bottom. Hansen said one of the things the children learn is to hold the toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to loosen food at the base of the teeth and to scrub their tongue and gums, as well.

Hansen gives each of the students a toothbrush and a letter for home, to teach their parents about good dental hygiene, also. Tooth decay is the second most common disease, next to the common cold, she said. “Parents can learn a lot from their children,” she concluded.

Brush ‘n Up presentations are available in daycare homes and agencies, preschools and elementarys from February through May, with a kickoff in February for Dental Health Month.

“Hold the toothbrush at a 45-degree angle.”

Janelle Hansen



PPHD Health Educator Janelle Hansen teaches a youngster how to brush Freddy Flossisaurus’ teeth.

Preventing, Promoting, Protecting

Dental Day ‘09

Nearly 170 children received dental care this year at the annual Dental Days in Gordon, Alliance, Chadron and Sidney in June 2009. The Dental Days program was led by UNMC Associate Dean Dr. David Brown.

Dental Days is an opportunity for children who may not see a dentist regularly to get a thorough check up on their teeth, mouth and gums. Coordinated through Panhandle Public Health District, local dentists, area hospitals and health services -- dental students from UNMC traveled to the Panhandle for the sixth year.

This was the first year the Community Action Partnership of Western Nebraska was involved in Chadron. The satellite office for the federally-qualified Gering clinic saw 16 patients in Chadron.

Box Butte General Hospital and Drs. Cork Taylor and Paul Maxwell of Alliance have been champions of Dental Day all along. Dr. Taylor originated the program six years ago. The hospital provided surgical services for eight young people. Twenty-three children received the exams.

In Sidney, Drs. Neal, Croft and Hlavinka saw 34 patients for prescreenings.

In Gordon, the Gordon Memorial Hospital was the site for 88 children receiving a checkup. The hospital provided space for the portable chairs and staff assistance in completing the exam.

PPHD Director Kim Engel said the UNMC students treated 169 children during the two-day event in cooperation with local dentists who provided pre-screenings.

—turn to page 13

Prevention Coalition aims at curbing underage drinking, binge drinking and impaired driving

Local and regional prevention coalitions in the Panhandle continue to work on the problem of underage drinking among youth ages 12-17. The organizations include local coalitions in every county in the Panhandle.

In addition, the Panhandle has revitalized an existing group known as the Panhandle Prevention Coalition to include more stakeholders and develop new plans for prevention efforts in the region for the coming years.



Jann Lawler
Photo by Jessica Bauerkemper
Sidney Sun Telegraph

The prevention coalition is being reorganized under a framework known commonly across the state and the nation as SPF-SIG.

The Strategic Prevention Framework of SPF-SIG is a five-step model for creation of substance abuse programs, including needs assessment, capacity building, planning, implementation and evaluation.

Overarching values of cultural competence and sustainability are addressed at each step of the program. In addition, the SPF-SIG planning requires a coalition of stakeholders from 13 areas – law enforcement, youth, parents, education, health, business, faith-based organizations, public health, civic/volunteer groups, cultural organizations, local government, media and youth-serving agencies.

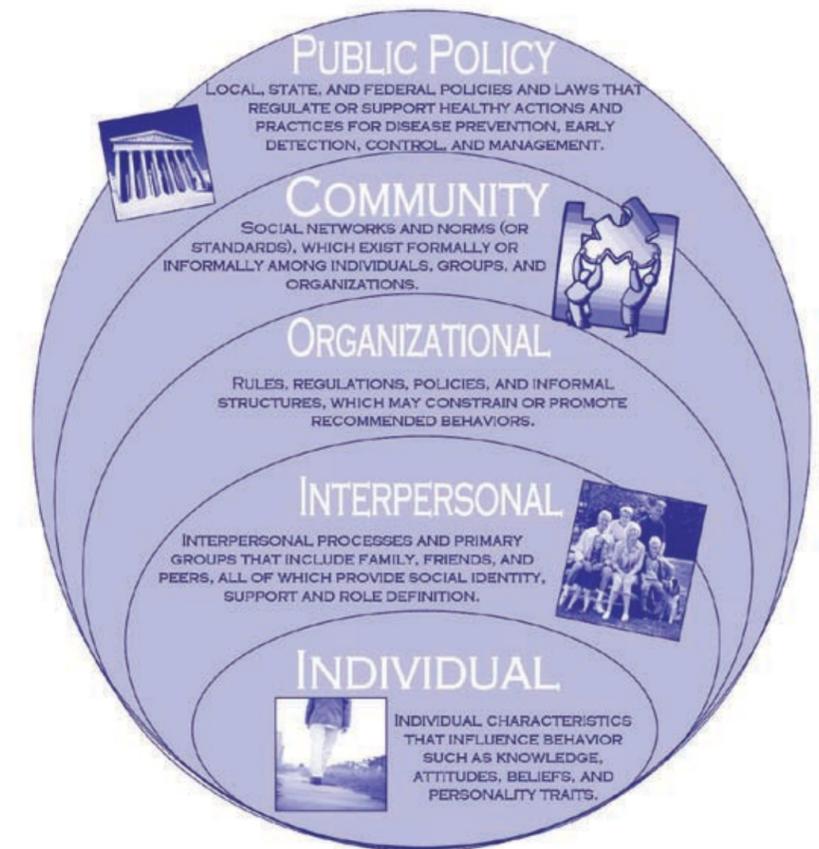
The three priority areas addressed in the plan are underage drinking, binge drinking among youth and young adults (18-25) and drinking and driving for all ages.

Alcohol-impaired driving is particularly high and is common in fatal motor vehicle crashes. According to the Substance Abuse and Associated Consequences in Nebraska, an Epidemiological Profile, residents of the most rural Nebraska counties reported the highest percentage of alcohol-impaired driving.

Alcohol abuse factors among young people are documented in a student risk and protective factor survey conducted biannually in the fall at area high schools.

Joan Frances consulted with PPHD to oversee the assessment and planning

SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL



Source: Adapted from McLeroy, et al., An ecological perspective on health promotion programs. *Health Education Quarterly* 1988; 15:351-77

The most effective approach leading to healthy behaviors is a combination of efforts at all socio-ecological levels -- individual, interpersonal, organizational, community and public policy. The programs described in the article on this page include primarily organizational, community and public policy level changes.

process. Region 1 Behavioral Health is coordinating the implementation process under the direction of Faith Mills and Jann Lawler.

The Panhandle coalition has always considered sustainability from the very beginning of each project. The coalition recognizes three factors: significant change takes time, sustainability is about outcomes, not programs and sustainability is not just about money, but also human and social resources.

Upcoming meetings for the coalition are planned for February 19, March 19 and April 16, at the Prairie Winds Community Center in Bridgeport.

ASSESSMENT, ASSURANCE, POLICY DEVELOPMENT

H1N1 virus affects families, communities

For Chance, Justice and Riah Simmons the choice was simple – their parents were well educated about the 2009 novel H1N1 influenza virus and high risk groups that included all children. All three children were vaccinated, twice each at public H1N1 vaccination clinics held in Chadron this past fall and winter. Children ages nine and younger are advised to have two vaccinations.

Joe Simmons, executive director of the Chadron Native American Center, said he had read and heard a lot about H1N1 from the media, friends and colleagues in public and minority health during the past year. As a responsible parent, Simmons said, he has always wanted the best for their kids and that includes protection from what could prove to be a deadly virus.

Based on evidence compiled during clinical trials in the spring of 2009, scientists with the Centers for Disease Control determined that children ages six months to 24 years were one of five high-risk groups for H1N1. Riah, 6 and Justice, 3 each received flu mist vaccines, while the baby Chance, 1, received injections of the H1N1 flu vaccine.

The Simmons children also attend childcare, he said, and that played a large part in his family's decision. In a daycare situation, children are in close proximity with others who may not have been vaccinated, including the small-

est babies who cannot receive the vaccination until they are six months old.

Kids are also famous for sharing germs on their toys and sloppy kisses, another mother said. It was vital to her that the other children in her family's daycare be immunized, as well as the childcare provider. Pregnant women and people who live with or care for children less than six months of age (parents, siblings and day care providers) are another high-risk group.

Although not members of the five high-risk groups, Simmons was immunized when the vaccination clinics were opened to the public in late December.

In addition, Simmons' Native American heritage may place him in a higher risk group, as well. Based on a December 2009 CDC report, the American Indian H1N1-related death rate is four times higher than that of all other racial/ethnic groups combined.

There are several possible explanations for the disparity – including higher rates of underlying chronic illnesses like asthma and diabetes, poverty, delayed access to health care and low vaccination coverage, the CDC reports.

In his role with the center and as a liaison for the Nebraska Office of Minority Health, Simmons encouraged other Native Americans in the Panhandle and beyond to get vaccinated.



Riah, Chance and Joe Simmons check in for their H1N1 vaccination at a Chadron clinic. The young family learned about the free vaccinationa clinics through Panhandle Public Health District.

Emergency preparedness starts with you

Three key steps will help your family be prepared, Becky Corman, Emergency Response Coordinator with Panhandle Public Health said. "Get a kit, make a plan and be informed," Corman advises.

Corman said a family's emergency preparedness kit should include key items like flashlights, a radio, extra batteries and enough food and water for three days. Dust masks, moist

towelettes and trash bags are other essential items to include in a preparedness kit, as well as a can opener, a wrench and/or pliers and a whistle to summon help. Cell phones with chargers may also come in handy, if service is available in your location.

In addition to the kit, each family should have a plan on how to handle emergencies. "Make a plan that works for your family."

H1N1 top story . . .

Public health officials were expecting the H1N1 flu to rear its ugly head again in the fall, possibly in combination with the seasonal flu.

"Each year, seasonal flu epidemics kill about 36,000 people," PPHD Emergency Response Coordinator Becky Corman said. This year, H1N1 caused not just an epidemic, but a pandemic. "To be considered pandemic," she said, "the virus must be a novel virus to which the population has little or no immunity, capable of producing a highly infectious disease in humans and sustained through person-to-person transmission."

In the fall of 2009, the state charged local public health departments across Nebraska with planning for vaccination and distribution of vaccine in the most effective manner. Knowing vaccine would initially be in short supply and high demand, the CDC identified five high-risk groups to receive the vaccine first.

The five high risk groups identified were pregnant women, people who live with or care for infants younger than six months of age, health care and emergency services personnel, children age six months to 24 years and anyone from 25-64 years of age with chronic medical conditions or a weakened immune system.

Children age nine or younger needed to receive two immunizations at least 28 days apart to be fully protected.

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To date, PPHD and their partners administered 10,765 doses of H1N1 vaccine across the 10 county area.

Planning needed to be done to reach the high-risk target groups first, followed by the general public. PPHD hosted community planning meetings with key stakeholders such as schools, hospitals, physicians, city government, law enforcement and emergency management system providers.

By the time the vaccine became available in early October, PPHD was ready to ship the first doses to hospitals and physician's offices for the five high risk groups. The H1N1 vaccine is, and continues to be, available in both a nasal mist and injectable form. The nasal mist is only available to people ages two to 49 and in good health.

Following closely on the heels of that shipment, free public health clinics (primarily in schools) focused on children, expanding to the five high-risk groups as supply allowed. In some schools, the school nurses conducted the clinics for their students.

By the end of December, enough vaccine was available and targeted populations had been vaccinated to open the clinics to the general public.

Volunteers were key to the effort, Corman continued. More than 70 nurses and 20 student nurses helped at the community clinics with dozens of emergency medical services and school personnel providing additional support. In some cases, the local fire hall or Legion Club provided the venue, helping to set up or tear down the privacy screens, sign up area and waiting areas.

At press time, the Panhandle has an 18% immunization rate, one of the higher in the state, Corman concluded. Future clinics are targeted at specific groups such as businesses.

In Kimball, each clinic was preceded by a call to every home in the community using the Reverse 911 system. Participation was up considerably in each of those clinics.

At press time, more than 50 public clinics had been held throughout the 10-county area

At latest report, Nebraska had 13 deaths. The PPHD area has not had any deaths due to H1N1. The peak of influenza illness occurred in October and November in the Panhandle. Nationally, one in six individuals has come down with the H1N1 flu this past year.

Special Populations preparedness

Special populations imply special needs every day, but never is the case more highlighted than in the case of a disaster. Getting to the basement in the event of a tornado? Nearly impossible in a wheelchair. Calling other family members from your cell phone? Not feasible for someone with speech or hearing difficulties. Emergency personnel, busy multitasking in the case of an emergency, may not be trained to look directly into the face of a person who is hearing-impaired so they can read lips.

Gerry Redler is a vocational case manager and Bud Mohrbutter is a retired business owner and nurse. Both are board members of Panhandle Independent Living Services and avowed advocates for special populations. PILS is a member of the Panhandle Special Populations Coalition, working collaboratively to get agencies and individuals prepared for an emergency. Other PSPC agencies work with elderly and disabled individuals and their families in the region.



Gerald Redler

Shelters are often without handicap accessibility and the ability to handle the other special needs of some individuals. Power wheelchairs require extra batteries or a generator. Displaced persons might need extra hearing aids, daily medications or a prosthesis that didn't make the trip with them in the rush of an emergency situation.



Bud Mohrbutter

"Two of our ladies are paralyzed and bedridden," Mohrbutter said.

"I worry about who's going to take care of them if something big happens. Many people with special needs have a regular caregiver or a neighbor who looks after them, he continued. But others are on their own, able most days to take care of themselves, but not so if disaster strikes.

Becky Corman of Panhandle Public Health District is a leader in the Special Populations Coalition. "Together we are working on issues like making sure shelters are handicap accessible. We'd like to see first responders ready to accommodate special needs patients," she said.

Redler has battled with cerebral palsy his entire life. His biggest

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Preventing the flu: Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs

1. Get vaccinated.
2. Avoid close contact with people who are sick, with anyone if you are sick.
3. Stay home when you are sick: from school, work or any events.
4. Cover your mouth and nose; use a tissue, throw it away immediately.
5. Wash your hands often; teach children also.
6. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth; germs spread into these openings.
7. Practice other good habits; eat, drink and sleep well, manage stress, be physically active.

2009 Timeline

January 2009	February 2009	March 2009	April 2009	May 2009	June 2009	July 2009	August 2009	September 2009	October 2009	November 2009	December 2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special population focus groups conducted • TV commercials developed for breast feeding friendly worksites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morrill County Hispanic meetings begin for preparedness • County governments begin worksite wellness programs • Brush 'n Up events in area schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass Fatalities training begins in Panhandle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRC recruitment • H1N1 flu pandemic strikes the U.S., Nebraska and the Panhandle • Lakota basketball tournament and health screening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CERT Olympics • 22 area pools model safe sunning, offer free sunscreen • Panhandle Prevention Coalition chooses underage drinking, impaired driving and binge drinking as priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean Indoor Air Act takes effect • Dental Days VI in Panhandle • 15th Intertribal PowWow at Ft. Robinson • Rains prompt West Nile Virus precautions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Jay Sutcliffe teaches others to "Take Charge of Your Health" • Tai Chi Better Balance trains 18 instructors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPHD offers free Deet at county fairs and football games • Birds test positive for WNV in Panhandle • Planning begins for H1N1 mass vaccinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparedness month kicks off in Panhandle • CERT trainings begin again in Panhandle • Worksite Wellness 101 workshops • Podcasts developed • Kids Fitness & Nutrition Days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H1N1 vaccine arrives in Panhandle, delivered to healthcare providers • Geographic Information Systems exercise • Scrub Club events in area schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H1N1 school & community clinics begin for five priority groups • PCCN's CERT leader Bob Hessler wins governor's award • Safe Communities application submitted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H1N1 vaccine made available to general public, outside high risk groups • Special Populations toolkit completed