



Making Health Our Own NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2008



Sponsored by Whatcom County Health Department
 In collaboration with the Whatcom Coalition for Healthy Communities
 Made possible, in part, by a grant from The Case Foundation

IN THE NEWS:

The first Health Counts Community forum was held March 19th at St. Luke's Health Education Center in Bellingham.

Next up: The next forum will be held in LYNDEN on April 2 (6:30-9:30 PM) at the Community/Senior Center at 401 Grover St.

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FUTURE SEARCH CONFERENCE to Expedite Health Planning

THE CASE FOUNDATION Awards \$10,000 to MAKING HEALTH OUR OWN

On March 26th the Case Foundation awarded 20 grants nationwide in a competition that began with almost 5,000 applicants.

Susan Sloan, Health Information Specialist for Whatcom County Health Department, was one of the successful award recipients. She will receive \$10,000 to be used to assure that the Whatcom County Comprehensive Health Plan is driven by diverse, grassroots citizen participation. The Whatcom Coalition for Healthy Communities (WCHC) has agreed to act as fiscal

WIN \$2,500 FOR YOUR FAVORITE CHARITY:

From March 26th-April 21, you can vote for Susan's project and three others at: (one vote per e-mail address) <http://casefoundation.org/myvote>. If you correctly identify the top four projects—those receiving the most votes—the charity of your choice could win \$2,500. There will be ten such awards. If Susan's project is in the top four, she will receive another \$25,000 to support grassroots citizen input to the Comprehensive Health Plan.

sponsor for the grant, as the citizen-input focus of the Make It Your Own Awards™ helps achieve WCHC's mission.

The Case Foundation awarded these grants to provide funding for great ideas for improving communities. After an intensive review process, the Foundation determined that Making Health Our Own perfectly fits their criteria for a "citizen-centered" approach.

"WE THE PEOPLE" IDENTIFY WHATCOM HEALTH ISSUES

In December 2007, a three-part approach was launched to identify health issues of importance to Whatcom County residents. This is the first step in the creation of a Comprehensive Health Plan for the county.

The focus of the process is to assure the input of a broad spectrum of Whatcom County residents.

The three methods used provide opportunities for experts and non-experts alike to participate:

* **ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS** were conducted with 32 "experts" in the areas of communicable disease, environmental health, health care delivery systems, and health promotion.

* **FOCUS GROUPS** have been completed with groups as diverse as medical providers, members of the oral health community, the environmental health community, and pregnant and parenting teens. Additional groups are planned for seniors, youth, Latinos/Latinas, and members of the Slavic community. (Cont'd p2)



“WE THE PEOPLE” IDENTIFY WHATCOM HEALTH ISSUES (Continued)

✱ HEALTH COUNTS COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS provide an opportunity for any resident of Whatcom County to participate and provide input. These public forums are particularly important because they allow “WE THE PEOPLE” of Whatcom County to determine which health issues are most important. Above all, Making Health Our Own is a citizen-driven process.

Information for all upcoming Health Counts Community Conversations is available under “Features” at the top of the Whatcom County home page at: www.co.whatcom.wa.us/

Additional information is also available on the Health Department’s home page under “Hot Topics & News” at: www.co.whatcom.wa.us/health/

If you would like promotional materials (flyers & posters) for the public forum in your community, please contact Susan Sloan at (360) 676-6724 Ext. #50838 or send a request to:

health@whatcomcounty.us with “Health Counts Community Conversations” in the subject line.

“Oral health is integral to general health...and must be a critical component in the design and provision of health care.”

2000 Surgeon General’s Report on Oral Health

HEALTH ISSUE OF THE MONTH: The Importance of ORAL HEALTH

Numerous interview and focus group participants have identified oral health as a critical health issue for Whatcom County. Poor oral health has significant and far-reaching impacts on children, adults, and seniors. Even beyond pain and cost, poor oral health has negative consequences on learning, medical conditions, productivity, nutrition, social interactions, and overall health.

According to the 2007 report on “Experiences of Poverty in Whatcom County”, low-income households rated affordable dental care as the overall #1 “service gap” in our community.

Oral Health Snapshot in Whatcom County:

- ✱ 5 of 10 children over age two have tooth decay
- ✱ 8 of 10 children over age two have tooth decay when cost

- ✱ is a barrier to care
- ✱ 3 of 5 Bellingham 3rd graders have tooth decay
- ✱ 1 of 5 Bellingham 3rd graders have untreated tooth decay
- ✱ 1 of 5 Bellingham 3rd graders have rampant decay (7 or more teeth with treated or untreated decay)
- ✱ 4 of 10 Whatcom adults have had tooth loss due to disease

Source: Whatcom County Smiles, Oral Health in our Community, WCHD 2005

Using OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY to Hear from Citizens

Health Counts Community Conversations are being conducted using a meeting process called Open Space Technology. Open Space is a simple way to run productive meetings. The process shifts control from one leader to all of the participants themselves, including the organization’s or the community’s traditional leaders. It is a

process that recognizes that people take responsibility to pursue what they are passionate about and ensures that what is important to each participant will be discussed.

The method was conceived from the observation that the best moments of many conferences are often the coffee breaks, when

participants are free to converse amongst themselves about what matters most to them.

Join us for one of the Health Counts Community Conversations and help bring the issue or issues you care most about to the community’s attention!

