



Making Health Our Own NEWSLETTER

MAY 2008



Sponsored by Whatcom County Health Department
 In collaboration with the Whatcom Coalition for Healthy Communities
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IN THE NEWS:

Making Health Our Own finished 7th in The Case Foundation on-line voting competition. Although we didn't make it to the Top 4, we plan to use our \$10,000 Top 20 award to hold a Future Search Conference in October of 2008. THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO TOOK THE TIME TO VOTE! We received a grand total of 3,484 votes!!

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IN OUR JUNE ISSUE:

Summary of Identified Health Issues and Next Steps in Prioritizing Those Issues

FUTURE SEARCH PLANNING CONFERENCE TARGETED FOR 2008

On recommendation of the Health Department management team and the Public Health Advisory Board, the Health Committee has approved our moving forward with planning for a Future Search Conference in Fall 2008.

Our first step will be to select a Future Search Planning Committee. It will be the Committee's responsibility to refine the Conference topic and carefully establish the criteria for who needs to attend the conference in order for the entire "system" to be in the room.

This is a necessary prerequisite for a successful Future Search Conference. Based on Committee-chosen criteria, a very specific list of invitees will be selected.

The topic for this Conference will be HEALTH PROMOTION, although it will be further refined by the Committee.

If you have any questions, please contact Susan Sloan at ssloan@whatcomcounty.us.

What Is a Future Search Conference?

Future Search is a planning meeting that helps people transform their capability for action very quickly. The meeting is task-focused. It brings people from all walks of life into the same room & the same conversation—those with resources, expertise, formal authority, and need. They meet for 18 hours spread across 3 days, exploring the past, present and desired future. Through dialogue they discover common ground. Only then do they work to enact action plans.

A REVIEW OF COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH PLANNING EFFORTS TO-DATE

Since November 2007, Whatcom residents have identified an extensive list of health-related issues. Most importantly, participants have shared their vision for a healthy Whatcom County.

Here's an update on who has provided input thus far:

- * 10 Health Counts Community Conversations across the

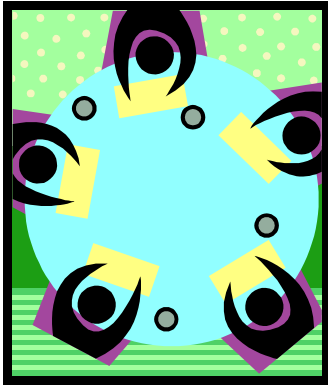
county provided an opportunity for approximately 150 Whatcom residents to set their own agenda on health and discuss health concerns with fellow participants.

- * 22 FOCUS GROUPS provided guided interviews with up to 15 participants per group who shared expertise in a specific area, such as behavioral, oral,

or environmental health, to name a few.

- * 33 ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS were conducted with "experts" throughout the county.

Input is currently being summarized and will be reviewed at the June 24th Health Committee meeting.



New Whatcom County Health Committee Formed

The Health Board's decision to move forward with the Comprehensive Health Planning processes inspired the County Council to form a new standing committee of the County Council (as Health Board). The new Health Committee was formed in September 2007, as awareness increased of the importance of health issues to Whatcom County residents.

This is the first time in 16 years that a standing committee has

been added. The last standing committee to be added was Natural Resources in 1991. The new Health Committee now provides the opportunity for County Council members to learn about and focus more on health issues.

The Committee is currently comprised of three members who will rotate on and off the Committee on an annual or bi-annual basis. Current Committee members are Barbara Brenner, Laurie Caskey-

Schreiber, and Ward Nelson (Committee Chair).

The Health Committee provides Whatcom County Health Department the opportunity to request more frequent input and guidance on health-related issues than is usually possible.

The next meeting of the Health Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, June 24th at 9:30 AM in Council Chambers at the Courthouse.

"The operation of our water supplies is, to most of us, invisible. Invisibility encourages complacency..."

Dr. Robert D. Morris from *The Blue Death: Disease, Disaster, and the Water We Drink*

The risk of dying from tap water having the EPA limit of contaminants is
1 in 10,000,000

The risk of dying from drowning is
1 in 9,000

HEALTH ISSUE OF THE MONTH: WATER QUALITY

Water is a precious commodity that many of us take for granted. With the ever-increasing demands on this valuable resource, Whatcom County Health Department plays an integral part in ensuring that the quality of the water used for drinking purposes is adequate for consumption.

Water has characteristics that, when tested, reveal what you cannot detect with the naked eye. The presence of items such as chemical compounds, heavy metals, and

bacteria can be detrimental to your health.

Public water systems (such as city water) are required to test on a routine basis. However, private water users—those on individual wells and surface water withdrawals—are not. The Health Department recommends that you test your water at least once a year for bacteriological quality. Testing takes very little effort and is inexpensive.

Do not take the quality of your drinking water for granted. We all must do our part to ensure that the water resource we use now and for future generations is clean and safe.

To learn more about water quality, contact Whatcom County Health Department at 676-6724.

CHP Project Recognition

The Whatcom County Comprehensive Health Planning efforts are receiving recognition even outside the borders of our community. First, The Case Foundation recognized the value of our citizen-driven processes. On May 21st, Susan Sloan presented an over-

view of our Comprehensive Health Planning efforts to Assessment Coordinators from around the state at the Annual Statewide Assessment meeting in Wenatchee.

In addition, the Washington Health Foundation recently submitted a

joint proposal with Whatcom and Mason Counties to share how our local CHP efforts are similar to the work the Foundation's Healthiest State in the Nation Campaign. Currently, Washington ranks 15th.

