

Campaign aims to insure kids as school year begins

By Tina Hansen*

Pencils? Check. Notebooks? Check. Health insurance? In Iowa, tens of thousands of children would be unable to check this last item off their Back-to-School list.

Why health insurance? "Research suggests that healthy children learn better in school," said Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) Director, Mary Mincer Hansen, R.N., Ph.D. "Furthermore, parents are more likely to allow their children to participate in sports activities if their children have health care coverage."

To ensure Iowa kids get the coverage they need, a campaign was held in August by the Des Moines-based Healthcare Coverage for Kids Coalition (HCKC) in collaboration with the Iowa *Covering Kids & Families* (CKF) initiative. Through health fairs, radio and television advertising and other activities, the "Back-to-School" campaign aimed to reduce the number of uninsured school-age children in Iowa by increasing enrollment



Families receive community resource information at "Shalom Zone," one of two large health fairs where HCKC provided outreach.

of those eligible for public health care coverage programs such as Medicaid and **hawk-i**.

IDPH is a partner member of HCKC. **hawk-i** stands for Healthy and Well Kids in Iowa. It operates as a public health care coverage program for children, and is administered by the Iowa Department of Human Services. IDPH provides outreach and enrollment activities for **hawk-i**, Medicaid and other health care coverage

programs for children, based on family income.

Important messages delivered to media

Citing new Iowa data on the uninsured released by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), which funds the national CKF initiative, Dr. Hansen spoke at a news conference at the House of Mercy on Aug. 9 that

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New disease reporting system to be piloted this fall

By John Satre*

Ann Rogers of Black Hawk County Community Health agrees that it would be nice if infectious diseases stood still sometimes – stood still while she completes her epidemiological investigations, fills out the paperwork, and finds a fax machine to send the report to the Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology at the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH). Then there's the task of entering the same data into her local record keeping system.

Soon though, Rogers will worry less about the time and effort disease reporting requires. "I'll be able to wrap up investigations outside of normal business hours without waiting to return to the office," she said. "Additionally, I'll be able to monitor ongoing case investigations wherever I am. The bottom line is we'll be more efficient and that's good for the residents of Black Hawk County."

That's not just good for them, it's good for all Iowans.

The change Rogers is looking forward to is the introduction of the new Iowa Disease Surveillance System (IDSS), a Web-based tool being developed to modernize and streamline disease reporting in Iowa. Commissioned by the Iowa Department of Public Health and due for release early next year, the IDSS will serve as a single, consistent, and secure source of information for everyone involved with infectious diseases. The new system will not change underlying epidemiologic methods or the existing list of reportable



diseases in Iowa.

The IDSS is part of a national initiative by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to create an integrated network of data reporting, sharing and analysis also known as the Public Health Information Network (PHIN). The PHIN covers a number of areas including early event detection, outbreak management, alerting, surveillance and partner-communication.

Already, partners in Iowa have been brought on board to begin testing the new system. A 12-week pilot is planned to begin in the last quarter of 2006 to ensure that the IDSS is user-friendly, functions well in a non-simulated environment, and is comparable and better than the current reporting system of faxes and multiple data entry.

"The local public health agencies, hospitals, and lab services we have invited will help us achieve our goals of allowing shared access to information while

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IDPH looks forward to collaborating with these partners during the 12-week IDSS pilot project.

Cerro Gordo County Public Health
Collaborative Laboratory Services
Cross Medical Laboratory, Iowa City
Greater Community Hospital
Iowa Health Systems, Des Moines
Johnson County Public Health
Mercy Medical Center, North Iowa
Ottumwa Regional Health Center
Polk County Public Health
Siouxland District Health (Woodbury County)
St. Luke's Regional Medical Center, Sioux City
University of Iowa Hospital and Clinics, Iowa City
Union County Public Health
University Hygienic Laboratory
Wapello County Public Health



Iowa Department of Public Health

Advancing Health Through the Generations

Phase I of preparedness exercise includes many disciplines

By DeAnne Sesker*

Pandemic influenza was the topic of discussion for roughly 700 participants in five regional tabletop exercises hosted by the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HLSEM) from July 31 to Aug. 4. The exercises were the first of a two-part series focusing on pandemic preparedness.

Held in Atlantic, Altoona, Cherokee, Marion, and Mason City, the exercises centered on a scenario in which human-to-human transmission of the H5N1 “bird flu” virus had affected several people in Iowa. The simulation required local partners to consider how they might best work together to control the spread of the disease and address public education, policy and other health issues.

“This was the perfect opportunity for a variety of disciplines to meet to discuss the issues they could be dealing with in the event of a pandemic,” said IDPH Director, Mary Mincer Hansen, R.N., Ph.D. “I was impressed with the turnout that included not only local public health and health care, but also representatives of businesses, schools and elected officials. It will require the efforts of every sector to respond when a pandemic occurs.”

Local preparedness partners included public health, hospitals, emergency management, emergency medical services, law enforcement, elected local officials and public information officers. The day concluded with a meeting of representatives from each county to discuss immediate planning or training needs.

“Supervisors should be involved in this type of event and informed about the impact of this type of emergency, especially when extra resources would be needed and the supervisors would be the first

place people would come,” said Cass County Supervisor, Chuck Kinen. “We



Sandy Jirsa from the University of Iowa Hygienic Laboratory in Iowa City gives a brief explanation during the Region 4 exercise on Aug. 3.

need to be as prepared as possible and have our eyes open for what could happen during a pandemic.”

IDPH and HLSEM applied a “building-block approach” in developing the tabletops. The second phase will be a combination functional and full-scale exercise on Sept. 27 that will involve 12 counties and state agencies.

More information about pandemic influenza is available at www.idph.state.ia.us/pandemic. IDPH will report on the Sept. 27 exercise in an upcoming edition of *Iowa Health FOCUS*.

** DeAnne Sesker is the education/exercise coordinator in the IDPH Center for Disaster Operations and Response.*



Iowa Department of Public Health

Advancing Health Through the Generations

New IDPH Web site helps meet information needs

By Joyce Allard*

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) Web site, www.idph.state.ia.us, has become easier to use due to upgrades introduced during a 60-day pilot test of the site launched in June. Those improvements, says IDPH Director, Mary Mincer Hansen, R.N., Ph.D. resulted from comments gathered as part of the department's strategic communications plan.

"We made changes to the Web site based on input from external and internal focus groups," Dr. Hansen said. "The information received from local public health agencies, other health partners, citizens and employees has enabled us to develop a highly effective and informative online resource."

And the site keeps getting better, thanks to the comments of hundreds of visitors who filled out a survey during the important two-month testing period.

In October 2005, the IDPH Bureau of Information Management and a redesign committee began discussing possible Web site improvements. According to IDPH Information Management Bureau Chief Dale Anthony, more than 150 responses to the Web Redesign Survey have served to further enhance the site. "The survey provided an important tool to let us know what was working well and what areas need developing," Anthony said.

High percentage of satisfaction reported

Anthony noted that 78 percent of respondents said information on the Web

site was easy to read. Sixty-six percent said they were able to find information in a timely manner compared to search time required by other Web sites.

Anthony said the responses also indicate Google technology has improved search results. Eighty-two percent said the Google search engine is helpful in locating specific items. Seventy-five percent said the A-Z index is helpful in locating specific programs.

"I appreciate the time spent to upgrade the Web site and make it more user friendly," said Kevin Grieme, health planner/development coordinator with the Siouxland District Health Department. Grieme particularly likes the Quick Links section, the A-Z index and the topics of interest.

Calendar coming soon

Sept. 12 is the target date to introduce a new IDPH calendar feature to replace the "Conferences" button on the site navigation bar. The calendar will display the title, date, and time of upcoming events, and links to relevant documents such as brochures and agendas. Anthony said the calendar section will continue to be modified depending on identified needs.

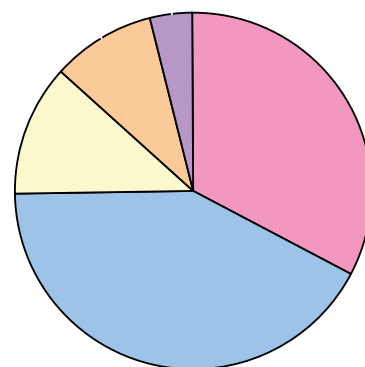
IDPH welcomes feedback on any of the department's programs, publications and other activities. Visit www.idph.state.ia.us and click on "Contact Us" at the bottom of any page.

* Joyce Allard is the coordinator of the Office of Community Education.

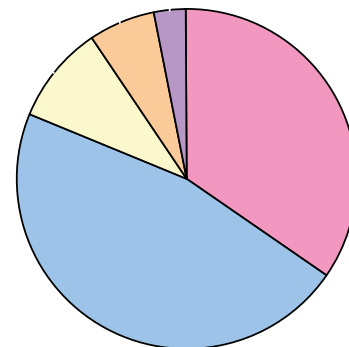
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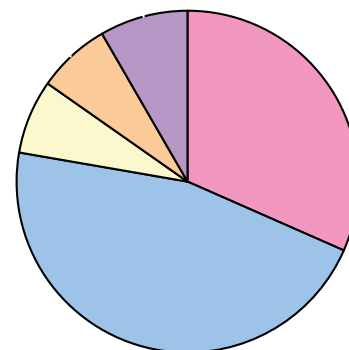
(Clockwise from top)



The A-Z index is helpful in locating specific programs.



The Google search is helpful in locating specific items.



Information on this Web site is easy to read.



Campaign equips kids, provides health services

(Continued from page 1)

served to kick off the campaign. "Public health has worked with many partners in Iowa to enroll children in health coverage. Since 1997, the number enrolled has increased by more than 57 percent, providing more than 46,000 Iowa children with health coverage," Dr. Hansen said. She added, however, that more needs to be done.

Other partners at the conference agreed. "Despite considerable gains, more than 50,000 children remain without health coverage in Iowa. In my opinion, that's 50,000 too many," said Sgt. Joe

Gonzalez of the Des Moines Police Department. Des Moines School Superintendent Nancy Sebring, Olympian and Drake Head Track Coach Natasha Kaiser-Brown, and local mother and Medicaid participant Laurie Northway also attended and spoke at the news conference. Children at the House of Mercy and the Evelyn Davis Academy were provided backpacks filled with school supplies following the event.

Outreach extended to thousands

The first of two major health fairs was held the same afternoon at McKinley Elementary School. Applications for the **hawk-i** program, physical exams, immunizations, blood lead testing, and free school supplies were provided for each of the 500 children who attended the fair. Families lined up outside the school an hour before the event.

The Des Moines partners focused their initiative on outreach to minority populations, a need acknowledged by the national campaign.

The attendance of many Latino families

living in the area boosted the health fair's success. National data suggest that one in five Latino children under age 18 lacks health insurance.

HCKC reached a similar audience with another community health fair, held on Aug. 17 at Gatchel United Methodist Church in Des Moines. More than



A line of more than 300 people forms outside McKinley School waiting for free school physicals and other information.

1,500 children received school supplies, physical exams, and other screenings.

The Iowa State Fair provided another avenue for **hawk-i** outreach. Working from the IDPH booth in the Varied Industries Building, CKF staff distributed thousands of applications, as well as cups, fans,

bookmarks, and magnets with the **hawk-i** logo and contact information.

Sponsored by RWJF, the national CKF Back-to-School campaign selected Des Moines as one of eight target markets to provide outreach to uninsured families. Many **hawk-i** outreach coordinators across Iowa also participated in the campaign in their own communities, creating campaign bulletin boards and distributing **hawk-i** applications at school registrations.

Although **hawk-i** enrollment numbers were still being tabulated at press time, campaign partners hope their efforts will lead to a decline in the number of uninsured children in Iowa. Results will be announced on the Iowa *Covering Kids and Families* Web site at www.idph.state.ia.us/coveringkids, and in future IDPH publications such as Director Hansen's *Quick Reads*.

* Tina Hansen is a UNI intern with *Covering Kids and Families* at IDPH.



Iowa Department of Public Health

Advancing Health Through the Generations

WIC staff excited about fruits and vegetables proposal

By Judy Solberg*

Who doesn't enjoy farmers' markets? It's like a little fair every week... and the cornucopia of fresh fruits and vegetables there means it's good for you, too.

"Our clients look forward to the WIC Farmers' Market Program every summer," said Cheryl VonBehren, Women's, Infants and Children (WIC) Program director at Broadlawns Medical Center in Des Moines. "However, access to the farmers' markets has always been a barrier, and the redemption rate for those WIC coupons is typically only about 60 percent."

Thanks to proposed changes to the national WIC program by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food & Nutrition Service, the federal agency responsible for administering the WIC Program at the national and regional levels, Iowa WIC participants stand to gain other options to the seasonal farmers markets.

"Of the proposed food package changes, one which will be much appreciated is the fruit and vegetable option," VonBehren said. "To be able to buy produce year-round, and with the convenience of doing so at the grocery store, would certainly be a welcome change for our WIC participants."

Julie McMahon, director of the Division of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention at the Iowa Department of Public Health couldn't agree more. "Including fruits and vegetables in the WIC food package will help WIC to play its part in fighting the obesity epidemic in Iowa," McMahon said. "We applaud this landmark proposal"

The proposed changes will be the first in WIC's 32-year history.

Other significant changes proposed are the inclusion of a wider variety of foods to increase cultural acceptability, and the inclusion of whole-grain products. These are seen as some of the most critical tools WIC needs in the food packages to reinforce the nutrition education messages mothers and children receive in WIC clinics. Furthermore, the proposal allows WIC to come in line with current nutrition science.



Highlights of Proposed Changes

The addition of:

- Fresh, processed or combined fruits and vegetables for children and women;
- Baby foods including meats for fully breast-fed infants, and fruits and vegetables to the packages for all infants 6-11 months of age;
- Alternatives to milk, including calcium-set tofu, and calcium and vitamin D-rich soy beverages;

Reductions in:

- Infant formula for partially breast-fed infants and for fully formula-fed infants 6 to 11 months of age;
- The quantity of eggs; and
- Milk and juice for children and women.

The elimination of:

- Juice for all infants, substituting baby food fruits and vegetables; and
- Whole milk for participants age 2 and older.

To read more about the proposed revisions to the WIC food package, go to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Web site at www.fns.usda.gov/wic. Comments to USDA about the proposed changes must be postmarked by Nov. 6.

For details about the Oct. 24-25 Iowa WIC Conference, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/conferences.asp and scroll to "Harvesting Opportunities for a Healthier Iowa." Registration deadline is Oct. 10.

* Judy Solberg is the Iowa WIC program director and chief of the Bureau of Nutrition and Health Promotion at IDPH.



Racial and ethnic minorities encouraged to get checkups

By Joyce Allard*

Regardless of race or ethnicity, we all face the same health problems. But health problems impact various racial and ethnic groups in disproportionate numbers.

"It's time for Iowans to focus on this issue by helping themselves or others who, for whatever reason, may belong to a high risk demographic group," said Janice Edmunds-Wells, consultant for the Office of Multicultural Health at the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH). "There is even a special day set aside to do just that."

The day Edmunds-Wells refers to is *Take a Loved One for a Checkup Day*. On the third Tuesday of each September, people are encouraged to help prevent diseases by making an appointment for a health screening, attending a health event in the community or helping a friend, neighbor or family member do the same.

"By focusing our efforts on September 19, we believe we can help generate a greater understanding of the importance of regular health screenings while at the same time focusing on those populations which tend to have the highest disease burden and the least access to health care," said Edmunds-Wells.

Take a Loved One for a Checkup Day is part of the national Closing the Health Gap campaign, designed to help improve the health of racial and ethnic minority populations who are affected by serious diseases and health conditions at far greater rates than other Americans. The campaign is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



"IDPH plans to increase awareness of this campaign through various channels, including during the Iowa Latino Heritage Festival Sept. 9-10," Edmunds-Wells said. She encourages all local public health agencies and other partners in Iowa to use the free toolkit

available on the Close the Health Gap Web site at www.omhrc.gov/healthgap.

Edmunds-Wells stressed that if scheduling an appointment is not possible in September, it's fine to make one for another time. "The point is to see a health professional and begin taking charge of your health!"

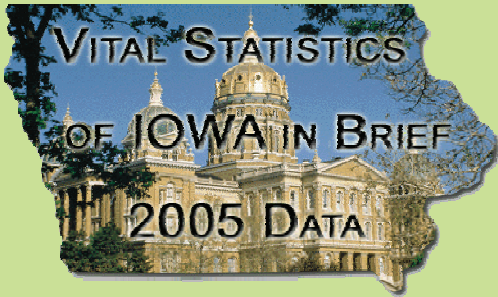
* *Joyce Allard is the Community Education coordinator at IDPH.*

Consider these facts:

- Hispanic/Latino Americans are 1.5 times more likely to have diabetes than non-Hispanic whites of similar age;
- African Americans are almost twice as likely to have a first-time stroke as whites;
- American Indians and Alaska natives are more than 2.2 times as likely as non-Hispanic whites of similar age to have diabetes.
- Mexican Americans, who make up the largest share of the U.S. Hispanic population, suffer in greater numbers from being overweight or obese, a leading risk factor for heart disease, than whites; and
 - Asian and Pacific Islander Americans make up more than half of the 1.3 to 1.5 million known hepatitis B carriers in the U.S.



Vital statistics brief released



The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) has just released *2005 Vital Statistics of Iowa in Brief*. This “pocket guide to the health status of Iowans” includes provisional data on the number of live births, and the top ten causes of death in 2005 for the state and individual counties. The full report should appear in November.

The brief can be accessed and printed from the IDPH homepage under “Birth, Death and Marriage Certificates” in the “Quick Links” section. Hard copies will be available in September.

Briefs and full reports from previous years are also available online.

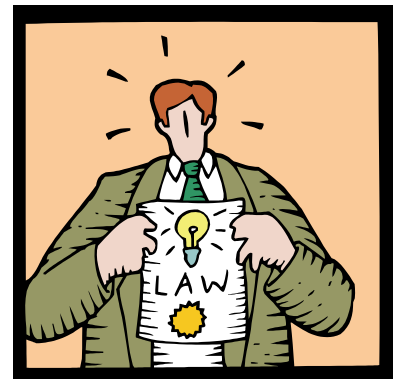
For more information, write to jjunqlin@idph.state.ia.us or call (515) 281-4945.

2006 Legislative Summary now available

Are you wondering what provisions were in the state health budget? Maybe you want to know how the department will follow up on an enacted bill. If you're looking for information on a public health bill from the last session, check out the 2006 Legislative Summary now posted on the department Web site in the Legislative Updates section at

www.idph.state.ia.us/do/legislative_updates.asp.

Arranged in an easy-to-read table format, the document serves as a quick reference guide on which bills were passed by the Legislature, bill numbers, effective dates and more. If you can't find what you're looking for, contact Lynh Patterson, the department's legislative liaison, at lpatters@idph.state.ia.us or 515-281-5033.



IDPH employee Dena Fife talks with a fairgoer about the contents necessary for an emergency supply kit on Protect Iowa Health Day at the Iowa State Fair. The personal preparedness campaign distributed 6,000 guidebooks on this special day; 2,500 were handed out “on a stick.”



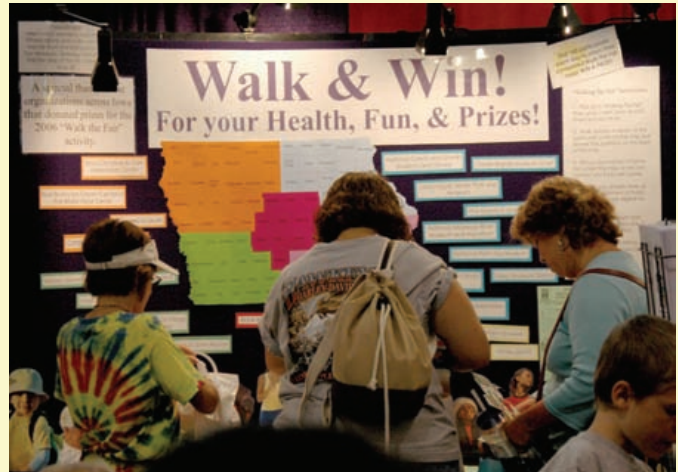
State fair booth informs and inspires

By Katrina Karasch*

An estimated 1,013,000 people visited the Iowa State Fair, this year. Thanks to the efforts of Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) employees who staffed the IDPH booth in the Varied Industries Building during the 11-day event, approximately 27,500 fairgoers now know more about IDPH's mission, activities and programs.

A number of visitors even got in a little physical activity because of the booth. The ever-popular "Walk the Fair" activity had more than 600 participants, twice as many as last year. Upon completing the scavenger hunt, each returned to the booth to collect a prize contributed by one of over 25 attractions across Iowa. (See below.) Participants were also entered into drawings for a pair of shoes from Fitness Sports, or a die-cast toy tractor from the National Farm Toy Museum.

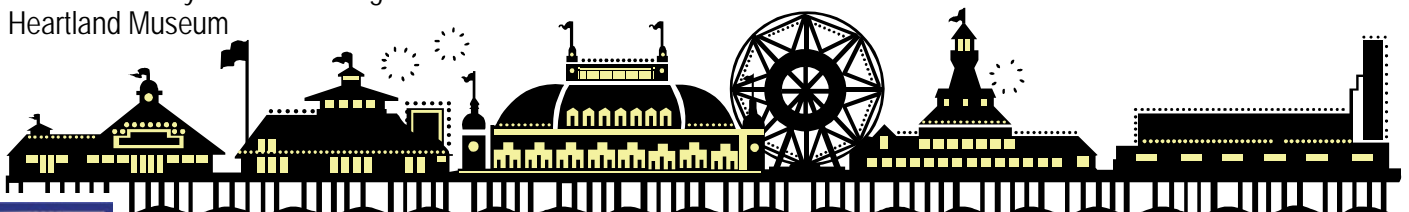
Another big draw to the IDPH booth was a display featuring the 28 local health initiatives funded by the Harkin Wellness Grants. According to Jane Schadle of the IDPH Office for Healthy Communities, which administers the grants, a number of people are now thinking about how to fund their own initiatives. "We have had contacts from communities as a result of the display and this has given us the opportunity to explain who we are and what we do." Schadle said. "We've also been able to talk to communities about the future."



* Katrina Karasch is an ISU intern in the IDPH Office of Community Education.

Amana Heritage Society
Birthplace of John Wayne
Blank Park Zoo
Blue Bunny Ice Cream Capital of the World Visitor Center
Camp Algona P.O.W. Museum
Cedar Rapids Museum of Art
Danish Windmill
FFA Historical and Ag Museum
Figge Art Museum
Fitness Sports
Grant Wood Studio and Visitor Center
Grout Museum District
Harrison County Historical Village and Welcome Center
Heartland Museum

Historic General Dodge House
Iowa Aviation Museum
Iowa Children's Museum
Laura Ingalls Wilder Park and Museum
Lighten Up Iowa
Madison County Historical Society
Mason City Foundation/Music Man Square
National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library
National Farm Toy Museum
National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium
Reiman Gardens
Sioux City Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center



IDPH co-sponsors national disability conference

By Ben Woodworth*

June 2006 brought representatives from state and federal government, university partners from both disability and research, and disability organizations from around the country to Ames for the fourth annual American Association on Health and Disability (AAHD) conference. The conference was co-sponsored by AAHD and the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH), through the Office of Disability and Health.

The event focused on two underlying premises. The first is that the performance of CDC-funded state disability and health programs, external partner organizations and research grantees can be significantly enhanced through the development of long-term collaborative relationships and partnerships with both disability and non-disability organizations. The second premise was that in many cases, it is no longer sufficient to rely on traditional

alliances of public-sector disability organizations.

Held in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta and with the first Special Olympics USA National Games, the first day of the conference featured opening remarks by state and national experts. They included: IDPH Director, Dr. Mary Mincer Hansen; CDC Division of Human Development and Disability Director, Dr. Ed Brann; Special Olympics University Executive Director, Dr. Ronald Blankenbaker; and AAHD President, Dr. Stephen Corbin

During the conference, IDPH Disability and Violence Prevention Bureau Chief, Tom

Brown, participated on an expert panel titled *Non-traditional Partnerships in Emergency Preparedness/Post Katrina for People with Disabilities*. "The foundation of emergency preparedness rests with each individual and family developing their own plan and then linking with larger community plans," Brown said. "People with disability need to be included in emergency planning efforts to ensure

their needs are met in actual local and state response efforts."

Bob Bacon, director of Iowa's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities at the University of Iowa and Geoffrey Lauer, member of Iowa's Advisory Council on Brain Injuries, provided a presentation titled *Advocates and Advocats: Changing Systems through Partnerships*. Bacon reviewed the activities of Iowa's Olmstead Real Choices Consumer Task Force and state partners in advancing Iowa's

disability service system over the past five years. Lauer presented on how the education and advocacy efforts of the council, the Brain Injury Association of Iowa, and IDPH have advanced the brain injury system of services and supports during the past decade.

* Ben Woodworth is the Brain Injury Program manager in the IDPH Division of Behavioral Health & Professional Licensure.



Closing remarks at the conference were delivered by Dr. Timothy Shriver, president of the Special Olympics. The following day, Dr. Shriver was awarded the Surgeon General's Medallion, the highest honor of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded to civilians.



...and then some

Did you know...?

Iowa has 30 community health nurses listed on a national registry of experts in early childhood health and safety? The nurses are child care nurse consultants from local community health agencies. Consumers may use the national registry to locate and contact a nurse consultant. The Web site <http://hccnsc.edc.org> contains the names, contact information, and areas of expertise. Child care nurse consultants assist child care businesses in:



- preventing injuries and communicable disease;
- caring for children with special health needs; and
- developing health and safety policy.

The child care nurse consultants are the community level segment of the Healthy Child Care Iowa campaign sponsored by the Iowa Department of Public Health since 1996. Healthy Child Care Iowa provides information and consultation services to Iowa's 1,500 licensed child care centers and 4,680 registered child development homes. For more information about Healthy Child Care Iowa visit www.idph.state.ia.us/hcci or contact Sally Clausen or Kim Tichy from the Bureau of Family Health at 1-800-383-3826.

Partners important in developing new disease reporting system

(Continued from page 2)

decreasing duplication of effort," said IDPH Regional Epidemiology Program Manager, Judy Goddard. "The pilot is an important activity as we work toward a system that allows local public health staff to initiate case investigation sooner and educate Iowans on preventing spread of disease, and thereby reducing illness in the state."

Developed by the Iowa Foundation for Medical Care under contract by IDPH, the IDSS has important applications at the local level as well. "My board of health will be very interested in the reports that I'll be able to create for our county," said Emmet County Public Health Administrator, Karen Miller. "This kind of information will also allow me to better understand what types of infectious disease cycles have been present in Emmet County historically and that will help me be more proactive in my work."

For more information about the new IDSS, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/idss.asp, write to jsatre@idph.state.ia.us, or call 515-242-5090.

** John Satre is the IDSS Coordinator at IDPH.*

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