



December 2006

Iowans Fit for Life partners implement state plan

By Sarah Taylor*

The facts are clear. In this state of 2.9 million people, 1.3 million adult Iowans are overweight or obese. That's more than two thirds of the adult population.

A problem like this calls not only for big solutions, but big partnerships as well.

On Nov. 16, more than 100 representatives of organizations with a vested interest in reducing overweight and obesity came together to face this problem head on. The event was the [Iowans Fit for Life](#) Symposium.

Hosted by the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH), the gathering served to kick off implementation of the [Iowa Comprehensive Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan](#). The State Plan is a call to action to combat the rise of the epidemic of inactivity and poor nutrition in Iowa.

"It's unacceptable that today's children may have a shorter life span than their parents because of obesity," said IDPH Director, Mary Mincer Hansen, R.N., Ph.D., who opened the Symposium. "A majority of our counties have identified overweight as a serious health problem; therefore, it's essential our children, adults and seniors have the opportunities to get active and eat healthy."



(l-r) Matt Russell of the Drake Agricultural Law Center and Ken Daley of the Iowa Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance speak with walkability expert Mark Fenton at the Symposium.

Report shows success of treatment programs

By Bob Kerksieck*

I have my life back," says "Rick," from Dubuque. "For a while there I couldn't see any way out of the hole I was in, and I just kept getting in deeper."

That hole was Rick's addiction to methamphetamine or meth. Before he entered treatment one year ago, Rick lost his job, was arrested twice and hospitalized once. He regularly went days without sleep, was prone to violent outbursts and became severely emaciated.

"I have a good job, but that's nothing compared to staying out of jail and the hospital," said the 35-year-old who sought help from the Substance Abuse Services Center in Dubuque. "I don't ever want to go back to that kind of life. Not ever."

Multiple arrests, hospitalizations and job problems are common among substance abusers.

According to an [outcomes report](#) funded by the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH), Rick's success is typical of many who entered treatment



Vaccinations provided at rural voting stations

By Candy Pugh*

Voting is often called one's "civic duty." It's for one's own good and that of the community. The same might be said of getting vaccinated, especially during influenza season.

On Nov. 7, nearly 500 Iowans were able to do both at seven polling places in Louisa County.

"So many people commented on what a great idea this was," said Mary Louise Bayne of the Louisa County Volunteer Corps (LCVC). "Everything was so well-organized, and the process went so smoothly; no one had to wait long to get a vaccination."

The effort to provide influenza and pneumonia vaccinations at polling places was part of the national "Vote and Vax" program. Louisa County Public Health was selected from 60 county applicants as one of 25 organizations to receive funding for the project.

Grant funds could be used for any aspect of clinic preparation and service delivery, except purchasing the vaccine. Funding like this is especially helpful considering the many barriers that limit access to routine health care services in this rural southeastern county.

Overcoming challenges

Louisa County Public Health administrator Alana Poage says that holding the clinics was not without its challenges. "It was difficult to find



Madde Johnson sits on her mother Ann's lap and brother Drew watches as paramedic Damon Moore administers a flu vaccination at the Briggs Civic Center in Wapello.

sites where we could legally hold the clinics," Poage said. The department worked closely with the [Louisa County Auditor's](#) office to identify locations.

"Staffing the clinics required a little more creativity," Poage recalls. Members of the LCVC, the local version of a medical response corps, quickly offered their services, supplying about half of the manpower required to keep all seven clinics open for 12 hours. Students from [Iowa Wesleyan College](#), the [University of Iowa School of Nursing](#), and the [Southeastern Community College Nursing Program](#) were recruited to help run the sites. Poage says that one staff member from the health department was able to oversee each site.

Poage said it was also necessary to consider the design of the

polling place. "Ideally, the best design was where the residents could transition smoothly from voting to vaccinations without leaving the building." Despite the less-than-perfect design of some sites, Poage says the effort was very successful. "Even in cases where people were required to cross the street or go to another floor of the building, the response was excellent."

Measuring success

Poage reported that 499 Louisa County residents received flu vaccinations during the 12 hours the seven clinics were open. "This is three times the number of vaccinations provided on any single day previously in Louisa County," she pointed out.

Sixty-four of the recipients said they probably would not have gotten vaccinated this year if it hadn't been for the Vote and Vax program. Another 25 people said they were uncertain whether they would have sought vaccination at another place or time.

The Vote and Vax program is funded by a \$320,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. To learn more, visit www.rwjf.org.

* Candy Pugh is the office manager at Louisa County Public Health.



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Iowa Department of Public Health

Advancing Health Through the Generations

National Public Health Week focuses on vulnerable populations

By Joyce Allard*

Stop for a minute and think about Sept. 11, 2001, Hurricane Katrina and the looming threat of an influenza pandemic. Each of these has caused Americans and Iowans to think about how they would respond in a similar situation and what they need to do to prepare.

As people prepare for public health emergencies like these, it's likely that each thinks in terms of what he or she is capable of controlling, depending on the conditions of his or her everyday life. Unfortunately many vulnerable populations have specific barriers that may limit their ability to prepare.

With this in mind, the [2007 National Public Health Week](#) (NPHW), April 2-8, is designed to encourage Americans, especially vulnerable populations, to choose one activity as their first step toward becoming better prepared to address a public health threat.

The [American Public Health Association's](#) (APHA) theme for the week is *Take The First Step! Preparedness and Public Health Threats: Addressing the Unique Needs of the Nation's Vulnerable Populations*.

"Knowing the focus of NPHW this far in advance will help the state, local public health agencies and other partners start planning their events and activities for this important week," said Iowa Department of Public Health Director, Mary Mincer Hansen, R.N., Ph.D.

Now in its 12th year, NPHW is celebrated in every state nationwide. APHA has organized

and developed a national campaign to educate the public, policymakers and practitioners about issues related to the theme.

The 2007 NPHW efforts will work to close the gap in current emergency preparedness plans to ensure all Americans have a plan. The focus will connect vulnerable populations with the resources that are tailored to their unique needs.

Target audiences for NPHW 2007 face unique challenges related to preparing for public health emergencies.

- **Mothers** – Mothers' daily priorities of getting children to school, helping with homework or just spending time with their kids compete with preparing their families for a public health emergency.
- **Food banks** – Local food banks become essential resources in times of disaster. Preparing for a public health threat is vital to ensure that food banks can operate before, during and after an emergency.
- **Hourly-wage workers** – Hourly wage earners do not usually have employer-sponsored health plans. They could be seriously impacted if public transportation is shut down and they cannot get to work. In the event of a public health threat, hourly wage workers may not be able to find or retain employment.
- **K-12 schools** – Administrators, teachers, staff and nurses have numerous responsibilities in the event of an emergency, including their students. With school violence so common, most schools have re-evaluated their emergency preparedness plans, but possibly not related to public health emergencies.
- **People living with chronic illnesses** – People living with chronic disease have unique health needs and may have to rely on support networks. Whether a person has high blood pressure, cancer, or asthma, it's important to consider the unique preparations needed to address a serious public health emergency. In Iowa, this day will also address challenges faced by people with disability.

What this means for Iowa

During the past few years, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) has coordinated a workgroup with local public health agencies, state and local organizations and other partners to observe National Public Health Week in Iowa. This year is no exception.

"The workgroup plays an important role in developing activities for NPHW with local public health



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Advancing Health Through the Generations

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Strategies begun to promote nutrition and physical activity

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In addition to the dilemma of knowing that future generations may not live as long as their mothers and fathers, health problems related to overweight and obesity now cost Iowans \$783 million annually. What's more, only 46 percent of Iowa adults get enough physical activity and only 20 percent eat enough fruits and vegetables.

With these facts in mind, the Symposium participants sat down for a full day of strategic planning. They were divided into eight settings: community, health care, education, early childhood, older Iowans, communication, policy, and business and agriculture.

Following a presentation by national walkability expert, [Mark Fenton](#), teams assessed their current situation including strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities

for nutrition and physical activity. The groups then identified possible strategies pulled from the State Plan, and rated them based on resources, feasibility, and support. Finally, teams developed one-year work plans for strategies in the State Plan that the network of partners could start within the next year.

"Partnerships are vital for this to succeed," said Roxane Joens-Matre of Des Moines University. "The implementation of the Plan will require everyone to work together, which will also increase efficiency and decrease duplicative efforts."

Approximately 450 individuals are currently involved in the Iowans Fit for Life Partnership. These individuals represent a broad range of traditional and nontraditional public health partners, including

business, city planning, insurance, health care and the public sector.

Stephanie Loes, of the Healthy Linn Care Network, commented on the broad representation of Symposium participants. "This is especially critical because people are more vested in the product if it comes from them," Loes said. "The Symposium also made participants feel like they could take away strategies and apply them to their communities."

To learn more about Iowans Fit for Life, or to view the Iowa Comprehensive Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/iowansfitforlife.

** Sarah Taylor is the physical activity coordinator at IDPH.*



Grundy Center residents and those passing through are reminded how to prevent the spread of influenza this season. "It's been a wonderful use of public health dollars," said Diane Schultz, director of Grundy Center Public Health. Two billboards were placed on the north and west sides of town on Highway 14, a main thoroughfare through Grundy Center.

Treatment reduces hospitalizations, arrests, and unemployment

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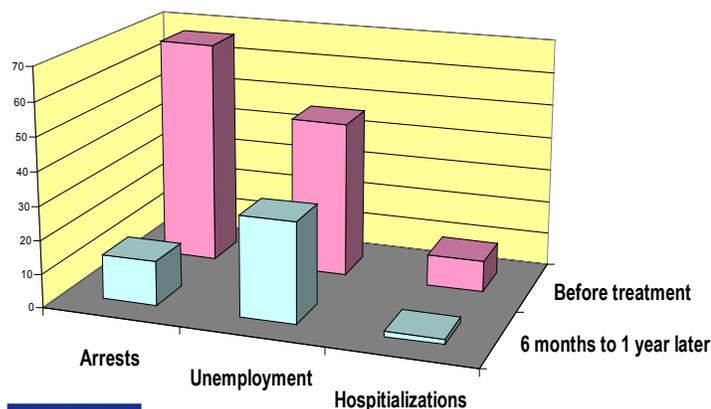
in 2005. Less than one-fifth as many clients reported arrests at least six months after treatment compared to those reporting arrests at admission. The percentage of clients reporting hospitalizations at follow-up was six times less than the percent reported at admission. Also, full-time employment increased by 46 percent during the same period.

The report, released in September by the [Iowa Consortium for Substance Abuse Research and Evaluation](#) at the University of Iowa, was based on a sampling of former substance abusers six months to one year after treatment at centers funded by IDPH.

"It's important that we use a respected outside evaluator to monitor outcomes among substance abuse treatment providers in Iowa," said IDPH Deputy Director Janet Zwick. "The most recent results are exciting, showing again that treatment does indeed work."

This is the eighth year the Consortium has issued an outcomes report under contract with IDPH.

"Increasing employment while reducing arrests and keeping people out of the hospital are positive changes that save the taxpayers money," said Stephan Arndt, director of the Consortium. "Reducing hospitalizations, for example, results in a tremendous cost savings to taxpayers by reducing Medicare, Medicaid and insurance costs."



Substance Abuse Counselor Marie Shaw speaks to a client in the Manchester office of the Substance Abuse Services Center. Meth addicts come from all walks of life and do not necessarily display all the signs of addiction such as severe weight loss, violent behavior, or skin lesions.

Zwick pointed out that length of stay in a treatment program is a critical factor in success. Clients who were in treatment at least four months had the most success and remained abstinent at a rate of 58 percent. That, she says, is due to IDPH and providers pushing the field of substance abuse to adopt research-based best practices.

"The types of treatment and length of stay for clients are now determined by nationally accepted criteria based on client need rather than a 'one size fits all' program," Zwick said. "IDPH has a long-term commitment to high-quality substance abuse treatment. This study is one of the ways we can evaluate how successful the field is."

To view the entire report, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/bhpl and click on "Outcome Monitoring System, Iowa Project - September 2006."

* *Bob Kerksieck is a health facilities surveyor at IDPH.*

Conference moves tobacco control efforts from “Vision to Victory”

By Rob Semelroth*

More than 120 advocates from across the state met in Des Moines, Nov. 1-2 with one thing in mind – moving statewide tobacco control efforts from a vision to a victory. The 2006 Iowa Tobacco Control Conference, sponsored by the Iowa Department of Public Health’s [Division of Tobacco Use Prevention and Control](#), provided participants the opportunity to interact with and learn from national and state experts.

“The conference allowed community partnerships to come together and develop a consistent message and vision,” said Meredith Slaymaker, tobacco prevention specialist with the [Area Substance Abuse Council](#). “It was a great event for networking, learning and sharing ideas, which is always appreciated and beneficial.”

The conference featured presentations on a variety of topics. Vinnie DeMarco, president of the [Maryland Citizen’s Health Initiative](#) and assistant professor at the [Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health](#), shared his experiences with tobacco tax campaigns. Annie Tegen, program manager at the Americans for Nonsmokers’ Rights Foundation, explained the importance of building local support for smoke free campaigns.

Both days of the conference offered participants the flexibility to learn and talk about areas of tobacco control of interest to them. Roundtable discussions and breakout sessions covered topics such as working on tobacco-free policies with schools, health care facilities, restaurants and other businesses, increasing media exposure and recruiting and motivating youth and adult volunteers.

Whether participants were seasoned veterans in the fight against tobacco, concerned youth, or health professionals new to the subject matter, the conference offered something for everyone. “Being new to tobacco control, the conference gave me the big picture,” said Karla Shull, community tobacco coordinator at Cass County Memorial Hospital. “I had the opportunity to meet others, get ideas & rediscover the people and awesome work being done in Iowa.”

Another conference highlight involved a role reversal of sorts, as the adults orga-



JEL Executive Team Member Eddie Castillejos (right) shows Adrienne Geer from the Pottawattamie Tobacco-Free Coalition how to stencil messages on sidewalks using spray chalk. The youth-led anti-tobacco movement has won many awards for its approaches to community education.

nized their own street marketing event. Street marketing activities are more commonly associated with [Just Eliminate Lies](#) (JEL); Iowa’s youth-led anti-tobacco campaign.

Conference participants, using ideas from the popular JEL television commercials, roamed the downtown skywalk system pushing strollers with dolls wearing gas masks, and walked around in ghostly white face plates, representing those who “disappear” from diseases caused by tobacco products. Outside, participants used stencils and spray chalk to brand downtown sidewalks with “53K,” a reference to the 53,000 Americans who die from secondhand smoke each year.

To learn more about tobacco control community partnerships in your area, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/webmap/default.asp?map=tobacco.

** Rob Semelroth is a community health consultant in the IDPH Division of Tobacco Use Prevention and Control.*



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Advance notice helpful in planning NPHW activities

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agencies and other partners,” said Dr. Hansen. “This year’s theme is especially important as a greater sense of urgency to prepare has become a reality with the threat of an influenza pandemic.”

Dawn Gentsch, M.P.H., C.H.E.S., a 2007 NPHW work-group member from the University

prepare and respond to the needs of our vulnerable populations.”

Resources

A downloadable brochure is available from the APHA Web site www.apha.org/nphw/2007/ under the “Tools” menu. Included in the brochure are five full pages that

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of Iowa College of Public Health, stressed the importance of the week. “NPHW is an opportunity for public health practitioners in Iowa to inform the public of who we are and what we do,” Gentsch said. “The 2007 theme allows all sectors of public health to remind the public of what they can do in the event of an emergency and how to better

introduce the unique challenges of each targeted population and what they might do to prepare. There are also recommended activities for local public health agencies and other organizations.

IDPH plans to develop a Web site that features Iowa-specific information, news release templates and a calendar of events.



**TAKE
THE FIRST
STEP!**

More details will be announced once the site is available.

For more information, contact Joyce Allard at jallard@idph.state.ia.us or 515-281-7174.

* Joyce Allard is co-chair of the NPHW Iowa workgroup.

IDPH communications efforts receive national recognition

Ten communications efforts at the Iowa Department of Public Health were recently awarded a 2006 [National Public Health Information Coalition](#) (NPHIC) Award for Excellence in Public Health Communication.

Gold Award for Excellence

- *JEL (Just Eliminate Lies) Summit Poster*, Division of Tobacco Use Prevention and Control (TUPC)
- *Protect Iowa Health Guidebook*, Division of Acute Disease Epidemiology and Emergency Response (ADPER)

Silver Award for Excellence

- *JEL Know Campaign*, TUPC
- *Gambling’s Student Call for Help Radio Advertisement*, Division of Behavioral Health and Professional Licensure

- *JEL TV-March/April*, TUPC
- *JEL Summit Media Kit*, TUPC

Bronze Award for Excellence

- *Protect Iowa Health Campaign Launch Media Kit*, ADPER
- *Protect Iowa Health Internet Site*, ADPER
- *JEL 1000 Words E-zine Issue #3*, TUPC
- *Comprehensive Cancer Control Poster, “From Ackley to Zwingle,”* Division of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention

NPHIC is an independent organization of professionals sought after to improve America’s health through public health communications.



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Advancing Health Through the Generations

Barn Raising VI to feature national leaders

Healthy communities to be celebrated Aug. 2 and 3 at Drake University

The [Governor's Conference on Public Health: Barn Raising VI](#) will offer participants a rich menu of dynamic speakers, a chance to meet colleagues at a smoke-free reception, and an opportunity to display products and programs. The event, held every two years, is coordinated by the Iowa Department of Public Health. The 2007 gathering will take place Aug. 2 and 3 at Drake University in Des Moines. The theme is "Celebrating Healthy Communities."

Dr. Julie Gerberding, director of the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), will open the conference with a keynote address on healthy communities. Dr. Leonard Marcus, director of the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative at the [Harvard School of Public Health](#) will keynote the second day of the meeting, speaking on "Meta-Leadership: Incident without Precedent." In keeping with the Barn Raising VI theme, plans are underway to showcase outstanding Iowa community initiatives.

For more information, including a downloadable flyer and save-the-date postcard, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/bhpl/barn_raising.asp. Check regularly; the agenda and presenter information are updated frequently.



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The [Wellmark Foundation](#) has announced funding priorities for 2007 which may be of interest to public health agencies and partners in Iowa. They are depression, diabetes, end-of-life care and health literacy.

A meeting to review the 2007 RFP will be held Tues., Jan. 16 through the Iowa Communications Network. To view information online, including updates on funding opportunities and application materials, visit www.wellmark.com/foundation.

Iowa Department of Public Health

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