



# *Quick Reads*

Thomas Newton, MPP, REHS  
Director, Iowa Department of Public Health

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## **Smoking down 22 percent among adults**

Think of five smokers you knew in 2006. Chances are, at least one of them has quit. According to preliminary results of the 2008 [Iowa Adult Tobacco Survey](#), Iowa has experienced a 22 percent decrease in the number of adult smokers. (In 2006, 18 percent of adults smoked compared with 14 percent in 2008.) This is one of the most dramatic declines experienced by any state in recent years. For a fact sheet, visit [www.idph.state.ia.us/tobacco](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/tobacco) and look under "Adult Tobacco Surveys."

While behavior change of this kind is often the result of a number of factors, I find it especially encouraging that among former smokers, the most common reason for quitting (57 percent) was health. Armed with the knowledge of tobacco's ill effects on health, more smokers than ever have chosen to quit. This is due in no small part to the hard work of public health workers and partners across Iowa to educate the public and support policies that make us a healthier state.

Also good news in the survey is that 84 percent of current smokers in Iowa say they want to quit smoking. Please help us promote Iowa's helpline for quitting tobacco use, [Quitline Iowa](#). Iowans who call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) by Jan. 31 can get a four-week supply of nicotine replacement therapy gum and patches. After Jan. 31, two-week supplies will be available.

## **Modernization among IPHA advocacy priorities**

I am pleased to see that the [Iowa Public Health Association](#) (IPHA) has chosen to support the [Public Health Modernization Act](#) as one of their four advocacy priorities for this legislative session. As with other professional organizations, IPHA has been a strong partner as we move toward the modernization of the public health system in our state. To view a

statement regarding this important endorsement and step forward for public health in Iowa, visit [www.iowapha.org](http://www.iowapha.org) and click on "Advocacy."

### **Teacher shares success of BASICS program**

I recently received a success story from an elementary school teacher in Southeastern Iowa about one of our wellness programs, Building and Strengthening Iowa Community Support for Nutrition and Physical Activity. More commonly known as [BASICS](#), this program works with 18 partners across the state to provide nutrition education and unique social marketing efforts to reach out to food-assistance recipients and food-assistance-eligible populations. She writes:

"I have a young student in my class who has been diagnosed with autism. The student is very picky about what she eats; every day for nearly two months, she brought the exact same two food items to lunch. When the local BASICS representative came to our room for the first time this year I was anxious to see how this student would handle the sampling of different foods. She was very focused on the lesson of healthy foods and stayed on task throughout the lesson. When it was time to sample the foods, the student was excited to taste the new foods. She ate jicama, frozen grapes, and carrots and radishes with ranch dressing. She even wanted seconds. We were so excited we immediately contacted her mom and she too was excited! We are anxiously waiting for the BASICS coordinator to come to our classroom again!"

### **Update on health care reform wellness initiatives**

Last year's Health Care Reform Legislation ([HF 2539](#)) included several initiatives related to promoting wellness in Iowa. Since November, IDPH has been working with Governor Culver's Council on Physical Fitness and Nutrition. Progress has included work in revising the statewide comprehensive nutrition and physical activity plan, establishing and promoting a best practices internet site, and coordinating a governor's physical fitness and nutrition challenge. IDPH is also receiving input on the statewide comprehensive plan revisions from the Iowans Fit for Life Leadership Team and Partnership.

Another wellness initiative legislated by HF 2539 relates to the development of a tax credit for small businesses so they can create wellness activities and opportunities for their employees. Since November, a work group has developed recommendations for a tax credit that would apply to wellness programs with an assessment, evaluation and education component. The recommendations require further action from the Legislature to be implemented. The work group includes representation from the Departments of Public Health and Revenue, the Iowa Insurance Division, small business interest groups, wellness organizations and a consulting firm.

### **Bureau of Health Care Access launches new publication, Web site**

A new publication, the [Access Update](#), has just been developed for stakeholders, partners and grantees who work with the IDPH [Bureau of Health Care Access](#). Published every other

month, each issue will cover news, events, and useful grant-related information for health care professionals, hospitals, clinics and other health care related organizations. Coinciding with the launch of the newsletter, the bureau also made its Web page more user-friendly to allow visitors easier access to resources and important information. Check out the new Web site at [www.idph.state.ia.us/hpcdp/health\\_care\\_access.asp](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/hpcdp/health_care_access.asp). While there, click on the "Newsletter" tab. To join the newsletter mailing list, send a blank e-mail to [join-HCA@lists.ia.gov](mailto:join-HCA@lists.ia.gov).

### **"Kids Count" report highlights food assistance, unemployment**

A continued deterioration of economic indicators of child and family well-being has overshadowed gains made in other areas according to a new report, Iowa Kids Count 2007: Trends in the Well-Being of Iowa Children. The publication is produced and updated annually by the [Child and Family Policy Center](http://www.cfpciowa.org). This year's report indicates that while teen births, infant deaths and child deaths have decreased, and high school graduation and school test scores have improved, the percentage of people receiving food assistance and the percentage of people who were unemployed rose dramatically from 2000 to 2007. In addition, the percentages of Iowa children living in poverty and students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches both recorded substantial increases since the beginning of the decade. For a copy of the new report, call 515-280-9027 or write to [mcrawford@cfpciowa.org](mailto:mcrawford@cfpciowa.org).

### **Mark your calendar for conferences**

Plans are underway for two important upcoming conferences. The [2009 Iowa Public Health Conference](http://www.iowapha.org/Default.aspx?pageId=127969) will be held at April 7 & 8 at the Scheman Conference Center in Ames. For more information, visit [www.iowapha.org/Default.aspx?pageId=127969](http://www.iowapha.org/Default.aspx?pageId=127969). The following month, the Governor's Conference on Aging will be held at Hy-Vee Hall in downtown Des Moines. Dates are May 13 to May 15, with an additional day of intensives on Saturday, May 16. For more information, visit [www.state.ia.us/elderaffairs/living/conferences.html](http://www.state.ia.us/elderaffairs/living/conferences.html).

### **We want your best practices**

IDPH is committed to telling the citizens of Iowa about the good things public health is doing to make a difference. To do this, we want to highlight your best practices/success stories. Please send your ideas to Don McCormick at [dmccormi@idph.state.ia.us](mailto:dmccormi@idph.state.ia.us).

*To everyone in public health and all our partners—keep up the great work!*  
*Tom*