

PUBLIC HEALTH

ALWAYS WORKING FOR A SAFER AND HEALTHIER COMMUNITY



June, 2006
Issue 8

Oral Health Matters

For Whatcom County



Whatcom County Oral Health Coalition Partners:

- Bellingham Technical College
- Dental Office Managers' Association
- Dept. Social & Health Services
- Interfaith Community Health Center
- Lummi Tribal Health Center
- Madrona Medical Group
- Mt. Baker Dental Hygienists' Society
- Mt. Baker District Dental Society
- NW Regional Council
- Opportunity Council
- Readiness to Learn Consortium
- St. Joseph Hospital
- SeaMar Community Health Center
- Tooth Fairy Dental Hygiene Care
- Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare Access
- Whatcom County Health Department



Everyone Taking a Bite: Whatcom County Community Summit on Oral Health

June 9, 2006

Two years after the first Oral Health Summit, from which the Oral Health Coalition (OHC) was born, the second Community Summit was held on June 9, 2006. The theme was "Everyone Taking a Bite" with the primary purpose being to inspire more people to get involved with the OHC and reinvigorate current OHC members. Other goals of the Summit were to educate participants about the scope and importance of the issues, recognize achievements of the OHC, generate new ideas, and marshal community resources to support the work.

Following a buffet lunch, the 104 Summit participants heard opening remarks by County Executive, Pete Kremen; presentations about the OHC's history and successes by Jenny Shuler and Chris Phillips; a panel of consumers and providers facilitated by Rebecca Johnson; and presentations by guest speakers LeeAnn HoaglinCooper, Oral Health Consultant from the Snohomish Health District, and Jim Diers, former Director of Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods and author of *Neighbor Power*. The event concluded with closing remarks from Diane Lowry Oakes, former OHC Coordinator who now works for the Washington Dental Service Foundation.

After the presentations, Summit participants divided into five groups to discuss oral health issues and generate potential strategies for community action. The following themes emerged from the group discussions:

- Deliver basic prevention services through schools (e.g. fluoride varnish, swish 'n spit, sealants) and establish curriculum that includes information about dental hygiene, nutrition/diet, and the importance of oral health.
- Increase support for dentists to serve low-income patients by advocating for higher reimbursement rates for patients with Medicare/DSHS and/or create alternatives to reimburse dental professionals for serving low-income patients.
- Increase the delivery of less expensive, basic oral health services, and/or expand delivery of services by a wider range of providers (e.g., hygienists, visiting nurses, caregivers).
- Establish more avenues for disadvantaged people to access oral health care, such as increasing space for volunteer dentists at community health centers, expanding mobile services to target populations, and an urgent care clinic.
- Join forces with a wider spectrum of potential allies, and target specific messages to various audiences about disease prevention and easy ways to promote oral health (e.g. using Xylitol, avoiding pop & sports drinks).

The next steps for the OHC are to engage people in determining which strategies to pursue, and organizing the support, resources, and leadership to "take another bite."

The Donated Dentistry Project Has Begun!

The exciting news in Whatcom County is that there is now a new option available for low-income adults in urgent need of dental care. The Donated Dentistry Project (DDP) officially began serving Whatcom County on May 19, 2006. Dr. Curt Smith and the Washington State Dental Association spearheaded this project in collaboration with Interfaith Community Health Center and Mt Baker District Dental Society. Members of the Oral Health Coalition's Access Workgroup offered support throughout the planning and implementation phases.



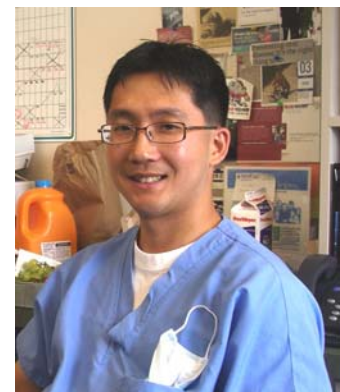
The DDP clinic operates on the third Friday and Saturday of each month from 9:00a.m.-1:00p.m. Interfaith houses the DDP and provides staffing and supplies, while community dentists volunteer their time. All patients served through the DDP must first be seen at Interfaith Dental Clinic for an exam, and then they are scheduled for an appointment with a DDP dentist. Over 40 dentists already have signed up to work a four-hour shift. Dr. Wicknick and the other Bellingham oral surgeons have volunteered to provide on-call support in case a patient urgently needs oral surgery. Patients pay for services based on Interfaith's standard sliding fee scale.



The DDP has held four clinic days now and the numbers clearly demonstrate the resources going into this project and the resulting benefits to the community. Twelve dentists, three dental assistants, and nine BTC interns have volunteered so far. Three dental assistants from Interfaith also were on staff for each DDP clinic, and played a critical role in the clinic's success. Forty-eight patients have received services at the DDP clinic. The dollar amount of the donated care that has been provided to date is \$11,343. For dentists, the DDP provides an opportunity for community service without impacting one's private practice, and for patients the DDP clinic offers relief from dental pain in one affordable clinic visit with no time in the waiting room.

The next DDP clinics will be July 21 & 22. If you are interested in becoming involved with the DDP, please contact Dr. Curt Smith at 734-1367, or Dr. Ralph Peterson at 384-6101.

We feel great doing this public service.
Dr. Choong Lee



Mark your calendars!

The next Oral Health Coalition meeting will be:
Tuesday, September 19, 2006
5:30-7:30 pm.
St. Luke's Health Education Center
3333 Squaticum Pkwy.

Dental Professionals Honored at Heart and Hands Award Ceremony

On a beautiful Sunday afternoon in April, around 350 people packed Bellingham High School cafeteria to enjoy ice cream sundaes while honoring community volunteers. Whatcom Volunteer Center's Heart and Hands Awards are a chance to say thank you to volunteers that make Whatcom County a special place. Among those honored were some of Whatcom County's dental professionals who give of their time, energy, and caring. This year's nominees included:

Volunteer Dentists for St. Joseph's Hospital Emergency Department

*Drs. Dennis Hoofnagle, Von Hanks,
Mary Elizabeth Bisese,
Robert Klein, Daniel Hovorka,
Marcus Fairbanks, (Scott Clough,
and Michael Crowley, not pictured)*



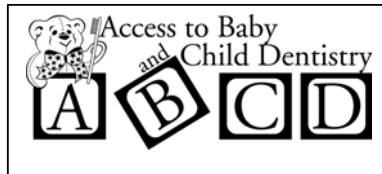
This group of dentists has rotated on-call duties for dental emergencies at the hospital for many years. This means that when they get a call, at any time of day or night, they respond to address the immediate need of the patient. This is inspiring because these dentists have been doing this over time, with no monetary compensation or community recognition. Thanks to these dentists for all they do for those in need!

Dee Simmons RDH

Dee deserves special thanks for starting Free Dental Sealant Day in Whatcom County and for making it such a success that it has turned into an annual event. Because of her dedication, children from low-income families have been able to receive the dental services they deserve. With Dee at the helm, the Mt. Baker Dental Hygienists' Society worked together with the Mt. Baker District Dental Society in 2005 & 2006 to serve 182 children. Dee is an inspiration to many because of the combination of her vision, her compassion, and her ability to get things done.

If you know of an oral health program or service that you would like highlighted in a future issue of Oral Health Matters, contact Maggi at 676-6762 ext. 32022 or mkriger@co.whatcom.wa.us

ABCD



CORNER



ABCD Certification Training Inspires BTC Students

On the morning of June 5, 2006, the conference center at Bellingham Technical College was abuzz with dental assisting students getting hands-on practice with pediatric patients. The children weren't sitting in a chair in the standard manner, but were lying in the laps of parents and students, in a knee-to-knee position being coached by Dr. Mary Elizabeth Bisese and her assistant, Dawana Brown. The children's average age was 2 ½ years old; the youngest was 7 months old with just the two teeth!

Maggi Kriger, ABCD Program Coordinator, began the training for dentists and students with an introduction to the ABCD Program. Dr. Bisese followed with an in-depth PowerPoint presentation focusing on "Specialized Dental Training in Oral Health for Infants and Toddlers." Topics included early childhood caries (ECC), preventive dental care, and "What do you do with an infant in your chair?" Dr. Bisese emphasized the critical role that dental assistants play in supporting family involvement in preventive oral health care at home and in the dental office.

Students reported that they learned a lot and loved the interactive experience of doing the "lift the lip exam" and fluoride varnish application with such young patients.

**The next ABCD Training is planned for fall 2006.
For more information call 676-6762 x32022
or e-mail mkriger@co.whatcom.wa.us**

What is the Access to Baby & Child Dentistry Program All About Anyway???

The ABCD program is designed to increase access to dental care for Medicaid-eligible children, birth to six, by linking children with ABCD dental offices. The program emphasizes enrollment by age one, preventive dental care visits, and a child friendly approach.

Some factors that contribute to the success of the ABCD model are: all families receive an orientation prior to referral to an ABCD dentist, with emphasis on keeping scheduled appointments and other barriers to care; ABCD dental offices have received extra training in working with young children, choose how many new patients they wish to accept, and are eligible for enhanced DSHS reimbursement and coverage. Additionally, the ABCD coordinator is available to assist dental offices and patients with any questions or difficulties that might arise.

Twenty-five ABCD dental practices provide services to ABCD children in Whatcom County. Since its inception in November 2000, over 5500 children have been enrolled in the Whatcom ABCD program! And yet 60% of Medicaid-eligible children under age six still do not have access to regular dental care. There is clearly a need for more ABCD dentists. For more info, or to enroll a child in ABCD, call 676-6762 x32022 or email mkriger@co.whatcom.wa.us

Words of Wisdom from Summit Speakers



Today we have come together once again to look at the problem, honor the good work that has been done, and consider what we need to do now to move forward. I encourage all of you to provide input and prepare to take action. Let today be another step forward in improving the health of our community.

- Pete Kremen, Whatcom County Executive

I am impressed with the energy and action that can happen in a community when the representatives of different groups work together for the same mission. We have done a lot to improve oral health in Whatcom County. I challenge you all to find a way to get involved, "take a bite".

- Jenny Shuler, Bellingham Technical College, Oral Health Coalition Chair



You can't do everything at the same time. In making a choice, you have to plant a seed and watch it grow. That is what we have done with oral health in the community.

- Chris Phillips, St. Joseph Hospital

Oral health care has to encompass all people in the community.

Oral health disease isn't just a disease of the poor.

- LeeAnn HoaglinCooper, Snohomish Health District



Think about a healthy community as your ultimate goal. Be open to solutions that can unite as broad a sector of the community as possible. The best path to oral health is a healthy community.

- Jim Diers, former Director of Seattle's Dept. of Neighborhoods



The challenge is how to take the oral health message to our community. This is hard work trying to change systems, but it is worth it because oral health disease is preventable. This community really is on the forefront.

- Diane Lowry Oakes, Washington Dental Service Foundation



Sincere Thanks to all who made the Summit Possible:

Summit Sponsors

- Mt. Baker Dental Hygienists' Society
- Mt. Baker District Dental Society
- Northwest Regional Council
- St. Joseph Hospital
- Whatcom Co. Health Dept.

Partners

- Bellingham Technical College
- DSHS Bellingham CSO
- Interfaith Coalition
- Interfaith Community Health Center
- Lummi Tribal Health Center
- Migrant Health Program
- Nooksack Tribal Health Center
- Opportunity Council
- SeaMar Community Health Center
- Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare Access
- Whatcom Co. Medical Society
- Whatcom Co. Readiness to Learn

Summit Planning Committee

- Patricia Anderson, Interfaith Community Health Center
- Felicia Boettger, WAHA
- Dr. Mark Brooks, SeaMar Community Health Center
- Dr. Rachael Hogan, SeaMar Community Health Center
- Maggi Kriger, Whatcom Co. Health Dept.
- Erica Larsen, Mt. Baker Dental Hygienists' Society
- Harriet Ludjin, Lummi Tribal Health Center
- Jenny Shuler, BTC
- Lesley Rigg, Northwest Regional Council
- Dee Simmons, Dental Hygienist
- Anita Stolpe, DSHS
- Dr. Sid Williams, SeaMar Community Health Center
- Shelly Zylstra, Northwest Regional Council

Supported by:

- Janet Davis, Whatcom Co. Health Dept.
- Chris Phillips, St. Joseph Hospital

Coordination & Facilitation

- Crossroads Consulting

Senior Advocates Speak at DOMA Meeting

Barbara Lancaster and Lesley Rigg of the Oral Health Coalition's Seniors Workgroup, were invited to speak at the May 31 meeting of the local Dental Office Managers' Association (DOMA). The 24 office managers present showed interest and compassion as Barb spoke about older adults with special needs and how to minimize distress and maximize positive outcomes of dental treatment. Barb's years of caring for her mother with dementia, and current experiences volunteering with Adult Day Health, plus her many years as a Dental Hygienist, made her presentation both moving and practical.

The questions and discussion that followed showed that DOMA members (many of whom had elderly relatives) understood the needs of an aging population and of people with dementia, and would love to see their professional colleagues get further training in meeting the oral health needs of seniors.

Copies of the Seniors Smiles brochure are available from Lesley Rigg at 738-2500 or can be downloaded at www.happyteeth.org

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