

PUBLIC HEALTH
ALWAYS WORKING FOR A SAFER AND
HEALTHIER COMMUNITY



August, 2004
Issue 3

**Whatcom County Oral Health
Coalition Steering Committee:**

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Opportunity Council

Chris Phillips
St. Joseph Hospital

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NW Regional Council

Marian Russell, RDH
Toothfairy Dental Hygiene Care

Jenny Shuler, CDA (Chair)
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Colleen White, RDH
Lummi Dental Clinic

Fredrick Wicknick, DMD
Oral Surgeon

Oral Health Matters

For Whatcom County

A publication of the Whatcom County Oral Health Coalition



Go to www.happyteeth.org
for more coalition information

Summer Coalition Picnic

Over thirty community members attended the summer meeting of the oral health coalition at Fairhaven Park on July 21st. Amid fried chicken and potato salad, members heard updates from coalition workgroups, shared upcoming oral health events, and discussed ideas about the work of the coalition. (See page 2)



Coalition Chair, Jenny Shuler CDA, welcomes members to the coalition picnic at Fairhaven Park

What You Can Do...

Please spread the word - if you know someone who would like to receive this newsletter, or become involved in coalition activities have them contact Diane at 676-4593 or dlowry@co.whatcom.wa.us

We Welcome Your Feedback and Ideas...

If you have any comments, ideas, or questions about this newsletter or the Whatcom Oral Health Coalition, please contact Diane at 676-4593 or dlowry@co.whatcom.wa.us

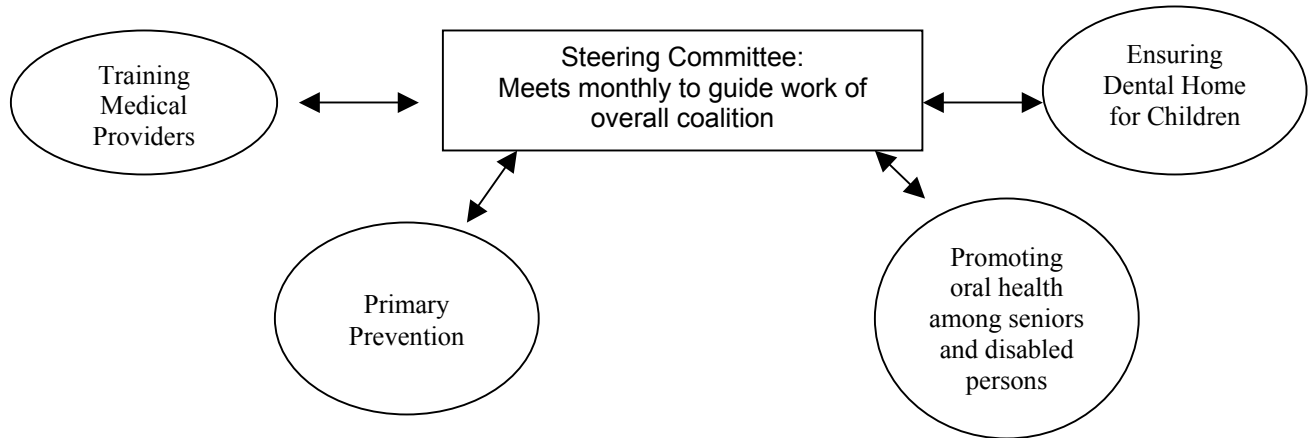
Did you know?

Fluorine (from which fluoride is derived) is the 17th most abundant element in the earth's crust.

Whatcom County Oral Health Coalition

4 Workgroups have been formed around our dual vision:

- 1) Primary prevention of dental decay and disease, and
- 2) Expanding access to dental services



Workgroup Updates

Training medical providers: All babies should have their teeth checked by a health professional by first birthday. Medical providers can play a significant role in ensuring all young children receive screening, anticipatory guidance, preventive treatment (such as fluoride varnish), and a referral to dental care when needed. This group is working to develop a systematic approach to encouraging and supporting medical providers in their role as oral health promoters.

Ensuring dental home for children: Local data shows that children in families with financial limitations are more likely to have tooth decay and less likely to receive dental care. This group is working on assessing the capacity of local dental resources to meet the oral health needs of children. This assessment will lead to identification of service gaps and resulting work to expand services to fill these gaps. The vision of this workgroup is: "Children, age birth through 18 years, have access to and take advantage of regular dental check-ups, prevention, education, and treatment by maintaining a consistent dental home."

Primary Prevention: Community water fluoridation has been ranked by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as one of the 10 greatest public health achievements of the last 100 years. Yet, only 6% of Whatcom County residents receive optimally fluoridated water. Raising the fluoride level in Bellingham's water supply to the recommended amount is cost-effective, safe, and beneficial for reducing dental decay and disease among residents of all ages and incomes.

Education for caregivers and screening for seniors: Many seniors and adults who are unable to care for their own teeth experience extremely poor oral health. Many also lack dental insurance or are Medicaid-insured and are unable to find a dental provider. This group is working to engage and educate caregivers regarding prevention and appropriate dental care for their adult patients.



Coalition Member Spotlight: Marian "Tooth fairy" Russell, RDH

"I spent my childhood in Seattle, before it was fluoridated. I have 11 crowns, 2 root canals and 9 fillings. 20 out of my 28 teeth are restored. Today, this dental work would cost about \$10,000.00. My dad, on the other hand, grew up in Texas in the 20's and 30's, where fluoride is put in the water by Mother Nature. His teeth are like rocks. At 84 not ONE tooth is restored, he has a history of no dental disease. The cost to him: \$0.

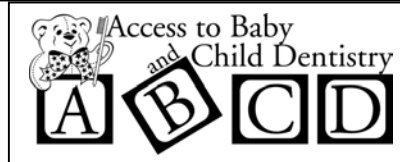
I began working in dental offices in 1968 during high school and graduated from dental hygiene school in 1981 in the Bay Area, which has had fluoride in the water for 26 years now. There, I worked as a dental hygienist in nursing homes, private offices, and as a public health dental hygienist in schools. I saw lots of teeth.

Twelve years ago I moved to lovely Bellingham. Here, I've worked as a dental hygienist in nursing homes, private practice and as a public health dental hygienist in schools. I've had 36 years of looking in people's mouths who live in areas that have fluoride in the drinking water, and here, where we don't.

I was appalled by the amount of decay I saw when I moved here. I can tell you, you NEVER see the kind of mouths you see in Whatcom County that you see in an area with fluoride in the water. I can look at someone's x-rays and determine that they grew up here, due to the amount of decay and /or restoration in their teeth. With fluoride in the water, you don't see bombed out teeth, you don't see toddlers with decay, or seniors in nursing homes with rampant decay, where every single tooth has a black hole. To talk about getting people dental care without putting fluoride in the water is like putting your finger in the dike of dental disease.

In Bellingham we have soft water and no fluoride, which is particularly bad for teeth. I am here to tell you, with my 36 years of looking at teeth in all these settings that fluoride in the water benefits ALL ages. Almost 70% of people in the US have the healthy benefit of fluoride in the water, why not us too?"

ABCD



CORNER



ABCD Program is going strong!

ABCD is a great example of how collaboration among committed groups and individuals can make a difference. ABCD depends on participation & support from local dental offices in order to serve children, birth to six years, with DSHS Medicaid coverage. Our local health department and dental society are committed to ensuring the continuation of this successful program. While start-up funding from Washington Dental Service Foundation has ended, Whatcom County Health Department has secured funding to continue in its administrative leadership role, and Mt. Baker District Dental Society has already contributed \$1000 to program support for Whatcom ABCD in 2004.

Thank-you ABCD Dental Offices and Supporting Partners!

as of 8/01/04

4400

children have been
enrolled in ABCD...

3299

children have had an
ABCD dental visit...

2122

have had at least two
ABCD dental visits...

Less than

5%

no-show average
reported

If you know of an oral health program or service that you would like highlighted in a future issue of Oral Health Matters, contact Diane at 676-4593 or dlowry@co.whatcom.wa.us

Coalition Members: Who You Are, What You Bring...

Diverse Membership

Dentists
Dental Hygienists
Dental Assistants
Physicians
Public Health Nurses
Oral Surgeon
Pediatician
City Council Member
Readiness to Learn Coordinators
Dental Access Program Coordinators
School Board Member
Dental Assistant Instructor
Director of Childcare Referral
DSHS Supervisor
Manager of Dental Clinic
Mobile Clinic Managers
Washington Dental Service Trustees
Community Health Manager
Newcomer to Bellingham
Mobile Dental Clinic Manager
School Nurses
Chemical dependency professional

Strong Linkages

Bellingham Technical College
Bellingham and Whatcom County Schools
Dep't of Social and Health Services/MAA
Interfaith Coalition
Interfaith Community Health Center
Lummi Tribal Health
Madrona Medical Group
Mobile Dental Care Practices
Mt Baker Dental Hygiene Society
Mt. Baker District Dental Society
Nooksack Tribal Clinic
Northwest Regional Council
Opportunity Council
Private Practice Dental Offices
Sea Mar Community Health Center
St. Joseph Hospital
Washington Dental Service Foundation
Whatcom County Health Department

Many Assets

Frequent contact with community with dental needs
Experience serving high-risk populations
Linkage to statewide dental efforts
Strong dedication to improving oral health
Abundance of experience serving the community

Whatcom County Health Department
P.O. Box 935
Bellingham, WA 98227

