Health Department Takes Aim at Youth Violence

The Health Department has been selected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to participate in a five-year youth violence prevention demonstration project. The funding is part of the CDC’s national initiative entitled “Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere (STRYVE) Through Local Public Health Leadership.”

Although not always treated as such, youth violence is a public health problem that affects the health and well-being of the entire community. This grant will be an opportunity to develop and test programs and policies that will prevent youth from engaging in violence.

“Once young people join a gang and embrace that lifestyle, it’s very difficult and expensive to intervene and change their life course,” says Dr. Hugh Stallworth, Monterey County Health Officer and Project Director. “Prevention keeps them from going down that path and directs them towards the path of contributing to this community.”

As part of the grant, the Department will enhance and expand the prevention component of the existing “Salinas Comprehensive Strategy for Community-wide Violence Reduction,” written by members of the Community Alliance for Safety and Peace (CASP). Evaluated strategies that prove effective will be added to the Salinas Plan and shared with other regions of Monterey County experiencing high rates of youth violence.
Community-based organizations and governmental agencies will be invited to join a planning process that identifies strategies to address problems related to youth violence such as truancy, parenting skills, access to drugs and the lack of meaningful afterschool activities. Participating organizations will receive technical assistance in evaluation and grant writing to ensure the sustainability of successful projects.

“We feel that we can make a difference,” said Linda McGlone, M.P.H. and Project Coordinator. “It’s our goal to find out what works best in our community and then help our community partners sustain those efforts.”

Monterey County Children Create Colorful, Healthy Messages

Usually it’s your mom saying things such as “cover your cough” or “stay home when you are sick.”

The Monterey County Health Department provided a colorful turnabout of that stereotype, as it held its second annual Stay Healthy Poster Contest for children in Kindergarten through 8th grade. The children were invited to use their artistic talents to create posters showcasing behaviors that help people stay healthy.

“The children captured health messages with imagination and color,” says Dr. Hugh Stallworth, Monterey County Health Officer. “It is my hope that the children’s messages will remind all of us to take some simple steps to keep our community healthy.”

As part of the contest, students picked one of the following themes: wash your hands, cover your cough, stay home when you are sick or eat healthy. The winning designs are featured in the 2011 – 2012 Stay Healthy Calendar, which is now available from the Health Department. Three of the winning designs have been reproduced as posters and one as a handy magnet.

This year’s winners of the Stay Healthy Poster Contest are:
• Alyssa Pena Ceja – 5th grade, Salinas “Wash Your Hands”
• Christopher Paghasin – 7th grade, Seaside “Stay Home When You Are Sick”
• Suzette Plumley – 8th grade, Salinas “Cover Your Cough”
• Jennifer de Leon - 8th grade, Gonzales “Eat Healthy” (this artwork will be used to make a magnet)

The calendar will also feature the winner of the Snapshots of Health contest, Hannah Ray, a 6th grader from Santa Catalina School.

Election Outreach Staff Staying Busy as Election Day Nears

The Elections Department and its staff have been busy holding voter registration trainings, attending voter registration events, training personnel to manage student election activities, and utilizing speaking engagements to discuss election related issues throughout the county.

On Thursday, September 8th, Registrar of Voters Linda Tulett addressed the Stillwater Club in Pebble Beach. Speaking before a group of 100 – 150 retired lawyers, doctors, business executives and members of the military, Tulett came armed to speak on a variety of topics affecting voting and election officials. However, her first topic – California’s Voter Registration System: checks and balances and protections against risks to the ballot box generated so many questions and comments that she will have to leave other issues for a return visit!

Other outreach efforts this month:

• Thursday, September 15th - the Department trained a small group of voters from Greenfield on the rules and process for assisting people to register to vote. The City may be looking at two upcoming ballot issues in the near future, for which voter registration needs may increase

• Friday, September 16th - outreach staff attended the annual Constitution Day event at Hartnell College and had a successful day. At least 25 new voters were registered and 20 Poll Worker applications from students interested in serving the voters on Election Day were received
Monday, September 19th - the Registrar of Voters attended the Carmel Foundation for the Men’s Discussion Group to review voting trends and discuss California’s voter registration process and voting systems

Wednesday, September 21st - two of the Department’s program managers met with key California State University Monterey Bay staff to plan the student registration and voting activities for the coming elections

When not on the outreach ‘circuit,’ it’s business as usual for Election staff preparing the ballot. This week, the department finalized all drafts of the 42 different official ballot types and their corresponding voter guides based upon all documents filed with the Department. The next step is to have the printer create the official proofs so the ballot can be proofed again, one more time, before the ballots can be printed on official ballot stock approved by the Secretary of State. The first voters to be mailed official materials are eligible military and overseas voters – their ballots are mailed in excess of two-weeks prior to all other materials since it can take much longer to reach their overseas destination.

The Department is also busy recruiting poll workers, attempting to find more than 500 people who can be trained and ready to serve on Election Day this November. There are 102 precincts with ballot issues; each must have no less than four workers and must include bilingual speakers and one specifically to manage the accessible voting machines throughout the day. The County’s Employee Election Official Program is a key program that assists the County in providing direct customer service and meeting the needs of the County’s electorate under federal and state law. An announcement with sign-up information for this program will be out within the week.

Important dates to remember! Monday, October 10th is the first day of Early Voting at the Department; Tuesday, October 11th is the first day vote by mail ballots will hit the US mail stream (Monday is a Federal holiday, the post office will not be open); and Monday, October 24th is the last day to register to vote for the November 2011 Election.