The Express
A biweekly publication
Indiana State Department of Health
"Working for Hoosier Health – a Lifetime Investment"
Friday, February 6, 2004

"X Marks the Spot" launched in Delaware County

Residents of Delaware County could be on their way to better heart health with a new, community-wide health initiative entitled "X Marks the Spot." The campaign is aimed at promoting physical activity and increasing awareness of metabolic syndrome, which is sometimes referred to as "Syndrome X."

Health officials report that adults with metabolic syndrome are twice as likely to have heart problems, and more than three times as likely to develop diabetes. Syndrome X is defined as having three or more of the following conditions:

- Fat around the stomach (the "spot" in "X Marks the Spot")
- High levels of triglycerides (bad cholesterol)
- Low levels of HDL (good cholesterol)
- High blood sugar
- High blood pressure

The program encourages participants to walk 10,000 steps per day and decrease their daily intake of calories by 100. Program participants will use a pedometer to track how many steps they take daily. This effort is based on the walking model of the America on the Move™ steps program, which involves increasing activity and decreasing calories to improve health.

Photo by Daniel Axler

"X Marks the Spot" walkers on January 18.

"We decided to focus on Syndrome X, an important cluster of factors that impact heart health," said John Peterson, M.D., a Delaware County family practice physician. Dr. Peterson is a member of the Delaware County Health Department board and is also a participant in Living Healthy.

"Information on Syndrome X, or metabolic syndrome, is everywhere in medical literature," said Dr. Peterson. "It is clear that the syndrome is a precursor of cardiovascular diseases."

He says that studies show that decreasing their waist measurement has a direct correlation in decreasing or eliminating cardiovascular risk factors.

"So when we say, 'X Marks the Spot,' the spot we are talking about is the waistline," said Dr. Peterson.

State Health Commissioner Greg Wilson, M.D., participated in a news conference in Delaware County on January 6 to unveil the new program and highlight Indiana residents' major health risk behaviors.

See WALK– Page 2

Go Red for Women on February 6

This year during February -- American Heart Month -- the American Heart Association has launched its Go Red for Women campaign to help raise awareness of cardiovascular disease and women, and has named February 6 as National Wear Red for Women Day.

As part of the Go Red for Women campaign, the American Heart Association is asking individuals to wear red on February 6, both as a symbol of the power women have over their own health and to show support for those whose lives have been affected by cardiovascular disease.

According to the American Heart Association, cardiovascular disease will claim the life of one woman per minute, making it the number one cause of death for women. Of these women, 63 percent will die suddenly with no symptoms.

"There are actions that a woman may take to help prevent heart disease and stroke," said Barb Levy Toby, director of the Office of Women's Health at the State Department of Health. "Making women aware of the risk of cardiovascular disease is an important first step."

On February 5, a Go Red for Women health fair took place from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the lobby of the Emmis Building in downtown Indianapolis. The Office of Women's Health was on hand to offer free bone density screenings.

"Heart disease and stroke claim more women's lives each year than the *next seven causes of death combined*," said Levy Toby. "We hope many people will show their support on February 6 and wear red."

For further information on Go Red for Woman Day or on heart disease and stroke, go to the American Heart Association's Web site at: http://www.americanheart.org/women or call 1-888-MY-HEART.

Women who do so can receive a complimentary Heart Healthy Tool Kit with tips and information.

American Heart Association®
Go Red™ for women

Macy's and Pfizer are the national sponsors of the Go Red For Women campaign

Cub Scouts honor MLK with "Spirit of Giving"

The "Spirit of Giving" brought seven members of Cub Scout Pack 200 to the Indiana State Department of Health offices at 2 North Meridian on Friday, January 16.

The boys donated blankets, comforters, quilts, and pillows to help the agency's efforts to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday through acts of community service.

The bedding was accepted by State Health Commissioner Greg Wilson, M.D. and Tasha Smith-Bonds, Office of Minority Health.

"The purpose of the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday is to celebrate the life of Dr. King by encouraging Hoosiers to engage in community service projects as part of the King Holiday commemoration," said Smith-Bonds.

As part of this "Spirit of Giving," the Office of Minority Health at the State Department of Health started a collection of new and gently used bedding for the Wheeler Mission and the Holy Family Mission.

With the help of the scouts' donation, the State Department of Health staff collected 22 boxes of bedding to be donated to the missions.

Photo by Daniel Axler

Cub Scouts from Pack 200 sit by donated bedding.Third from right is MaliVai Morgan, son of Cathy Archey-Morgan in the HIV/STD Division. Standing in back, from left to right, are Tasha Smith-Bonds, Office of Minority Health; State Health Commissioner Greg Wilson, M.D.; and Cub Scout Pack 200 leader Ken Stokes.

Delaware County walks for better heart health

(continued from page 1)

"'X Marks the Spot' is a good example of a positive public health initiative working at the community level that can improve the health and well-being of Hoosiers and save lives," said Dr. Wilson.

According to Bob Jones, Delaware County Health Department Administrator, in order to focus on walking – the main component of the program – there will be a series of five monthly community-wide walks. The first walk was held on January 18 at the Ball State Arena.

Future walks will take place at:

- 8:00 a.m. on February 21 at the Muncie Mall
- 9:00 a.m. on March 13 at the Saint Patrick's Day Parade
- 2:00 p.m. on April 18 at the Cardinal Greenway
- 8:00 a.m. on May 22 at the YMCA in Muncie

Jones says that in conjunction with these walks, there will also be opportunities for individuals to buy low-cost pedometers, to measure their waistlines to track progress, and to receive health screenings and help with goal setting. Participants will also be encouraged to reduce or eliminate tobacco use.

"X Marks the Spot" is sponsored by Living Healthy, a collaborative of 13 local organizations, including the Delaware County Health Department.

The group was convened and is managed by TEAMwork for Quality Living. This nonprofit organization focuses on helping individuals and local organizations to work together to improve quality of life in Delaware County.

Photo by Daniel Axler

"X Marks the Sport" participants register for the walk in Muncie on January 18.

The Express
A biweekly publication

The *Indiana State Department of Health Express* is a biweekly publication for ISDH employees and stakeholders. Words in blue are links that you can access directly if you read the *Express* on-line. To submit news items, call (317) 233-7090 or send information to: ISDH *Express*, Office of Public Affairs, 2 N. Meridian St., Section 6G, Indianapolis, IN 46204-3003. Inquiries should be directed to:

Jennifer Dunlap, Editor
Telephone (317) 233-7090
Fax: (317) 233-7873
jdunlap@isdh.state.in.us
http://www.statehealth.IN.gov

Margaret Joseph, Director of Public Affairs

Gregory A. Wilson, M.D.
State Health Commissioner

Liz Carroll, J.D.
Deputy State Health Commissioner

Officials prepare for bioterrorism with tabletop exercises

State and local public health and emergency response officials dealt with a deadly outbreak of pneumonic plague last month in Lafayette. Fortunately, it was just an exercise and not the real thing.

Approximately 100 people attended the two days of Strategic National Stockpile Tabletop Exercises on January 21 and 22 at the Tippecanoe County Fairgrounds.

The Strategic National Stockpile, or SNS, is a cache of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies under federal control that can be requested and used by a state during a terrorist attack, natural disaster, or other public health emergency.

The exercises were planned and organized by officials from the Indiana State Department of Health, the Tippecanoe County Health Department, and Titan Corporation.

In addition to many participants from the Indiana State Department of Health, the exercise also included several officials from local health departments throughout the state and a number of emergency response agencies in Tippecanoe County, as well as representatives from other state agencies, including the State Emergency Management Agency and the Counter-Terrorism and Security Council.

Indiana State Department of Health SNS Coordinator Bruce Farrar says the exercises were profitable.

"They pointed out what direction we need to go in the future," Farrar said. "They showed us what we are doing right, and where changes might need to be made."

Tippecanoe County Health Department Administrator Ron Cripe echoed those sentiments and also pointed out some additional benefits.

"The exercises were beneficial not only because we are being proactive," Cripe said, "but the relationships we are developing with other local and state agencies are just as important."

Pam Pontones, Epidemiology Resource Center, seated in the center with a blue blazer, works with fellow participants on January 21.

He said the exercises can help build on existing efforts to strengthen those relationships and improve communication.

The first day of the exercises focused on the initial response of local and state agencies to a potential bioterrorism event, while day two focused on warehouse operations.

On both days, participants were divided into several different table groups, like policy and decision-making, public and mental health, and warehousing. They were presented with hypothetical scenarios, or modules, and were then given the opportunity to discuss how they would react to the situations. In this case, the overall scenario dealt with the intentional release of pneumonic plague by a militia group at a local mall during the holiday season. After the discussion period, representatives from each table would then share with all of the participants the key issues and plans that were discussed at their respective tables, and answer questions. Non-participating observers were also allowed to walk around during the discussion periods and listen in on the conversations.

The exercises were eye-opening to many, as the table groups discussed a wide variety of issues and concerns ranging from patient care to security to dealing with the media.

"They demonstrated that coordination and cooperation among local, state, and federal agencies are paramount or things can fall apart in a hurry" Farrar said.

Two more days of tabletop exercises are planned for March, also in Tippecanoe County. These tabletop exercises will lead up to a full-scale exercise that is being planned for this summer.

Earned Income Tax Credit could save you money at tax time

As 2004 begins, Hoosiers must once again face tax due date, April 15. Who would have thought that filing your taxes could be a chance for you to *save* money?

Many people do not realize that they may be eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a refundable federal income tax credit for working individuals and families with low incomes. Individuals may also be eligible for the state Child Tax Credit (CTC) and the EITC from Indiana.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) estimates that 19 percent of eligible Hoosiers are not claiming the Earned Income Tax Credit. Indiana Department of Revenue staff say that this lack of participation could be either because taxpayers haven't heard of the credit, or they don't know how to apply for it.

The EITC could make a substantial difference to a working family, since it could provide up to $4,140 to those with incomes up to $34,178.

To qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit or the Child Tax Credit, individuals must file taxes and fill out the appropriate tax forms. For instructions and further information on filing, call 1-800-829-1040, stop by any local IRS office, or visit the state Family and Social Services Administration's Web site at: http://www.in.gov/fssa/eitc.

Indiana Department of Revenue staff say there is a three-year retroactive claim if individuals have not used the Earned Income Tax Credit or the state Child Tax Credit in the past.

In addition to the possibility of a tax credit, individuals who are eligible for the EITC can also have their taxes prepared for **FREE** at a local Volunteer Income Tax Assistance site. Hopefully, this will take some of the fear out of doing taxes and will encourage more individuals to take advantage of the EITC.

Fighting the cost of obesity

Not many diets can survive the temptations of the holiday season, and jeans that fit two months ago are a bit tight in January. We laugh and joke and use terms like "winter weight" but in reality, weight is a serious issue for Indiana.

In fact, a 2001 state health survey showed that 24.5 percent of people in Indiana were reported as being obese. Unsurprisingly, the cost of obesity is much higher than buying a new pair of jeans that fit.

A paper published on January 23 in the national journal *Obesity Research* estimated that Indiana spent approximately $1.6 billion on obesity-related medical expenditures in 2003. The nation as a whole spent approximately $75 billion.

State officials say that the Indiana Chronic Disease Management Program, which was established in 2003, can help fight the high cost of obesity in Indiana. The program is a joint initiative of the state's Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), which manages Medicaid, and the Indiana State Department of Health.

"Chronic disease accounts for 75 percent of the health care costs in Indiana," said State Health Commissioner Gregory Wilson, M.D. "That is what makes this program so important. By focusing on obesity as a risk factor for chronic diseases like diabetes, asthma, and cardiovascular disease, we hope we can save lives and reduce long-term disabilities."

The paper, which was written by researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and RTI International, says that Indiana is estimated to have spent $522 million in Medicaid money on obesity-related medical costs, which was 15.7 percent of the state's total Medicaid expenditures.

FSSA's Medicaid Director Melanie Bella cautions that the findings rely only on survey data and do not include analysis of actual claims. But she says the numbers show the need for Indiana to take action to combat obesity.

"Fighting obesity and reducing chronic disease through the Indiana Chronic Disease Management Program is an investment in all Hoosiers," said Bella. "Investing in prevention now is the key to improving health and controlling the costs of treating chronic disease-related illnesses."

A recent national study by RAND Health reports that people aged 30 to 49 who were disabled in their ability to care for themselves or perform other routine tasks increased by more than 50 percent from 1984 to 2000. The study says that the number one reason for the significant increase in disability is obesity.

Obesity is defined as having a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or greater. A normal BMI is within the range of 20-25, and from 25-29 a person is considered overweight.

For more information on calculating BMI, go to the State Department of Health Web site at http://www.statehealth.in.gov, select "Public Health Programs," then "Diabetes,"and then "Consensus Guidelines" at the top of the page. Click on the link to BMI information at the bottom of the page.

Tippecanoe County Health Officer Wendell Riggs, M.D. retires

Photo by Daniel Axler

(left) Wendell Riggs, M.D., Tippecanoe County health officer, speaks at his retirement reception at the Tippecanoe County Health Department in Lafayette on Friday, January 23, 2004.

Photo by Daniel Axler

(right) State Health Commissioner Greg Wilson, M.D. honors Tippecanoe County Health Officer Wendell Riggs, M.D. with a State Health Commissioner's award.