

OEHA News

Volume
1, Issue 3

October 2004

Details inside on:

- Handwash Education Trailer*
- OEHA Conference*
- Scholarship Auction*
- Awards Banquet*
- Norovirus*
- *First Human WNV case in Oregon*

Inside this issue:

- Clean Team 1
- WNV in Oregon 1
- Norovirus 2
- Conference Report 3
- WNV 3

OEHA CLEAN TEAM

The OEHA CLEAN TEAM was on the move this summer. The first stop was the Marion County Fair and then onto Linn, Coos, Klamath, Douglas, and Lane County Fairs before returning to Salem for the Oregon State Fair. This mobile education facility graphically demonstrates the importance of clean hands. The facility utilizes a glow product and an ultra violet light to demonstrate whether you have washed your hands adequately. Built with Rotary funds, OEHA owns, schedules and is responsible for the mobile hand wash trailer. Local Rotary Clubs have been given the opportunity to assist in staffing the handwash trailer and promote their local Rotary Club while giving out "Clean Team" stickers. OEHA, Rotary and the Oregon Fair Board Association have endorsed this joint project.

The Clean Team facility is an 8 x 18 foot trailer built with six sinks, ultra violet lights, three doors, and stabilizer jacks, awning, vents, lights and outside theme which includes the Rotary Wheels with "District 5110 Rotary Clean Team" logo and the OEHA logo on three walls. The 4 step clean team challenge walks participants through the

steps of contaminating your hands with "glow germs", observing the contamination under black lights, washing the hands and checking how well the hands were washed.

For the first year of use, over 60,000 fair goers took the handwash challenge. Comments like, "this is great", "what a wonderful way to teach handwashing", "this is what I've been trying to tell the kids", "this really helps out our fair" and "tell me about OEHA" were but a few of the positives expressed.

Ron Baker, Mike Christman, Dave Bussen and many other OEHA members have promoted and nurtured this project. We hope a second unit can be built before the 2005 fair year. We had several weekends where we had two or three requests to use the handwash facility, but could only accommodate one.

To schedule the trailer contact Bob Anderson, RS; Marion County Environmental Health; 2111 Front Street, NE #3-109; Salem, OR 97303-6621; 503-588-5408 bobanderson@co.marion.or.us

First Human Case of West Nile Virus in Oregon

In early August, public health officials confirmed the first appearance of West Nile Virus (WNV) in Oregon.

As of October 22, 2004, WNV has been identified in Grant, Jackson, Josephine, Lane, Linn, Benton, Crook and Malheur counties. The majority of cases are in horses (32) and birds (23),

with five human cases, four in Malheur and one in Jackson counties.

The first North American case of WNV infection occurred in New York in 1999. To date, more than 14,000 human cases and 586 deaths from WNV have been reported in the U.S. on September 10, 2004.

Norovirus

Over the last two years the public health system in the United States has increasingly focused attention on potential bio-terror agents like botulism, bubonic plague and smallpox. These deadly agents grab the attention of the public, media and lawmakers, yet remain largely theoretical threats. Meanwhile, the lowly norovirus is with us on a daily basis generating few headlines but causing more illness and some death than bio-terrorism has so far.

Characterized by the rapid onset of vomiting and/or diarrhea, with a 24-48 hour duration, most of our society is intimately familiar with the effects of this organism. It is incredibly easy to transmit via the fecal-oral route, and is often referred to as “stomach flu” or “the 24-hour bug”. While the illness is self-limiting, and most cases resolve without intervention, the ease of transmission is what makes it a major concern.

The Centers for Disease Control in 1999 identified norovirus as a major food safety concern, with two thirds of all foodborne illnesses, one third of all foodborne-related hospitalizations and seven percent of all deaths attributable to norovirus. What norovirus may lack in lethality it makes up for in sheer volume of victims, an estimated 23 million cases annually. More disturbing is the fact that we may still only be seeing the tip of the iceberg in terms of the impact norovirus has on society.

Ten years ago, the Norwalk-like virus was considered a minor player in the communicable disease world. The lack of a practical test prior to 1997 severely limited the ability to assess its true impact. Technological advances and greater awareness in the CD community have created an ex-

traordinary example of the more you look, the more you find. Many outbreaks that in the past would have been of “unknown etiology” are being confirmed as norovirus, and it increasingly appears to be a question of when, not if, a nursing home, retirement center, school or other closed population gets hit with an outbreak.

Oregon’s Communicable Disease Summary for 2002 lists 93 outbreaks, and almost half were attributed to norovirus (38 confirmed, 5 suspected). Preliminary data for 2003 lists more than 130 disease outbreaks in Oregon, 69 of which were caused by norovirus, with at least a third occurring in care facilities.

The emergence of norovirus highlights the need for both new policies and a return to one of the most basic concepts in Public Health, education.

Current communicable disease rules dictate that food workers diagnosed with certain diseases be excluded from work, but norovirus is rarely diagnosed in a clinical setting. Even if infective individuals do not work when they are ill, they are back on the job as soon as symptoms resolve, even though they will continue to shed the virus for an unknown period of time (usually for two weeks). This is why policies on ill employees returning to work must be re-evaluated.

Residential care facilities face the same concerns around contagious food workers, but with an additional twist. The people who serve the meals in these facilities are also the people who clean up after ill residents, so they may transmit norovirus even if they are not infectious themselves. This type of employee-facilitated

Continued page 5

*CDC identified
“norovirus as a
major food safety
concern.”*



Scholarship Auction Results

One of the highlights of the Annual Education Conference is the Scholarship Auction. In addition to supporting future Environmental Health professionals by helping with tuition costs, the auction was a fun finale to the evening.

The 2004 scholarship auction was very successful. Members and friends of the organization donated a variety of fine wines and other interesting items. Thanks to all the participants, we were able to raise \$1,525 to support the educational pursuits

of future environmental health professionals. A delinquent \$70 was collected (yes, you know who you are,) from the 2003 auction. Sadly, no applications were submitted for this year’s scholarship award. Let’s get the word out for 2005. Encourage students preparing for careers in environmental health to apply for next year’s award. Applications can be found on-line at www.oregoneha.org. Click on scholarship information, and then click on “application” in the last line. Let’s get the word out this year.

OEHA 2004 Awards

OEHA is proud to introduce the deserving professionals and happy to highlight the accomplishments of this years Award recipients.

Michael Christman, OEHA '04 -'05 president, presented The Sanitarian of the Year Award, awarded to the Sanitarian or Environmental Health Specialist who consistently exemplifies the principles and ideals of the Environmental Health profession, to David Bussen. The Vern Reiersen Meritorious Service Award, awarded in recognition of a career of serving and promoting the Oregon Environmental Health Association and the field of Environmental Health, was given to Lila Wickham,.

Sanitarian of the Year Award Recipient

David Bussen, REHS, Douglas County Environmental Health Director.

David has worked as a Sanitarian in Oregon since the end of '73. He attended his first OEHA Conference at Diamond Lake in '74. Since that time he has been a member and participant for OEHA in many capacities over the years; as committee member, committee chairman, newsletter editor, secretary, treasurer, vice president and as 2001-2003 President.

David has been active in CLEHS, CHLO and many state committees. Over the last year he was a member of the BT Assurance Committee which helped set the criteria for the counties and state to meet the CDC focus area requirements for grant funding. He has been a CLHO Executive Board member for two terms (1997-1999, 2001-2003).

David is supportive of OEHA promoting his staff to participate in OEHA & allowing his staff to attend the Annual Education Conferences. He has been a great asset to his community, the state of Oregon, and to the profession of Environmental Health/Public Health.

"The Vern Reiersen"

Meritorious Service Award Recipient

Lila Wickham, RN , Multnomah County Environmental Health Director.

Although Lila is not a registered sanitarian herself, she is manager of the Multnomah Environmental Health Division and continues to support the operations, activities, & mission of OEHA through allowing her staff to participate in OEHA & attend the Annual Education Conference.

Lila was chairperson of CLEHS (2002 & 2003) and was lead in the facilitated workshops to improve communications & coordination between DHS & county environmental health managers. She coordinated efforts for development of decision protocol for both CLEHS & DHS.

Lila is active in CLHO and involved in CLHO committees; BT Grant Award Writing, BT Emergency Planning Assurance, and CLHO Standards to mention a few.

Lila was also involved with the development of the food handler training rule revision and evaluation process with/between DHS, industry, and Local Health Departments.

Congratulations to Dave and Lila

2004 OEHA Award Winners

David Bussen
*Sanitarian of
The Year*

Lila Wickham
Meritorious Service

2004 OEHA Conference Report

The 2004 OEHA Annual Education Conference was held in Hood River, home town of Michael Christman, OEHA '04 -'05 president. What a beautiful area, offering all the golf and windsurfing you could handle, with the Columbia Gorge just outside the conference center.

Grant Higginson, DHS Health Officer, as keynote speaker, initially set the tone of the conference by discussing how recent events in Oregon have affected the organization and function of public health services and the future of public

health. Speakers delivered over 15 exceptional educational sessions on topics ranging from terrorism and food security to West Nile Virus and Bovine Spongiform Encephalitis in the Pacific Northwest. And lets not forget the wonderful social events, the Full Sail Brewery tour, awards banquet and scholarship auction.

We were honored to have eight retired Sanitarians attend as guests during our awards banquet. Each retiree was introduced, chatted about old public health stories, and received an official OEHA coffee cup signed by each retiree.



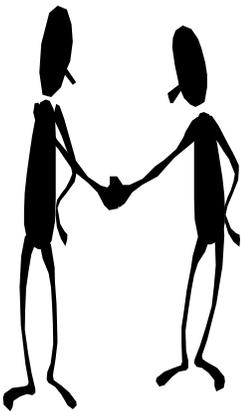
Oregon Environmental Health Association
621 W. Madrone
Roseburg, OR 970000

Online at
OregonEHA.org

PROCLAMATION

Sanitarian/Environmental Health Specialist Day

May 4, 2004



Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski designated TUESDAY, May 4, 2004 with a signed proclamation as the fourth annual Sanitarian/Environmental Health Specialist Day in Oregon recognizing the vital public service provided by the Registered Sanitarian and Environmental Health Specialist as critical to the continued health of the citizens of Oregon. It is appropriate to be formally recognized because our work is primarily preventive in nature and our ac-

complishments in protecting the public from negative health effects are difficult to see and measure.

The signed Sanitarian/Environmental Health Specialist Day certificate (along with original copies of its three predecessors) and award plaques listing all previous recipients were on display during the Awards Banquet.

Norovirus

Continued from page 2

person-to-person outbreak is increasingly common in senior care facilities. It takes a diligent staff to contain a norovirus outbreak in a senior care facility, and the facility is extremely fortunate if no residents experience severe complications.

The hard reality is that most food service and care center employees don't get paid if they don't show up for work. Even conscientious employees feel pressure to hide their illness from their employers, and afterward will usually be working while still infectious. Dealing with these realities involves addressing wages, benefits and job responsibilities, areas beyond the current scope of public health practice.

The "Cover Your Cough" campaign sends the message that basic precautions can help prevent transmission of respiratory diseases that have no vaccine or cure. A similar public information campaign targeting gastrointestinal illnesses, of which norovirus, a major cause, is also needed.

Public Health must educate the public, medical practitioners, and the food service and senior care industries on the risks associated with norovirus. More importantly, the research into this pervasive organism must continue.

by Matt Jaqua BS, REHS

<p>Welcome new OEHA members: Frank Ferro, Overland Parks, Kansas Kelly Davis-Martin, student, Salem Sara Cleveland, Bend Thomas Brudnicki, OHSU/CROET, Portland Theodora Tsonga, DHS, Portland Gregory Parks, Consultation and Auditing Sonia New, Washington County Dallas Bedwell, Student Brian Wickert, Malheur County, Karen Leben, Clackamas County Paul Heberling, DEQ, Roseburg Office Christine Hilderbrand, Washington County</p>	<p>!!Congratulations!! !!Congratulations!! It's a Boy</p> <p>Angela Scott: Environmental Health Specialist for Klamath County, gave birth to an 8 lbs. 7oz boy. Length:21 3/4 inches. Andrik Jaden Scott was born at 1:50 p.m., Thursday, September 16, 2004</p> <p>Rick Hallmark: Environmental Health Division Director for Coos County, is the proud father of a 7 lbs. 15 oz boy. Length 21 inches Dean James Hallmark was born at 2:10 a.m., Thursday, September 16,</p>
--	--

OEHA 2005 Annual Education Conference

Set your calendar for April 26, 27, & 28, 2005 for the
2005 Annual Education Conference.

The Conference will be held at the Mt Bachelor Village Resort

OEHA Donations Support Environmental Health Outside of Oregon

OEHA donated \$450 to Public Health International. This amount was generously augmented to \$500 by members Dennis Allen and Randell Howarth. PHI has projects around the globe that are aimed at improving environmental sanitation and health for people in under-developed areas.

OEHA followed tradition by once again donating a blanket from Pendleton Woolen Mills for auction at the 2004 NEHA conference held in Anchorage, Alaska. The blanket is a Pendleton original and titled "Blackfish."