

Board of Health reorganizes, welcomes new commissioners

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

The Northeast Colorado Board of Health welcomed new commissioners to its membership during its Jan. 23 meeting.

Phillips County Commissioner Joe Kinnie replaced outgoing commissioner Bud Beisemeier; and returning after a four-year absence, Logan County Commissioner Gene Meisner, a familiar face to public health, replaced outgoing commissioner Jim Edwards. Meisner served his previous two commissioner terms on the board from 2000-2008, at which time he was term-limited out of office.

In addition to welcoming new members, the board also reorganized, leaving Morgan County Commissioner Laura Teague as president, Sedgwick County Commissioner Gene Bauerle as vice president and naming Meisner as secretary.

Dr. Tony Cappello, NCHD public health director, shared some good news with the board regarding an increase in revenues, specifically in the tobacco program.

After initially being turned down for a \$150,000 application last June, NCHD was recently awarded \$199,998 from the state health department for the Community Tobacco Initiative.

Although the funding won't be available until July of 2013, NCHD has already started working on their focus of the program which will encompass implementing the youth NOT program in high schools across the region, as well as working with health care providers with training through the Colorado Health Collaborative.

The NOT program is the American Lung Association's program to help teens stop or reduce their smoking, increase their healthy behaviors and improve their life management skills. The training through the Colorado Health Collaborative focuses on training health care providers to ask, advise and refer patients who are ready to quit smoking.

This is the first year NCHD has received tobacco funding for community initiatives since it was

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cut across the state in 2009.

In addition to the Community Tobacco Initiative, NCHD will continue with their Innovative Tobacco Initiative, Baby and Me Tobacco Free project, which was also funded at a higher level for the 2014 fiscal year.

In past years the agency focused its efforts for this program with the pregnant women in their Women, Infants and Children program, but will be expanding to promote tobacco cessation to all pregnant women in northeast Colorado who are interested in quitting smoking for their health and the health of their baby.

Participants in this program receive coaching sessions during their pregnancy and can receive vouchers for diapers if they remain smoke-free for up to 12 months postpartum.

Dr. Cappello continued his good news, telling the board the agency's oral health program was also funded at a higher rate through Caring for Colorado and money received from the Stretesky Foundation in Sedgwick County.

The added funds will allow NCHD to expand the program beyond Phillips and Sedgwick counties and into Logan and Morgan counties. Washington and Yuma counties are served under a similar grant through the Rural Communities Resource Center.

As the meeting wrapped up, Trish McClain, NCHD director of nursing, announced the retirement of long-time registered dietitian and WIC coordinator, Cynthia May. Although May, who has been with the agency for 27 years, will be officially retiring at the end of January, she will remain with the agency beginning in March on a limited basis to transition the coordination of the program.

"Cynthia has been a part of the NCHD family for 27 years," said McClain. "The knowledge she has and the relationships she has built with staff and clients are going to be very hard to replace. I feel we're very fortunate to be able to keep her with us on a part-time basis to help make the transition a lot easier while we train new staff."

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In other news the board:

—discussed the 2013 budget, which asks for level funding from counties, in the amount of \$2,840,953. That is an 11.93 percent increase from the 2012 adopted budget, which is largely a result of additional revenues and grants the agency was awarded.

—approved a salary increase for NCHD Public Health Director, Dr. Tony Cappello. The increase follows a 1.5 percent cost of living raise for staff which was approved by board members in November.

—approved the 2012 audit engagement letter from Liittjohann, Kauffman and Pederson.

—voted to make the lobby of NCHD's district headquarters, located at 700 Columbine St., the official public posting location for all agendas and other legal matters.

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