

NEWS RELEASE

April 15, 2008

MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

**411 NORTH 5TH ST
SHELTON, WA 98584**

TO: KMAS, KRXV, SHELTON-MASON COUNTY JOURNAL, THE OLYMPIAN, SHELTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, NORTH MASON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, CITY OF SHELTON, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, THE SUN

RE: Public Health Week – April 6, 2008 – April 12, 2008

Last week, April 6, 2008 – April 12, 2008 was national Public Health Week. A week to think about all that public health does in a community all year long. In Mason County, your Public Health Department is always working for a safer and healthier Mason County, but what public health does is often taken for granted.

We will bet you weren't thinking about public health when you woke up this morning. But public health was there with you when you brushed your teeth, and the wastewater emptied into a septic system we reviewed and approved. If you drove your car to work, you buckled up first. If you biked, you strapped on a helmet. In your workplace restroom, you washed up with hot water and soap and dried off with a single-use towel that you placed in a trash container for sanitary disposal.

Did you go out to lunch? The people who made and served your meal were trained in safe food handling, and the restaurant or school kitchen was inspected for hygienic practices. On your way home you might hear a radio update about flu season, or perhaps a public service announcement encouraging you to stock an all-hazards emergency kit at home. Or you might read about these things in your local newspaper. You experience all of those things day in and day out without thinking twice about public health, but public health is with you all the time.

A century ago public health stressed good hygiene to help mothers survive childbirth and to help their babies survive infancy. More recently, public health's immunization effort has helped children avoid many serious and (often) fatal communicable diseases. Building on those amazing achievements, today public health focuses on assuring that parents raise their newborns in environments that allow them to thrive and become productive citizens.

In the early 1900s, a white person in our country could expect to live for 47 years, and a black person could expect to live for 33. The 10 leading causes of death back then were pneumonia and influenza, tuberculosis, heart disease, diarrhea, stroke, nephritis, accidents, cancer, senility and bronchitis. Flash forward 100 years to 2000, and a white American could expect to live 77 years, a black American 71 years. Today the leading causes of death include heart disease, cancer, injury, chronic lung disease, stroke, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, influenza and pneumonia, suicide, and chronic liver disease. For the first time in recent history, if, as a society, we do not reduce tobacco use, reduce risky behaviors, and improve nutrition and physical activity, we run the risk of future generations not enjoying the life expectancy we currently enjoy. Mason County Public Health will be working with the Mason County community to reverse this trend. Add to that the County stewardship over Mason County's sensitive and beautiful water

bodies, the health department also works to assure that any food derived from those water bodies is safe for human consumption.

It is interesting to note that public health's old list was dominated by communicable diseases. Today, in addition to communicable diseases, public health's list is dominated by chronic diseases – most aided and abetted by tobacco use, inactivity and poor nutrition - plus working to ensure Mason County residents are protected from environmental impacts on their health. Public health will be working in Mason County – both to maintain the good that is already in place, and also to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

Tim Sheldon
Chair

Lynda Ring Erickson
Commissioner

Ross Gallagher
Commissioner