

JULIA PATTERSON'S PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE

April 2009

Dear Neighbor,

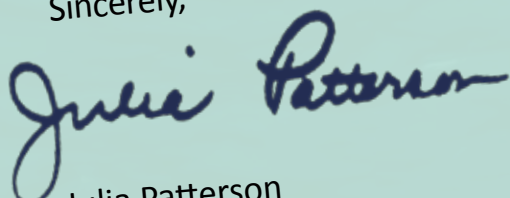
I have the honor to serve as the Chair of the King County Board of Health. Many in our community don't understand what public health is or how it adds value. Our public health department is facing devastating cuts due to budget shortfalls and the elimination of the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET), which funded public health functions in the past. Without public awareness and support, we could lose this resource that improves and prolongs our lives.

This newsletter provides you with information about public health – what it does, what impacts it has on our health, and why it matters to every one of us. I hosted a King County Council town hall meeting last month on this topic. If you weren't able to attend, here's a link to view it online: http://king.granicus.com/mediaplayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=1567.

Public Health is too important to lose in our community, and I hope after reading this newsletter, you will understand how critical it is that we can continue to rely on public health services.

It is an honor and a privilege to serve you on the King County Council.

Sincerely,


Julia Patterson



JULIA PATTERSON – PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE

WHAT IS PUBLIC HEALTH?

Public Health is population, rather than personal, health. Public Health professionals regard the community as their patient.

It is the science of protecting and improving the health of communities through education, promotion of healthy lifestyles, and research for disease and injury prevention.

Public Health – Seattle & King County, our local public health department, has two primary long-term goals. They are: to increase the number of healthy years lived and to eliminate health disparities.

In order to achieve these goals, the functions most vital to public health are the 3 P'S:

- **Protection of the public's health;**
- **Promotion through leading efforts to promote health and prevent injuries; and**
- **Provision of personal health care services for the uninsured and under-insured.**

Since 1900, the average life expectancy for Americans has increased by about 30 years. Over 25 of those 30 years can be credited to Public Health initiatives, while medical advances account for less than 4 years.

The dramatic achievements of Public Health in the 20th century have improved our quality of life: an increase in life expectancy, world-wide reduction in infant and child mortality, and the elimination or reduction of many communicable diseases.



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Students from the Kent School District help spread the word about Public Health through a sticker campaign called "This is Public Health"



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Julia greets constituents at the Council's Public Health Town Hall at Valley Medical Center

WHAT DOES PUBLIC HEALTH DO IN KING COUNTY?

- Tracks and monitors diseases like west nile virus and tuberculosis,
- Creates and promotes anti-smoking campaigns,
- Prepares our region's healthcare system for emergencies such as earthquakes and pandemic flu,
- Inspects restaurants to ensure that the food they serve is safe to eat and the facility and employees use sanitary practices,
- Collects and provides disease prevalence data to doctors and nurses, and sends alerts of disease outbreaks,
- Cleans up meth labs,
- Works with businesses to ensure foods like salmonella-tainted tomatoes are removed from grocery stores and restaurants,
- Conducts autopsies for criminal investigations,
- Runs jail health services for inmates entering the King County jails,
- Partners with businesses and community groups to promote diabetes and heart disease management, healthy eating and exercise,
- Ensures that our drinking water is safe,
- ...and much, much more.



10 Great Public Health Achievements

Public Health is the area of government that has been most successful in improving quality and length of life. Since the 1900's, Public Health advancements have included:

- 1 Vaccinations
- 2 Motor-vehicle safety
- 3 Safer workplaces
- 4 Control of infectious diseases
- 5 Decline in deaths from coronary heart disease and stroke
- 6 Safer and healthier foods
- 7 Healthier mothers and babies
- 8 Family planning
- 9 Fluoridation of drinking water
- 10 Recognition of tobacco use as a health hazard

LEARN MORE:

My website has information about public health and the Board of Health: www.kingcounty.gov/patterson

Public Health – Seattle & King County's website is full of useful information and resources: www.kingcounty.gov/health

What is Public Health? website: www.whatispublichealth.org

Julia Patterson

WORKING FOR US

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