



# HEALTHY CITY THRIVING FAMILIES

A Quarterly Report from the City of Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support January - March 2003

## Skyway Senior Center: First Year Success Story

The Skyway Senior Center, located in downtown Minneapolis, opened on November 1, 2001. The center was created in response to the needs of the senior population for a place to socialize, explore enrichment opportunities, and access resources. In past years, banks and discount stores located downtown had spaces where seniors met to have coffee and relax. Since these places for seniors to gather have mostly disappeared, the Skyway Senior Center (SSC) fills a real void.

The SSC space is an attractive, 2,400 square-foot facility located at the skyway level of LaSalle Avenue and 10th Street. Open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., the SSC has hosted over 15,000 drop-in visitors during its first year. To date, the SSC has had a significant impact:

- Daily average of visitors as of November 30, 2002: **71**
- Number of programs offered January 1-November 30, 2002: **226**
- Number of program participants: **4,266**
- Average number of participants per program: **18**
- Newsletter circulation: **3,500 per month**
- Volunteer hours January 1-November 30, 2002: 2,089
- Value of volunteer hours equal one full-time staff position.
- Holiday fund drive held by Friends of the SSC netted \$3000 in contributions from seniors and other individuals.

The SSC was made possible by the tireless efforts of the Minneapolis Senior Advisory Committee to the Mayor and City Council, which forged a partnership between the City, Ryan Companies, and Target Corporation. Ryan Companies created the space and donated furnishings, the City provided pilot funding and operates the SSC. The Downtown NRP and Minneapolis Public Housing Authority have also contributed funding. The SSC is a public/private partnership where MDHFS, through its Senior Ombudsman's Office, serves as fiscal agent.

The SSC collaborates with a wide range of partners to address the needs of older Minneapolis residents. These organizations include local businesses, social service organizations and government agencies. Its partners provide staffing for fitness programs and wellness services, speakers for presentations, outreach to under-served populations, connections to benefits and services, consumer and legal information, public safety information, nutrition services, volunteer opportunities, and staff/volunteer training. Services provided by the center's partners are promoted in "Chatter," the SSC monthly newsletter.

To sustain this innovative enterprise, MDHFS is aggressively seeking both private and public funding to support SSC operations. For more information, or to receive the Chatter newsletter, contact Melinda Ludwiczak at 612/370-3869. (See also photo on page two.)

## Winter Blitz on Lead Screening for Kids

MDHFS is partnering with the Sustainable Resources Center (SRC) and City of Minneapolis Children's Environmental Health to implement a \$10,000 grant from the EPA to increase lead testing in Minneapolis. The funds will go to the SRC for a 3 month intensive campaign to test Minneapolis children in high-risk areas and for outreach to communities with English as a second language. While the MN

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### Lead Screening continued

Department of Health recommends that ALL Minneapolis children under six be tested for lead, only 19% have been tested. Several strategies will be used: finding children at WIC clinics, daycare centers, and community agencies such as Phillips TLC/Way to Grow, working with health plans to find hard-to-reach families that are covered by Medical Assistance but not accessing primary medical care, and going to community events to conduct on-the-spot lead testing for children. SRC's public health nurse will follow-up on positive tests with medical and housing interventions. In addition to MDHFS grantwriting and project management support, the Public Health Laboratory will test the blood samples and report results. The campaign will run from January through March 2003. For more information, contact Megan Ellingson at 612/673-3817.



*These women are participants in the English language learning program held last fall at the Skyway Senior Center. At left is a native Russian speaker, with her English speaking mentor on the right, encouraging her to practice the day's lessons. Forty-five students, both Russian and Somali native speakers, participated in the program, which ran from September 17 through December 4, 2002. Fifteen volunteers from the Skyway Senior Center served as mentors to practice English.*

## Acting Out Disaster

Imagine this scenario: A couple of typical December days in Minneapolis full of holiday shopping, Holidazzle parades, concerts, parties, and hockey games. Unusual events during these days include high numbers of people with flu requiring hospitalization, rumors of contaminated strawberries from Paraguay, and a huge traffic jam on I-94 and 35W caused by a semi-truck crash involving a driver with an International Driver's License. These were some of the clues provided to a group of about 350 public officials, emergency responders, and health care professionals on December 11 at the City of Minneapolis Convention Center, gathered to participate in an emergency preparedness drill. The task of the group, which included about two dozen City employees, was to respond to this "reality scenario" as a planned sabotage unfolded. The drill was an opportunity to check out our metropolitan area's ability to put into practice a coordinated response to a bio-terrorism event. With the heightened awareness since 9/11 of potential outbreaks of mass biological incidents, it is critical that such drills are conducted regularly for those who may need to respond to such an event. Although it is difficult to know how a real disaster will unfold, these exercises will help improve our current systems. For more information, please contact Becky McIntosh at 612/673-2884.

The Minneapolis  
Department of  
Health and Family  
Support (MDHFS)



City of Minneapolis

works to ensure that all families are healthy and fully share in the social and economic opportunities of the City of Minneapolis. The MDHFS reaches residents by working in partnership with community organizations, other units of government, schools, and health and human service agencies.

**David S. Doth**, Director  
**Council Member**  
**Natalie Johnson Lee**, Chair,  
Health & Human Services  
Committee

612/673-2301  
[www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us)

## Smallpox Vaccination Starts Up

As part of Minnesota's preparations for a possible bioterrorism attack, a small number of City of Minneapolis employees will soon be vaccinated against smallpox. MDHFS and Hennepin County Community Health Department are currently in the process of planning and implementing a three-phase effort to vaccinate people against smallpox. The vaccination program is intended to address concerns that we could someday face a possible terrorist attack using the smallpox virus as a weapon. The goal is to prepare response teams of health care providers and public health workers, so they can respond quickly and safely if an actual case of smallpox ever occurs. If this ever happens, only those who have already been vaccinated will be able to safely vaccinate others, or provide care to people with smallpox. By vaccinating a limited number of people in advance, we will immediately be able to begin vaccinating other emergency response personnel and members of the public — and caring for the sick. Once this first phase is complete, it is expected that the next phase will extend to City of Minneapolis emergency responders and additional staffers who may be needed in the event of an outbreak. For more information, visit the MN Department of Health website at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/bioterrorism/smallpox/index.html>.

# Legislative Priorities 2003

The City's Legislative Agenda includes these issues of importance to MDHFS:

**Maintain the Eliminating Health Disparities Grants:** In 2001, the legislature allocated funding to reduce health disparities in 10 targeted areas. In 2002, 32 community-based organizations working in Minneapolis were awarded these grants, representing an investment of \$6 million in our community. Maintaining this funding is critical to reducing these long-standing disparities in populations of color.

**Lead poisoning prevention:** In partnership with the City's Environmental Health Division of Regulatory Services, MDHFS supports continued efforts to promote universal lead screening for urban children and to hold managed care plans and health care providers accountable to screen children on medical assistance for lead poisoning.

**Sustaining the Minor Consent Law:** Current minor consent laws permitting teens under 18 to see medical providers for reproductive health, mental health and chemical dependency issues without informing a parent or guardian are critical to ensure that teens receive the health services they need.

**Renew funding for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** at the current level for safety net programs including employment services, welfare to work programs and home visiting for pregnant and parenting teens and for MFIP families with health issues.

Other issues include preserving safety net programs like General Assistance Medical Care; improving dental health care for children; and supporting the Minnesota Workforce Council Association's platform. For more information on MDHFS legislative priorities, contact Patty Bowler at 612/673-3009.

# Project SWIFT

Minneapolis Employment & Training (METP), along with Ramsey County Workforce Solutions, is partnering with the PACER Center on an innovative demonstration grant called Project SWIFT (Strategies for Workforce Inclusion and Family Training Project). Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, Project SWIFT aims to increase the inclusion of youth with disabilities in WIA (Workforce Investment Act) youth programs. Project SWIFT spans several components, including a seven-session disability training curriculum for staff of WIA-funded agencies, parent workshops, advocacy with youth serving agencies, and systems change such as revising reporting requirements to accurately reflect youth with disabilities. "The Workforce Investment Act mandated all youth employment programs to be accessible to those with a disability," stated Project SWIFT Coordinator Sean Roy, "It is a pleasure working with METP and Workforce Solutions to achieve that goal." For more information on Project SWIFT, or advocacy for youth with disabilities and their families, please contact Sean Roy at the PACER Center at (952) 838-9000.



On December 17, MDHFS convened the Minneapolis grantees of the state Eliminating Health Disparities initiative. The 45 participants, from 26 agencies, gathered at the Jack Cornelius Boys and Girls Club to strategize how to maintain this funding, which began in January 2002. Keynote speaker Senator Linda Berglin (DFL, Minneapolis) outlined the likely steps the Legislature will take to address the budget shortfall. After her presentation, participants worked in small groups to identify areas of possible savings to the state as a result of their efforts to reduce health disparities. Pictured at left are Tony Looking Elk from Metro Urban Indian Directors and David Johnson from the MDHFS Research staff.

# Healthy City Updates

## RFP for Summer Youth Internships

Requests for Proposals (RFP) for Minneapolis Employment and Training's School to Career summer internships are now available. The program will run from June 16 - August 22. The RFP is online at [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs) under "requests for proposals" in the left column. Proposals are due by 4:30 pm on January 31st. For more information, contact Michelle Chavez at 612/673-3016.

## New Funding Awards

MDHFS actively seeks grant funding, both for internal activities and programs we support with our community partners. Recent examples of successful awards include a \$50,000 federal grant from Health & Human Services to establish a volunteer Medical Emergency Corp for emergency preparedness and public health. MDHFS and Hennepin County Community Health are co-applicants. \$25,000 was received from UCare Minnesota through the Healthy Learners Board for the New Families Center, a joint venture of MDHFS, Minneapolis Public Schools, and Children's Defense Fund. Another \$10,000 grant was awarded from the EPA for lead screening of Minneapolis children; see front page for full details. \$5000 from Minneapolis Public Housing Authority was given for the Skyway Senior Center.

## Steering Youth on a Healthy Course

Youth Risk Behavior contracts have been funded for the past three years through the MDHFS with a combination of Tobacco Endowment and TANF funding from the Minnesota Department of Health. Funding parameters include serving youth between 12-18 years of age, building on existing initiatives and programs, and reducing the risk of unhealthy sexual behaviors while promoting positive youth development. Eight community agencies have received this funding from 2002-03. The services provided include peer education programs, risk reduction classroom programs, implementation of the Life Skills Training curriculum in grades 6-8 of the Minneapolis Public Schools, and original research to explore the influence of family immigration status and acculturation on youth health choices. The grantees meet twice a year to exchange developments, strategies, challenges and resources with one another. A conference for youth addressing risk reduction issues is being planned for April 2003. For learn more, contact Meridel Fahsl at 612/673-3814.

## Staff on the Move

**Vicenta Valero** has joined the staff of Minneapolis Multicultural Services as the Bilingual Program Aide with Spanish expertise. Vicenta started her new position in November, and can be reached at 612/673-2700.

**Terry Donkers**, longtime staffer in METP's vocational training program, has retired. Terry started in METP 29 years ago as a driver, and progressively worked his way up to his counselor position. Terry was known for his cooking skills, sports knowledge, good humor, and sincerity with his clients. Enjoy your new adventure, Terry!

**Pam Blixt** has started as the new Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for MDHFS, funded through the federal Homeland Security Act. Her role is to develop a bioterrorism plan in conjunction with City Police and Fire departments, along with other potential health emergencies. Pam brings a 25 year background in health care along with 12 years as a governmental board member to her new position. She is at 612/673-3933.

# FAST FACTS SHAPE II

**Survey of the Health of Adults, the Population, and the Environment** (SHAPE) is a major health research project surveying adults over age 18 in Hennepin County. Collaborators include MDHFS, Hennepin County Community Health Department, and Bloomington Public Health.

**SHAPE I completed:** 1998

**SHAPE II completed:** 2002

## Data variables collected include:

- general health status
- acute & chronic physical health
- acute & chronic mental health
- need for medical care
- reason for delayed or failure to access medical care
- current status of physical and dental examinations
- flu shots
- cholesterol checks
- cancer screenings
- health insurance coverage
- use of complementary or alternative health care
- diet
- exercise

## SHAPE interview languages:

Spanish, Hmong, Vietnamese and Somali

## Oversampling in these communities: (number of interviews)

- American Indians (225)
- Latinos (619)
- Southeast Asians (474)
- U.S.-born African Americans (501)
- African-born Blacks (547)

**Target number of interviews:** 9500

**Total number of interviews conducted:** 10,038

SHAPE II reports will be released in early 2003. For more information, call Pat Harrison at 612/673-3883.