

# Healthier Schools Connection

March 2007

Partnering with faculty, students and their families to promote  
Public Health and safety in our schools and community

**WELCOME** to the first issue of *Healthier Schools Connection!* This newsletter will be sent to you periodically, courtesy of the El Paso County Department of Health and Environment (EPCDHE), to provide timely, accurate and relevant public health-related information and opportunities for students, staff and parents.



Rosemary Bakes-Martin  
Public Health Administrator

As you incorporate wellness education into your daily activities and planning, it is our hope that you will utilize the many resources available to you through the EPCDHE.

The EPCDHE offers a variety of age-appropriate classroom presentations, as well as many resources and services.

Popular topics include tobacco education, substance abuse prevention, suicide prevention, food safety and sexually transmitted disease education.

To help facilitate this growing partnership, the EPCDHE recently hired a community relations specialist to work closely with school district personnel. We encourage you to contact Jennifer Lange to discuss your district and/or school's wellness and public health needs. Jennifer may be reached by calling (719) 578-3212 or e-mailing [JenniferLange@epchealth.org](mailto:JenniferLange@epchealth.org).

Rosemary Bakes-Martin  
EPCDHE Public Health  
Administrator

## Healthier Schools, Healthier Kids!

Are you passionate about bridging the link between a healthy lifestyle and increased academic achievement? Are you interested in networking with professionals in support of a healthier, more active youth population in the Pikes Peak Region?

If so, the Healthier Schools Initiatives (HSI) group is for you! Hosted by the EPCDHE, the organization is a collaborative partnership of community representatives who join together to discuss common strengths and challenges in the areas of food and nutrition, physical activity and wellness education. Participation from government and public education agencies, non-profit health and human service organizations and interested citizens drive the success of the program.

Meetings are typically held the second Wednesday of each month at the EPCDHE, 3 p.m. For membership information and to begin receiving HSI e-mail updates, please contact Marilyn Bosenbecker at (719) 578-3253 or [MarilynBosenbecker@epchealth.org](mailto:MarilynBosenbecker@epchealth.org).

## Please Join Us

at the  
**Fifth Annual Meeting**  
Celebrating  
**National Public Health Week,**  
April 2-8, 2007

Learn the many ways that your  
Health Department promotes a  
healthy community every day.

## How Safe Are You? Facing Public Health Challenges

Annual Meeting  
Monday, April 2, 2007  
4:30-6:30 p.m.

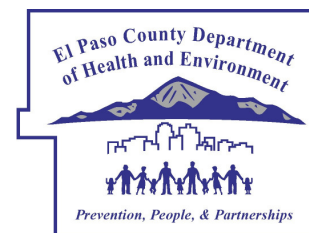
Pikes Peak Regional  
Development Center  
2880 International Circle  
Colorado Springs, CO 80910

Please RSVP by March 23 to  
(719) 578-3101

Do you have story ideas for upcoming issues of the *Healthier Schools Connection*?

If so, please contact Jennifer Lange, Community Relations Specialist,  
at (719) 578-3212 or [JenniferLange@epchealth.org](mailto:JenniferLange@epchealth.org).

El Paso County Department of Health and Environment  
301 S. Union Blvd. • Colorado Springs, CO 80910  
Phone: (719) 578-3199 • [www.elpasocountyhealth.org](http://www.elpasocountyhealth.org)



The following feature addressing a potential flu pandemic is one of the many ways in which your Health Department promotes a healthier and safer community through people, prevention and partnerships. Related articles will appear in future issues of *Healthier Schools Connection*.

## Preparing Our Community for a Possible Flu Pandemic

Catastrophic events such as Hurricane Katrina serve as a reality check that reliance on the federal government to rescue communities in times of disaster is a risky strategy at best. Crises by definition are unplanned and unpredictable in size and scope, creating a variety of logistical challenges for emergency responders and mounting anxiety for those caught in “the eye of the storm.” Large-scale public health crises such as a pandemic fall prominently into the crisis arena—illustrated by the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic, which claimed hundreds of thousands of lives throughout the United States and affected nearly 20 percent of the world population.

Reports of another potential flu pandemic have been widely covered in the local, national and world news, and federal officials are strongly encouraging citizens and agencies to establish local disaster preparedness and response plans in consideration of such an event. “You’re on your own” was the resounding message delivered by Mike Leavitt, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, addressing attendees at the Colorado Pandemic Flu Summit in March 2006. “Any community that fails to prepare, with the expectation that the federal government will come to their rescue, will be sadly disappointed,” Leavitt added.

Over the past several years, Public Health officials have been on alert for a variety of emerging infectious diseases—including Monkey Pox, SARS, West Nile virus and, presently, a possible flu pandemic.

Many U.S. health officials and citizens are concerned that Bird/Avian Flu (also identified as H5N1 Virus) may emerge as the world’s next pandemic—possibly on the same scale as the 1918 outbreak. Although the timing or likelihood of another flu pandemic is hard to predict, local and national health officials



emphasize that crisis preparedness measures adopted by our community today will ultimately strengthen response and recovery efforts in the event of any pending widespread emergency. Public Health’s ongoing mission is to champion emergency preparedness efforts on all levels through training, education and multi-agency collaborations.

### How Prepared Are You?

A community forum to discuss organizational emergency preparedness plans—including a possible flu pandemic.

**Tuesday, April 17, 2007  
9 to 11 a.m.,  
EPCDHE, 301 S. Union Blvd.  
RSVP to Mike Wagner  
(719) 578-3117, MikeWagner@epchealth.org**

### What are the Health Department and partnering agencies asking the community to do in preparation for a possible flu pandemic?

Individuals and families are encouraged to conduct a preparedness inventory, taking into account such things as special medical requirements, food and water storage, emergency equipment and key contact numbers. Schools, businesses, hospitals and other organizations are urged to develop business continuity plans, identifying critical operations and determining

how these functions would continue if 30 to 40 percent of their workforce was absent for a considerable length of time. Residents also are encouraged to meet with their neighbors and develop contingency plans—pooling expertise, services and resources. Everyone should be involved in emergency preparedness efforts. It will take the entire community working together to effectively manage a potentially devastating situation like pandemic flu.

### How can I learn more about pandemic flu?

The following web sites contain extensive information and printable resource materials related to pandemic flu preparedness:

- [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)
- [www.elpasocountyhealth.org](http://www.elpasocountyhealth.org)

## EPCDHE Contact Information

<b>MAIN SWITCHBOARD</b> .....	(719) 578-3199	Immunization & Travel Clinic .....	(719) 578-3272
Communicable Disease .....	(719) 578-2646	Medicaid .....	(719) 575-8682
Community Relations .....	(719) 578-3212	Nurse Family Partnership .....	(719) 578-3267
Drug and Alcohol Counseling & Prevention Programs .....	(719) 578-3150	Office of Communication .....	(719) 578-3101
Emergency Preparedness .....	(719) 578-3117	Preventive Services .....	(719) 578-3246
Environmental Health Services .....	(719) 575-8635	STD & Bloodborne Pathogens .....	(719) 578-3148
Injury & Violence Prevention .....	(719) 578-3293	Tobacco Education & Prevention Program ...	(719) 578-3240
		Vital Statistics (Birth and Death Records) .....	(719) 575-8492