

# Annual Report 2008:

## Assuring Health Equity



### Health Department Locations:

#### Benton Harbor:

769 Pipestone  
PO Box 706  
Benton Harbor, MI 49023  
269-926-7121

2106 S. M-139  
Benton Harbor, MI 49022  
269-927-5623

#### Niles:

South County Building  
1205 N. Front St.  
Niles, MI 49120  
269-684-2800

#### Three Oaks

21 North Elm  
Three Oaks, MI 49128  
269-756-2008



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**Berrien County Health Department Administrative and Medical Leadership 2008**

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## Health Equity

Unfortunately, a person's health is not entirely dependent on how conscientious he/she is about making healthy choices– that's only part of the story. Surprisingly, the number one determinant of a person's future health is his or her socio-economic status. Why does status make such a difference in health care?

Where a person stands on the socio-economic ladder often sets the social determinants of health such as housing stock, employment options and level of poverty. In addition, people at lower socio-economic levels are less inclined to participate democratically to change their living and working conditions. There are also underlying injustices based on race, class, gender, religion and sexual orientation that generate inequity in the distribution of disease. Berrien County Health Department (BCHD) is committed to not only address primarily health concerns such as clinical care and prevention, but to also actively pursue social long-term, environmental policy change in order to improve the health of our community.

## Evolving to Respond to Health Equity Needs

In 2008, the Berrien County Board of Commissioners approved the creation of two new Management Team positions to respond to the Health Equity needs in Berrien County by providing more staff time and more directed services.

**Substance Abuse Prevention Supervisor** is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operation of the Department's substance abuse prevention efforts. This includes classroom and community education, and oversight of the staffing of taskforces and coalitions including the Community Alliance Against Substance Abuse and the Berrien County Alcohol Taskforce.

**Clinical and Community Health Services Supervisor** is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operation of public health nursing (including immunization and TB), family planning, Children's Special Health Care Services, and STD/HIV clinic. This allows more attention to the NFP and lead programs.

## Continuous Quality Improvement

### Accreditation Status Conferred

BCHD was pleased to receive notification that accreditation status was conferred in 2008 based upon the recommendation of the Michigan Local Public Health Accreditation Commission. This designation is awarded to local health departments that meet ALL requirements and signifies the department's dedication to continuous quality improvement. BCHD is pleased to acknowledge our repeated success in becoming accredited in this, Cycle Three of the Local Public Health Accreditation Program.

### NACCHO Grant Project

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) awarded a grant in the amount of \$7,000 to BCHD in November 2007 for a continuous quality improvement (CQI) project. The project involved the health department Management Team completing a survey to identify organizational capacity among the 10 essential local public health services. The Management Team concluded that the department could enhance nearly all the essential indicators by reviewing/revisiting the department's **strategic planning process**. The Management Team has improved the strategic plan process and intends to implement the revised process in 2009.

**In memory of . . . Larry Clymer**

On January 9, 2008 The Board of Health recognized Larry Clymer for his 11 years of service as Board of Commissioners Liaison to the Berrien County Board of Health. Larry served as Commissioners Liaison from April 1995 to December 2006. Dr. McBride, Chair of the Board of Health, presented Larry a rosewood finished desktop plaque on behalf of the Board of Health.



In addition, Larry chaired the sewage appeal meetings that were scheduled to consider requests to install private septic systems in areas that were questionable for handling conventionally designed and constructed systems. Larry had a keen interest in the Health Department and helped tell the department's story. He always stated "the Health Department is the best kept secret in Berrien County."

Larry Clymer died at his home on June 16, 2008.



Gary Tipton, President of Perry Ballard, Inc., shows billboards created for BCHD

**Friend of Public Health**

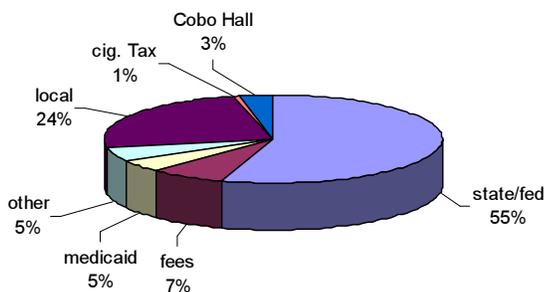
Perry Ballard, Inc was presented with the 2008 "Friend of Public Health" award. This award, created in 2000 and given annually, was established to honor a worthy recipient, either an individual or an organization, for outstanding contributions to the health of the community while reflecting the spirit of the Berrien County Health Department's Mission Statement and its population-based approach to health status improvement.

Perry Ballard worked collaboratively over the years to create an awareness and understanding regarding many community health issues. Specifically, Perry Ballard provided unprecedented support to several public health awareness campaigns such as drunk driving, cervical cancer, infant mortality, and accidental falls.

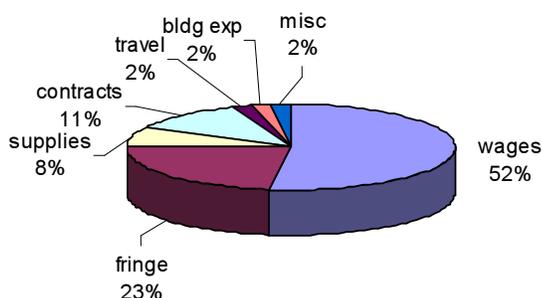
Perry Ballard's years of numerous collaborative endeavors with the Berrien County Health Department exemplifies the true spirit in which this award was created and will be given for years to come. Congratulations – and Thank You – Perry Ballard.

**Financials**

**2008 Revenue (\$7,309,486)**



**2008 Expenses (\$7,165,038)**



**BCHD would like to thank the 2008 special project supporters that provided funding in the following categories:**

Smoking Prevention and Cessation

- Michigan Gateway Community Foundation for smoking cessation in Southern Berrien County

Safe and Healthy Infants

- Heart of Cook Foundation for Baby's Own Bed supplies
- Frederick S. Upton Foundation for Nurse Family Partnership operating support
- Kellogg's Benton Harbor Connect Up! for books for NFP babies
- March of Dimes for the House to House program
- United Way of Southwest Michigan for NFP operating support



Lead Poisoning Prevention

- US Environmental Protection Agency for support of policy change

Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment

- US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration for the Community Alliance Against Substance Abuse

## Avoiding Harmful Substances

Statistics show that Benton Harbor is disproportionately affected by many health issues as compared to children across Berrien County and the state. Several BCHD services work to change this issues. Lead poisoning is one such problem affecting Benton Harbor children more than other areas. Only Detroit area children have a similar record with respect to lead paint in Michigan. The main reason for this disparity is children living in old homes that have not been maintained and have chipping and peeling paint.

While substance abuse affects all racial and income groups, treatment services are not equally available. Many substance abuse treatment facilities have been cut recently in Berrien County, leaving few options for low-income residents. Smoking does affect lower-income residents disproportionately. In fact, 44% of residents with incomes under \$20,000 are current smokers, as compared to just 16% of residents with incomes over \$50,000.

### Environmental Health and Lead Poisoning Prevention

**Environmental Health Services (EHS)** assures public health through food sanitation program, ground water supply inspections, the on-site sewage disposal program, surface water monitoring program and other sanitation inspections.

In 2008 the following inspections, among others, were conducted:

- 1,603 food service sanitation inspections
- 330 on-site sewage permit applications
- 465 private water supply permit applications processed
- 60 adult/child care facilities inspections

Recently the City of Benton Harbor has made the commitment to train several housing inspectors in assessing lead paint and to improve its Housing Inspection Code. Together with BCHD Environmental Health staff, the City will attack the problem in



older housing and where children show elevated blood lead. BCHD hosted three Lead Health Fairs in 2008, in partnership with Care Source and Health Plan of Michigan. Events are made to be fun for the whole family, and include gifts, balloons, and even a Halloween theme in October. A total of 83 children were tested for lead poisoning during these fairs.

### Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment

**Substance Abuse Treatment Services (SATS)** provides assessment and counseling services for individuals, families and agencies. SATS also provides auricular acupuncture, urine screening and Secretary of State Driver's License evaluations and services. Evidence based interventions include cognitive behavioral therapy and motivational interviewing/motivation enhancement therapy.

In 2008 the SATS urine screening lab served approximately 8,700 clients. Also, the number of SATS admissions increased by over 130 for a total of 1,170 client admissions.

In 2008, SATS was again awarded a three-year accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). CARF accredited organizations "focus on the needs and outcomes of the persons served." A three-year CARF accreditation is considered "a hallmark of quality" that SATS has received since 1993.

**Substance Abuse Prevention Services** offers a variety of programs to schools, community groups and organizations. Tobacco reduction and smoking cessation continue to be a strong focus especially since Berrien County has a higher percentage of current smokers (26%) than that of the state of Michigan (22%) or the United States (21%).

Smoking cessation classes are held regularly, and in 2008, the number of participants increased from previous years, reaching a total of 49 residents. Of these 49, over half completed the seven week, eight session group and a total of 22 people had successfully quit smoking.

In 2007-2008, through a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield, activities were coordinated at Lakeshore and Niles Public Schools in which teens were trained to be 'tobacco educators' to younger youth. Overall, 950 middle schoolers received 'tobacco education' from their older peers.

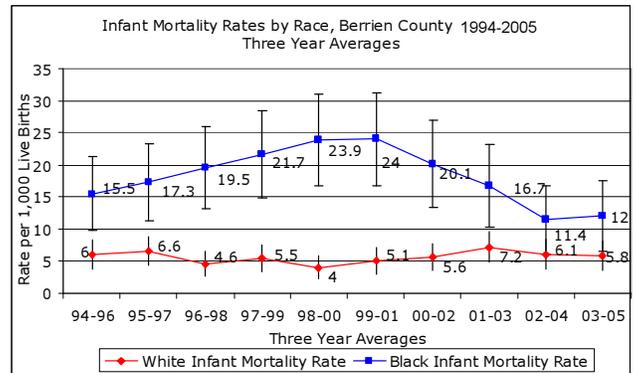


Teen group at Niles High School.

## Healthy Mothers and Babies

Infant mortality (death of a child before 1 year of age) is another area of health inequity that BCHD is working to improve. Although declining, infant mortality remains a health challenge in Berrien County as infant death rates continue to be higher than the state and nation since the early 1990's. Berrien County has an infant death rate of 9.6 per 1,000 live births for the year of 2005 compared to the United States rate of 7.0 per 1,000 live births.

According to 2006 Berrien County data, only 35% of African-American women received "adequate" prenatal care as defined by the Kessner Index, as compared to 66% of white women. Additionally, only 43% of African American women initiated prenatal care in their first trimester, while 58% of white women did. Low prenatal care is a strong indicator of low birthweight and other perinatal health problems.



## Programs to Improve Health and Reduce Disparities

The **Raising Up Healthy Babies Taskforce**, coordinated by BCHD, was involved in many programs and initiatives in 2008, including:

- Inter-Conception Health Program provided services to 12 high risk women.
- Through the Baby's Own Bed program, 61 portable cribs were distributed to residents of who would have otherwise not had a safe sleep environment for their baby.
- The House to House Program (H2H) project, first initiated in 2006, was once again funded by the March of Dimes for 2008. H2H provides peer education in a group setting focusing on healthy pregnancies and safe sleep to women of childbearing age who are at risk for infant mortality and birth defects. A total of 55 in-home educational sessions were conducted with 617 participants attending.
- FIMR (Fetal and Infant Mortality Review) case abstraction and home interviews were completed and case conferencing was done with recommendations made to prevent future infant losses in Berrien County.

2008 has been an exciting year of change for the **Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** program. After over 35 years of doing things the same, BCHD has upgraded to an electronic, paperless system.

- EBT Cards– Prior to March 2008, WIC benefits had been given to clients as paper coupons that were redeemed at authorized WIC stores. In March WIC placed food benefits on Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards. With this system, benefits can be loaded without the client coming to the WIC office.
- Paperless Charting– The WIC program went online to a paperless chart system in December. Staff uses laptops to interview clients and issue benefits. The new system has helped to serve clients in a more organized and efficient manner.

**Nurse Family Partnership** is a nurse home visiting program intended to improve the lives of low-income, first-time parents and their children. Highly educated and experienced registered nurses regularly visit low-income expectant mothers (median age of 19) during their first pregnancy and the first two years of their children's lives, teaching them parenting skills and helping them gain access to job training and education programs.

President Barack Obama's domestic agenda calls for significantly increasing investment so that Nurse Family Partnership and other programs that meet its high evidentiary standard are available to all low income first time mothers. NFP has also received support from institutions and organizations such as the Brooks Institution, The Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy, and Marian Wright Edelman of The Children's Defense Fund, for dramatically expanding its program.



## Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

Obesity causes many health problems, and is a condition that disproportionately affects some groups of residents. According to the 2005 Behavior Risk Factor Survey, 31% of the adults in Berrien County are categorized as obese and 65% are categorized as obese or overweight (76,880 adults). Obesity significantly contributes to the top five leading causes of death in Berrien County, fast becoming the #1 preventable cause of death. Being overweight or obese is more common in African Americans (at 76%) and those with incomes less than \$20,000 annually (at 75%). Being overweight is often the result of poor eating habits and not enough physical activity, and can lead to serious health problems including heart disease and diabetes.

### Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

In June 2008, Berrien became a *We Can!* County. *We Can!* (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity and Nutrition!) is a new program from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to address the growing obesity epidemic among youths ages 8-13. *We Can!* reaches parents and caregivers in home and community settings with educational materials and activities.

Benton Harbor Schools, BCHD, along with the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Michigan's Surgeon General and the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) have teamed up to implement **Generation with Promise** in Benton Harbor's two middle schools, Fair Plain Renaissance Middle School and Hull Middle School.



The Student Action Team at Hull Middle School

Generation with Promise works to empower and support Student Action Teams. This unique approach hinges around youth involvement, mentorship, and youth-to-youth networking. Middle school students are actively involved in the change process; making decisions, planning actions, prioritizing needs, participating in and promoting new opportunities to make healthy choices at school as well as leading through example.

### Primary Prevention

**WISEWOMAN** runs in conjunction with the Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program. Women are eligible for these programs if they are uninsured or underinsured and between the ages of 40-64. Through WISEWOMAN, women are educated and inspired to be conscience of their health and diet. At a screening, women will have their blood pressure, pulse, BMI, glucose, total cholesterol and HDL tested. At a WISEWOMAN appointment the women will also set lifestyle goals and be educated on how to be healthier.

The primary purpose of the **Berrien Health Plan**, initiated in 2004, is to improve access to health care by providing covered health services for low income people who may fall through the cracks of the system. BCHD provides outreach and enrollment services as well as health education to the 950 currently enrolled participants. People on the Berrien Health Plan also qualify for the **Discount Prescription Drug Program**, which allows clients to get medicine for less (about 20%) at participating pharmacies.

### Early Screening

BCHD was invited by MDCH to design a pilot program to increase the breast and cervical cancer screening rates of African American women on Medicaid Health Plans, and responded by creating the **Reaching Out for Your Health** Project. This project was created with the significant input of health care providers, as well as current BCHD clients to assure the program responded to our clients' needs.

Project outreach to encourage women to be screened has included phone calls, post cards, door-to-door contact, birthday cards for women turning forty (encouraging them to get a mammogram) and community events. Media outreach included billboards, newspaper ads, posters in target areas, radio ads, and media interviews. Providers report that access to services has improved and expanded. Data is being tabulated to determine how many women benefited from the program.



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**Cervical Cancer  
Is Preventable**

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Live Healthy...Live Happy...Live Long



REACHING OUT For Your HEALTH PROJECT

This billboard was placed in Benton Harbor to encourage young women to get cervical cancer screenings.