

**REPORT OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH**  
**July 1, 2007 - June 30, 2008**

**DEPARTMENT MISSION**

The mission of the Wellesley Board of Health (BOH) is to protect and improve the health and quality of life of the Town's residents and workforce. Under the supervision and guidance of the elected Board of Health, the Health Department's professional staff assesses the public health needs of the community, and addresses those needs by providing environmental and community health services, communicable disease prevention and surveillance, public health nursing services, as well as health promotion initiatives. Other important functions include enforcing local and state sanitary regulations, providing emergency preparedness and response planning, reducing environmental health hazards, and providing community health education. The Board of Health subsidizes community mental health services, and provides leadership and expert consultation on Town health and human service matters.

**BOARD AND STAFF**

In FY08, the three-member elected Board of Health was comprised of Shepard Cohen, Chairman; Marcia Testa Simonson, MPH, PhD, Vice Chair; and Lloyd Tarlin, MD, Secretary. The Health Department staff consisted of one full time Director; two full-time Environmental Health Specialists, a full-time Administrative Assistant; a part-time Health Communication Specialist, and a part-time Public Health Nursing Supervisor.

**COMMUNITY HEALTH**

This program area encompasses the assessment, development and implementation of policies, programs and services that address community public health needs. Priority areas include:

**Public Health Nursing Services**

The Wellesley Health Department Public Health Nurses operated *Keep Well* clinics at six rotating sites in Wellesley. The clinics are open to all residents, and offer blood pressure and glucose monitoring, some vaccinations, health counseling and referrals. Nurses also made well-being home visits that provided safety-net services to homebound residents, who were either ineligible for, or unable to access services from other health care providers. The Health Department collaborated with town departments, area agencies and families, to ensure that seniors had appropriate services with ongoing follow-up. Home visits also included monitoring of seniors with complex hoarding issues.

Seniors are also at high risk of injuries from falling, often due to medication mismanagement and/or an unsafe living environment. WHD nurses conducted assessments of seniors living in public housing or private homes, to evaluate their medication management and safety of their living environment. The WHD collaborated with the Council on Aging, Wellesley Housing Authority, and families to identify at-risk seniors. Modifications were made to reduce the risk of falling

including: adjustment of self-medication scheduling, installation of grab bars and railings, improved lighting and reduction of clutter. In total, approximately 535 visits were accomplished in FY08.

In FY08, the WHD immunized approximately 1567 adults (including the workforce) and children. Flu clinics were held for residents at various locations including the Wellesley Hills Congregational Church and public housing sites. In addition, Health Department staff, Medical Reserve Corps nurses and volunteers distributed emergency information and first aid kits to Wellesley Housing Authority residents.

### **Communicable Disease**

WHD Public Health Nurses conducted surveillance of 77 cases of communicable diseases. The Health Department also collaborated with Wellesley school nurses, area college health service staff, and daycare providers to identify and monitor cases and contacts.

### **Employee Health/Wellness Programs**

In FY08, the Health Department continued to encourage Town employees to adopt healthier lifestyles. The Health Department nursing staff provided cardiac and diabetes screenings, blood pressure checks, plus nutritional and other health-related counseling. The Health Department, in conjunction with the Town's Human Resources Department, continued to offer a walking program for Town employees. The program consisted of a cardiovascular screening and a 30-day walking challenge, along with accompanying collateral materials, maps of walking paths from specific town buildings, and essentials including a t-shirt, water, and sunscreen.

The Health Department continued to participate in the Town's annual Right to Know trainings for DPW personnel and new employees. The state's Right to Know Law provides rights to employees regarding the communication of information on toxic and hazardous substances. These rights include workplace posting of key portions of this law, annual training for employees who work with toxic or hazardous substances, maintenance of a Material Safety Data Sheet, proper labeling of toxic and hazardous substances and non-discrimination against employees for exercising rights under this law. Several years ago, the Health Department was asked to include education on communicable diseases, seasonal illnesses and disease prevention at all Right to Know trainings.

### **Mental Health**

Two local mental health service agencies, The Human Relations Service (HRS) and Charles River Association for Retarded Citizens, received funding subsidization from the Town through the Board of Health, to provide affordable, accessible, quality, mental health and counseling services, and a sheltered workshop for Town residents. Town Meeting approved additional funding to increase the hours of the outreach worker to full time at the high school, and part time at the middle school, starting in the academic year 2008-2009.

A Mental Health Steering Committee was formed in summer 2007 under the auspices of the Health Department. The committee is composed of representatives from the Board of Selectmen, School Committee, Wellesley Public Schools administration and guidance departments, Central Council of PTO's, Health Department and Board of Health, Youth Commission, Wellesley Police and Human Relations Service (HRS). The primary focus of the committee has been to support the schools in their continuing efforts to identify and counsel at-risk children, and to support parents by providing resources and programming regarding their children's mental health. In addition, the Director of HRS spoke to parents at PTO meetings throughout the year. The committee also produced a *Parent Resource Guide* to assist parents in taking initial steps to address concerns about their children, as well as to provide general information about mental health. The guide has been widely distributed and is available on the Health Department and the Town's websites. The group plans to expand their outreach efforts to residents across the age continuum.

### **Senior Services**

Health Department staff continued its participation in the "It Takes A Town" Committee (ITAT), committed to providing education and resources to residents age 50 and older. For the past several years, the committee organized resource fairs and luncheon presentations that addressed the concerns of Wellesley seniors. In FY08, the committee hosted a forum for those 50+ featuring Susan Wornick, and breakout sessions at which residents identified their priorities. ITAT also presented a program on the Beacon Hill Village model for aging in community. The Health Department Director and staff collaborated with the Council on Aging and senior service agencies to identify elders at risk, and address seniors' concerns. The Health Department Director also served on the Senior Center Study Committee, whose mission is to research the feasibility of a senior center in Wellesley.

### **Community Health Programming**

In April 2007, the towns of Wellesley and Needham received a grant award from the West Suburban Community Health Network Area 18 (CHNA 18). The goals of the grant were to enhance the efforts of the Eat Well/Be Fit Committee in Needham, and to examine whether replication of this model in Wellesley could help the Health Department forge new partnerships with town departments and organizations grappling with childhood, adult and senior overweight/obesity issues, as well as other barriers to achieving a healthy lifestyle. The Healthy Wellesley Committee was formed to assess these concerns, and identify programs, resources and materials available to address them. The WHD and Youth Director coordinated this initiative. Many exciting ideas were generated and carried out in FY08 including: forging new partnerships with local and regional advocates, schools, agencies and businesses to promote healthy living in the community; offering a lecture series (featured speaker was Gary Marino of the Million Calorie March); introducing Strive for Five Town-wide, which encouraged kids and adults to consume more fruits and vegetables; participating in local cable shows, and working with various town departments, Wellesley Celebrations Committee, Rotary Club, Wellesley Little League and residents on Healthy Wellesley Week, May 12-18 2008. Events included Healthy Wellesley Week at the Council on Aging, a "Tots and Tails on

Trails” walk, tour of the High School’s Fitness Center, and a display on eco-friendly practices.

### **Tobacco Control**

In FY08, tobacco permits were issued to 16 tobacco retailers. Two compliance inspections of all 16 retailers were conducted (using a minor) resulting in four sales to a minor. Those retailers selling to minors were fined and educated about the importance of age verification. In addition, visits to tobacco retailers were conducted twice to check for proper signage.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

This program area encompasses risk assessment, protection from potential and actual hazards, prevention of disease and injury, and the promulgation and enforcement of regulations. Priority areas include:

### **Food Sanitation and Food Establishments**

Health Department Environmental Health Specialists routinely inspected all food establishments in Wellesley, with emphasis on those that presented the highest risk to public health. In FY08 152 food establishment, six-frozen food and 23 temporary food permits were issued. Three hundred fifty one inspections (including re-inspections) were conducted at these facilities. Nineteen complaints were registered and promptly investigated, and appropriate corrective measures taken. Four restaurants had their food establishment permits suspended, due to critical violations of the food code. Fourteen new licenses and 16 temporary permits were issued. There were 23 plan reviews of new food establishments, or renovations. Thirty-seven inspections of construction sites were conducted.

### **Housing**

The Health Department staff continued to address the housing sanitation concerns of residents. In FY08, the Health Department received 65 calls related to housing issues. A total of 129 actions, including inspections and re-inspections, were taken to address sanitary code violations. Thirty-seven inspections of septic systems were conducted.

### **Swimming Pools and Beaches**

The Health Department monitored the town’s swimming water quality (pools and beaches) to ensure compliance with state sanitary codes. In FY08 16 semi-public pool permits were issued. Ninety-five inspections and one re-inspection were conducted. Weekly water samples from Morse’s Pond were taken and analyzed to monitor E-coli levels. There were no closings of the Pond in FY08.

### **Camps**

In FY08, the Health Department licensed 41 camps that provided recreational activities for approximately 7,700 children. A rigorous inspection process was conducted to ensure the safety of the children enrolled in camp activities. All camps

were inspected at least twice. The Health Department held a seminar to educate camp staff on safe camp operations, and compliance with state camp regulations.

### **Mosquito Control and West Nile Virus**

The Health Department and the Department of Public Works (DPW) collaborated with the East Middlesex Mosquito Control Project to monitor and control the mosquito population thereby minimizing the risk of mosquito borne illnesses, such as West Nile Virus (WNV). In a seasonal plan to reduce mosquito breeding, DPW placed larvicide packets inside street catch basins throughout the town. In FY08, three birds were tested for WNV; all were negative. In addition, mosquito pools were tested on a regular basis; none were positive for WNV. Education on personal protection measures and elimination of mosquito breeding areas remained a primary focus of prevention efforts.

### **Rabies Control**

The Health Department collaborated with the Wellesley Animal Control Officer on rabies control measures. By statute, any pet or farm animal that may have had contact with an animal suspected of carrying the rabies virus must be ordered confined by the animal inspector. In FY08, 10-day quarantines were issued to 12 dogs that bit people, 5 cats that bit people and 5 dogs that bit other animals. Longer (45-day) quarantines were issued to three dogs and five cats. Six-month quarantines were issued to two cats, three bats, one opossum and one woodchuck specimen were submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Virology Laboratory for rabies testing; all were negative.

### **Sprague Field**

The Health Department participated in a multi departmental committee, the Sprague Field Task Force, to develop a master plan for Sprague Field, as well as to provide a recommendation on the use of a synthetic field surface. To that end, the task force agreed to use a Thermoplastic Elastomer (TPE) infill product on the field.

A portion of the Sprague Field complex is the site of a former landfill where glass and metal objects have occasionally risen to the surface. This area is subject to a mitigation order by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The Health Department worked with DEP, an environmental consultant and Town departments to ensure that the site will be appropriately capped in compliance with the order by 2009.

### **Additional Services**

The Health Department issued annual licenses to facilities offering tanning and massage therapy. In FY08, five tanning inspections were conducted. Three individual and establishment applications were reviewed, and three inspections were conducted. As of December 28, 2007 the Wellesley Health Department no longer issued massage permits to individuals or establishments. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Division of Professional Licensure appointed a Board of Registration of Massage Therapy. This board assumed responsibility for overseeing inspection, enforcement and permitting. The Health Department also monitored lead and asbestos abatement projects.

In FY08, 23 rodent inspections were performed as part of the Building Department's requirements for the demolition of an existing structure. Several of these inspections involved the abandonment of existing subsurface sewage disposal systems. Four permits were issued for Title 5 related work, two for the installation of a new septic system, and two for repairs to existing systems. Four sets of plans were reviewed and approved for future septic systems. Three permits were issued for private wells; two were drilled for irrigation, and one for geothermal heating and cooling.

### **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLANNING**

The Health Department was involved in local, regional and state emergency preparedness and response planning including: all hazard, pandemic flu, and natural and manmade disaster planning. The Health Department Director remained as co-chair of the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), which provides emergency preparedness planning for the Town. The committee met regularly to review the Town's emergency preparedness and response protocols.

The Health Department, through its active participation in Massachusetts Department of Public Health Emergency Preparedness Region 4B (a coalition of 27 communities), focused on regional aspects of emergency preparedness, including collaboration with member communities to pool resources, provide mutual aid, conduct surveillance, and address hospital linkages.

In FY08, the Health Department continued to provide trainings for the Wellesley Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). The MRC is a group of approximately 100 residents with clinical or non-medical skills, who will assist the Health Department and other responders in a local, large-scale public health emergency. Many of these volunteers also assist at regularly scheduled public health events, such as flu clinics. Wellesley is also part of a seven-community emergency preparedness sub-region (Sub-region 3). For the last two years, MRC's from Sub-region 3 participated in full-scale training drills. In October 2007, the drill entailed setting up an alternate care site (ACS) staffed primarily by MRC volunteers. The purpose was to gauge how well MRC volunteers could be incorporated into ACS operations. ACS sites would be set up to address the surge of people looking for medical care in the event of a pandemic flu outbreak.

Presentations about family emergency preparedness are ongoing initiatives offered by the department. Information on preparing for emergencies, essential supplies to have on hand, as well as Wellesley specific information can be found on the Health Department website: [www.wellesleyma.gov/health](http://www.wellesleyma.gov/health) .

### **FY08 by the Numbers**

Food establishment permits issued: 152  
Food establishment inspections (including re-inspections): 351  
Housing related calls: 65  
Housing related inspections (including re-inspections): 129  
Pool permits issued: 16  
Pool/ Beach inspections: 95  
Camp licenses issued: 41

Public health nursing services: 535 well being, homebound and other visits

Public health nursing services: 1567 immunizations were given

Public health nursing services: Nurses conducted surveillance of 77 cases of communicable diseases