

**REPORT OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH**  
**July 1, 2006-June 30, 2007**

**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 Wellesley community, and addresses those needs by providing communicable disease prevention and surveillance, health promotion initiatives, and public health nursing services. 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 a wide-range of essential public health services, as well as leadership on Town health and human service matters.

**STAFF**

In FY07, the three-member elected Board of Health was comprised of Shepard Cohen, Chairman; Lloyd Tarlin, MD, Vice Chair; and Marcia Testa Simonson, MPH, PhD, Secretary. The Health Department staff consisted of one full time director, Mary Suresh RN, MPH who was appointed Director of Public Health in April 2007, after serving as Acting Director since August 2006; two full-time environmental health specialists, a full-time administrative assistant; a part time health communication specialist; and two part-time nurses.

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLANNING**

The Health Department was involved in local, regional and state emergency preparedness and response planning.

In FY07, the Health Department coordinated trainings and drills for the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). The Wellesley MRC is a group of concerned residents with clinical or non-clinical skills, who will assist the Health Department and other responders in a local, large-scale public health emergency. These volunteers also assist at regularly scheduled public health functions, such as flu clinics. The MRC, in coordination with MRC's in the region, is a well-trained, credentialed and important volunteer organization.

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. In FY07, the LEPC began to enhance the professional value of its meetings, by providing a tour of a relevant town facility.

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

of Understanding approved at the 2006 Wellesley Town Meeting and adopted in all Region 4B (27) member communities.

The Health Department updated its Biological and Chemical Emergency Planning and Response Plan. The updated plan stands as an annex to the town's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.

## **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**

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 FY07, 146 food establishment permits were issued. 368 inspections (including re-inspections) were conducted at these facilities. Seventeen complaints were registered and promptly investigated, and appropriate corrective measures taken. One restaurant had its food establishment permit suspended, and two were closed temporarily due to critical violations of the food code. Five new licenses and 22 temporary permits were issued.

### **Housing**

The Health Department staff continued to address the housing concerns of residents. In FY07, the Health Department received 77 calls related to housing issues. A total of 138 actions, including inspections and re-inspections, were taken to address sanitary code violations.

### **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 FY07 16 semi-public pool permits were issued. 80 inspections and four re-inspections were conducted. Weekly water samples from Morse's Pond were taken and analyzed to monitor E-coli levels.

### **Camps**

In FY06, the Health Department licensed 35 camps that provided recreational activities for 6527 children. At the time of this report FY07 camp numbers were not yet available. 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) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis Virus (EEEV). In a seasonal plan to reduce mosquito breeding, DPW placed larvicide packets inside street catch basins throughout the town. In FY07, eight birds were tested for WNV; all were negative. In addition, mosquito pools were tested on a regular basis; none were positive for WNV or EEEV. Education on personal protection measures and elimination of mosquito breeding areas remained a primary focus of prevention efforts.

### **Rabies Control**

The Health Department coordinated rabies control measures with the Wellesley Animal Control Officer. 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 FY07, 10-day quarantines were issued to 12 dogs that bit people, 9 cats that bit people and 4 dogs that bit other animals. 45-day quarantines were issued to 4 dogs and 12 cats. Six-month quarantines were issued to 5 cats. Nine bats, 1 raccoon, 2 squirrels, and 1 rabbit specimens were submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Virology Laboratory for rabies testing; all were negative.

### **Additional Services**

The Health Department issued annual licenses to facilities offering tanning and massage therapy. In FY07, 10 individual and establishment massage therapy permits were issued and 21 inspections were conducted. The Health Department also monitored lead and asbestos abatement projects.

In FY07, 22 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. Five permits were issued for Title 5 related work; one for the installation of a new septic system, and four for repairs to existing systems. Two 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.

## **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* sessions at six rotating sites around Wellesley. Nurses also made well-being home visits which provided safety-net services to homebound and other residents, who where either ineligible for or unable to access services from other health care providers. Collaborating with town departments and families, WHD nurses ensured that seniors at risk 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 for referral of 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 710 visits were accomplished in FY07.

The Health Department continued to manage a vaccine depot for residents and an expanding number of healthcare providers. An inventory of vaccines valued at more than \$500,000 is processed annually and dispensed to area practices, as well as residents. In FY07, the WHD immunized approximately 1510 adults (including the workforce) and children. Flu shots comprised 1460 of the total immunizations.

### **Communicable Disease**

WHD nurses conducted surveillance of 85 cases of communicable disease. This included collaboration with Wellesley public school nurses and daycare providers in the management of seven cases of (break-through) varicella.

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

In FY07, the Health Department continued to encourage Town employees to adopt healthier lifestyle habits. The Health Department nursing staff provided cardiac and diabetes screenings, blood pressure checks, 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 a "goody pack" including water, sunscreen, and socks.

The Health Department continued to participate in the Town's annual "Right to Know" trainings for DPW personnel and new employees. The Health Director and staff provided information on communicable diseases, seasonal illnesses and disease prevention.

### **Mental Health**

Two local mental health service agencies, Human Relations Service and Charles River Association for Retarded Citizens, received funding subsidization by the Town through the Board of Health, to provide affordable, accessible, quality, mental health and counseling services for all Town residents. Town Meeting approved additional funding to increase school-based outreach worker hours at the high school and middle school, overseen by Human Relations Service. The Wellesley Housing Authority continued to supervise the Resident Services Coordinator (who is also partially funded by the Board of Health). The Health Department, in collaboration

with the WHA, developed programs and initiatives to address health issues of residents in public housing.

### **Senior Services**

Health Department staff continued its participation in the "It Takes A Town" Committee, which is committed to providing education and resources to seniors in the community. For the past several years, the committee organized resource fairs and luncheon presentations that addressed the concerns of Wellesley seniors. In FY07, the committee updated the Wellesley Elder Resource Guide, describing services and resources available to all seniors in the community.

### **Wellesley Youth**

In FY07, the Health Department continued to support the "Thinking About Drinking" course designed to reduce underage drinking. This required course was incorporated into the 10<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum. The course is a successful collaboration between the Health Department, Youth Commission and the High School.

### **Community Health Programming**

In April 2007, the towns of Wellesley and Needham received a mini-grant award from the West Suburban Community Health Network Area 18 (CHNA 18). The goals of the grant are 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 other 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. Many exciting ideas were generated and plans made to schedule speakers for a lecture series, enhance school and community- based nutritional initiatives, showcase the walking trails with an event and a fitness course, and disseminate a resource guide that will highlight the bounty of healthy living resources available in Wellesley.

### **Tobacco Control**

In FY07, tobacco permits were issued to 18 retailers. Compliance inspections of all 18- tobacco retailers were conducted (using a minor) on three separate occasions, and no sales to a minor were made. Educational visits to check for proper signage, and other relevant materials were conducted at 17 of the 18 retailers.

### **FY07 by the Numbers**

Food establishment permits issued: 146  
Food establishment inspections (including re-inspections): 368  
Housing related calls: 77  
Housing related inspections (including re-inspections): 138  
Pool permits issued: 16  
Pool/ Beach inspections: 80

Camp licenses issued: 35\* (\*FY06 figures only, FY07 data not available at the time of the report)

Public health nursing services: 710 well being, homebound and other visits

Public health nursing services: 1510 immunizations (including 1460 flu shots) were given

Public health nursing services: Nurses conducted surveillance of 85 cases of communicable diseases