

2005 “Friend of Public Health Award” Recipient



LAKELAND REGIONAL HEALTH SYSTEM

List of Public Health Accomplishments and Collaborations

- **Flu Vaccine Shortage**

In the fall of 2004 the Berrien County Health Department (BCHD) found itself thousands of doses short of flu vaccine due to a national shortage. While BCHD considered various options and strategies, a call was received from Lakeland Regional Health System with the offer to BCHD to purchase the bulk of the flu vaccine that Lakeland had received for its own use.

Thus began a partnership with Barbara DeLong and her nursing staff at the Lakeland Center for Health Enhancement. Over the next two months, countless senior and community clinics were held to vaccinate the highest risk citizens of our community.

The staff of BCHD’s Community Preventive Health Services and Lakeland’s Center for Health Enhancement planned and worked side by side as if one. From the first planning meeting to the last clinic, one would not know that two organizations were involved, so seamless was the blending of the two organizations.

Through 14 community clinics, over 8,000 flu vaccinations were administered. Without this collaborative venture, far fewer of our most vulnerable populations would have had access to the flu vaccine in such a timely manner.

This partnership is a fine example of Lakeland’s recognition of its role in providing population-based care for the enhancement and protection of the health of our community.

- **Healthy Berrien Consortium Participation**

Lakeland is a member of the Healthy Berrien Consortium (HBC). Their involvement in the HBC assures that collaboration and partnering exists as health needs are addressed in the communities.

- **Sharing Staff Expertise**

Staff of the Berrien County Health Department and Lakeland Regional Health System serve on each other's boards and committees. The sharing of staff in this way benefits both agencies by assuring a better understanding of each other's mission and services, and enhances the overall health care delivery system to the community.

- **Health Fairs**

Every year, Lakeland hosts a community Health Fair that BCHD participates in. This past year the Health Department worked closely with Lakeland's Community Benefits Committee and Health Foundation to organize a special Health Fair at the Benton Harbor High School.

- **Infant Mortality Task Force**

Lakeland Regional Health System has actively participated on the Infant Mortality Reduction Task Force. The Task Force has been established to reduce the unacceptable disparity of the infant death rate for babies born to African American women in Berrien County. Lakeland staff from various departments have contributed to the strategic planning and the implementation of a variety of sleep training for the Baby's Own Bed program, design and production of "Signs of Labor" stickers for prenatal vitamin bottles, and community education activities. In addition, Lakeland Hospital-St. Joseph has graciously hosted the Infant Mortality Reduction Taskforce meetings in the Upton Education Center since the inception of the Taskforce in 2002.

- **Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR)**

A FIMR Team has been active in Berrien County since 2003 as the result of the commitment and dedication of Lakeland personnel. The purpose of FIMR is to identify the cause of infant deaths and to make recommendations to the community on preventive measures. Selected Lakeland professionals have conducted medical record case abstractions and home interviews in the attempt to identify the factors contributing the deaths in Berrien County. With this valuable information, prevention interventions are being identified and implemented. As a result, the community should continue to see a reduction in the infant mortality rate.

- **Berrien County Tobacco Reduction Coalition (BCTRC)**

BCTRC has been working since 1983 to reduce the health consequences of tobacco. Staff from various departments at Lakeland have served in various capacities on the Coalition. A respiratory therapist has conducted smoking cessation classes and parish nurses have taken information to various congregations. A staff person currently serves as chairman of the Coalition and conducts cessation classes. Lakeland has promoted cessation classes through their monthly ad in the Herald Palladium as well as via internal communications.

- **Safe Kids Coalition**

Lakeland has chaired the Safe Kids Coalition for several years. BCHD has served on this Coalition in various capacities. Safety checks have been held to insure proper installation and fitting of children's car safety seats. This year Lakeland and BCHD are working closely to provide properly fitted bicycle helmets to children and parents.

- **HEADS UP Falls Prevention Task Force**

Lakeland's involvement in the HEADS UP Task Force was instrumental in this group accomplishing its goals. They printed many of the materials for distribution and Lakeland nurses from various Senior Centers were key in the distribution of the materials.