

**ISLAND COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH**

**MINUTES OF MEETING - FEBRUARY 8, 1999**

The Regular Meeting of the Island County Board of Health convened on February 8, 1999 at 11:15 a.m., in the Basement Hearing Room of the Island County Courthouse Annex, Coupeville, Wa.

Present were:

Board of Health Members: Mike Shelton, Chairman; Wm. L. McDowell, Member; and Wm. F. Thorn, Member.

Island County Health Department: Tim McDonald, Health Services Director; Dr. Roger Case, Health Officer; Keith Higman, Environmental Health Director; Jan Dahl, Assessment Coordinator; Jackie Henderson, Coordinator, Developmental Disabilities; Mike Etzel, Developmental Disabilities.

CHAB and CHAT Members: Marshal Bronson, Kathy McLaughlin; Herb McDonald; Alasun Schrecengost, one of four students nominated for appointment to serve on CHAB.

**CHAB APPOINTMENTS**

A unanimous motion was adopted to reappoint the following individuals as members on CHAB for a three year term effective 3/8/99:

**Position # Reappointment Position # Reappointment**

1. Michael W. Benway 12 Toni Kotschwar
2. Herbert McDonald 13 Marshal Bronson
3. Eileen Rosman

Student Members appointed by unanimous motion of the Board to serve for one year were:

Colleen Mulcahy, Clinton Alasun Schrecengost, Freeland

Cienna Ventura, Oak Harbor Joanna L. Thome, Greenbank

Chairman Shelton expressed for the record his belief that although sometimes the public seems to hear a lot about a very small percent of youth in Island County who may be in trouble, these four students certainly restore faith in the young people in Island County. He thought the community extremely fortunate they were willing to serve on the CHAB.

**CHAB PRESENTATION ON Volunteerism BY Herb McDonald**

Herb McDonald, M.D., CHAB Membership Committee Chairperson, gave the following presentation, taken from his presentation to the Island County Community Health Advisory Board and the Camano Health Advisory Team Joint Retreat that was held on October 14, 1998. The presentation, in written form, is on file with the Board of Health, and posted on the CHAB Internet Webpage.

*(Some information extracted from National Issues Forum Report sponsored by the Kittering Foundation and from National Commission on Civic Renewal Report financed by the Pew Charitable Trusts and co-chaired by Democrat former Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia and Republican William J. Bennett, author, former Drug Czar and Secretary of Education, both reports represented as bipartisan.)*

The CHAB Membership Committee salutes the members of both the Community Health Advisory Board and the Camano Health Advisory Team. They deserve recognition and honor, not just the current members, but those who have preceded us,

and those who will come after. At the September CHAB meeting Cheryl Connelly of the National Association of City and County Health Officials congratulated CHAB and CHAT for their impressive community mobilization effort, in comparison with other Environmental Health Assessment Projects in the country. I would like to expand on that.

This decade of the 90's is arguably the most prosperous and peaceful in our nation's history. The stock market has boomed bullishly; unemployment and inflation are at record lows; interest rates are lower than in the past 25 years. Major employers, such as the auto industry, have made striking comebacks. Federal and State budgets are running surpluses. Crime, even among teenagers, and illegal drug use are declining. Teen pregnancy rates are dropping. Air pollution in our largest cities is lower than in a generation.

Science fiction can barely keep ahead of medical and technological advances. New drugs are discovered weekly. Steady progress is made in treatment of cancer, Alzheimer's, AIDS, heart disease, stroke. Genetics and Molecular Biology have revolutionized our understanding and treatment of congenital and acquired diseases: gene therapy is a budding reality. The power of computers, office-ready and family home systems, their speed and quality, go up and up as prices fall, increasing productivity and giving us all free travel to the wonderlands of the world wide web. (Monday I was trying to access our National Medical Library and I stumbled into the National Medical Library of China in Beijing!) Then Tuesday the power outage hit, my hard drive crashed, and I now suffer post-crash-stress syndrome with no e-mail for a week! It's a different world now.

Globally the United States is the only Super-power. Historically intractable problems in Northern Ireland and South Africa are close to solution. The citizens, the amateurs, are making it work. NPR Radio reported that new Irish dancing classes in Belfast are taught by a Catholic woman to Protestant children in a Protestant church! India and Bangladesh, the names evoke pictures of starving children; well, with our help both are now nearly self-sufficient in food production. Chronic crises in the Middle East, Bosnia, Kosovo/Yugoslavia, and on the Asian Subcontinent are being contained by the International Community that looks to our Government for leadership.

Yet the US public in this decade has become more deeply alienated from, frustrated by and cynical about our Government, especially the Federal Government. Since WWII our attitude toward our Government has changed from that of proud, patriotic citizens to cynical, over-burdened tax-payers, from seeing ourselves as producers of government to consumers. We Americans have stopped focusing on the work of citizenship and started expecting government to do it all. Our loss of confidence in Government when it inevitably cannot solve all our problems has profoundly undermined the effectiveness of the institutions of Government, has pushed government from being what Adlai Stevenson called "the efficient, effective agent of a responsible Citizenry" to a progressively more inefficient, wasteful and self-protective monstrosity where policy is determined by polls of uninformed citizens with an attitude.

The problem and solution are not with Government. The problem and solution are with citizens who now feel powerless and disconnected. In the 1990's only 1 in 5 Americans participates in a civic organization of any type, compared to 50 years ago when civic clubs, Churches, social groups, and youth organizations were the driving

forces in every successful American community. Citizen participation, relearning how to work together to improve the community in which we live together, is a growing grass-roots movement that seeks to reverse the dangerous anti-civic trend of this decade of progressive non-involvement by cynical citizens.

So for us, CHAB and CHAT are fresh feeding springs to put us as citizens back into the mainstream of public life in our own communities, giving us a forum (or public space) as citizens to work with others to nurture our community, and presenting a forum for our local government officials to seek out and receive policy direction from us citizens, so that we the people play a key role in community problem solving and public decision making. The key to success of citizen projects that are springing up throughout our country is that a mix of citizens with all types of interests, people from all walks of life, meet together for meaningful interaction between citizens, and then with government, to achieve what neither could achieve alone, to solve community problems, present and future.

In one notorious section of North Philadelphia, the Fraulford Neighborhood, local citizens recently joined

together to save their community, activated themselves, worked with local government officials, and almost miraculously reversed the downward spiral of their Neighborhood, which they now work together to keep safe and healthy. The same thing is happening in growing numbers of communities, for instance in a similar battleground of civil deterioration in the inner city of Baltimore.

We in CHAB and CHAT welcome the national trend in Public Health to go back to small geographic areas. Citizens within groups like ours can work on our common problems, weigh options, make choices together, focus on solutions, bring about change. In this process, as we talk and listen, discussing with each other complex issues in a non-confrontational setting, prioritizing, discussing trade-offs, acting together to deal with our community needs, we citizens discover common purposes, we deliberate, we make choices. We work together for Island County's best interest. We create an infectious environment of activated citizenship and share that process as a lasting value to our community. We focus community energy on achievable goals with measurable outcomes.

At our last CHAB Orientation in April, some of our new members said they felt overwhelmed by the detailed information and work generated at CHAB meetings; but they also said they recognized that the challenge and pace of the work obviously keeps members coming back. The feeling of inadequacy that all of us non-experts feel was addressed over two centuries ago by Thomas Jefferson: "State a moral case to a plowman and a professor," he said. "The former will decide it as well, and often better, than the latter because he has not been led astray by artificial rules." Eighty years ago President Woodrow Wilson expressed fear for democracy that "a government of experts" would seize democratic institutions, pushing out citizens. Wilson said democracy depends on dedicated amateurs who understand what policy means when it affects the common citizen. Elizabeth Dole recently said: "The best public policy is made when you are listening to people who are going to be impacted. Then, once a policy is determined, you call on them to help you sell it."

Both Wilson and Jefferson would be shocked by the more than 100 policy research groups and think tanks in the DC beltway today (two-thirds have come into being since 1970); or the more than 20,000 registered DC lobbyists (compared to just 2000 in 1965) whose combined budgets last year totaled 1.2 billion dollars; or the

admission by the respected Senator Christopher Dodd of Connecticut that: "Those who write the checks write the laws."

Winston Churchill said that democracy is the worst form of government there is, except for every other form that has ever been tried. Our democracy is built on the belief that ordinary citizens can exercise extraordinary judgment, that we do as well or better than experts, especially those experts hired by special interest groups. Not that we don't all have our own agenda, but we amateurs are more likely to listen and to make trade-offs for the good of our community than those who are paid for their view.

The Community Health Process that we use in CHAB and CHAT is not science fiction or too idealistic. It has worked for us and will work in the future:

- developing a community coalition
- creating a shared vision
- assessing community health
- prioritizing community health issues
- implementing a community health plan.

We CHAB/CHAT members are charged to be advocates for the community health process, to help develop a vision and plan, to connect our community to the process, to prioritize issues, to recommend difficult decisions in response to the needs and desires of the community, to stimulate team building in the community and turn civic spectators into a community of players. As dedicated amateurs, for what we have done and what we are going to do, both CHAB and CHAT deserve a hearty round of applause.

### **Developmental Disabilities Report by Jackie Henderson**

#### **Handouts:**

- Background Information and Data describing what is a developmental disability, total number of Developmental Disabled in Island County and Funding
- Island County Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board: Mission Statement; Guiding Principals; Role of County DD Boards and State
- Services and Supports in Island County
- *"The Dignity of Risk"* (anonymous)
- *"Normalization Means..."* (taken from "New Life in the Neighborhood" by Robert Perske)
- Educating and Empowering Individuals – Whidbey Island
- Chart: Island Employment Services – Participant's Total Yearly Earnings
- *"The Retarding Environment"* by Thomas Hopkins (presentation to U S Civil Rights Commission,

quality of Life Conference, 30 April 1988).

Today there are about 330 individuals eligible for DD services compared to 25 twenty years' ago. The focus for how services are provided has gone from very institutional sheltered type services, to services in the community. Island County at this point does not fund any separate services for people with disabilities, all services are in the community and the DD receiving residential support live in their own apartments or homes and all the jobs are in the community. The County cannot possibly provide for the 330 people with DD everything needed so the focus has been toward helping them get some needs met in other ways and not be so dependent on services through the government. Island County was selected as one of the sites in Washington State to receive a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant. Because of the observed trend that DD individuals coming out of the school system were dependent on a system, Island County's project focused on working with families with very young children with DD trying to break that cycle, to help them

become more self-sufficient. Systems surrounding those with DD are confusing; families and individuals with disabilities were very frustrated in getting the systems to listen. After funding ran out from the Foundation grant, Island County received a grant from the Division of Developmental Disabilities to continue on with the project in an effort to see how to provide the best supports and services to people to get what they need in the most cost-effective way.

Mike Etzel, the County's project director, commented on some peer-mentoring ideas about adults with DD spending time with kids in the schools who experience disabilities and share with them that they can go out and be employed and active citizens. He noted that Big Brothers-Big Sisters was in formative stages in this County and he has connected with that organization to see how some mentoring might be done together. A big part of the project will be workshops for people with DD, their families and providers, to learn, brush-up and increase skills in mediation negotiation, and the first workshop is scheduled for February 27<sup>th</sup>.

Some of the challenges facing the State and Island County were outlined by Mrs. Henderson:

throughout the State there are between 7,000 and 9,000 DD individuals waiting for services, and about 40+ on Whidbey Island; because of advances in medical science, people are living longer and many adults with DD are still living at home with extremely elderly parents; and more and more people are entering the system. For some reason, more and more children receive the diagnosis of autism. Respite care funding is minimal and agencies cannot pay good salaries, resulting in good people being lost to higher paying jobs. The Island community has been wonderful; there are some 30 people with DD working and that money goes back into the community.

A four minute video done by Norman Kunc from B.C. who experiences cerebral palsy, was shown about what his advice is for those who want to support people with disabilities.

As far as DD eligibility, the number having gone from 25 to 330 over a 20-year period, Mrs. Henderson attributed to the program having found DD eligible folks they had not known about previously, and the military had a huge impact on the number of young children with DD far exceeded the number per Island County population. TLC has about 45 children, which is more than Skagit or Whatcom County, primarily due to the military. TLC has a very good reputation and some military families with DD children request to be stationed here because of that program.

Tim McDonald commented that when the County entered into the process of integrating DD programs into the community, that step was taken because of the understanding it was better for DD folks. From his perspective, he had not understood at the time how much better it was for the community or how much it enhanced the community.

Meeting adjourned 12:20 p.m.; next Regular Meeting is scheduled for 3/8/99 @ 11:15 a.m.

BOARD OF HEALTH, ISLAND COUNTY, WASHINGTON

*Mike Shelton*, Chairman

*Wm. L. McDowell*, Member

*Wm. F. Thorn*, Member