

ALL IS WELL AT AWARDS IN CAMP ALLEN

by Ernesto Marquez, TDH SHP

The annual *Awards for Excellence in Texas School Health* dinner ceremony took place in a remote, idyllic setting this year – the Camp Allen Retreat Center, near Navasota, Texas. Representatives of this year’s award winning schools and districts traveled by car, plane and horseback to attend the dinner and participate as presenters in the All Well Institute’s roundtable sessions the following morning. During the ceremony, the winners dined with the 200 or so All Well Institute participants, comprised of teams of teachers, administrators and staff from schools and districts throughout Texas, there to learn more about coordinated school health programming. Okay, nobody showed up on horseback, but this place is remote!

The honored guest speakers for the evening were Eduardo J. Sanchez, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner of Health, Robert Bernstein, M.D., President of the Texas Health Foundation (THF), which sponsors the *Awards for Excellence*, and Tommy Fleming, Ph.D., Director of Health and Physical Education for the Texas Education Agency. In between speeches, the guest speakers presented framed certificates and checks to the award winners. Each winner was presented with a check from THF, in an amount of \$750 to \$1500, to further enhance their school health programming.

“The Texas Health Foundation is proud to sponsor the *Awards for Excellence in Texas School Health*,” said Robert Bernstein, M.D., President, THF, during the opening ceremony speech. THF helped create *Awards for Excellence* thirteen years ago as a method to promote health education and prevention programming in schools so that Texas children can develop healthy lifestyles at an early age.

As always, the award winners represented a diverse set of school health programs. Some, such as Lubbock-Cooper ISD’s Crisis Response Plan, deal with specific health issues. Lubbock-Cooper ISD’s program prepares the students, staff and community to react quickly and efficiently to

emergencies on one or more campuses. Other programs, such as Irion County I.S.D.’s W.O.W. – Working on Wellness, address a wide array of preventive health issues, with the goal of transforming school staff into healthy role models for students, and incorporating health education and promotion into the students’ academic and physical education curriculum. While the specific objectives of the programs differ, all share the traits of being (1) well-planned and based on health needs of their community; (2) comprehensive in their implementation through collaboration within the district, with the school health advisory council, and outside community resources; (3) creative and/or innovative; and (4) subject to meaningful outcome measurements which are used to enhance the program.

“Effective school health programming can go a long way in promoting preventive health behavior among students and school staff, the latter of which become positive role-models for the students,” says Michelle McComb, R.N. and Coordinator of the TDH School Health Program. “Since a school community may have unique and differing health needs, the goal of *Awards for Excellence* is to honor programs that are suc-



Zela Daniel, R.N., left, of *Teach to Reach, Reach to Teach* and Shannon Terry, right, of the *Clean Hands Club*, pose with guest speakers at the Awards for Excellence ceremony. L to r: Tommy Fleming, Ph.D., TEA, Robert Bernstein, M.D., President, THF, and Eduardo J. Sanchez, M.D., Texas Commissioner of Health.

Texas Vaccines For Children Program

By Codie Prinz, TDH Immunization Div.

Since its inception in 1994, Texas has participated in the Federal Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program. VFC was initiated by the passage of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993. This legislation guaranteed that vaccines would be available at no cost to providers, in order to immunize children who meet the eligibility requirements.

Today, there are more than 6,000 Texas providers enrolled in the Texas Vaccines for Children Program (TVFC). Texas leads the nation in the number of uninsured and underinsured children. We also have over a million children on Medicaid (Federal Fiscal Year 1998 data). Many of these children are not receiving the complete series of vaccines required to protect them from vaccine-preventable disease. Under the TVFC, the following groups of children should be receiving their vaccines for free:

- uninsured or underinsured children,
- children who are covered by Children’s Health Insurance Plan (CHIP)
- children who are of Native American or Native Alaskan heritage
- children on Medicaid

In order to ensure the health and

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Letter from the Editor by Michelle McComb, R.N., Coordinator, TDH School Health Program

As I listened during the annual Awards for Excellence in School Health recognition dinner, I became more acutely aware of the relationship between school health and public health. Some of the award-winning schools developed and implemented programs relating to:

- First Aid, CPR, babysitter training
- Crisis response/emergency preparedness
- Handwashing
- Fostering student responsibility for healthy choices
- Community wellness
- Health care consumer awareness
- Increasing physical activity
- On-site health care delivery, health education and outreach

Each of these local activities corresponds to at least one of the multitude of programs offered by the Texas Department of Health. Each of these local activities also supports the department's overall vision, which states, "Texas is healthy people and healthy communities." During his awards recognition speech, Dr. Eduardo Sanchez, Texas Commissioner of Health, stated, "we believe the best way to achieve this vision is through partnering with the people and communities of Texas

to protect, promote and improve health."

During the next several months you, our readers, have the honor and privilege of partnering with students (our state's future) and their families to improve health. Improving health inherently involves some form of change, whether it is knowledge, attitude or behavior. For some, change is a lengthy, difficult, and resisted process. But do the children of Texas have time to wait for this change to happen? Each moment of each day, they are growing, developing, learning and becoming. We hope that part of what they are becoming is *healthier!* We recognize that what you do in your office, in your school and in your community everyday contributes to that goal. We recognize that one cannot do it alone, and we stand ready as a resource in your efforts.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

- Margaret Mead

Just how will you play a part in improving the health of Texans? Here are

just a few suggestions:

- volunteer to write a regular health column or occasional health article for your local paper;
- try something different with your students this year, focusing even more on wellness and prevention;
- talk to students about considering nursing or other health fields as a career;
- become a Vaccines for Children provider or ImmTrac registry user (see related articles on pages 1 and 3);
- become active in your professional association;
- contact your legislative representatives; and last but not least
- *LISTEN to what your students say.* Oftentimes they are so insightful, and other times they convey sheer comedic genius!

Texas Health Rankings

You may have read or heard about Texas ranking 50th in the nation for vaccine coverage of the 2 year-old population. Certainly by now you are aware of the list of the ten "fattest cities" in the country, with four of them right here in the Lone Star State. What do these findings do to your sense of Texas pride? Despite these concerns, the future of Texas is promising. Within the past year, both TDH and

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Have you subscribed yet?

If you do not already have a subscription, provide the info below so we can send you each future School Health Bulletin. There is no charge. Send info by fax: (512) 458-7350 - Attn: School Health Program, or send an e-mail to schoolhealth@tdh.state.tx.us.

Full Name and Job Title: _____
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 Phone: _____
 Email: _____

We need your feedback! Tell us what you would like to see in the bulletin. Send us submissions - an anecdotal story, artwork, accolades, or anything else of interest to school nurses in Texas!

Surfin' the Net

Asthma and Schools (www.asthmaandschools.org) is a website devoted to linking teachers, administrators, and other school personnel with resources and information on asthma. This website allows users to search for info by type of resource, target audience, grade level, language.

Emergency Medical Services for Children – National Resource Center website has an activity and coloring book designed for children ages 3 – 9 years to promote emergency preparedness. The book, entitled Be Prepared Not Scared, contains numerous fun activities and illustrations to teach kids how to react safely and make healthy choices in emergency situations. To view/download, visit: www.ems-c.org

Nonprofit Warehouse has launched a Free Prescription Drug Discount Card. Any district or school can distribute a card to an individual that does not have a prescription drug benefit. The card allows individuals to purchase prescriptions at or below wholesale prices. Individuals may order the card themselves as well. There are no income or age restrictions, documentation or registration requirements. The card is available at www.nonprofitwarehouse.com, and is valid in over 1400 pharmacies in the U.S. Or, card holders may mail-order prescriptions.



KUDOS!

The TDH School Health Program is fortunate to have Jeff Sellers as a volunteer intern this summer. Jeff is working to enhance our program promotion efforts. He is helping us create a new program logo and has also designed and laid out this issue of the Texas School Health Bulletin. Jeff is a junior at the University of Texas in Austin, majoring in Advertising. We thank Jeff for donating his time and skills to TDH during his summer break.



American Academy of Family Physicians

TEACHING TOBACCO PREVENTION

By Janie G. Dykes, TDH Office of Tobacco Prevention and Control

As you are reading this article, a child somewhere in our state is trying tobacco for the first time. One out of every two of these children will become regular tobacco users. What can we, as educators, do to combat this epidemic of tobacco use among children? What if a tobacco-free education program targeting children were available to you at no cost?

I would like to introduce you to Tar Wars! Tar Wars, designed to be presented to fourth and fifth-grade students, contains two parts: a one-hour classroom presentation and a follow-up poster contest.

The classroom lesson is an effective, innovative, and interactive approach to teach students about the short-term consequences and financial implications of tobacco use, reasons why people use tobacco, and deceptive tactics used in tobacco advertising.

The follow-up poster contest reinforces the Tar Wars message by encouraging students to creatively capture what they learned about being tobacco-free.

The winning posters from each school are entered in the state-wide contest, and local businesses donate some of the prizes to be awarded.

Tar Wars is an award-winning program of the American Academy of Family Physicians that was originally developed in 1988, by the Hall of Life at the Denver Museum of Natural History and the non-profit volunteer organization Doctors Ought to Care (DOC). In June, 2000, the American Academy of Family Physicians acquired full ownership of Tar Wars®. Since its inception, Tar Wars has reached more than 2.5 million children worldwide. I encourage you to consider Tar Wars as one component, or building block, of your school's comprehensive, tobacco-free education plan. The Tar Wars curriculum is consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) *Guidelines for School Health Programs to Prevent Tobacco Use*.

For More Information about Texas Tar Wars, to be a Tar Wars presenter, or to receive a Tar Wars presentation in your elementary school, visit our website: www.tdh.state.tx.us/otpc/tarwars

IMMTRAC

Texas' repository of children's immunization records

By TDH Immunization
Division Staff

ImmTrac is the statewide children's immunization registry. As a centralized repository of immunization records for persons up to age 18, ImmTrac is a free service offered to all young Texans and their parents. Although participation in the ImmTrac is offered to all Texas children, state law limits access to registry application to medical providers, local health departments, public health districts, schools, and licensed child-care facilities.

Information contained in the immunization registry is confidential and may be disclosed only with written consent from the child's parent, guardian or managing conservator. By law, ImmTrac records may only be released to a child's parent, a public health district, local health department, or a school or child-care facility in which the child is enrolled.

Benefits for all

ImmTrac offers many benefits to participants as well as to medical providers working with children's immunizations. ImmTrac enables physicians to access immunization histories of their patients. A patient's immunization history is consolidated into one easily accessible record regardless of the number of providers from whom the child has received vaccines. Having a single immunization history repository also helps physicians ensure appropriate, timely vaccinations and prevent over- or under-vaccination of children and unnecessary costs to families or third party payors.

For schools ImmTrac can serve as a single source of immunization records for students. Having access to students' records, school nurses may verify vaccine information or update a student's incomplete record for future use. Registry access allows schools to update a child's immunization record when parents provide updated information to the school. A school can also generate recall and reminder notices for parents through the registry. Licensed child-care facilities are also able to review

immunization information for children registered in their care.

For parents, consolidation of a child's immunization records is helpful because they will not have to gather records from all medical providers who have treated their child. In addition, a printout of a child's ImmTrac record is recognized as an official shot record, should they ever need a copy.

Parental Consent

Because the registry is an "opt in" service, parents must choose for their child to participate in ImmTrac rather than automatically be included at birth. Parents must give written consent one time and may withdraw their child's information from the registry at any time. This one time consent is good for inclusion of past, present and future immunizations in the registry.

ImmTrac Needs Your Support

There are approximately 7 million children in Texas between the ages of 0 to 18 years of age. ImmTrac currently contains approximately 34 million immunization records on 4.6 million of those children. If your school or district is interested in disseminating information about ImmTrac to

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TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News & Notes

TDH PROVIDES AUDIOVISUALS

Free audiovisuals and publications available from TDH can enhance an educator's health message. The TDH Audiovisual Library offers an extensive collection of health and safety audiovisuals on topics such as HIV/AIDS, dental health, nutrition, smoking, head lice prevention and treatment, spinal screening, hygiene and youth violence. There is no charge to Texas borrowers other than return mailing and insurance.

For more information, visit the TDH AV Library's web site at www.tdh.state.tx.us/avlib/avhomepg.htm, or call 1-(888) 963-7111 ext. 7260. If interested in TDH publications, please visit the Forms and Literature Inquiry and Order Entry System at www.tdh.state.tx.us/mamd/litcat/default.asp. You may search for publications by subject, keyword, format, language or stock number. Most publications may be ordered without charge or downloaded from the web.

BABIES & BIRTH DEFECTS

The Texas Birth Defects Monitoring Division is promoting a FREE educational module designed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia. The module is designed to teach middle school and high school students about epidemiology, neural tube defects, and folic acid. The basic concepts of epidemiology are attained as students study an actual birth defects case in Brownsville, Texas. Students learn about the scientific method and epidemiology as they follow the steps scientists used to investigate the problem, incorporating both math and science skills. The module facilitates scientific inquiry by exploring

epidemiological methods such as, applying the scientific method to different case studies, conducting scientific investigations, calculating relative risk, and computing metric system conversions. The module is effective in enhancing students' aptitude of reasoning and deductive skills and improving their proficiency of collecting and analyzing data. The Excite Curriculum Module is designed to increase awareness and knowledge of risk factors and good health practices through promoting the consumption of folic acid as a measure in preventing neural tube defects. The integration of this free module is conducive to many core subjects such as math, science, and health.

For more information please visit the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, Excite Educational Curriculum site at: www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid/excite/0Home.htm or contact Alina Flores, MPH at ail5@cdc.gov. For other information regarding this topic, contact Amy Case, TDH, (512) 458-7232, amy.case@tdh.state.tx.us

FOLIC ACID IS BENEFICIAL

The Texas Folic Acid Council wishes to remind you that half of pregnancies are unplanned. To help prevent potential birth defects of the brain and spine, all women of childbearing age should take an additional 400 micro-grams of the B vitamin, folic acid, every day. Folic acid is also associated with reducing the risk of cancer, heart disease, and

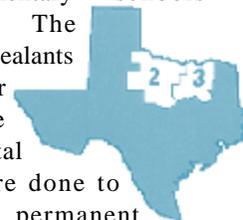


Alzheimer's in both men and women.

For more information contact Jim Phillips, MSW, Texas Folic Acid Council Coordinator, Perinatal Health Program, TDH, (512) 458-7111, ext. 6287; Jim.Phillips@tdh.state.tx.us

DENTAL SCREENINGS

Dental and Oral Health Services of Region 2/3 of TDH will be conducting dental screenings and sealants in elementary schools this Fall. The screenings and sealants will be done for children in the 3rd grade. Dental screenings are done to identify any permanent molars that would be good candidates for dental sealants. The screenings are also done to identify any obvious, visual dental problems for which the child's parents or guardians need to be made aware. The dental screening is not a comprehensive dental examination and is not a substitute for regular dental care by the child's dentist. Dental sealants are clear or shaded plastic material which is placed into the grooves and fissures of the occlusal (top, chewing) surfaces of the permanent molars. The sealant material acts as a barrier to keep plaque, bacteria, food and other debris out of these grooves and fissures. This greatly reduces the possibility that decay will develop in the occlusal surfaces of the tooth that has been sealed.



For more information and/or to schedule screenings for 3rd graders in your school(s), please call: Dental and Oral Health Services, TDH, Region 2/3: (817) 264-4670 or (817) 264-4671.

ZOONOSIS



West Nile Virus FAQs

Where Has It Been and Where Is It Going? West Nile virus (WNV) is commonly found in Africa, Eastern Europe, West Asia, and the Middle East. It was first detected in the United States in 1999 during an outbreak in New York. Last year, it traveled as far west as Louisiana, and this Summer it came to Texas. By the end of July, WNV had been identified in 8 counties in the Houston area and 3 counties in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area. Anyone taking part in outdoor activities in Texas should take precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes, especially in the eastern third of the state.

What Are The Symptoms Of West Nile Virus? Most people infected with WNV will not show symptoms. Some, however, may have a fever, headache, body aches, and swollen lymph nodes. A small number may develop encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the spinal cord). Although rare, death can occur.

How Is It Spread? West Nile virus is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. (There is no recorded proof of it being passed from person-to-person, animal-to-animal, or animal-to-person.) Mosquitoes are most active at dawn, dusk, and in the early evening.

Can Animals Be Infected With WNV? Yes. However, the only domestic animals that appear to be harmfully affected by WNV are equines, such as horses. Some species of wild birds may become very ill and die.

Can It Be Treated? There is no specific treatment for WNV infection. In a serious case, a person may have to be hospitalized and given supportive treatment along with good nursing care.

How Can I Reduce My Chances Of Being Infected?

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants whenever you are outdoors.
- Apply insect repellent sparingly to exposed skin. Repellents containing 35% DEET are effective. Repellents

may bother the eyes and mouth, so do not touch these areas if you have repellent on your hands.

- Spray clothing with insect repellents containing permethrin or DEET, as mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing.
- Whenever you use an insect repellent, be sure to read and follow the directions for use that are printed on the product label.
- Although it does not appear that a person can get WNV from handling live or dead infected birds, it would be wise to use gloves or double plastic bags when handling any dead animals, including birds.
- Make sure tent openings have flaps and cabin doors and windows have screens to keep mosquitoes from entering. ■

ANIMAL AWARENESS

Has a stray dog ever entered your playground? Has a downed bat ever been handled by a group of children at your school? Have you ever seen a student inappropriately handle or approach an animal? If so, you can call the Zoonosis Control Division of TDH for guidance in how to respond to these situations and prevent complications that could develop because of them. Additionally, educational pamphlets are available on a variety of zoonotic diseases, which are diseases transmissible between animals and people, including rabies, animal bites, and vector-borne diseases (for example, Lyme disease, plague, and Rocky Mountain spotted fever). Electronic versions of these items can be accessed on the Zoonosis Control Division's website at www.tdh.state.tx.us/zoonosis or pamphlets and posters can be ordered via the TDH's Forms and Literature Inquiry and Order Entry website at www.tdh.state.tx.us/mamd/litcat/default.asp

Some of the information presented in these educational materials includes how animals can spread diseases and how to avoid animal bites, prevent exposure to rabies, properly remove an attached tick, and responsibly care for pets. For more information, contact your local TDH Zoonosis Control office or call (512) 458-7255 for assistance.

Avoiding Rabies

By James Wright

Here are some brief tips for people who have had an encounter with an animal:

1. If you are bitten by an animal, keep track of the animal. Ask animal control or another authority to assure the animal is quarantined or tested for rabies.
2. Never shoot or hit an animal that bit someone or one that is a rabies suspect in the head. The impact might make it impossible to test the animal for rabies.
3. Keep all pets, including horses and show calves, vaccinated against rabies.
4. If you can touch a bat, it may be rabid. *Never handle or touch a bat!*

For more info on animal bites, rabies, or any other animal related issue, call your local TDH Zoonosis Control office. To find contact info for the office closest to you, visit the Zoonosis web site at www.tdh.state.tx.us/zoonosis/contact.asp or call the Austin Office at (512) 458-7255.

Vaccines for Children *continued from page 1*

future of Texas children, we need your help. Your school, if not already enrolled, should consider joining TVFC as a provider.

The first step in establishing a school immunization project is to communicate with district administration and the school health advisory council to obtain support. The clinic will need a licensed physician to sign the TVFC enrollment paperwork and provide standing delegation orders to school staff. The school does not take on any additional medical liability by participating in this program.

TVFC provider schools must:

- fill out Provider Enrollment and Provider Profile forms;
- agree to screen for eligibility; and
- agree to maintain screening records.

Vaccine is ordered through

regional health offices and delivered directly to the school. A TVFC provider may not charge for the vaccine itself, but is permitted to charge a reasonable administration fee.

Schools that become TVFC providers benefit the students, their families, and the community as a whole. One of the most important of these benefits is the removal of barriers to obtaining immunizations. For instance, you will no longer have to refer uninsured children to public health centers for immunizations. And TVFC removes the financial burden of purchasing vaccines.

Immunizing children is cheaper for Texas taxpayers than treating those children for vaccine-preventable diseases. For example, for every dollar spent on DTaP, \$23.40 is saved in direct and indirect costs. Also, because TVFC vaccine contracts are negotiated at a

federal level, the lowest possible price and a standardized cost are ensured. Of course, we also benefit by maintaining a high level of immunity in our communities. Families who are currently paying for vaccinations may be TVFC eligible. Vaccines are supplied to the school at no cost.

TVFC covers all vaccines recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and approved by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

A fully immunized society is necessary to reach optimum eradication of vaccine-preventable infectious disease. With your help, we can reach these goals leading to a healthier Texas.

For more information please contact the nearest public health regional office or a TVFC/AFIX Consultant at toll-free number 1-(800) 252-9152, or call (512) 458-7284.

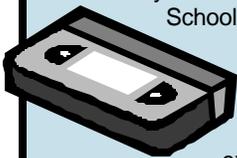
NEW TDH SPINALSCREENING TRAINER VIDEO!

The TDH School Health Program has purchased *Taking the Mystery Out of Spinal Screening*, an instructional video for trainers to use when teaching school spinal screening. The video includes real-life examples of nurses and physicians performing forward-bend exams, and includes guidelines for making the decision to refer or not. The twenty minute video was produced by the California School Nurses Organization and the Children's

Hospital Los Angeles. Some of the terminology and techniques discussed do not pertain to Texas spinal screening rules. A one-page explanatory memo will accompany each

video to assist trainers in pointing out the differences between California and Texas school spinal screening guidelines. Despite some discrepancies in screening methods, the video offers excellent depictions of how to conduct a thorough forward-bend test, an overview of common spinal abnormalities screeners may find, and current forms of treatment.

To borrow the tape for a workshop, contact the TDH Audiovisual Library at 1-(888) 963-7111, ext. 7260 or (512) 458-7260; E-mail avlibrary@tdh.state.tx.us. To purchase a copy of the video, contact the California School Nurses Organization at 1-(888) 268-CSNO; e-mail: csno@csno.org; website: www.csno.org.



New School Health Networkers

The TDH School Health Program welcomes new members to the Texas School Health Network:

- **Mariette Burt** Region 11 Fort Worth
- **Joan Berry** (interim) Region 12 Waco
- **Donna Bryan** Region 18 Midland



We look forward to collaborating with the new school health specialists to provide support for coordinated school health programming through the Regional Education Service Centers (ESC) throughout Texas. Have you contacted your regional school health specialist to be put on their contact list? Visit www.tdh.state.tx.us/schoolhealth/net_list.htm for the name, phone, & e-mail of your ESC school health specialist.

TDH School Health Advisory Committee Membership Openings!

Applications are now being accepted for School Health Advisory Committee (SHAC) membership in the following categories:

- **Physician**
- **Registered Nurse**
- **Parent**

To learn more about how you can apply yourself, or nominate someone else, please contact Diane Bernal, TDH School Health Program, (512) 458-7111 ext. 2140, or visit:

www.tdh.state.tx.us/schoolhealth/shadvise.htm

TD VACCINE SHORTAGE OVER

Boosters Will Be Resumed

Notification was sent to all Texas school officials in early August regarding the supply of tetanus and diphtheria toxoids (Td) in the U.S. The manufacturer, Aventis Pasteur, has indicated that the current supply of vaccine is adequate to resume the routine schedule for Td vaccination as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

What is required of schools?

Schools are asked to begin reviewing immunization records immediately. Starting with the oldest students and working down by age/grade level, refer all who need a Td booster to their primary care provider or the public health department for the booster.

Are the boosters required this school year?

No. TDH has developed a timeline allowing adequate time for schools, parents, and providers to work together in order for students to obtain boosters prior to the August 1, 2003 deadline. So, while the deferment remains in effect for the 2002-03 school year, this does not mean that schools, parents, and providers should wait to take action. Time has been allowed, and, therefore, should be spent during the current school year working on immunization record review, sending recall and reminder notices, and updating immunization record documentation.

When is the deadline for all students to be "caught up" on immunizations?

On August 1, 2003, all students will be expected to have received the needed Td booster, have current immunization status, and provide adequate documentation to the school. School records will be expected to be complete.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please contact Monica Gamez, Immunization Compliance Coordinator, TDH Immunization Division, at 1-(800) 252-9152, or (512) 458-7284.

Letter from the Editor

Continued from page 2

the Texas Education Agency have received new leadership. In November, voters will decide which representatives and senators will make up the House and Senate. In January 2003, our state's 78th legislative session will begin. Will you be a voice in this process? Will you help your elected officials make informed decisions regarding health? Will health be a priority issue? It certainly is here at TDH where the following priorities have been identified:

- **Promoting Fitness** – as a means for reducing overweight Texans / obesity and preventing disease in our children and the adult population;
- **Raising Immunization Rates;**
- **Eliminating Health Disparities** – by age, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status;
- **Enhancing the Public Health Infrastructure** – to increase our preparedness for both natural and intentional emergencies; and
- **Improving Agency Business Practices** – which will help make us better stewards of public resources.

We appreciate the assistance that local school health programs can provide as we work to address these priorities. We look forward to hearing about all of your efforts to improve school health during the 2002-03 academic year because ultimately, we can all agree with Dr. Sanchez when he says "I want to make an affirmation – an educated child will be a healthier adult."

Michelle E. McComb

School Health Awards

continued from page 1

successful in making continued and effective health promotion take place, no matter what the specific health concern may be. That is why we might give an award to both a program that trains students in CPR and First Aid, and a program that teaches students and their families about diabetes prevention."

In addition to being honored at the dinner ceremony, award winners were invited to spend the night at the conference center hotel, have breakfast in the morning, then attend the general session to hear motivational speaker Dr. Pat Cooper, Superintendent of Schools in McComb, Mississippi. Dr. Cooper spoke about obstacles confronted and lessons learned in his district's efforts to address student health needs in their community. Following his presentation, the award winners participated in a relaxed, informal roundtable workshop at which they talked and answered questions about their programs.

A highlight of the All Well Institute and



Pat Coleman, R.N. (holding up sign), Coordinator of the Lubbock-Cooper I.S.D. Crisis Response Plan, explains the implementation of her award-winning program during the All Well Institute roundtable sessions.

Awards for Excellence ceremony was the presence of Eduardo J. Sanchez, M.D., M.P.H., Texas Commissioner of Health. Dr. Sanchez emphasized the importance of the role Texas schools play in influencing the health of future generations of Texans. "An educated child will be a healthier adult. What you do makes the vision of healthy adults and communities more likely to become a reality. Senate Bill 19, passed by the Texas Legislature in their most recent session, recognizes the importance of teaching our children healthy habits for lifelong disease prevention and fitness promotion. This community initiative promotes development of School Health Advisory Committees at the local level,

encouraging the kind of partnership that works."

This is an exciting time for Texas in terms of health promotion and education in schools. The State Legislature and state-level entities such as the State Board of Education, the Texas Department of Health, and the Texas Education Agency, are recognizing the importance of a coordinated approach to health promotion in schools, and are working together to guide schools in this direction. In the meantime, *Awards for Excellence* continues to provide recognition and financial support to those schools and districts that are joining the march in this direction towards a healthier Texas population. ■

ImmTrac *continued from page 3*

parents, please contact ImmTrac's Public Information Coordinator at toll-free number 1-(800) 252-9152 or (512) 458-7284.

Access to ImmTrac

As a user you have two options for accessing the Registry application directly from your office. Your site may have the web-based application installed over the phone with assistance from the ImmTrac Help Desk or you may use the client/server version which requires an on-site visit. All installations include training on use of the registry.

For more info about ImmTrac or to request registration materials, contact the ImmTrac Help Desk, toll free, at 1-(800) 348-9158, visit our website at: www.tdh.state.tx.us/immunize/immtrac.htm, or contact us by e-mail at immtrac@tdh.state.tx.us.

THE TDH SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAM WISHES YOU A HEALTHY & SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL YEAR!



From left to right: **Mary Jackson**, R.N., Coordinator, Texas Comprehensive School Health Network and TDH School Nurse Consultant; **Ernesto Marquez**, Administrative Technician, School Health Program; **Diane Bernal**, Administrative Technician, School Health Program, **Jeff Sellers**, Summer Intern, School Health Program, **Michelle McComb**, R.N., Coordinator, School Health Program; and **John Dillard**, School Health Program Specialist.

Mark Your Calendar!

SEPTEMBER

Food Safety Education Month
(www.foodsafetycouncil.org)
National Child Injury Prevention Week (1st-7th)
Family Health and Fitness Days (29th&30th)
(www.fitnessday.com/family/)

OCTOBER

American Heart Walk (www.americanheart.org)
Healthy Lung Month (www.lungusa.org)
National Dental Hygiene Month (www.adha.org)
Walk a Child to School Day (2nd)

NOVEMBER

Lung Cancer Awareness Month (www.alcase.org)
World Kindness Week (11th-17th)
Great American Smokeout (21st)

FALL CONFERENCES

TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS

7th Annual Conference

"Shaping the Future of School-Based Health"

September 27-28, 2002, in Austin, Texas

Educational sessions for all health care professionals, not just those involved in school based health centers.

For info: www.tasbhc.org.

IMMUNIZE TEXASIZE 2002

November 18-21, 2002, in Austin, Texas

Information on vaccines and vaccine-preventable diseases; CNE for nurses; motivating, informative speakers; networking; and much more. For info contact the TDH Immunizations Division at 1-(800) 252-9152 or visit www.ImmunizeTexas.com.

For questions, suggestions or subscription info: www.tdh.state.tx.us/schoolhealth or e-mail ernesto.marquez@tdh.state.tx.us



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