

the Consortium

QUARTERLY



St. Louis Regional **Asthma Consortium**

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from the chairman
of the board

Board Planning for Consortium's Future

Beginning at its January meeting, the Consortium Board began a strategic planning process, which will continue into the spring. The Board is revisiting the Consortium's mission statement and will establish two or three themes that will focus the Consortium's attention over the next several years. After establishing these themes, the Board will identify goals, objectives, and action steps that lead to significant accomplishments for each theme. Based on this plan, it will consider the operational and structural issues that will need to be addressed by our Executive Director and staff.



The results of this planning will be shared with Consortium members through our website, newsletter and upcoming community meetings. In addition, the Board would welcome any comments that you have regarding the Consortium's future as it attempts to respond to the growing prevalence of asthma in the region.

One source of information that is available to the Board is the results of the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool, which Consortium members have been completing since the summer of 2004. This information now provides a fairly clear picture of member's opinions regarding Consortium functioning and their satisfaction with participation in it. A few of the results of these surveys are summarized below:

- Consortium members are consistently satisfied with their personal involvement, finding significant benefits and few drawbacks to their participation.
- Consortium members began their assessment with significant concern for some aspects of Consortium functioning but over the years have raised their opinion of many of these activities.
- Consortium members have been highly pleased with the secretarial support provided the Consortium and in the last year, have very favorable views of the coordination of communication among partners, the organizing of activities, and preparing materials for decision-making.
- Consortium members have been consistently concerned with the adequacy of funds needed by the Consortium and the lack of resources to contact political leaders, governmental agencies, and other organizations.

Rick Kurz
Chairman of the Board of Directors



Midtown's Michelle Hankins shows Jorie Gold how to use a spacer.

With 140,000 adults and 45,000 children in the St. Louis Region currently living with asthma, it's no surprise that a lot of families here could use a little H.E.L.P. from some friends. The Asthma H.E.L.P. programs at Midtown and St. Jane Catholic Charities Community Services have a proven track record in reducing asthma morbidity, and they've been selected for the Best Practices Spotlight in recognition of their evidence-based approach to helping people with asthma.

Asthma H.E.L.P. (Health care, Environment, Learning, Prevention) addresses the many barriers to consistent, quality Health care that many low-income families face every day. The program emphasizes teamwork between patients and their health care providers so that people with asthma can get the most out of the medical services available to them. Patients are coached to take responsibility for keeping their medical appointments and adhering to agreed-upon therapies. In turn, health care providers are encouraged to take into consideration the ongoing, multi-faceted challenges confronting their patients.

There is also an Environmental component to the Asthma H.E.L.P. program. Families living in poverty have fewer housing options, and mold and vermin infested housing is more often the norm than the exception. Midtown and St. Jane provide insecticide and cleaning products to tackle environmental asthma triggers, although their limited supplies can't always meet the need.

Presentations and social gatherings, where families have an opportunity to learn from health care professionals and from each other in a supportive setting, provide many opportunities for Learning about asthma and how to navigate the health care system. There are also opportunities for one-on-one education when Asthma H.E.L.P. caseworkers visit the families in their homes.

Prevention is the ultimate goal of Asthma H.E.L.P.—prevention of asthma episodes, trips to the hospital or emergency room, and absenteeism—and the initiative is clearly paying off. More children in the program now have Asthma Action Plans, and with each home visit there is a decrease in the number of children going to the emergency room or hospital because of asthma symptoms. There are also fewer missed school days with each caseworker home visit.

Midtown Center created Asthma H.E.L.P. in 1993, and it now has 82 children enrolled in its program. Although there have been many challenges along the way, Midtown social worker Michelle Hankins has seen many success stories. She recalls, "There was one child in particular who averaged five visits to the emergency room every year until he joined Midtown's program. This child has not been to an emergency room for an asthma episode since 2005."

According to St. Jane Director Jamie Saunders, "The Asthma H.E.L.P. program takes a holistic approach by putting an emphasis on the needs of the entire family, not just the child with asthma. As children learn to use an Asthma Action Plan and improve their self-management skills, they become more independent. They can participate in school sports and have fun playing with friends. Parents are less stressed and anxious because they know their children can keep their asthma under control. The entire family benefits."

With CDC funds from the Asthma Consortium's Controlling Asthma in St. Louis (CASL) grant, Midtown and St. Jane have been able to expand their Asthma H.E.L.P. programs. CASL has also helped them develop tools to accurately track and assess program outcomes. CASL Project Director Kristin Wilson says, "Midtown and St. Jane's approach to health with the members of their community is different than other approaches we have in CASL. Their focus on the importance of social, economic and environmental factors that influence health plays a very important role in reducing the burden of asthma."

If you can donate pesticides or asthma-friendly cleaning supplies to Midtown or St. Jane, please contact Lucy Reinhart at 314-977-8253 or lreinhart@asthma-stlouis.org.

best practices spotlight

news from the board of directors

These are the newly elected officers of the Board of Directors.

Chair
Rick Kurz, PhD
Professor and Chair
Saint Louis University
School of Public Health

Vice Chair
Rick Barbarash, PharmD, FCCP
Medical Information Scientist
AstraZeneca

Secretary/Treasurer
Larry Bauer, MA, JD
Partner
Stinson, Morrison, and Hecker, LLP

Kathleen McDarby and Viviane McKay
will continue to serve on the Executive Committee as Co-Immediate Past Chairs.

Breathe Your Best for School Success



This year the Best Practices Committee, in collaboration with *Asthma 411*, sponsored the *Breathe Your Best for School Success* program in the Jennings and Wellston school districts. Children with asthma in grades K-8 were eligible to participate. "Passports" were mailed to parents before the summer break, reminding them to take their child to a health care provider for an updated Asthma Action Plan. The next stop was the pharmacy to pick up medications and asthma devices for school and home. When the children delivered their Asthma Action Plans and medications to the school nurses at the end of the summer, their names were entered into a drawing for a grand prize—a \$500 Target gift card. Any child with an up-to-date Asthma Action Plan at the start of the school year had a chance to win. Wellston and Jennings had separate drawings, so both districts had proud winners.

Wellston winner Andre Hutson, a student at Bishop Middle School, announced that he plans to share his prize with his younger brother and sister. The winner at Jennings was 7th grader Tanisha Crump, who attends Jennings Junior High.



The *Asthma 411* team saw an increase in the number of Asthma Action Plans in the Wellston schools this year and believe *Breathe Your Best for School Success* may have made the difference. Parents participating in the program liked the "passport" because it reminded them to take the necessary steps to help control their child's asthma. From their point of view, all the kids came out winners!

As part of a community-wide Breathe Your Best campaign, the Best Practices Committee also developed back-to-school posters, prompting children take their Asthma Action Plans, medications and asthma devices to school. If you would like to request a free poster, please contact Julie Durchholz at 314-977-4006 or at jdurchholz@asthma-stlouis.org.



Linda Dillon, Tanisha Crump, Rebecca Crump and Angela Hobson



Nelda Gardner, Andre Hutson, Seretha Alford and Angela Hobson

- 3/3/07** Midtown Center "I Knew That!" #3 Trivia Night
- 3/10/07** Tobacco-Free Missouri Coalition Trivia Night
- 3/28/07** National Kick Butts Day
- 4/15 – 4/22** National Environmental Education Week
- 4/21/07** American Lung Association of Illinois Asthma Walk
- 4/21/07** American Lung Association of Missouri's Asthma Walk
- 4/30/07** National Healthy Schools Day
- 5/1/07** World Asthma Day
- 5/19/07** World Asthma Day at the St. Louis Science Center
- 5/22/07** National Asthma Forum in Washington, D.C.



calendar

Please visit our website www.asthma-stlouis.org to learn more about these events or to view a complete list of SLRAC activities and committee meetings. If you have an upcoming event that you would like posted on the newsletter calendar, contact Lucy Reinhart at lreinhart@asthma-stlouis.org.

Researchers analyzing data on almost 3,000 Americans suffering from persistent asthma have demonstrated that asthma puts a heavy financial burden on employers. To be eligible for the study employees or their dependents had to experience at least two asthma episodes a week. It was found that direct medical costs for study subjects were close to \$6,500, about \$4,500 more than for people without asthma. Researchers also reported that high indirect costs, attributed to disability and absenteeism, were associated with persistent asthma. Asthmatic employees cost their employers, on average, \$924 more in annual indirect costs than workers without asthma. Interestingly, the indirect rates for people with moderate persistent asthma were similar to those for employees with mild persistent asthma. Dr. Gene Colice, who headed the study at the Washington Hospital Center, cited the minimal use of inhaled steroids by individuals with mild persistent asthma as a likely explanation for this paradox.

The full article can be found in the August issue of the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, www.joem.org

A new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report has some good news and some bad news on asthma. The good news is that the asthma death rate for children in the U.S. has gone down from 3.2 deaths per million in 1999 to 2.5 deaths per million in 2004, although, sadly, there has not been a decline in the mortality rate for African American children. In 2005 the current asthma prevalence shot up to almost 9%, up from 3.6% in 1980 and 7.5% in 1995, but prevalence rates now seems to have plateaued. Also noteworthy, children's asthma-related doctor visits have more than doubled. In the early 1990s about 40 children out of a 1,000 visited a physician because of their asthma. By 2004 this had increased to 89 for every 1,000 children. According to the CDC, the highest incidence of asthma in children was found in the Puerto Rican population, followed by non-Hispanic black children. In 2003 about 4,000,000 children were reported to have had at least one asthma attack in the previous year. Cumulatively these children missed a total of 12.8 million school days because of their asthma. For more information read the CDC report, *State of Childhood Asthma, United States: 1980-2005*, which can be found at www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/ad/ad381.pdf.

Thank You

The Asthma Consortium thanks its donors for their support.

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 Alison C. Nash, MD
 Theresa Prosser
 Lucy and Greg Reinhart
 Stinson, Morrison & Hecker, LLP

Our Mission

The Consortium's mission is to close the gap that exists between people affected by asthma and the knowledge and services that will help them.

Our Vision

To bring together the wealth of talent and resources in the St. Louis metropolitan area to improve the health and quality of life of people living with asthma.

Want to have a say in your Consortium?

Join the committee of your choice by email at Ireinhart@asthma-stlouis.org or go to the website for more information at www.asthma-stlouis.org.



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