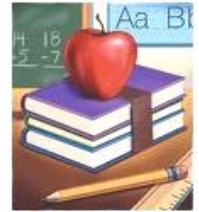




School Links



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Thurston County Public Health and Social Services Department is to make a positive, significant and measurable difference in the environmental, physical and mental health, safety and well being of our community.

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"Hand washing is the single most important means of preventing the spread of infection."

~ CDC

SPRING 2007

THURSTON COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

LEPTOSPIROSIS CASE

Recently a case of Leptospirosis was diagnosed in a Thurston County resident. This is a disease that we seldom see, but has the potential to be transmitted from animals to humans, especially if you are not aware of how that may occur. In the Thurston County case, a local veterinarian was treating a family pet rat and was exposed to bacteria that cause the illness. This incident makes it a good time to review some of the facts about Leptospirosis that you may not know.

Q. What is Leptospirosis?

A. Leptospirosis is a disease caused by spiral shaped bacteria called leptospire. It occurs worldwide and can affect humans as well as many wild and domestic animals including dogs and cats.

Q. How do people and animals get Leptospirosis?

A. The bacteria are spread through the urine of infected animals, which can get into water or soil and can survive there for weeks or even months. Humans and animals

can become infected through contact with contaminated urine, water, or soil. The bacteria can enter the body through our skin (through a cut or scratch). or mucous membranes (eyes, nose, or mouth).. Drinking contaminated water can also cause the infection.

Q. What pet animals get Leptospirosis?

A. All animals can potentially become infected with leptospire, although cases of Leptospirosis in cats are rare.

Q. What are the signs of Leptospirosis in pets?

A. The clinical signs of Leptospirosis vary and are non-specific. The common clinical signs reported in dogs include fever, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea, refusal to eat, severe weakness, stiffness, severe muscle pain, or inability to have puppies.

Q. How can I protect myself and other people when

my pet has Leptospirosis?

A. Do not handle or come in contact with urine, blood, or tissues from the infected pet before it receives proper treatment. As a general rule for handling all pets, always wash your hands after handling them or anything that may have your pet's excrement on it. If you are cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated or have urine from an infected pet on them, use an antibacterial cleaning solution or a solution of 1 part household bleach in 10 parts water.



IS THERE STILL MERCURY IN YOUR SCHOOL?

Thurston County Environmental Health is offering another free disposal of mercury and mercury containing products. This opportunity is funded by the Department of Ecology. If you have any mercury or mercury containing products such as thermometers, thermostats or switches, please contact us at 754-4111 x 6509 to arrange for pickup and disposal. This offer will be good through Earth Week, which is April 22nd - 28th. If you have questions, please call the above number. We look forward to your participation.



BREATHE EASIER: DO-IT-YOURSELF HOME ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

“Your home can affect your health. Find ways to make your home a healthier place to live.”

This booklet provides an extensive checklist of factors in the home that could trigger asthma attacks or expose the occupants to toxins, and what to do about them. It is an excellent tool to provide to families whose children have asthma or frequent

respiratory disease. Teachers and maintenance workers also will find many tips for improving air quality in classrooms and offices. Request copies for all staff, to hand out in the nurse’s office, or just for your own use by calling 360-754-3355 extension 7244, or e-mail :



donetr@co.thurston.wa.us

PLAYGROUNDS TO PORTABLES

The installation of playground equipment or additions to any school facility first



requires the review and approval of the health department. This review process allows us to assure the designs of the project meet safety and health performance

criteria. Examples for playground equipment are design features that might present injury hazards or configurations that would create unsafe active play zones. Classroom projects need to be reviewed for ventilation, lighting, and noise control among other safety standards. If you have future plans for these projects at your school, they need to be reviewed and approved prior to installation and/or con-

struction. If you have any questions regarding this issue please call our office at (360) 754-3355 extension 7392 or 7386.



WASTE REDUCTION OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL SCHOOLS

Is your school seeking ways to save money, reduce waste and educate students on environmental stewardship all at the same time? Thurston County Solid Waste has an energetic, new Education and Outreach team that wants to help you. Below are a few of the programs we have to offer:

RECYCLING CONTAINERS:

We've just received a grant from Washington State Department of Ecology to provide FREE ClearStream CycleMax recycling systems to all the high schools and universities. These can be used in cafeteria areas, at sporting events, and other activities to collect plastic and aluminum beverage containers. Using CycleMax can greatly reduce your trash bill and/or even provide a way for your school clubs to make money off of the recyclables. Learn more about the foldable, stackable, lightweight containers at <http://www.clearstreamrecycler.com/cyclemax.asp>. We've contacted all the high schools by phone, fax and email to offer these, yet some have not responded to the free offer. If your high school hasn't already done so, call us to make sure you get included in the upcoming purchase. If there are funds remaining after the first phase, we will contact the junior highs to offer containers as well.

CLASSROOM PRESENTATIONS:

Our staff is currently revising our school outreach presentations for all grade levels. We are reviewing other jurisdictions' curriculum and meeting with Thurston County school officials to find out how we can best provide environmental education while meeting the teaching requirements. We'll be actively promoting new opportunities when they become available. Other opportunities are tours of the Waste and Recovery Center and the new Silver Springs composting facility.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WASTE REDUCTION SURVEY AND ASSISTANCE OFFER:

Surveys were sent out in January to all 40 elementary schools in Thurston County to assess their current level of recycling and their interest in upcoming food waste composting projects. In addition, we wanted to let the schools know we are here to offer free waste audits and site assist visits to see what waste reduction or recycling opportunities might help them. We'll be sending surveys to the junior and high schools in the near future, but these schools can certainly call us now to request any assistance.

FOOD WASTE COLLECTION AND ON-SITE COMPOSTING:

Food waste and compostable paper makes up between 30-50% of school waste. Thurston County is exploring a few options for schools to divert these materials to save money:

- 1) We've received a grant to provide all the equipment, training, and assistance to elementary schools to set up on-site composting systems. Based on submitted survey responses, we have identified our potential schools and will continue developing the program.
- 2) We'll keep you up to date on our progress. In conjunction with LeMay Enterprises, we are working on a pilot program in the Lacey area to collect food waste and compostable paper from businesses and schools. This is in the beginning stages so stay tuned for more information.

To discuss any of the above opportunities or if you have any questions, please contact Terri Thomas at 360-754-2896 or thomaste@co.thurston.wa.us.



"Food waste and compostable paper makes up between 30-50% of school waste."





“Check for kids, toys and pets before entering the car and starting the motor.”



You could save a child's life by taking a five-second walk around your car before you get in.

Many of these preventable injuries and deaths occur in driveways or parking lots when drivers do not see children near their vehicles.

Often, these drivers are loving family members or friends.

FOLLOW THREE EASY TIPS TO HELP KEEP CHILDREN SAFER AROUND CARS:

Parents and Caregivers

- Firmly hold the hands of children when in driveways, parking lots, and on sidewalks.

Drivers

- Drivers, even those without children of their own, are cautioned to do a safety check to look for chil-

dren walking or playing around cars.

- Drivers should walk all the way around a parked vehicle to check for kids, toys, and pets before entering the car and starting the motor.

MORE ABOUT SPOT THE TOT

Spot the Tot is a nationwide expansion of the successful program of the same name created by Safe Kids Utah.

The program teaches parents, drivers, caregivers and children new safety tips to increase awareness about small children sharing the same space as vehicles. It is designed to increase awareness and reduce the risk of injuries and fatalities that occur in driveways, parking lots, and on sidewalks.

This is the newest ini-

tiative of Safe Kids Buckle Up, which has focused on promoting safety for children in cars for more than 10 years.

FACTS

In the United States, from 2001-2003 approximately 2,500 children per year, ages 1-14, reported to emergency rooms. An average of 229 children per year died after being struck by a vehicle in a driveway or parking area. Close to half of children injured in these incidents were ages 1-4.

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FDA RE-EMPHASIZES WARNINGS TO CONSUMERS ON RISKS OF PET TURTLES

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is urgently reminding the public that contact with baby turtles can pose a serious health risk to infants, small children, and adults with impaired immune systems as they can be natural hosts to *Salmonella*, a group of bacteria that can cause severe illness and death. Recently, a four-week old infant in Florida died of infection traced to *Salmonella pomona*, a bacteria that was also found in a pet turtle in the home.



Salmonella is the genus name for a number of bacteria commonly associated with food poisoning from contaminated or undercooked foods, and salmonellosis is the disease the bacteria can cause. *Salmonella* can be found on the outer skin and shell surfaces of turtles, causing salmonellosis for those handling turtles without properly washing their hands after handling the animals. FDA is reminding parents and others who care for children of the following:

- 1) The sale of turtles with shells less than four inches long is illegal. Exceptions to FDA's regulation include sales of these turtles intended for export only or for bona fide scientific, educational, or exhibitional purpose;
- 2) *Salmonella* infection can be caused by contact with turtles in petting zoos, parks, child day care facilities, and other locations; and
- 3) It is important to wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling or touching turtles and their housing.

In the early 1970's, it was determined that pet turtles, particularly red-eared sliders, were responsible for an estimated 280,000 cases of salmonellosis each year in the United States. In 1975, FDA banned the sale of turtles with a shell less than four inches long as a necessary public health measure. FDA has repeatedly emphasized the risks of turtle-associated salmonellosis because of a resurgence in the sales of such turtles in the last four years. The public health impact

of turtle-associated salmonellosis in humans is an estimated 74,000 cases in the United States per year.

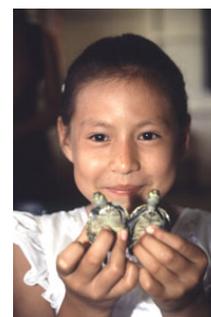
Salmonella infection can be transmitted either directly from contact with the turtle or its feces, or indirectly through the animal's water. Turtles with *Salmonella* usually do not appear to be sick. Their feces do not always contain the bacteria, therefore a single negative test does not prove they are *Salmonella*-free.

Although anyone can acquire a salmonellosis infection, the risk is highest in infants, young children, the elderly, and others with lowered natural resistance to disease. Pregnancy, cancer, chemotherapy, organ transplant, diabetes, and liver problems pose particular risks. Gastrointestinal symptoms following *Salmonella* exposure begin in 6 to 72 hours (usually 12 to 36 hours) and generally last for two to seven days.

For more information on FDA's regulation of turtles, please see the following: <http://www.fda.gov/cvm/turtlereg.htm>.



“The public health impact of turtle-associated salmonellosis in humans is an estimated 74,000 cases in the United States per year.”





MYTHS ABOUT HEAD LICE

By Vikki Valentine *Morning Edition*, November 30, 2006

Head lice and humans go way back; the parasites have been found with their little claws locked around prehistoric mummy hair. And our eons-long relationship has given us plenty of time to build up myths about lice, too. Here, Harvard lice expert Richard Pollack dispels some of the most persistent folklore:

Dirty Kids Spread Lice:

Head lice have no preference for dirty hair or clean hair. "If you wash your hair three times a day or more, the lice on your head will just be clean lice," Pollack says.

Pets Spread Lice: Human head-lice infestations don't come from pets -- our lice only like our blood.

Brushes Spread Lice:

Combs, brushes, headphones, hats and helmets have very little role in spreading lice. It's all the tumbling, playing and hugging that does it. In the vast majority of cases, lice are spread by direct head-to-head contact.

Clean House to Get Rid of Lice: If your house is dusty or dirty, go ahead and clean, says Pollack. But that won't prevent or cure a lice infestation. The parasites can't survive for more than a day without a meal of human

blood, and they generally aren't going to let go of your hair to hang out on your couch. Changing bed linens or vacuuming a car seat can only help, but chances of a louse being on a bed or a car seat are incredibly small.

Shave Heads: "It's like using a cannon to kill a housefly," Pollack says. Completely shaving a head will get rid of lice eggs, but Pollack says that's a needless tactic when there are so many other effective and less drastic ways to solve the problem.

Head Lice Can Kill: Nope, that would be body lice. Those parasites do thrive in dirty environments and are perhaps most infamous for spreading deadly typhus in the 19th century. Head lice just make you itch.

Coat Your Head in Vaseline:

Some people swear by the Vaseline or olive-oil treatments -- the idea is to suffocate the lice. But lice are extremely hard to suffocate, and to date, no studies have evaluated the efficacy of either substance. "Why not chose something that's been tested and shown to work?" Pollack says.

Insecticide Shampoos Can Be Toxic: "The only ones who should fear the proper use of these products are lice," says Pollack. Look for FDA-registered over-the-counter treatments containing pyrethrin, which is a natural chrysanthemum abstract, or permethrin, which is the

synthetic form. If your lice appear to be resistant to those, the next step is a prescription shampoo containing either malathion or lindane. "When used properly, they are valuable and low-risk pesticides," Pollack says.

Manual Removal Is Safest: If you have short, straight hair, a special comb on its own could take care of an infestation. "If my daughter, who has thick, shoulder-length hair, had head lice, and I tried to use any of these devices on her, the neighbors would call the cops, it would cause so much discomfort and pain."

Editor's Note: Pollack has served as a paid scientific advisor in the past to companies that manufacture head lice shampoos.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6556831#6555975>





During the 2005-2006 school year, 340 second grade students at 24 participating elementary schools received a free dental screening by local volunteer dentists. Of those 340 students who were screened, 223 received sealants and 264 received fluoride varnish. Fifty-five children were also identified as being in "urgent need" due to having severe decay and/or active infection.



THURSTON COUNTY ORAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

ABCD - ACCESS TO BABY AND CHILD DENTISTRY

The ABCD program's goal is to improve the oral health of Medicaid-enrolled children by increasing access and utilization of dental services in the 0-5 age group. The Thurston County Public Health and Social Services Department provides program education, case management, outreach and evaluation. Other partners include the Thurston-Mason Dental Society, University of Washington School of Dentistry, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services and the Washington Dental Service Foundation. Each year, children enrolled in the program receive two dental exams and parent education sessions by a participating local dentist, three fluoride varnish applications, and restorative care. Since launching in Thurston County in 2000, over 5,000 Thurston County children have enrolled in ABCD. During enrollment, parents receive enrollment cards for each child, family oral health education, a list of ABCD-trained dental providers, and dental supplies. Families

interested in enrolling children in the ABCD program should contact Colin Williams, Program Coordinator, at (360) 709-3070.



COMMUNITY SCHOOL SEALANT PROGRAM

The Thurston County Community School Oral Health Program has been offered since the 1996-1997 school year through the cooperation of local school districts, the Thurston County Oral Health Coalition, Sound Smile Professionals, and the Thurston County Public Health and Social Services Department.

This program is available to elementary schools that have at least one-quarter of their students receiving free or reduced priced meals. The target population is second grade students. At this age, most children begin to use their first set of permanent adult molars. Applying dental sealants is a non-invasive process. Mobile

dental equipment is brought to a school to apply a white plastic coating to smooth out deep pits and crevices in teeth where cavities can easily form. This program is completely voluntary and requires written consent from parents/guardians. After participants are screened for free by a volunteer dentist, Sound Smile Professionals is contracted by the Thurston County Public Health and Social Services Department to apply sealants and fluoride varnish. Sound Smile Professionals can bill medical coupons or private insurance, and families without dental insurance are able to contribute to the cost of these services through cash payment options.



Questions related to Thurston County oral health programs and resources can be directed to Colin Williams, Thurston County Oral Health Coordinator at (360) 709-3070 or by email at wiliamc@co.thurston.wa.us





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SUGGESTIONS?

If you have any information or school related issues you would like to see addressed in future issues of School Links please call 754-3355 ext. 7392 or 7386, E-mail: peebled@co.thurston.wa.us or write to:

Thurston County
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Attr: Dawn Peebles
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"The Road to Healthy Public Spaces"



"The Road to Healthy Public Spaces" training video is coming soon to a school near you! The goal of the video is to train public sector gardeners and managers on how to maintain public spaces without the use of pesticides, and within existing staffing levels. The video can also be used to show school boards, administrators, homeowners, and community groups how and why to maintain places where children, pets, and the public play without relying on pesticides.

One of the great things about this video is that it has an all star cast of gardeners working in the field, who speak honestly about their successes, and failures. We truly feel this movie will be a very useful, hands-on training video and will greatly assist many public entities in pesticide reduction/elimination. The video will run 30-45 minutes and covers: What is the concern about pesticides? Landscape design, turf maintenance, pruning, mulching, less-toxic tools, and how to deal with stinging insects. To reserve a copy or set up a screening for your staff, please contact Jennifer Johnson at (360) 754-4111 ext. 7631.

