A stronger, healthier community

What makes a community healthy? Is it when there are low rates of sickness and disease? Or active, fit residents? These areas may be what you imagine first when you think of health, and they are very important, but is that it?

We at the Verdant Health Commission also envision social connectedness and mental health as part of the picture of a healthy community. New York University Professor of Sociology Eric Klinenberg spoke in February about this issue to more than 200 community providers who serve South Snohomish County at the Verdant Healthier Community Conference. He reminded us that the strength of a community can depend on how connected we are with one another. He stressed that the places where we gather can build a sense of belonging, which can positively affect health.

As Superintendent Robin Fenn shares in her message on page three of this newsletter, loneliness affects all portions of our population. Engaging with those around you is one way to build a stronger community, and we strive to provide those opportunities at the Verdant Community Wellness Center and through many of our grant programs.

Verdant hosts gatherings of parents with young children weekly at Play & Learn while on a monthly basis we host veterans at Hero’s Café, family caregiver meetings, older Korean-speaking adults learning about health topics, and more. Verdant is a designated “Safe Place” for teens in crisis and a location for Volunteers of America North Sound 2-1-1 for people with basic needs. Our multi-week programs and one-time classes also provide a chance to be with others who share a common interest.

Take a look through this edition of *The Canopy* to gain more ideas about programs to build community strength and health. Please join us if you can!
Building community to strengthen connections

Message from the Superintendent

Some say that in our current environment, it is difficult for people to be lonely. With modern technology, you can “connect” with others within a matter of seconds. Despite these instantaneous connections, people still report feeling alone.

Who feels lonely? Many believe that it is most prevalent in the elderly population due to decreased mobility and loss of social networks. However, loneliness affects people of all ages. Up to 80 percent of adolescents report often feeling lonely compared to 40 to 50 percent in the elderly populations. We often don’t consider that it is possible to be lonely even when one is surrounded by people and seemingly has a lot of friends. Loneliness has more to do with the quality of relationships as opposed to the number of relationships we have.

So how do we address this? One of the primary ways is to create spaces that allow people to connect in meaningful ways; spaces that foster a sense of community. Author and digital anthropologist Brian Solis once said, “Community is much more than belonging to something; it’s about doing something together that makes belonging matter.”

At our recent Verdant Healthier Community Conference, we had the opportunity to hear from those in the Puget Sound area who are using their physical spaces in creative ways to bring people together and build connections. Given that the current research shows that loneliness can have health impacts greater than those from being obese and that long-term loneliness increases mortality by up to 25 percent, the effect of reshaping physical infrastructure has great implications for overall health.

Take a look at the awards given (shown on this page) at the Verdant Healthier Community Conference in February. These recipients demonstrate dedication and service to our South Snohomish County community, and we are privileged to recognize them.

Sincerely,

Robin Fenn, Ph.D., LICSW
Superintendent

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**Fun and healthy activities all summer long**

**Meet Me at the Park**

Join us for free activities and fun at these family-friendly events!

- **6:30-8 p.m. on the following Tuesdays:**
  - July 9 at Wilcox Park
  - July 16 at South Lynnwood Park
  - July 23 at North Lynnwood Park

Learn more at verdanthealth.org/events

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**South County Walks**

Do you enjoy walking and want to volunteer this summer leading free walks in our community?

The South County Walks program includes daytime and evening community walks throughout the summer, and we are looking for interested volunteers to help! An information and training session will take place on Thursday, June 13, 2019 from 5:30-6:30 p.m. at the Verdant Community Wellness Center. Please email sue.waldin@verdanthealth.org or call (425) 582-9412 to RSVP or get more information.

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**Bike2Health**

**South County Rides**

Grab those handlebars and join us for free, family-friendly bike rides this summer!

As part of the Verdant-supported Bike2Health program in South Snohomish County, Cascade Bicycle Club is leading beginner-friendly rides this spring and summer. Cascade’s trained education staff offer tips on: basic bike handling skills, navigating routes, and group etiquette during these fun and relaxed rides.

Rides begin in April and run through September with monthly or weekly opportunities to ride. You can expect a leisurely pace, flat terrain, and relatively short rides on protected bike paths or low-traffic streets. Participants must have basic bike handling skills, wear a helmet, bring a bike without training wheels (balance bikes are OK), and be no younger than six years old. Limited to 12 participants per ride, plus two trained ride leaders.

Learn more and register at cascade.org/bike2health

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The Power of Community

The Verdant Health Commission recognizes that good health is so much more than the absence of disease. It is also about those things that influence us daily: our wealth or the lack thereof, the opportunities we have, the education we receive, our health care, the policies that determine what we eat, or the barriers we face to healthy environments. The Verdant Health Commission is looking for the strongest impact for so many.

Capturing the voice of the community, honoring the four individuals and organizations who have contributed to the community in unique and powerful ways, is how we can best honor their impact. This newsletter, ‘The Voice,’ highlights these efforts and the words and drawings they contributed to Verdant Health Commission.

The following awards were given at the Verdant Healthier South Snohomish Community Health Center awards dinner.

1. Hispanic Champion: The Mountlake Terrace Recreation Pavilion

2. Innovation Award: The Lynnwood Police Department with the Innovative Program Award; and the School of Nursing and Public Health.

3. Project Access Award: Korean Women’s Association, Seattle Visiting Nurses Association

4. Street Team Award: Compass Health

It is the people in the community, our most important resource, who determine the strongest impact on me and for whom I work as Superintendent of Public Hospital District No. 2, Snohomish County.

Lifestyle Modification Programs

Are you ready to commit to change?

At Verdant, we regularly offer free, in-person classes to reach healthy habits. We have recently begun offering small-group, multi-week programs to encourage lifestyle modification with support of experts over the course of 12 weeks, depending on the program. Some of these programs face a fee in places, typically ranging from $15 to $20, with discounts for senior citizens. Programs include Cooking with Confidence (12x), diabetes-friendly living for adults with Type 2 (10x), and more.

Find these classes at verdanthealth.org or call (425) 582-8600.

Board of Commissioners

The Verdant Health Commission is governed by the selected commissioners of Public Hospital District No. 2, Snohomish County. Each member of the board is elected for a four-year term. Board meetings require that all the board members of the Verdant Health Commission be available for meetings and sessions at least one time a month.

Current Programs & Community Investments

The organizations and programs below have been supported by Verdant in 2016, with four of the programs featured on the following page.

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Did you know?

If you are at risk of developing type 2 diabetes:

• Reduces your risk for high blood pressure
• Helps you relax and sleep better
• Improves your cholesterol levels

The bottom line is, walking is a great way to both add to your daily activity and work towards your goal. If you haven’t been physically active for a while or have chronic conditions, it is important to start slowly. You can add a half mile to your daily walk or set a goal to walk 5 miles a week. If you are already active, you can shorten the walk or set a goal to walk 10 miles a week. "Developing diabetes can negatively impact for so many. Congratulations to these community stewards who are making a difference in our community."

For more information, visit verdanthealth.org/events.

On Thursday, Nov. 15, 6–8 p.m., the Hero’s Café Planning Committee will host the 2017 Hero’s Café in the Mountlake Terrace Recreation Pavilion. The purpose of the event is to honor community members who have contributed to the community in unique and powerful ways.

The event will feature a formal presentation and a dinner. Tickets will be available for purchase for $15. Visit verdanthealth.org/events.

Youth sports experience practitioners, clubs, coaches, and volunteers with the Youth Sports Experience Program. The program offers comprehensive options for youth sports organizations to develop a best-in-class youth athlete experience. For more information, visit youthsportsexperienceprogram.org.

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About The Canopy

The mission of the Verdant Health Commission is to improve the health and well-being of our community. We bring together community partners and individuals interested in improving their health or the health of others under the umbrella topic of wellness. Our work in this area is similar to a canopy’s work in nature: supporting and protecting the forest it covers. We hope that through this newsletter, The Canopy, you will learn about our programs and find ways to support your health by engaging with us.

Get Involved: Community Health & Wellness Events

Learn about these events and others, by visiting verdanthealth.org/events. All events below are free unless otherwise listed and take place at the Verdant Community Wellness Center, 4710 196th St. SW in Lynnwood, (425) 582-8600. Pre-registration required.

Learn & Taste:
Nutrition & Brain Health 3-Part Series
Thursdays, May 9, 16 & 23, 10:30 a.m.–12 p.m.
$15 fee to participate; scholarships available

What is Mindfulness & Can It Help Me Manage Stress?
Wednesday, May 15, 6–7:30 p.m.

Osteoporosis & Bone Health: Facts & Food with a Doc and a Dietitian
Tuesday, May 21, 1–3 p.m.

Diabetes-Friendly Living:
A 4-Week Series for Adults*
Mondays, June 10, 17, 24 & July 1, 6–7:30 p.m.
*Adults diagnosed with diabetes who have already had formal diabetes education

Cooking Demo: Eating Well to Reduce Fatigue
Wednesday, June 26, 1-2:30 p.m.