

Shining Stars recognized by Board of Health

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

During their April 25 meeting, board of health members helped staff from the Northeast Colorado Health Department recognize the 2012 Public Health Shining Stars.

This is the agency's fifth annual recognition of individuals throughout Northeast Colorado that champion public health.

"This award ceremony provides a great opportunity for our agency to acknowledge and applaud the public health efforts of others," said Tony Cappello, PhD, NCHD's district public health administrator. "This also gives us a chance to highlight just how vast the field of public health is and how important it is to our communities. We are all exposed to public health in our everyday lives and there are many individuals in Northeastern Colorado who help support and sustain public health in our area."

According to Dr. Cappello, the honorees are nominated by health department staff.

Pam Kage was nominated for her vision and passion to help reduce the injuries to children and youth in Washington County. Her nomination reads as follows: "Pam collaborated with several partners in Washington County to create the Reducing Injury through Prevention, Education, Activities & Traffic Safety (RIPEATS) coalition."

In partnership with this RIPEATS coalition, Kage coordinated an extremely successful safety event called "Surviving the Summer." The event focused on injury prevention including teen driving safety, railroad safety, child passenger safety and motorcycle safety.

Kage brought in the Med Evac helicopter from Greeley, a No Zone Semi, a rollover simulator, Alive at 25, Spot the Tot as well as other programming that focused on distracted driving. Kage's dedication to injury prevention makes her a Public Health Shining Star.

In addition to her outreach to teens, Kage also provides the Buckle Up for Love program at the preschools and other early childcare providers, has implemented a program called "Save a

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Friend, Save Yourself,” designed for students in grades 3-8 and is also a child passenger safety technician.

Kage was nominated by Michelle Pemberton, NCHD’s prevention services coordinator.

Nadeen Ibrahim, a junior from Weldon Valley High School, was nominated for her work studying irradiation of bacteria in wastewater. Her nomination reads as follows:

“This award is being presented to Miss Ibrahim for her outstanding research and dedication to the field of Public Health. Her science fair project sought to examine a more effective way to utilize ultraviolet (UV) light in the deactivation of pathogens in wastewater. Miss Ibrahim’s research found that by introducing tinfoil to the UV disinfection process, this increased the overall reflectivity of the UV light and subsequently increased the efficiency of wastewater disinfection.

“Overall, Miss Ibrahim’s project has proven to be significant addition to public health practice and research and also gained the support and assistance of Dr. David Gilkey, a professor at Colorado State University’s Environmental and Radiological Health Sciences Department. This further highlights the unique contribution and relevance of Miss Ibrahim’s project to the field of environmental public health and in the areas of wastewater disinfection and water quality.”

Ibrahim was nominated by Dr. Cappello.

The Haxtun Community, specifically the Childcare Coalition members, its board of directors, the Haxtun School District and the Town of Haxtun, were nominated for their efforts in planning, organizing and building a child care center in their community. The Haxtun nomination reads as follows:

“In October 2008, the Childcare Coalition was established from the Engage Haxtun meetings. This group of community members established themselves as a non-profit organization, with the help of the Haxtun Education Foundation and began fund raising efforts to construct a childcare center in Haxtun. They had a simple goal to provide a safe environment for infants, toddlers,

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preschool-aged children and families needing childcare in the Haxtun community as well as the surrounding area.

“The group first received a \$405,000 Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) grant and tried to place a bond on the November 2007 election ballot to raise the remaining funds to construct the center. It failed by six votes and the project lost the DOLA funding. But this group decided to persevere and start over again to secure funds to complete this project.

“The coalition organized many fund raising events and received many cash pledges from private and community service organizations. They even received another \$300,000 grant from DOLA, after having to deny accepting the first grant. The Haxtun School District donated the land for the center, worth up to \$35,000 and the Town of Haxtun pledged \$25,000 worth of in-kind labor and also agreed to serve as a host for the DOLA grant.

“Through dedication, hard work and perseverance, this dream has become a reality. It is a great example of what can be accomplished when an entire community becomes involved and works together.”

The Haxtun Community was nominated by Carmen Vandembark, NCHD’s environmental health director.

Austin Beckner, an eighth-grader at Caliche, was nominated for his willingness and passion to reach out to local youth about the importance of traumatic brain injury prevention. His nomination reads as follows:

“During a young riders’ rodeo event in Greeley in 2010, Austin was bucked off of and trampled by a bull, sustaining a severe head injury. Even though Austin was taking precautions and wearing a helmet at the time of his accident, the head injuries he received were nearly fatal and put him in the hospital for 49 days, the first 18 of which he spent in a coma.

“Austin has turned his story into a learning experience for others and become a voice for traumatic brain injury prevention in Northeast Colorado. He was one of the reasons NCHD

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wrote a grant for the S.T.O.P. Rodeo Traumatic Brain Injury program in 2010.

“Through that program, grant funds were utilized to purchase safety helmets and provide education to local youth rodeo competitors. While the helmets and educational presentations were well-received, it was Austin’s presence as a guest speaker at many of these TBI functions that really delivered the message about prevention. For the past two years, Austin has spoken to both youth and adults about the importance of wearing a helmet, for everything from mutton busting to bull riding. In addition, he was also an ambassador for Children’s Hospital in 2011.

“Austin has been a great advocate of wearing helmets and he has helped us educate thousands of people in our region about the importance of traumatic brain injury prevention, particularly for youth rodeo participants.”

Beckner was nominated by Sherri Yahn, NCHD’s coordinator of the Healthcare Program for Children with Special Needs.

All of the award winners were recognized during a luncheon and received a plaque and a printed copy of their nomination.

In other business the board:

—learned that full funding is being restored to Amendment 35 programs, which includes tobacco and chronic disease. Dr. Cappello told board members he was pleased to learn that NCHD is slated to receive \$150,000 for fiscal year 2013 and will have the opportunity to competitively apply for more funds from a state general fund block. As soon as the funding is finalized, the agency will move forward with program planning.

—listened to a presentation from NCHD’s Environmental Health representative Pam Lindenthal regarding proposed changes to NCHD’s rabies regulations.

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