CLEVELAND COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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APRIL 1-7, 2013 IS NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK

The Cleveland County Health Department Celebrates Public Health Week by Recognizing the Ten Great Public Health Achievements of the 20th Century

(Shelby, NC)—Public health is credited with adding twenty-five years to the life expectancy of people in the United States in this century. Yet, ask the average person what public health is and their reply may be limited to, "healthcare for low-income families." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Ten Great Achievements in the 20th Century was created to remind us how far we have come, how we got here, and exactly what public health is—the active protection of our nation's health and safety, credible information to enhance healthy decisions, and partnerships with local minorities and organizations to promote good health.

The CDC's Ten Great Achievements in the 20th Century are as follows:

- **Vaccination**: Programs of population-wide vaccinations resulted in the eradication of smallpox; elimination of polio in the Americas; and control of measles, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, Haemophilus influenzae type b, and other infectious diseases in the United States and other parts of the world.

- **Motor-vehicle safety**: Improvements in motor-vehicle safety have contributed to large reductions in motor-vehicle-related deaths. These improvements include engineering efforts to make both vehicles and highways safer and successful efforts to change personal behavior (e.g., increased use of safety belts, child safety seats, and motorcycle helmets and decreased drinking and driving).

- **Safer workplaces**: Work-related health problems, such as coal workers' pneumoconiosis (black lung), and silicosis—common at the beginning of the century—have been significantly reduced. Severe injuries and deaths related to

mining, manufacturing, construction, and transportation also have decreased. Since 1980, safer workplaces have resulted in a reduction of approximately 40% in the rate of fatal occupational injuries.

- **Control of infectious diseases**: Control of infectious diseases has resulted from clean water and better sanitation. Infections such as typhoid and cholera, major causes of illness and death early in the 20th century, have been reduced dramatically by improved sanitation. In addition, the discovery of antimicrobial therapy has been critical to successful public health efforts to control infections such as tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

- **Decline in deaths from coronary heart disease and stroke**: A decline in deaths from coronary heart disease and stroke has resulted from risk-factor modification, such as smoking cessation and blood pressure control, coupled with improved access to early detection and better treatment. Since 1972, death rates for coronary heart disease have decreased 51%.

- **Safer and healthier foods**: Since 1900, safer and healthier foods have resulted from decreases in microbial contamination and increases in nutritional content. Identifying essential micronutrients and establishing food-fortification programs have almost eliminated major nutritional deficiency diseases such as rickets, goiter, and pellagra in the United States.

- **Healthier mothers and babies**: Healthier mothers and babies are a result of better hygiene and nutrition, availability of antibiotics, greater access to healthcare, and technologic advances in maternal and neonatal medicine. Since 1900, infant mortality has decreased 90%, and maternal mortality has decreased 99%.

- **Family planning**: Access to family planning and contraceptive services has altered social and economic roles of women. Family planning has provided health benefits such as smaller family size and longer intervals between the birth of children; increased opportunities for preconceptional counseling and screening; fewer infant, child, and maternal deaths; and the use of barrier contraceptives to prevent pregnancy and transmission of human immunodeficiency virus and other STDs.

- **Fluoridation of drinking water**: Fluoridation of drinking water began in 1945 and in 1999 reaches an estimated 144 million persons in the United States. Fluoridation safely and inexpensively benefits both children and adults by effectively preventing tooth decay, regardless of socioeconomic status or access to care. Fluoridation has played an important role in the reductions in tooth decay (40%-70% in children) and of tooth loss in adults (40%-60%).

- **Recognition of tobacco use as a health hazard**: Recognition of tobacco use as a health hazard in 1964 has resulted in changes in the promotion of cessation of use, and reduction of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke. Since the initial Surgeon

General's report on the health risks of smoking, the prevalence of smoking among adults has decreased, and millions of smoking-related deaths have been prevented.

Now that you know some of the achievements of public health, let's take a look at how many of these successes impact your life on a daily basis:

"A Day in the Life of Public Health"

7:00 a.m.
Your alarm clock rings and you roll out of bed. You turn the faucet to brush your teeth and fluoride-enriched water flows out. Despite being reluctant to commute to work this morning, you have slept well.

7:30 a.m.
Before you leave the house, you have a balanced, nutritious breakfast. The milk, orange juice, and coffee you prepare have all been inspected and approved as ready for human consumption. The same goes for your bread, bagels, cereal, bananas, or any other breakfast food you choose.

8:00 a.m.
You hop in the car for your daily commute to work and buckle your seatbelt. As you are driving, you can be assured that public health experts have conducted research that have led to improved traffic safety laws.

9:00 a.m.
Your workday has begun. The air filters provide the office with clean air. Public health experts researching the effects of proper posture on chronic musculoskeletal injuries developed your office chair with ergonomics in mind. The overhead lights have been designed to provide just the right amount of light so as to keep you awake during work and also reduce depressive symptoms.

12 noon
At lunch, you go for a brisk walk. The CDC encourages adults to get at least 30 minutes of activity a day. Regular exercise can help you:

- Control weight
- Control high blood pressure
- Reduce risk for type 2 diabetes, heart attack, and colon cancer
- Reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety

- Reduce arthritis pain and disability
- Reduce risk for osteoporosis and falls

5:00 p.m.
You go to meet friends or work colleagues for an early dinner. Open the restaurant door and, before being seated, you catch a glimpse of the county certificate of approval. The certificate signifies your chosen restaurant serves clean food.

8:00 p.m.
Before reading a bestselling novel and falling asleep, you decide to watch some television. The evening newscaster mentions the latest study into the effects of smoking on lung cancer and another study about the latest data released for a new cancer drug. The FDA announced approval of a new medication to treat asthma and public health experts are handling possible disease transmission after a recent hurricane hits the southern States. A commercial explains the latest food guide pyramid and you start planning what breakfast you would like to eat tomorrow morning.

As you can see, public health works hard every day to protect and improve the health of our community. Public health professionals try to prevent problems from happening or re-occurring through education, promotion of healthy lifestyles, and research for disease and injury prevention.

The field of public health is highly varied and encompasses many disciplines and services. We are far more than an agency that provides "healthcare to low-income families." To learn more about the services offered by the Cleveland County Health Department, please visit our website at: www.clevelandcounty.com/cchd.

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