

## **Healthwatch 2006 The Year in Review**

### **The year behind...**

Within the past year, we, as a coalition have accomplished a lot. We walked into 2006 facing the grim reality that HealthWatch was understaffed, Community Advocates was no longer able to solely staff the meetings and we could not continue without either acquiring financial support or staff support from participating organizations. We weren't even sure that our members felt that the meetings were valuable enough to continue moving forward. After holding an emergency meeting and experiencing an outpouring of ideas and support, we learned that HealthWatch meetings are indeed important to the community. We came out of the meeting that day with a plan, a newly formed steering committee and two new staff volunteers and we continued moving steadily forward throughout the year. Now at the year's end, it appears we have accomplished more in 2006 than ever before and we have you all to thank for your collaboration and support.

It is important to give special thanks to those who have put in the extra time and work to make sure things get done. First, thanks goes out to Cara Hansen and Leah Jepson for their assistance in the dull and thankless HealthWatch tasks, such as, minute writing and agenda organization. Their help has been crucial keeping our meetings going throughout the year. Thank you ladies! We also owe thanks to those who've helped organize and staff the steering committee and volunteered to do letter writing and talking points for our action oriented work; Shirin Cabraal, Lisa Foley, Masiel Gomez, Laura Kerecman, Shay Sanford, Andrea Williams and Ivy Zamora. Thank you all!

Please read on to get

### **2006 Accomplishments**

The steering committee and various other coalition volunteers have also been instrumental in organizing coalition actions and activities. In the past year we have accomplished the following:

- Restructured HealthWatch to ensure meeting time was productive and relevant to our work.
- Formed a steering committee that now guides the direction of the coalition.
- Written letters of support for the School Breakfast Program, Housing Trust Fund, and Targeted Case Management.
- Released a letter with talking points to legislators, which outlined the negative effects the Deficit Reduction Act would have on recipients of entitlement programs. Representatives from Congressman Ryan, Congresswoman Moore and Senator Feingold's office also attended HealthWatch to hear our concerns.
- Worked with Covering Kids and Families national marketing team in planning and implementing back-to-school health fairs and a Milwaukee press conference to boost Medicaid awareness in Wisconsin.
- Consulted with the General Assistance Medical Program (GAMP) in their creation of a new enrollment application.

- Continued to advocate for better access to health programs by working collaboratively with the Department of Health and Human Services and GAMP representatives.

### **2006 Presenting Agencies**

In the spirit of working together for better outcomes, HealthWatch has continued to invite local agencies to share information on their programs and services, as means of increasing members' understanding of services available in our community. The following agencies were chosen to speak this year:

- ICare
- Kid's Matter, Inc.
- Gilda's Club
- UWM College of Nursing
- 16<sup>th</sup> Street Community Health Center
- Milwaukee Health Services

### **2006 Special Speakers and Presentations**

HealthWatch invited speakers to come into our meetings to provide more in-depth information and education on current health topics. The following presentations took place:

- Bob Speer from St. Michael's Hospital discussed the closing of St. Michael's Hospital and the effects on the displaced patients.
- Autumn Arnold from Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) provided training on the ACCESS system.
- Mary Moyer from DHFS provided a training on policy changes mandated by the Deficit Reduction Act
- Dr. Stephen Hargarten gave a presentation on gun violence as a public health issue.
- Rob Henken from DHFS provided an explanation of the Milwaukee County 2007 budget.
- The authors of three proposed state health plans presented the detail of their plans at a Universal Healthcare Forum sponsored by HealthWatch.

### **The Year Ahead...**

After having accomplished so much in 2006, we'll have a tough time trying to outdo ourselves in 2007. We will be releasing a web link to a survey that will help direct our efforts in the coming year. In the mean time the HealthWatch Steering Committee has made the following recommendations for our meetings.

**Issues for 2007:** The issues that HW focuses on will be based on the results of a survey of members. A paper copy of the survey will be distributed at the December HW meeting, followed by an on-line survey sent to the e-mail list:

**Proposed Trainings:** We would like to hold the following one to two hour trainings in 2007. If you would like to help coordinate one of these trainings or have additional suggestions, please contact HealthWatch co-chairs or staff volunteers.

- Presentation on programs for those with mental illness or dual diagnosis.
- Two part SSI training: Part 1- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) basics, Part 2- Services available for SSI recipients.
- Transportation for Medicaid Recipients.
- Badger Care Plus
- Teen Issues: Sexual Assault, Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Pregnancy
- Infant Mortality.

**Agencies of the month:** This year we are requesting that coalition members determine which agencies present for “agency of the month.” Who do you want to hear from? You can communicate that information to us by filling out our year-end survey. The following agencies have already been suggested by the steering committee.

- SAIL
- MHA’s Invisible Children’s Program and Specialized Family Center
- Community Options Program (COP)

Last, please don’t forget to fill out our survey. We want to make sure our meetings are useful to everyone who attends. Now let’s look forward to 2007 being a year of positive changes in health care programs!

Sincerely,