



1020 Washington St. N, Twin Falls, Idaho
208-737-5900 www.phd5.idaho.gov

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PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

Contact: Amy Lierman, Public Information Officer, 737-5978

South Central Public Health District Honors Local Health Heroes

As part of celebrating National Public Health Month in April, South Central Public Health District announced today that a mental health advocate, a group of students working on tobacco cessation activities, a food safety awareness group, and a group of volunteers working with elderly are being honored as 2008 Health Heroes.

The 2008 Health Heroes Awards were presented today during the South Central Public Health District Board meeting in Twin Falls. Nominations were submitted by the community, and selection of Dr. Elizabeth Sugden, a mental health advocate; the Magic Valley Tobacco Free Coalition; the South Central Idaho Food Safety Awareness Coalition; and the Fit and Fall Proof Exercise Program Volunteers was based on the breadth of their service and their on-going commitment to improving the health of south central Idaho residents.

Winner of the award for Adult Health Hero was Dr. Elizabeth Sugden of Jerome. Dr. Sugden serves as a passionate educator to the community on the severity of mental illnesses and the need to expand mental health resources in the Magic Valley. Along with her mental awareness activities, she personally advocated for free medications from pharmaceutical companies for over 200 recipients who otherwise would have gone without.

“Dr. Sugden is a true champion to those in need and is greatly respected for her passion to improve the mental health community,” said Buck Ward, Chairman of the Board of Health. “She represents the true spirit of a Health Hero.”

The Magic Valley Tobacco Free Coalition was selected as the 2008 Youth Health Hero. This dedicated group of Twin Falls High School students is on a mission to better the health of thousands by enthusiastically promoting a tobacco free community. Activities of this group include a successful request and petition drive for the local hospital to become a smoke free campus (implemented Jan. 1, 2008), a triumphant legislative campaign for smoke free bowling alleys in the state (became law on July 1, 2007), and the group was recently nominated for Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids National Group Advocates of the Year award. MVTFC is truly an asset to this community and an inspiration to all.

“Thank you to the members of MVTFC for your diligent work to get Idahoans to kick the tobacco habit,” said Ward. “You are an inspiration to your peers and all Idahoans.”

Winner of the Group Health Hero awards included the South Central Idaho Food Safety Awareness Coalition and the Fit and Fall Proof Exercise Program Volunteers.

South Central Idaho Food Safety Awareness Coalition is a group with the common goal of increasing food safety awareness for food handlers and the general public through advocacy, collaboration, and education. During the 2007 holiday season, the Coalition produced and distributed over 2000 safe holiday meal preparation and cooking brochures to various agencies and businesses throughout southern Idaho.

“We applaud the members of the Food Safety Awareness Coalition for their dedication in keeping this community educated on food safety,” said Ward. “Thank you for taking the time to help better the health of this community.”

Also named a Group Health Hero was the Fit and Fall Proof Exercise Program Volunteers. These volunteers freely give of their time to help Magic Valley elderly maintain their independence and stability by offering exercise programs for individuals that want to improve their balance, strength, and mobility. Unintentional falls are a common occurrence among older adults in the United States, affecting approximately 30% of persons aged 65 years and older each year. The injuries received from a fall can result in death, disability, nursing-home admission, and direct medical costs. The volunteers use their knowledge and technical training to better the health and lives of hundreds of elderly people in this community. Their selfless service, commitment, determination, and enthusiasm is to be admired and should inspire everyone to follow their lead.

“These volunteers give their time and knowledge to help others in this community,” said Ward. “Their dedication to improving the health of others is an inspiration for all of us.”

This is the tenth year that South Central Public Health District has recognized the contributions made by area individuals and groups to the health of south central Idaho residents.

Side Bar

What Does South Central Public Health District Do in Your Community?

- **Keep you safe from every day health threats.** Public Health guards the safety of the tap water you drink, the restaurant food you eat, and the clean air you breathe, as well as responding quickly to health emergencies and preventing disease.
- **Ensure the health of entire towns, cities, and counties.** When a contagious disease or epidemic threatens your community, Public Health joins forces with other agencies, organizations, schools, businesses, and the media to quickly stop it from spreading.
- **Educate you and your neighbors about good health.** Public Health provides information to help you make healthy decisions every day, like exercising more, eating right, quitting smoking, and washing your hands to keep you from spreading illness.
- **Keep everyone healthy.** Public Health makes sure that everyone – no matter who they are – has access to preventive care they need to help maintain their health.

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