

## What's Inside

## Seeking public health champions

Dr. David McKeown, Toronto's Medical Officer of Health, has issued a call for nominations for the inaugural Public Health Champion Awards. The award has been created as part of celebrations marking the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of public health in Toronto.

The award recognizes individuals or organizations—outside of Toronto Public Health—that have made outstanding contributions to protecting and promoting the health of Toronto residents. Nominations will be adjudicated by a committee of the Board of Health based on demonstrated achievement in one or more of four areas:

- Providing leadership in efforts to reduce health inequalities
- Fostering collaboration to improve the health of the population
- Building community capacity through innovative health promotion strategies
- Achieving impact by acting as a catalyst for change.

“The public health awards will recognize the achievements of people and agencies that make positive change happen in our community,” said Dr. McKeown. “The awards recognize the vital role played by community leaders and partners in protecting and improving the health of Toronto's population.”

Nominations are open until July 11. Nomination forms and eligibility guidelines are available on the City's [web site](#).

### *Dr. Sheela Basrur – 1956–2008*

On June 2, former Medical Officer of Health for Toronto and former Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario Sheela Basrur passed away after a courageous battle with cancer. Sheela's death hit close to the heart for many of her friends and colleagues in the public health community. The extensive media coverage, letters to the editor, editorials, and comments from people across the country have been a testament to the impact Sheela had on so many people. Sheela made a career out of improving the lives of others, and her energy and commitment inspired those around her to share in that goal. Sheela's legacy lives on in the many initiatives she championed, including the new Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (the Sheela Basrur Centre), provincial smoking legislation, and Toronto's DineSafe restaurant rating program.



## New initiative encourages breastfeeding, anytime, anywhere



Mandy knows the impact of feeling unwelcome in a restaurant. She was once asked to leave in the middle of her meal when her baby needed to be breastfed.

Another time it was politely suggested she retreat to a café's public washroom. "Both times I was caught off guard because the people working in the restaurant had been so accommodating to all my other needs," Mandy said.

The Toronto mother of two, who is currently breastfeeding her newborn, welcomes a new initiative that gives restaurants an opportunity to register as Breastfeeding Friendly under a new Toronto Public Health program. Restaurants registering as breastfeeding friendly will be listed in an [online directory](#) accessible to diners looking for a family and baby-friendly establishment. The designation indicates that the restaurant will support mothers to breastfeed at the table, communicate this policy to staff, and display the "Breastfeeding Anytime Anywhere" sticker to welcome breastfeeding mothers.

"It is well established that breastfeeding provides ideal nourishment for the healthy growth and development of infants and children," says Donalda McCabe, Toronto Public Health Director, Healthy Families. "Attitudes toward breastfeeding in public vary widely.

This program helps to create a comfortable, supportive environment for mothers to breastfeed whenever and wherever they choose."

Councillor Paula Fletcher welcomed the launch of the program. "Over 30,000 babies are born each year in Toronto. More than 90 per cent of new mothers choose to breastfeed their babies," said Councillor Fletcher. "As a member of the City's Board of Health and a mother, I know how important it is to encourage and support mothers in giving their babies the healthiest start possible."

Toronto Public Health is mailing information packages to 6,100 restaurants in Toronto containing a Breastfeeding Friendly window decal (available in 20 languages), information sheets from Health Canada and Toronto Public Health, and an Employee Guide.



*Clare Sullivan and Sofia, Victor Polle and Nomsa, and Elaine Yuen and Elora, attend Commensal, a breast-feeding friendly restaurant.*

## World Breastfeeding Week—Toronto goes for the Gold

On October 11, mothers and babies around the world will once again compete to set the record for the most children breastfeeding at one time. Last year, Toronto placed a respectable eighth out of 222 participating sites, with 105 mothers and 107 latched children. Breastfeeding mothers and babies are once again invited to participate and help Toronto win the challenge, which is organized locally by Toronto Public Health and the Chinese/Vietnamese Breastfeeding Network.

This year's challenge will take place at the North York Civic Centre, Council Chambers, 5100 Yonge Street on Saturday, October 11, beginning at 10:00 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. The event is free and includes door prizes, a light lunch and information sessions on a variety of topics including infant massage, infant CPR/First aid, mother goose rhymes and songs, baby sign language, and introduction to solids. Prior registration is not required.

## Province expands eligibility for HPV vaccine

Girls who are finishing grade 8 and missed the opportunity to be vaccinated against Human Papillomavirus (HPV) during the school year can still receive the vaccine free of charge. Toronto Public Health will be holding several catch-up clinics throughout the city during the summer. Under newly announced provincial eligibility rules, any female in grade 8 who has received at least one shot (three doses are required) of the HPV vaccine will now be eligible to receive free HPV vaccine while in grade 9. Previously, once a grade 8 female entered grade 9 she was no longer eligible for free HPV vaccine.

“We are pleased that more young women will be able to qualify for this vaccine, which is a form of cancer prevention,” said Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Associate Medical Officer of Health, and Director of Communicable Disease Control for the City of Toronto. “Each year, there are 500 cases and 140 deaths from cervical cancer in Ontario.”

HPV is a common virus that can cause cancer of the cervix and genital warts. Sixty percent of Toronto’s 14,000 grade 8 girls were vaccinated by Toronto Public Health at school-based clinics in the 2007-08 school year.

Vaccine safety continues to be monitored for Gardasil®. As of January 2008, the Public Health Agency of Canada received a total of 145 reports of adverse events from Gardasil®, the vaccine manufacturer. Most were minor adverse events, such as injection site reactions.

In the U.S., over 12 million doses of the vaccine have been distributed and the number of serious adverse events has been very rare. Over 5000 reports (0.04%) of adverse events following Gardasil® administration were reviewed by the U.S. Vaccine Adverse Event reporting system. For more information: [http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/hpv-vph/fact-faits\\_e.html#1](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/hpv-vph/fact-faits_e.html#1) <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/vaers/gardasil.htm>

*Toronto Public Health summer catch-up clinics are as follows. All clinic hours are from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.*

Etobicoke Civic Centre 399 The West Mall	160 Borough Drive Scarborough	North York Civic Centre 5100 Yonge St.	East York Civic Centre 850 Coxwell Ave.
Wed., July 23 Health Centre	Tues., July 29 Health Centre	Thurs., July 24 Members Lounge	Mon., July 28 Rooms 3 & 4
Thurs., Aug. 28 Health Centre	Thurs., Aug. 28 Health Centre	Wed., Aug. 27 Main Hall, North	Wed., Aug. 27 Room A

## Protecting children from second-hand smoke

*Bill 69*, a law that protects children under 16 years old from second-hand tobacco smoke in motor vehicles, was recently passed in the Ontario [Legislature](#). Earlier this year, the Board of Health advocated for this type of legislation to protect the health of children from the [well-documented](#) effects of second-hand smoke.

“We applaud the government for addressing this important public health issue,” said Mary-Anne McBean, a Toronto Public Health Planning and Policy Manager. “Children exposed to second-hand smoke have a greater risk of respiratory infections, sudden infant death syndrome, ear infections, and severe asthma symptoms. This Bill will help protect their health.”

## Community gardens promote locally grown food

Parents, caregivers and children from ethnically and culturally diverse communities are growing a variety of their favourite fruits and vegetables at [Peer Nutrition Program](#) community garden sites. One of these unique community garden programs is located at Rockcliffe Yard Greenhouse and Lawrence Heights Community Centre, which includes cultural foods grown by the participants of this free Toronto Public Health nutrition program. Peppers, callaloo, eggplant, okra, cilantro, tomatoes, zucchini, watermelon, green onion, squash, beans and bitter melon are just some of the produce planted and nurtured by the gardeners.

Future plans include a community garden in the Jane and Finch area. The Peer Nutrition Program works with the Food Council Policy, [City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation](#) and community partners to improve food security and increase consumption of locally grown food in more than 100 community gardens.



## Supporting Food and Health

At its meeting in June, the Board of Health supported a number of recommendations from Toronto Medical Officer of Health Dr. David McKeown that will help improve access to affordable nutritious food.

After hearing a [report on nutrition in school cafeterias](#) in Toronto, which found the eating habits of school-age children often fail to meet healthy eating recommendations, board members agreed to advocate for the development and adoption of comprehensive nutrition standards for food and beverages sold and/or served in schools.



The Board of Health also supported a plan for developing a [Food Strategy for the City of Toronto](#). The goal of the food strategy is to develop an action plan to improve Toronto's food system to better support good nutrition, healthy development and disease prevention, poverty reduction and social justice.

An improved food system would also support a strong local economy, environmental protection and climate change action, and the promotion and celebration of culture and community through food. Achieving these goals will require a collaborative process that includes a wide range of City divisions and community partners.

## Community conversations on poverty reduction

The City of Toronto is holding two [public meetings](#) in July to give residents the opportunity to talk about poverty and how it can be reduced.

Wednesday July 9, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m., Council Chambers, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St West.

Thursday July 10, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m., Council Chambers, Scarborough Civic Centre, 150 Borough Drive.