



Quick Reads

Gerd W. Clabaugh, MPA
Director, Iowa Department of Public Health

May 14, 2015

Confirmation

I am pleased to have been officially confirmed by the Iowa Senate as Director of the Iowa Department of Public Health on April 8. It is my honor to have been appointed by Governor Branstad to serve the state in this capacity. I am looking forward to continuing to work with all our partners as we strive to promote and protect the health of all Iowans.

Avian influenza

IDPH continues to work closely with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, The Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management, and the Governor's Office in response to the [Avian Influenza](#) (H5N2) outbreak. Although the risk of human infection from this virus is extremely low (there has never been a reported case of human infection in the U.S.), public health is assisting the response by providing monitoring of poultry farm workers in the areas affected by the outbreak. It's important to remember there is no food safety concern associated with this virus.

Healthy Iowans 2015

The Healthy Iowans 2015 Progress Report and 2015 revisions for Iowa's Health Improvement Plan 2012-2016 are now posted [online](#). The plan is one of the best examples of Iowans investing energy and resources to make our state a great place to live, learn, work, and play.

New heights

I'm always pleased to share innovative and fun ways to encourage better health. I'm especially happy when it is happening within the walls – or better said, the stairwells – of the building which houses IDPH. At our offices in the Lucas Building in Des Moines, staff are taking part in the "Mt. Everest Challenge." Organizers calculated exactly how many flights of stairs in the Lucas building need to be climbed to reach a variety of mountain peaks - from the highest hill in Iowa all the way to the top of Mt. Everest. Congrats to [IDPH Data Management Program](#) Manager Betsy Richey who is the first to make it all the way to the top of Mt. Everest. This is a great way to make fitness fun in the workplace. If you would like to learn more about the Challenge and how to use it in your workplace, contact [Shawnice Cameron](#).

Policy success

On April 1, Governor Branstad signed [HF570](#), Shared/Community Use Bill. This bill alleviates liability concerns for schools and municipalities who choose to open their facilities such as playgrounds or gyms for recreational use to the general community or other organizations, and is an example of how public health intervention and advocacy can help change policies to encourage an environment of physical activity and wellness. This accomplishment is the culmination of three years of hard work, led by the [American Heart Association-Midwest Affiliate](#) and many other partners across the state. Thank you for all your efforts. The new law will go into effect July 1.

Congrats and kudos

Barb Khal, Executive Director, [Child Health Specialty Clinics](#), has received the 2015 [University of Iowa School of Social Work Bill Sackter](#) Award. The annual recognition goes to a social work student, alum, or community member who demonstrates extensive and extraordinary commitment to the rights of and services for persons with disabilities. Barb was honored for her extraordinary commitment to children and youth with special health care needs.

Dr. Louise Lex of the IDPH [Bureau of Planning Services](#) was honored this week at the unveiling of the [Iowa Women's Foundation](#) 2015 edition of "Ovation: A Tribute to Iowa Women and Girls" event in Iowa City.

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To everyone in public health and all our partners, keep up the great work!

— *Gerd*