



Fall 2019

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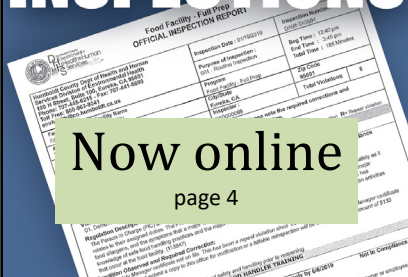
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## Suicide prevention efforts getting boost from local fatality review team



Front row from left: Kayleigh Emry, Kris Huschle and Dana Murguia. Back row from left: Trevor Enright, Charles Van Buskirk, Jamie Barney and Chad Zeck.

► The Humboldt County Coroner's Office has expanded the way it investigates suicides by using a consolidated risk assessment profile in hopes of learning how to prevent future deaths.

Created by an Oregon epidemiologist and her team, this checklist tracks near real-time trends to determine who in the community is most at risk of suicide and what system changes can be made to prevent future suicides.

Kimberly Repp, the chief epidemiologist for Washington County, Ore., who holds a Ph.D. in microbiology, created the checklist which

includes basic questions about age, gender and cause of death and expands to an extensive list of questions about a variety of things, including evidence of addiction, financial or job problems and relationship stress. Humboldt started using the checklist at the beginning of the year.

Dana Murguia, a senior program manager with DHHS, said she and her staff first heard about Repp and her methods when they saw her present at a conference. In December, Repp came to Humboldt and provided two suicide fatality review ["Suicide" page 7](#)

# Director's Report by Connie Beck



► If disaster strikes, will you be ready? Do you have a plan? Do you have supplies? Just last month we had two opportunities to put our emergency prep skills to the test.

During PG&E's first planned power outage, I was out of the area. I was kept in the loop about what was going on at work and at home, but I didn't go through the physical motions of rushing to the gas station to fill up my truck, testing my generator and stocking up on food for my family and our animals. So in some ways, the late October power outage was my first real experience, and my husband and daughter had to leave town unexpectedly taking away my main support system.

In late October, we were given some notice prior to the power outage, which was helpful for planning. As we know, we're all Disaster Service Workers (DSWs), and during the day-and-a-half heads up, I was glad to be able to communicate with staff about expectations and make sure we had things in order.

After spending Friday, Oct. 25, preparing things here at work, I woke up Saturday and realized I was not personally prepared. When I got to Renner that morning at 7:15 to fill my truck with gas, there was already a line.

Without knowing how long power would be out, I spent the rest of Saturday morning driving around town getting feed and delivering it to my horses, stocking

up on dog food and calling and texting photos to my husband while he walked me through where to plug in our generator and how to get it started.

It wasn't until the lights went out that I realized my flashlight was out of batteries and I didn't have replacements.

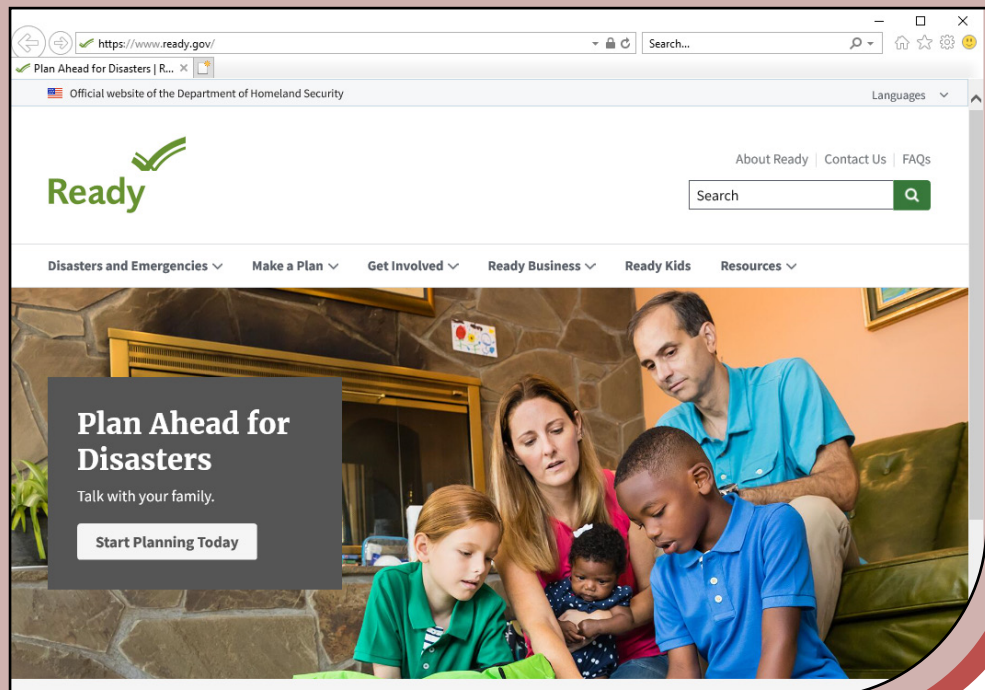
For the past year, DHHS has taken many opportunities to remind staff to be prepared. Be prepared in case of a planned power outage, be prepared in case of a natural disaster, just be prepared. And sometimes, no matter how prepared you think you are, it takes a situation like this to realize where you fall short. In my case, I was able to get ready Saturday morning and having a gas stove and water heater meant I didn't have to go without hot food or showers.

I did get the generator working, but at a certain point it stopped working, and I could not get it to start again.

We're not all in the same situa-

tion, however. We don't all have the same resources and ability to plan ahead. We are encouraging everyone to be prepared for an emergency, but I fully acknowledge that the financial advantage I have makes it easier for me to take care of myself and my family in these situations while people experiencing poverty and other challenges tend to be disproportionately impacted across all phases of a disaster.

But there is something we can all do to help ourselves get prepared. Check out [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) for tips, lists of items for kits and other resources. And just like we care for our clients and community, let's make sure we are all out there helping each other. ◀



# Sempervirens celebrates 50 years

► Sempervirens Psychiatric Health Facility was Humboldt County’s first inpatient mental health hospital when it opened in 1967. On Oct. 22, Mental Health staff, elected officials, service providers and members of the community celebrated more than 50 years of Sempervirens and community

mental health. Attendees had the chance to read archival newspaper articles describing the hospital’s founding and viewed a presentation on its history of service to the community. ◀

Director of Psychiatric Nursing Cyanne Brocius and Sempervirens Hospital Administrator Daryn Nimmo sign the guest book.



Mental Health Director Emi Botzler-Rodgers cuts the cake celebrating more than 50 years of community mental health at Sempervirens.



From left: Mental Health Director Emi Botzler-Rodgers, DHHS Director Connie Beck, Gladys Strobe’s daughter Lynn Intersimone and granddaughters Kara Fales and Nikki Roberts. Gladys “Gladly” Strobe helped found Sempervirens in 1967.



Watch this short video to learn more about Gladys Strobe, who helped found the hospital, and why the work done at Sempervirens is so important to our community.  
[youtu.be/uZl6K6iwmXY](https://youtu.be/uZl6K6iwmXY)



# Restaurant inspections now available online

► Inspection reports for local food facilities are now available online.

Inspection reports have always been available to the public in paper form. DHHS's Division of Environmental Health (DEH) Director Melissa Martel said going electronic will make the reports more accessible.

"Posting inspection report content online is an effort to better serve and inform our community and is consistent with the practice of most California counties," Martel said. "When you as the consumer

want to know what we found at our last inspection, it's right there online for you."

DEH staff performs 1,400 to 1,500 routine retail food facility inspections annually throughout the county. Retail food facilities include restaurants, grocery stores, school cafeterias, gas stations, food trucks and other places where food is available for purchase.

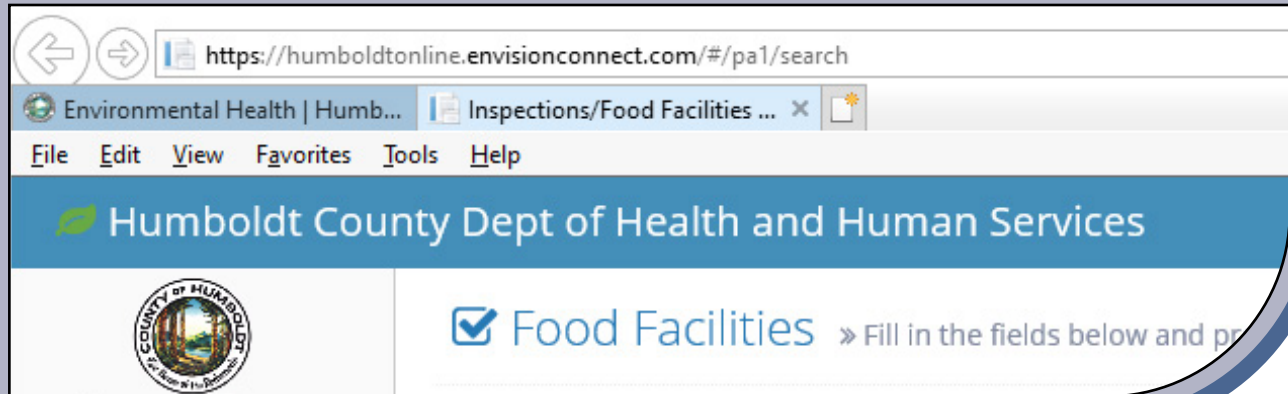
Martel said inspectors will continue to educate facilities on proper retail food handling practices while assisting operators in identifying the best ways to correct violations to

ensure food is being prepared and served safely.

Routine inspections occur one to three times a year depending on the type of facility. Non-routine inspections occur as needed and are complaint driven or conducted at the owner's request.

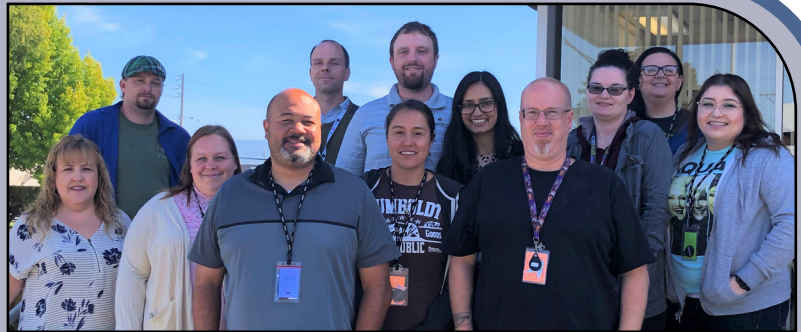
Inspection results are posted within a week of the inspection date. Currently, online reports are available going back a year.

To view the latest reports, go to the DEH webpage at [humboldt.gov/EnvironmentalHealth](https://humboldt.gov/EnvironmentalHealth) and click on Restaurant Inspections. ◀



## DHHS welcomes 10 new Eligibility Specialists

► Ten new employees completed 11 weeks of training in September to become Eligibility Specialists. Since then, each graduate has been at work in their new units, helping people in our community by connecting them to needed services. Eligibility Training Supervisor Casey Cordero said, "These individuals were a pleasure to have in the training class. If this is the future of eligibility, we are in good hands." ◀



All staff pictured are Eligibility Specialists unless noted. Back row from left: Casey Gleason, Robert Child, Tyler Plummer, Jessica Baez, Samantha Quinn, Lead Worker Erin Nixon and Megan Flores. Front row from left: Eligibility Training Supervisor Casey Cordero, Amanda Galligan, Baron Parks, Dawn Posh and Lead Worker Doug Brunell. Not pictured: Emily Brown. Photo submitted by Casey Cordero.

## Help Wanted

► DHHS is currently recruiting qualified applicants for a variety of positions. For a list of job opportunities, visit [humboldt.gov/hr](https://humboldt.gov/hr) and click **Job Opportunities**, or contact Employee Services at 707-441-5510. ◀



# Law enforcement trains to better handle mental health crises

►Forty-two law enforcement officers and mental health service providers graduated from Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training in October after spending the week learning techniques to de-escalate mental health crises.

The five-day CIT course teaches law enforcement officials to identify major mental health disorders and other disabilities when working with people in the field. These skills can help to de-escalate a crisis and divert those experiencing mental health challenges into treatment rather than the criminal justice system. DHHS, local law enforcement agencies and community organizations have been hosting these state-certified trainings since 2007.

Kelly Johnson, senior pro-

gram manager for DHHS Mental Health said, “It’s crucial that law enforcement, mental health and advocacy groups work together to learn better strategies for interacting with people experiencing mental health crises. CIT is proven to reduce numbers of people with mental illnesses entering the criminal justice system and reduce the use of force by police when interacting with people experiencing mental health crises.”

This year’s training followed a national curriculum that covers specific mental health diagnoses in greater depth to increase awareness of how these conditions may influence a person’s behavior. Other sessions focused on working with people experiencing homelessness and helping officers and

providers manage secondary traumatic stress associated with their jobs. Participants also had the opportunity to tour local mental health facilities to learn more about available services.

The Humboldt Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Arcata Police Department, Eureka Police Department, Humboldt County Sheriff’s Office, the Public Defender’s Office, the District Attorney’s Office, the Probation Department and DHHS organized this year’s CIT training.

Nearly 450 people have completed the course locally over the last 12 years. Those include representatives from law enforcement agencies, law offices, ambulance services, medical facilities, park systems, tribes and DHHS. [“CIT” page 6](#)



CIT leadership team.

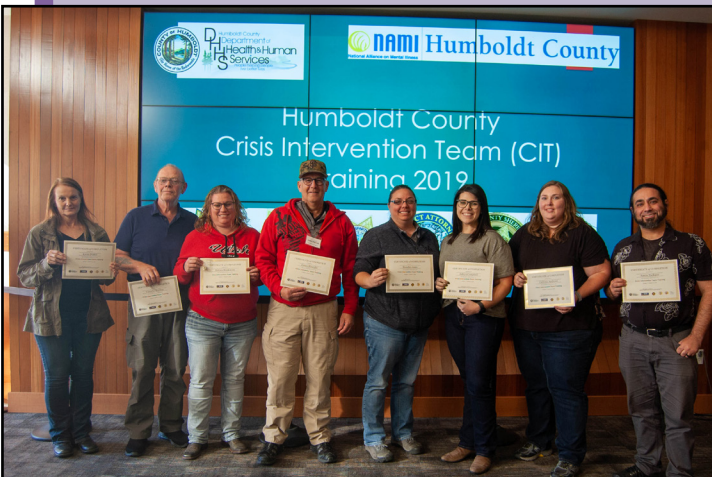
"We've continued to see an increase in support for CIT in Humboldt County," Johnson said. "This increased interest is a good sign that our local law enforcement agencies understand the value of CIT and are implementing these strategies in their departments." ◀



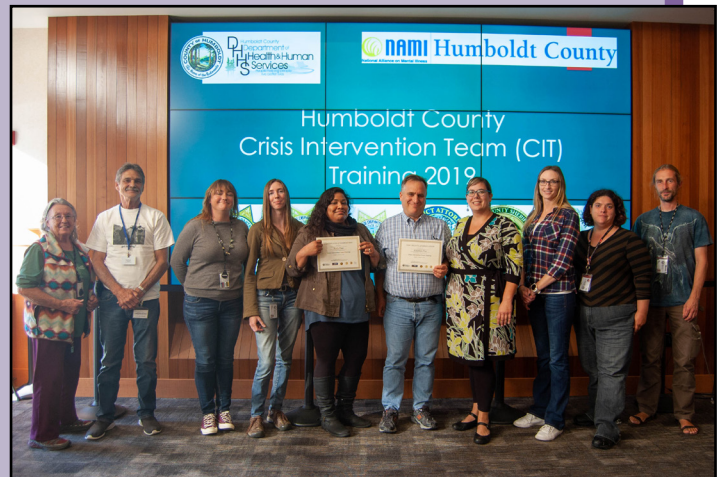
Humboldt County Sheriff's Office.



Yurok Tribal Police.



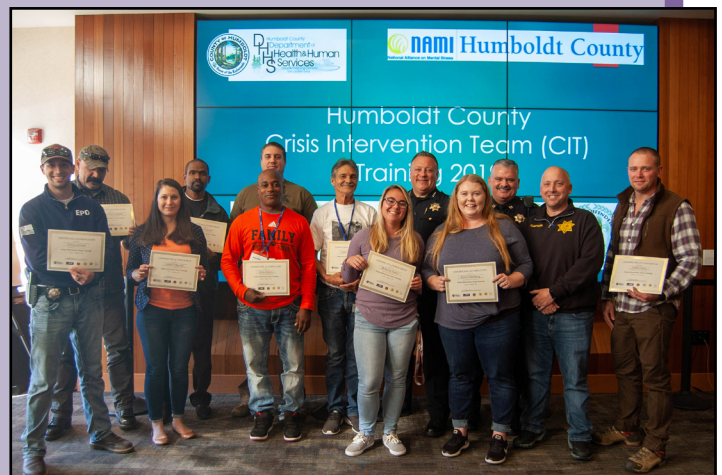
Humboldt County Probation Department.



DHHS Mental Health.



Arcata Police Department.



Eureka Police Department.

trainings to DHHS staff and community partners.

The purpose of these reviews is to take a closer look at these deaths and make recommendations for system changes, legislation, policy, training and public education based on data to prevent future deaths by suicide in Humboldt County. Murguia says sometimes just asking someone if they’re contemplating suicide can be enough to make the person realize someone cares about them and to be willing to seek necessary services. “It’s hard to ask the question, but it’s critical.”

Humboldt County Sheriff’s Office Sgt. Jamie Barney, an investigator at the Coroner’s Office, said, “We attended Dr. Repp’s presentation and it kind of opened our eyes. We realized the data that we can provide can point to people in the community who are at risk of suicide and provide people with suicide prevention training to help.”

In order to establish baseline data and identify what was missing from traditional reports, staff from DHHS Public Health’s Suicide

Prevention Program reviewed five years of reports.

“We still investigate the same way, but prior to the checklist we had to go through each report narrative to find answers to these questions. Now it’s consolidated to a yes, don’t know or no on the checklist,” Barney said.

In May, DHHS and Coroner’s Office staff gathered for the first quarterly Suicide Fatality Review Team meeting to review the checklists from three recent suicide deaths. With permission from the decedent’s families, the team spoke to their medical providers and other providers or agency representatives that had been in contact with the individual leading up to their death.

DHHS Mental Health Branch Quality Management Coordinator Kayleigh Emry who attends the meetings, said, “Mental Health’s Mortality and Morbidity review provides valuable, client-specific information and will allow us to participate as a member of the suicide fatality review team in a meaningful way.”

Rep. Jared Huffman, who rep-

resents California’s second district, said he thinks forming the suicide fatality review team is another step in the right direction.

“Suicide is a particularly difficult problem in the rural parts of my congressional district,” Rep. Huffman said. “My staff and I have met with the public health officials and coroners who are on the front lines of this issue, and it’s good to see them taking this important step toward helping our Humboldt County communities move toward zero suicide.”

Although the program is still in its infancy, Murguia said they are busy compiling and analyzing data. “As we collect more data, we’ll get more insight on specific places where we can intervene and implement actual prevention. Our objective is to be able to make recommendations for changes that will make an impact.”

Barney agrees. “It’s very positive for the community,” he said. “Zero suicide is the goal. To see a reduction in suicides in Humboldt County will be the first thing we can look at and say ‘this is having an effect.’” ◀

## NAMI expands support groups to eastern Humboldt

The Humboldt Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and DHHS Mental Health have expanded free support group meetings to eastern Humboldt. Family, friends and caregivers of those experiencing mental health challenges can now seek support and resources in Willow Creek, in addition to Eureka, Fortuna and Redway.

The groups are led by NAMI-trained facilitators who themselves have family members with mental health issues. See the complete schedule below, and call 707-845-3233 for more information.

Groups meet in:

- Eureka, every Monday from 4 to 6 p.m. in the Rainbow room at 720 Wood St.
- Eureka, every Thursday from noon to 1 p.m. in the Red room at 720 Wood St.
- Fortuna, on the first and third Mondays from 5:30-6:30 p.m. at 922 N St.
- Willow Creek, first and third Tuesdays from noon to 1 p.m. at the Willow Creek Community Health Center, 38883 Hwy 299
- Redway, every Thursday from 5 to 6:30 p.m. at the Redway Family Resource Center, 344 Humboldt Ave.



National Alliance on Mental Illness

# Flu vaccines available

► Now is a good time to get a flu vaccine with the season just starting. Flu shots are also available through medical providers and at some area grocery stores and pharmacies as well as DHHS's Public Health Clinic. The California Department of Public Health recommends everyone six

months of age and older get a flu vaccine. There is more you can do to prevent the spread of the flu in addition to getting a flu shot. Health officials recommend practicing the "3 Cs": Clean your hands, cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough, and contain your germs by staying home if

you're sick.

To make an appointment for a flu vaccine, call your health care provider or the Public Health Clinic at 707-268-2108. The cost of the flu vaccine at the clinic is \$17, although no one will be turned away for inability to pay. Medicare is accepted. ◀

# Health officials urge pertussis vaccine as local cases rise

► Local public health officials are stressing the importance of getting vaccinated for pertussis after a local infant who tested positive for the disease was hospitalized in an intensive care unit earlier this fall.

Since July, 10 county residents, including the infant, have been diagnosed with the highly contagious respiratory illness in seven separate incidents.

In early July, a Eureka teenager was diagnosed with pertussis, also known as whooping cough. Subsequently, two of the teenager's family members were also diagnosed. In an unrelated case, another teenager and family member were diagnosed later in the month. To date, an additional four unrelated people between the ages of 9 and 67 years old have been diagnosed with whooping cough in Humboldt County.

Pertussis typically begins with cold-like symptoms and sometimes a mild cough or fever before progressing to severe coughing fits which

can include uncontrollable, violent coughing and can make it difficult to breathe, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Babies with pertussis may not cough, but may gag and gasp instead, as well as have a symptom known as "apnea," which is a pause in a child's breathing pattern.

Babies need three doses of the DTaP (Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis) vaccine and cannot receive their first dose until 2 months old, with boosters at ages 15 to 18 months and at 4 to 6 years old.

Public Health Supervising Communicable Disease Nurse Hava Phillips said, "Infants and young children are most at risk from serious complications related to pertussis. By getting vaccinated during pregnancy, mothers pass on antibodies which help protect infants from pertussis until they are old enough to be vaccinated."

During the 2014 outbreak in Humboldt County, there were more than 190 confirmed cases

of pertussis. Statewide in 2014, more than 11,000 Californians tested positive. More than 9,000 cases were reported in 2010, with 808 hospitalizations and 10 infant deaths. In 2017 and 2018, no cases were reported in Humboldt County.

According to the CDC, pertussis is a cyclical bacterial infection that peaks every three to five years. Immunity, whether from getting the vaccine or from having the disease, typically wears off within five years, leaving previously immune children susceptible again by adolescence.

A booster shot is recommended for anyone over 11 years old who has not yet received one.

For additional information about pertussis, visit the California Department of Public Health website, talk to your medical provider or phone DHHS's Communicable Disease Program at 707-268-2182. To make an appointment for a vaccine, contact your health care provider or call the Public Health Clinic at 707-268-2108. ◀

# Adoption Awareness Month Proclamation

► The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors proclaimed November 2019 as Adoption Awareness Month to bring attention to the need for permanent families for children and youth in the foster care system. Staff from DHHS, Adoption Horizons and the Arcata Regional Adoption Office of the California Department of Social Services accepted the proclamation at the board's Nov. 19 meeting.

DHHS Program Manager Alison Phongsavath said, "Young people in foster care from birth through the age of 21 are in need of people in the community who are willing to keep them connected to their tribes, siblings, extended families, culture and provide a place to call home. Stability in foster placement improves outcomes for youth, and the youth are our community's future." For more information, call 707-499-3410. ◀



From left: Director Sutie Wheeler of the Arcata Regional Adoption Office of the California Department of Social Services, Director of Adoption Horizons Cynthia Savage, DHHS Office Assistant Miranda Cobb, DHHS Social Worker Winona Aubrey-Herzog and DHHS Program Manager Alison Phongsavath.

From left: Director Sutie Wheeler of the Arcata Regional Adoption Office of the California Department of Social Services, Director of Adoption Horizons Cynthia Savage, DHHS Office Assistant Miranda Cobb, DHHS Social Worker Winona Aubrey-Herzog and DHHS Program Manager Alison Phongsavath.

# The Tooth Fairy makes an appearance at the Bayshore Mall

► More than 50 people stopped to learn about the importance of oral health from representatives of the Dental Advisory Group at the Bayshore Mall's Back to School Bash in August. Dental health care professionals treated 16 people with fluoride varnish to prevent tooth decay, and DHHS Health Education Specialists shared informational materials with families. There was even a visit from the tooth fairy! To learn more about oral health and find local resources, visit [smilehumboldt.com](http://smilehumboldt.com). ◀

Community Health Outreach Worker Ana Guerrero-Gonzalez filled in as the Tooth Fairy for the Back to School Bash.



Health Education Specialist Ciara Hunt.

# Second annual Healthy Snack Day

Community residents learned helpful tips and recipes to make snacking healthy, easy and affordable at the second annual Healthy Snack Day on Sept. 12, at the Eureka Grocery Outlet.

Whether it's at home, work or after school, making healthy snack choices can improve one's health and well-being. According to the U.S.

Department of Agriculture, healthy eating combined with regular physical activity is a part of maintaining good overall health and can reduce the risk of chronic disease.

This event was organized by the Healthy Communities Division of DHHS's Public Health branch and Changing Tides Family Services. To find healthy snack recipes and resources, visit [healthysnackday.com](http://healthysnackday.com).



From left: Health Education Specialist Alyse Dorman, Senior Health Education Specialist Mellody Mallick and Health Education Specialist Evonne Koo pose for a photo in the Healthy Snack Day photo booth.



Victoria Anderson and Rachel LaMell from Changing Tides Family Services help shoppers make their own healthy snacks.



Health Education Specialist Ciara Hunt and Community Health Outreach Worker Ana Guerrero-Gonzalez promote the importance of healthy eating for good oral health.