

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**SANTA CLARA COUNTY RECOGNIZES WORLD TB DAY AND LAUNCHES A
POSTER CONTEST TO RAISE AWARENESS**

Santa Clara County, CA. Tuberculosis (TB) rates in Santa Clara County in 2012 are the lowest they have been in more than 20 years, at 9.6 cases per 100,000 people. Despite this, Santa Clara County has more TB cases than many other U.S. states, and the San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara metropolitan area continues to have one of the highest case rates of any metropolitan area in the nation. There are ongoing challenges for TB Control, such as shortages of essential medicines, increasing numbers of patients with complex medical conditions and drug resistant TB; TB patients also face challenges such as lack of insurance or stable housing.

March 24, 2013 is World TB Day, commemorating the date, in 1882, when Dr. Robert Koch announced the discovery of the bacterium that causes TB. While we have made substantial progress in the treatment of TB, it is still a global and local threat to public health. World TB Day is now a time to raise awareness about TB all over the world with a variety of events.

Santa Clara County is marking the day with a luncheon for clinicians and providers in the community on Thursday, March 21st at Asian Americans for Community Involvement (AACI). The event will feature a presentation of Santa Clara County TB data by TB Controller, Dr. Teeb Al-Samarrai.

TB is a bacterial disease that can remain dormant in infected individuals for years. Those who are infected with TB often don't know it because their infection is "latent" or inactive and doesn't make them or others sick. Once the infection becomes active, the infected individual is contagious. People with latent TB need to be treated to prevent the progression to active TB. Certain behaviors such as smoking or medical conditions or medications that suppress the immune system such as diabetes, cancer, HIV, or steroids can increase the likelihood of TB to progress from latent infection to active disease.

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Bruce Preville, Regional Director of RESULTS San Jose, reminds us, “TB is a global health issue, with one third of the world’s population infected, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.”

The Bay Area, including Santa Clara County, is home to many people who frequently travel to and from areas around the world where TB is common, increasing the risk for TB exposure and infection in our community. The TB Prevention and Control Program estimates that as many as one in ten Santa Clara County residents may be infected with TB.

In 2010, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that there were 1.4 million TB deaths worldwide. While world-wide, TB is a leading cause of death for people with HIV, there were no deaths among people with HIV and TB in Santa Clara County in 2012. There were six deaths among residents being treated for TB, and all were over the age of 65. Santa Clara County has seen a rise in the number of TB cases in older patients and an increasing number of TB cases in people with diabetes. In 2012, one out of five Santa Clara County TB cases also had diabetes.

“While Santa Clara County’s TB rate is a definite step in the right direction, we have so much more work to do, with a goal in mind of stopping cases of TB in our county, across the nation, and in the world,” said Dr. Marty Fenstersheib, Health Officer for Santa Clara County. “The partnership between the Public Health Department’s TB program and key partners is essential in making sure those with TB get treatment, and that those exposed to infectious TB are evaluated and treated.”

To raise awareness that TB is preventable and treatable, the Santa Clara County Tuberculosis Prevention Partnership is launching a special poster contest for students.

“Elementary, high school and college student artists are all invited to participate and submit poster designs with the theme of “Stop TB in My Lifetime,” said Margo Sidener, CEO of Breathe California of the Bay Area, where the entries should be submitted. “It is important to reach multiple age groups with the TB story.” The winners and their schools will receive cash prizes and the winning posters will be framed and displayed in various locations around the South Bay. For more information on the poster contest, or for information about the TB Partnership, please visit www.sccphd.org, or www.lungsrus.org.