

County of Santa Clara

Public Health Department

976 Lenzen Avenue
San Jose, California 95126



For Immediate Release
March 20, 2007

Media Contacts:
Dave Low, Breathe California of the Bay Area (408) 998-5865
Laurel Anderson, County of Santa Clara (408) 299-5119

Tuberculosis Cases on the Rise in Santa Clara County

County sees a 14.5% increase in TB cases; Coalition calls for greater resources to fight disease

San Jose, Calif. – In honor of the upcoming World TB Day, health advocates and community leaders gathered at the county’s Tuberculosis Clinic this morning, where they released the latest TB data and called attention to the growing public health threat.

“For the first time since 2002, we have seen a significant increase in active TB cases,” announced Dr. Sundari Mase, the Santa Clara County TB Controller. “It is essential that we remain committed to combating this deadly lung disease through public education, testing and treatment.”

In 2006, Santa Clara County experienced a 14.5% increase in active TB cases, the largest increase in all of California. The county’s active TB rate of 12.8 (per 100,000 people) ranks third in the state and far outpaces the state and national rates of 7.9 and 4.8, respectively. In addition, it is estimated that approximately 1 in 10 individuals have latent TB infection.

Tuberculosis is a bacterial lung disease that can remain dormant in infected individuals for years. However, once an infected individual develops active TB disease, he/she becomes very ill and extremely contagious. Although TB is completely curable, if left untreated, the disease can cause serious illness, and even death.

“Many people think that TB is something that we don’t have to worry about anymore, but the disease continues to be a problem,” said Dr. Marty Fenstersheib, the Santa Clara County Health Officer. “We are also facing new challenges stemming from a rise in complex cases and multi-drug resistant TB, making it even more important for people to get tested and treated for TB before they are at risk for serious health effects.”

“This latest resurgence serves as a reminder that we can not afford to let up our efforts to fight TB,” added Margo Sidener, CEO of Breathe California of the Bay Area and a co-chair of the Tuberculosis Prevention Partnership. “Decision makers at all levels of government must commit the funding and resources needed to fight this disease both at home and abroad. Only then will we be able to eliminate TB from our local communities.”

The Tuberculosis Prevention Partnership is a co-chaired by Breathe California, Asian Americans for Community Involvement and the Santa Clara County Public Health Department. Since 1999, the coalition of interested individuals and community organizations has worked to establish a community-wide effort to fight TB.

#