



## **State of the County 2013 By Board President Ken Yeager**

Before stating my goals for 2013, I want to take a brief moment to look back to when I stood before you in 2010 as the incoming President of the Board and outlined my 12 key objectives. I'm pleased to report that all of them were achieved.

1. We passed a stronger local preference policy.
2. We implemented key best practices to improve employee wellness.
3. We strengthened anti-smoking laws.
4. We established food standards for County-sponsored events.
5. We ensured that County-sponsored activities are zero-waste events.
6. We banned the single use of plastic bags in unincorporated areas.
7. We mandated that the County Government Center use 100% renewable energy.
8. We improved accessibility to the County Government Center.
9. We restored funding to support critical Public Health and Drug and Alcohol programs.
10. We created an Office of Sustainability.
11. We achieved more equitable representation for our county on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.
12. And, we created important partnerships and collaborations to improve community health.

My goals for 2013 are as ambitious as those in 2010, if not more so.

The national Affordable Care Act will take effect one year from now. Therefore, my top priority this year is to make sure Santa Clara County is prepared for Health Care Reform.

As president of the Board of Supervisors, chair of the Health and Hospital Committee, and vice-chair of the California State Association of Counties' Health and Human Services Committee, I will be devoting much of my time to this issue. We must get it right. Literally, the lives of tens of thousands of people in our county depend on it.

Already we have committed to new information systems, new clinics, increased access to primary care, and more effective partnerships with our safety net providers. However, the challenges of national Health Care Reform require us to re-double our efforts. We must measurably improve health outcomes, improve client satisfaction, and lower the total cost of care. It is our dedication to these goals, the so called "Triple-Aim," that will make us the provider of "first choice" in our county.

In order to achieve our goal of quality health care for all, our county must:

- Provide sufficient access to care for the expected 20,000 new Medi-Cal beneficiaries in our county.
- Work with the Social Services Agency to streamline our complicated eligibility process.
- Improve care coordination for those residents who already have Medi-Cal and for those who will likely qualify for health insurance through the Benefit Exchange.
- And, strengthen our collaborations with local stakeholders and community-based partners to enhance outreach, education and enrollment efforts so that people know their options, get covered, establish a medical home, and improve their health.

The next several months are particularly critical as the state decides the role and extent of county involvement in healthcare reform implementation. Because we need regulations that support rather than hinder our local efforts, I will be asking the County Executive to come to the Board with a plan to hire a lobbyist in Sacramento to focus solely on healthcare reform.

Ensuring that every child in Santa Clara County has access to comprehensive, high quality health care is a concept that we have long embraced. We were the first County to adopt a 100% coverage goal and contribute significant funds to our Healthy Kids initiative. The recession left us short of meeting that target, but the recent passage of Measure A reaffirmed the importance of this objective to voters. Therefore, I propose that we recommit to providing medical and dental coverage to all kids in need by using some of the Measure A funds approved by the voters last November. I look forward to working with our partners, including the Family Health Plan and Foundation, FIRST 5, and the City of San Jose, to accomplish this.

Next, I want to touch on the topic of gun violence. The horrific, senseless shootings we have seen over the past year highlight a particular need to focus on this issue. Congresswoman Eshoo and our allies in Washington are doing all they can on the national level, but we can make a meaningful impact here at the local level. To that end, I will work with Sheriff Laurie Smith and District Attorney Jeff Rosen to create a comprehensive program to curb gun violence by reducing the number of guns in our county. Specifically, I would like to create a gun buyback program that allows County residents to voluntarily turn in their firearms, no questions asked, in exchange for cash.

In addition, there are people in our community who are ineligible to possess firearms because of felony convictions, restraining orders placed against them, or having been determined by a court to be a danger to themselves or others. According to a monthly report compiled by the Attorney General, there are 529 people in our county who can no longer legally possess firearms. It is estimated that those individuals own 1,239 guns, 54 of which are assault rifles. That is why I will be working with Sheriff Smith to have these residents surrender their guns.

Adult and childhood obesity remains a serious health concern. Almost 1 in 4 children in Santa Clara County is overweight or obese. In some communities, that number is 1 in 3. Obese children have a higher risk of developing high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, and other serious illnesses that will affect them into adulthood. If we don't reverse this trend, this generation of children will likely live shorter lives than their parents.

A major contributor to both child and adult obesity is over-consumption of sugar-loaded beverages. That is why I will ask our Public Health Department to develop strategies aimed at reducing high-sugar, high-calorie beverage consumption.

If we are going to ask children and youth to give up sugar-loaded beverages, we need to offer them a good alternative. Water remains the best choice, and newly available "hydration stations" that fill reusable containers with filtered water have shown promise in encouraging increased water consumption. Last year, voters approved Measure B which earmarks funds to install up to 250 hydration stations in local schools. The Santa Clara Valley Water District will soon be working with organizations like FIRST 5 to roll out this program. In conjunction with that effort, I am asking the Public Health Department to create a program to finance additional hydration stations in areas where kids and families gather.

In 2013, I will continue to support specific initiatives that focus on preventive health. The CDC recently selected "winnable battles" that are public health priorities with large-scale impacts on health— including food safety, HIV, teen pregnancy, nutrition, obesity, and tobacco. While we in Santa Clara County continue to focus on all of these areas, I am including several of these as goals for this year.

HIV/AIDS remains a major health concern. There are over 3,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in our county. To drastically reduce transmission rates, testing is crucial. Knowing one's HIV status lessens the likelihood of infecting others, and helps residents receive the treatment they need. That is why I will be working with the Public Health Department to expand HIV testing programs.

Recent FDA approval of home testing for HIV gives us an opportunity to reach that population. I will be asking Public Health to create a pilot project to provide 500 home test kits at no cost to those at-risk who have not been tested. If the pilot program is successful, we will to expand it.

Cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis continue to rise as well. Last month, I asked Public Health to assess STD and family planning services in our community to ensure they are adequate and readily available. In addition, the Public Health Department will be launching new efforts to reach young people and others at-risk to encourage them to get tested. The ad campaign will begin in April, which is STD Awareness Month. You can see a few examples of the ads on the posters in the lobby.

In recent years, the Public Health Department conducted both a Latino and Vietnamese health assessment to determine the unique needs of those communities. In addition, our Public Health Department develops periodic Health Status Reports, outlining key health issues, challenges, and disparities in our community. I look forward to the opportunity to utilize and build on the knowledge we gain from these studies and strongly support the Public Health Department's efforts to perform a community-wide health assessment and action plan. As we launch our health system's mission of "Better Health for All," I am calling on them to include a special study of both the African American and LGBT communities to expand on their current work.

Another need is for more universal and more frequent developmental screenings for young children during their well-child pediatric visits. In Santa Clara County, more than 18,000 children under the age of six are thought to have developmental delays that go unidentified until they enter kindergarten. Often this leads to life-long problems – many of which could have been prevented with earlier screenings. This is why I am asking VMC and our clinics to perform routine developmental screenings for all children as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

We know that physical health is linked to mental health and substance use disorders. As such, the county is focusing on a patient-centered care model that integrates mental health and substance use disorder treatment into primary care services. Furthermore, since there are a high percentage of individuals who have co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders, I am supporting a consolidation of the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Alcohol and Drug Services into a combined Behavioral Health Department.

The County must continue to focus on conserving natural resources and combating climate change. We've become a national leader on these issues. I'm proud of what we have done to advance sustainability in our County, and I'm excited about what we will tackle in 2013.

To further reduce greenhouse gas emissions, I want the County to encourage the use of electric vehicles. To accomplish this, electrical wiring should be installed in new homes and commercial buildings so that electric vehicle chargers can be easily added if owners want them. To spur that opportunity, I am calling for the County to update its building codes to include this capability in all new residential and commercial construction.

We have another opportunity to be better stewards of the planet. We need to make sure that more of the waste we produce at home and at work is composted and does not go into our landfills. In unincorporated Santa Clara County, 25% of the waste is food waste. As our contracts with waste haulers come up for renewal, I will work with our Integrated Waste Management Division to include residential and commercial food waste collection in the new contracts.

Of course, there are many more issues that deserve our attention in the upcoming year. I will briefly mention a few of them.

- Our senior population is growing rapidly and will require more resources to be focused on chronic diseases. Last year, the County's Department of Aging and Adult Services led the creation of the Seniors' Agenda. The Board of Supervisors will continue to provide leadership and support in 2013 as we enter into the implementation phase of this community-developed Seniors' Agenda.
- The Social Services Agency is working to increase by 20% a year for the next 3 years the participation in CalFresh, the supplemental nutrition assistance program. This would equate to more than 10,000 additional applications, helping to lessen the pervasive problem of hunger and food insecurity that plagues even prosperous counties like ours.
- There is growing evidence that trauma survivors have unique needs. Trauma-informed services are based on understanding the vulnerabilities of survivors that traditional services may exacerbate. Over the past year, the County Cross-Agency Services Team has led an effort to adopt trauma-informed services and practices across County departments and agencies as a prevention strategy. I look forward to the success the team will have as it implements these strategies.
- We owe a debt of gratitude to Santa Clara County's 70,000 veterans of military service. Yet we know that the Veterans Administration is often slow in providing the services they need. That is why our County departments and agencies must work closely with the VA to ensure that our veterans receive the benefits to which they are entitled.
- We must look at ways to continue to fund affordable housing in our County. With the elimination of redevelopment agencies, a significant source of affordable housing dollars went away. New solutions are needed, and the County can take the lead in identifying new local funding strategies.
- Finally, I am proud to announce that we are working to ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our juvenile justice system are treated with fairness and dignity. Starting with the Probation Department, we are training our County staff to strengthen their professional competency on LGBT youth issues.

I look forward to tackling these and many of the other challenges that face our county. Being a County Supervisor is the most rewarding job I have ever had. This is why I am announcing today that I intend to run in 2014 for my final term on the Board of Supervisors and not for any other office. There is important work to be done here, and I would be honored to be part of the team that accomplishes it.

### **A Summary of Supervisor Yeager's Goals for 2013**

- Prepare Santa Clara County for Health Care Reform
- Ensure every eligible child has medical and dental coverage
- Sponsor gun buyback program to help reduce gun violence
- Support Sheriff's efforts to take away guns from those legally prohibited from having a firearm
- Reduce the over-consumption of sugar-loaded beverages in our community
- Create a program to install hydration stations where kids and families gather
- Expand HIV and STD testing programs
- Conduct health assessment of the African American and LGBT communities
- Perform developmental screenings of children during pediatric visits
- Consolidate mental health and alcohol and drug services into one department
- Update building codes to require electric vehicle charging infrastructure
- Offer residential and commercial food waste collection