A Lifetime of Service

It’s rare these days to find someone who has spent their entire working life in the same field. It’s even more uncommon to find someone who has spent their whole career working for the same employer - but that’s what Penny Hamilton has done.

Penny started working at First District Health Unit on October 1, 1972. One of her first assignments was sharpening the needles used for vaccinations. She quickly discovered a passion for public health that led her to become a tireless advocate for the young, the elderly, the helpless, and the voiceless.

Throughout her 45 years at First District, Penny has been a pioneer who worked hard to stay abreast of the changing needs of the population of First District. She has been deeply involved in home health, children’s health services, and serving at-risk sectors of the community. She has served on the board of many local entities involved in improving the quality of life for the disadvantaged, and shines at finding and implementing new solutions to meet new challenges.

Despite her busy schedule, Penny always has welcomed student nurses into the Health Unit to work side-by-side with public health nursing staff. In both staff and students, she fosters a deeper insight into social justice, health equality, and the empowerment that comes with involving a client in their own care. As one of Penny’s nurses put it, “Penny challenges students and her own staff to always think about the ‘bigger picture’ and the impact of public health policies on diverse communities of people. She reminds us that we must be the voice for those who are not heard.”

Penny is retiring from First District Health Unit May 31, 2017, but her passion and caring for those in need will live on in the programs she has developed, the policies she has helped to create, and the lives of the people she has touched.

Thank you to Beth Weidler and Lacey McNichols for their contributions to this article.
EpiPen tips

Summer—the season of sunshine, flowers and bees! Not a problem for most people, but for the two million Americans who are allergic to bee stings, a chance encounter can turn into a life-or-death situation. A critical component in responding to a severe allergic reaction is the epinephrine auto-injector, or EpiPen.

1. Epi Pens are not specifically dosed for the person they are prescribed for. In an emergency situation, **anyone can use any Epi Pen.**

2. EpiPens are generally in a two-pack, and **should not be separated.** If the first injection doesn’t stop the allergic reaction, a second injection may be given.

3. Once an EpiPen has been administered, **call 911.** The effects of the epinephrine might wear off, or a second reaction might start.

Consider taking a few minutes to watch an online training on how to use an EpiPen, such as [www.EpiPen101.ca](http://www.EpiPen101.ca). Becoming familiar with the epinephrine auto-injector could help you save a life.

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Do You Drive Like an AAS?

According to AAA Foundation, distraction contributes to more than 5,000 traffic fatalities each year. Although texting and driving gets a lot of attention, passengers, eating, and in-car technologies can also cause distractions. In fact, drivers spend more than half their time focused on things other than driving.

Interestingly, studies have shown that people feel less safe when they see others using a cell phone while driving, but don’t believe that their own cell phone use impacts safety. Research done by the auto insurer, Everquote, showed that of 2,300 survey respondents, 96% said he or she is a safe driver, but 56% of the same group admitted to using the phone while driving.

Work to decrease distracted driving has a long way to go, but there are some promising efforts. One campaign urges drivers to have a “DT” - designated texter—to man the phone so the driver can stay more focused. Virginia Tech described the model driver as “alert, attentive and sober” (AAS). Think about your day-to-day driving, and ask yourself honestly, “Am I an AAS?”

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Summer BuzzKills

Summer should be a time for vacation, relaxation, and picnics — NOT sunburn, bug bites or food poisoning! Avoid the ‘Big Three’ summer time fun killers — remember your sunscreen and insect repellent, applied multiple times every day that you are outside. And make sure that cold foods stay cold, and meat on the grill gets cooked and kept at the proper temperatures. A little prevention can help you avoid a lot of misery!