



King County

# Health Matters

VOL. 27, NO. 5

Supporting the King County Health Reform Initiative

MAY 2007

## May is Bike to Work Month

**J**oin King County Employee Transportation Program's official Bike to Work Month and earn prizes, free snacks and the awe of your co-workers.

Pedal your way to work on National Bike to Work Day, **Friday, May 18**. Throughout the Puget Sound region, riders can stop by commuter stations to pick up freebies, snacks, and bicycle commuting information. This is your day to be recognized as one of the thousands of Puget Sound residents who commute by bike.

Already a seasoned bike commuter? Then help us spread the word and encourage colleagues to try a bike ride as part of their workday.

Why bike to work? Here are just a few pedaling perks:

- It burns and firms! Biking can burn from 200 to 300 calories in just 30 minutes.
- Co-workers admire you.
- Bicycle commuting saves money over driving a car.
- Meet people — there is a whole community of bike-riders out there who are willing to lend you a hand.

Visit [www.metrokc.gov/employees/transportation](http://www.metrokc.gov/employees/transportation) to sign up for Bike to Work month and see how you can win prizes just by biking to work one day during the month of May. Call your program coordinator at 206-263-4575 to learn more.

Want a class on bicycle commuting or fixing a flat tire at your King County worksite? Call 206-684-1663 to see if there are opportunities for you. Classes will be arranged for groups of 15 or more.

*(Continued on page 3)*



*Erika Kinno, Aide with the King County Council, bikes to work so she can fit exercise into her busy schedule. She's been riding her bike to work on and off for 5 years and lately finds that it's helping her get back in shape after the birth of her daughter, Mia, 7 months old. Erika says it's a great way to wake up on the way to work and to release stress from the work day on the way home. She tries to ride at least 3 times a week. Interested in biking to work like Erika? This month's Health Matters is for you.*

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## *Trans fats...what you should know*

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## Qualifying Life Events Online

**Q**ualifying life events allow you to make changes to your benefits outside of Open Enrollment and you are now able to make those midyear benefit changes online.

A qualifying life event occurs when:

- You gain a dependent through birth, marriage, adoption or establishment of a domestic partnership.
- You lose a dependent through divorce, death or dissolution of a domestic partnership.
- You or a dependent lose coverage because you or the dependent are no longer eligible.
- Your spouse/domestic partner loses coverage under his/her employer.

You may also make midyear benefit changes if you did not initially enroll in medical coverage when you became benefits-eligible because you had other medical coverage at the time and then lost that other coverage. Other loss of coverage events include:

- An individual loses eligibility by reaching the maximum lifetime limit for benefits under a plan.
- A child ceases to be eligible as a dependent under the plan.

Changes you can make to your benefits when you have a qualifying life event include:

- Discontinue Dependent Coverage
- Add Other Dependent

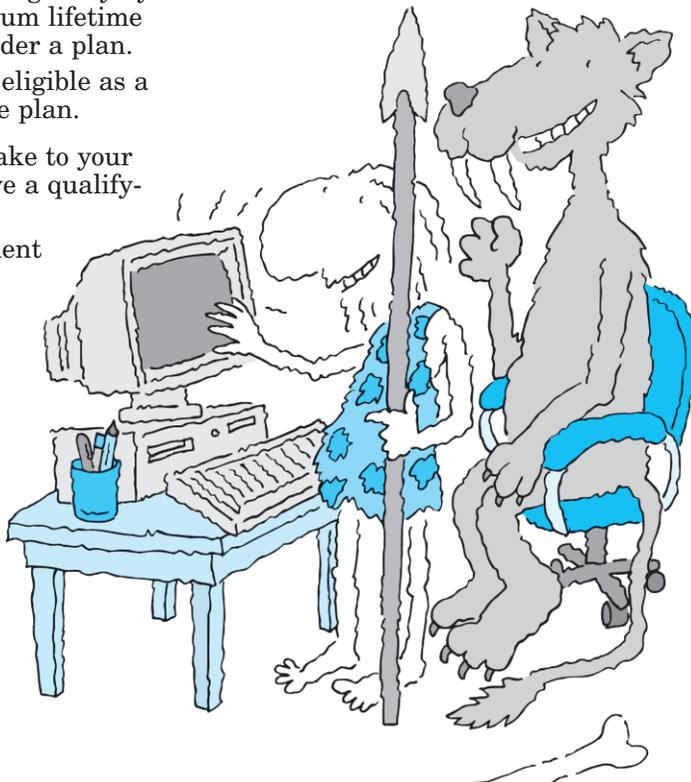
You have 30 days from the date of the loss of coverage or qualifying life event in which to notify Benefits and Retirement Operations and make your benefit changes online.

Using the online system is easy — just follow these two simple steps:

1. Go to [www.metrokc.gov/mybenefits](http://www.metrokc.gov/mybenefits). Follow the sign-in instructions\* on the screen.
2. Once you have signed in, click the **My Life Events** link on the left of your computer screen.

*\*To sign in, you must know your employee ID number, which is located near the top of your paystub. Your employee ID number is not your Social Security number, badge number or transit operator number.*

If you need access to a computer to complete your midyear benefit changes, there is a computer available for your use in the Benefits and Retirement Operations office. If you want to reserve this computer, need help using the online system or have questions about qualifying life events, contact Benefits and Retirement Operations at [kc.benefits@metrokc.gov](mailto:kc.benefits@metrokc.gov) or 206-684-1556.



## Health Observances

### Osteoporosis Prevention

**A**lthough it's more common in women, men can develop the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis with age, too.

To keep bones strong: walk, lift weights, or get other weight-bearing exercise regularly; get the daily recommended amounts of calcium and vitamin D for your age; limit alcohol; and don't smoke.

Also talk to your doctor about bone-density screening, especially if you take any prescription medications on an ongoing basis. Certain medications (including thyroid hormones, anti-seizure medications, and some antacids, to name a few) can increase your risk for osteoporosis.

Visit the National Osteoporosis Foundation at [www.nof.org](http://www.nof.org) for more information.

### Mental Health

**M**ost people believe that mental illnesses are rare and "happen to someone else."

In fact, more than 50 million Americans suffer from illnesses such as depression, schizophrenia, anxiety or bipolar disorders, and other mental conditions.

Mental Health America at [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org) can give you information on how to find support groups and treatment options.

## Cobblestone Walking Paths

**O**n April 25th, King County Executive Ron Sims and friends dedicated the first therapeutically designed public cobblestone walking paths in the nation at Marymoor Park and White Center Park.

Health and wellness are vital to the residents of King County and many are turning to complementary therapies such as reflexology — an ancient healing art based on the belief that reflex points exist in the feet, hands and ears which correspond to all parts of the body.

Walking on specifically placed uneven stones stimulates those acupressure points in the feet and can improve circulation, soothe the nervous system and reduce overall stress. Common in Asia, reflexology paths are often used daily by people who want to enhance their well-being.

A recently completed study by scientists at the Oregon Research Institute (ORI) confirmed that walking on a cobblestone mat surface resulted in significant reductions in blood pressure, improvements in balance and physical performance among adults aged 60 and over.

For more information on King County's reflexology paths and the



ORI study, visit [www.metrokc.gov/reflex](http://www.metrokc.gov/reflex).

Read about the health benefits of reflexology from Public Health Seattle and King County: <http://www.metrokc.gov/health/reflexology/>.

### Marymoor Park

6046 West Lake Sammamish Pkwy NE, Redmond

### White Center Park

1321 SW 102nd St, Seattle



MAY COACH OF THE MONTH

## Ben Siegenthaler

**B**enjamin Siegenthaler is a 2006 graduate of the Ohio State University with a BS in Health Sciences from the School of Allied Medicine. He has worked with the company since April of '06 and worked extensively with the King County Healthy Incentives program.

What Ben says about the program: "It is my hope that my participants were able to learn as much from the program as I have. The conversations I had with the diversified workforce of King County opened my eyes to the many experiences each participant has had. The launch of the new program year brings with it excitement, as I look forward to the new people I will come into contact with while also staying in touch with and learning about the progress of many of my clients from last year."

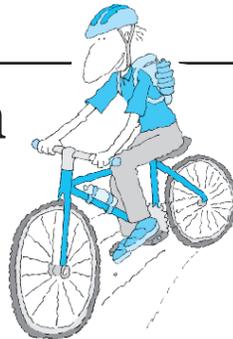
## May is Bike to Work Month

(Continued from page 1)

First-time biker? Never fear — there are lots of resources to help you get pedaling. Go to [www.metrokc.gov/employees/transportation](http://www.metrokc.gov/employees/transportation) for:

- Bicycle safety tips
- Info on bike racks on buses and vanpools
- Bike Buddy program — find someone to ride with you
- Bike to Work Day information (including the location and times of the commuter stations)

- Calendar of bicycle events
- Bikestation — visit Bikestation Seattle at 311 3rd Avenue South — they offer services including bike sharing, rentals, sales, repairs, and secure indoor parking. They also offer classes on Fridays. Go to [www.bikestation.org/seattle](http://www.bikestation.org/seattle) for details.



### CORRECTION

The "Health Heroes" photo caption on the cover of April's Health Matters incorrectly identified one of the OMB/Executive Office workout members as Krista Camenzind. Her correct name is Candida Lorenzana.

# Trans fats: What you should know

**T**rans fats have been a hot topic in the news lately.

The information ranges from how bad they are for us to how they are being banned in some restaurants in parts of the country. The following questions and answers will help you better understand *trans* fats and what you can do to limit the amount of *trans* fat in your diet. The American Heart Association recommends limiting *trans* fat to 1% of total daily calories which is 2 grams for a 2,000-calorie diet.

**Q** What is *trans* fat?

**A** *Trans* fat (also known as *trans* fatty acids) is a specific type of fat formed when liquid oils are made into solid fats like shortening and hard margarine. The majority of *trans* fats are artificial, made when an oil is heated with hydrogen (a process called partial hydrogenation).

**Q** What foods contain *trans* fat?

**A** *Trans* fat can be found in some of the same foods as saturated fat, such as vegetable shortenings, some margarines, crackers, candies, cookies, snack foods, fried foods, baked goods, and other processed foods made with partially hydrogenated vegetable oils. However, a small amount of *trans* fat is found naturally, primarily in some dairy and animal-based foods.

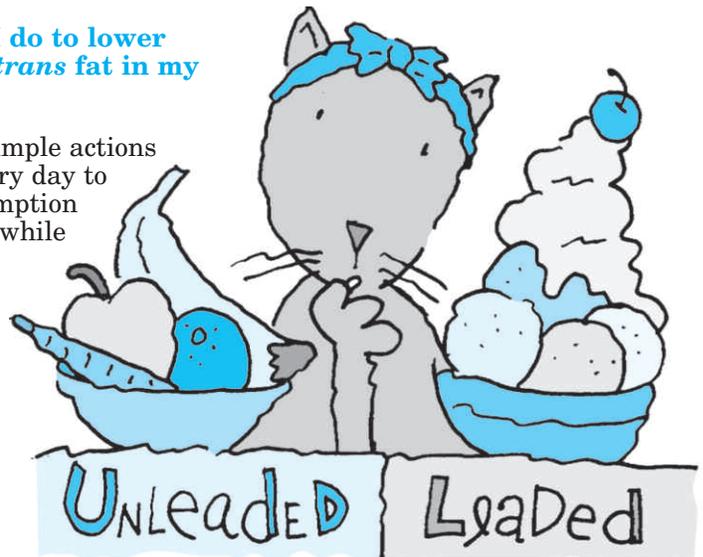
**Q** Why is *trans* fat bad for our health?

**A** *Trans* fat behaves like saturated fat by raising low-density lipoprotein (LDL or “bad”) cholesterol, which increases your risk of coronary heart disease (CHD) and stroke. It also lowers your heart-healthy HDL cholesterol.

**Q** What can I do to lower the amount of *trans* fat in my diet?

**A** These are simple actions you can take every day to keep your consumption of *trans* fats low while consuming a healthy diet:

- **Check the Nutrition Facts panel.** Choose foods lower in saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol.
- **Choose healthier fats.** Replace saturated and *trans* fats in your diet with mono- and polyunsaturated fats. These fats have health benefits when eaten in moderation. Sources include olive and canola oils. Sources of polyunsaturated fats include soybean, corn, sunflower oils, and foods like nuts.
- **Choose vegetable oils (except coconut and palm kernel oils) and soft margarines (liquid, tub, or spray) more often.** The combined amount of saturated and *trans* fats is lower than the amount in solid shortenings, hard margarines, and animal fats, including butter.



- **Consider fish.** Most fish are lower in saturated fat than meat. Some fish, such as mackerel, sardines, and salmon, contain omega-3 fatty acids that are being studied to determine if they offer protection against heart disease.
- **Avoid deep fried foods.** Doughnuts contain 5 grams *trans* fat and French fries contain 8 grams *trans* fat.  
Remember *trans* fats when eating out. They may not be labeled on the menu, but many baked and fried foods are a huge source of *trans* fats in our diets.

## TRY THE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE OF THE MONTH

**G**o to [www.metrokc.gov/employees](http://www.metrokc.gov/employees) for tips, recipes and more.

**Fruit:** Limes are packed with Vitamin C and are often used as garnish. Simply slice the lime in half and slice into several sections. Limes or lime juice are a great salt substitute and add a tangy flavor.

**Vegetable:** Potatoes are tough and durable, store well, and have an impressive nutritional content including being a rich source of fiber, potassium and Vitamin C. Like other fruits and vegetables, potatoes are a low-calorie food and are free of fat, cholesterol, and sodium.

- **For a healthier diet, eat whole grains, fruits and veggies.**

Choose whole grain breads, cereals and pasta and eat lots of fruit and vegetables.

To learn more and to check the *trans* fat content of some of your food choices, visit: [www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/transfat.html](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/transfat.html).

Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration — Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition



**NEED HELP DEALING WITH STRESS?**

**V**isit the new *Stress Less* section on the **Focus on Employees website**. You will find tons of information, tips, suggestions and resources to help manage stress.

[www.metrokc.gov/employees](http://www.metrokc.gov/employees)

The information in this publication is meant to complement the advice of your health-care providers, *not* to replace it. Before making any major changes in your medications, diet, or exercise, talk to your doctor.

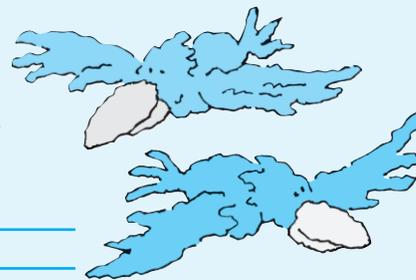
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## Move More — May Events

### Is biking not your thing?

You can still get your recommended 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week. Try these options if you're looking for something new.



### BIRD WATCHING

The Point Defiance Zoo in Tacoma observes International Migratory Bird Day the weekend of May 5–6. Learn about the birds who pass through the Puget Sound area on their way to winter and summer nesting and feeding grounds. Then test your knowledge at local parks as you spend May looking for birds on your walks and hikes. Go to <http://www.pdza.org/> for info on the Point Defiance Zoo.

### BOATING

Serious about sea kayaking? Visit the Puget Sound Sea Kayak Symposium May 19 and 20. Activities include classroom presentations, on-the-water classes, and vendor booths and demos to test equipment. Passes are sold for either one day or a weekend pass. Get more info at <http://www.metroparkstacoma.org/page.php?id=97>.

### STREET SCRAMBLE

This one comes recommended by a King County employee. Street Scrambles are individual or team events that can be done walking, running, biking, skating, scootering (you get the idea — non-motorized). On the day of the Scramble, participants receive a map with several checkpoints locations. Checkpoints have point values assigned to them. Participants choose either a 90-minute or 3-hour option, and try to reach as many checkpoints as possible within that timeframe. Map reading experience (USGS topographical) is very helpful — the map has very few street names. Awards are given for the highest scores in different categories. Join the May 19 Bellevue Street Scramble by going to [www.streetscramble.com](http://www.streetscramble.com).

### WALK OR RUN FOR A CAUSE

Various charities host fundraising walks in the Seattle area in May including:

- **Relay for Life** — various dates. Participate as a team on this overnight fundraiser. Teams keep at least one walker on the track all night long. Funds support the American Cancer Society. Visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) for dates, locations and registration information.
- **Asthma Walk** — May 6 in Seattle. This 5K walks supports the American Lung Association of Washington. Visit [www.alaw.org](http://www.alaw.org) for details.
- **Safe from the Sun Walk and Run** — May 6 to benefit skin cancer support programs in the Puget Sound area. Includes a 2-mile walk or a 5K run. Visit [www.melanomainternational.org](http://www.melanomainternational.org).
- **Beat the Bridge** — May 20. This Seattle tradition continues for the 25th year. Proceeds support juvenile diabetes research. Choose from walk and run options. Go to [beatthebridge.org](http://beatthebridge.org) for details.

Share your favorite activity or submit a Move More testimonial. E-mail [health.matters@metrokc.gov](mailto:health.matters@metrokc.gov) or call 206-263-6085.

# success story

## Move More — Success Story

**T**hanks to Greg Babinski, DNRP for submitting the following article:

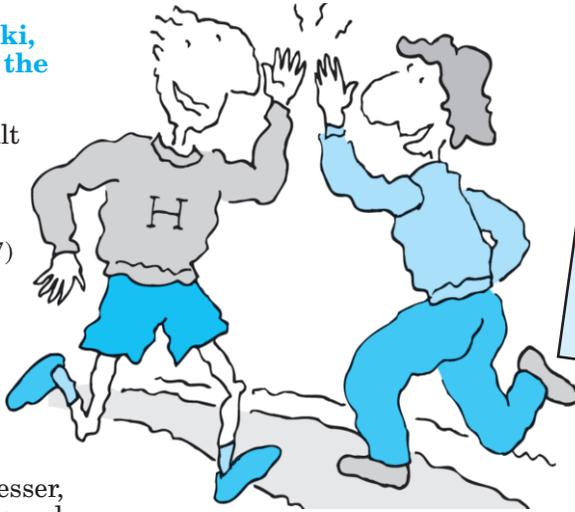
I started running as an adult on September 17, 1977. Since then, I have logged every training run, every race.

Wednesday (March 14, 2007) at noon along the Seattle Waterfront, I logged my 25,000th mile...

I have found that keeping a running log is critical for me to keep running throughout my life.

The log sits on top of my dresser, near where I keep my running and workout clothes. For every run, I record the date, the route I ran, the distance (even if an estimate), length of time, and my weight.

If I go a few days, or a week, or several weeks without running, the log is there to remind me...Greg, Greg, you should go for a run today. The log helps set goals for me. The



race I did last year — can I run faster this year? Last February, I ran 62 miles — can I run 70 miles this February? The log helps me control my weight — last year before the 10K race I weighed 168 pounds, if I can get down to 165 pounds, will I run the 10K faster this year?

### RUNNER'S RESOURCES:

- Pick up a free runner's log at Super Jock 'n Jill at Greenlake. Visit their Web site for running routes close to their store: <http://www.superjocknjill.com/maps.htm>.
- Sign up for a free, online training program tailored to your running (or walking) goals. Visit [www.runnersworld.com](http://www.runnersworld.com) and go to Smart Coach.

Before my children were born, I used to run 1,200–1,600 miles per year. After my two sons were born, I dropped down to 400–600 miles per year. Now that they are older, I've built back up to 1,000 miles or more a year, and both of my sons are runners, too!

Still running and shooting for 50,000 miles.

Happy trails to you...

### WELLNESS ASSESSMENT

## June 30th Deadline Approaches

**T**ime is moving fast so if you haven't already taken the wellness assessment, make sure you beat the clock.

If you took the wellness assessment in January 2007, your next step is to enroll and participate in your individual action plan. Remember, you must complete your individual action plan by June 30, 2007, to earn gold.

### LOW-RISK INDIVIDUALS

If you have been identified as having a low health risk, you have two free and confidential programs to choose from that best fit your interests and needs.

#### Route 66

This exercise program is designed to help you get fit and have fun. Just log the amount of time (in minutes) and the type

of physical activities you participated in each day.

#### Colorful Choices

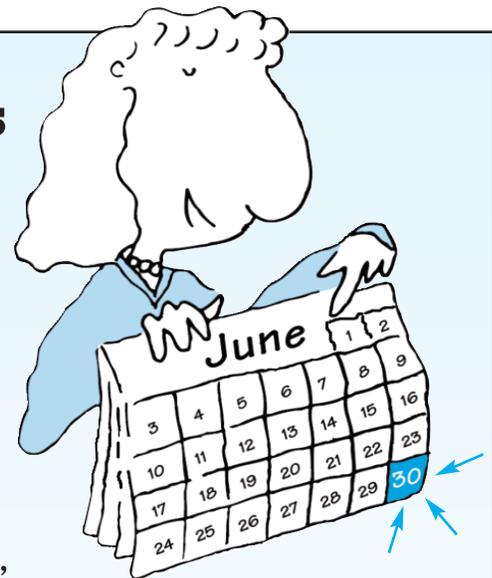
With this program, you simply track your servings of fruits and vegetables each day by color: red, orange, yellow/white, green and blue/violet.

Complete one of the programs for 56 consecutive days by **June 30, 2007**, to earn the gold out-of-pocket expense level.

**Make sure to begin by May 1st, 2007, to give yourself enough time to complete your low-risk individual action plan and be eligible for the gold out-of-pocket expense level!**

### MODERATE- OR HIGH-RISK INDIVIDUALS

If you have been identified as having a moderate or high health risk, you will receive three coaching calls from Harris HealthTrends. These



calls are designed to encourage positive health and lifestyle changes to reduce your health risks — they are not a treatment plan.

If you or your covered spouse/domestic partner took the wellness assessment in January 2007 and have not yet heard about your individual action plan, call Harris HealthTrends toll-free at 1-877-279-0624.

# choose generics

## Medication Check Up™ helps keep your prescriptions safe

**A** walk down any drugstore aisle reveals a vast and growing array of medications available today. While the wide choice in drugs holds great promise for addressing ills, serious errors in how medications are taken are also on the rise. The Institute of Medicine recommends that patients

taking multiple medications review their list with a health professional.

You can ensure that your prescriptions and supplements are the right combination for you with **Medication Check Up™**; a new, voluntary service available at no cost to KingCare<sup>SM</sup> members.



With **Medication Check Up™** you meet with a local pharmacist specially trained to look at your prescriptions. They'll review your medication history and work with your doctor to detect any potential conflicts or duplications.

If you or family members are taking multiple medications, the **Medication Check Up™** may be right for you.

To get started, visit *www.getoutcomes.com* and look for the **Quick Links** section. Click the *Pharmacy Ratings* link to see a list of participating pharmacies in your area. You may also call Outcomes™ at 515-237-0001 for help finding a participating pharmacist.

For more information about all the benefits of King County's entire Pharmacy Consulting program, visit the King County Web site at: *www.metrokc.gov/employees/benefits* or contact Benefits and Retirement Operations by phone at 206-684-1556 or by e-mail at: *kc.benefits@metrokc.gov*.

If you're experiencing anxiety  
about taking your  
**generic drug,**  
read this ad and repeat as needed.

FDA ensures that your generic drug is safe and effective. All generic drugs are put through a rigorous, multi-step approval process. From quality and performance to manufacturing and labeling, everything must meet FDA's high standards. We make it tough to become a generic drug in America so it's easy for you to rest assured. Visit *www.fda.gov/cder/* or call 1-888-INFO-FDA to learn more.  
**Generic Drugs: Safe. Effective. FDA Approved.**



Write down the names and numbers of all your charge cards and keep a copy in a safe place.



## SWIM SUIT SEASON IS COMING!

**I**t is time to start toning up and getting ready for summer and that swim suit you really want to wear.

Join a gym that is convenient and offers programs that will help you move more and get healthier!

The King County Gym Discount program has 124 first class facilities throughout the Puget Sound region. There are gyms for all budgets and all interests. Many are convenient to either work or home and all gyms offer a discount to both King County employees and their dependents. The average discount is 20% and you have a wide selection of fine fitness facilities to choose from.

Check it out at: <http://www.metrokc.gov/employees/kgym/default.aspx>.



## Quit Tobacco

### KING COUNTY EMPLOYEE RESOURCES:

- **Free Online Customized Support** — HealthMedia's BREATHE® program. Go to <http://quit-tobacco.healthmedia.com>. Click on Sign Up Today and enter a unique username. Access code is IWILLQUIT.
- **Free Telephone Support** — Call the King County Tobacco Quit Line at 1-877-279-0624.
- **Reimbursement for the patch and other nicotine replacement treatment** — check out King County's comprehensive tobacco cessation benefits online.
  - KingCare<sup>SM</sup> Members — prescription drugs and alternative treatments to ease nicotine withdrawal, over the counter drug coverage for nicotine replacement treatments (patches, gum)
  - Group Health Members — Free and Clear program and nicotine replacement therapy

### COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

- **Washington State Quit Line** — 1-877-270-STOP (7867) or online at [quitline.com](http://quitline.com)
- **Public Health's free quit kit** — 206-296-7613

For more information, visit [www.metrokc.gov/employees](http://www.metrokc.gov/employees) and click on Quit Tobacco or call 206-684-1556.

## SIMS, MANAGERS TO MEET ON WORKPLACE HEALTH

**B**uilding on increased employee awareness to support a healthier workplace is the thrust behind the 3rd annual Health Leadership Forum, to be convened later this month by King County Executive Ron Sims.

Sims will join 200 King County department managers in an in-depth discussion on how to improve awareness about personal health and our growing list of workplace opportunities, including the Healthy Workplace Funding Initiative, Weight Watchers at Work®, the Live Well Challenge, Get a Flu Shot and the Health & Benefits Fair, and more.

“With over ninety percent of King County employees taking the wellness assessment this year, our population is saying ‘yes’ to building a lasting community of health,” said Sims. “As we move from ideas to innovation, my challenge to the Leadership Forum is to make sure all the tools are there to strengthen our success in the workplace.”