

# Yakima Finds a “Handy Way” to Teach Hand Washing

## Issue

According to public health experts when some people don't wash their hands frequently, we all have good reason to be concerned. The simple task of washing our hands, if done correctly, is one of the most important ways to stop the spread of dangerous germs.

To help prevent illness in the county, the Yakima Health District found a fun and effective way to teach children hand washing skills so that they learn good lifelong habits and, in turn, pass this norm on to adults.

## Intervention

Public health nurses used 2007 Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant funds to take the health district's hand washing trailer, known as “Handy,” to a variety of communities in the county. The trailer is equipped with sinks, a black light tent, and lotion that glows only under a black light (the lotion represents pretend germs). Children get hands-on practice and can see immediately if their hand washing technique is effective—their hands will glow under the black light if they don't wash all the lotion off. Spanish-speaking volunteers, school staff, parents, and AmeriCorps workers were among those who accompanied Handy at visits to schools, child care centers, community events, and businesses.

## Impact

Parents, teachers, and school staff reported that children continually talked about Handy and gave each other tips on proper hand washing techniques. Kids even “busted” teachers and adults for not washing their hands properly and often.

In 2007, Handy reached:

- **17 elementary and secondary schools** where visits included school assemblies and free information bags for children to take home
- **Several child care centers** throughout the county, including many that serve the county's large Hispanic population
- **Major community events** including health fairs, farmer's markets, petting zoos, and community celebrations
- **Business supporters** at restaurants, retailers, and grocery stores

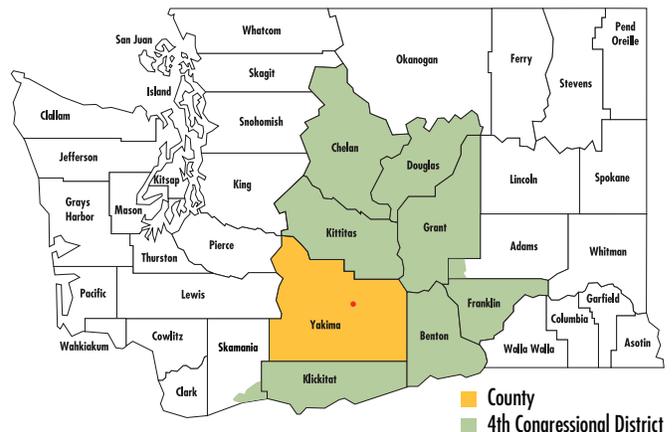
**Introducing kids to a fun method of practicing good hand washing habits can make a lasting impression and instill good habits in others, too. Thanks to block grant funds, the Yakima Health District was able to reach more than 11,500 people—23,000 hands.**

County population\*: 234,200

### Yakima Health District

Yakima, Washington

<http://www.yakimacounty.us/health/>



For persons with disabilities this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TTY/TDD 1-800-833-6388).

\* 2007, Office of Financial Management