

**Ken on the Issues:  
HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

As a County Supervisor, the health and well-being of our residents is the issue that is most important to me. Of the wide variety of healthcare concerns that exist, health problems that arise from preventable sources, such as smoking and obesity, are of particular concern to me.

Obesity in children and adults is of epidemic proportions. In fact, government projections show that children born in 2000 now have a one-in-three lifetime risk of diabetes. Almost one in four children in Santa Clara County are overweight or obese. This may be the first generation of children to have a lifespan shorter than their parents.

Although information about the medical problems related to obesity is everywhere, parents face a daunting challenge when trying to change behavior. Cartoon characters wave at children from cereal boxes filled with sugar and fat, convenience stores offer few or no healthy eating options, and low-income areas are crowded with fast-food restaurants.

One thing is clear: Solving a problem as massive in scope as childhood obesity can't be accomplished in small, timid steps. Government, the private sector, and schools must do more if substantial change is to occur.

When it comes to children from birth to 5 years of age, there are promising strategies to prevent obesity. These include increasing breastfeeding, improving feeding and eating practices for young children, and reducing television watching and marketing of unhealthy foods to children.

One of the worst culprits is the fast-food industry. One meal can equal half or more of a person's recommended daily calorie intake. That is why Santa Clara County became one of the first local jurisdictions in the country to require posting of calorie counts at the point of sale. It is now a national standard for the food industry. This year, we also passed a first in the nation ordinance that breaks the link between unhealthy food and toys.

Another problem for children and adults is the over-concentration of fast-food restaurants, particularly in low-income areas. At the same time, these same neighborhoods often have a lack of access to healthier food and proper grocery stores. Currently, I am working to help develop a plan that will expand access to healthy food options in areas that have high rates of poverty and poor nutrition.

Education is also crucial to fighting obesity. One program that I have supported is the Healthy Trails Challenge. The challenge, in partnership with Kaiser Permanente San Jose and the County Public Health Department, encourages residents to become more active while exploring the many beautiful parks throughout the County.

Another great educational program that I have been a part of is the Soda Free Summer Campaign. Soda is the No. 1 source of sugar in the American diet, and all that sugar adds to rising obesity rates and obesity-related diseases, such as diabetes. Teenagers in the United States consume twice as much soda as they do milk. The Soda Free Summer Campaign makes residents aware of how much sugar they are putting into their bodies and how many pounds they are putting on just from drinking sugary drinks.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cigarette smoking is the single most preventable cause of premature death in the United States. In Santa Clara County, 10.5% of youth and 10.7% of adults are smokers. Nationwide each year, 420,000 people die from a tobacco-related disease, while tobacco smoking costs more than \$190 billion in lost productivity and health care costs.

Last year, the Board of Supervisors accepted my proposal to expand the smoke-free zone around County buildings from 20 feet to 30 feet. We also made Valley Medical Center and our County clinics smoke-free zones.

This year, the Board is considering the adoption of my proposal for sweeping anti-smoking measures that will help prevent youth access to tobacco and protect non-smokers from harmful exposure to cigarette smoke. To aid in these endeavors, I supported the County in securing \$7 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for its anti-smoking efforts.