Updated, Valuable Health Data, Free on Spokane Counts site
In late 2013, Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) released updated health statistics on their Spokane Counts website. These indicators provide free, valuable information on more than 60 Spokane County health statistics, as well as comparisons with state and U.S. data.

According to a press release from the health district, high scores (indicating the county is not meeting expectations) for this round of indicators were present in bullying, maternal smoking, preschool administration, dental decay, child abuse and youth depression indicators.

Spokane County met health expectations in areas of drowning, preterm births, tuberculosis, vaccine-preventable diseases and correction of septic system failure.

Other data categories include environmental indicators (air quality, food and waterborne disease), health status indicators (rates of mental health, obesity, asthma, etc.), and health behavior indicators (rates of binge drinking, smoking, etc.)

Fresno Progress Report
Quarter one in 2014 has been productive for the Institute and our business partners in Fresno, California. We've been busy launching the Fresno Community Scorecard, a fresh new site chock-full of more than 150 data indicators unique to the Fresno area. Working with the Fresno Business Council, ValleyPBS and other community stakeholders, the Institute identified and created indicators that measure and reflect concerns of local importance to Fresno-area residents. We encourage our local readers to check out the Fresno site, as its design is a template for the upcoming redesign planned for our other community websites.
Below is a screenshot of the Fresno Community Scorecard, the latest Community Trends website with a fresh redesign.
Food Shortages Rise in Spokane County

Food insecurity, defined as eating diminished amounts of food at any particular meal or skipping complete meals due to lack of financial resources, is up nationally, statewide and in Spokane County. The trend is exacerbated by factors like the Great Recession, sluggish economic recovery and cuts to programs like TANF and SNAP (food stamps).

Unfortunately, in a developed country such as the United States, food insecurity is all too common, affecting an estimated 16.4 percent of U.S. residents in 2011 and 16.1 percent of Washington State residents, according to Community Indicators 6.14. Data for Spokane County has remained largely flat from 2009 to 2011 at around 15.3 percent, but local nonprofit workers say the need for food increased markedly in 2013.

Children are affected disproportionately - according to Feeding America, 15.9 million children under 18 were unable to consistently access nutritious food in 2012. That’s more than one out of five. Populations on fixed incomes or those living on incomes of others are more vulnerable to food insecurity because they are less able to earn their own income.

Seniors are also affected disproportionately by food insecurity, according to Meals on Wheels Executive Director Pam Almeida; mostly they are included in the population living on fixed or no income.

Like many local nonprofits, Meals on Wheels has faced significant funding reductions in the past year, Almeida said, and as a result has had to make program cuts. The program is largely funded by federal money allocated by the Older Americans Act of 1965, which authorizes funding for agencies throughout the country focused on serving the elderly and associated caregivers.

About 25 percent of the program’s meals go to people under 60, a little known fact, Almeida said, and that program is no longer free because of the cuts. Meals on Wheels also recently began charging for any liquid nutrition drinks they give out.

Meals on Wheels serves a significant number of people in Spokane County.

“We’re currently doing about 20,000 meals per month,” Almeida said, a number that was cut from 25,000 after budget reductions.

“Probably the most disconcerting number for me [is that] for half the people, our meal is the only meal of the day.”

To make up for budget shortfalls, Almeida and Meals on Wheels officials are currently working with local aging and long-term care officials to plan a summit on senior hunger for the late spring. She hopes to bring more awareness to the community about a problem she says isn’t understood as well as it should be.

“Theyir issues are different than the general population,” she said. “It’s a huge problem most people aren’t aware of.”

For example, many seniors have mobility problems and cannot go to the food bank, she said. Another barrier for seniors is the act of asking for help. Almeida calls this the ‘hidden waiting list’ of people who experience financial and physical need but may not reach out for assistance because of social and cultural upbringing that makes it difficult to use a charitable service like meals on wheels.
Many misconceptions exist about food insecurity, according to Second Harvest CEO Jason Clark, including ones about the people who do use the food bank.

“Often, people start with the assumption that we serve primarily homeless people or mostly the unemployed. We certainly help people who are homeless or unemployed, but today serve a significant number of working, low-income families with children,” he said.

Clark said food bank clients are often underemployed and earn less than the federal poverty income level. They experience an increasing level of what he calls chronic food insecurity, a trend that has grown more common in the last five years.

“Food bank lines have grown much longer and people are in a situation where they now have to come each month in order to feed themselves and their families,” he said.

Increasing food insecurity has become a problem for Second Harvest officials because the model was designed to relieve occasional or emergency need, rather than long-term assistance. The community has been responsive so far.

“Our distribution of donated food has grown from 14,000,000 pounds annually in 2008 to a projected 24,000,000 pounds in 2014,” Clark said.

Second Harvest supplies 272 food banks and programs in Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho from distribution hubs in Spokane and Pasco. In Spokane, these neighborhood food banks are called outlets, Clark said, and they served around 18,000 people per month in 2013, up from only 14,000 in 2008.

Clark attributes the rise in food bank visits to several factors, including cuts in SNAP benefits and changes to the most recent Farm Bill, which further affects food stamp funding.

Fortunately, while food insecurity is a serious problem in Spokane, it’s not one without a solution. Both Meals on Wheels and Second Harvest accept donations of volunteer time and money, and they need them more than ever in the face of rising demand.

“I always encourage folks to consider making a financial contribution because each donated dollar provides five meals,” Clark said.

**Spokane Exports Rebound, Expand**

Exports, defined as goods and services shipped out of one country and into another, are strong job creators and drive many markets, including one here in Spokane.

Most export categories in Spokane rose from 2011-2012, according to Spokane Indicator 3.4, Total Value of Exports, including metal manufacturing (up 17 percent), machine manufacturing (up 18 percent) and the "other" category (up 9 percent since 2011). 'Other' includes categories like crop production, electrical equipment/appliance manufacturing, forestry, chemical manufacturing and a variety of other products not included in the other NAICS categories.

Export revenues have trended upward since 2005, aside from a brief dip in 2009, increasing 66 percent in metal manufacturing and 55 percent in machine manufacturing. Washington State has been a key player in the export market for years, according to a recent article in The Spokesman-Review.
In 2013, Washington exported approximately $15 billion in agricultural products, among many others, creating a robust job market in shipping, harvesting, growing and supply processing. Top agricultural exports for the region include apples, wheat, cattle and barley.

Although the data are not yet in, 2013 appears to be a good year for local shipping companies as well. Companies like HollisterStier, Itron Inc., Triumph Composite Systems and SCAFCO lead the way in exporting goods to top buyers like Canada, China and Japan. “We have seen a huge demand in freight movements and inventory buildup between 2012 and 2013,” said Matt Ewers, vice president for business development for IEDS Logistics.

Ewers said people are more willing to risk investing and buying this year after several low years for the market, and that demand is reflected in the supply chain and shipping businesses like his. Clients like Kaiser Aluminum and Clearwater Paper are keeping his employees busy.

One of the obstacles in the current market, in fact, is finding enough truckers to get all the shipments to their destinations this year, he said.

Some shippers and people in the export business are still waiting on the resolution of new government regulations before they make more new hires or expand, Ewers said.

“We don’t know what the Affordable Care Act costs are going to be two to five years out. We need know the impacts of these costs for pro forma cash flow analysis,” he said. “When you don’t know your cost structure, it’s hard to accept the risk when you’re going to go out and invest.”

While exporting is already a big contributor to Spokane’s economic scene, Terry Chambers expects it to grow even more in upcoming years, in part because of his work with the Small Business Development Center, which provides technical assistance, management training and business advice to local firms.

Chambers, Network Training Director for SBDC, said he sees upcoming growth in industries like manufacturing (various products), environmental products and services, wine exports and food products.

One of the ways the SBDC hopes to strengthen the local export market, Chambers said, is by creating a “culture of exporting” within Washington State and the SBDC network.

“To create a strong capability within the statewide network we set a high goal of certifying a significant number of advisers and trade specialists in international trade,” Chambers said.

As of this month, 48 percent of the SDBC network has obtained Certified Global Business Professional (CGBP) certifications, and another four have received intermediate certifications, Chambers said. With SDBC’s help, he believes many more Spokane businesses will view exporting as a viable expansion tool, thus increasing profits and jobs.

With recent expansions in local exports, Spokane is again approaching the $1 billion dollar mark for total value of local exports, as noted in Indicator 3.4, and positive predictions from Chambers and Ewers about 2013 and 2014 make the future look promising for the city to beat its 2008 high of $895 million.

**Washington Cutting Edge in Juvenile Court Alternatives**

**By Scott Richter**

Childhood and especially the teen years can be a difficult time of a young person’s life. People cannot choose what family they are born into – whether rich or poor, or the number of opportunities versus the number of roadblocks a young person has. Is the neighborhood they live in community-oriented, or is it riddled with crime and drugs? Is there an abundance of positive role models or are they hard to find? Does the juvenile offender have mental health issues, learning disabilities, or have they been exposed to abuse, neglect and violence?

For these reasons and more, the juvenile criminal justice system differs in a few key areas from the adult criminal justice system. The juvenile system takes into account the history of a child and attempts to meet the individual needs of the child, while the adult system is primarily based off of legal facts and evidence. Most importantly, the juvenile justice system emphasizes rehabilitation and restoration while the adult system is geared toward deterrence.
There is not a national juvenile justice system in the U.S. Instead, there are approximately 56 independently operated juvenile justice systems across the U.S. and its territories. Policies and procedures are quite different within each of these independent systems. In Washington State, during 2012, the state legislature passed House Bill 2536 which requires "prevention and intervention services delivered to children and juveniles in the areas of mental health, child welfare, and juvenile justice be primarily evidence-based and research-based". The Washington State Juvenile Justice System has been ahead of the legislation.

For years, Spokane County Juvenile Court has been using cutting-edge programs. The Electronic Monitoring (the first of its kind in Washington State) and the Structured Alternative Confinement (SAC) programs have been in existence since the early 1990s and the Weekend Program for Status Offenders began in 2004. The Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) was adopted in 2005 by the Spokane County Juvenile Court in an effort to further improve and reform the system. JDAI is a proven detention and system reform model of eight core strategies that enable juvenile courts to safely reduce the use of secure detention for low-risk youth by utilizing community-based alternatives to detention. JDAI is also a model for juvenile courts to address and reduce racial and ethnic disparities.

When looking at this indicator, Youth Detention Alternatives 8.10, and the indicator for Youth Diversions 8.11, the number of participants in both these programs has decreased each year. According to Bonnie Bush, Spokane County Juvenile Court Services Administrator, there are many factors. One reason is the focus on earlier intervention with youth. The Juvenile Court has significantly reduced the incarceration of status offenders such as truants, who in the past might have been sentenced to secure detention. Earlier intervention required strong collaboration between the juvenile court, public schools and community resources in Spokane County. In 2007, after a group of community stakeholders expressed concern with high dropout rates and high occurrences of truancy, the Juvenile Court teamed with West Valley School District to conduct an in-depth effectiveness study of their existing community truancy board. The goal of the intervention is successful school re-engagement and renewed progress toward graduation. According to Bush “The personal and societal cost of a high school dropout is enormous. According to studies, every high school dropout costs society an estimated $292,575 over his or her lifetime. We do everything we can to help keep juveniles in school.” The Community Truancy Board model has been successfully replicated in the state of Washington and a replication tool kit has been shared across the country.

The JDAI reform efforts and the truancy reform model are highly successful examples of community collaboration.
Five Questions with EWU’s 25th President, Dr. Rodolfo Arévalo

Q: Among the many duties of a university president, time spent evaluating data must be a standing order. Besides operational data, what trends have you paid the most attention to as president?

A: The data that I spend most of my time concerned about are those related to student success and achievement. I review information on student retention, graduation rates and time-to-degree data. I look at how our achievements match other comparable universities in-state and nationally. I also review high school graduation rates and try to assess shifts in student populations across the state. Associated with these graduation rates, I also look at national test scores on student achievement.

Q: While EWU draws from all over the state, a strong base of students comes from Spokane. As you look at the Spokane Community Indicators (CI) site, are there any trends that you think are relevant for local recruitment of students to EWU?

A: The most relevant Community Indicators are those that measure achievement rates, high school graduation rates and achievement scores on national tests. I look at educational attainment and drop-out rates for local districts. All of these are important to gauge were the university needs to focus its recruitment efforts.

Q: You are a board member of Priority Spokane and have participated in the workshops that have led to both new indicators and perhaps a new priority for the organization. What metrics would you like to see that the Spokane CI site does not currently have?

A: I believe that this year’s process for assessing the need for new indicators was well done, and the new indicators in education will serve the University well. At this point, I do not see a need for any additional indicators that we would need to add.

Q: How do you think the EWU community – students, faculty, staff – can best use the site?

A: I think that the indicator data can be used for determining recruitment strategies and focusing our limited resources on school districts that will yield high quality students. In addition, given our community engagement goal, they can be used to determine programmatic efforts that can help improve areas associated with improving educational attainment. Department and student organizations that want to engage in community projects could use the indicators to pinpoint needed services. I believe that faculty and staff could also use the data to prepare grant proposals and demonstrate the need in the community for funded research.

Q: Do you have any parting words about the role of Eastern Washington University serving in the role of helping to “democratize data” for the residents of this county?

A: The university needs to continue to provide avenues for the general public to have access to information and data about the areas that can improve the quality of life for citizens. We need to continue to provide and create easily understandable information sources and studies that empower citizens to act on issues in a more effective way.