

Valley air district meetings aim to find solutions to quality issue

By Marc Benjamin

Fresno Bee, Friday, July 28, 2006 (Updated 4:55 AM)

The Valley's air quality problem needs solutions -- both large and small -- to meet new, more stringent federal standards going into effect in seven years.

While the Valley's air has improved, more emissions must be reduced to meet new federal standards that go into effect in 2013. The Valley may need to reduce polluting emissions by 60%, California Air Resources Board reports show.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has conducted four "Town Hall" meetings in the Valley this week and two others are being held today in Modesto and Stockton to hear residents' suggestions for reducing air pollution.

During Thursday's meeting in Fresno, residents suggested reducing dust, stronger adherence to existing rules and placing restrictions on dairies that want to come into the Valley.

Air quality officials describe the 25,000-square-mile Valley stretching from roughly Stockton to south of Bakersfield as a bowl with hot, trapped gases in summer and moist, tiny chemical-laced dust particles in winter.

The geography and stagnant air magnify the pollution problem because bad air can linger for days. The biggest villains are cars and trucks, accounting for more than half the pollution. The air resources board estimates vehicles in the Valley will travel 107.7 million miles daily. But the local district does not have authority over vehicles. State and federal agencies regulate cars, trucks, boats, trains and planes.

But on a local level, there are programs that are making a difference, industry officials say.

Manuel Cunha, president of the 1,000-grower Nisei Farmers League, said agriculture continues to make progress by working with air district officials to improve Valley air quality.

He said agriculture has helped remove thousands of tons of polluting emissions. One Valley program replaces diesel, gas, butane or propane engines with discounted electricity rates from Pacific Gas & Electric. Other programs that have benefited the Valley are diesel engine replacement programs and forklift engine retrofits for engines that pollute less.

And Cunha said agriculture can do more through programs that can reduce pollution from tractors and by reformulating pesticides that have fewer volatile organic compounds, which are another part of the Valley's air pollution problem.

Another potential avenue for pollution reduction is through growing genetically modified crops that are more resistant to pests and require less pesticide use.

"We want to continually look at farming practices, and that's a positive thing," Cunha said.

The development community also has played a role in cutting down pollution through dust reduction by keeping dirt watered down, submitting dust-control plans and replacing diesel engines, said Mike Prandini, president and chief executive officer with the Building Industry Association of the San Joaquin Valley.

He said houses are more energy efficient and are no longer being built with wood-burning fireplaces.

"The district shows it has had a major impact," Prandini said of the fireplace rules.

But developers also are blamed for urban sprawl that allows commuters to live greater distances from work.

"Until people demand to live in condos and high-rises downtown, the city councils and housing industry will accommodate what the public wants," Prandini said after the meeting. "We are just going to have to do it [reduce pollution] in little bits."

But others demand that more be done today.

The Rev. Walt Parry of Fresno said dairies need to be restricted from moving into the Valley from Southern California. He also suggested a health-impact report be issued for each district decision and adding respiratory, air quality, land-use and environmental justice representatives to the Valley air district board.

He said living in the region is like playing "Valley roulette: Which children and adults are you willing to sacrifice? How many? How long do they have to wait to breathe clean air? Our bad air is the gun that is indiscriminately hitting our children, seniors and others."

Sarah Jackson of Earth Justice in Oakland told air district officials that they need to more stringently enforce rules they have in place.

Two rules she cited specifically involve boilers in food processing plants and gas flares used in oil producing areas.

She said new rules are filled with exemptions for polluters.

"The big point is that they are asking for our help and it seems every suggestion we make is ignored," Jackson said. "It's going to take work from everybody."

Valley voters targeted: Angelides vows to help clean up Valley's polluted air

By Scott Jason

Merced Sun-Star, Friday, July 28, 2006

State Treasurer Phil Angelides pledged to improve Central Valley air quality if he's elected governor during a Merced campaign stop.

"I'm going to wage an all-out attack on asthma," he said Thursday. "We are going to do the right thing to clean up the air."

Angelides, along with his wife and two of his three daughters, visited Merced's Boys & Girls Club during his Central Valley tour.

Focusing on air quality, asthma, health care and growth in the San Joaquin Valley, Angelides spoke to 15 adults, some from the local Democratic club, and about 20 children from the club.

Angelides is the Democratic Party nominee running against Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in the Nov. 7 race. Schwarzenegger also made campaign stops in Merced on Thursday.

Angelides' trip began in Fresno at 9:15 a.m. and was scheduled to end at 4:15 p.m. in Stockton.

He arrived about an hour late and toured Castle Air Museum with his father and family after the speech, which also focused on asthma and health care.

About half the audience raised their hands when Angelides asked if they had asthma or problems breathing when it's hot.

"Asthma doesn't discriminate if you are a farmer or working at a business," he said. "If the Valley air continues to deteriorate, this won't be an attractive place for people to live or work."

Angelides said he supports Proposition 86, which would increase the tax on cigarettes by \$2.60 per pack if it passes in November.

If elected, Angelides said he plans to reduce the amount of teenagers smoking by half.

"I'm going to side with kids," he said. "I'm not going to side with the tobacco industry."

Angelides said some money raised from the tax would go to asthma research, prevention and treatment.

During his speech, a young girl sitting next to Angelides thumbed through his packet of notes.

"Do you think this will go down as the best summer reading?" he asked.

The girl smiled and nodded yes to laughter from the crowd.

Other ways to improve the air include making sure the Valley grows sensibly and that developers are encouraged to build energy-efficient and pedestrian-friendly communities, he said.

Sensible growth can mean affordable housing too, Angelides said. More condominiums and lofts are being built and they are places where new families can get their start before buying a house, he said.

"We can't grow in a way that degrades our air quality," he said. "It will be the death knell for our health and economy."

Angelides said affordable prescription medicine and expanded health care coverage are also programs he wants to bring to Californians if he's elected governor.

Elva Curley, 66, heard about Angelides' appearance from a Merced Democratic Club e-mail.

Curley said she hoped there would be more young adults at the speech, since it was aimed toward them.

Politicians seem to be focusing more on the Central Valley and its issues, she said.

"This is the agriculture center of California," she said. "It has a lot of problems. Bad air is the biggest problem."

Curley said she heard about Schwarzenegger stopping in Merced, but would rather see Angelides.

"You can rent a movie," she said. "I don't think he's a bad guy, but he's not a Democrat."

After the Boys & Girls Club visit, Angelides and his entourage of body guards, representatives and managers toured Castle Air Museum.

Angelides' father, 83-year-old Jerry Angelides, saw a B-29 bomber, the type of plane he flew during World War II, for the first time in 61 years.

A B-29 was the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Jerry explained the different navigation devices to his son, as well as his granddaughters.

"There was no such thing as GPS," he said.

The Angelides family looked at the 49 planes at the air museums and also climbed inside the B-29.

Fred Pillsbury, who is a tour guide and on the museum's board of directors, said it was an honor to have Angelides and his family visit.

Pillsbury, who flew B-52s during Vietnam and the Cold War, said he shared stories with Jerry Angelides.

"It was interesting to talk because we could relate as navigators," he said.

Angelides' daughters seemed thrilled to see the type of plane their grandfather flew, Pillsbury said.

"If (someone has) never seen a World War II plane, they are surprised," he said. "They aren't very plush."

Pillsbury said he hasn't closely followed the governor campaign, but was eager to meet the candidate.

"I think it's nice, Republican or Democrat, that you meet them and see them as they are."

Angelides promises help with asthma

Gubernatorial hopeful stops in Fresno, speaks to air quality, health.

By Barbara Anderson

Fresno Bee, Friday, July 28, 2006 (Updated 4:55 AM)

California can do a better job improving air quality to help children with asthma, state Treasurer Phil Angelides, the Democratic candidate for governor, said Thursday at a campaign stop in Fresno.

The epidemic of asthma is negatively affecting children, families and the state, Angelides said. Asthma results in 160,000 hospital visits by children and costs the state \$1.3 billion yearly, he said.

Angelides pledged to cut in half the number of emergency room and hospital visits by asthmatics in the next decade.

"We're going to have to make progress, and we're going to have to make a difference," he said.

But spokesmen for Gov. Schwarzenegger said Angelides' proposals would be costly to taxpayers.

Fresno was the first stop Angelides made in the San Joaquin Valley before heading to Merced, Atwater, Modesto and Stockton.

Before he took the microphone at the University of California Merced Center on Shaw Avenue, community members outlined the toll air pollution takes in the Valley.

The Central Valley is one of the dirtiest air basins in the country. And one in six children in the Fresno area suffers from asthma.

Dirty air costs each Valley resident \$1,000 a year in medical bills, lost time on jobs, school absences and premature deaths, said clean-air advocate Carolina Simunovic of Fresno Metro Ministry.

Robin Blake of Fresno said her daughter cannot complete a soccer game without becoming short of breath.

She makes sure her daughter carries asthma medicine for emergencies, Blake said. "But one of the things we should not have to worry about protecting [our children] from is the air that we breathe."

And Kevin Hamilton, a Fresno respiratory therapist, said one-third of the children he sees have no health insurance.

"I cannot think of any priority higher than the health care of the children I see on a daily basis," he said.

Angelides told the three: "I'm not a miracle worker, but I'm going to try my hardest" to improve air quality and reduce asthma rates.

He criticized Schwarzenegger for ignoring health-care problems in the state and for siding with big insurance and tobacco companies on health issues.

Angelides outlined a six-point plan he said would address air quality concerns and help children with asthma.

The actions include:

Support of measures like the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District fees on developers to reduce sprawl and the smog caused by it.

Pushing for more asthma research and prevention programs.

Expansion of health insurance coverage for all children.

Regulations to ensure insurance companies provide treatment for children with asthma.

Matt David, deputy communications director for Schwarzenegger, said Angelides "was silent when the governor promoted the Breathe Easier campaign, which seeks to remove 15,000 of the dirtiest cars and buses every year off our highways."

Pete Mehas, the statewide education chairman for Schwarzenegger and the retiring Fresno County schools superintendent, called Angelides' plan one of "tax and spend."

Said Mehas: "We'd all love for everyone to have all these benefits but who ultimately is going to pay for this?"

The Rev. Walt Parry, executive director of Fresno Metro Ministry, listened to Angelides at the UC Merced Center. He hopes both Angelides and Schwarzenegger will work to clean the air in the central San Joaquin Valley.

"It's a major issue that continues to drain the health of all the people who live in the Valley," he said. "And we cannot wait years to stop that damage."

In Central Valley, Angelides Vows to Take On Childhood Asthma, Pollution

Campaigning in the Central Valley, the Democrat vows to fight the air pollution that has led to high rates of the disease.

By Seema Mehta, Staff Writer

The LA Times, Friday, July 28, 2006

As polls showed tepid support for Democratic gubernatorial candidate Phil Angelides, even among his own party's rank and file, the state treasurer Thursday stumped through the Central Valley, highlighting issues of special importance to the region's residents: air pollution and childhood asthma.

Angelides pledged to cut emergency room visits and hospitalizations caused by the respiratory illness in half by toughening air quality standards, expanding healthcare coverage to all the state's children as well as increasing state spending on asthma research and prevention efforts and other measures.

"I am going to wage an all-out attack on asthma," Angelides told a gathering at a town hall meeting at UC Merced's Center for Educational Partnership in Fresno. He offered only limited details about the cost of financing such an effort.

He also criticized Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger over concern in the Central Valley about healthcare, jobs and schools.

"This is the ripest territory for a Democratic nominee," Angelides said at a medical clinic in Stockton. "What's the governor done for the valley? Nothing."

The swing through Fresno, Merced, Atwater, Modesto and Stockton came at a time when new polls showed Angelides trailing Schwarzenegger by as much as 13 percentage points among likely voters.

Even among Democrats, support for Angelides was lukewarm, with less than two-thirds supporting him in two independent surveys.

The Central Valley, a more conservative region than the Bay Area or greater Los Angeles, will prove a particular challenge for Angelides. In the June primary, the region's centrist Democrats overwhelmingly supported Angelides' opponent, the more moderate state Controller Steve Westly.

"The valley is a very conservative place," said Susan Walsh, vice president of the Merced chapter of the League of Women Voters. "But if he talks about the issues important to us, such as asthma and air pollution, we'll listen."

The voters in the valley are particularly concerned about its air because the region is among the most polluted places in the nation, leading to high rates of asthma. In the Fresno area alone, one in six children has asthma, triple the national average.

In response to Angelides' visit, Schwarzenegger campaign aides raised questions about the treasurer's commitment to solving the valley's problems, working in a gibe at Angelides' proposals for targeted tax hikes.

"Either he's going to have to raise taxes by a lot more than he's said or he's making empty promises," Schwarzenegger campaign spokesman Matt David said. "In stark contrast, the governor has a strong record on healthcare and environmental issues ... which don't ask hard-working Californians to pay higher taxes."

Steve Haze, chairman of Fresno County's Democratic Party, said he felt confident that once local Democrats became more familiar with Angelides, they will flock to him in November.

"It's a no-brainer," Haze said. "I've seen Schwarzenegger come through, and he's got star power. With Phil Angelides, I think he's much more personable. He connects with people."

The most poignant moment of the day came when a 9-year-old boy spoke about his asthma. Kody Work said he has had the disease since he was 5 and has been hospitalized twice.

"I wish the air quality was better," he said.

Angelides replied, "I can't promise you that I can solve every problem. I can't promise you that I can cure what you struggle with. I can promise you that I am going to try as hard as I can to protect you and make it easier for you to breathe and clean the air."

As he spent his second straight day in the Central Valley, Angelides met up with his father at the Castle Air Museum in Atwater, where they toured a field full of military aircraft, including a B-29.

Angelides' father, Jerry, 83, navigated a B-29 in the Army Air Forces during World War II.

In Modesto, Angelides echoed Haze's confidence about his chances in November.

"Every Californian knows who Arnold Schwarzenegger is, and despite that fact, they are not ready to send him back for another four years because they have grave doubts," he said. "They haven't made a judgment on me yet.... People in California are anxious to learn who I am and where I'll take this state."

He said that between Westly and Schwarzenegger, about \$35 million has been spent this year on negative ads against him. He has aired far fewer ads; from the June primary until last week, when the California Democratic Party began airing ads on his behalf, voters were only hearing from Schwarzenegger.

The paucity of information about Angelides struck Democrats like Frank Lopez, a 28-year-old Modesto city firefighter whose station was one of the Democratic candidate's stops Thursday.

Lopez said he would vote for Angelides in November because "we can't have someone like our current governor, who is going after our pensions; that's an attack on our families." But Lopez said he knew little about the Democrat.

Neil Hudson, president of the Central Valley Democrat Club, said that "Schwarzenegger is appealing more to moderate Democrats, and we have a lot of moderate Democrats in the valley. It's going to be a tough race for Phil in this valley."

Angelides advocates for air quality in Central Valley

By JULIET WILLIAMS, The Associated Press

In the Bakersfield Californian, Friday, July 28, 2006

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Phil Angelides made improved health care and air quality his themes Thursday on a campaign tour of the Central Valley, as residents continued to sweat on the 12th consecutive day of a stifling heat wave.

Temperatures soared past 105 degrees, but local forecasters called it a "cooling trend."

It was the perfect, if oppressive, backdrop to the state treasurer's message that urgent action is needed to deal with the region's notoriously poor air quality. Angelides held a series of community forums at which local experts complained about the high rates of childhood asthma and impassioned children described their breathing troubles.

Angelides, a former developer who nonetheless has received endorsements from the Sierra Club and other environmental groups, is trying to style himself as the "green candidate," despite a poll released Thursday by the Public Policy Institute of California that showed voters warming to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's pro-environment pitches. The poll showed Schwarzenegger with a 13-point lead over Angelides among likely voters, with around 85 percent of them saying environmental issues could affect their vote in November.

Angelides responded that voters are still getting to know him, and once they do, they'll see he's the real thing.

"They will see the Angelides family with our three hybrids (cars) and they will see Arnold Schwarzenegger with his fleet of Hummers," Angelides said at a stop in Modesto later Thursday.

His caravan of vehicles passed strip mall after strip mall linking the Central Valley's small, mostly agriculture-based cities.

The treasurer railed against irresponsible development, commending the San Joaquin Valley Air Quality District's decision to impose fees on developers who add to the sprawl and offering incentives for developers who embrace responsible urban planning.

Angelides said politicians have ignored the Valley for too long, and his message clearly resonated with some, including Susan Walsh, 53, who attended Angelides' forum in Merced on behalf of the League of Women Voters, which does not endorse candidates.

"That he's talking about it at all is very important to us here," said Walsh, who criticized both Democratic and Republican governors for ignoring pollution in the Central Valley.

Schwarzenegger's campaign said the governor has taken action on air pollution, allocating \$3 million in last year's state budget for a children's asthma intervention program and launching a public awareness campaign to encourage Californians to get dirty cars off state roads.

The campaign also said the governor secured \$25 million to upgrade school buses to the latest emission standards.

Schwarzenegger, also trying to appeal to Central Valley voters, added a last-minute appearance in Merced on Thursday, where he urged outdoor workers to drink water and take breaks in the shade.

But Angelides said what valley residents really need is more affordable health care and insurance for children and working families.

In response to the governor's health summit this week, he proposed extending the state's Healthy Families program to all California children and forcing companies with more than 200 employees to offer health insurance to employees and their families. Schwarzenegger's campaign estimated that would cost state businesses \$7 billion a year.

Angelides responded that the plan would merely shift the cost of caring for workers from California taxpayers to their employers.

"It's costing us billions of dollars a year now when people are uninsured. They show up in these emergency rooms that are in meltdown. ... The taxpayers are essentially subsidizing the Wal-Marts of the world," he said.

Robin Blake, 35, a medical assistant, said her 9-year-old daughter often struggles to breathe and has to sit on the sidelines of her soccer games because of her asthma, which is worse in the stifling heat.

"It's refreshing to hear someone actually make commitments (on air quality)," she said after Angelides' Fresno forum, at which she spoke. "I hope that he keeps his end of the bargain."

Angelides, a policy wonk often described as stiff, also showed his softer side Thursday, climbing aboard a B-29 bomber with his father at the Castle Air Museum in Atwater and winning a raucous game of air hockey against a 12-year-old at a Merced Boys & Girls Club.

"I think he's a good player," said Lucas Heil, 12, who lost 3-2 to the state treasurer.

Seeking Student Artists Through Sept. 30

Modesto Bee, Fri., July 28, 2006

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is looking for student artwork for its 2007 Clean Air Kids Calendar. 557-6400.

[San Francisco Chronicle, Commentary, Friday, July 28, 2006:](#)

Sparing ourselves pollution solutions

Aaron Golub

On days when poor air quality is predicted, "Spare the Air" day helps to reduce smog levels and meet federal clean air rules by funding free travel on the region's public-transit systems. Breaking federal air-quality rules poses significant health hazards, and as far as "Spare the Air" day helps to prevent that, it is important, but it also has problems.

Instead of making the substantial effort to improve transit access in the region permanently, we entice people to use it once in a while, and only when the region runs the risk of breaking the rules. It's like cramming for an exam -- we pass the test, but we have learned nothing.

It is actually quite surprising that the program improves air quality at all. The impact on car use is actually very small, and much of the increased transit use still requires automobile access, meaning emissions reductions are compromised, as cars emit more pollution at the beginning of their trips when engines are starting. Driving to ferries, BART parking lots, park-and-ride lots, or being dropped off, does not lower vehicle emissions as much as it might seem.

I estimated how many car trips were reduced by the "Spare the Air" program, and thus how much pollution was prevented. Scientists talk about this as dollars per ton of emissions avoided. In this case, the cost per ton of the program to reduce smog precursors (nitrous oxides and hydrocarbons) was around \$100,000 and about \$10 million to remove particulate matter. Typically, a pollution-reduction program would cost around \$5,000 and \$20,000 per ton, respectively. And, at \$2 million for roughly 155,000 transit trips that we can attribute to the "Spare the Air" program, each trip costs \$13. Thus, the cost effectiveness of the program is miserable.

This Band-aid approach also means that we suffer from higher air pollution on other days. The federal rules are meant to create cleaner air so that pollution levels don't spike very high and "Spare the Air" days are more rare. Temporarily depressing the spikes doesn't mean that air quality has improved -- it just means it has improved on those days enough to pass the test.

Furthermore, using scarce transit funds to pay for the ride for commuters who normally drive is an affront to transit users. Transit monies, in a time when transit fares are rising and routes are being cut, should stay with transit to preserve services and keep it affordable for those who use it every day. The same money could be used to shuttle passengers to transit stations or to restore crosstown bus routes -- changes that could reduce driving year-round.

The money spent on these six "Spare the Air" days is roughly equal to the added revenues AC Transit will see from its recent fare hike. Also, the question of whether new riders (those who are incentivized to try public transit) actually stay with it, is important. Unfortunately, research shows most short-term commute changes, such as using transit on "Spare the Air" day, don't normally last very long.

The number of bad air days has declined over the years, but we need to work to achieve cleaner air and bring to zero the number of bad-air days, legitimately and sustainably.

The region is, and must be, encouraging denser and mixed-use, transit-oriented developments, tolls that vary with traffic congestion, and stepping up support for bicycle improvements and "bus rapid transit" innovations. And, while we are working toward these solutions, there is a way to improve "Spare the Air" days: Make drivers -- the polluters -- pay for it. Increasing bridge tolls on "Spare the Air" day to pay for the free transit would greatly improve the program.

As great as "Spare the Air" day seems, it can distract us from more substantial and long-term solutions, allow us to keep driving and creating more sprawl. And it lets us squeak by clean-air rules, rather than confronting the issues of air pollution head on.

The region is full of smart people -- let's stop cramming and get to work so we can actually pass this exam. Our lungs and our children's lungs deserve it.

Aaron Golub is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California at Berkeley's Transportation Center, and a transportation justice fellow in the Urban Habitat Program.

[Hanford Sentinel, Commentary, Thursday, July 27, 2006:](#)

Not all people have same reactions to asthma triggers

Place your vote at the bottom of the article

Mary Gallegos, Guest Column

Asthma is chronic lung disease with one main characteristic - airway inflammation. Airway inflammation is caused by one or more "triggers." Triggers can be described as elements or events that start an asthma reaction: dust, pollen, animal dander, allergic reactions, breathing in cold air, perfume/cologne, exertion, reactions to food or chemicals, mold, cigarette smoke, aerosol sprays, emotional reactions or colds/sinus congestion or infections. Asthma triggers vary and change with the time of the year and are individualized (not all people have the same reactions to all triggers).

Asthma triggers irritate sensitized lung tissue which then leads to airway congestion, mucus production, and airway constriction or broncho constriction (muscle tissue that tightens and makes the airway smaller) followed by coughing, wheezing, chest tightness and/or shortness of breath, rapid breathing -- an asthma attack. When the airways are constricted and the lung tissue is inflamed, breathing is a chore. People describe an asthma attack as feeling like "a fish out of water," gasping for air and physically taxed with each breath. Medications that are most effective to relieve airway constriction and the bronchial muscle spasms are inhaled or propelled into the lungs to directly intervene and work to reverse the constriction.

Asthma has no cure but can be managed effectively. Management plans include minimizing asthma triggers in the home, school and/or office. Many of us spend as much as 90 percent of our time indoors. Keeping indoor environments "trigger-free" helps to reduce asthma symptoms and is not difficult to accomplish. For example, mold is a common trigger found in the home environment and sources are showers/bathrooms, around window sills, kitchens, houseplant soil -- any place where moisture accumulates to promote mold growth. Mold growth can appear along grout or caulk lines in the bathroom or other areas with reduced ventilation and residual moisture. To remove mold, clean the surface where the mold has grown, dry the surface thoroughly and keep that surface as dry as possible. For houseplants, replace the soil. These are simple remedies to deter mold production and, therefore, reduce mold as an asthma trigger in your home.

Dust is also a common asthma trigger and it may be the dust mite that causes you the most problems. Dust mites are microscopic insects that live in every home, in the carpet and upholstered furnishings, in the bed sheets, pillows and mattresses, and in stuffed toys or fabric-covered items. Pillows and mattresses can be covered with allergen-free, zippered material to reduce exposure to dust mites. Laundering sheets and pillowcases each week in hot water also reduces the presence of dust mites.

Asthma symptoms may come and go with the seasons and can be more prevalent at different stages in life. Asthma is considered a lifelong disease and that, for some people, may mean there will be times in their lives when symptoms are not present. Have you heard that children will outgrow asthma? Studies now show that is not the case and asthma management to prevent serious complications becomes even more important.

Developing a treatment plan with your physician/nurse practitioner/physician assistant that includes prescribed medications taken regularly to prevent airway inflammation is a critical step toward successful asthma management. The medications most often prescribed are designed to reduce the inflammation in the lung tissue and are recommended for daily use to keep symptoms controlled or minimized. If you do not have a treatment plan, contact your physician and discuss your medications and how you feel when taking them. If you aren't taking the medications as prescribed, tell your physician. If you aren't certain what triggers cause problems for you, take note of when you have symptoms and what you were doing at the time or where you were at the time that symptoms increased. Discuss your observations with your physician. Getting control of asthma symptoms starts with effective communication with your physician or nurse practitioner/physician assistant about what works and what doesn't.

Future articles will be written by other Asthma Coalition members, so please watch for new guest columnists each month. Please contact us for more information or to join the Coalition and assist us with our efforts to promote asthma management and increase asthma awareness and education within our community. If you have questions about asthma please contact 584-1411 or e-mail us at kingscountyasthma@yahoo.com. Ask about the Asthma Coalition monthly meetings to come and join us.

Mary Gallegos is vice chairperson of the Kings County Asthma Coalition. She joined the coalition in July 2005 because she found that the members of the coalition are devoted to providing quality education for people in our county. She is a public health nurse and has worked for Kings County since 1990.