Top Stories

Six Flags Magic Mountain Accused of Polluting River
Environmental groups and community members are accusing Six Flags Magic Mountain of polluting the adjacent Santa Clara River with huge amounts of trash and contaminated water. Environmentalists allege that they found alarming levels of pollutants like bacteria, metals, toxins and sediments in water leaving the park’s storm water outfalls. Over the past 10 years, the park has paid more than $1 million in fines for over 400 offenses. The groups plan to sue Magic Mountain for defying the federal Clean Water Act. The park released a statement expressing concern about the environment and feels a responsibility to improve. (L.A. Times, 4.26.12) Read more about protecting water quality and the Clean Water Act.

Genital Warts Tied to Skin and Cervical Cancer
A recent study found that people who have had genital warts caused by HPV may have a higher risk of several types of cancers, including skin and cervical cancers. HPV is the best-known cause of cervical, anal, vaginal, vulvar and penile cancers as well as certain cancers of the mouth and throat. The study confirmed these established relationships and suggested that HPV might be involved in non-melanoma skin cancers, the most common and curable type of skin cancer. Researchers hypothesize that impaired immune function could be the underlying factor in HPV and skin cancer in some people. (Chicago Tribune, 4.4.12) Read more about genital warts, HPV, HPV-associated cancers, and skin cancer.

Setting the Standard for New Power Plants
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently announced standards to limit greenhouse gas emissions for new power plants for the first time. The New Source Performance Standards, based on the EPA’s authority under the Clean Air Act, limit emissions from new power plants to no more than 1,000 pounds of carbon dioxide per megawatt of electricity produced. These standards ensure that new power plants will be designed to protect the health of the public and the planet. (World Resources Institute, 3.27.12) Read more about air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and the Clean Air Act.

Who We Are
Hollywood, Health & Society is a program of the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. HH&S is a free resource for entertainment writers working on health and climate change storylines. The program is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, The California Endowment, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Barr Foundation, The Grantham Foundation and the Skoll Global Threats Fund.

Funding Agency News

‘Late Night Hoops’ Brings Positive Change
The California Endowment recently teamed up with the Los Angeles Clippers to revive “The Los Angeles Clippers Late Night Hoops,” a basketball league for over 150 young adults living in gang and drug-impacted areas in Los Angeles. The program allows the 18- to 25-year-olds “to run the courts instead of run the streets” and works to promote non-violence and unity, health and fitness, educational opportunities, employment referral and organized recreation and cultural activities. (The California Endowment, 3.27.12) Read the press release and more about youth violence.

Amazon Tribe Fights Illegal Logging
The Skoll Foundation recently funded a small tribe of indigenous people isolated within the Amazon rainforest for 25 years on an innovative forest carbon project to shield their territory from illegal logging. The 1,300-strong Paiter-Surui is the first indigenous tribe worldwide to earn carbon credits for...
Internationally recognized standards for capturing carbon in trees, allowing them to preserve the endangered tropical rainforest they reside in. The tribe is being funded under the Amazon Corridors Initiative to prevent deforestation and promote conservation. It sets the stage to protect this land proactively with similar projects across the Amazon. (Skoll Foundation, 4.17.12) Read the press release and more about the initiative.

Hospital Costs Spur Rise in Home Births
A recent report by the CDC and the National Center for Health Statistics found that home births increased by 37% between 2004 and 2009 in the state of California and by 29% nationwide. Reasons behind this increase include the economy and the high cost associated with hospital births as well as increased control and ease of preparing at home. Women with low-risk pregnancies can utilize a midwife to facilitate a birth at home at a third of the cost of a hospital birth. However, while home births appear to be as safe as hospital births for the mother's health, the death rates for children born at home are twice as high than those born in a hospital. (HealthyCal.org, 4.16.12) Read more about the report and home births.

Healthcare Cost Spur Rise in Home Births

Real People, Real Lives

Doctor Infects Himself with Hookworm
Dr. James Logan, of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, infected himself with hookworms and swallowed a pill camera to film what happened in his body as a result. Previous research suggested that hookworm saliva works with the human immune system to cure food allergy symptoms and even asthma. Dr. Logan found that although the worms did cause some stomach pains, he was able to eat pizza and breadsticks without the nauseating side effects he normally suffers due to his bread allergy. Hookworms have been essentially eradicated from the U.S. but can still carry risks such as severe anemia. Further research on worm infections could explain the physiology behind this immune response and lead to new treatments in the future. (TIME, 4.18.12) Read more about parasites, intestinal worms, hookworm and food allergies.

Help for Hemophilia
Vincent was diagnosed with one of the most severe kinds of Hemophilia, an inherited bleeding disorder in which the blood does not clot properly due to the absence of clotting factors. As a result, a simple bruise or cut could cause him to bleed for hours and be taken to the emergency room, requiring his parents to pad corners, cribs, and anything in the house that could possibly injure him. When Vincent was a baby, even immunizations caused huge problems with bleeds, which prompted his parents to approve surgery to place a port into his chest. The port gives direct access to his veins so he can be infused every other morning with medicine to make his blood clot. Doing so allows him to attend kindergarten, play his favorite sports like T-Ball, and have a normal childhood. (San Ramon Patch, 4.4.12) Read more about blood disorders, hemophilia and its treatment.

Hammered on Hand Sanitizer
Dr. Billy Malon, an emergency room doctor at L.A. County USC Medical, has seen an alarming number of teens coming through the ER due to alcohol poisoning from drinking hand sanitizer. Teens have recently begun trying to get drunk by drinking hand sanitizer, which is 62% ethyl alcohol and corresponds to a 120-proof liquid, essentially a shot of hard liquor. At least six San Fernando Valley teenagers have been hospitalized in the past several weeks due to the practice. The accessibility and low cost of hand sanitizer is an alarming factor in the spread of this trend. Dr. Malon and other physicians recommend that parents monitor hand sanitizer like any other alcoholic beverage around the house. (KTLA.com, 4.24.12) Read more about teen substance abuse.