



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Caring today for a healthy tomorrow

Health Matters

Vaccinations are Proven to Prevent Deadly Illness



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Health Officer

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In 1998, *The Lancet* published an article by Dr. Andrew Wakefield raising serious concerns about a link between autism and the Measles/Mumps/Rubella (MMR) vaccine. Many parents subsequently shied away from MMR and all other vaccines due to that article, which was widely reported throughout the US and Europe. *The Lancet* retracted that article in 2010, after it had been discovered that Dr. Wakefield’s study was seriously flawed. His results were later determined to be fraudulent and based upon a sample of 12 children with conditions that he had specifically sifted for his study. Andrew Wakefield’s license to practice has since been removed. Scientific studies conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other reputable institutions have found no evidence

supporting a link between autism and vaccination. Let me restate that point: ***there is no credible evidence supporting a link between autism and vaccinations.***

Misconceptions and deceptions do not, however, fade easily. Misguided celebrities, the internet, and social media have perpetuated the falsehoods about vaccines and autism. While it is true that the rate of autism has increased in recent years; it is also true that there are multiple possible explanations for the increase – and vaccines are not among those explanations. Tragically, many vaccine-preventable diseases which were once firmly under control are now making insidious comebacks because vaccination rates have tumbled. There have been 154 cases of measles in the US

through April of this year. This puts us on pace for the worst year of measles in decades. Here in Kent County, we have seen 6 cases of pertussis during the first three months of 2014. During the previous five years, we did not have any reported cases of pertussis in January through March. To make matters worse, the World Health Organization is reporting a resurgence of polio in many central Asian and African countries. Our diminished overall vaccination rate places us in great jeopardy from these diseases again.

As leaders within our community, I am asking you to please support vaccination efforts. The re-emergence of these vaccine-preventable diseases is a threat to all of us. The unvaccinated are, of course, in danger. But so are unborn babies
(Continued on Page 2)



The KCHD Public Laboratory passed the annual Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) audit in April. The auditor said the staff, under the leadership of Lab Manager Erin Lammers, are “doing an outstanding job.”

KCHD’s Emergency Preparedness Program recently received a score of 100% on their Strategic National Stockpile Plan from the MDCH’s Office of Public Health Preparedness. The review consisted of over 80 measures.

Kent County Receives Funding for Mosquito Surveillance

West Nile Virus (WNV) infection continues to be a concern for Kent County residents. During the summer of 2013, staff at the Kent County Health Department trapped and tested mosquito populations. Positive results from this testing are meant to serve as an early warning system for the presence of the virus in Kent

County. Testing of mosquitoes collected at a site in West Michigan yielded a result that was positive for WNV. As a result, the City of Grand Rapids applied mosquito larvicide in the area where the mosquitoes carrying the illness were collected, to disrupt mosquito populations.

KCHD received a grant from the Michigan

Department of Community Health for 2014 to enhance mosquito surveillance, in hopes of creating an early warning system for West Nile Virus. Municipalities where it is determined that mosquitoes are carrying the infection will be notified to determine a course of action.

Vaccinations, *Cont. from page 1*

and those who may be immune-compromised. As a society we tend to minimize the risk from things we have not personally experienced. This is very true in the case of vaccine-preventable disease. Despite what some may

think: measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis, polio, and influenza are mass murderers. The public health system has done a good job keeping those monsters away but we need your help: please speak well of vaccines within our community

and please encourage our neighbors to seek vaccination from their primary health care provider or from us at the Kent County Health Department.

Visit us at:

www.accessKent.com/immunizations

News Regarding

In an effort to increase influenza vaccination rates, the Michigan Department of Community Health developed an influenza toolkit for colleges and universities. The information is intended to help schools develop and implement campaigns to encourage annual influenza vaccination. The toolkit can be found at www.michigan.gov/immunize.

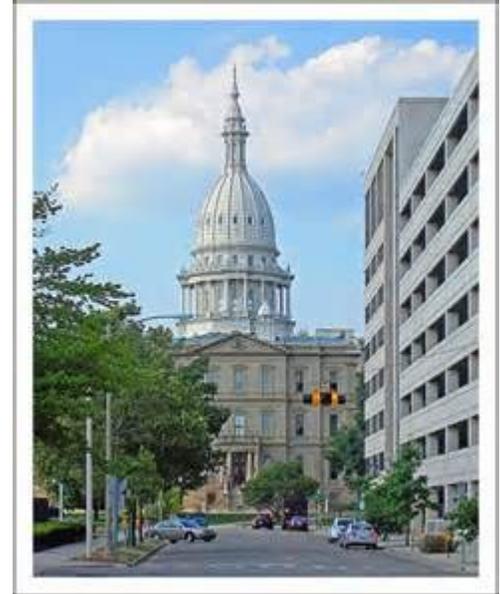
In October of 2013, Senate Bills 237, 238, and 239 were passed by the Michigan legislature. The bills change the current sixth grade immunization reporting requirement to seventh grade beginning with the 2014-2015 school year. This change will allow parents time to immunize their 11 or 12 year old child prior to the start of seventh grade. There was no change in the required vaccines.

Breast Density Bills Introduced (HB 4260 and SB 0879)

Two of our state legislators from Kent County, Representative Winnie Brinks and Senator Dave Hildenbrand, have introduced bills in their respective chambers related to breast density awareness. The bills, which are similar in nature, would require specific language to be included in the report from the radiologist to the physician and to the patient when mammography

results are indicative of dense breast conditions.

Dense breast tissue can reduce the effectiveness of mammograms and is a risk factor for cancer. The intent of these bills is to assure the disclosure of the condition to the patient and to stimulate a discussion between physician and patient.



Revised Fee Schedule and Environmental Health Staffing Plan

Incoming applications for Environmental Health services at the Kent County Health Department have increased by approximately 20% during each of the past two years. This has created a problem with extended turnaround times for services such as well and septic permits, real estate evaluations, pool and campground inspections, nuisance complaint investigations, and others. Applicants were waiting up to 8 weeks for service delivery. These delays were seriously compromising the ability of those businesses to move forward with work. The staffing shortage also stressed the amount of time staff can spend educating and coaching restaurant employees, daycare providers, body artists, and other professionals about safe practices.

KCHD invited members of many of those industries to stakeholder

meetings to discuss the problem and possible solutions. Several solutions were identified and have been implemented. One of the solutions agreed upon by the stakeholders was to increase Environmental Health staffing to pre-recession levels. This solution required additional revenue, therefore, a proposed fee schedule was drafted and agreed upon by the stakeholder groups. This revised fee structure, which was approved by the Board of Commissioners on April 24th, brings Kent County's service fees up modestly to a level consistent with surrounding counties.

KCHD is recruiting for the four positions created by this Board action. The department and the stakeholder/customer groups are optimistic that this policy change will improve customer service and public health protection.



Kent County is committed to providing services to improve the quality of life, health and well-being of our citizens.

Many of these services are mandated, while some of the services exist to enrich the lives of our community.

Learn more about opportunities with Kent County at:

www.accesskent.com/jobs

Project FRESH Pilot Continues in Kent County



The Kent County Health Department WIC Program was given the green light by the USDA to continue the pilot program allowing clients to use WIC EBT Cards at local farmer markets. This will further allow participants to receive their Project FRESH benefits electronically via their WIC EBT card. Kent County is the first in the Nation to implement this program. Before the pilot started in 2012, eligible participants of Project FRESH were given paper coupon booklets, containing 10 individual

coupons worth \$2 each.

This project is both good for clients, our community and local economy. During the past 2 years of the pilot \$45,000 dollars' worth of benefits to eligible WIC participants were issued through Project FRESH to use towards the

purchase of locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables. This is in addition to the over \$14 million worth of food purchases made each year by Kent County WIC participants.

Project FRESH operates from June 1st to October 31st.



CDC Study Comes to Kent County

The National Centers for Health Statistics, part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will be in Kent County conducting the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) from May 2, 2014 through June 24, 2014. The Kent County Health Department (KCHD) strongly endorses this essential survey of our nation's health and nutrition status. NHANES has been in existence since 1960 and has provided valuable

information for more than 50 years on the prevalence of major diseases, risk factors for diseases, and the relationship between nutrition and overall health of all people living in the United States.

Over 5,000 persons across the country will participate this year, and approximately 554 of them will be from Kent County. Residents will be selected to participate on a random basis. Survey staff will first collect information through

interviews scheduled in each participant's home. Then they will schedule an appointment for health measurements which will be taken at the Mobile Examination Center at a local site, which will be located near KCHD. All information obtained in the survey is held in the strictest confidence and will be used only for statistical purposes.

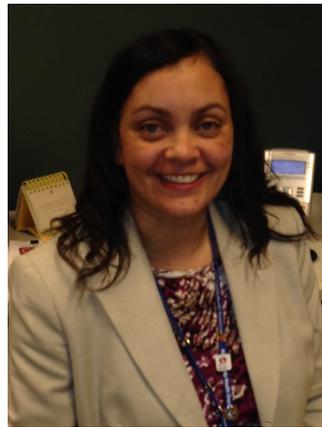
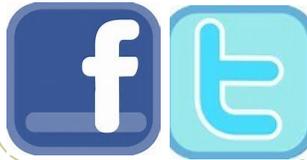


Administrative Health Officer Adam London was elected 2nd Vice President of the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA). Adam will assume the presidency of that organization in 2017-2018.

Follow us:

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www.twitter.com/kchd



Teresa Branson Named Deputy Health Officer

“I look forward to new challenges as Deputy Health Officer,” said Branson. “We have a very committed staff who serve, protect and promote a healthy community every day.”

“Teresa is an outstanding supervisor, whose visionary leadership has led staff at the Kent County Health Department to better understand health disparities, and work to achieve social justice,” said London. “We are fortunate to have her in such a prominent leadership role.”

Branson previously led the Health Education and Promotion section of the Health Department, and boasts a track record of achieving successful outcomes, including:

Teresa attended Central Michigan University, where she received her B.S. in Public Health Education with a minor in Substance Abuse Prevention. She received her Master of Health Administration from Grand Valley State University, and was inducted into Pi Alpha Alpha – National Honor Society through the School of Public, Non-profit and Health Administration.

- Increased Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program client caseload from 1,158 to 2,662 since 2007.
- Increased access to dental care for 115+ uninsured women through the Brush Up For Baby Program.
- Increased access to case management/support services for 400 high-risk Inter-conception Care (IC) Program clients.
- Improved birth outcomes for 58 IC clients evidenced by reduced pre-term births/low birth-weight infants, increased gestational age and reduced NICU admissions.

Teresa is a proud mother of two teens, Dennis and Shayna.



After nearly two decades of working in health, Teresa Branson has helped thousands of people through a variety of programs. The Kent County Health Department is pleased to announce she was recently promoted to Deputy Administrative Health Officer.

In the past two years, Ms. Branson has co-facilitated fifteen Health Equity and Social Justice Dialogue Workshops, reaching over 400 KCHD employees and community partners. She and her team developed Community Health Equity Guidelines, a Kent County Community Plan of Action for Achieving Health Equity, Framing the Relationship between Race and Health toolkit, and a video entitled: Framing Social Determinants of Health in Kent County.



kent county
animal shelter



Get your dog license renewed today:

www.accessKent.com/kcas



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Deciding where to eat tonight, but you aren't sure about a restaurant's health and safety practices? Your decision may be easier, thanks to the 2nd Annual Food Safety Awards!

This program recognizes establishments that show a high degree of safe food handling practices and sanitation. Award winners received window clings and certificates to hang where patrons can see them.

www.accesskent.com/Health/FoodServices/awards.htm

Or scan here for details:



Dear Community Partner Organizations and Kent County Residents:

The 2014 Community Health Needs Assessment project is currently underway in Kent County. Different from the 2011 needs assessment, this project is now coordinated by Healthy Kent, a long-standing community coalition focused on improving the health and well-being of Kent County residents. Many of you were participants at some level in 2011 during the first community health needs assessment process, and we are now inviting you back to the table to join us as we move forward with the 2014 cycle.

During the months of February, March, and April 2014, more than 20 community conversations were held in various locations across our county. Valuable input regarding strengths, weaknesses, and health concerns in Kent County was collected from agency representatives and community residents who participated in these conversations. This information will now be used to help inform the second phase of data collection for this project!

As we approach the second phase of data collection for the 2014 Community Health Needs Assessment, which includes the development and administration of a community health survey, your personal and/or agency participation will be critically important. This community health survey is intended to collect community perception data to which we otherwise do not have access. Assisting with this phase of the project will be a key opportunity for you and your organization to ensure that the voices of those with whom your organization interfaces are heard.

To learn more about the information collected from the community conversations, next steps in the 2014 Community Health Needs Assessment, and how you or your organization can become or stay involved, please join us for the **Healthy Kent 2014 Needs Assessment Summit on Monday, May 12 at the Kent County Health Department.**

The Summit will be held from 9:00am to 11:00am in the Lakes Conference Rooms on the Garden Level at 700 Fuller Ave NE, Grand Rapids. You can also learn more at www.kentcountychna.org.

Know Your Storm Alerts

Every spring, we start hearing the terms: severe thunderstorms, tornados, watches, and warnings. Here are some reminders from the National Weather Service on what these mean, and what you need to do when you hear each.

Severe Thunderstorm Watch:

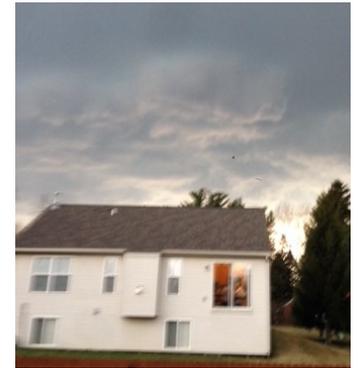
The potential exists for thunderstorms to develop. If you know a watch has been issued, you can continue your normal activities, but be aware. Watch the skies and monitor a National Weather Service weather radio (or local media) for updates.

Tornado Watch: Conditions are favorable for severe thunderstorms, and some may be capable of producing tornados.

Severe Thunderstorm Warning:

Severe weather is occurring or is imminent. Get indoors and stay in a safe place. Often these storms can bring damaging winds, hail, and lightning. If you see hail golf-ball size or larger, the storm is well-organized and may have a rotating updraft, so watch closely for funnel clouds.

Tornado Warning: Consider this the ultimate in severe warnings. Radar indicates a tornado is either occurring or imminent. **Take cover immediately.**



Whole Community Preparedness

“Whole Community” is a term used to describe involvement in preparedness activities by everyone and for everyone. In emergency plan development, people most vulnerable to disaster (people with disabilities, communication and cultural barriers, children, elderly) are often not included in the planning process. The Kent County Emergency Preparedness and Emergency Management Programs are committed to inclusion of all population groups in Kent County exercises and

emergency planning. Equally important, Kent County urges all Kent County residents to prepare for themselves, their neighbors, friends, pets and service animals. Know what it takes to shelter and evacuate your loved ones. Share your plans and needs with trusted neighbors and friends. Keep our community whole by getting involved. Go to www.accesskent.com/Health/EmergencyPrep/disaster.htm and www.getreadykent.org for more information.

The **Healthy Michigan Plan** is a comprehensive and accessible health care program offered through the Michigan Department of Community Health.

Who is Eligible?

- ◇ Ages 19-64
- ◇ Income around \$16,000/single person \$33,000/family of four
- ◇ Not pregnant when applying for the plan
- ◇ Not currently enrolled in other Medicaid programs
- ◇ Not eligible for or enrolled in Medicare
- ◇ State of Michigan resident

Learn more at:

healthymichiganplan.org

855-789-5610

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931.

The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter.

The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids.

www.accessKent.com/Health



Mission Statement:

To serve, protect and promote a healthy community for all.