



# *Town of Darien*

## *Health Department*

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### **Health Department Quarterly Report April, 2022**

COVID-19 remains a major concern as we continue monitoring case counts and provide advice and guidance as necessary. Weekly summaries and monthly reports have been provided and will continue as long as the pandemic is with us.

In addition to our normal activities which include inspecting restaurants, cosmetology salons, septic system plan reviews and inspections, issuing recreational shellfishing permits, responding to complaints and inquiries from residents, seasonal activities, such as collecting water samples at our beaches, public pool permitting & inspections, permitting/inspecting seasonal food service operations, including the farmers' market as well as special events that serve food on weekends and in the evenings begin over the next few months.

#### **Staff Update:**

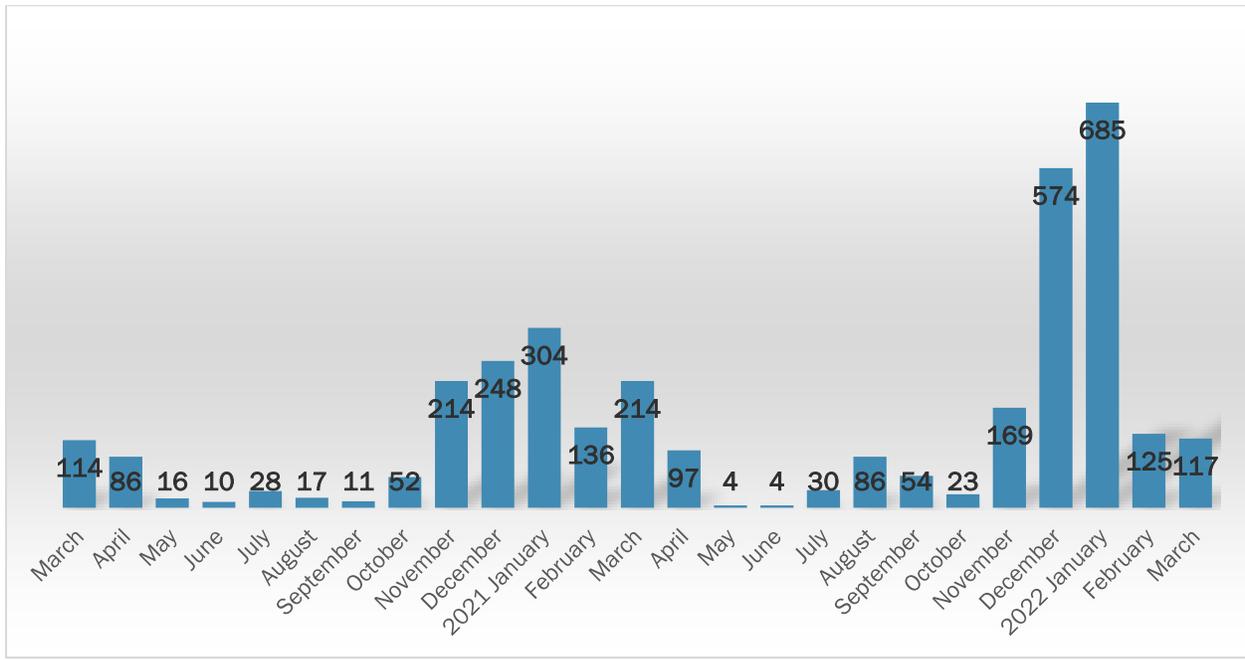
- Student Intern: In cooperation the Darien High School, the Health Department once again will offer an internship to a Senior who will be assigned to collect data to assist with updating our Community Health Assessment, last done in 2017.
- We are making staff adjustments to ensure continuous office coverage during the upcoming Maternity Leave for our Office Administrator.

#### **COVID Update**

- Weekly summaries are posted on the website [www.darienct.gov/health](http://www.darienct.gov/health) each Tuesday.
- Since January 1, 2022, we have held four clinics and administered 250 boosters and 150 pediatric doses of vaccine.
- Due to declining demand and the widespread availability of vaccine in the area, no additional clinics are scheduled by the Health Department at this time. There are 50 locations listed on the website providing vaccine within 10 miles of Darien.
- As of March 31, the State has terminated the "contact Tracing" program but we have retained our two part-time, grant funded positions who continue our outreach to positive cases, tracking the severity of illness and provide guidance as needed. Cases interviewed report cold-like symptoms or no symptoms at all.
- There have not been any reported hospitalizations directly associated with COVID.
- The mask mandate in schools has ended with no associated increase in positive cases being reported.
- Two test sites remain open to the public in Darien and home test kits are available in our office, also through the Federal Government and at local pharmacies.
- More than 40 "Test to Treat" sites have been opened in Connecticut, offering individuals an important way to rapidly access free treatment for COVID-19, according to the Connecticut Department of Public Health. Through the newly launched nationwide Test to Treat initiative, people can get tested and – if they are positive and treatments are

appropriate for them – fill a prescription from a health care provider, all in one location. Details are provided on our website.

- Detailed monthly updates are provided and posted to the website on the first Tuesday of every month. Case counts have declined since January’s surge.



### **Food Protection Program**

- January 1 of each year is permit renewal time for our food service facilities. 125 establishments returned their applications and Permits have been issued. Seasonal food service permit applications have recently been sent out.
- Several new facilities opened in the past quarter, and more are scheduled to open soon. In addition, we are aware of additional facilities planned for the areas in town currently being redeveloped, which will increase our administrative work, plan review and inspection workload in the future.
- Inspection activities:

#### September 1 to December 31, 2021

- Inspections: **95**, with 3 failures (3.2% failure rate)
  - Ratings (only Class 3 & 4 year round facilities are Rated):
    - A: 74
    - B: 15
    - C: 3

#### January 1 to March 31, 2022

- Inspections: **91**, with 2 failures (2.2% failure rate)
  - Ratings
    - A: 61
    - B: 11
    - C: 2

We are current with State mandated inspection frequencies.

## **Radon**

According to the CDC, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer (to smoking) and testing is the only way to know if radon is the home. Once again, the Department has partnered with the State Department of Public Health to provide FREE Radon test kits to residents. This year, we distributed 73 kits, 78% were submitted for testing and 3 (5.2%) were found to be slightly above EPA recommended limits. This is the fifth year we have partnered with the State to provide free test kits, and, unlike other communities in Connecticut, widespread elevated radon levels are not common in Darien.

## **Ticks**

One of the policy adjustments made as a result of COVID was to arrange to have residents send ticks directly to the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) for testing instead of having the specimens brought to our office. During this past quarter, four ticks were submitted to CAES and all were positive for Lyme or other associated diseases. With the approach of warm weather, ticks become far more common and the number of ticks tested increases accordingly. We will be providing guidance for residents in an upcoming newsletter and website updates.

## **Seasonal Activities**

- **Beaches:** Beginning the week before Memorial Day and continuing until Labor Day, water samples are collected and tested for bacteria once a week at Pear Tree Point and Weed Beaches. We monitor rainfall amounts, maintain the beach HOTLINE (203-656-7323) and communicate with the Parks & Recreation Department to provide information to residents as to whether beaches are open or closed. Weekly updates of water test results are posted on the Health Department website.
- **Public Pools:** The State defines a public pool as being one that serves multiple individuals and includes pools at private clubs, condominiums and apartment complexes. All public pools are subject to local health department permit and inspection programs. At this time, there are eight locations with 18 pools, all of which are inspected to check safety and filtration equipment along with water quality tests on a bi-weekly basis.
- **Mosquitoes:** The CT Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) resumes testing of mosquitoes for West Nile and other diseases in June. There are two collection stations in Darien. As in past years, we anticipate that mosquitos positive for West Nile virus will be found in Darien and public advisories will be provided as needed.

## **Additional Public Health Program Involvement:**

- **Marijuana:** Provided an introductory statement for the new Thriving Youth Task Force Marijuana Awareness campaign, posted on the Town Facebook page.
- **Public Health Awareness:** Collaborated with other regional local health departments on an overview of health department activities and responsibilities during Public Health week. Mindy did a video segment on cosmetology salon inspections.
- **Itinerant Vendor Permit Reciprocity program** – collaboration workgroup with industry, the CT DPH and other local health departments to develop a statewide permit and inspection program for mobile food trucks.
- **Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment:** we provide representation for Darien on Health Needs Assessment committees of both Norwalk and Stamford Hospitals.

## **Respectfully Submitted:**

**David Knauf, M.S., M.P.H., R.E.H.S.**

**Director of Health**