

# Town of Darien Health Department

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Summer brings several additional responsibilities to our list of normal activities. In addition to the regular responsibilities of inspecting restaurants, salons, septic systems, holding training sessions for food handlers, submitting ticks for testing, issuing recreational shellfishing permits and responding to complaints and inquiries from residents, we also inspect all public pools, seasonal snack bars, the farmers' market and the many special events that serve food to the public on weekends and in the evenings.

#### 1. Staff Update

- Michelle Varrone, our new Administrative Assistant, has been a wonderful addition to the Department and is doing a terrific job working on, among other things transitioning our permit applications from in-office only to on-line.
- Mindy Chambrelli, REHS, has been asked to present an overview of our Cosmetology program at the Annual Yankee Conference on Environmental Health to be held in Portland, Maine.
- Paula Sutliffe, RN, successfully spearheaded the application process for the renewal of the Town's HEARTSafe Community designation from the State.
   Darien again far exceeds the minimum criteria for such designation. She is also working with Post 53 and SEMS to better identify the incident reporting system so we can identify those calls that may be related to substance abuse.
- Nicholas Jossem, MS, is now a part of our Public Health Emergency Preparedness staff on a part-time basis beginning in July. Nick also works in the Fire Marshall's office and will provide us with a dedicated local representative in the event of an emergency. His position is fully funded by a grant from the State Health Department.
- High School Intern The Health Department has readily participated in the senior intern program and again this year, the capability of the assigned student was very impressive. Madeline Murray created a trifold informational mailer informing owners of private wells why it is important to get their water well water tested. She also completed a poster with the findings of the DNA Source Tracking Study which was presented at the recent National Environmental Health Association Annual Education Conference in Anaheim.

## 2. Reportable Disease Summary F/Y 2017-18

A mandated responsibility of this department is to monitor reportable infectious diseases. Over the years, the most frequently reported condition has always been influenza. However, since 2015-16, sexually transmitted diseases, especially Chlamydia, have become the number one reportable condition.

For the past three years, the most commonly reported diseases were:

	<u>2017-18</u>	2016-17	<u> 2015-16</u>
1) Chlamydia (and other STDs)	36	25	30
2) Influenza	4	10	12
3) Campylobacteriosis	4	5	8
4) Hepatitis C	7	5	4
5) Lyme			

We plan to follow up on the STD issue with some targeted out-reach conducted by our Public Health Nurse while also developing an informational resource for our website.

Reduced reports of influenza may be due to the easy availability of vaccines at local pharmacies or physicians may be performing diagnostic testing in their offices without utilizing outside laboratories that are required to report results. Similarly, Lyme Disease reports are very low, likely due to in-office diagnosis and the lack of confirmatory testing.

#### 3. Beaches, Water Quality and Seasonal Issues

- a) Water samples are being collected and tested for bacteria once a week at Pear Tree Point and Weed Beaches. We continue to monitor rainfall amounts and maintain the beach HOTLINE (203-656-7323) to inform residents whether beaches are open or closed. <u>So far this summer, beaches were closed for one day due to heavy rainfall.</u>
- b) In a cooperative venture with the Parks and Recreation Department, our beaches feature an innovative technology "The SOLaware<sup>TM</sup> Display", a UV meter designed to alert beachgoers of the potential risks associated with too much time in the sun without skin protection. Please see the Darien News article at <a href="https://www.dariennewsonline.com/news/article/New-beach-displays-shine-bright-light-on-sun-13069355.php">https://www.dariennewsonline.com/news/article/New-beach-displays-shine-bright-light-on-sun-13069355.php</a>
- c) The CT Agricultural Experiment Station has resumed testing of mosquitoes for West Nile and other diseases for the summer. 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.
- d) This year, the percentage of ticks found to be positive for Lyme Disease has been increasing throughout the State. So far this year, the rate of positive ticks submitted from Darien is currently 40%, compared to 30% last year. Reminders for personal vigilance are routinely posted on Twitter and the Health Department website.

## 4. Food Protection Program

Since the last report, there still has been no regulatory guidance issued by the State. The new CT Food Code which had been scheduled to go into effect on July1, 2018 has been delayed until January 1, 2019. We have been informed by the State NOT to expect regulatory guidance until just before the changes go into effect which again will *not* allow sufficient time to adjust local regulations. Repeated attempts to convey that message to the State have been unsuccessful. As a reminder, the new system involves the use of an inspection form that

does not have "scoring" which completely impacts how we enforce correction of violations. It will necessitate revision to the Ratings program, the fee schedule and our local regulations.

## **Inspection Activities:**

# April 1 to June 30, 2018

- ➤ Inspections **128**, with 11 Failures (8.6% Failure Rate) Enforcement – 2 Hearings
  - Temporary Events 10 with 41 venders

## January 1 to March 31, 2018

➤ Inspections – **105**, with 15 failures (14% Failure Rate) Enforcement – 2 Hearings

## October 1 to December 31, 2017

 $\triangleright$  Inspections – **56**, with 6 failures (10% failure rate)

## July 1 to October 1, 2017:

- ➤ Inspections 117, with 9 failures (7.6%); Enforcement: 2 Notices of Intent to Suspend Permits and 3 Hearings
  - Temporary events 9 with 32 venders

## 5. New State Regulations Pertaining to Backwash from Water Treatment Systems

The State has adopted standards for the installation of subsurface disposal systems intended to accept backwash from private well water treatment systems which by law, cannot be discharged into a septic system. This has been a regulatory black hole for a very long time and finally provides a legal method of disposing such waste water. The drawback is that it involves the same level of site evaluation, permitting and inspection as a standard septic system, while the backwash water does not represent the same risk to public health as human sewage does. Furthermore, the regulation does not require an evaluation of the drinking water quality to ensure that the treatment system being installed is appropriate. We have surveyed local health departments throughout the state and there currently is no standard approach to addressing this issue. Consequently, we are left with no choice but to invent our own approach which will involve inspections, permits, fees and regulations that we will submit for your review soon.

## 6. Public Outreach and Social Media

We continue advocating for the use of the Community Health and Wellness Calendar on our website. The calendar is intended to be a centralized source of public information on health improvement programs being offered in the area.

We will have a themed informational booth at the Farmers' Market for one day in August, September & October. August will feature summer safety tips (including tips on pools and food safety, as well as sun exposure, mosquito & tick awareness). September will feature a presentation from the State Health Department on SepticSmart week and well water, and October will feature reduced cost flu shots (see "Emergency Preparedness" below). Our nurse, Paula Sutliffe, will be providing free blood pressure checks at each event.

#### 7. Emergency Preparedness

In the event of a large scale emergency that would involve the need for rapid dispensing of medication, the State has created 49 "Mass Dispensing Areas" (MDAs) to streamline delivery logistics. Darien has been assigned to MDA #2 and Stamford serves as the "lead", which is where medication would be shipped. We are planning a drill to test this arrangement which will involve Darien, the City of Stamford and the State to be held in October. Not only will this drill test our ability to coordinate delivery and transport with the State and City of Stamford, but it will test out ability to provide vaccinations remotely as the drill focus will be at the Farmers' Market where we will be providing 'real' flu vaccine to the public.

## 8. Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

Following up on the Health Needs Assessment of 2017, the Health Department, Police Department, Communities4Action and the Community Fund partnered on a town "Opioid Assessment", the results of which were presented to the public at the Library in May. We are on the agenda for September 10<sup>th</sup> to present the results of the study to the Board of Selectmen. Interestingly, the report did not identify opioids as a primary risk for substance abuse, but did identify alcohol as a problem in Town. Proactive and preventative publicity programs, such as our partnership in the <a href="www.NoRxAbuse.com">www.NoRxAbuse.com</a> campaign and participation in statewide initiatives will continue.

Respectfully Submitted, David Knauf, Director of Health July 17, 2018