A Note from the Health Commissioner

With Geauga County experiencing a severe raccoon-strain rabies outbreak, rabies has become a major item on our daily agenda at the Health District. Untreated rabies is 100% fatal to humans. We must take precautionary measures as rabies can spill over into the domestic pet population. A few simple rules can save your life; never feed or attempt to touch wild animals, feed pets indoors, securely cover garbage cans, and keep all domestic pets immunized. If an exposure takes place wash the exposed site with soap and water, seek medical attention immediately, and report the exposure to the Health District.

It seems as though the latest buzz word in the field of public health is budget cuts. Cuts at the federal government and State levels have a ripple down effect here at the local level. Although we had prepared ourselves for the earlier cuts, the recent cuts will require us to readjust goals and priorities in our Personal Health Service Division. With grant funding cuts of 14% each of the last two years there has been a negative impact on services provided to Geauga County residents. No budget can continue to withstand dramatic cuts without seeing some decrease in the service area. It would appear that most local health departments will have no choice but to adopt a "fee for service" increase to provide vital services to the residents. As you may know, once a government agency establishes a fee it will likely get bigger, not smaller. If we are forced to establish any fee, it will be done so with the resident’s concern in mind.

House Bill 231, the sewage bill, has been signed into law. The Ohio Department of Health is in the process of writing the rules that every health department must abide by. This new mandate will require periodic ODH surveys of the local Health District. If a Health District does not meet the standards the sewage program can be taken over by ODH or another appointed agency. The rules are in the process of being adopted so we can only guess what types of sewage systems will be acceptable to ODH. If we are forced to establish any fee, it will be done so with the resident’s concern in mind.

Please visit our website http://www.geaugacountyhealth.org for updates and important information services offered at the Health District.
Residential Sewage

Many of the homes in Geauga County are served by individual household sewage disposal systems, which are regulated by the Geauga County Health District. The Health District approves sewage permits for new construction and updates permits for existing homes.

An evaluation of the property is conducted by this office before a sewage permit is issued. This evaluation determines the size, type, and location of the proposed sewage system. The department conducted 793 lots evaluations in 2004. When a sewage system is installed it is inspected by a registered sanitarian before the system is covered with soil.

The Geauga County Health District has a “For Sale of Property” regulation requiring that all homes served by a household sewage system be inspected by a registered Sanitarian sometime during the selling process. The fee is $200 or $250 depending on the type of sewage system. The health district conducted over 575 for Sale of Property inspections in 2004. Residents can obtain copies of forms and more information on this program at the Health District website at http://www.geaugacountyhealth.org.

The Ohio State legislature recently approved HB 231 which pertains to household sewage disposal systems. This will become law in May 2005 and the Ohio Department of Health will have one year from this date to adopt new rules for household sewage disposal systems. This program will now be administered by the Ohio Department of Health with one set of rules for the state of Ohio. The new rules may change the types of sewage systems commonly used in Geauga County.

It is the responsibility of each homeowner to operate and maintain the sewage system located on their property. The department recommends pumping the septic tanks every 2 to 3 years. Other maintenance includes alternating the use of leach trench fields where applicable, cleaning and maintaining filters, keeping electrical components such as pumps, aerators, control panels, and alarm floats in good working order and adding chemicals for disinfection where required. Every homeowner needs to monitor what enters the sewage system and goes out into the environment. Homeowners can call the health department office to obtain information on the type, location, and operation and maintenance of their sewage disposal system.

The department has an active nuisance investigation program and will investigate signed written complaints submitted to the office. In 2004 this department received 316 nuisance complaints which were investigated.

2004 Financial Report

Revenue

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<th>Fees</th>
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<td>Cash Carryover</td>
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Grant Reimbursements: 266,377.26

Expenditures

Personnel Costs: $1,622,070.47
Supplies: 23,188.88
Vaccine: 26,919.42
Equipment: 36,763.90
Maintenance & Repair: 8,819.31
Remit to State & Lab Fees: 37,486.00
Travel & Training: 29,594.32
Other: 149,209.42
Total Expenditures: $1,934,151.75

Grant Revenues: 346,197.22
Grant Expenditures: 377,519.94

Vital Statistics

There were 1,069 births at UHHS Geauga Regional Hospital. In addition, there were 17 home births and 119 births at the Middlefield Care Center for a total of 1,205 births in Geauga County. Of these births, 617 were male and 588 female. There were 689 recorded deaths in Geauga County in 2004. The Health District Medical Director, J. Bradley Moritz, MD, reviews all death certificates and compiles statistics listing the most common causes of death.

2004 Most Common Causes of Death
Heart Disease: 236
Cancer (Lung Cancer Highest 31): 125
Neurological: 116
Infection (Pneumonia 36): 61
Lung Disease: 39

For forms, information and news visit us at http://www.geaugacountyhealth.org
Women, Infants & Children (WIC)

The Geauga County WIC Program serves the women, infant's and children's nutritional needs under grants from the Ohio Department of Health. Experienced Registered Dieticians deliver prenatal and early childhood nutrition education information to families. The fundamental goal is to educate and encourage the family in corrective measures to assure optimal growth and development for the young child. This includes a tailored food package appropriate for the age and assessed nutritional needs of the participant. Children with special needs can access tube feedings and therapeutic diet formulas with a prescription from their physician. The WIC program provides essential nutrients for newborn to five year old children including protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C and iron rich foods. Iron fortified infant formulas are available when breastfeeding is not an option. Upon the arrival of the first birthday a child's food package with an assortment of cheese, juice, milk, cereal, eggs, peanut butter and beans to help meet the needs of growing preschoolers. Pregnant, lactating and postpartum mothers also benefit from the WIC program. Special dietary needs are considered for motherhood and WIC nutritionists advise young mothers on optimal nutrition recommendations for childbearing years.

Jobs & Family Services, United Way, immunization clinics, drug and alcohol addiction counselors and prenatal care providers are common partners in addition to WIC support and intervention. Assisting families in meeting educational and occupational goals is critical to the overall success and satisfaction of the program to parents. We strive to educate, as well as enforce, the Ohio WIC program regulations. Currently, Geauga County WIC also participates in the Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program that provide coupons for fruits and vegetables during the summer months.

Rabies 

Rabies is an infectious virus that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals. The virus is found in saliva and can be transmitted through several ways: by a bite, scratch, or by getting infectious material into eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound. Animals such as raccoon, skunk, fox, coyote and bats are the most common source of rabies. There is no cure for rabies once the symptoms develop and all persons bitten by a rabid animal should be stopped in people if a series of rabies shots are given soon after exposure to the virus. Untreated, rabies is almost always fatal in both humans and animals.

Since the mid-1970s, raccoon-strain rabies has spread along the entire East Coast of the United States. Raccoons are now a major reservoir of wildlife rabies from Florida to Maine, and the virus has moved into Canada as well. Raccoons can infect domestic animals and are putting humans at risk from this deadly disease. In 1996, raccoon-strain rabies began to move into northeast Ohio from Pennsylvania. There are specific identifiable strains of the rabies virus. Although there were only two cases of raccoon-strain rabies in Ohio that year resulting in two fatalities, several cases were confirmed in 1997 in eastern Ohio counties. The Ohio Department of Health, with the support of other state and federal agencies, implemented an ongoing program to immunize wild raccoons for rabies using an oral rabies vaccine (ORV). This program has been implemented in an attempt to reduce animal cases and prevent spreading of raccoon-strain rabies into the rest of Ohio. Beginning in 2001, neighboring states began to join the Ohio effort to control raccoon rabies. With support from United States Department of Agriculture - Wildlife Services, this multi-state effort is now called the Appalachian Ridge ORV Barrier and will ultimately extend to the Gulf of Mexico coastside.

In July 2004, however, positive cases of raccoon-strain rabies were found in both Lake and Geauga County. This resulted in a collaborative effort to determine the extent of rabies in the raccoon population in Lake, Geauga and Cuyahoga Counties. This emergency effort was conducted because the raccoon-strain rabies had not been found this far west of the Ohio-Pennsylvania border.

With the assistance of the Ohio Department of Health, the USDA - Wildlife Services, the US Centers for Disease Control, as well as the four local Health Districts in Geauga, Lake and Cuyahoga Counties, a raccoon specimen collection was conducted. Most of the specimens collected by the local Health Districts were from road-killed wildlife. There were several specimens collected from suspect raccoon, i.e. raccoons that demonstrated behavior consistent with a sick or infected animal. The USDA Wildlife Services performed some raccoon trapping and accounted for nearly 85% of all the specimens collected. Of more than 1,300 specimens tested in Geauga, Lake, Cuyahoga, Portage, Summit, Medina and Trumbull Counties there were a total of 22 positive raccoon specimens and one skunk in Geauga County, 22 positive raccoons in Lake County and one positive raccoon in Cuyahoga County. Geauga County had the highest rate of infection with 26% of raccoon specimens, or 11.1%. Lake County has 22 of 282 positive specimens, or 7.8%. Of the 187 specimens collected by the Geauga and Lake County Health Districts over 10% were positive.

Assisted by township officials, the Geauga County Park District, the Geauga County Sheriff and local police and fire departments, there was a significant effort to alert the residents of Geauga County. The Ohio Department of Health conducted an emergency oral rabies vaccine by airplane and hand delivery over all of Lake and Geauga Counties. Registered Sanitarians from the Geauga County Health District assisted in the handling and backing of the raccoon vaccine at locations determined to be the most accessible to the raccoons. With the assistance of the Ohio Department of Health, the USDA - Wildlife Services, the US Centers for Disease Control, this multi-state effort was put in place and was put into action.

Surveillance of the raccoon population in Lake and Geauga Counties will resume in 2005 to monitor the effectiveness of the ORV baiting conducted in 2004 and additional ORV baiting in 2005. For the residents of the county the first line of defense against rabies is to avoid contact with wild animals, sick or injured animals, and animals you don't know. Pet vaccinations should be kept current and pet owners should keep their pets indoors and not feed feeding food and nesting places for wild animals in residential areas. Residents should continue to report all animal bites to the Health District and contact us if they suspect the possibility of a rabies exposure to themselves or a household pet.

Solid Waste Program

The Health District has as aggressive solid waste program and conducted 155 inspections of scrap tire generators, small and large infectious waste generators, infectious waste treatment facilities, closed landfills, compost sites and solid waste transporters. Since smaller compact facilities are no longer inspected under Ohio EPA regulation, allowing time and resources for larger facilities. The last several years an emphasis has been put on the enforcement of solid waste laws pertaining to mosquito control and scrap tire generators due to the West Nile Fever that has been an ongoing concern. The 50 registered scrap tire generators in Geauga County are all enclosed and are putting the county at risk, some of which are not storing and disposing of scrap tires in accordance with Ohio law. Citizen complaints about scrap tires have decreased in 2004 as scrap tire generators as a group are becoming more proficient in controlling the spread of disease as well as the odor. There were eight solid waste collection events held by the Geauga-Trimble Solid Waste District in 2004 for scrap tires, appliances and hazardous waste materials. Some of the waste materials collected included:

- 278,645 lbs. Mercury
- 1,834 lbs. Oil (including Antifreeze)
- 647 units Total Household Hazardous Waste...
- 53,100 tires
- 6,646 gallons

The Geauga-Trimble Solid Waste District is completing construction of the new Household Hazardous Waste Recycling Facility scheduled to open in June 2005 at 5138 Enterprise Blvd., just off U.S. Route 422, in Warren, Ohio... easy accessible to all residents. This new facility will operate several days a week from Spring through Fall. This should make disposal of household hazardous wastes safer and more convenient for residents of both Geauga and Trumbull counties.

The 10,000 STEPS PROGRAM

In the spring, 17 employees of the Health District participated in the Ohio Department of Health 10,000 steps walking program. Each participant in the program received a pedometer and log forms. After establishing a baseline daily step total, participants were challenged to find ways to reach the 10,000 per day. Ideas included:

- Parking farther away from entrances
- Using the stairs instead of riding the elevator
- Carrying groceries one bag at a time
- Taking the dog for a walk

At the end of the 10 week program, participants were able to see the progress they had made in their activity levels, even if they had not reached the 10,000 steps per day goal. Many employees have incorporated the ideas into everyday activities and continue to count steps in an effort to maintain good health and fitness.

Scrap tires ........................................647 units
Liquid pesticides ......................................963 tons
Mercury .............................................1,834 lbs.
Acidic and corrosive waste ................................66,466 gallons
Appliance Freon Remover .................................616 units
Propane tanks & cylinders ..............................647 units

An ounce of prevention keeps the germs away.
The Personal Health Services Division of the Geauga County Health District consists of Nursing Services, the W.I.C. program, Health Education services, and Disease Surveillance Coordination. The primary focus of these programs is to maintain a healthy Geauga County community through disease prevention, health education, and health promotion. Most of these services are available to residents of Geauga County either at no cost, at reduced cost, or on a sliding fee scale.

Adult Services

Communicable Disease Investigation – Many communicable diseases or illnesses with an impact on the health of the public are required by law to be reported to the Health District. The Personal Health Services Division assures the effective surveillance of communicable diseases reported in Geauga County in compliance with the Ohio Department of Health infectious disease reporting requirements and CDC recommendations. Assisted by sanitarians from the Food Service Operations department, we investigate and track food borne illnesses to prevent outbreaks within the community. Public health nurses participate in the Regional Infection Control Committee to meet with other NE Ohio agencies to discuss current issues and share information.

Vector-borne Disease Surveillance – Together the Personal Health Services and Environmental Health Divisions conduct data collection and provide information for vector-borne diseases. These include West Nile Virus, Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted fever, Equine Encephalitis and others. The information reported to the Ohio Department of Health and the CDC which monitor the diseases and plan effective control measures.

Tuberculosis Control – The Personal Health Services Division provide tuberculosis control by screening high risk populations, maintaining contact with positive reactors, and planning treatment for individuals. The Geauga County Commissioners are a partner in providing treatment to residents. Individual TB tests are available at the Chardon Friday Morning Clinics.

Pregnancy Testing – The Personal Health Services Division provides free pregnancy testing to women 18 years or older.

Adult Immunization Services – Personal Health Services Division conducts weekly clinics at the office for adult immunizations and blood pressure screenings. Flu vaccine clinics are held at senior centers and occupational settings during the fall months. Because of the vaccine shortage in 2004, flu clinics were held only at the senior centers and at the Health District office. As suggested by the Ohio Department of Health, vaccine was distributed to high risk clients. The fee schedule for adult immunizations is based on the current cost of vaccine and supplies for administration.

Senior Services – Public health nurses visit the Senior Centers in Geauga County on a monthly basis and provide free blood pressure screening and free medication education. A public health nurse is made available for health promotion to the Adult Day Care clients who attend the Multi Purpose Senior Center in Chardon. The Department on Aging selects Day Care clients to receive nursing services that are funded by the Title III Community Block Grant. The Health District provides a full time dietitian, which the Department on Aging funds, for individual nutrition counseling and group classes on healthy diets, meal planning, and food preparation.

2005 Children’s Immunization Clinics

Chardon
Geauga County Health District
470 Center St., Building B
2nd Tuesday—9:00 am to 11:30 am

Chardon Evening
Geauga County Health District
470 Center St., Building B
3rd Tuesday—4:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Middlefield
First United Methodist Church
14999 S. State St. (State Route 608)
2nd & 4th Monday 9:00 am to 11:30 am

Middlefield Evening
First United Methodist Church
14999 S. State St. (State Route 608)
3rd Thursday—4:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Parkman
Parkman Community Center
16295 Main Market (US Route 422)
3rd Monday—9:00 am to 11:30 am

Russell
Russell Fire-Rescue Station
14810 Chillicothe Rd. (State Route 306)
1st Thursday—9:00 am to 11:30 am

Troy
Troy Community Center
13950 Main Market (US Route 422)
3rd Monday—1:00 pm to 3:30 pm

Friday Morning Clinic
Adult Immunizations
TB Testing
Blood Pressure Screening
Geauga County Health District
470 Center St. Building B
Fridays—8:30 am to 11:00 am
There are no clinics on public holidays
Check our website or call for a schedule

Children’s Services

Help Me Grow Newborn Home Visits – Public health nurses provide voluntary, free home visits to newly delivered mothers and their infants that include an evaluation of the mother’s recovery, an assessment of the infant’s early growth and development, information on a variety of preventive health issues for the family, and referral to other community agencies and resources, if needed, the nurses collect infant blood specimens for required newborn screening tests. Funding for this service comes through the Geauga County Family First Council as a grant from the Ohio Department of Health “Help Me Grow”.

Maternity Survey – Our Personal Health Services Division participates in the annual maternity licensure survey of UHHS Geauga Regional Hospital, which is conducted by the Ohio Department of Health. After the site visit, the Board of Health is presented with the survey results, which are reviewed before the board votes to approve or deny re-licensure for the facility. The Personal Health Services division is responsible for investigating any complaints regarding the maternity facilities in the county.

SIDS Home Visits – The Personal Health Services Division provides a public health nurse home visit to families who have recently experienced the unexpected death of an infant within the first year of life, regardless of the cause. The purpose of the visit is to provide support, information, and referral services to bereaved families. There is no charge for this service.

Children’s Immunizations – Public health nurses hold clinics throughout the county to administer free childhood vaccinations to Geauga County residents. No appointments are necessary. The vaccines are supplied by the Ohio Department of Health.

Well Child Services – Well child clinics funded by a grant from the Ohio Department of Health are conducted at the Middlefield Care Center in Middlefield twice a month. Children receive healthcare screening for vision, hearing, development, dental, and nutrition. Physical exams are performed by a physician or nurse practitioner, immunizations are updated and the family receives appropriate health education. Fees for services are based on income, and no one is denied services due to inability to pay.

Bureau for Children with Medical Handicaps (BCMH) – The BCMH program provides early identification, evaluation, referral, and coordination of services for children from birth to 21 years in accordance with the Ohio Department of Health. The Health District serves as the local contact for families who participate in this program. The child’s family receives free home visits from the public health nurse which include child assessment, care plan development, health promotion, and advocacy on behalf of the family.

Specialty Clinics (Orthopedic and Neurology) – In cooperation with the Ohio Department of Health and Rainbow Babies’ and Children’s Hospital, the Health District manages 8 specialty clinics per year. Orthopedic/Scoliosis Clinic are held quarterly at the Chardon office. Neurology Clinics are held quarterly at the Das Deutch Center in Middlefield. Children up to age 21 are seen at these clinics and appointments are necessary.

Help Me Grow