

ST. LOUIS

Thyroid problems top the list of health issues, but no red flags yet

By Linda Gittleman*For the Morning Sun*

Preliminary results on the St. Louis voluntary health study are in and they aren't bad.

St. Louis residents do have health problems but so far the study shows little difference from nearly any other community.

Available health statistics don't single out a particular city in Gratiot County, said Central Michigan University Assistant Professor Dr. John Clements, who, along with his medical students, provided an analysis of the submitted forms.

"And, there's not much difference between Gratiot and other counties," he said.

That said, this study hasn't ended. It's likely only the beginning.

For his part, Clements would like to have a lot more forms completed in order to get a more accurate portrait of the city's health problems, some of which could have been caused by the Velsicol Chemical Co. and its contaminants.

Despite the fact that more than

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200 current and former St. Louis residents completed the forms — more than expected — it very simply wasn't enough.

In the forms completed however, people told of their own health issues as well as reported on others. And that can be problematic, Clements said. Medical records, along with other data would be needed to back up those claims.

Even so, here's what Clements learned:

- The health problems most reported were thyroid cancer and thyroid disease. That numbered 17.

- Second were uterine and ovarian cancers along with miscarriages.

- Third were cases of breast cancer and that was followed by leukemia.

The rest were, in large part, various other forms of cancers and they were in single digits. Birth defects and other reproductive issues were also listed in single digits.

Although 17 sounds like a large number of thyroid problems for a city of about 4,500 people (not including the prisons) it is, in fact average, Clements said.

Out of a population of 100,000, 14 cases of thyroid



LINDA GITTLEMAN — FOR THE MORNING SUN

JoAnne Scalf models a T-shirt she's selling as part of a fundraising effort for Emory University's health study. Cost is \$20 and can be purchased by contacting Scalf at pineriversvhm@att.net.

problems is normal.

Although St. Louis's population is far lower, that 14 average is counted per year, while the St. Louis number spans a 20 year period, he said.

Clements said by way of example, that if perhaps 50 thyroid cases were reported, that would send up a red flag, indicating a more obvious and serious problem.

He pointed out that the completed forms cited nearly every street in St. Louis.

He also said it was important to note that only two or

three people reported no illnesses.

Clements had explained that a number less than five people with certain illnesses cannot be reported with the street location as it might indicate who those individuals are, denying their privacy.

Because so little data is available, Clements said he very much wants to continue the study. And he said he believes that intergenerational issues that could include birth defects and miscarriages may prove to be the more significant path to study.

Ideally, he would like to have people who have no health problems complete the forms as well.

"That gives us something to compare it to," he said.

After his presentation, Joanne Hall Scalf who began the volunteer health study, noted how St. Louis residents and former residents are more than willing to participate since they definitely want answers to their health concerns.

Forms are available at the St. Louis library, she said, adding that she hopes more people will participate.

Pine River Task Force Secretary Jane Keon agreed that more studies are needed and noted how information not gathered but known anecdotally can nevertheless, provide an impact locally.

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MI LOTTERY

Thursday

Midday Daily 3: 3-4-6

Midday Daily 4: 4-6-9-0

Daily 3: 7-4-3

Daily 4: 4-5-3-1

Fantasy 5: Not available

Keno: 4-11-15-18-22-24-27-28-30-40-41-49-51-52-53-55-60-61-62-76-78-79

Mega Millions: Estimated Jackpot: \$43million

Powerball: Estimated Jackpot: \$228 million

The lottery numbers are not official. Check www.michiganlottery.com for confirmation.

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She cited a street near the Velsicol plant site on which five people died of brain cancer over a period of years and therefore couldn't complete the forms for this study.

Meanwhile, a separate health study on the effects of PBB conducted by Emory University will continue as more money is raised.

As part of that fund-raising effort, Hall has designed a T-shirt that is now available by contacting her at pineriversvhm@alt.net. Cost is \$20