

# RAW SEWAGE PIPE VISIBLY DISCHARGING INTO RIVER

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From the left: Cheri Meyer, Liz Braddock and Matt Lumbert each convey information to Riverdale area residents during the Seville Township meeting on April 10. Meyer is with Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Braddock is the Environmental [Health](#) Director for the health department and Lumbert is with Michigan Rural Water Association. (Herald photo)

## *Riverdale Location Not Only Place In Gratiot Draining Waste Water Into Pine*

**By Rosemary Horvath**  
**Herald Staff Writer**

The Riverdale residential area isn't the only example of where raw sewage drains into the Pine River but, for now, Seville Township is the first in Gratiot County required to produce a remedial plan this year.

A trio of experts outlined the problem to a packed audience inside the Seville Township hall on April 10. A pipe in the Riverdale area visibly discharges raw sewage into the Pine River, said Mid-Michigan District Health Department Environmental Health Director Liz Braddock, who observed the menace earlier that day. Officials have been aware of the issue for more than a year. It provoked the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to require the township to submit a corrective engineering plan.

The deadline submitting one has been changed to May 6.

Braddock acknowledged some Riverdale residents have resisted having their septic tanks and drain fields checked out of fear of retribution. Notices have been mailed but only a handful have been returned.

It is also apparent, Braddock noted, that some homes don't have septic systems at all and that raw sewage is draining into the catch basins or the county drain.

Those homes with septic permits are not subject to any more testing, she said.

The health department does welcome information of locations believed to have soft ground or unpleasant odors. "We want to help you," she told the crowd. "We have long term solutions to offer."

The aim of this project is to stop the pollution, she said.

At the same time, the health department does have the option to escalate enforcement through the [court](#) system, but it's an option least favored by the department, Braddock said.

Braddock was joined at the meeting by Cheri Meyer from the Lansing District Office of the Water Resources Division of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. And Matt Lumbert, a wastewater technician

with the Michigan Rural Water Association.

Meyer explained the Riverdale area is the first targeted “because we can see the pipe discharging into the river. We are not excluding other areas.”

Elm Hall and Elwell areas will be addressed at a future time. But Elm Hall has different circumstances because it is landlocked and there is no river discharge, Meyer said.

Raw sewage draining into a waterway isn't unique to Riverdale or Gratiot County.

As county Drain Commissioner Bernie Barnes explained to the Herald, historically the common and acceptable practice was to dispose of sewage by draining into county drains.

In past years, Wheeler, Fulton and North Star townships addressed their local issues with sewage treatment options.

“Riverdale is not the exception,” added the drain commissioner, further explaining the plan will be to install “a new line for sewage only and to treat it properly. County drains will still drain all the stormwater.”

Lumbert of the rural water association travels around the state assisting areas to develop small systems.

His project in the last two years has been with Nottawa Township in Isabella County where special assessment districts were established around Coldwater Lake and in Beal City to pay for wastewater treatment.

These areas had raw sewage drain into the Chippewa River. A few years ago, the State Legislature allocated \$3 million toward the project. The township also applied for grant funding through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development.

Similar grants and federal loans have assisted with sanitary sewer projects in Montcalm County and Kent County, to name a few.

Township Supervisor Tish Mallory told the audience that the Rural Water Association will test septic systems in the Riverdale area.

She asked residents “to spread the word” and uncover their tanks once the township learns of dates. The township joined the association in order to be exempt of any charges for the testing. Membership also entitles eligibility to apply for grant assistance. There are other state and federal grant resources also.

Mallory explained upon receiving grant funding, the township will hire an engineering firm to help plan a solution.

Meanwhile, the township assessor is counting the exact number of residential properties in the Riverdale area, whether occupied or not.

Township resident Bernie Shaver who said he has experience with wastewater treatment systems volunteered to serve on a citizens committee to assist the township board with planning.

Also volunteering were Tammy Campbell, Bob Lombard, Mikie VanHorn and township Trustee Doug Brecht and District 1 Gratiot County Commissioner Chuck Murphy.

# Daily News

Friday, April 19, 2019

## Disposal dates are coming up

**D**ear DO Line: Can DO Line find out the next date for collection of toxic substance and sharps containers in Montcalm County? Also, where can we take papers to be shredded? Thanks. B.P., Greenville.

Dear B.P.: DO Line went to our friend, Leslie Kinnee, public information officer for Mid-Michigan District Health Department in Stanton, for help. She told us the Health Department is no longer in charge of the Household Hazardous Waste events. She directed us to the Montcalm Conservation District, also in Stanton.

We called the phone number she gave us and spoke with Di'Shun Melbert, district conservationist. He provided us the information we needed to answer your question. He said we should contact Dixie Ward, resource technician, for additional information.

Here's what we learned:

Household Hazardous waste, tire and electronic collection: The Montcalm Solid Waste Committee is offering this one-day event June 15 at the Mid-Michigan District Health Department at 615 N. State St., Stanton, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Accepted items (not all inclusive) include: aerosols, auto liquids, batteries, cleaning products, corrosives (acids, bases), glue/adhesives, fertilizers, fire extinguishers, flammable liquids and fluorescent bulbs.

Also included: herbicides, pesticides, inert cylinders, mercury lead and oil-based paint, deck stain (no latex paint), over the counter medications, propane cylinders (30 pounds each), antifreeze, brake fluid, car wax, gasoline, kerosene, diesel fuel, oil, contaminated oil, sharps (biomedical), solvents, and thermometers.

Not accepted: ammunition or weapons, asbestos, commercially-generated waste, construction materials/debris, explosives, flares household trash, infectious medical waste, latex paint, radioactive materials, prescription medication and yard waste.

Medical sharps containers can also be brought to Spectrum Health locations in Greenville, Lakeview, and Belding. These Sharps must be in a medical sharps container. We suggest interested persons should call for more information and hours of operation. Phone numbers are Greenville, (616) 754-4685; Lakeview, (989) 352-6474; and Belding, (616) 794-0940.

As far as shredding paper is concerned, there is a Community Shred Day from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. July 20 at the Mid-Michigan District Health Department. This is for residential people. No businesses. There is a limit of four boxes/bags per resident. There is no charge to residents.

It is sponsored by the Montcalm County Solid Waste Committee.

For additional information, contact the Montcalm Conservation District at (989) 831-4606, extension no. 4, or email [dixieward@macd.org](mailto:dixieward@macd.org). You can also visit their website at [montcalmcd.org](http://montcalmcd.org).

# Honing in on H<sub>2</sub>O



The Flat River flows at a popular drop-in spot for kayaks, canoes and tubes at Jackson's Landing in Greenville last summer. A test of sites along the Flat River resulted in positive results of human sewage being present. These results led Mid-Michigan District Health Department officials to propose a septic system ordinance amendment. Due to overwhelmingly negative feedback from the public last autumn, the proposal was dropped; however, health department officials are now looking to create a water quality program instead. — DN file photo

## Health Department proposing water quality program in response to septic system issues

ELISABETH WALDON  
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STANTON — Septic system issues are bubbling up again in Montcalm County.

Last November, a standing-room-only audience packed a meeting room at Montcalm Community College to voice their concerns with a septic system ordinance amendment proposed by the Mid-Michigan District Health Department.

Many residents were angered by the idea of having to pay the health department a discharge permit fee for septic inspections every 10 years, as well as the varied costs of private sector inspectors.

As a result of public feedback, health department officials backed off from the idea. However, the health department, which governs Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties, is now proposing creating a water quality program to



Mid-Michigan District Health Department Health Officer Marcus Cheatham, at left, led a septic system ordinance proposal public hearing in November 2018 in front of a standing-room-only audience at Montcalm Community College. Feedback from the public was overwhelmingly negative — DN file photo

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# Health Department proposing water quality program

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oversee septic systems in the three-county area.

The proposal will be discussed at the next Board of Health meeting at 9 a.m. Wednesday at the Mid-Michigan District Health Department in Stanton. The meeting is open to the public.

Health Officer Marcus Cheatham, who led the push for the septic system ordinance amendment, proposed a water quality program in January to deal with failed and non-existent septic systems.

"After careful consideration and discussion, (Director of Environmental Health) Liz Braddock and I now believe that many of the criticisms of the proposed amendment made by the public are, in fact, correct," stated Cheatham, according to Board of Health meeting minutes. "Therefore, we recommend that the BOH consider changing directions."

Cheatham believes residents were against the septic system ordinance amendment for three reasons: about 90 percent of homeowners already have working septic systems and they don't want to pay a fee when they are already paying to maintain their systems; most households that are non-compliant are low income and would have to pay anywhere from \$10,000 to \$30,000 to install or repair a septic system; and there are other sources of fecal contamination in local rivers, including land application of human septage and manure from combined animal feeding operations.

The proposed water quality program would be led by a full-time environmental health specialist at a salary of \$60,000 to be split between the three counties (Clinton \$24,660, Montcalm \$20,065 and Gratiot \$13,292).

According to Board of Health meeting minutes, Montcalm County didn't pay its full appropriations last year, but Cheatham proposed Montcalm County pay full appropriations next year and in the meantime use supplemental fees to pay for the county's share of the proposed water quality program. He said if Montcalm County chose to do this, the burden of supplemental fees on clients would actually be reduced. Cheatham could not be reached for comment by the Daily News to clarify this statement.

The proposed water quality program would have three areas of focus:

- Targeted inspections of properties



**The Flat River, as seen here in Greenville last summer, is a valuable natural resource in Montcalm County and provides for recreational activities, including kayaking, canoeing and tubing. — DN file photo**

likely to have non-compliant disposal systems: The health department would use its existing records to identify properties in which occupants have not had contact with the health department regarding a septic system. The health department would target properties in vulnerable aquifers in order to make a rapid improvement in water quality, and would also manage the number of properties to ensure it can keep up with the workload and that sufficient financial assistance is available for distressed homeowners.

- Financial assistance: The health department would identify and make available as much financial assistance as possible, possibly including funding currently available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development through matching grants to counties and the establishment of new programs, such as low or no interest revolving loans.

- Other sources of contamination: The health department already regulates land application to ensure it happens safely

and legally and would act as a source of accurate information in helping people interact with state agencies.

Cheatham cited MCL 333.2446 as giving the health department the authority to create the water quality program. He said the Board of Health has the authority to hire employees and establish new programs and the costs would be defined in the budget development process for 2019-2020.

According to March meeting minutes from the Board of Health, Clinton County Administrator Ryan Wood and Gratiot County Administrator Tracey Cordes both recommended the health department proceed forward with the proposed water quality program as soon as possible. However, Cheatham still has not met with Montcalm County Controller-Administrator Bob Clingenpeel.

"He has not discussed it with me," Clingenpeel told the Daily News. "We do have an annual meeting with the three county administrators coming up in a couple weeks."

Montcalm County Commissioner Adam Petersen is one of six commissioners from the three counties with a vote on the Board of Health.

Petersen told the Daily News he has concerns about the health department's funding request for a new water quality program when the health department recently ended its role overseeing Montcalm County's recycling program. The health department cited a staffing shortage in the health department's environmental health division as the reason. The recycling program has since been turned over to the Montcalm Conservation District.

Petersen also noted the health department recently spent \$48,500 on a rebranding effort, including a new website, signs, ADA-compliant entrances, deep cleaning and painting.

Petersen said at this point, he will "absolutely not" vote in favor of the water quality program unless he hears support from constituents.

"I think water quality is great, I'd love to have our lakes and rivers clean, but at what cost?" he said. "The health department needs to find it in their budget that the county already supplants quite a bit of money into."

To read previous and current meeting agenda packets and past meeting minutes of the Board of Health, visit [www.mmdhd.org/2019-board-of-health-2-2](http://www.mmdhd.org/2019-board-of-health-2-2) online.

## Michigan's groundwater threatened by silent crisis

KELSI KROLL | Capital News Service

A “silent crisis” is brewing beneath Michigan that threatens what experts say could be considered the sixth Great Lake.

It's hard to imagine a state that enjoys 3,288 miles of freshwater coastline, 242 streams and 11,000 lakes and ponds could be in danger of droughts like those in the western United States.

But if groundwater management trends continue, that's precisely what's on the horizon for Michigan, according to Liz Kirkwood, the executive director of the water advocacy organization FLOW: For Love of Water based in Traverse City.

Among the threats that worry Kirkwood are deep-well injections that store hazardous chemicals underground.

“Even though those injected wells are confined, there's room for error and contamination,” Kirkwood said. “If you mapped all the deep injection wells across the United States, it's sort of a pin cushion of a lot of toxic waste right underneath our feet.”

Another worry is PFAS, a bio-accumulative chemical that is “really mobile in water” and could leach into groundwater supply. Another worry is a deafening lack of awareness of the nature of groundwater.

“It's a bit of a silent crisis,” she said. “It's not priority.”

Michael Beaulac, a senior project administrator for the Michigan Office of the Great Lakes, echoes many of Kirkwood's worries. Like anything else below ground, groundwater maltreatment is “out of sight, out of mind,” he said.

“People don't know about it and assume

that it's taken care of,” Beaulac said. “We're just waiting for the shoe to drop in some circumstances.”

But there's a bigger problem on Beaulac's mind.

“We're running out of groundwater,” he said.

“We're either going to run out in isolated areas due to overuse, or we're going to have a water quality problem, and a water quality problem is a water quantity problem.”

The Department of Environmental Quality says that 700 million gallons of groundwater are extracted every day for drinking water, irrigation and industrial use in Michigan. Rural areas of the state are already experiencing drought due to aquifer contamination, Beaulac said. Sinking new wells is one solution – but it comes with a price tag.

“It's costly to sink new wells,” Beaulac said. “The end result is that you're going to see an increase in your water bill.”

Kirkwood and Beaulac stress that a preventive approach is key, and that starts with reforms in Michigan's groundwater policy. Michigan has the most private drinking wells of any state — 1.25 million wells drawing 231 million gallons of groundwater per day, according to the state — but it's the only one without a statewide law protecting groundwater from sewage tank leakage.

“We've got 130,000 septic tanks that are failing, and 6,000 groundwater sites considered orphan sites with no funding for clean up,” Kirkwood said. An orphan site is a contaminated or undrinkable water well that has been abandoned, and whose owners cannot be found nor held accountable.

“Current groundwater policies are asking

the public to abandon those waters, and that's the wrong path and the wrong signal for state policy,” Kirkwood said. “You don't just make a mess — you actually have to clean up.”

There's no uniform system for septic tank inspection in Michigan, either, Beaulac said. What Michigan does have, however, is “an awful lot of info tied up in databases” that needs proper interpretation to be useful in groundwater policy.

“We need a better handle on the data if we can't afford to sink monitoring wells – and we can't,” Beaulac said. “We're not making the right decisions.”

And with nearly half of Michigan living off groundwater, there's no time to waste.

“I think comprehensive reform is important, and we need more data and modeling of our current resource. We can't make informed decisions without it,” Kirkwood said. She is uneasy about the future of what she calls Michigan's “sixth Great Lake.”

“If you think about the history of water protections in this country, it literally took a fire on the Cuyahoga River to capture the American imagination and true understanding of how badly we've treated our surface waters,” she said, hearkening back to the 1969 polluted river fire featured in Time magazine.

But Kirkwood hasn't lost all hope.

“People don't want to live in communities blighted by toxic wastes, and we've seen a revival across the Great Lakes to help rebuild our rustic cities,” she said.

To do that, Kirkwood says, Michigan must recognize the importance of “protecting our groundwater with the same vigilance we protect our surface water.”

## Velsicol Plant Cleanup On Track, For Now

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**By Rosemary Horvath**  
**Herald Staff Writer**

A U.S. Environmental Protection Agency spokesperson informed the Herald that funding to complete the in-place thermal treatment for the second area on the former Velsicol chemical plant site has been provided. Construction is underway and is expected to be completed by September 2021.

The Trump administration has proposed decreasing funding for EPA in the 2020 budget by \$100 million. This includes a 30 percent reduction for Superfund cleanups, 43 percent cut for EPA research, \$1.5 billion cut from states and tribal programs, and 30 percent cut for water infrastructure improvements. Staffing for the EPA had been reduced by 8.5 percent and, in the proposed budget, another 1800 staff positions would be eliminated.

The EPA contact in Chicago was asked to respond to these proposed budget cuts but did not do so. The following is an update for the Velsicol Chemical plant from the Michigan-based spokesperson:

### **Velsicol Chemical Plant**

Diane Russell, EPA Community Involvement Coordinator  
Area 1 Restoration

The portion of the former Velsicol property known as Area 1 is currently undergoing restoration to ensure boreholes and wells are sealed for future redevelopment.

#### **Area 2 Wellfield Construction**

The portion of the former Velsicol property known as Area 2 is currently under development in preparation for the in-place thermal treatment system that will be used. The drilling for this area began on April 3 and is expected to continue in the following months. Soil heating for the first phase is set to begin sometime in October 2019. Heating of soil for the second phase is expected to begin in August 2020 and the project is expected to be done in October 2021.

EPA expects to have a public meeting sometime in May to discuss the Area 2 in-place thermal treatment system.  
**DDT Pilot Study**

We are waiting to receive an answer from EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) if they will fund a pilot study evaluating the use of carbon-based materials to remove DDT in floodplain soil. Currently, ORD has not funded the study, but EPA has the money to begin the initial phases of the study.

#### **Velsicol Burn Pit**

The design for the in-place thermal treatment system continues. Funding has not been made available to begin this project, and electricity demand for the in-place thermal treatment system will not allow us to begin until after Area 2 is completed on the Velsicol Chemical Plant. The design for the hook-up of nine homes to the city of St. Louis drinking water continues.

# A healthy discussion



Mid-Michigan District Health Department Health Officer Marcus Cheatham tells audience members at Wednesday's Board of Health meeting that a proposed septic system ordinance amendment for Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties, which was hotly debated last autumn, is no longer in the works. Cheatham is instead proposing creating a water quality program to deal with failed and non-existent septic systems in the three-county area. — DN Photo | Elisabeth Waldon



Montcalm County Commissioner Adam Petersen, who also serves on the Mid-Michigan District Health Department Board of Health, voices his concerns about how a water quality proposal is being rolled out during Wednesday's Board of Health meeting. — DN Photo | Elisabeth Waldon



Jim Hoisington voices his opinion on the Mid-Michigan District Health Department's proposal to create a water quality program at Wednesday's Board of Health meeting. Hoisington was one of about 20 audience members present. — DN Photo | Elisabeth Waldon

## Commissioner, health official debate water quality proposal

ELISABETH WALDON  
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STANTON — Nearly 20 people attended Wednesday morning's Mid-Michigan District Health Department Board of Health meeting to ask questions and voice their opinions on a proposed new water quality program.

A number of audience members were confused and appeared to be under the belief that the health department was still pushing a proposed septic system ordinance amendment for Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties, which was hotly debated last autumn. Health Officer Marcus Cheatham emphasized again that this proposal is no longer in the works.

"We heard loud and clear from the community they did not want a fee-based program, they did not want mandatory inspections every 10 years," Cheatham said.

Instead, the health department is now proposing creating a water quality program to deal with failed and non-existent septic systems in

the three-county area. Cheatham said a public hearing will take place before the proposal is voted on.

The proposed water quality program would be led by a full-time environmental health specialist at a salary of \$60,000, the cost of which would be split between the three counties (Clinton \$24,660, Montcalm \$20,065 and Gratiot \$13,292). Cheatham said he is scheduled to meet with the three county administrators on Thursday in Gratiot County to discuss the proposal.

Montcalm County Commissioner Adam Petersen, who is a member of the Board of Health, has previously voiced concerns about how the proposal will be funded. He attempted to clarify the issue again Wednesday.

"At the end of the day, the counties are going to pay for this, right?" Petersen asked.

"The counties are going to decide what to pay," Cheatham answered.

"You would essentially increase fees in Mont-

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# Commissioner, health official debate water proposal

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calm County if the board doesn't say OK, we'll pay for our portion of it," Petersen clarified.

"I don't think we'll be increasing fees," Cheatham said. "I don't think so. My intention is to not have that happen."

"So where does it come from?" Petersen asked.

"People are currently paying for these because Montcalm didn't pay its entire appropriation last year, and I know you and I disagree on that," answered Cheatham, who also declined to go into cost details with the Daily News after the meeting.

Petersen voiced his displeasure regarding the lack of communication between the health department and the Daily News regarding the water quality proposal.

"You didn't answer the Daily News' phone call?" asked Petersen, which Cheatham confirmed.

Cheatham said his reasoning was that he didn't want to act as a spokesman for the health department, but Petersen noted Cheatham went on the radio to talk about the water quality proposal.

"It's almost like you're causing a frenzy for no reason," Petersen said. "We work for them (the public), but they're vastly uninformed because you

didn't return an email."

"Obviously I know that was a mistake now I do," Cheatham admitted.

"I had no issue with anything in the article," Cheatham added. "It was a good, informative article."

"There was only one thing missing, and that was you," Petersen said.

"I hear that. Thank you," Cheatham responded.

"You're already on the hot seat," Petersen said. "Now to not comment, it makes you look like you're hiding something."

"I know that now," Cheatham said. "Thank you."

"You should all be subscribed to the Daily News," Cheatham added to everyone in attendance.

Cheatham has cited MCL 333.2446 as giving the health department the authority to create the water quality program. He said the Board of Health has the authority to hire employees and establish new programs and the costs would be defined in the budget development process for 2019-2020.

According to Board of Health meeting minutes, the proposed water quality program would have three areas of focus:

- Targeted inspections of properties likely to have non-compliant disposal systems: The health department would use its existing records to identify prop-

erties in which occupants have not had contact with the health department regarding a septic system. The health department would target properties in vulnerable aquifers in order to make a rapid improvement in water quality, and would also manage the number of properties to ensure it can keep up with the workload and that sufficient financial assistance is available for distressed homeowners.

- Financial assistance: The health department would identify and make available as much financial assistance as possible, possibly including funding currently available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development through matching grants to counties and the establishment of new programs, such as low or no interest revolving loans.

- Other sources of contamination: The health department already regulates land application to ensure it happens safely and legally and would act as a source of accurate information in helping people interact with state agencies.

The next regular Board of Health meeting will be 9 a.m. May 22 at the Clinton County branch office of the health department in St. Johns.

Visit [www.mmdhd.org/2019-board-of-health-2-2](http://www.mmdhd.org/2019-board-of-health-2-2) online for more information.

# Daily News

Thursday, April 25, 2019

## Commissioner questions Board of Health minutes

ELISABETH WALDON  
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STANTON — A Montcalm County commissioner wants the Mid-Michigan District Health Department Board of Health minutes to fairly show both sides of discussions.

Adam Petersen is one of six county commissioners from Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties who serves on the Board of Health. During Wednesday morning's Board of Health meeting, Petersen questioned why recent meeting minutes included lengthy statements from Health Office Marcus Cheatham, but no responding comments from Petersen — specifically regarding water quality and septic systems.

"Marcus and I had a discussion and there was nothing from my side, there was only what Marcus was saying," Petersen said. "Why was that?"

"Technically you only have to put the motion in," responded Health Department Executive

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## Commissioner questions Board of Health minutes

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Administrative Assistant Cynthia Partlo, who takes Board of Health meeting minutes.

Cheatham noted he specifically requested his comments be included in the minutes, adding that Board of Health members can listen to the audio recording of the meeting and add Petersen's comments to the minutes if he wishes.

"You were saying how you started charging the restaurants more because you didn't agree that we (Montcalm County) were paying our fair share," Petersen recalled. "You (Marcus) and I had a back and forth, but it's not included in here. That's my issue. Obviously, this is a hot button issue. I think everything that was discussed needs to be in there. I would just ask that all the minutes be recorded as far as hot button issues like this. You told us in the meeting last time that you could hire this (proposed water quality program) person without the board's (county Board of Commissioners) consent, we just have to approve the appropriation."

"We represent the county to adjust that appropriation," Clinton County Commissioner Bruce DeLong said to Petersen. "If you don't agree with it, that's when you vote no."

Board of Health members debated what was and wasn't said during recent meetings, which led Petersen to return to his original point.

"Things that were said during min-

utes, now nobody remembers because they weren't in the minutes," he said.

"My vote is just that we record motions, that's what legally required, and not put comments in," Partlo again responded.

"If you're making a statement that you want on record, you need to say 'Cindy, I want this on record,'" DeLong

added.

"I think the entire conversation, both sides, need to be recorded," Petersen reiterated. "It almost feels like if there's something damning being said, it's being excluded from the minutes."

"I'm hearing your wish, commissioner," Cheatham said. "We will do better."

# Health officials plan for measles

**ELISABETH WALDON**  
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STANTON — A measles outbreak hasn't yet hit the Mid-Michigan District Health Department's three-county area, but health officials have a plan ready just in case.

Medical Director Dr. Jennifer Morse updated Board of Health members Wednesday morning about the health department's plan if measles is ever discovered in Clinton, Gratiot or Montcalm counties.

"Measles is the most contagious disease that we deal with," Morse said. "If someone has measles, if they're in a room with unvaccinated



**Dr. Jennifer Morse**

people, nine out of 10 of those people are going to get measles. If those people are vaccinated, only one out of 20 would get measles. Unfortunately, some people see it as a harmless childhood illness, so they don't mind those statistics.

"We are breaking records in the U.S. right now with this outbreak," she added. "Sometimes parents don't like it when their kids are kept out of school

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# Plan for measles

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and we anticipate they may call and question that.”

“Especially in Clinton County if we had to start excluding kids from school, people would go crazy and we’d be getting calls, so I wanted to preemptively discuss this,” Health Officer Marcus Cheatham noted. “The only way to stop these measles outbreaks is to do these exclusions.”

Symptoms of measles include high fever, cough, runny nose, red and watery eyes, tiny white spots on inner cheeks, gums and roof of mouth and a red rash that starts on the face and moves down the body.

The health department’s measles outbreak plan says anyone with measles should immediately be excluded and isolated from group activity settings, such as schools, daycare centers, workplaces and camps through the fourth day of the onset of rash to limit exposure. Measles is contagious from four days before the rash starts until four days after the rash has started and infectious virus particles can remain in room air for at least two hours after the infectious person has left the room.

The plan says any unvaccinated person who has been exposed to measles should be vaccinated as soon as possible. Those who receive their first dose of measles vaccine and are receiving it within 72 hours of exposure to measles may, in general,

be readmitted to general activity settings; however, a local health officer may opt not to grant readmission until 21 days after the last known onset, since it can take 21 days for someone exposed to measles together such with measles.

The plan says anyone who refuses vaccination and those who have not received vaccination within 72 hours after exposure should be excluded from all congregate settings for 21 days after the last known exposure, including grocery stores and restaurants.

Measles in the United States has climbed to its highest level in 25 years, closing in on 700 cases this year in a resurgence largely attributed to misinformation that it is turning parents against vaccines, according to the Associated Press. About three-quarters of current measles cases have been in the state of New York, primarily in two ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities in Brooklyn and suburban Rockland County, and most of those cases have been in unvaccinated people. Earlier this month, city officials in Brooklyn ordered mandatory vaccinations for four ZIP codes in Brooklyn and threatened fines of up to \$1,000 for non-compliance.

For more information, call the health department’s Clinton County branch at (989) 224-2195, the Gratiot County branch at (989) 875-3681 or the Montcalm County branch at (989) 831-5237.

## COLUMN

*Time to get much tougher on the anti-vaccine crowd*By **Juliette Kayyem***Special to The Washington Post*

I love my children. And, if I'm in a gracious mood, I believe that parents who do not vaccinate their children love theirs as much as I love mine.

But, I am quite confident in this fact: I love their children much more than they love mine. These anti-vaxxer parents — call them free-riders or even pro-plague — are putting my children and our communities at risk to cater to their erroneous belief that vaccinations would harm their children rather than contribute to the elimination of childhood diseases.

It is time we stop viewing the anti-vax movement and its adherents' responsibility for the measles outbreak as a public health problem. With more than 700 reported cases confirmed in 22 states, it is now a public safety crisis, and the tools of public safety — arrests,

fines, isolation — are absolutely necessary.

We are not in a "both sides" moment. On Friday, President Donald Trump finally conceded that his previous statements questioning the safety of vaccinations (promoting the debunked claim that vaccinations contribute to autism) were erroneous. He didn't put it that way, of course; instead, when pressed, he said, "They have to get the shots." Just as he does with "both sides" statements regarding white supremacists, Trump promotes risky, unscientific ideologies until the reality of their harms becomes too dangerous to ignore.

And, when it comes to the measles, it is too late to ignore. "Get the shots" is not a plan. We are in a crisis; an avoidable one, but a crisis nonetheless. Measles cases in the United States have exceeded the highest number on record since the disease was declared eliminated nationwide in

2000. Trump's statement came too late; the measles are back.

In some places, sadly, more education is necessary, especially in isolated communities. But some of the crisis was bred in well-off and informed communities, where voodoo science is given equal weight with yoga and kale; vaccination rates in areas of California have, at times, been less than rates in South Sudan.

The initial steps we have taken are essential: prohibit non-vaccinated children from public spaces, including schools; promote educational efforts; and, in extreme cases, force isolation on pockets of populations that might have been exposed to the outbreak, as is happening now in the University of California system. But these efforts impact the children who might have been put at risk by the decision of individuals not to vaccinate. Viewed through the lens of public safety, it is the parents

who should be punished. Why not make them pay for the harms they are causing?

Fines for the increased public safety burdens put on these communities by a few ought not to be the responsibility of all. In many states, when hikers ignore warnings that certain trails are too dangerous and then have to be rescued, the fees for the rescue must be paid by the hikers. It's a fine for making a self-centered decision that placed an unreasonable burden on a larger community. Measles should be no different.

In the same way we have created sex-offenders lists to protect our children, communities can inventory families that choose not to be vaccinated, notifying employers of these parents as well as neighbors who may choose not to expose their children. Exceptions might be made for religious or medical reasons, but not for those who are simply choosing to ignore the science.

The anti-vaxxers are also put-

ting at risk populations that cannot be vaccinated due to health conditions or allergic reactions. Mostly children and the elderly, these people are dependent on the rest of us being vaccinated so that they can benefit from herd protections; they should be the only acceptable free-riders.

Yes, this language is harsh, the language of a homeland security expert, not a pediatrician. Maybe the threat of greater penalties will get these parents to be less self-centered. But, sometimes a crisis requires a change in orientation if only to scare the free-riders into loving my children as much as I love theirs.

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*Juliette Kayyem is the faculty chair of the Homeland Security Project at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, a former assistant secretary at the Department of Homeland Security and the author of "Security Mom: An Unclassified Guide to Protecting Our Homeland and Your Home."*

# Daily News

Saturday, May 4, 2019

## Health department conducting phone survey

Submitted by the MMDHD

If you receive a call from someone “on behalf of your local health department,” asking you to take a survey, don’t worry; it’s not a scam.

Randomly selected residents in Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties will be asked to participate in a phone survey from Public Sector Consultants, on behalf of the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD). The calls are currently being made and will be completed

by the end of July.

The purpose of this short, 15 minute Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (BRFS) is to gather information on human behavior and lifestyle patterns, such as access to healthcare and health insurance, smoking, and exercise. Completing the survey will give MMDHD valuable information on the health and well-being of our residents, help determine strategies to improve health, and assist in securing funding to implement programs.

The calls will be coming from an out-of-

state call center, manned by Survey Sampling International (SSI) employees, and may be identified on a caller ID as “SSI,” “SSI-Dynata,” or “Dynata.” The calls will be placed to landlines and cell phones on weekdays and weekends, and no later than 9 p.m.

The BRFS was established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a way to collect important health-related information. For many states and communities, the BRFS is the only available source of timely, accurate data.

# Health safety



Mid-Michigan District Health Department Public Health Nurse Megan Schulz measures Brooklyn Cook, 3, during a Women, Infant and Children (WIC) visit at the Stanton office. WIC is one of many wellness services the Mid-Michigan District Health Department provides to keep the community healthy. — DN Photo | Meghan Nelson



Mid-Michigan District Health Department Public Health Nurse Jamie Shepler pulls up information on a computer inside the health department's Stanton office. Public health nurses like Shepler provide a number of wellness programs for the community. — DN Photo | Meghan Nelson



Mid-Michigan District Health Department Environmental Health Specialist Nate Akey spends a few moments at the Stanton office reviewing information. Environmental health specialists spend much of their time out in the field overseeing sewage disposal, well installations and other environmental health programs. — DN Photo | Meghan Nelson

## Health department's dedication to public service often goes unnoticed

MEGHAN NELSON  
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STANTON — They may not have sirens or flashing lights, but the health officials with the Mid-Michigan District Health Department pride themselves on the services and safety they provide to the community.

Health Officer Marcus Cheatham explained the health department works on two fronts — environmental health and physical health — to ensure the safety of the community.

To understand how the health department became involved in both arenas, he said it goes back almost two centuries to when health departments were implemented.

"If you go back to think of when Europeans were settling in Michigan in the middle of the 1800s, one of the things they ran into was serious outbreaks of cholera, dysentery, malaria, and all kinds of terrible stuff," Cheatham explained. "The first thing the settlers did was put up a courthouse, and they started coming to the county commissioners saying they were dying of these terrible diseases and wondering what was going on."

According to Cheatham, the county

**MONTCALM PUBLIC SAFETY CELEBRATION**

This is the second in a four-part series of stories in the Daily News leading up to the third annual Montcalm Public Safety Celebration, which is scheduled for May 18 and hosted by Montcalm County Central Dispatch, Montcalm County Emergency Services and Montcalm County Sheriff's Office.

- Part 1 was April 22: A look at the corrections officers who work inside the Montcalm County Jail
- Part 2 was April 29: A feature about the Road Commission for Montcalm County
- **Part 3 is today: Mid-Michigan District Health Department**
- Part 4 is May 13: Preview story for the third annual Public Safety Celebration

commissioners would hire a doctor and a sanitarian to discover the illnesses were water-borne communicable diseases.

"There were no sewer systems or septic systems, so we just had this rampant disease," he explained. "Over the years, public health has been working to chip away at those two things."

In 1966, the requirement for Michigan counties to have a health officer,

Continues on Page 3

# Health department dedicated to public service

Continued from Page 1

like Cheatham, became a law.

"When people look at a health department they kind of scratch their head and say, 'Why this weird assembly of different things? You have well permits and restaurant inspections, but you also do shots for babies and stuff like that. How do these things go together?'" Cheatham continued. "But they really do, and we've been at it for 50 years."

Today, health departments work in a number of ways to keep the public safe, such as ensuring the restaurants are providing clean food.

Cheatham said one of the minimum requirements for a state-accredited health department is to inspect local restaurants twice a year:

"Most people just show up when they go out to eat and have a nice dinner," said Leslie Kinnee, Mid-Michigan District Health Department's public information officer. "They're not thinking about the person who came in to make sure the restaurant was following proper procedures and everything is clean."

Another area of cleanliness the health department oversees is water.

While water and sewer infrastructure has seen significant improvements since the mid-1800s, Cheatham said the environmental side of the health department is primarily focused on water quality, including septic standards and water toxins like per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS.)

"I'm at the age where I could retire, but I'm not done yet," Cheatham said. "I still have things I want to do. Clean water is one I'm really passionate about."

His other passion is for the Pathways to Better Health Program which started in 2015. The program seeks to help sick individuals gain access to medication and care they would otherwise struggle to receive.

An example Cheatham gave of someone who may benefit from the Pathways to Better Health Program is a diabetic who is uninsured without a doctor and medication.

"They're off their meds and getting worse and worse. They start having emotional problems, and they're not able to take care of themselves," Cheatham said.

The community health workers come to the rescue and help people like in the example Cheatham gave to get back on their feet.

"Life is just beating them down, and these community health workers come in and they've been referred to as angels," Kinnee added. "They do great work."

Other wellness-related services the Mid-Michigan District Health Department offers include Women, Infant and Children (WIC), immunizations, family planning, hearing and vision screenings, children's special health care service, communicable disease control, sexually transmitted diseases testing and treatment, HIV counseling and testing, blood lead screenings, breastfeeding support, oral health initiatives, breast and cervical cancer control, and tuberculosis control.

On the environmental side, the Mid-Michigan District Health Department oversees food service sanitation, sewage disposal, septage water haulers, well permits, public swimming pool programs, campground in-



At left, Christa Cook of Edmore holds her 3-year-old granddaughter Brooklyn Cook while they talk to, at right, Oral Health Coordinator Shelley Treynor at the Montcalm County Branch of the Mid-Michigan District Health Department. Oral health initiatives, such as fluoride varnish and education to preschool and school-age children is one of the many wellness services the health department offers. — DN Photo | Meghan Nelson

spections and many other services.

The health department also has an emergency preparedness plan to protect the public in the case of a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or natural disaster.

This winter, the health department worked with other local agencies to ensure the safety of residents left without power during snow and ice storms.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Hailey Brewer said if the power outages had lasted longer and left residents without power for even two weeks, the health department would have had their hands full.

"(During sustained power outages) we have to look at the restaurants we inspect all the time and if they have power. How is their food staying cold? Are they serving food?" she continued.

While sanitarians are checking in with restaurants other health department officials check on people who need refrigerated medication like insulin or depend on electricity for ventilators or in-home dialysis.

Depending on the time of year, the health department also has to consider if peo-

ple are at risk of freezing or having a heat stroke.

"When you think about one little scenario of a power outage for two weeks, you have almost every facet of the health department responding to that one incident that has multiple public health indications to it," Brewer said. "And you can do the same thing for flooding, wildfire or communicable disease outbreak."

For Brewer, Cheatham and Kinnee, working to protect the public by ensuring the community's health and well-being is rewarding, though.

"What I enjoy most about my job is coming to work every day is knowing that my work positively affects those in my community," Kinnee said. "In public health, whether you're on the front lines (like our environmental health and community health staff) or behind the scenes in administration, we all contribute to a healthier community, and that's a good feeling."

More information about the Mid-Michigan District Health Department and the services they offer can be found online at [www.mmdhd.org](http://www.mmdhd.org).

# Daily News

Monday, May 6, 2019

## New well alleviates Tri County's PFAS problem

Submitted by Tri County Area Schools

In August of 2018, Tri County Area Schools reported to the community that PFAS levels were found in the Middle School water well at 62 parts per trillion which is slightly below the 70 ppt advisory level set by the EPA.

Tri County immediately took measures to ensure a safe temporary water supply and provided water stations for students and staff and to the school kitchen for meal preparation.

Over the past eight months, Tri County Area Schools worked with the MDEQ (now the Michigan Department of Environment,

Lakes and Energy-EGLE), Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and Prein and Newhof Engineering to solve the drinking water issue. Through work with these entities, local well water information on depth of wells and the associated soil layers of wells were reviewed and a new deeper well was drilled for Tri County Middle School. The new water well is at a depth of 276 feet and goes through over 130 feet of clay layer. The old well at the Middle School where PFAS was detected was only 80 feet deep.

On May 2, the district was informed that the new well for Tri County Middle School is PFAS free with no detection of PFAS.

To offset these costs, Tri County Area Schools applied for and was awarded \$92,520 from the Drinking Water Contaminant Remediation Grant from the Department of Environment, Lakes and Energy.

Superintendent Cumings stated "Securing the grant helps the district avoid spending general fund or sinking fund dollars to pay for the new well. It keeps District money in the classroom for educational purposes. The district is pleased that through its collaborative work with the MDHHS, EGLE and Prein and Newhof, quality and safe drinking water will be provided to the Middle School for many years."

# Daily News

Saturday, May 11, 2019

## Medication drop-off day is May 18

Submitted by the Mid Michigan  
District Health Department

STANTON — The Medication Disposal Coalition of Montcalm County and the Montcalm Prevention Collaborative are hosting a medication drop-off from 9 a.m. to noon May 18.

The medication drop-off is being held in conjunction with Montcalm County's Public Safety Celebration at 659 N. State St. in Stanton.

Those with unwanted, unneeded or expired prescriptions and over-the-counter

medications are encouraged to take advantage of this free, no questions asked service.

Those dropping off medications may blacken out their name on bottles for added privacy, but it is not required. Loose pills and bottles containing liquids should be placed in a Ziploc bag. Sharps will not be accepted at this event.

For additional information, visit the Medication Disposal Coalition of Montcalm County's Facebook page or the Montcalm Prevention Collaborative website at [www.montcalmprevention.org](http://www.montcalmprevention.org).

# Health department working with Riverdale to stop sewage from flowing into Pine River

ELISABETH WALDON  
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SEVILLE TOWNSHIP — Property owners in the small town of Riverdale can expect to receive a letter in the mail from the Mid-Michigan District Health Department about a smelly and dangerous issue.

Riverdale is located in Gratiot County about five miles southeast of Vestaburg. The health department received a complaint that human sewage is being introduced into Riverdale's storm sewer system and then released into the Pine River via a local creek, according to Environmental Health Director Liz Braddock.

An investigation by the health department in conjunction with Seville Township — including multiple surface water samples throughout Riverdale's storm sewer system — revealed raw sewage contaminating the storm drain system.

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy sent Riverdale a letter last December requiring a plan of action be taken. In response, Seville Township has created a task force, which is next set to meet on Tuesday. The task force is seeking funding to pursue a feasibility study to pursue the installation of a community sewer system in Riverdale, according to Braddock.

"The next step is to individually dye test home septic systems in the area of the affected storm sewers," Braddock said. "The purpose of these dye tests is to identify homes without adequate septic systems and those that are polluting the Pine River. It will also

identify septic systems that are operating correctly. This process requires cooperation from the property owner to locate the septic tank on the property and expose the outlet access port, if it's buried."

During Wednesday's Mid-Michigan District Health Department Board of Health meeting, Montcalm County Commissioner Betty Kellenberger of Carson City asked why some Riverdale residents don't want to allow health department officials to come onto their property.

"They are concerned that we'll come and see other things ... things that they feel will get them into trouble," Braddock said. "The task force wants to actively talk to the homeowners who are discharging into the storm drain. They want to help them with financing to fix the problem. We will be going door to door and coming in as we're invited to come in."

For those who don't know where their septic tank is or can't find it, Braddock suggests contacting a septage pumping company for assistance.

"The point of this whole thing is to get a common sewer system within the confines of Riverdale," Gratiot County Commissioner George Bailey of Ithaca noted. "It takes some people quite some time to understand maybe they're part of the problem. Instead of being part of the problem, they need to be part of the solution. At the end of the day, there's a big cost associated. The endgame is that they all get a common system."

"If you don't bear the cost now, you will bear the cost in the future," Kellenberger



**The Mid-Michigan District Health Department is assisting Riverdale regarding a complaint that human sewage is contaminating the storm sewer system and going into the Pine River.** — Submitted photo | Health Department Environmental Health Director Liz Braddock

agreed.

Anyone wanting more information can contact Braddock at (616) 302-6301 or lbraddock@mmdhd.org or Seville Township Supervisor Tish Mallory at sevilletwpsupervisor@gmail.com.

# Quality questions



Mid-Michigan District Health Department Health Officer Marcus Cheatham, at right, explains his reasoning for wanting to hire a water quality specialist for Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties as Dr. Jennifer Morse, center, and Clinton County Commissioner Dwight Washington, at left, listen during Wednesday's Board of Health meeting in St. Johns. — DN Photo | Elisabeth Waldon

## Health department moves forward with water quality specialist, despite opposition from commissioner

ELISABETH WALDON  
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ST. JOHNS — The Mid-Michigan District Health Department Board of Health has voted to approve a budget with an added cost for Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties to support the hiring of a new water quality specialist.

However, one Montcalm County commissioner has indicated his county will likely not support the cost.

Montcalm County Commissioner Adam Petersen cast the lone opposing vote against the health department's budget during Wednesday's meeting in St. Johns. Montcalm County Commissioner Betty Kellenberger voted "yes," as did commissioners from Clinton and Gratiot counties.

The health department budget specifies Montcalm County's annual share for health department services at \$427,904, with an additional cost of \$24,500 as Montcalm County's share for hiring an environmental health specialist for water quality issues.

Clinton County's annual share is specified at \$401,279 with an added cost of \$29,400 for the new specialist, while Gratiot County's annual share is specified at \$286,295 with an added cost of \$16,100 for the new specialist.

"It was not for certain that Montcalm County would be on board," Health Officer Marcus Cheatham said. "We're confident



Adam Petersen

that we can fund this position so we're bringing it to you even though there might be ... differences in what the counties decide to appropriate for this. We're confident that we will be able to cover the new position."

"So if Montcalm County doesn't pass their apportionment ... what is the recourse there?" Petersen asked.

"We would need to discuss that and I would be interested in taking direction from you on that," Cheatham replied.

"I believe we'd be able to meet the \$427,904," Petersen said. "I don't think we would be willing to fund the extra \$24,500 for this specialist. It's no secret where Montcalm County has been (financially). We're trying to alleviate as much as we can

Continues on Page 3

# Health department moves forward with water specialist

Continued from Page 1

without taking on more for something that our constituents have voiced their opinion about something they're not wanting."

"I feel like the politics can cut both ways," Cheatham noted. "We might start getting calls like, 'why aren't you doing something about the Flat River, why are you working on the Pine and the Maple rivers?' That's something we have to think about. I don't want to wag my finger at Montcalm County because your economic reality is what it is. I think right now it's hard for Montcalm County to sustain a health department."

The new environmental health specialist, who has yet to be hired, will work on water

quality issues specific to each county, such as assisting homeowners with failed septic systems, helping villages establish own municipal sewage systems and monitoring swimming areas for E. coli, according to Cheatham.

"(Clinton County Administrator) Ryan Wood has said he wants to see remediated septic systems in Clinton County," Cheatham said. "Gratiot County is more complicated, they have these rural villages that need to switch to sewers. We want to respond to the needs in each community."

After the meeting, Petersen told the Daily News he couldn't in good conscience vote to approve the health department budget with the added cost built in for Montcalm County

"I don't think that our constituents want to pay for something like that," he said. "I don't see the validity in going in and hitting the taxpayers for more. I can think of a lot better things to do with \$24,000 than to spend it on a water quality engineer that people have made it abundantly clear they don't want."

The health department's budget proposal will now go before the Montcalm County Board of Commissioners during a Finance & Personnel Committee meeting sometime before the new fiscal year begins Oct. 1.

The next Board of Health meeting will be 9 a.m. June 26 at the health department's Gratiot County branch in Ithaca. Anyone may attend.

## ST. LOUIS

# Cleanup work resumes at former Velsicol Chemical plant site

EPA official said cleanup could last another six or seven years

Cleanup work has resumed at a former chemical plant in central Michigan that's become one of the country's costliest Superfund sites.

An Environmental Protection Agency official, Thomas Alcamo, told MLive.com that it could still take another seven years to finish cleaning up the Velsicol Chemical plant site in St. Louis, Michigan.

"I could see this going six or seven more years, it's really funding-dependent for a lot of it," Alcamo said. "It's extremely expensive."

Volatile organic chemicals, such as DDT and polychlorinated biphenyls, were left behind at the site when the plant closed roughly 40 years ago, seeping into the soil. The chemical DDT was also found to have leaked into the Pine River after the plant closed in 1978, costing over \$100 million to clean up.

The first phase of the cleanup process at the site wrapped up last fall, but the second phase that's underway covers an area that's three times larger, the Morning Sun reported.

Workers removed nearly 30 tons (27 metric tons)



KAYTIE BOOMER — SAGINAW NEWS VIA AP MARKETPLACE

The former Velsicol Plant across the Pine River, in St. Louis, Mich.

of contaminated soil during the first phase. About 100,000 tons (91,000 metric tons) are planned for removal from the second area by 2021.

Workers will be using a process to remove chemicals from the soil by inserting metal rods into the ground, which heat the chemicals to boiling. The chemicals are then siphoned off and destroyed.

Alcamo said the second phase of the cleanup is estimated to cost up to \$25 million, while the following phase will cost up to \$20 million.

Pine River Superfund Citizens Task Force, an EPA-sanctioned community group that's overseeing cleanup of the Superfund site, expressed concern about the toxic substance

DBCP buried at the site. The chemical, which has been used as a soil fumigant and pesticide, is believed to lead to several health risks, such as decreased sperm counts in males.

Jane Keon, the task force's secretary, said the air will be monitored around the site so that they can react to any potential exposure.

— *The Associated Press*

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# Daily News

Tuesday, May 28, 2019

## Health officials drafting editorial

Piece would highlight 'positive impact' of health department

ELISABETH WALDON  
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ST. JOHNS — After a Montcalm County commissioner chastised a health official for not responding to questions from the Daily News, the health department is working on damage control.

During the Mid-Michigan District Health Department Board of Health meeting in Stanton on April 24, Montcalm County Commissioner Adam Petersen questioned why Health Officer Marcus Cheatham didn't return emailed questions from the Daily News regarding the health department's proposal to hire a new water quality specialist. Petersen told health department officials that by declining to



Marcus Cheatham



Adam Petersen

comment, it might look like they were hiding something.

During last Wednesday's Board of Health meeting in St. Johns, Cheatham said Clinton County Commissioner Bruce DeLong and Gratiot County Commissioner George Bailey requested that the health department draft an editorial about the "positive economic impact of the health department" to be published in the Daily News.

"Obviously going on the record can have unpredictable consequences in today's media environment, so there is risk involved," Cheatham wrote in his editorial proposal under the subject "re-branding" to Board of Health members. "If board members are included to sign the editorial, I think we should consider whether the information about the actions we took during Montcalm's economic crisis could be misconstrued. I would not want Clinton or Gratiot county residents to think resources from their counties were spent inappropriately."

Cheatham proposed including in the editorial details about how in 2016 the health department paid off a building loan held by Montcalm County and costing the county \$50,000 per year; how the health department partnered with the county for pay for a new roof on the building; and how Cheatham took a \$10,000 pay

cut when health department staff took furlough days. Cheatham asked Board of Health members if they were interested in signing the editorial.

"I would be delighted to sign it," Montcalm County Commissioner Betty Kellenberger said.

However, Petersen, the other Montcalm County commissioner on the three-county Board of Health, had some critiques.

"I would be fine with this if you said what we do, not what we've done," Petersen said. "It's kind of like we're tooting our own horn here. Why can't we say 'here's what we're doing moving forward and here's what we're trying to accomplish,' not 'here's what we did three years ago.' Looking backward doesn't help anybody. How far back are we going to look before we start looking forward?"

Commissioners from other counties had some suggestions as well.

"I think one of the strengths of the Mid-Michigan District Health Department is the counties working together," Clinton County Commissioner Dwight Washington said. "I think it would be nice if you summarized how the three counties work together."

"We have a county system of three counties and since I've been on this board, we've all worked very well together," Bailey agreed. "Montcalm County has always had a (financial) situation

and everybody knew it, that they were struggling. The other two counties said fine, we'll help. That's what we do, we're here to maintain as much service as we can for the most people that we can. All three counties have cooperated so all can benefit, and I think that's an important thing to put out there. We all work together for a common goal to get the job done."

"I think this should be a quarterly thing," added DeLong of the editorial. "We've got to keep the public aware of what the health department does."

Cheatham asked for volunteers to help write the editorial. Petersen and Washington both volunteered, with Petersen emphasizing that the health department should place a focus on "positive, forward, this is where we're going, this is what we're doing, not this is what's been done."

Petersen warned there are still hard feelings amongst his constituents regarding how the health department attempted to roll out a septic system amendment last autumn.

"I think at least in Montcalm County, the health department took such a hit with this whole sewer thing, it's going to be a hard sell no matter what you do," Petersen said. "If you throw stuff like this (proposed editorial) out in Montcalm County, you're going to smear yourself further and further down the drain."

"No pun intended," he added.

## Health officials drafting editorial

Continued from Page 1

Continues on Page 3

# Lakeview Area News

## Thursday, May 30, 2019

### Foodborne illness is no picnic

By Leslie Kinnee, Public  
MMDHD Information  
Officer

Ithaca, Stanton St. Johns- It seems as though Mother Nature is finally going to bless us with sunshine and warmer temperatures, just in time for graduation open houses, picnics, family reunions and backyard barbecues. These ideal weather conditions help make these events more enjoyable, but there is one downside- bacteria can rapidly multiply in the hot summer sun, which can put quite a damper on an otherwise good time.

Foodborne bacteria can cause illness within as little as 20 minutes or up to three days of eating contaminated food. Symptoms can include: vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain—and flu-like symptoms, such as fever, headache, and body ache.

This scenario can definitely put a damper on an otherwise enjoyable time, so safe food handling when eating outdoors is critical.

The first step to safe food handling is to clean: Wash hands with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food, and after using the bathroom, handling pets or changing diapers. Always rinse raw fruits and vegetables under running water, and avoid cross-contamination by cleaning counters, cutting boards, utensils and dishes with hot soapy water after preparing each item.

The second step is to separate: Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs from other foods.

Use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry and seafood. Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs unless the plate has been washed in hot, soapy water. When packing a cooler, wrap uncooked meats and poultry separately, and put them on the bottom to prevent raw juices from dripping onto other foods. A separate cooler for storing raw food is ideal.

The third step is to kill harmful bacteria by cooking food to the right temperature: Visual cues, like color, are not a guarantee that food is safe. Don't guess! Use a metal stemmed thermometer to check when meat and poultry are safe to eat. Foods are safe to eat when internal temperatures are 145°F for chops, roasts and steak; 165°F for Poultry; and 160°F for ground meat.

The fourth step is to keep cold food cold. Perishable foods normally kept in the refrigerator must be kept in a cooler with freezer packs or ice to keep the temperature at or near 40° F. Also put leftovers back in the refrigerator or cooler as soon as you are done eating. The simple rule is: When in doubt, throw it out!

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

We take action to protect, maintain and improve the health of our community.

Advancing innovative solutions to achieve healthier outcomes



#### A Problem?

CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) estimates that each year roughly 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) gets sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die of foodborne diseases.

# Daily News

Tuesday, June 4, 2019

**JUNE 15 STANTON HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION** There will be a household hazardous waste, tire and electronic collection day is from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Mid-Michigan District Health Department. Accepted items include aerosols, auto liquids, batteries, cleaning products, corrosives, glue and adhesives, fertilizers, fire extinguishers, biomedical sharps, solvents and thermometers. Tires may be recycled for \$2 per tire with a limit of 15 tires, \$15 per semi tire and \$20 per tractor tire. Office and household electronics may be recycled for 62 cents per pound. Computer towers, servers and laptops may be recycled for free. Call the Montcalm Conservation District at (989) 831-4606, email Dixie Ward at [dixieward@macd.org](mailto:dixieward@macd.org) or visit [montcalmcd.org](http://montcalmcd.org) for more information.

## MID-MICHIGAN

# Farmers' market season kicks off this week

## Prescription for Health program expanding to Mt. Pleasant

By Eric Baerren

*ebaerren@medianewsgroup.com*  
Multimedia journalist

A program launched at the St. Louis Farmers Market last year designed to help promote health through better eating is expanding to Mt. Pleasant as

most area farmers markets prepare to open this week for the 2019 season.

Prescription for Health, which last year graduated 28 people from Gratiot County, is expanding this year — thanks to a two-year grant from the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Foundation — to 100 people in Gratiot and Isabella counties. Seventy of those people are expected to be in Gratiot County, with 30 in Isabella, said Linda Bader, manager of

the St. Louis Farmers Market.

Bader got the ball rolling locally after networking with managers of other farmers markets around the state, specifically a manager of a market in Washtenaw County, she said. After pulling together health care providers, the Mid-Michigan Health Department and getting a grant from the Gratiot County Community Foundation, they launched last year.

The program is really a com-

munity program, said Mid-Michigan Health Department Health Officer Marcus Cheatham. In addition to the health care organizations, MSU Extension participates by providing nutrition classes. They've even looped in Alma College. Between 20-25 participants in Gratiot County this year are expected to be eligible for a winter-time exercise program at the college, with tailored programs created by stu-

**HEALTHY » PAGE 2**



MORNING SUN FILE PHOTO

The Mt. Pleasant Farmer's Market is now hosting a healthy eating program.

# Healthy

FROM PAGE 1

dents studying to be personal trainers, Bader said. Alex Montoye, an assistant professor of integrated physiology and health science at Alma College, is overseeing that part of the program.

The target demographic are people with medical conditions that can benefit from improved nutrition, Bader said, including things like diabetes or cardiovascular problems like hypertension. Health care providers provide referrals to the health department, Mid-Michigan Health Department in Gratiot County and Central Michigan Health Department in Isabella.

Referred patients attend an enrollment class where they fill out paperwork and the department can determine whether patients are interested enough to complete the six nutrition courses.

Courses take place the day of the farmers market, and start with the instructor, from MSU Extension, purchasing in-season produce. The instructor prepares the produce as part of the class, which takes place close to the market. At the end, participants are given coupons to purchase produce right where they are at. Over the course of the summer, each participant is provided \$100 in coupons.

The idea isn't just to raise awareness of the role that better nutrition plays in managing chronic health

conditions, but to increase the amount of exercise participants get. It also provides an opportunity for participants to meet and get to know new people.

"It's good for their mental health," Cheatham said.

Blood work done before and after the program are an important component, Bader said. Showing results helps them get funding to continue the program.

Although the sample size for last year's program is pretty small, Bader said their testing did produce some results. At the start of the program, the body of participants had an average A1C, an indicator of diabetes had improved from 8 percent to 7.3 percent. Body mass also showed some improvement, from 38.6 to 37.6 kg/meter. The

program also showed high participation, with 28 of 34 referrals enrolling and only two dropping. Those two, according to the fact sheet, dropped out due to medical reasons.

There is hope to expand Prescription for Health to more health care providers. A letter is available for patients to take to health care providers who aren't currently participating. They'd also like to add more participants and expand to other area farmers markets. One advantage to expanding to Mt. Pleasant is that it is already equipped to process coupons and participates in low-income food access programs.

That will require a stable source of funding, Bader said, which could include a provision of last year's

Farm Bill that allocated money for these kinds of programs. It's hoped that by the time the Blue Cross foundation money runs out that guidelines for how to access federal funding will be available.

This is the first week that both the Mt. Pleasant Farmers' Market and St. Louis Farmers Market are open for the 2019 summer. Mt. Pleasant's is open at the South Shelter in Island Park every Thursday from 7:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. through Oct. 25. St. Louis' is open on Thursdays at city hall, 300 N. Mill St., from 2 to 6 p.m. every Thursday through October.

In addition, Mt. Pleasant has a Saturday market open on Broadway from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. That runs June 30 until Oct. 13.

Other area farmers markets are open as follows:

- Alma, open Wednesdays from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the corner of Pine Avenue and Downie Street through October;

- Ithaca, the season for which started May 4 and runs until Oct. 12, every Saturday from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m. at Center and Pine streets;

- Farwell, the season for which started May 4 and runs until Oct. 12, every Saturday from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. at 124 W. Illinois St.; and,

- The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe reservation, open Tuesdays from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. at the Farmers Market Pavilion at the corner of Broadway and Leaton roads, from June through October.

# It's the time of year to start watching out for ticks

Submitted by the Mid-Michigan  
District Health Department

The Mid-Michigan District Health Department is encouraging residents to get outside and enjoy all that our beautiful state has to offer this time of year, but also to watch for ticks.

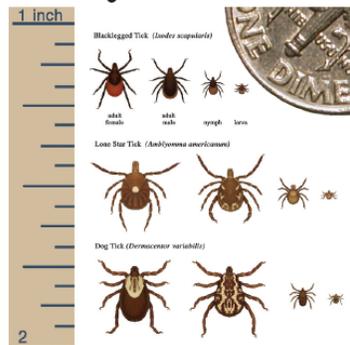
Ticks may be tiny, but they can pack quite a punch, especially the black-legged/deer tick, which can transmit Lyme disease.

Symptoms of Lyme disease include fever, chills, headache, muscle and joint pain, and a bull's-eye rash at the site of the bite. If not properly diagnosed and left untreated, infection can spread to the joints, the heart and the nervous system.

The best defense against Lyme disease is prevention. If possible, avoid shady, moist areas in wooded and grassy locations, as these are the preferred hiding spots for ticks. If you do need to venture into these areas, walk on well groomed trails and avoid contact with overgrown grass, brush and leaves.

Other prevention tips include:

- Apply repellent containing DEET or Picaridin to exposed skin, following manufacturer's instructions.



If you find a tick and would like to know what kind it is, visit [Michigan.gov/lyme](http://Michigan.gov/lyme) online or call the Mid-Michigan District Health Department at (989) 831-3615 in Montcalm County. — Submitted photo

- Spray clothes with permethrin, which kills ticks on contact.
- Wear enclosed shoes, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt.
- Tuck pants into socks or boots.
- Use tick prevention products on your pets After returning from potentially



Ticks may be tiny, but they can pack quite a punch, especially the blacklegged/deer tick, which can transmit Lyme disease. Symptoms of Lyme disease include fever, chills, headache, muscle and joint pain, and a bull's-eye rash at the site of the bite. — Submitted photo

tick-infested areas, check yourself and your pets for ticks and shower immediately to wash off and find ticks that may be on you. Ticks can attach to any part of the body, but are commonly found in the hairline, ears, waistline, groin, armpits and sock line.

If you find a tick attached to your skin, remove it promptly to decrease the

chance of infection. Using fine-tipped tweezers, grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible. Slowly and gently pull upward with steady, even pressure. After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the area and your hands with soap and water and apply an antiseptic to the bite wound.

If you find a tick and would like to know what kind it is, visit [Michigan.gov/lyme](http://Michigan.gov/lyme). Here you can view photos of ticks commonly found in Michigan and even submit an electronic photo for Michigan Department of Health and Human Services staff to identify. Ticks can also be submitted to the state lab for identification. Those identified as a type that can transmit Lyme disease can be tested if the tick is still alive. If you would like to submit a tick to the state lab for identification and possible testing, contact the Mid-Michigan District Health Department at (989) 831-3615 in Montcalm County.

If you experience a fever, rash, or muscle or joint aches within several weeks of removing a tick, be sure to see your doctor. Patients treated with appropriate antibiotics in the early stages of Lyme disease usually recover quickly.

# Lakeview Area News

## Thursday, June 6, 2019

### Pathways to Better Health Receives United Way Grant



Pictured, left to right: Community Health Worker Erin Morgan, United Way Montcalm-Ionia Counties Director Terri Legg and Health Educator Cheryl Thelen.

**By Leslie Kinnee  
Public Information  
Officer, Mid-Michigan  
District Health Depart-  
ment**

The Mid-Michigan District Health Department was recently awarded a Community Impact Grant from United Way of Montcalm and Ionia Counties to help improve health outcomes for area residents.

The \$2,375 grant will be used to provide gas cards to clients who are being served by the Pathways to Better Health Program in Montcalm County.

Pathways to Better Health is an evidence-based program, in which a

community health worker assists at-risk clients in navigating medical and social service systems. These clients, faced with chronic medical Left to right: Community Health Worker Erin Morgan, conditions and other obstacles, often lack the funds for long distance United Way Montcalm-Ionia Counties Director Terri Legg trips to receive needed medical care or social services supports.

and Health Educator Cheryl Thelen

While some lack gas money for their own vehicles, others

depend on family and friends for transportation.

Gas cards, now available thanks to the United Way grant, will help lessen the transportation barrier that keeps many from seeking much needed care.

Improving the quality of life and guiding clients to advocate for themselves are goals of the Pathways to Better Health Program. Erin Morgan, Community Health Worker for Montcalm County states: "Being a rural community, many of our clients have to travel long distances to receive medical care, so this will be a big help."

For more information on the Pathways to Better Health Program, contact Erin Morgan, Community

Health Worker for Montcalm County, at (989)831-3618. Applications for assistance can be found on the Mid-Michigan District Health Department's website at [www.mmdhd.org](http://www.mmdhd.org).

*Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.*

*We take action to protect, maintain and improve the health of our community. Advancing innovative solutions to achieve healthier outcomes*

# A watershed moment

Montcalm Conservation District receives \$370,495 grant for Flat River

ELISABETH WALDON  
ewaldon@staffordgroup.com

STANTON — The Montcalm Conservation District has received a federal grant to assist with water quality in the Flat River.

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy (EGLE) recently announced grants totaling more than \$3.9 million for projects benefiting Michigan lakes and streams, including a \$370,495 grant for the Flat River, which flows from Six Lakes about 70 miles south until it joins the Grand River in Lowell.

The grant requires a local match of \$168,960 from Montcalm County. Dixie Ward, a watershed technician for the Montcalm Conservation District, said the Conservation District will provide \$24,027 of that match in conjunction with Natural Resources Conservation Services, with the rest of the match coming from partner organizations.

Montcalm Conservation District partners on the project will include the Mid-Michigan District Health Department, Kent Conservation District, Ionia Conservation District, Land Conservancy of West Michigan, Flat River Watershed Council, Michigan State University Extension, Streamside, Ecological



The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy recently awarded a \$370,495 grant to the Montcalm Conservation District for the Flat River, which flows from Six Lakes (pictured) about 70 miles south until it joins the Grand River in Lowell. — DN Photo | Elisabeth Waldon

Services and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

The project includes a mixture of protection, restoration and outreach activities.

The protection activities include a water quality-based permanent conservation easement and working to adopt natural rivers ordinances in 10 townships.

Restoration activities include installing agricultural best management practices (such as cover crops, filter strips and manure storage facilities) in the Mud Lake, Hunter Lake and Clear Creek sub-watersheds and installing two natural shoreline demonstration sites totaling 97 linear feet of shoreline on Woodard Lake in the Long Lake

sub-watershed.

Outreach activities include contacting the general public about septic system operation and maintenance for homeowners and contacting farmers about best management practices, water quality and funding opportunities.

Continues on Page 3

# Conservation District receives grant for Flat River

Continued from Page 1

"This a great opportunity to start implementing recommendations from the Flat River Watershed Management Plan and the Conservation District is excited about this opportunity to start working on the project goals and objectives," Ward said. "This a three-year grant and the Montcalm Conservation District will be starting this grant by October."

During Monday's Montcalm County Board of Commissioner committee meetings in Stanton, John Johansen, a former commissioner, was excited to share the news.

"This is a real upbeat thing for this county for the Flat River," Johansen said. "I just hope we'll get on board with making correc-

tions to the Flat River so the river becomes a safe environment for people to use. It's our prime water source in Montcalm County, it runs all the way across the county."

State Sen. Rick Outman, R-Six Lakes, congratulated the Montcalm Conservation District via a press release.

"The Montcalm Conservation District is a great asset to have and if anyone deserves this funding, it's them," said Outman, who chairs the Senate Committee on Environmental Quality. "These funds will help restore the overall health of the environment and help put into action preventative measures to ensure the health and longevity of Montcalm County's natural resources. As the state continues evaluating water quality issues, we cannot let our healthy waters fall by the wayside. This money will sure-

ly help ensure the health and well-being of Montcalm County waterways, along with areas from every corner of the state."

The EGLE also awarded a \$398,189 grant to the Clinton Conservation District for the Upper Maple River Watershed and a \$198,044 grant to the Kent Conservation District for the Rogue River and Indian Mill Creek Watersheds. The grants are funded under the federal Clean Water Act Section 319 and the Clean Michigan Initiative Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Grants Program.

More than half of EGLE's budget each year flows into Michigan communities in the form of grants, loans and other spending that supports local projects that protect public health and the environment, while spurring economic growth and creating jobs for Michigan workers in the process.