

# Daily News

Friday, September 17, 2021

## Learn how to properly maintain your septic system during SepticSmart Week

By [The Daily News Staff](#) | on September 17, 2021

Submitted by the Mid-Michigan District Health Department

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), supported by state and local governments, the private sector, communities, and academia, will sponsor its ninth SepticSmart Week 2021. This annual event will take place Sept. 20-24, and will focus on educating homeowners and communities on the proper care and maintenance of their septic systems.

More than one-fifth of U.S. households utilize an individual onsite system or small community cluster septic system to treat their wastewater. These systems treat and dispose of relatively small volumes of wastewater and include a wide range of individual and cluster treatment options to process household and commercial sewage. These systems go by such names as septic, decentralized wastewater treatment, cluster, package plants, on-lot, individual sewage disposal, and private sewage.

Onsite systems provide a cost-effective, long-term option for treating wastewater, particularly in sparsely populated areas. When properly installed, operated, and maintained, these systems help protect public health, preserve valuable water resources, and maintain a community's economic vitality.

EPA's SepticSmart initiative is a nationwide public education effort offering educational resources to homeowners, local organizations, and government leaders to explain how septic systems work and provide tips on how to properly maintain them. This year's theme is, "Safeguard Your Family's Health, Protect the Environment, and Save Money." Each day during SepticSmart week will focus on a different topic:

- **Think at the Sink:** What goes down the drain has a big impact on your septic system. Fats, grease, and solids can clog a system's pipes and drainfield.
- **Don't Overload the Commode:** A toilet is not a trash can. Disposable diapers and wipes, feminine hygiene products, coffee grounds, cigarette butts, and cat litter can damage a septic system.
- **Don't Strain Your Drain:** Use water efficiently and stagger use of water-based appliances. Too much water use at once can overload a system that hasn't been pumped recently.
- **Shield Your Field:** Tree and shrub roots, cars, and livestock can damage your septic drainfield.
- **Keep It Clean:** Contamination can occur when a septic system leaks due to improper maintenance. Be sure your drinking water is safe to drink by testing it regularly.
- **Protect It and Inspect It:** Regular septic system maintenance can save homeowners thousands of dollars in repairs and protect public health.

- Pump Your Tank: Ensure your septic tank is pumped at regularly intervals as recommended by a professional and/or local permitting authority.

SepticSmart Week 2021 encourages homeowners, wastewater professionals, and state, tribal, and local officials to design and maintain effective systems to safeguard your family's health, protect the environment, and save money. Be part of the solution by visiting [www.epa.gov/septic](http://www.epa.gov/septic) for additional information.

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

# Daily News

Monday, September 20, 2021

## 100 Acts of Kindness: The Mermaid Cake

Submitted by the Mid-Michigan  
District Health Department

An act of kindness can reach far into the hearts of others. Many times, it is the simplest of gestures that brighten other's days. And surprising those you think highly of is so much fun.

For example, a co-worker wanted to create a special birthday party for her daughter during the pandemic. The isolation was starting to wear on everyone. Mom wanted this to be very special, filling her daughter's heart with smiles. Mom's special surprise included a mermaid cake for the birthday party. We can only assume her daughter loves mermaids.

The day, however, became even more special when a person, who still remains unidentified, surprised mom. When she went to pick up the mermaid cake she had ordered, it had already been paid for it. Can you imagine the surprise and special feelings mom experienced knowing someone was so very thoughtful and provided this simple act of kindness?

And, yes, her daughter was thrilled with the special mermaid cake.

*This is one in a series of "100 Acts of Kindness" stories submitted in conjunction with the Mid-Michigan District Health Department. To submit your own Act of Kindness story, visit [MontcalmPrevention.org](http://MontcalmPrevention.org) and click on one of the "100 Acts of Kindness" buttons.*

# Daily News

Friday, September 24, 2021

## Misinformation, masks dominate local Board of Health public comment

By [Elisabeth Waldon](#) | on September 24, 2021

ITHACA — The Mid-Michigan District Health Department is not planning on issuing face mask mandates for Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties, but that doesn't mean residents aren't concerned about the possibility.



Mid-Michigan District Health Department Board of Health members and officials at Wednesday's meeting in Ithaca, clockwise from bottom left, Gratiot County Commissioner Chuck Murphy, Montcalm County Commissioner Adam Petersen, Clinton County Commissioner Dwight Washington, Medical Director Dr. Jennifer Morse, Health Officer Liz Braddock, Montcalm County Commissioner Michael Beach, Administrative Services Director Melissa Selby and Clinton County Commissioner Bruce DeLong. — Screenshot

Multiple people attended Wednesday's Board of Health meeting both virtually and in person to speak out against mask mandates. All Board of Health members were present in person in Ithaca except for Gratiot County Commissioner George Bailey who participated via Zoom, along with 23 other remote participants.

During August's Board of Health meeting, Medical Director Dr. Jennifer Morse said that while she recommends masks in schools because she believes it's the safest approach for teachers and students, masking is not required and a mask mandate by the health department will likely not occur.

However, during Wednesday's meeting, multiple residents from Clinton County spoke out against the possibility.

Makayla Smith of Clinton County accused the health department of inserting itself into a personnel decision regarding a DeWitt Public Schools bus driver in Clinton County. Smith said the bus driver was fired for wearing a mask below her nose.

“Shame on all of you,” Smith declared. “I don’t know who you people think you are, but you really need to stay in your lane. Get back to inspecting restaurants and stop this egregious overreach. Personally I think we should defund the health department and all of you should be out of a job.”

However, health department officials said they didn’t know anything about a fired bus driver nor did they play a role in any such situation.

“It is surprising to me,” said Health Officer Liz Braddock. “It is not something that we would be involved in. We had no notice of this.”

Braddock noted that mask mandates on a school bus are a federal requirement and that local health departments have no oversight over this.

“We have no mask mandates,” she emphasized. “DeWitt Township put something in place to protect their students, which was not a requirement that involved us.”

“I field calls every day. This is the first I’ve heard about it,” added Clinton County Commissioner Bruce DeLong.

The Daily News contacted DeWitt Public Schools Superintendent Shanna Spickard to clarify the bus driver incident.

“I do not have any details to share with you,” Spickard told the Daily News. “I do not wish to discuss staff discipline outside of the affected parties. As a reminder, masks are required by law on public transportation and absent the proper medical documentation, we expect our drivers and students to wear them.”

Other public comment speakers on Wednesday were also focused on mask and quarantine recommendations.

“Unfortunately DeWitt Public Schools has issued a mask mandate and I do not think it’s beneficial to our students or our community,” said Deirdre Thompson of DeWitt. “I am concerned that the goalpost for COVID-19 keeps moving. We are in an endemic phase, not a pandemic. There are more important things than COVID out there. Unmask the children, stop the quarantining and let’s get our lives back to normal.”

“I appreciate that you guys have not issued a mandate,” said Kelly Havens of St. Johns. “I would hope that you guys continue to not place any mandates here in Clinton County. We are absolutely against it. We are prepared to take the health department to court if any are mandated.”

“I have one student and fortunately he’s a junior and will be out soon,” said Bethany Smith of Clinton County. “This situation has been devastating in many ways. There’s no card for immunity. I have immunity, my son has immunity. He cannot wear a mask, he cannot function on an online program at home and I do not have the capacity to teach him at home. I’m glad you’re not mandating because it’s not fair for children to be afraid to go to school, to be afraid that their rights are going to be infringed upon, to feel like they can’t participate actively.”

Bethany Smith noted that health department officials weren’t social distanced from each other at Wednesday’s meeting and that Braddock took off her mask when she spoke. Some health officials wore masks while others did not.

“The inconsistencies are amazing and we’re asking our children to follow these and quarantine and not quarantine and asking teachers to monitor this in large groups,” Bethany Smith said. “There’s just so many inconsistencies, it’s inconceivable.”

Kim Kirkoff of Clinton County said her daughter attends Ovid-Elsie Area Schools which doesn't have a mask mandate, but she's worried about this changing.

"We've had enough and we're not going to take it anymore," she declared. "Masks don't work. We're kidding ourselves if we're gonna put a piece of cloth on our face and think that they're gonna protect people. ... We have an immune system for a reason."

Clinton County Commissioner Dwight Washington responded to some of the public comments.

"I'm really moved by the passion of some of the speakers during public comment. What I'm not hearing is the compassion," he said. "Where is the compassion for those who have gotten ill?"

Morse agreed, noting that she knows one board member up north who has lost three family members to COVID.

"She talks to me every month in tears and doesn't understand what's going on right now (regarding certain public comments)," Morse said. "I'm doing my best to educate the community. I don't really know how else to help out with the situation right now. It's just been very challenging. We continue to try to do our job and protect the community, but it's been very difficult."

### **In Other Matters ...**

During Wednesday's meeting, the Mid-Michigan District Health Department Board of Health also:

- Voted 6-0 to accept Administrative Services Director Melissa Selby's proposal to dedicate just over \$300,000 remaining in the health department's retirement fund balance toward \$3 million in unfunded pension liability for the Municipal Employees Retirement System (MERS), which is currently only 76% funded, and to work toward getting 90% funded in coming years.
- Voted 5-1 to make a part-time environmental health public health representative position full-time after failing to fill the part-time job posting. The salary will come from COVID funds as well as health department fees this year and in the future the salary funding will be wrapped into the 2023 fiscal year discussion. Montcalm County Commissioner Adam Petersen voted "no."
- Voted 6-0 to approve giving 16 non-union employees a one-year wage increase of 2.5% for the upcoming fiscal year; a monthly stipend of \$250 for those who carry emergency pagers; a one-time bonus of \$1,000 in recognition of efforts over the past year in handling an increased workload during the pandemic; access to vacation time after 30 days with a payback clause if new hires leave prior to their one-year anniversary; and to remove a requirement to use 50% of accrued vacation during the year.
- Approved a one-time bonus of \$1,000 for 42 employees in the teamsters union in recognition of efforts over the past year in handling an increased workload during the pandemic (to be payable from COVID money).

The next Board of Health meeting is scheduled for 9 a.m. on Oct. 27. Visit [mmdhd.org/2021-board-of-health](https://mmdhd.org/2021-board-of-health) for more information.

# Daily News

Saturday, September 25, 2021

## 100 Acts of Kindness: Paying it forward

Submitted by the Mid-Michigan  
District Health Department

Wedgwood is a counseling agency in the Substance Use Disorder field, as well as other aspects of counseling services. They share a card with people who come to their offices. The card reads, "Someone has completed an act of kindness for you. Instead of paying it back, we ask you to pay it forward. Do a good deed for someone else at Wedgwood and include this note to continue the cycle of paying it forward."

*This is one in a series of "100 Acts of Kindness" stories submitted in conjunction with the Mid-Michigan District Health Department. To submit your own Act of Kindness story, visit [MontcalmPrevention.org](http://MontcalmPrevention.org) and click on one of the "100 Acts of Kindness" buttons.*

# Gratiot County Herald

Thursday, September 30, 2021

## Despite Lone Rejection, Gratiot Commissioners Approve County Budget

By Michael MacDonald  
Herald Editor

Though it failed to receive full support, the Gratiot County Board of Commissioners last Tuesday approved their upcoming fiscal year budget following a public hearing and subsequent 4-1 vote.

Rejecting the county's \$40.5 million financial plan for 2021-22 was commissioner Jan Bunting, who took issue with boilerplate wording in the budget's resolution and a potential purchase in the county's five-year capital improvement plan for fiscal year 2022-23. Citing dismay about a recent policy adoption which prohibits commissioners from spending county money on goods and services without getting majority support from the board, Bunting said she would not approve a section of the resolution that pledges full adherence to the county's policy manual.

The new policy was adopted earlier this month and stems from recent [legal](#) fees incurred by the county on behalf of an unnamed commissioner. Bunting, who was absent when the policy passed a 3-1 vote, told commissioners that she does not support it, and as a result, would not approve the budget.

She further revealed that she had yet to even read the policy in which she is opposed. Bunting also rebuffed the expenditure of a half-ton truck with topper for Gratiot Animal Control, before commissioners reminded her that the budgetary line item was for the following fiscal year and would still need to be approved by the board.

"I'm not for another truck, because they don't even pick up the animals," she said. In its initial draft, presented to the board at their regular meeting on Sept. 7, the overall county budget totaled \$40.2 million, with a general fund budget of \$13.2 million. However, an increase of \$300k was added to both budgets in the approved final draft for the purpose of paying down post employment benefits for county employees.

Set to go in effect on Oct. 1 and run through Sept. 30, 2022, the fiscal year budget will carry with it a general fund surplus of roughly \$1.1 million as result of additional wind [farm](#) tax revenue.

Gratiot Finance Administrator Chris Oosterhoff told commissioners that there will be a nearly \$2 million increase to the overall budget from the current fiscal year, but 99 percent of the adjustment is directly attributed to projects that will be funded with some of the \$7.9 million the county received in COVID relief funds from the federal government.

# Gratiot County Herald

Thursday, August 5, 2021

Oosterhoff also noted that the general fund budget is only anticipated to rise by \$100,000, which is a “wonderful achievement” with union raises for county employees now on the books.

General fund revenues are projected to reach \$14.6 million, with an estimated \$9.3 million generated from local taxes. Expenditures are expected to total \$13.5 million, with 56 percent of the spending earmarked for salaries, wages and benefits.

The county anticipates spending \$505k from the general fund on various projects, including \$283k for building and grounds renovations at the courthouse and \$115k for technological upgrades.

Approving of the budget were commissioners John Lemmermann, Sam Smith, George Bailey and Chuck Murphy.

In other county board news, commissioners last week approved the allocation of up to \$500k from their American Rescue Plan funds for the purpose of updating the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system, and the replacing of windows, at the Mid-Michigan District [Health](#) Department building in Ithaca.

Built in 1998, the HVAC system at the health department building has “reached or exceeded its’ service life,” according to a pre-proposal submitted to commissioners by the Spicer Group, an engineering, land surveying, community planning and architectural firm based in Saginaw.

In their proposal, Spicer estimated the cost to update the system would be upwards of \$200k. A cost estimate for windows was not completed by firm, as the county may be able to handle that service in-house.

The request to utilize the federal relief funds for the MMDHD building was brought to commissioners by county administrator Tracey Cordes, who said the half-million dollar ask “was shooting high,” as to not having to come back to the board for further approval once a price for windows was in place.

“The hope is that (the cost) will be significantly below \$500k,” she said.

The allocation was approved by Bailey, Lemmermann and Smith. Bunting and Murphy dissented.

# Daily News

Saturday, October 9, 2021

## **PUBLIC FORUM: Politics harming public health**

By [The Daily News Staff](#) | on October 09, 2021

Dear Editor,

The budget bill passed earlier this month by the Michigan Legislature contains language that was purposely inserted to further restrict the powers of local public health departments to control the spread of communicable diseases.

The governor yesterday signed the budget with this boilerplate language in it but indicated in her signing statement that portions of the bill are unenforceable and unconstitutional.

However, some county commissions and local boards of health believe this action does not provide sufficient protection from legal challenges.

Several local health officers around the state have governing boards that are deeply divided over the steps taken to protect children in our K-12 schools. Some of them will rescind their orders today, not because they want to, but because they cannot in good conscience risk losing the funding they need to keep vital public health programs functioning in the coming year. Some other local health departments have decided to call the question by keeping their orders.

As a community, local health officers are in stunned disbelief that our leaders willingly worsened an already dangerous situation. Local health officers are not saying things they don't mean. They did not issue school mask orders or quarantine orders as a political gesture.

The Delta variant is affecting kids. This wave of sickness has been growing steadily around the state for more than a month, and our deep concern is that when the warm weather ends soon and everyone heads indoors, it will skyrocket.

We hope we are wrong. But if we are not, this is a travesty brought on by playing politics with public health, and we all will suffer its consequences together.

A loud voice of opposition, on social media and in public meetings, is behaving outlandishly in some places. But its tone and volume does not mean it reflects the sentiments of the entire community. We encourage everyone to find civility in their disagreements and recognize local health officers are doing their level best to recognize the importance of personal freedoms while protecting their communities from a serious threat.

Norm Hess

Michigan Association for Local  
Public Health executive director

# Daily News

Wednesday, October 13, 2021

## CC-C receives funding for contact tracing, discusses COVID cases

By [Brandon Schreur](#) | on October 13, 2021



Carson City-Crystal Area Schools Board of Education President Gregg McAlvey discusses the impacts COVID-19 is having on the district and the various protocols in place during Monday's meeting. — DN Photo | Brandon Schreur

CARSON CITY — Facing a bit of an odd school year in light of all the COVID-19 requirements and recommendations provided to districts by local health departments, Carson City-Crystal Area Schools officials are urging parents to keep their kids home from school when they're sick.

At the very least, CC-C staff members are hoping more parents will start keeping their students home until their COVID test comes back negative.

"If parents would keep sick kids home and keep kids home that are awaiting testing results to come back, the number (of close contact letters being sent out) would be significantly reduced," CC-C High School Secretary Lainie Niemi said near the adjournment of Monday's Board of Education meeting. "It's not high to begin with, but those are the two things I run across on the daily. (The student) has taken the test and is still coming to school waiting for the results because (they assume) it's just allergies or sinuses. If they stayed home, I wouldn't have to send out all those letters.

"It's happened six times (this school year)," Niemi added. "Six times. It's very frustrating."

The conversation initially started when CC-C Superintendent John Sattler told board members the district recently came into some additional funding to help with contract tracing expenses.

According to Sattler, the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) gave the Montcalm Area Intermediate School District (MAISD) funds to divide up among local school districts.

“When we met with the health department, they told us in the summer that they were going to have more resources for us and have extra people to help with contact tracing,” Sattler said. “That really didn’t happen. What they did do is they gave the ISD some money. Each district got their share. Through MAISD, CC-C Area Schools received \$20,000.”

Sattler said the district will primarily use those funds to help pay a portion of Niemi’s salary, as she’s the one sending out close contact letters to parents and acting as the school district’s COVID liaison.

“Really, we just have to keep track of the hours she spends contract tracing on the phone, dealing with any kind of health department issue when it comes to COVID,” Sattler said. “That really helps us offset that. Last year, she (Niemi) put in a ton of overtime. The majority of that overtime was related to contract tracing, which involved coming in on weekends and late at night.”

In August, the CC-C school board unanimously approved a number of required COVID-related protocols from the MMDHD. Under those requirements, parents are supposed to keep their child home if they’re sick or have tested positive for COVID; however, if a child comes in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID, parents have the option as to whether or not they want to quarantine them or send them to school.

Board Vice President Chris Ryan asked how many students were still coming to school after receiving notification about a close contact. Sattler said that number is about 75% (a bit lower in the elementary school level).

“I just think parents with younger children are a little more nervous, or the kids have some coughing, sneezing and runny noses and they’re a little more careful to keep the kids home,” Sattler said. “The percentages, overall, is over 70 percent of people who receive that (close contact) letter. You can take that as a good thing. I guess some people could probably take it as a bad thing.”

Ryan asked how many of those close contact cases were actually going to get tested for COVID, but Sattler didn’t know.

“So many kids missed out on weeks and weeks of school (last year because of quarantines) without ever getting sick,” Sattler noted. “Two percent or less than 2 percent of kids (who had close contact to a confirmed COVID case) actually got COVID. This year, I’d say it’s a little higher percentage of kids that have been in close contact and tested positive. I don’t know if it’s due to the Delta strain or other factors, but I think it’s a little higher.”

“Some of that might also be people getting tested,” Board President Gregg McAlvey pointed out. “The figure of 2 percent of all people in close contact testing positive — that percentage isn’t based on 100 percent of those people ever getting tested, either. Some of it you don’t know.”

Sattler did note that the district’s attendance figures are hovering right around the 88% range and holding steady.

“Anything lower than 75 is when you have to consider shutting down school, so 88 is good,” he said.

According to CC-C’s COVID Dashboard, there have been 12 cases of COVID in the high school since Aug. 23, along with 12 in upper elementary/middle school, eight in the lower elementary and six that are non-building specific.

“I know that, when I was a kid and I was sick, I was still kicked out the door,” Sattler said. “That’s kind of the way (a lot of people) were raised and, sometimes, it’s hard to change those things. I know I have allergies. I’ve been tested multiple times over the past couple of weeks because my allergy symptoms mirror some of those COVID symptoms. It can be difficult, but we’re asking parents, if you test your kid, keep them home until you get the results.

“Kids are getting excited about normal things, again. Going to college or Mr. Porter’s (upcoming field trip to Lansing),” he added. “We haven’t had a field trip since, I don’t know, maybe the last two years? There were no field trips last year. There were no assemblies last year because of (COVID). We’d like to do some of those normal things — and kids are excited about it — if we can, and we’re headed that way.”

# Daily News

Wednesday, October 13, 2021

## Striking a change in tone, members of public thank Greenville school board for listening to concerns

By [Cory Smith](#) | on October 13, 2021



Eureka Township resident Don Thompson thanks the Greenville Public Schools Board of Education for its efforts throughout the coronavirus pandemic during the Board's regular monthly meeting Monday held in the Performing Arts Center at Greenville High School. — DN Photo | Cory Smith

GREENVILLE — A month removed from a long, sometimes contentious public comment period in which nearly 30 residents addressed their local school board with concerns over potential COVID-19 mandates, a different tone was struck Monday evening.

Meeting in the Greenville Public Schools Performing Arts Center at Greenville High School to accommodate a larger audience, the Board of Education again welcomed public comment toward the start of its meeting. However, following last month's public comment in which multiple residents brought forth concerns ranging from mask mandates, efforts to encourage COVID-19 vaccines and other alleged restrictions or policies, Board President Norice Rasmussen opened Monday's session with a prepared statement of her own.

In response to some comments that lead to shouting and in one case cursing, along with other emails and in-person communication between some residents and school staff that Rasmussen claimed were threatening in nature, she said such negative discourse cannot continue.

“Currently, Greenville Public Schools does not have a mask mandate in place for our students or staff, nor has there been a mask mandate since school started this year,” Rasmussen said. “We have been encouraging people to wear masks and vaccinate, continuing the fight against COVID, as requested in partnership with the Mid-Michigan District Health Department. We also engage in cleaning and prevention strategies to slow the spread of infectious diseases.

“Again, let me stress — we do not have a mask mandate in place nor do we have any plans to implement one in the future unless mandated by the Health Department,” she continued. “We also do not teach Critical Race Theory.”

Rasmussen pleaded with those in the audience that the community be more civil as the school district continues to navigate its way through the pandemic.



Greenville Public Schools Board of Education President Norice Rasmussen, left, speaks during Monday’s regular monthly meeting of the board held in the GPS Performing Arts Center at Greenville High School as Board Treasurer Jim Anderson listens. — DN Photo | Cory Smith

“We are your neighbors, we attend your churches and shop at the same grocery stores,” she said. “We have or have had children in the same public education system and share the same concerns as the communities we represent. Doing what is best for each child in the school district is at the heart of every decision we make. Board members, superintendents, principals, teachers and others who work in service to our students are being subjected to online and in-person threats, abuse and harassment. This must stop. We are asking you to have these conversations in a professional and collaborative manner.”

As public comment began, that desire for more professional and collaborative dialog was exactly what the board received.

“I just want to say, thank you for listening,” said Eureka Township resident Don Thompson. “I know the last couple of meetings have been a little rough, and I’m sorry for that. I thank you for your patience. I know people are compassionate about things and sometimes they can get a little emotional, and I hope that we will be respectful and kind tonight.”

Thompson identified himself as a member of the “Stand Up Montcalm” organization, a local chapter of the “Stand Up Michigan” statewide grassroots initiative which aims to “reclaim and defend the rights and liberties of Michiganders.”



Montcalm Township resident Jennifer Gunderson brings forth a concern regarding the effects a nationwide food shortage at public schools may have during Monday evening's meeting of the Greenville Public Schools Board of Education held in the Performing Arts Center at Greenville High. — DN Photo | Cory Smith

"We do want to see more parents involved (in the school district)," he said on behalf of the group. "We think the more parents get involved in the schools and the community, the more kids get engaged. We think that just better the education of kids today. I'd like to say that Stand Up Montcalm is an organization that loves the Lord, we love our country, we love our county, we love our communities, we love our families and we are here to help."

Of the 47 people in attendance at the meeting (a decrease from the more than 130 who attended last month), five people spoke to the board — all offering messages of support and thanks.

"You guys have done a remarkable job," said Eureka Township resident Arturo Puckerin. "I can't even speak about the levels of anxiety that I've heard throughout this community, throughout most of West Michigan, as we approached those months before school started. Will there be mask mandates? Will there be this, will there be that? And you guys have treaded the line. This has been our first full semester of being back in school since the pandemic started, and if anything, we are a pilot (program) for public safety. At surrounding districts, we've had everything from mask mandates to board recall efforts, so my hat is off to you."

Additional concerns were also brought forward, ranging from a focus on a current food shortage affecting school districts throughout the state to the impact a potential closure of in-person learning would have on the mental health of students. Superintendent Linda Van Houten said she would be reaching out to each individual regarding their concerns.

Montcalm Township resident Richelle Lentz was simply glad to see events previously canceled by the pandemic, such as school dances and band and orchestra concerts, returning without issue.

"As much as you guys (board) get beat up, you are doing a good job," she said. "We are seeing some of those things come back, and we appreciate that, making an effort to get our kids back to some sense of normalcy."



Eureka Township resident Arturo Puckerin thanks the Greenville Public Schools Board of Education for its efforts throughout the coronavirus pandemic during the board's regular monthly meeting Monday held in the GPS Performing Arts Center at Greenville High School. — DN Photo | Cory Smith

While GPS has not implemented any mandates at this time, the school district has reported a significant number of COVID cases since the school year started on Aug. 23.

When the board met a month ago, 57 positive cases of COVID had been reported; however, in the 28 days that have passed since that meeting, the district has reported an additional 141 cases — an average of five a day — for a total of 198 cases to date among students and staff.

Greenville High School is listed by the state as the site of an ongoing official school-related outbreak (reported Sept. 20), involving nine cases between both students and staff.

In total, Montcalm County has five school-related outbreaks reported by the state, which in addition to the high school include Carson City-Crystal Middle School (four students), Carson City-Crystal High School (five students and staff), Montabella High School (five students) and Great Lakes Adventist Academy (16 students and staff).

Per the state's online COVID dashboard, Montcalm County has a COVID vaccination rate of 47.7% — the eighth-lowest vaccination rate among Michigan's 83 counties.

The one-week positivity rate of COVID is 19.9% from Oct. 4-10 — up from the rate of 12.74% a month ago.

In that one-week time span, 358 positive tests were reported in the county with no reported deaths.

Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, Montcalm County has reported 7,991 confirmed and probable COVID positive cases and 122 confirmed and probable deaths.



# Daily News

Tuesday, October 19, 2021

## Health dept. offers guidelines for keeping sick kids home

Submitted by the Mid-Michigan  
District Health Department

With the school year well underway, the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) wants to remind parents to keep their children home from school or childcare when they are sick.

This is particularly important this year because COVID-19 rates in our area continue to be high, especially in school-aged children. We are also seeing higher than expected respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) activity. RSV is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Most people recover in a week or two, but RSV can be serious, especially for infants and older adults. October also marks the beginning of the influenza season, though the peak of the season is usually between December and February.

“One of the most effective ways to keep illness out of school is for those who are ill to stay home,” said Dr. Jennifer Morse, medical director for the MMDHD. “In general, children should not go to school or childcare if they have a fever, diarrhea, vomiting, belly pain, or unusual rashes or sores. During the COVID-19 pandemic, RSV season, and influenza season, other concerning symptoms include new or worsening cough, wheezing, difficulty breathing, sore throat, body aches, extreme fatigue, and new stuffy or runny nose.”

If your child is experiencing any of the symptoms listed above, he or she should be evaluated by a healthcare provider and not return to school until told it is safe to do so. If your child requires testing for CO-

VID-19 or another illness he or she should not return to school while waiting for the test results. Also be sure to tell your child’s school or childcare provider if your child is diagnosed with an illness, as it is important for the safety and wellbeing of other students and staff members.

If your child has been exposed to a contagious illness, like COVID-19 or whooping cough, he or she may need to quarantine. Quarantine has been used for centuries to prevent the spread of infection by those who may be infected and contagious but not yet showing symptoms. There are now modified quarantine options approved by the health department that provide more opportunity for students to stay in school.

The MMDHD highly recommends that students wear masks while at school. Many schools have made mask use “optional” in their buildings and at school activities; however, mask use is still recommended for your child’s and family’s safety.

Parents can help reduce the spread of germs by teaching their children how to properly wash their hands and to wash their hands frequently, especially before eating, and after using the bathroom and blowing their nose. Parents can also help keep germs at bay by teaching their children how to properly cover coughs and sneezes.

If your child is eligible, consider getting them vaccinated for COVID-19 and for influenza now and every fall. Eating a healthy diet, getting enough sleep, and staying active are also very important ways to protect against illness.