

The Herald-Sun

High school students kick butts

Mar. 31, 2014 @ 10:57 AM

From staff reports



Thousands of cigarette butts were collected by students from the three Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools high schools as part of National Kick Butts Day.



Angela Gasdaska of Chapel Hill High School cleans up cigarette butts in Chapel Hill and Carrboro as part of Kick Butts Day.



East Chapel Hill High's (from left) Shanaya Jeudy, Najah Walker, Jenny Suwanmanee and Joanna Salazar helped clean up cigarette butts along Franklin Street in Chapel Hill and Main Street in Carrboro as part of national Kick Butts Day.

CHAPEL HILL —

Students from Carrboro High, Chapel Hill High and East Chapel Hill High got together on a Saturday to kick butts.

The students took part in Kick Butts Day and other activities at their schools to encourage their peers to not use tobacco products. All of the students are members of their school's Tobacco Reality Unfiltered clubs.

The events were part a series of collaborative events between the Orange County Health Department

and the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools that advocated against tobacco use.

The official Kick Butts Day was March 19 but the students cleaned up butts March 15. They cleaned up thousands and were part of a smoking response team outreach event along Franklin Street in Chapel Hill into Main Street in Carrboro.

Kick Butts Day is observed nationally as a day of activism that empowers young people to “stand out, speak up, and seize control against the tobacco industry.”

On Kick Butts Day each high school held events during their lunch periods.

At Carrboro High, students could spin the Smart Tobacco Wheel with smoke-free pledges. The school also had body outlines with #33 on them to represent the number of Americans who die from cardiovascular disease.

East Chapel Hill High had a social media photo booth with signs that were made by students that said why they chose not to smoke.

Chapel Hill High also sponsored a Kick Butts Day event.

Four News Flu Deaths Reported Last Week, Death Toll Climbs 96

By [Rachel Nash](#)

Posted April 3, 2014 at 4:20 pm



Photo: Tim Boyle, Getty Images.

Four new flu deaths were reported last week in North Carolina, bringing the total number of influenza-related deaths to 96 this flu season, [according to data](#) released Thursday by the state Department of Health and Human Services.

In comparison, 59 people in total died of the flu during the 2012-2013 season.

Pam McCall, Director of Personal Health Services for the Orange County Health Department, said that though flu season is almost over, it is still important to be on alert.

“Last year, we had deaths as late as May 11, so it could continue to happen on into late April or early May. We have been getting some reports locally of clusters of influenza-like illness in congregate settings,” McCall said.

Typical seasonal flus tend to impact very young children with underdeveloped immune systems or the elderly who have weakened immune systems.

But for the 2013-2014 flu season, 33 of the total number of deaths have occurred among adults aged 25 to 49, followed by people aged 50 to 64, with 32 deaths.

“What is dramatic, too, are the ages of the people affected. Normally we expect the deaths to occur in elderly people, sixty-five and older, but that has been different this year, and it has younger people,” McCall said. “That is something that has not been expected and that really is a dramatic difference from what has happened in the recent past.”

Twenty-five people aged 65 or older have died from the flu.

The virus has also has killed three children under the age of four, including one infant, and two children between ages 5 and 17.

The [H1N1 strain of flu](#), also known as the Swine Flu, has caused a [majority of deaths](#) in the state. The weekly total peaked in late January when 12 deaths were reported by the state health agency.

The best way to prevent contracting the flu is aggressive hand washing and getting the flu vaccine.

The Center for Disease Control recommends that people six months and older get vaccinated for the flu.

Six confirmed rabies cases already in Orange County

By [Anna Long](#) | April 6, 2014

Orange County might be seeing an increase in rabies cases this year, highlighting the importance of preventative measures like vaccinations.

There have already been six confirmed cases this year, compared to a total of 13 for 2013, said Bob Marotto, director of Orange County Animal Services. He said the increase is likely part of the normal ebb and flow of rabies in the area.

“The literature, if you will, says that there’s a cycle of rabies in a reservoir species like raccoons throughout the mid-Atlantic,” he said.

“This year, we may well be seeing the upside of the cycle given that we have half as many confirmed cases already this year to last year and the year before.”

But even though this year may see more rabies cases, Marotto said the important message remains the same: Because everyone has encounters with wildlife, everyone needs to take precautions to prevent the disease.

If an animal is up-to-date on its rabies vaccination and is bitten by a potentially infected animal, all it needs is a booster shot within five days of the bite, Marotto said.

But if the animal is not vaccinated, it is required by law to be quarantined for six months or euthanized. There are currently three cats under quarantine in the county.

“We want to protect the animals and in protecting the animals, we protect the people,” Marotto said.

“The best way to do that is through preventative measures. Really, the health of animals and the health of people is very closely related — especially if we’re doing the right things.”

Sue Rankin, communicable disease coordinator for the Orange County Health Department, said people can be exposed to rabies by bites from infected animals.

The rabies virus can be transmitted through the saliva of an infected dog or cat for five days before it shows signs of the disease, which attacks the nervous system of mammals, including humans.

It is also possible to transmit the disease via neurologic tissue. But people exposed to rabies can prevent contracting the disease by receiving a series of four shots during a two week period.

There is an incubation period of three to eight weeks before humans show symptoms of the disease — including weakness, fever and headache before progressing to hallucinations, confusion and anxiety — after which it is incurable and deadly, Rankin said.

"Once you develop symptoms, it's too late," Rankin said. "If you think you've been exposed, you need to contact a medical provider right away."

According to the Orange County Health Department, raccoons, foxes, skunks and bats are the most common carriers of the disease in North Carolina. All six of the county's cases this year have been in raccoons.

Rabid animals might appear to be agitated, bite or snap at objects, drool or seem disoriented . Should your pet come in contact with a potentially rabid animal, avoid touching damp areas on its coat, face or body. Confine it to a safe place away from other animals and people and call animal control.

Opioid Drug Use In Orange County And The Overdose Antidote

By [Rachel Nash](#)

Posted April 8, 2014 at 7:36 pm



Photo by Mels Evans/AP

There has been a surge in the use of opioid drug— heroin and prescription painkillers— in the United States, and this rise in popularity has some calling it an “epidemic.” Here in Orange County, public health officials say there is a growing problem with opioid abuse and subsequent overdoses.

The increase in heroin use across the country is interconnected with an expanding opioid market, driven by the high demand for prescription painkillers, such as Oxycontin and hydrocodone. As a general class of drugs, opioids have a high potential for abuse.

“We have seen here in Orange County an increase in unintentional poisoning overdose deaths. That has been almost entirely due to prescription opioid overdose, not to heroin overdose,” said Meredith Stewart, the Board of Health Strategic Planning Director for the Orange County Health Department.

In 2009-2012, Stewart said the Health Department recorded an average of 10 opioid overdose deaths per year in Orange County. That’s compared to decade ago when there were about six deaths per year.

Across North Carolina, there has been a more than 300 percent increase in opioid overdose deaths since 1999, according to the state Center for Health Statistics.

“We consider that each one of these deaths is preventable, and that’s why we are taking a community approach to this,” Stewart said.

The Overdose Antidote

Part of that approach is the use of the medication, [naloxone](#), which can quickly reverse an overdose caused by opioid medications and even heroin.

This was possible due to a state law passed in 2013 that gave doctors the ability to prescribe naloxone to a person at risk of opioid overdose, as well as that person's friends and family members. The "good Samaritan" law also grants people immunity from criminal prosecution for possessing small amounts of heroin if they are seeking assistance for a drug-related overdose.

The person who holds the prescription can then administer it to someone experiencing an opioid overdose.

In December of last year, Orange County became the first health department [in the state](#) to offer naloxone.

"Naloxone is just one piece of a larger effort to address substance abuse and misuse, particularly with prescription and other opioids," she said.

Other Measures

Stewart said the Orange County Health Department is also working to develop better systems to track prescriptions issued for painkillers.

Additionally, in a partnership with Healthy Carolinians of Orange County (HCOC), the Health Department worked with area law enforcement to set up drug drop boxes, located at police department headquarters, where people can drop off their unused or unwanted medications.

tarheel

Orange County Health Department fights drug misuse

By Jasmin Singh | Published 04/16/14 4:22pm

Daily Tarheel

Orange County officials are on the look-out for a threat that could be sitting in the average home — prescription pain medications.

There were 1,014 accidental drug overdoses in North Carolina in 2012, according to the North Carolina Injury Violence and Prevention Branch.

Of those deaths, 565 were from prescription opioid painkillers.

In Orange County, prescription pain medication, specifically opioids, cause about 10 unintentional poisoning deaths every year.

The increased access and use of prescription pain medication sparked this trend, said Dr. Lisa Waddell , chief program officer for community health and prevention for the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials.

“At one time, people were using illegal drugs a lot, like heroin, and then those drugs became more expensive, so they looked for similar drugs,” Waddell said. “People found another legal form in prescription medication.”

The Orange County Health Department has made drug overdose prevention its top priority this year, said Meredith Stewart , senior public health educator for the department.

“Last year, we did door-to-door surveys to see what the community’s priorities were, and we saw that substance abuse was seen as a top issue,” she said.

The biggest risk comes when people think an overdose can’t happen to them.

“We see elderly patients who are overdosing by accident, we see young people overdosing who are just experimenting with drugs and take too many, we see middle aged people who use it for pain,” said Tessie Castillo , spokeswoman for the North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition, which provides overdose prevention training. “It’s rich people, it’s poor people, it’s everybody.”

Naloxone, also a prescription medication, can be used to help a person who overdoses on pain medication.

“Naloxone blocks the effects of the opiate in the brain, and it reverses the overdose,” Castillo said. The medication is intended to prevent imminent death.

“It’s like when you get a snake bite, so you go to the hospital and get the antidote,” Waddell said. “Naloxone is the antidote.”

Though naloxone has always been available by prescription, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the 911 Good Samaritan law last year, which allows community groups, like the Harm Reduction Coalition, to distribute it.

“When someone overdoses on opioids, they become unresponsive so they can’t give naloxone to themselves,” Stewart said. “That’s why it’s so important for family and friends to be able to have access to naloxone.”

Since August, the Harm Reduction Coalition distributed 1,409 kits containing naloxone and received reports of 53 successful overdose reversals. No unsuccessful reversals were reported.

Stewart said it’s also important to prevent prescription medications from getting into unsafe hands. Healthy Carolinians of Orange County, a network of agencies and citizens partnering to promote health and wellness in Orange County, created drug drop boxes at various municipal police stations where people can dispose of used or unused medications.

“This way they are disposed properly and not sitting around for someone else to use,” Stewart said. Waddell said communities must adopt new policies and continue educating residents.

“The policy changes could be around what type of providers can provide this sort of treatment measure or around management changes.”

Stewart said North Carolina uses the Controlled Substances Reporting System, which was created to improve the state’s ability to monitor people using and possibly misusing prescription medication. “When pharmacists dispense a prescription, it gets logged into that system so physicians and other authorized providers can look in the system and see how many prescriptions a person has gotten,” Stewart said. “We can look at a specific physician and their prescribing practicing.”

She said residents need to realize that drug overdose isn’t a private problem.

“Substance abuse doesn’t affect just the person, it affects the community,” Stewart said. “It’s not an individual problem, it’s the community’s problem.”

city@dailytarheel.com