

WCHL – Commentary for August 2014

I love living in Orange County. The people here are amazing. So smart and thoughtful, kind and considerate. They consistently make decisions based on what's best for the community, or the environment or the disenfranchised.

Unless you're talking about immunizations. Then, I see some of the most thoughtful, intelligent parents make an unfathomably bad decision not to vaccinate their children.

Here's the problem with that. There are some children who legitimately cannot be vaccinated against potentially deadly diseases like measles and pertussis. Normally this isn't a problem because when everybody else in the community is vaccinated, it creates a kind of herd immunity protecting those few who can't be vaccinated. But when people capriciously choose not to vaccinate their child, they destroy this community protection, ultimately putting their children and *others* at risk.

Last year we had a serious measles outbreak in North Carolina. In Orange County dozens of kids were quarantined to their homes for 21 days. No school, no sports, no church, no interactions with the public. These kids' parents had declared a religious opposition to immunizations. I respect religious differences and recognize there are some religions that teach not to immunize. But what Health Departments found during the investigation was that many of these kids had all their vaccinations except the one for Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR). Not surprisingly, after talking with health department nurses and getting the correct information, many of these parents chose to vaccinate their children after this exposure.

The data linking the MMR vaccine to autism was forged, publically disproven time and time again. Just like we now know the earth is round, we know immunizations are safe. We are a community of thoughtful, educated, caring people. Let's not let internet hype and conspiracy theories divert us from doing what we know is right, both for our own children and the community.

WCHL – Commentary for July 2014

Chikungunya. It's a funny word that is scaring a lot of people. The Chikungunya Virus has been around in the Caribbean and other tropical locations for decades, but just arrived in the United States last week. It is spread by two types of mosquitos that here in the US can mainly be found in the southeast. In North Carolina, public health professionals have been watching its encroachment and planning for its inevitable arrival for years.

New viruses happen all the time and it is often a serious threat to our health. But I must admit I chuckle a bit at the reactions I see from people. Some like to go into what I call chicken-little mode running around telling anybody who will listen that the absolute worst case scenario will absolutely happen and we'll all be helpless to stop it. Others like to go into conspiracy mode claiming the virus was inflicted upon us by an evil-doer. Most of the folks I've talked to, though, are only paying attention to Chikungunya, quite honestly because it has a funny name.

So, yes. Chikungunya is serious. The best defense against it is to limit your exposure to mosquito bites, by emptying standing water sources and wearing long sleeves and pants for example. But don't barricade yourself indoors waiting for 40,000 of your friends and neighbors to fall victim to this dreaded disease. We've had two infections occur in the United States so far, none in our state. I hope you won't listen to either the chicken littles or the conspiracists. Besides, the best way to keep your immune system in tip top shape is to get regular physical activity. Just don't forget your bug spray.

'Chikungunya' Mosquito Virus Safety

By [Wilson Borntrager](#)



Posted July 23, 2014 at 3:03 pm

The most likely type of mosquito in North Carolina to carry 'chikungunya,' the Asian Tiger Mosquito

As the first domestically-acquired cases of the "chikungunya" virus were confirmed in Florida less than a week ago, the Orange County Health Department requesting that residents take precautions to stay safe against mosquito-borne illnesses.

Orange County Health Director, Colleen Bridger, told WCHL that areas with standing water are ideal locations for

mosquitoes to breed.

"The way you're going to get this virus is through a mosquito bite if the mosquito is infected," says Bridger. "The best way to prevent getting this is to prevent getting mosquito bites, and the best way to do that is to eliminate any breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Birdbaths, watering cans, all of those things should be dumped out every couple of days, because if there are any larvae growing in those pools of water, they will die when the pools of water go away."

Bridger warns about when mosquitoes are typically active and what can be done to prevent bites from happening during those times.

"Dawn and dusk are the times when mosquitoes are most active," says Bridger. "The best thing to do is to wear long sleeves and long pants, because they can't bite you through the material. The other thing you can do is look for bug spray. There is effective bug spray that has deet, and then there is also effective bug spray that doesn't have deet. So, if you don't want to use deet, there are options available to you out there."

Bridger says that though there is no treatment for the virus, it is not lethal and must simply run its course. Those who are suffering from the illness are recommended to go see a physician regardless.

"It's a virus, so there isn't a treatment that anybody can give them," says Bridger. "It's going to have to run its course, and for the vast majority of folks, while it's not pleasant, it does run its course, and people get better. But, if you're just feeling absolutely horrible, you should always go to your doctor, and there are things that he or she can give you to just help you feel better while your body is fighting off the virus."

Following [the first case of chikungunya being discovered in North Carolina](#), Bridger affirms that the virus has not been domesticated within North Carolina, and all known cases in the state have come from people that have travelled from outside the country in specific tropical locales.

“All of the cases in North Carolina have been people largely who’ve travelled to the Caribbean or some other tropical location,” she says.

For more about other mosquito-borne illnesses and how to prevent them, [click here](#).

parasite. You are more likely to contract the illness by sending your child to a day care facility, than you are by talking near a creek.

Beavers are destructive to vegetation. The beaver does not clean cut a forest. They selectively take down trees, eat the cambium, and gnaw, and then use the wood to break down in small pieces to create lodges and dams. They can thin trees near the water's edge, but it is a selective process. Bolin Creek Beavers have a special license for invasive Privet, which could only be seen as beneficial to the ecology of the riparian zone.

Beavers cause flooding. They do! When the beaver blocks a creek, the water behind the dam forms a deep pool which spreads out and lowers the banks of the creek. This is a great thing. The slowing of the flow allows time for the water to settle and become trapped in the wetland created by the beaver. This wetland attracts more wildlife, creating greater diversity of species. The slowing of the creek prevents erosion of creek banks, and prevents the disappearance of water from a creek in times of drought. Many scientists are now encouraging the introduction of beavers to riparian creeks where sea-level droughts have created dry lands where creeks once existed. Additionally, beavers create easy land access for further shallow areas for fish breeding.

When a paved road becomes flooded, locating a beaver dam closely to a waterway uses the problem. Beavers use their tails to dig into place on their dams. No, they do not use their tails as trowels. The beaver balances on land with the flat of the tail especially when standing more upright in higher vegetation. The tail acts as a rudder in the water, and sometimes the beaver will sit on its folded tail as if it was a conveyor belt. The tail is also used down against the dam to warn other beavers.

at medieval Lenten dinners because the beaver, spending most of its time in water, was considered almost a fish. True! What can I say? The middle Ages were never known for high-minded scientific rigor, and remembering the Friday night fish stick dinners that I endured as a child, I think they might have been on to something.

Beavers can live about 24 years, so there is no way to know what became of our old friends on Bolin Creek. They may have moved to another location on the creek, or they may have passed, but the new residents are young and healthy, and I am hoping to spend many years photographing them. They pay no heed to the sound of runners or cyclists along the main trail, as the buffer of vegetation along the path has granted our wildlife a private zone of safety. Any summer evening, this hard-working pair can be seen at creek side. The sound of crunching wood will lead you to the newest members of Bolin Creek's resident engineering crew.

Mary Sonis is a naturalist, photographer and writer in Carrboro. You can reach her at msonis@nc.rr.com

a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday. It is closed on Sunday and Wednesday.

Spiritual Presence is the only store of its kind serving Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Durham and the surrounding area. "In His Name" in Raleigh is the closest similar store.

Habitat wine tasting

A Wine Tasting to benefit Chatham Habitat for Humanity is set at 7 p.m. July

Chicken Salad" and homemade sourdough bread.

Touted by the cooks as "bigger and better than ever," the event will feature a complete dinner served from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the church. Tickets are \$10 per person with kids under 6 eating for only \$5.

This year's menu also includes chicken and dumplings, a variety of fruit and vegetable salads and casse-

Interested persons are asked to RSVP to 919-942-2535 for a seat on the bus and/or to donate \$50 so someone else can ride. Make checks to the Community Church and send to 106 Purefoy Road, Chapel Hill 27514-4853. Checks must be received by July 30.

Contact Flo Johnston at flo.johnston314@gmail.com or call 910-361-4135.

Briefly

County recognized for 'Smoke-Free Places'

The Orange County Health Department and Board of Health have been named a 2014 Achievement Award Winner by the National Association of Counties (NACo) for the county's Smoke-Free Public Places policy.

The NACo Achievement Awards program recognizes counties from across the United States for innovations that modernize county government and increase services to residents.

"We are thrilled with this award. It is wonderful that Orange County is being rec-

ognized as a national leader in the quest for healthier communities," said County Manager Bonnie Hammsley.

Orange County's smoke-free public places rule prevents smoking on sidewalks, at bus stops, and in other public places – both indoor and outdoor. The goals of the rule are to decrease exposure to secondhand smoke and provide an environment that is supportive of smokers who want to quit.

County needs adult-home panel members

Orange County has openings on its Adult Care Home

Community Advisory Committee.

The committee works to maintain the intent of the Adult Care Home Residents' Bill of Rights for those residing in licensed adult care homes. This board has an initial one-year training term with subsequent eligibility for three additional two-year terms. There are currently openings for an Eno Township resident representative and an At-Large representative. Applicants must reside in Orange County.

If interested in serving, apply at www.orangecountync.gov/boards.

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OC Health Department Wins Award for Smoking Ban

By [Princess Streeter](#)

Posted July 21, 2014 at 12:55 pm



Orange County's smoking ban has received national recognition, as the National Association of Counties (NACo) has awarded the Health Department and Board of Health with a 2014 Achievement Award.

"We are thrilled with this award. It is wonderful that Orange County is being recognized as a national leader in the quest for healthier communities," Orange County Manager Bonnie Hammersley said in a press release Monday.

NACo awards counties from across the United States for increasing the well-being of its residents while modernizing county government. Orange's smoke-free public policy beat a host of other county policy applications to win its first Achievement Award.

The smoking ban, put in place on July 1, 2013, prohibits smoking in all outdoor locations owned by Orange County and its towns, including sidewalks, bus stops and parks, in addition to indoor areas that are open to the general public.

The goals of the ban are to educate residents about the dangers of cigarette smoking and eliminate secondhand smoke, one of the leading causes of preventable disease in the state.

To learn more about Orange County's smoking ban, click [here](#) or visit the [Health Department website](#).

“Washing With Soap And Water Is Best”

By [Ran Northam](#)

Posted July 10, 2014 at 1:49 pm



Photo courtesy Getty Images

If you're given a choice between buying traditional soap or hand sanitizer, Orange County Health Department Community Health Services Supervisor Judy Butler says there's only one way to go.

“Washing with soap and water is best, especially if your hands are visibly dirty,” Butler says. “Let's say you've been out changing the oil in your car or working in the garden, hand sanitizers are not as effective when you clean your hands when they are visibly soiled.”

Hand sanitizers reduce the number of microbes on your hand, whereas washing with soap and water actually carries them away.

And, Butler says it's especially important when dealing with viruses.

“Hand sanitizers are not effective against Norovirus,” Butler says. “So that would be if you were dealing with the situation where you were preparing food or potentially dealing with someone who's been ill with gastrointestinal symptoms.”

Butler says the Orange County Health Department is very proud of the work the nurses do in the county's school systems. She says they go to kindergarten classes to teach best practices and check on the children to make sure they're following them.

Breaking it down further between traditional soap or the foaming variety, Butler says she wasn't able to find any research that favors one over the other.

“The information that I found was pretty consistent that it’s the way you wash your hands more so than the actual soap product that you use that is so important,” Butler says.

She says that doesn’t mean that some soaps aren’t better than others, but that a lot of the data points to best practices.

And remember, to get a good clean, the rule of thumb is to scrub for 20 seconds after you’ve lathered. Humming happy birthday twice is a good measuring tool.

Sportsplex puts its convections to the test

By From Staff Reports

July 5, 2014



Sportsplex employee Dylan Bunnell bakes French fries in the facility's new convection oven. COURTESY OF OC SPORTSPLEX



HILLSBOROUGH — It's not like chicken tenders are being tossed out the door, but the savory snack pieces will have to change their ways if they're to stay on the menu at the Orange County Sportsplex.

So will French (un)fries. And pizzas will change, too.

Following the growing trend of fitness facilities doing away with unhealthy cooking techniques for healthier alternatives, the Sportsplex has replaced its fryer with a convection oven to use in its snack bar.

"It's not like people won't be able to get snacks," said Stacy Shelp of the Orange County Health Department. "People can get chicken tenders, but they will be baked instead of fried."

The switch from a fryer to a convection oven will eliminate fried foods from the fitness facility altogether, while enabling its snack bar to include healthier versions of popular items like potato fries and chicken tenders.

Convection ovens, sometimes called “fan ovens,” blow air around food as it cooks. This distributes the heat more effectively and reduces the cooking time. In most cases, this also helps crisp the food instead of making it soggy.

Sportsplex patrons had asked for healthier food options, Shelp said. “Option” was the operative word. While New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg tried to outlaw oversized snacks — and got slapped down by the courts — Orange County has tried to let people make their own choices.

“Membership and clientele have been asking for healthier food options, and we are looking forward to providing that to them,” says Mary Catherine McKee, Membership and Marketing Manager for the Orange County Sportsplex. “We are a fitness facility and we feel it is important to offer healthy food options to not only our members but to everyone that comes to our facility.”

The replacement of the fryer is the latest in a string of changes the Sportsplex has made to improve the nutritional content of the food it serves the public.

“You can still get your favorite snack food, but healthier versions of them,” Shelp said.

In June 2013, the Sportsplex snack bar was assessed by a registered dietician, using standards from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. The resulting report outlined suggestions to increase access to healthy food options. These included:

- Providing approximately 700 healthy lunches to children in their summer camp programs;
- Removing fried items from the camp lunch options;
- Replacing snack bars high in sugar, with bars that meet the Alliance for a Healthier Generation’s standards;
- Reducing the number of sugar and candy options;
- Trying pizza options which are lower in sodium and have whole grain crust;
- Adding nutrition education articles in their newsletter.

The new oven was purchased with a matching grant from the Orange County Health Department’s Innovation Grant program.

“I think this is a great example of collaboration between the County and a private vendor that will benefit the health of our children and families,” says Liska Lackey, a member of the Orange County Board of Health. “Because of this collaboration, it is a win-win for everyone.”

The News of Orange County

County Receives 15th Positive Rabies Result

Posted: Monday, July 7, 2014 7:30 am

Orange County Animal Services has received its 15th positive rabies test result of the year, according to the N.C. State Laboratory of Public Health. This most recent incident involved a bat. The county recorded 12 total positive cases last year and also in 2012.

The case originated Monday, June 23, when a Hillsborough resident noticed her two dogs paying close attention to a certain spot in the backyard. The resident investigated the area further and found the bat in the yard. She brought the dogs inside the house and called an animal control officer to have the bat removed for testing.

A communicable disease nurse from the Orange County Health Department will contact the owner to evaluate whether there is a risk of human rabies exposure. Of concern in this case is the possibility of secondary exposure from the resident handling her dogs after the incident. As is always the case, a decision about the post-exposure prophylaxis that protects people from rabies is based upon an assessment of all the factors involved in this type situation.

Fortunately, both dogs involved in this case were currently vaccinated against rabies and will only have to receive a booster shot pursuant to North Carolina's rabies laws. According to these laws, if there is a reasonable suspicion of exposure, a dog or cat with a current vaccination must receive a booster shot within 120 hours or five days. By contrast, an unvaccinated animal must either be destroyed or quarantined for a period of six months.

"Awareness and prevention are always important, but especially given the current upswing in rabies cases in Orange County," Animal Services Director Bob Marotto said. "Pet owners need to be absolutely sure that their dogs, cats and ferrets are currently vaccinated against rabies and do not have opportunities to come into contact with wildlife."

Of the few cases of rabies in humans in our country in recent years, most have been traced to bats. If there is any possibility of exposure from a bat, it is critical that the bat be safely contained without human contact and that residents immediately contact their animal control program. If an incident involving a bat—or other rabies vector—should occur outside regular hours of service, an animal control officer should be reached right away through emergency communications at 911.

The other dominant host species in the area is the raccoon. Other animals can contract rabies from a host species, a process known as the spillover effect. The other species that are most susceptible to getting rabies from raccoons are dogs and cats, groundhogs, foxes and skunks.

2014 low-cost rabies vaccination clinic

The next low-cost rabies vaccination clinic will take place Saturday, June 28, from 9 a.m. to noon at Piedmont Feed Center, 4805 N.C. 54 West in Chapel Hill. The cost for rabies vaccinations is \$10, and this

is a cash-only clinic. Clinic dates for the rest of 2014 are posted at <http://orangecountync.gov/AnimalServices/rabies.asp>.

For more information, call Orange County Animal Services at 919-942-7387.

WCHL/ Chapelboro

OC SportsPlex Offers Healthier Food Options

By [Princess Streeter](#)

Posted June 25, 2014 at 2:10 pm



The Orange County SportsPlex is cutting some of the fat out of its snack bar and replacing it with more nutritional food options.

The recreational facility took the first step by replacing the snack bar's deep fryer with a convection oven. It was purchased with a matching grant through the Orange County Health Department's Innovation Grant Program.

While starting out mainly as a recreational facility, the SportsPlex has evolved into a more fitness and health-oriented center, and has updated its cooking techniques to meet that new standard.

After a registered dietitian reviewed the food options at the snack bar in June of 2013, the SportsPlex began a series of recommended changes to improve the nutrition of both cooked food and packaged food.

Board of Health Strategic Planning Manager for the Orange County Health Department Meredith Stewart told WCHL that increasing the availability and affordability of healthy food choices is essential to the Orange County community.

"In order to have changes in things like obesity rate and physical activity, we need both individual behavior change as well as policy change to make our community healthier," Stewart said. "This is one of those changes. And we're really excited that these changes offer the opportunity for healthier choices for all groups of people when they're at the SportsPlex."

The SportsPlex is already replacing sugary breakfast bars, reducing the amount of candy sold as well as continuing to offer healthy snacks such as yogurt and fruits.

Membership and Marketing Director at the Orange County Sportsplex Mary Catherine McKee says customers seem to like the new change, and the baked options are even attracting a few new faces to the facility.

The snack bar now offers baked alternatives of its usual lunch favorites, including chicken tenders, french fries and whole grain pizzas. With no more fried foods on the menu, the SportsPlex is adapting to the new changes in its kitchen.

“We’re still playing with the cooking times,” McKee said. “I think that’s been the biggest difference because the fryer can do things very quickly where as we only have a convection oven and microwave combo right now so we’re still playing with how to create those items at a faster rate.”

Also known as the Triangle SportsPlex, the facility is equipped with three indoor pools, an ice rink and a fitness center and also hosts parties and a summer camp.

WCHL/ Chapelboro

Village Pride Award – Connie Pixley – June 18, 2014

By [Alex Curley](#)

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Posted June 18, 2014 at 11:13 am

Connie Pixley – June 18, 2014 – Village Pride Award



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