Welcome to Our First Newsletter!

By Herbert Yardley, Health Officer/Division Director

The Sussex County Division of Health has experienced many positive changes over the past year. Our top priority is to open the lines of communication between the people we serve and our Division.

Our staff has put together this publication to address current health topics and highlight what the Sussex County Division of Health is doing to protect and promote the health of our citizens. We hope that you will find this publication both interesting and informative.

We will continue to update you on our programs and activities. If there is a topic of interest you would like us to cover, we strongly encourage you to let us know by contacting us at 973-579-0370 or emailing us at health@sussex.nj.us.

Special thanks to Stephen Gruchacz, Administrator of the Sussex County Department of Health & Human Services for making this newsletter possible and for his continued support in our endeavors to provide our citizens with dependable and quality services.

Smoke Free Air-Act

Effective April 15, 2006, indoor public places and work spaces across the State will be smoke free. New Jersey’s Smoke-Free Air Act ensures that workers have a safe workplace and that all nonsmokers can breathe smoke-free air in public places.

The ban will apply to:
- Bars
- Restaurants
- Nightclubs
- Bowling alleys

The ban will not apply to:
- Casinos
- Cigar bars/lounges
- Tobacco retailers
- Private homes

Secondhand smoke is a combination of a smoker’s exhaled smoke and the smoke from a burning cigarette. It contains more than 4,000 chemicals, some of which are known to cause cancer. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that secondhand smoke kills an estimated 62,000 nonsmokers each year in the U.S., including between 1,000 and 1,800 New Yorkers.

For more information on guidelines, please visit http://www.state.nj.us/health/ctcp/smokefree/
First Annual Local Boards of Health Meeting

On Saturday, May 20, 2006, the Sussex County Department of Health & Human Services, Division of Health hosted the first ever Annual Local Boards of Health Meeting hosted by Health Officer Herbert Yardley and the Division of Health staff. This meeting was designed to increase the understanding of current public health issues and activities, as well as provide an opportunity to promote the exchange of ideas, among our Local Boards of Health. Various presentations were given by our staff that focused on Division of Health programs and activities, Public Health Nursing, Pandemic Flu Preparedness and an overview of the Public Health Nuisance Code.

At the closing of the event, our guests evaluated the quality of the meeting. Feedback ranged from good to excellent, with many positive responses: “Hope it becomes a regular meeting”, “This was long overdue” and “I see good changes in the County health department.”

Based on the heartening responses from our guests, we will make this an annual event, extend this invitation to the community and expand our agenda to address current health issues and concerns.

Special thanks to Marty Theys and the Salesian Sisters from the Sacred Heart Center in Newton for their hospitality and beautiful facility and to Deidre Holland for making this event such a success.

Tick, Tick, Tick

It’s that time of the year again. The birds are chirping, the flowers are blooming, the grass is growing and ticks are attaching themselves to our pets and us every chance they get. Our recent mild winter has made it easier for ticks to survive to spring and summer. Therefore, it is even more important this season to protect ourselves from ticks and Lyme disease.

Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is transmitted to humans by the bite of infected ticks. Typical symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue and a characteristic skin rash called *erythema migrans*. If left untreated, the infection can spread to joints, the heart and the nervous system. Most cases of Lyme disease can be treated successfully with a few weeks of antibiotics. If you suspect you have been bitten, please see a medical provider immediately for treatment.

Steps to prevent Lyme disease include:
- using insect repellent
- removing ticks promptly
- wearing light colored clothing
- wearing long pants tucked into socks
- avoiding tall grass and shrubby areas
- landscaping

The ticks that transmit Lyme disease can occasionally cause other tick-borne diseases as well.
Flu Facts

You have probably been hearing a lot about pandemic flu lately. It’s on the news, radio and in the paper. Here are a few simple facts that will help you understand the difference between seasonal flu, pandemic flu and avian flu:

**Seasonal Flu**: This flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It occurs annually between October and April.

**Pandemic Flu**: Currently, there is NO pandemic flu. A flu pandemic is a global outbreak that occurs when a new influenza virus causes serious human illness and spreads easily from person to person.

**Avian Flu**: Bird flu (H5N1 virus) is caused by avian influenza viruses, which occur naturally among birds. The virus is passed and carried among domestic poultry and wild birds.

Most references in the media are regarding the Influenza A virus subtype H5N1, also known as H5N1. It is capable of causing illness in many animal species, including humans. The H5N1 virus is transmittable from birds to birds and birds to humans. According to the World Health Organization, as of June 20, 2006, there have been 228 confirmed cases in humans and 130 deaths. The main worry is that the virus will become easily communicable among humans. Luckily, human-to-human transmission has been very limited and the virus has not mutated to allow for easy person-to-person transmission.

Since December 2003, bird flu (H5N1) infections in poultry or wild birds have been reported in Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe. Influenza A (H5N1) viruses have NOT been detected in the United States, either among domestic poultry or wild birds. If you do see a sick or dead bird, do not pick it up. Contact your local health department. If you must dispose of a dead bird, pick it up with an inverted bag or disposable glove, place the bird in another bag and dispose of the bag in the trash, then wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.

The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and the Sussex County Division of Health are continuously updating and expanding current pandemic influenza plans. The Division of Health is actively working with area hospitals and community organizations to develop guidelines and plans in the event pandemic influenza were to occur in the United States. In addition, we continue to improve our disease monitoring efforts in order to identify challenges.

For more information, please visit www.pandemicflu.gov.
**Bacteria: The Hidden Enemy**

Every year, millions of people suffer from bacteria related food borne illnesses. Symptoms range from diarrhea, abdominal cramps, fever, headache and vomiting. In most cases, this can be avoided by following simple food handling and hand washing techniques. Here are a few tips on how to **Fight Bac**!

**Clean** -- Wash hands, utensils and surfaces with hot soapy water before and after food preparation, especially after preparing meat, poultry, eggs or seafood. Using a disinfectant cleaner or a mixture of bleach and water on surfaces and antibacterial soap on hands can provide some added protection.

**Separate** -- Keep raw meat, poultry, eggs and seafood and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods. Never place cooked food on an unwashed plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, eggs or seafood.

**Cook** -- Cook food to the proper internal temperatures (this varies for different cuts and types of meat and poultry) and check for doneness with a food thermometer. Cook eggs until both the yolk and white are firm.

**Chill** -- Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food and leftovers within two hours and make sure the refrigerator is set at no higher than 40°F and that the freezer unit is set at 0°F.

For more food handling tips and proper internal temperatures for cooked foods, please visit www.fightbac.org

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**Personal Hygiene Quiz—True or False**

1. ____ It is not necessary to bathe daily.
2. ____ If you are sick, you should still go to work.
3. ____ Disposable gloves are a good substitute for hand washing.
4. ____ You can determine if a food is hot or cold enough by touching the food.
5. ____ Hand washing is only really important if you are sick.

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**Sussex County Department of Health & Human Services**

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