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Taney County Health Department



An Accredited Local Public Health Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 3, 2009

H1N1 and Seasonal Flu Vaccination Walk-In Clinic Scheduled

The Taney County Health Department will be hosting an H1N1 and seasonal influenza vaccination clinic on Thursday, December 10, 2009 from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm at the Forsyth location. Appointments will not be necessary.

Until recently, the supply of H1N1 vaccine has been limited. The focus has been to ensure that priority groups defined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have been followed. Those groups include pregnant women, healthcare workers, emergency responders, children 6 months to 18 years and parents or caretakers of children under the age of 6 months. In addition to these priority groups, now that more vaccine is available, priority groups are expanded to include anyone age 25-64 who has a chronic disease. A chronic disease is defined as anyone with illness related to heart, lung, kidney, diabetes, asthma, or compromised immune system. Children age 9 and under who received their first H1N1 vaccination dose may attend this clinic to receive the second vaccination if it has been at least 4 weeks since the first dose. Proof of the first dose, such as an immunization card, is required before the second dose will be provided.

“Even though the numbers of reported H1N1 flu cases are decreasing, we expect another wave of illnesses to occur in January or February at the same time we traditionally experience the peak of seasonal influenza,” said Robert Niezgoda, TCHD epidemiologist. “With this in mind everyone who qualifies for the H1N1 vaccination should take advantage of this clinic to protect their health.”

Seasonal influenza vaccine is now available for children and adults at the walk-in clinic on December 10. Children aged 6 months to 18 years of age are encouraged to be vaccinated against the seasonal flu. Other high priority groups that should get the seasonal influenza vaccine are: adults over age 65; someone who lives with, or cares for someone over the age 65; anyone who has a chronic illness including heart, lung, kidney, diabetes, asthma, or compromised immune system and their caregivers; and anyone who lives with or cares for children under the age of 6 months.

This year has been challenging to inform the public about the two types of influenza vaccine and the priority groups who should receive each type of vaccine. The goal for public health has been to reach the most vulnerable groups of individuals that require protection from the flu this year. The public has been very patient as we have worked through the process which is greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions regarding the clinic or if you qualify for one or both vaccines, please visit our website at www.taneycohealth.org or call the Forsyth office at (417) 546-4725 or the Branson office at (417) 334-4544.

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August 19, 2009

On Tuesday, August 18, 2009, a mercury spill occurred in a Forsyth Middle School science classroom. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Taney County Health Department, and Missouri Department of Health were notified of the incident. Testing conducted by MDNR identified the presence of levels of mercury contamination that were higher than the Environmental Protection Agency's allowable levels. The acceptable level of mercury for a school classroom is the same as the acceptable mercury level for a residence.

It is important to remember that having mercury concentrations above acceptable levels does not necessarily mean that children who were in the affected classrooms were exposed to enough mercury to cause adverse health effects. However, it does suggest that clean up should be completed to prevent additional exposures.

"The test results from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources have confirmed that the amount of mercury measured and time students were exposed did not create the presence of a health risk," said Taney County Health Department epidemiologist, Robert Niezgoda.

The school was closed to allow for proper testing and cleanup of the spill. The actions taken by the Forsyth School district were to ensure the safety and well-being of the students and staff. School will be reopened as soon as the Missouri Department of Natural Resources concludes their testing and cleanup has been completed.

People who are concerned about potential exposures may contact the Bureau of Environmental Epidemiology at (573)751-6102 for more information on mercury exposure or their personal physician for medical concerns.

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For Immediate Release

March 04, 2009

**American Humane Association Conducts Training
Preparing People to Help Animals When Disaster Strikes**

Course Teaches Essentials of Rescuing, Caring for Animals in Times of Crisis

The Taney County Health Department will host a two-day Basic Animal Emergency Services Training course Friday, May 8th and Saturday, May 9th. Anyone interested the rescue and care of animals during a disaster is encouraged to attend.

Each year, thousands of animals are affected when disasters strike. Tornadoes, flooding, fires and ice storms all dramatically impact people's lives here in the Ozarks and the lives of the animals that rely on them. This training teaches volunteers and animal welfare professionals how to manage large and small animals in a disaster. Topics covered in the training include emergency response, animal first-aid techniques, coordinating emergency animal shelters, and personal safety when handling a variety of animals. The class will provide practice with live animals and setting up a mock emergency shelter. This training is the first step toward becoming a volunteer in American Humane's Red Star Animal Emergency Services™, who with additional training can be part of a national network of responders.

"It is a privilege to partner with the American Humane Association in bringing this training to our area," says Charles Avery, Taney County Health Department Animal Control Officer. "Lessons have been learned from major disasters when people were reluctant to leave their homes if they were unable to bring their pets with them." Avery added, "This training will add an important level of emergency preparedness to the existing response plans currently in place for our community."

The American Humane Association is a nonprofit organization, headquartered in Denver, Colorado. It is the only national organization dedicated to protecting both children and animals. Through a network of child and animal protection agencies and individuals like ourselves. American Humane develops policies, legislation, curricula and training programs to protect children and animals from abuse, neglect and exploitation. For more information about their organization, visit www.americanhumane.org.

The Basic Animal Emergency Services Training will be held at the Taney County Health Department Branson location at 320 Rinehart Road from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on both Friday, May 8 and Saturday, May 9. Tuition for the training is \$106 for American Humane members and \$125 for nonmembers. Training materials will be provided, and attendees will receive a certificate upon completion of the class. To register for the training visit www.americanhumane.org/aestraining. For more information contact the Taney County Health Department at (417) 334-4544 ext 234 or visit www.taneycohealth.org.

Taney County Health Department



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 6, 2009

Annual Swimming Pool School Scheduled

Free Educational Seminar offered by Taney County Health Department

The annual “Pool School” will be offered by the Taney County Health Department providing area businesses and residents an opportunity to learn pool and spa safety, chemical testing and preventive maintenance. New requirements for opening a pool, based on the federal law changes resulting from the Virginia Graeme Baker Act and City of Branson pool ordinance changes, will be discussed. The four-hour educational seminar is free to the public.

“The focus of the seminar is on maintaining a healthy pool,” said Laura Hunter, TCHD Environmental Health Specialist. In the past six months several changes in the law for pool and spa operation have taken place, said Hunter. Again this year, a mock pool inspection will be offered during the seminar. Participants will have an opportunity to ask questions and learn more about what to expect from an actual inspection.

The seminar will be held Friday, April 24, 2009, from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm, at the Roark Health Club, located at 403 Veterans Blvd. (Business Hwy 65) Branson. To register or for more information, please call the Taney County Health Department at (417) 334-4544 ext 247 or register online at www.taneycohealth.org.

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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

August 18, 2009

First H1N1 Cases Officially Reported in Taney County

The Taney County Health Department received confirmation on August 17 of two laboratory confirmed cases of 2009 novel H1N1 Influenza A in Taney County teenagers. These are the first laboratory confirmed H1N1 cases among Taney County residents.

“We are not surprised to see the first confirmed cases in Taney County because we know the illness is present in every state,” said health department administrator Jim Berry. “We have been anticipating that we would confirm the presence of the new influenza virus in our community and have been preparing.”

The best protection against H1N1 continues to be proven disease prevention methods such as good hand washing. To stay healthy, follow the three C’s:

- Clean – properly wash your hands frequently
- Cover – cover your cough and sneeze
- Contain – contain your germs by staying home from school or work if you are sick

The symptoms of H1N1 influenza are similar to other flu-like illnesses. If you develop flu-like symptoms (such as a fever over 100 degrees with cough or sore throat), it is very important that you stay home from work or school for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of fever reducing medication. The health department suggests staying home when you are sick unless seeking medical care and limiting contact with others. Most people who get the flu need supportive care such as extra fluids and rest. If symptoms are severe or persist, contact your health care provider.

“We will continue to reinforce the prevention message,” says department epidemiologist Robert Niezgoda. “It is important for the community to remain vigilant, practice good hand washing, and be aware of symptoms to help prevent the spread of the virus.”

For more information about the H1N1 virus visit our Web site at www.taneycohealth.org or call the Taney County Health Department at (417) 334-4544 or (417) 546-4725.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 1, 2009

Local Environmental Public Health Specialists

Attend Homeland Security Training

Taney County Health Department Environmental Public Health Specialists (EPHS) Laura Hunter and Kim Foster recently attended the first Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) training class for EPHS in emergency response.

Kim Foster, LPN, has a BS in Environmental Health from Drury University, Springfield, MO and is currently working on a master in the same field. She has her registration from the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) and certification from Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.

Laura Hunter has a BS in Environmental Health from Missouri Southern University, Joplin, MO. She is a NEHA registered Sanitarian and is also a Certified Sanitarian with Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.

The center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP), located in Anniston, Alabama, provides federally-funded, interdisciplinary training for emergency responders from across the United States and U.S. Territories, for ten disciplines: Emergency Management, Emergency Medical Services, Fire Service, Government Administrative, Hazardous Materials, Healthcare, Law Enforcement, Public Health, Public Safety Communications, and Public Works.

“Attending specialized training ensures our EPHS staff gains the skills and confidence to more effectively respond to local or potential national incidents,” said Linda Randolph, Environmental Health Manager.

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October 23, 2009

Health Department Schedules H1N1 Vaccination Clinic

Taney County Health Department announces first public H1N1 vaccination clinic

The first H1N1 public vaccination clinic will be held on Thursday, October 29 at both Taney County Health Department locations from 10:00 am to 5:30 pm. This clinic is for children age 2 to 18 and only the nasal spray vaccine will be available. Appointments are required to receive a vaccination.

The live, attenuated virus, nasal spray vaccine is licensed for use of children age 2 to 18 that do not have any chronic medical conditions. It cannot be given to pregnant women or children younger than two years of age.

The health department can expect to receive weekly shipments of vaccine. The amount and type of vaccine depends on production. The health department has already provided H1N1 vaccine to area health care workers and emergency response personnel.

“It was important to protect the health care and emergency response workers to maintain a healthy health care workforce as the H1N1 influenza continues to spread,” said Robert Niezgod, TCHD epidemiologist, “now we will begin to shift our focus to the next priority group of children.”

Taney County schools have seen an increase in the number of flu-like illness this year compared to last year. Recently, the Bradleyville and Taneyville school districts closed in order to break the chain of illness occurring in those locations after they experienced a 20 percent absenteeism rate. Other county schools have seen increases, but not at a level that closing schools has been considered at this time.

Please call the Branson office at (417) 334-4544 or the Forsyth office at (417) 546-4725 to schedule an appointment for the clinic on October 29th. Visit our website at www.taneycohealth.org for more information.

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June 12, 2009

Taney County Health Department Board Member Resigns

After 15 years of serving on the Taney County Health Department Board of Trustees, Beth Huddleston, has resigned to pursue her education. She was elected to the board in 1994 and served as chairperson for the past twelve years.

Many significant changes have taken place during the her time of service including the expansion of public health services to western Taney County with the opening of an office in Branson, the opening of the Children's Dental Clinic, growth of the WIC program and most recently the integration of the City of Branson Health Department into the Taney County Health Department. Beth has been an active participant in the voluntary accreditation process for our department, a distinction held by only 13 of the 114 public health departments in the state. "It has been a pleasure to serve on this board with Beth Huddleston. Her commitment to public health is unprecedented. Her vision that "every" Taney County resident should have access to quality public health services has helped this organization grow to be a leader in the industry. I want to thank her for her many years of service and I will miss her wisdom and knowledge about public health," said board member, Janet Gard.

"We have been fortunate to have someone of Beth's caliber willing to serve on our Board of Trustees," said director, Jim Berry. "Her leadership has provided a supportive board that has been very interactive with our staff, our planning and growth process." She will be missed however; the board and staff support her decision to continue her education and ultimate goal to teach at the university level. Beth will be attending the University of Arkansas this fall to pursue a doctorate in nutrition.

The five-member board of trustees is elected at large and each serves a four-year term. If a seat is vacated before the end of their term, the Taney County Commission names a replacement to serve until the next scheduled election. The commission has appointed Debbie Redford to serve the remainder of Huddleston's term effective June 25, 2009 to April 2010. "We are pleased to have someone of Debbie's ability appointed to the board," said Berry. Her experience in environmental issues will be an asset and we look forward to her joining the board.

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June 16, 2009

PANDEMIC FLU ELEVATED TO LEVEL SIX BY THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

No Immediate Changes in Local Response Plans

On June 11, the World Health Organization (WHO) elevated the H1N1 (swine flu) to the highest level, declaring it a pandemic at Phase 6. The WHO made the decision based on the geographical spread of the H1N1 flu around the world and not the severity of illnesses. The WHO phases do NOT predict the severity of the virus. In other words, they have determined that the virus is present and spreading around the world, but they cannot predict how severe the virus will be in the fall. The important message that is conveyed by the WHO's action is to prepare your family, business, church and community to be in the best position to respond, if the virus would have a serious impact locally.

The Taney County Health Department and community response partners continue to monitor the movement of the H1N1 virus and track any changes that might occur in our community. Since April, there have been 50 confirmed cases in Missouri and no cases reported in Taney County. Robert Niezgoda, Taney County Health Department epidemiologist, said, "We are continuing to conduct surveillance information to identify the presence of any cases locally and monitor changes in the situation in Missouri, we are also focusing on how to prepare the community for any changes in the virus in the fall."

The public is reminded to use everyday common sense to protect your health and decrease the spread of the H1N1 virus as well as the seasonal flu viruses. Wash your hands often with warm water and soap; cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze; if you are sick or your child is sick stay home, recover and keep others well. Stay informed of the most current information by visiting our website at www.taneycohealth.org. If you would like information on how to prepare your family, church or business you may contact Jean Mueller or Robert Niezgoda at (417)334-4544.

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April 1, 2009

Health Officials Urge Taney County Residents to Make Healthier Lifestyle Choices

National Public Health Week April 6-12, 2009

Making better health choices is the best way to live a longer, healthier life. That is the message from the Taney County Health Department during National Public Health Week, April 6-12.

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and the Taney County Health Department promote healthy lifestyle choices with its “Live Like Your Life Depends On It” program. The program focuses on five recommendations for a healthier life that include: eating smart, moving more, be tobacco free, get recommended health screenings and maintain a healthy weight.

Thursday, April 9, the Taney County Health Department will host an open house from 10:00 a.m. to noon at the Branson location, 320 Rinehart Road. During the open house visitors will have an opportunity to tour the facility, learn more about public health and receive information about living a healthy lifestyle. “National Public Health Week is also an opportunity to present our recently completed building project to the community,” said Jim Berry, Director of the Taney County Health Department. “Following the integration of the City of Branson Health Department into the Taney County Health Department in February 2008, additional work space was needed,” said Berry.

“We take this occasion to share our vision to be a community of well people, living in a healthy and safe environment with the community,” Berry said.

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October 13, 2009

Branson High-Risk Seasonal Flu Shot Clinic Scheduled

Taney County Health Department has scheduled a high-risk “seasonal” flu shot clinic on Thursday, October 22 at the Branson Rec Plex from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm. The Rec Plex is located at 1500 Branson Hills Parkway, Branson.

This vaccination offers protection against the seasonal flu and will not protect against the H1N1 virus. A separate vaccination will be needed for protection against the H1N1 when it becomes available.

The clinic is open to Taney County residents who are considered to be at high-risk of developing complications from the flu. Individuals considered high-risk include adults age 65 or older, someone with a chronic illness or someone who lives with or cares for individual with a chronic illness, anyone living with or caring for children 6 months to five years of age and pregnant women. Vaccine will not be available for children at this clinic.

Individuals who have Medicare should bring their card to the clinic along with a picture ID. Medicare will cover the cost of the vaccine, with no out of pocket expense for the recipient.

Vaccine for children and individuals unable to attend this scheduled clinic will be available later. As the vaccine becomes available, the department will make that information available to the public.

If you have any questions regarding the upcoming clinic or the H1N1 influenza, please call Branson office at (417) 334-4544, Forsyth office at (417) 546-4725 or visit our website at www.taneycohealth.org.

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October 9, 2009

WIC Changes Food Packages

Focus on increasing breastfeeding infants and healthier food choices

Effective October 1, 2009, the Women's, Infants, and Children's (WIC) nutrition education, supplemental food program, has implemented new food packages for participants. The revised food packages add new food categories and offer optional substitutions for some of the current food choices. This is the first significant change in food packages in more than 30 years.

The reason for the changes is to encourage more women to breastfeed their babies and help fight obesity. Obesity is considered a major public health concern in the nation and in Taney County. "Breastfeeding is the healthiest option for babies and mom's," said Lyn Konstant, Missouri WIC Director. "Breastmilk contains all the nutrients a baby needs for the first six months and reduces the risk of allergies, asthma, diabetes and certain childhood cancers."

Breastfeeding also helps a new mother lose the weight she gained during pregnancy and helps her uterus return to normal size, Konstant said. Babies who are breastfed have lower rates of obesity as they grow older.

The changes in food packages are intended to better meet the needs of the wide range of WIC participants. The changes include:

- WIC clients can purchase whole grains and fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables.
- Beginning at 6 months, all infants receive infant fruits and vegetables, while fully breastfed infants also receive infant meats.
- Soymilk and tofu may be given as an alternative to milk, with medical documentation.
- Canned beans are offered as an alternative to dry beans.
- The amount of milk, eggs, juice, and cheese is reduced for women and children.
- Juice is eliminated for infants.
- The amount of infant formula is reduced for partially breastfed and older infants.

The new food packages are lower in fat and cholesterol, higher in fiber and limit added sugar and sodium," said Konstant. "These new options should help WIC participants improve their diet and maintain a healthy weight."

"The WIC program in Taney County serves approximately 1,977 participants per month," said Tammy Drake, WIC coordinator with the Taney County Health Department. "About ten percent of infants in Taney County are breastfed the first 6 months."

We are excited to introduce the changes to our participants and their response has been positive, Drake said. The food choices offer healthier alternatives that contain less fat and sugar that along with nutrition

education should help reduce the incidence of childhood obesity, which is a health priority in Taney County.

The WIC program is offered at both the Taney County Health Department locations in Branson and Forsyth. For more information about how to qualify for WIC visit our website at www.taneycohealth.org or call the Branson office at (417) 334-4544 or Forsyth office at (417) 546-4725.

WIC is an equal opportunity program and services are provided on a nondiscriminatory basis.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 12, 2009

The Taney County Health Department reports that mosquitoes, in parts of the county, have tested positive for West Nile Virus.

“The chances of becoming ill from West Nile virus are low,” said Robert Niezgoda, health department epidemiologist. “Less than 1% of people who are bitten by an infected mosquito will develop illness and very few of those will develop serious illness.”

Kim Foster, health department environmental specialist, said, “The season is in full swing for mosquitoes, and this is the time of year to wear repellent and eliminate mosquito breeding areas around your home and community.” She reminds residents to empty standing or stagnant water from cans, bottles, old tires, wading pools, flowerpots, and other containers. You can also clean out clogged gutters, drill holes in the bottom of recycling containers and mow high grass and weeds to eliminate mosquito-breeding habitats. In addition, make sure that all windows have proper screens to help keep mosquitoes out of your home.

Mosquitoes’ favorite time to feed is between dusk and dawn. Those outside during this time should protect themselves by wearing long sleeves and using insect repellent containing DEET.

Niezgoda said, “There have been no reported human cases of West Nile Virus in Taney County.”

For more information you may visit the Taney County Health Department website at www.taneycohealth.org or call (417) 334-4544 or (417) 546-4725.

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May 20, 2009

FIRST ANNUAL SAFE AND SOBER AFTER PROM EVENT
Underage Drinking Prevention Awareness Campaign

Prom is a highlight for many high school students and memories of the special event last a lifetime. The idea of making prom memorable and safe prompted the Underage Drinking Prevention Coalition to plan the first Safe and Sober After Prom Event. Over 350 students from Branson and Forsyth high schools participated in this first ever event in Taney County. After prom, the students were treated to a movie of their choice and snacks, provided by the IMAX Entertainment Complex.

Both high schools provided several educational opportunities leading up to the event. An assembly, sponsored by the Kurt Larsen Law Firm, shared real life stories of consequences related to drinking, driving, and underage drinking. Posters and t-shirts were designed for the event by the students. Parents also took part in the event. Students choosing to attend the after prom event voluntarily signed a contract agreeing to stay drug and alcohol free on prom night. Parents were given information about the legal consequences of providing alcohol to a minor and were asked to sign the contract that supported their child's decision to be drug and alcohol free.

Kara Miller, health educator with Taney County Health Department and chairman of the Underage Drinking Prevention Coalition, said, "For a first time event the response was awesome and we are encouraged by the number of young adults who made the decision to participate." The coalition will continue to work on prevention and education and welcome the community to become involved in this very important life changing issue. Miller said, "The coalition is most grateful to the management and staff at the IMAX who made this event possible and successful their generosity."

April is designated as Alcohol Awareness Month to bring attention to the risks associated with all aspects of alcohol use. In addition to the after prom event, members of the Dream Big Club, recorded public service messages (PSA) that aired on KRZK/KOMC radio stations, warning of the risks, and dangers associated with underage drinking. The Dream Big Club is a student organization that promotes awareness and education about the risks of using alcohol, drugs, or tobacco through positive peer pressure. Patricia Civiello, health educator with the Taney County Health Department leads the group at Branson High School said, "The students have been looking for an opportunity to record the PSA's for a long time." They take the issue of preventing underage drinking, drug and tobacco use very seriously. Club members want to do their part to inform fellow students of the risks and consequences related to these issues. Civiello said, "They do a great job."

For more information about the Underage Drinking Prevention Coalition, contact Kara Miller at the Taney County Health Department 334-4544 ext 225.
