

Keeping you updated on your local health department

LLHD Plays Key Role in Local Public Health Response to Hurricane Sandy



*Hurricane Sandy hitting the Northeast.
Photo Credit: NASA*

As reports of Hurricane Sandy's path came in days before the storm hit, LLHD staff began preparing food safety information to send out to food service establishments and sharing preparedness tips on our website to help residents prepare for the storm.

"When we heard that Hurricane Sandy was headed our way, we quickly put into place the plans that we had revised after the last two weather events; we were much better prepared to hit the ground running during Hurricane Sandy," said Deputy Director Steve Mansfield.

"One of the first things we did was utilize our Code Red system to contact all of our food service establishments with a general message," Mansfield said. Code Red is a web-based emergency communications tool that allows someone to record a message and send it to phone numbers on a selected list.

"We told them there

are many things they can do to continue to operate safely until they lose power and the things they should do after they lose power. We urged them to contact a sanitarian with any questions or go to llhd.org for helpful information on how to deal with flooding, power outages and so on," Mansfield said.

The day before the storm, Deputy Director Mansfield sent out communications to municipal elected officials and emergency management directors in each town of the District to see if they needed a representative from LLHD to be present at the Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs), where officials who make or inform critical decisions set up a headquarters during an emergency.

East Lyme and New London requested LLHD's presence at their EOCs, and Mansfield represented LLHD at these EOCs during the first 48 hours of the storm.

14 volunteers from the LLHD Medical Reserve Corps also played a major role during and after the storm by providing medical services at the Red Cross emergency shelters in Groton and East Lyme, where nearly 400 people stayed during the week the shelters were open.

After the storm passed, LLHD sanitarians went out in the field to visit food service

establishments in effected areas. If a food service establishment was closed, sanitarians left a pre-printed message with instructions for re-opening and a note to contact LLHD before re-opening. "People were very good about that; they would utilize that information and call our hotline to let us know when they wanted to re-open," Mansfield said.

After an establishment contacted LLHD, a sanitarian was dispatched there to make sure they were ready to open. "That was very well received by the food service community; we got a lot of great comments about how quick we were to respond and get them back up-and-running."

"Our number one priority is to make sure the food supply is safe—to make sure that people who go out to eat are eating in a place that is in substantial compliance with the Connecticut Public Health Code. Secondly, we have a responsibility as the public health department to be efficient—to get those businesses up-and-running as quickly as possible because we know every hour they can't open, they're losing money. It's also important because they supply food to our community. So we're very happy that our activities were efficient enough that we didn't impede people from opening when they wanted to open."

“Drive-Thru” Flu Clinic Provides Free Flu Shots, Tests Regional Response



Vaccinators collect consent forms and administer flu shots to Drive-Thru participants at the Drive-Thru to Beat the Flu exercise.

On a beautiful Saturday in October, just two days before the arrival of Hurricane Sandy, LLHD staff joined other local health department staff, town emergency management officials, police and several volunteer groups in organizing the first drive-through flu clinic in southeastern Connecticut.

The “Drive Thru to Beat the Flu” exercise at Fitch High School provided free flu shots to nearly 150 residents from all over southeastern Connecticut and gave regional public health and emergency response officials an opportunity to test their plans for medical mass dispensing in the event of a disease outbreak, anthrax attack or other public health emergency.

When clinic participants arrived, they were asked to fill out a consent form if they hadn’t already filled one out in advance. Then they were given a numbered card, which said “start” and “finish” on the back so clinic staff could record the amount of time it took for a car to go through the whole process. The participant was then directed to the vaccination station. When

they arrived at the vaccination station, the traffic monitor asked them to stop and put their car—or in a couple of cases, bus or motorcycle—in park, and then a team of vaccinators would administer flu shots. Once the vaccinators finished, the traffic monitor directed the participant to the exit, where they would be

surveyed about their experience on the way out.

Communicable Disease Prevention Supervisor Kris Magnussen said the most difficult part of organizing the exercise was coming up with a regional plan, which could be adapted for any type of event that would require administering medications to large numbers of people.

“A plan looks great on paper, but until you actually drill it, you don’t know if things are going to work,” Magnussen said. “For the most part, I think things did work because they were based on recommendations and best practices from [other health departments]. But thanks to the feedback from the volunteers and the staff who participated, we’re going to be able to make some changes to the plan that will make it even more operational.”

She said it was the support of partner organizations such as the Groton Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), Groton Emergency Management and over 50 volunteers in planning and staffing the clinic that helped the process run smoothly.

Magnussen said there will likely be another drive-through flu clinic next year. “It was so easy to do and the volunteers enjoyed it

tremendously because it was so different,” she said.

“Many of the people who registered, especially those who were uninsured or had mobility issues, were so relieved to have this opportunity,” she said. “Everyone who participated said they would do it again and we would love to do this again for the community.”



Volunteers conduct an exit survey to get feedback from participants after they receive their flu shots.

LLHD thanks all who made Drive-Thru to Beat the Flu possible!

Groton Emergency Management
Groton CERT
Town of Groton Police
Fitch High School
Uncas Health District
Northeast District Department of Health
Eastern Highlands Health District
Mohegan Health Department
Salvation Army

“Taste of African Heritage” Program Demonstrates Healthy Cooking



AAHC member Quincy Clayton gives a cooking demonstration at the Second Congregational Church of New London as part of the “Taste of African Heritage” Cooking Series.

Part of LLHD’s mission to promote improved health and prosperity for all residents includes partnering with other organizations to get the community actively engaged in programs that help them make healthy choices.

Thanks to Boston-based food and nutrition education non-profit Oldways, LLHD and the African American Health Council (AAHC) were able to bring the “Taste of African Heritage” Cooking Series to interested residents who wanted to learn how to cook healthy, traditional African meals.

Oldways was founded in 1990 to address health issues (increasing rates of obesity, heart disease, cancer, diabetes and other diseases of excess) and to preserve culinary traditions, helping people make healthy connections to their food (cooking and eating real foods) and their heritage.

An Oldways representative contacted LLHD Health Program Coordinator Stephanye Clarke shortly after learning of the

AAHC’s work and offered to supply LLHD and the AAHC with any materials needed to continue the success of the *Together We Can!* program.

Within two months, Oldways asked LLHD to be part of a national pilot of their new curriculum, “A Taste of African Heritage.”

Oldways supplied the curriculum, supplies and a small stipend to cover the cost of additional ingredients.

The series began on Friday, September 28 and was held at the Second Congregational Church of New London. Quincy Clayton, member of the AAHC and a graduate of Johnson and Wales University, volunteered to facilitate the series. The average attendance for each class was 10 people, which is on target with Oldways’ projections. Social networks including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were instrumental in engaging community members and reminding them about the classes.

“We had at least two participants who cooked dishes from the class at their own homes throughout the following week, sometimes substituting ingredients but both reported their intent to continue to add these dishes to their menu plan” Health Program Coordinator Stephanye Clarke said.

Because of the program’s success and photos that were shared, LLHD and the AAHC are planning to run the series again in the Spring.



Oldways Black-Eyed Pea Salad

Serves 6

Ingredients:

- 1/2 medium yellow onion
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 1/2 red bell pepper
- 2 (15 oz.) cans black-eyed peas, thoroughly rinsed (reduces 41% of sodium)
- 4 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Instructions:

1. Rinse the black-eyed peas
2. Dice celery, onion and bell pepper into small cubes
3. Mix onion, celery, bell pepper and black-eyed peas in mixing bowl
4. Dress the salad with the vinegar, olive oil and salt to taste

Calories: 140

Fat: 4g

Saturated Fat: 1g

Sodium: 183mg

Carbohydrates: 21g

Fiber: 5g

Sugars: 1g

Protein: 7g

LLHD Promotes Smoke-Free Living for the Great American Smokeout



LLHD's table at the Crystal Mall for the Great American Smokeout on November 15. Health Program Coordinator Carolyn Wilson gave out quit kits and information to help people quit smoking.

As part of the American Cancer Society's 37th annual Great American Smokeout, LLHD staff member Carolyn Wilson set up a table at the Crystal Mall, where she shared information about the harmful chemicals in cigarettes and promoted LLHD's free 6-week "Becoming an Ex" smoking cessation program to people who were interested.

"We had a good turnout. Several people came by and took quit kits and fliers for our upcoming classes in Waterford and Gales Ferry," she said.

Wilson also handed out free "quit kits," which included mints, cough drops, tea bags, paper clips and rubber bands. "Basically, small things to help someone keep their mind off smoking a cigarette," she said.

"We had some smokers come by but most of the people who stopped at our table said they wanted to bring home the information to family members who smoke," she said. "A couple of people said their kids are smokers and they have been

trying to convince them to quit. Several people shared stories about parents or grandparents who smoked and suffered severe health problems or died as a result of smoking-related diseases."

According to the CDC, smoking causes an estimated 90% of all lung cancer deaths in men and 80% of all lung cancer deaths in women, while secondhand smoke causes 46,000 annual deaths from heart disease. Based on current cigarette smoking patterns, an estimated 25 million Americans who are alive today will die prematurely from smoking-related illnesses, including 5 million people younger than 18 years of age.

"Anyone can quit smoking if they're willing to do it," Wilson

said. "Whether you have been smoking for 20 or 30 years or you recently started and are having a hard time quitting, there are many resources out there to help you. You just have to do some research, try different things and figure out the right method that works for you."

LLHD has free smoking cessation programs coming up in Waterford and Gales Ferry. The program teaches participants about nicotine addiction and the brain, how to deconstruct smoking behavior, nicotine replacement therapy and medication options, how to reduce and manage triggers, how to create the right quit plan and how to stay smoke-free for life. Please contact Carolyn Wilson at 860-448-4882 ext. 318 or cwilson@llhd.org for more information.

Becoming an Ex

- **Gales Ferry**- Session starts January 10 and takes place Thursdays from 9-10:30 a.m. at the Gales Ferry Library, 18 Hurlbutt Road.
- **Waterford**- Session starts January 9 and takes place Wednesdays from 6-7:30 p.m. at the Waterford Public Library, 49 Rope Ferry Road.

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