

Kent COUNTY *Detail*

September/October 2011

Administration

Update: Multi-Jurisdictional Parks Study

Earlier this year, the County established a Citizens Committee to conduct a multi-jurisdictional study of our parks and recreational systems. The purpose of this study is to identify if there are ways that we, as local units of government, can work together to better sustain our high-quality parks and recreational services.

To facilitate this study, a 30-member Citizens Committee has been appointed to select a consultant and to substantiate and evaluate any recommendations made by the consultant. The Citizens Committee and a staff committee consisting of parks and recreation directors within the County have been working to select a consultant to perform the study. After issuing an RFP and interviewing several local and national firms, the Citizens Committee has selected **D. Kerry Laycock**, of Michigan, to conduct the study. Laycock has a significant amount of experience working with local units of government and with parks and recreational systems.

As we begin this study, much of the initial work will be comprised of gathering data and information from local units of government. Over the next month, you and your staff may be contacted to provide information about your parks and recreation systems. The Citizens Committee will have initial observations from the consultant in January 2012 with a final report issued in March 2012. If you are interested in receiving meeting notices or have questions about the study, please contact Mary.Swanson@KentCountyMi.gov.

Health Department

Get Your Pet Microchipped for \$20

National statistics show that as many as eight million animals end up in shelters every year, and only 15-20% of dogs and less than 2% of cats are returned to their owners. One of the ways to increase the chances of finding your lost pet is having it microchipped. Kent County Animal Control takes in 30 animals a day, and many do not have any identifying tags. The Animal Shelter is offering a quick, easy, and inexpensive way to make sure your pet can be identified.



Starting October 1st, Kent County Animal Control will offer walk-in microchip implantation for the public, with just a \$20.00 fee. "Our hope is to encourage responsible pet

ownership,” says Cathy Raevsky, Administrative Health Officer of the Kent County Health Department.

According to research in an October 2009 *ScienceDaily* article, “the return-to-owner rate for cats was 20 times higher and for dogs 2 ½ times higher for microchipped pets than were the rates of return for all stray cats and dogs that had entered the shelters.”

We remind anyone with a microchipped pet to make sure their address and phone number is up-to-date, in case the pet goes missing. Also, the Animal Shelter has dozens of pets looking for a good home right now. If you know of someone looking for a furry companion, tell them to come see us at 740 Fuller NE, Grand Rapids!



Health Notes

A Service of the Kent County Health Department

October 2011

Flu Season is Approaching!

Yes, it is that time of year again. Influenza, or the flu, impacts schools and the workforce, but it can be prevented. According to the CDC, the flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. Flu viruses can spread when people with flu cough, sneeze, or even talk! Someone might also get flu by touching a surface or object (like a phone) that has flu virus on it, and then touching their own mouth, eyes, or nose. It can cause mild to severe illness, and in severe cases, can lead to death.

Signs and symptoms:

- Fever* or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough and/or sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (very tired)
- Vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults)

**It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.*

Prevention:

- Cover your nose and mouth with tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, as germs spread this way.
- The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine to protect against flu viruses. The

- People at high risk of serious flu complications include young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease, and people 65 years and older.
- Health care workers and people who live with or care for high risk people to keep from spreading flu to high risk people should consider vaccinations.
- Children younger than 6 months are at high risk of serious flu illness, but are too young to be vaccinated. People who care for them should be vaccinated instead.

Stick it to the Flu!

Be sure to check out the Kent County Health Department website, [“Stick it to the Flu”](http://www.stickittotheflu.com/) at <http://www.stickittotheflu.com/> to learn more about flu vaccinations, prevention tips and treatment, or call (616) 742-4FLU to make an appointment.

NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL DIABETES MONTH: Activity, Diet Can Help Prevent Diabetes in Adults

The Kent County Health Department is working hard to get the community educated about the risk of diabetes. Complications from diabetes are the seventh leading cause of death in Kent County. November is National Diabetes Month, and the KCHD is reaching out to help those at higher risk and those who have been diagnosed with the disease.

Nearly 25 million children and adults in the United States have been diagnosed with diabetes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says the number of adults with diabetes is estimated to double or triple in the next four decades. Right now, about 1 in 10 American adults have diabetes: if scientists are right, that could be one in three adults by 2050.

There are two types of diabetes: Type 1 is typically diagnosed in children and teens, and Type 2, which is far more common, generally develops later in life. With Type 1, the body does not produce insulin, the main source of energy. But in Type 2, according to the American Diabetes Association, either the body does not produce enough insulin, or the cells just ignore insulin.

Insulin allows the body to use glucose for energy. Basically, when you eat, your body breaks down sugars and starches into glucose. The insulin takes the glucose from the blood into the cells. When glucose builds up in the blood instead of going into cells, it can lead to numerous detrimental health

problems.

Diabetes can lead to risk of kidney failure, heart disease, stroke, blindness, and amputations of legs and feet. “The Centers for Disease Control says as many as seven million people in the United States may have diabetes and don’t even know it,” says Cathy Raevsky, Administrative Health Officer of the KCHD. “Early diagnosis can help someone survive, without facing dire consequences of letting the disease go unchecked.”

Type 2 diabetes is more common in people who are overweight or obese. People with a “body mass index” of 25-29.9 are considered overweight, and people with a BMI of 30 or above are classified as obese. “In 2010, we here at the Kent County Health Department found more than 27% of residents were considered obese,” says Raevsky. “That’s up from 20% in 2002. We have to encourage residents to change lifestyles and habits, to be healthier and more active.”

Other risk factors for Type 2 diabetes include:

- People who are 45 years of age or older
- Women who developed diabetes while pregnant (gestational diabetes)
- Those with a parent, brother or sister with Type 2 diabetes
- People who are not physically active



- Certain racial or ethnic groups are at higher risk, including African Americans, Hispanic/Latino, American Indians, and some Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

There is good news here: Kent County is one of the five most active counties in Michigan, according to the CDC. The more we move, the easier it is to maintain a healthy weight. If you have been diagnosed as having diabetes or pre-diabetes, you can take steps to prevent damaging, even deadly consequences. Here are some important steps you can take to control diabetes:

- Physical activity should be part of your lifestyle. Consider simple things like walking quickly or gardening for 2 ½ hours a week, or vigorous activity such as jogging or jumping rope for 1 ¼ hours a week. Muscle strengthening activities should be part of your routine 2 or more days each week.
- Get a flu vaccine. People who have diabetes should ask for the "shot"

version. Also consider a pneumonia (pneumococcal) shot. People with diabetes are more likely to die from pneumonia or influenza than people who do not have diabetes.

- Ask your health care provider to explain how to manage your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol.

The Kent County Health Department offers a 5 week plan for at-risk adults, based on the Michigan Diabetes Prevention Course. It also helps people recently diagnosed with diabetes. KCHD Educators and Nutritionists can also provide free grocery store tours for those recently diagnosed with diabetes, or caretakers living with someone struggling with the disease. These tours provide insight on how to buy the right foods to keep your blood sugar under control. For more information, call the KCHD at 616.632.7100.

Cooperative Extension

Kent/MSU Extension Partners with Grand Rapids Community College Students By Stephanie Marino, Kent/MSU Extension Educator

Students in Melanie Schiele-Gady's "Principles of Physical Education and Sport" class at GRCC are required to have hands-on, interactive experiences at local elementary schools. Through a partnership with Kent/MSU Extension, these students have the opportunity to utilize the OrganWise Guys materials to teach elementary students about healthy eating, physical activity and taking care of their bodies.



This semester, teachers at Aberdeen Elementary and Kent Hills Elementary have welcomed two GRCC students into each of their classes once a week to teach a health lesson and to assist with other classroom activities as directed by the teacher. The GRCC students are also able to assist on the playground at recess at each school, organizing activities for students to participate in and helping to direct students to play and be physically active. The GRCC students will gain important experience and knowledge about teaching, classroom teachers will gain extra support in their classroom and at recess, and elementary students will gain knowledge about healthy behaviors while interacting with more adult role models. For more information, please contact Stephanie Marino at marinos1@anr.msu.edu.

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Human Resources Department



Kent County Quality Service Employee 3rd Quarter 2011

Tracy Kniffen-Oates is recognized as the Kent County Quality Service Employee of the **3rd Quarter** for helping to fulfill Kent County's mission by providing our citizens outstanding quality service. The individual who nominated **Ms. Kniffen-Oates** had this to say:

"Tracy is a Circuit Court Clerk who works in Judge Trusock's courtroom. I am assigned to provide the security in this courtroom quite often. By far, this is the most efficient and organized courtroom to work in. Tracy is confident in her work and goes out of her way to make sure the daily proceedings, whether they are civil or criminal, are handled in a professional manner. Tracy has the ability to make sure all of the staff and civilians receive professional and courteous service. She is always pleasant and has a smile on her face. During every jury trial, Tracy deals with an endless amount of tasks and she takes them in stride and keeps the courtroom running smoothly. During this most recent Festival, she was observed volunteering her time to work with hundreds of children at the painting exhibit area. She was having fun yet giving back to the community on a day off. Tracy represents the County of Kent and its employees with honor and grace. Thank you for considering this valuable employee for this recognition."

Judge Trusock had this to say about Ms. Kniffen-Oates "Tracy is an outstanding individual with a tremendous work ethic. She is always willing to go beyond whatever is necessary to keep things running smoothly. She has a great deal of pride in performing her responsibilities."

Number of Years Employed by Kent County: 4.67 years.

The hardest thing I've ever done: Raising my children to be honest, hard-working members of society was one of the hardest, albeit most rewarding things I and my husband have ever done. I'm very proud of my children and their accomplishments, as anyone who knows me will tell you!



Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: I'd like to have dinner with Abigail, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. I've read their letters to each other and they were very passionate about the founding of this country. Although they did not always agree with each other, they believed in freedom and what this country could be because of freedom. I would like to hear their perspective of their journey through the new

experiment we now call America.

You'd be surprised to learn that: I come from and have a family who is centered on public service. My father was a police officer and farmer. My mother was a nurse. My husband was a Captain at the Delta Township Fire Department. My son has graduated from West Point Military

Academy and is currently serving with 101st Airborne in Kentucky, and my daughter just graduated from Oakland University and is currently the head diving coach for the Vandal's Women's diving team at the University of Idaho.

The thing that I like most about working for Kent County is: Everyone is very friendly, courteous and professional. I can remember when I first started filling in as a court reporter here; I was amazed at how friendly the staff was. Even the judges were nice to me! I wasn't used to that from the organization where I used to work.

Please join us in congratulating **Tracy Kniffen-Oates** for earning Kent County's Employee Recognition for Quality Service Award.

If you know a Kent County employee who is deserving of this award please complete a nomination form at www.accesskent.com/qualityservice or on the Kent County Intranet.