

## A Day in the Life of Public Health

The Alleghany County Health Department would like to share a story with you about how public health affects your daily life.

The mountain sun wakes you up and it's "A Blue Day" says the TV. It's nice that the air quality is good and that public health is around to monitor the pollution level and develop programs to address it. You make a note to check into that ride-sharing idea that is being offered at your workplace.

You hear your son laughing in the other room as your husband gets him ready for daycare. Public health assured that he is a healthy baby, thanks to the immunizations that ward off the diseases used to be deadly in the olden days. You give him a glass of milk, confident in the knowledge that it is safe and that public health checks the dairies, tests lab samples, and refrigeration levels of dairy products.

As you help get your son ready for daycare, you smile as you think of the new baby soon to arrive. You remember getting your positive pregnancy test at the Alleghany County Health Department and you think of how relieved you were to find out that you could receive your prenatal care there. You were aware that the local hospital is no longer delivering babies and you feared you would have to travel to another county for the many prenatal visits as well and delivery. Thankfully, the health department is still offering a full range of maternity services, including prenatal care, health education and WIC nutrition services. You are especially glad you will be able to see Dr. Denise Absher and Dr. Tennant Teeter who were so very helpful during your last pregnancy.

You remember the call from your mother last night to say that she is relieved to have been able to get a doctor's appointment in her own town. Public health recognized the need for doctors in her rural area and helped to place one there. You are pleased that she won't have to spend the day traveling to and from her appointment in the city miles away. You realize you are especially fortunate in Alleghany County because your health department has chosen to offer primary care services, even though these services are not required or funded by the state government. You have personally found the compassion and expertise of Dr. Beth Lyon-Smith to be invaluable during times of illness in the family.

It is time to leave for work and you buckle seatbelts around yourself and your son. It is a habit now, thanks to public health educational messages that have greatly reduced automobile-related deaths in this country. You realize that the efforts of the Alleghany chapter of Healthy Carolinians and the Safe Kids program have made great strides in increasing public health education.

The childcare center director welcomes you and your son and takes him into the room full of children. She and her staff have been trained in the public health measures necessary to run a safe, healthy program. Ultimately her center is trying to avoid the unnecessary epidemics that can occur with improper hand washing and childcare techniques. Historically, public health has looked at the root causes of disease and addresses them at this prevention-oriented level.

Heading on to work, you stop and pick up an egg sandwich at your favorite fast food restaurant. You know that the quality of the food is good because the local health department inspectors have rewarded 95 out of 100 possible points, ensuring that the standards have been met. In Alleghany County, David Richardson takes his duties as restaurant inspector very seriously. Reassured, a different public health message sticks in your mind, you think "I need to limit my fat intake because my cholesterol levels are high." Enjoying the last bites of your sandwich, you make a decision to get up earlier the next day and eat the cereal you bought last week.

Work is good and relatively stress-free. You feel good because you have started a lunchtime walking program with five of your colleagues. The exercise increases aerobic fitness and helps your stress level for

the rest of the afternoon. Public health studies have shown the positive effects of avoiding or lessening the risks of chronic disease by exercising routinely.

You are also happy because your business has opted to become a smoke free working environment. It has become clear through the years that smoking has definite links to cancer and other chronic diseases. Public health has been encouraging people and organizations to give up smoking to improve the overall quality of life. In Alleghany County, Teri Vandyke with Project ASSIST and Lydja Andrews, Alleghany County School Tobacco Prevention Coordinator work tirelessly to accomplish these goals.

It is the end of the day and you and your son stop at Crouse park with the toy boat he got for his birthday. Gently placing the boat in the creek, he jumps in surprise when he sees a fish swim by his hand. You smile and acknowledge one of the environmental aspects of public health- to evaluate and monitor the cleanliness of our lakes, rivers and streams. In addition, Barry Erwin from the Alleghany County Health department works to ensure our septic systems are safe for people and the environment.

The day grows dark and the two of you head home. Your husband has made dinner so you spend the rest of the evening relaxing with your family and watching the news. There is a story about an injury prevention project and a local public health professional points out the positive outcomes that are being seen as a result of the community's prevention efforts.

As you lie in bed musing on the day, you realize that public health is not a one-day or a celebratory week, but an everyday kind of thing that we celebrate by living.

I hope you have enjoyed our story. Maybe you can think of even more ways that public health has improved your life. This message has been brought to you by the Alleghany County Health Department.

Radio Announcement by Heather Herman, RN, Health Educator  
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