



April 2009 Executive Report

Preparing for Possibility of Swine Flu Pandemic

The Galveston County Health District has been planning for the possibility of a pandemic flu for several years. As of April 29, 2009, there are no confirmed swine flu infections reported among Galveston County residents. The Health District has activated its pandemic flu plan which includes: (1) coordinating with state and federal response officials through daily conference calls and important updates on the development of swine flu cases in Texas and the nation; (2) working with local medical, school, and business groups; (3) performing active surveillance by calling hospitals, emergency rooms and private clinics to encourage testing of suspected cases and prompt reporting to the health district epidemiologist; (4) disseminating Health Alerts and Advisories to the medical community regarding signs and symptoms, how to test for swine flu, effective treatments, etc.; and (5) maintaining an update website of swine flu information at www.gchd.org. The Health District has identified several sites throughout the county that could be used for public vaccinations or for dispensing antiviral medications. Such mass dispensing would only occur if Galveston County was impacted and there is an effective vaccine/drug available in the federal stockpiles of medications for such emergencies. Dr. Guidry submitted a news column published April 29th in the *Galveston Daily News*, "Planning for the Possibility of a Swine Flu Pandemic" found at <http://www.gchd.org/press/2009/Planning%20for%20influenza%20column.htm>.

Update on Lack of Access to Care for Uninsured – Hospital Districts and More

On April 22 Dr. Mark Guidry made a presentation to Commissioner's Court in a workshop. Dr. Guidry outlined the current problem of limited healthcare services in Galveston County, especially for specialty care for the uninsured. There are several proposals that could fund such services if approved by the voters of Galveston County. Two proposals discussed include the formation of a Hospital District funded by property taxes and Health Care Pilot Program, HB 3852 by Representative Craig Eiland, would fund services via county-wide sales and use tax. For HB 3852, the state legislature would have to approve "busting the cap" on the allowable collection of sales and use tax in this county. This bill is currently in the Way and Means Committee at the state House. The Commissioners are considering forming a work group to study the proposals and make recommendation on how to educate various public groups. November is the earliest a proposed solution could be brought to county voters. Dr. Guidry was covered in the *Daily News* on April 23rd, found at www.gchd.org/press/2009/county-discusses-hospital-district.htm.

4C's Awarded Economic Stimulus Grant for Saturday Clinic

On March 27th, the Health District was notified that the 4C's application for the Increased Demand Service Economic Stimulus grant submitted to HRSA's Bureau of Primary Healthcare (BPHC) for \$453,329 was awarded. The Increased Demand Services Grant is designed to increase access to healthcare for the nation's un- and underinsured while also providing economic stimulus for the national economy. The clinic's proposal includes hiring an additional 8.2 full time employees over two years, including one physician, one dentist and an array of support staff as well as a part-time mental health counselor. The clinic in Texas City will increase its hours by an additional 7 hours weekly by adding a Saturday walk-in clinic tentatively scheduled to start on June 6, 2009. Medical and dental staff will provide urgent care within the usual scope of services. The grant will also provide funds for an accountant to manage this grant and provide other business support, supplies and minor equipment needs. Once operational needs are secured, a news release will be issued to the public.

Update on High Island Septic System Replacement

The High Island grant project where the Health District identified approximately 28 homes connected to a non-compliant sewage collection and treatment facility continues to move forward following a short work stoppage caused by Hurricane Ike. Project representatives have approved six (6) homeowners who met the financial requirements of the grant project and will pay for the design and installation of an approved septic system. A soil scientist was hired to determine soil types in the area that will be used by septic system planners in the design of the new septic systems. Marty Entringer accompanied the soil scientist in the initial soil studies. A certified septic system installer will be hired to install the new systems. On April 29th, a warning letter from Dr. Guidry was sent by certified mail to the remaining 22 homeowners urging their response by June 1st. To avoid enforcement fines, these remaining homeowners must either apply for grant funding or install a new septic system according to regulations.

Dangerous Dog Declared

Kim Schoolcraft, Animal Services Manager, filed a dangerous dog declaration for a Pitt Bull and Rottweiler that were running at large and bit a school aged child in the city of Dickinson. After an order by Judge Foster, the dogs were placed in care of animal shelter. Subsequently, the owner expressed interest in keeping the Rottweiler and was able to meet the policy requirements: maintain a secure enclosure that is approved by the Health District, place signage on her property that can be seen from the road, and purchase a 100,000 dollar liability insurance policy. The Health District's Animal Control Officers will make sure that the secure enclosure remains intact through frequent inspections. If this dog should get out of the enclosure and bites someone who has not provoked the animal, the owner can face criminal charges and state jail time.

Update on City of Galveston EMS Services

Since the United Board of Health issued a letter to the City of Galveston outlining financial deficits in Galveston EMS budget, District Staff met with Steve LeBlanc and City officials to discuss financial issues as well as the City's interest in an EMS service in

the fire department. The outcomes of the meeting were as follows: (1) City and GCHD CFO's will review the financial information and concerns and (2) a workgroup would be formed to study a proposed EMS service in the City fire department. Steve LeBlanc and Dr. Guidry selected the members of the workgroup which had an initial meeting and plans to meet again on May 6, 2009 to discuss the issues surrounding long term provision of EMS in Galveston. A joint message from Dr. Guidry and Carolyn Cox (Assistant City Manager) was distributed to employees to keep them informed.

Presentation of Hurricane IKE to State Health Department Advisory Council

At the request of the Texas Commissioner of Health, Dr. Guidry provided Hurricane Ike lessons learned to the State Health Services Council at their April 23 meeting in Austin. The presentation included a summary of various public health threats faced as a result of the Hurricane, the role of local health authorities in hurricane-related disasters, GCHD experiences and best practices in coordinating with state and federal partners, other lessons-learned, and long-term health consequences (e.g. loss of access to care for uninsured) and solutions currently being considered (e.g. taxing proposals for funding secondary and tertiary care of uninsured).

National Public Health Week Recognizes Community Partners and Heroes

The week of April 6th was National Public Health Week which GCHD observed at multiple events. A proclamation was issued April 8th by County Commissioners proclaiming it National Public Health Week in Galveston County, a health fair was held at Mall of the Mainland in Texas City which included a ceremony recognizing Hurricane Ike Public Health Heroes, and finally the District's annual Gold Ribbon Awards were presented at the Wayne Johnson Community Center that evening. A press release was issued March 31st that contains information on all of the events including the recipients of Ike Hero and Gold Ribbon awards. The release is posted at www.gchd.org/press/2009/Gold-Ribbon-09.htm. A photo of the Hurricane Ike Public Health Heroes is currently featured on the GCHD web page www.gchd.org. Photographs of Gold Ribbon recipients can be found at www.gchd.org/ech/goldribbon.htm.

Office of Public Information: *For more information, please contact Kurt Koopmann, Public Information Officer, at (409) 938-2211 or email (kkoopman@gchd.org).*

- The Texas Association of Local Health Officials requested that GCHD submit a brief article on the District's response to Hurricane Ike for their upcoming newsletter. The article as submitted can be found at: www.gchd.org/press/2009/TALHO-Article.htm.
- At the request of the *Galveston County Daily News* Dr. Guidry contributed a guest column providing information on what people should know in the event of an animal bite. The column submitted April 3rd can be found at www.gchd.org/press/2009/Rabies%20Prevention.htm. The column was published April 19th.

- The District's Annual Strategic Health Plan Report was announced in a press release issued April 7th. The report summarizes activities undertaken in 2008 and highlights areas to be addressed in 2009. The press release can be found in the press section of the District web site at www.gchd.org/press/2009/2008SHPReport.htm. The full report can be found at www.gchd.org/admin/strat08progress.htm. The information was published in the *Galveston County Daily News*.
- When news broke that President Obama's family would be adopting a dog there was great media interest. The *Galveston County Daily News* did a story on pet adoption that included an interview with Animal Services Manager Kim Schoolcraft. The April 8th story is posted at www.gchd.org/press/2009/adopt-pets.htm.

4C's Clinic Updates: *For more information, please contact Patrick Butler, 4C's Business Director, at (409) 949-3406 or email pbutler@gchd.org or Pam Jahnke, RN, Strategic Plan Evaluator at (409) 938-2256 or email pjahnke@gchd.org.*

- **4C's Collaboration with UTMB** - On April 16, Pam Jahnke, RN met with two case managers from the UTMB Community Health Program to discuss how this program can help 4C's patients. The clinics will refer patients that meet the criteria, those with a chronic condition such as diabetes or heart disease, uninsured and having been to UTMB for care in the past year. If enrolled, patients will receive case management, education and self-management goal setting and monitoring, assistance with social service referrals and access to specialty care at UTMB. The patients must be willing to work with the case manager, be financially screened and pay a co-pay for specialty services.
- **The Joint Commission Survey** - The Strategic Plan Evaluator submitted a "10 Day Clarification" to the Joint Commission (TJC) regarding two disputed findings from the March 1-2 unannounced visit. Results are pending. When the clinic receives the results on this portion of the survey, next corrective actions will be taken.
- **4C's Prepared for Swine Flu** - Clinic staff are responding to the Swine Flu outbreak with enhanced triage of symptomatic patients. Patients with fever (actual or subjective), or sore throat, cough, stuffy nose, chills, headache and body aches and nausea/vomiting or diarrhea are triaged according to a detailed triage and reporting form. Triage nurses are protected by special filter masks. Several patients have been tested for the flu and results are pending. Some patients have been prescribed medications that can treat the swine flu. Signage and patient education handouts on Swine Flu in English and Spanish have been developed.

Office of Community Health Services: *For more information, please contact Cassandra Arceneaux, MD, MPH, Director of Community Health Programs at (409) 938-2456 or email carceneaux@gchd.org.*

- **Health Fairs** – In the month of April, Community Health Services participated in the following six community events: 1) Education Symposium sponsored by The

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc, 2) Health & Fitness Fair sponsored by Christine Lawless, RN and certified aerobics Instructor, 3) Community Health & Safety Fair, sponsored by the City of Dickinson, Dickinson ISD & Mainland Medical Center, 4) the 19th Annual Teen Parent Roundup sponsored by Galveston County Teen Parenting Coalition, 5) the County Health Fair sponsored by The City of Galveston and UTMB, and 6) Open House & Health Fair sponsored by Metro City Kids Day Care. Over 783 people were informed about various GCHD services through these combined events.

- **Capital Testimony on First Responder Vaccination** - On March 31st, Cassandra Arceneaux MD, MPH, Deputy Health Authority, gave testimony at the State Capital in Austin, regarding Senate Bill 1328 relating to a study on the feasibility of providing vaccines to first responders deployed to a disaster area. This testimony was given on behalf of GCHD vaccination experience during Hurricane IKE, the Texas Public Health Coalition which includes 21 private, non-profit organizations, including the Texas Medical Association, and represents thousands of public health professionals and consumers in Texas.
- **UTMB Disaster Management: Learning from the Past-Planning for the Future - The Lessons of Hurricane Ike** – April 9th Cassandra Arceneaux MD, MPH, Deputy Health Authority, gave a short presentation along with UTMB faculty to UTMB students on lessons learned from Hurricane Ike. Over 100 students were in attendance.
- **UTMB Presentation** - Friday April 17, 2009 Cassandra Arceneaux MD, MPH Deputy Health Authority, gave a presentation during the Ninth Annual McLaughlin Symposium entitled, “**Emerging Infectious Diseases: Ethics, Law and Professional Obligation**”. The Symposium was held at the Galveston Island Convention Center at the San Luis Resort. Dr. Arceneaux spoke on Galveston County Health District’s responsibilities in the event of a pandemic flu outbreak. There was also a 30 minute question and answer session. The presentation was well received.

Office of Environmental Health Services: For more information, please contact Ronnie Schultz, Director of Environmental Health Services, at (409) 938-2314 or email rschultz@gchd.org

- **2009 Trash Bash** - Approximately 550 volunteers removed 4400 pounds of trash and debris, some left following Hurricane Ike from Skyline Drive near the now closed Texas City Dike. The volunteers were part of the 16th Annual Trash Bash Environmental Event that raises awareness of the harms associated with trash and debris illegally disposed of near natural waterways. Following the cleanup, volunteers were treated to hot dogs, chips and cookies and provided with a commemorative T-shirt. In addition, volunteers were invited to participate in an environmental exposition where environmental related products and services were showcased along with a multitude of environmental handouts.

- **Voluntary Mobile Emission Reduction Program** – Ronnie Schultz accompanied representatives from the Houston-Galveston Area Council (HGAC) as they presented to Commissioner’s Court about the objectives of the Voluntary Mobile Emission Reduction Program (VMERP). The objectives of the program are based on a list of voluntary measures that Local Governments can implement that will result in immediate real emission reductions and improved public health. Some of the voluntary emission reduction programs include: adoption of a clean fueled fleet policy, encouragement of alternative commuting solutions, increased bike trails, increased transit services, construction contracts that provide incentives when clean technology is used, increased enforcement of the smoking vehicle program, etc. HGAC asked the Commissioner’s Court to enter into an Interlocal Agreement adopting many of these voluntary emission reduction programs. Commissioner Holmes asked the Health District to assemble a committee to investigate these emission reduction commitments and deliver a proposal to the Court.
- **Houston Advancement Research Center** - The Houston Advanced Research Center (HARC) out of the Woodlands is working with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and several universities and research organizations to measure industrial emissions in the Houston Ship Channel and Texas City Industrial Park areas between April 15, 2009 and June 3, 2009. A multi-axis differential optical absorption spectrometer (MAX-DOAS) will be placed at the County Building at 25th and Texas to collect information about pollutant gases (specifically formaldehyde) and an aerosol lidar to determine the height of the (pollutant) boundary layer. An Aerodyne Mobile Laboratory will also be located at the Texas City site at various times throughout the measurement period to collect pollutant information to authenticate the data from the MAX-DOAS. Commissioner Holmes and Ronnie Schultz assisted HARC with the sitting of this equipment and access to electrical power. This cutting edge technology will provide researchers with important information on formaldehyde emissions and its importance as a catalyst in the formation of the pollutant ozone. The Board may remember that the Houston-Galveston area cannot attain the federal standard for ozone and has until 2019 to meet attainment or face federal sanctions.

Office of Emergency Medical Services: *For more information, please contact Mike Carr, JD, EMS Director, (409) 765-2524 or mcarr@ghcd.org*

- **Hurricane Preparedness Planning** – A group of GAAA employees have been working on applying lessons learned from Hurricane Ike, to the GAAA Hurricane plan. The GAAA staff will be trained on the plan during the May staff meeting. Highlights include clear function descriptions for all positions activated in the plan and assignment of responsible persons to the various plan functions at the beginning of seasonal vulnerability.
- **Special Event Standbys** – The summer special event season has begun with GAAA providing medical stand by for several special events including the Space Race which was anchored at Gulf Greyhound Park in La Marque and the Lone

Star Triathlon based at Moody Gardens, as well as several cheerleading and drill team competitions held at Moody gardens. Special events will continue through the year, predominately in the spring and summer months

- **Bolivar Recovery Planning** – GAAA staff are actively involved in assisting County Government and FEMA contractors in developing the “Bolivar Blueprint”, a long term recovery plan for the peninsula. Technical meetings, stakeholder sessions and public input have been completed and a plan is expected by the end of May that will address the long term recovery goals of the Bolivar peninsula.
- **UTMB Special Operations** – GAAA has been providing a dedicated MICU ambulance to UTMB’s “urgent care center” since mid-March. The unit is able to provide a high level of care to any patient that enters the urgent care center, but whose medical needs exceed the center capabilities. This operation is expected to continue into the summer until UTMB is able to open its Emergency Department.

Disease & Disaster Preparedness for additional information, contact Dana Beckham, DVM, Chief Epidemiologist, at (409) 938-2322 or email dbeckham@gchd.org.

Epidemiology Updates

- **Meningitis in Galveston County** - From March 26, 2009 thru April 21, 2009, the Health District’s Epidemiology Services received 6 suspect viral meningitis cases. Investigation of the cases revealed 1 of the 6 cases was confirmed as viral meningitis. Viral meningitis is an infection of the fluid of a person's spinal cord and the fluid that surrounds the brain. It is generally less severe than bacterial meningitis and resolves without specific treatment. Additional information on meningitis is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/viral/viral-faqs.htm>
- **2009 Lead Poisoning (Texas City)** - For 2009, GCHD has received 2 confirmed elevated blood lead level (EBLL) reports on Texas City residents. Both cases have been referred to Community Health Nursing for assessment and 1 has been referred for an Environmental Lead Investigation. All levels above 10 µg/dL warrants public health intervention consisting of a community health nurse assessment and lead poisoning education; levels above 20 µg/dL triggers an environmental assessment conducted on dwelling in which the child spends majority of time.
- **Flu Update** - The influenza (flu) activity level for Texas for the week ending April 4, 2009 was “local.” Local activity indicates that one Health Service Region in the State is experiencing an increase in influenza-like illness (ILI) and has recent laboratory confirmed influenza. Galveston County has received a total 102 lab confirmed influenza test reports for the 2008 -2009 influenza season (78 influenza A; 17 influenza B and 7 not differentiated (ND) influenza). Flu cases are confirmed by rapid test, culture, antigen detection or PCR.
- **Lyme Disease (Texas City)** - On April 2nd, Epidemiology Services completed an investigation regarding a Lyme disease case in Galveston County. The case involved a 48-year-old Hispanic male from Texas City. Serological testing using a Western Blot methodology confirmed the diagnosis. According to the CDC, the

bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi* causes Lyme disease that transmits to humans from infected blacklegged tick bites. Symptoms include fever, headache, and a characteristic skin rash (erythema migrans). If left untreated the infection can spread to joints, the heart and the nervous system. Galveston County averages 1 to 3 cases of Lyme Disease per year.

- **Mold/*Aspergillus* Surveillance in Galveston County** - Mainland Medical Center reported an unusual expression of patients diagnosed with mold/*Aspergillus* since Hurricane Ike. Due to this expression, Epidemiology Services is monitoring cases involving mold and it's correlation with the health of Galveston County residents. So far, Mainland Medical Center has reported a total of 22 cases for Galveston County. Cases are confirmed by lab reports that indicate the presence of mold growth in the bronchial secretions of affected patients.
- **Hospice Care Presentation in Texas City** - On April 9, 2009, Epidemiology Services presented an in-service to 35 staff members of the Hospice Care Team in Texas City on infections in the community and disease reporting. This in-service is required for the Hospice Care Team continuing education and accreditation.

Preparedness Update:

- **Staff attended a variety of trainings:** The Regional Strategic National Stockpile Exercise Planning group discussed the scenario for the upcoming June full scale exercise to take place; WebEOC Training to give emergency management personnel hands-on experience working on the computer at the EOC during an emergency incident; Integrated Medical Public Health, Preparedness and Response (PHP) Training Summit for developing training plans, effective leadership, increasing volunteer membership, clinical care mass fatality response, public health preparedness and response and response teams; Galveston County Emergency Response Collaborative (GCERC) guest speaker was Lieutenant Philip Meadows, Santa Fe Police department, who discussed the role the police department plays during an emergency event incident.

Signed RFP's, Grants, Contracts & Agreements *For more information, please contact Kristina M. Garcia, JD, Compliance Auditor, at (409) 938-2213 or email kgarcia@gchd.org.*

- **Contract with the Managing Pharmacist for the 4C's Clinics**, Don DePasqual, R.Ph., d/b/a DePasqual Enterprises was renewed by COO on March 30, 2009. The term of this agreement is April 1, 2009 through July 31, 2009. Payment of services will remain the same as previous contract at the rate of \$24,771 per month and shall not exceed \$99,084 during the 4-month period.
- **Pure Water Supply contract** was signed by COO on April 7th. The prices are valid for one year. Once a week, water will be replenished at seven District locations at 5 gallon refill \$1.90 each, distilled water refills 5 gallons at \$3.59 each.
- **Clinical Information Repository and Sharing Agreement with The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston** was signed by COO April 13, 2009.

This agreement is associated with UTMB's pilot program project and their web-based master patient index designed to facilitate and coordinate the allocation and use of limited resources regarding patient care between our organizations. The agreement is good unless cancelled.

- **Maintenance Agreement on the Tabletop Collator with Riso, Inc. Digital Printing** was signed by COO on April 15, 2009. Annual base contract amount of \$178,750. The term is May 22, 2009 to May 21, 2010.
- **The Public Health Lab Supplies bid was awarded to Government Scientific and Idexx** by COO on April 24, 2009. This is a one year bid award effective April 27, 2009.
- **Lease Agreement with Dixie Partners II, L.P for the Dickinson Plaza Shopping Center Community Health Services WIC office** was signed by COO on April 24th. Lease term is for 10 years. The Base Rent for years 1-5 is \$5,000 per month and for years 6-10 the rent will increase by \$500 to \$5,500 per month. In addition to the Base Rate, \$1,023 is paid monthly for taxes, insurance and maintenance of the space. The office space is approximately 5,000 square feet.