

Health Department releases annual report

Commissioner predicts growth and positive change in 2015

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The Galion Health Department released its 2014 annual report on Tuesday.

"The past year has brought several significant challenges for us including discussions regarding the long-term objectives for public health in Galion, and staff turnover in leadership positions," Health Commissioner Trish Factor said in the report. "These challenges provided opportunities to consider what is most important about the services we provide and how we provide them to our community at large."

After months of discussion, the agency decided to continue as an independent operation, rather than combining with the Crawford County Health Department. However, Factor noted that the staff began collaborating with partners throughout the county in order to assess the health needs of the community.

One of the major examples of that collaboration is the Community Health Assessment, in which dozens of local organizations are involved, including Avita Health System and the Crawford County Education and Economic Development Partnership.

Factor also said that

a health department does more than food inspections and flu shots. Ten essential public health services the department provides are:

1. Monitor the community's health status to identify potential problems.
2. Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards.
3. Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.
4. Mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems.
5. Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts.
6. Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety.
7. Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.
8. Assure competent public and personal health care workforce.
9. Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility and quality of personal and population-based health services.
10. Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

"We have begun work

to improve and expand upon the services that we offer, including preventing injuries and chronic disease. We are poised for growth and positive changes in our programs and services," she stated.

Disease and vital statistics

The annual report includes a spotlight on Hepatitis C. Through a free testing program sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control, the department tested 47 adults for the disease last year, resulting in 25 positive cases.

The free testing has since been discontinued. "It was offered one time through the state. That's how we were able to offer the testing," Factor explained.

They are waiting to see if the program will be reinstated. In the meantime, hospitals continue to test for Hepatitis C and submit results to the health department.

There were also 69 reported cases of Chlamydia in 2014. Factor said the disease is high in most counties because of how easily it can be transmitted, but it is treatable.

There were 381 registered births at Galion Community

Hospital. The breakdown of where the parents were from was: 86 from Galion, 92 from Bucyrus, 40 from Crestline, 61 from other parts of Crawford County and 102 from out of county.

There were 198 deaths within Crawford County last year. Top three causes of death were diseases of the circulatory system (heart attack, stroke, etc.), diseases of the respiratory system (ones that cause distress to the heart and lungs) and cancer.

Three of those deaths had drug overdose reported as the main cause.

Last year the Health Department issued 113 food service licenses and provided 35 low-cost car seats to eligible families.

As far as environmental health, 102 public nuisances were reported and 92 of them were resolved. Eight-five percent of the nuisances involved trash, while food and sewage were the next two common complaint types.

The full report is available at www.galionhealth.org.

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