

Public Health Week Editorial  
By Amy Phelps

April 3-9 is National Public Health Week, a time to celebrate Public Health, and all of the work it does for the community. That work often gets overlooked, and yet is quietly running in the background of the public's lives, helping to keep its members safe and healthy.

Your local health department - The Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department - is more than just COVID vaccines, as all of Public Health has been associated with in the past three years. The Health Department's work impacts everyone every day in many ways that might not be thought about immediately, and in six counties: Wood, Wirt, Roane, Calhoun, Pleasants and Ritchie.

Have you eaten at a restaurant lately? The Environmental Health workers have inspected them to make sure they are serving you safely. They have trained employees in food handling classes. And that's not all - they also do indoor air inspections and enforce the Clean Indoor Air regulations. When fair and festival season comes around, they have checked all of the food vendors to make sure they too are serving food properly.

Want to enjoy a pool or campground this summer? Once again, Environmental Health workers have been there, ensuring proper operating practices of both.

Thinking of getting a tattoo, piercing or tan? Those establishments have also been inspected by Environmental Health to make sure they are keeping everyone safe and healthy.

Does your house use a septic system or water well? Those too have been inspected by Environmental Health.

The Clinical department is kept busy by giving out plenty of vaccines that have nothing to do with COVID - including 1,876 flu vaccines given in 2022. They are there to make sure children and teens get the vaccines they need to go to school, with appointments all summer long so they are ready when the first day approaches. For anyone wanting to travel outside the country, they are there to give the necessary vaccinations.

But they are more than just vaccine givers. Clinical also performed 1,385 sexually transmitted disease/HIV screenings and treatments in 2022. They handled tuberculosis screenings and treatments that year as well. They continuously provide breast and cervical cancer screenings for women. Their Oral Health department also routinely gives screenings for tooth decay.

WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Services is also a part of the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department. WIC provides nutrition education and counseling, breastfeeding support, health screenings/referrals and more to pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women and children up to age 5 throughout MOVHD's six counties, as well as Jackson, Mason and Gilmer Counties. In 2022, they had a monthly caseload of 4098.

The Community Health and Threat Preparedness Departments are also there to help the members of the community with educational resources to protect their health. Community Health is launching its updated Step Up MOV program with free exercise classes for the community that add health education to the mix, MOV Ruck Club which adds weight to walking for a better workout, and looks to continue to add programming to help everyone achieve better health. Threat Preparedness stands by to respond to public health emergencies with its response team as well as trained volunteers.

Administration and Finance works with all of these departments to ensure we can provide these services. Everyone works together as part of a large team with one goal in mind - the health and safety of our communities.

The Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department continues to be a vital part of its communities. This Public Health Week, let's acknowledge the hard work and dedication its employees and all of Public Health have done every day to better everyone's health, long before and long after COVID.

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