

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT
2013 Annual Report

In 2012, the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment provided many services that enhance the quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors to the community. The Division of Public Health is what many traditionally think of when listing public health activities and encompasses several programs: an Immunization clinic, the WIC Supplemental Food and Nutrition Education Program, an STD Clinic, the distribution of Vital Records, Health Promotion and Education, and Communicable Disease investigation. The Division of Environmental Health and Protection promotes healthy conditions and reduces public risks through the inspection and licensing of food service and other public service providers; mosquito and pest control; and natural resource management. The Division of Humane Services and its Pet Adoption Center promote the health and safety of pets and people in St. Charles County through education, adoptions and animal welfare enforcement.

For the third consecutive year, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute study rated St. Charles County among Missouri's healthiest counties. In the annual County Health Rankings, St. Charles County placed first in the state for Health Outcomes and second in Health Factors. Noting a premature death rate below state and national benchmarks, high graduation rates and access to outstanding medical care, the rankings further the notion that this county is an excellent location to raise a family.

In March, the department upgraded its efficiency by teaming with VitalChek Network Inc., to begin offering certified birth and death records online. Prior to this arrangement, those seeking these important records needed to come to the department office, complete an application and wait a few minutes for the order to be processed. Now, through the arrangements with VitalChek, immediate family members of those who were born or died in Missouri can complete an application on their home computers and receive these certificates by mail for a small convenience fee.

Coordinated by health department staff in partnership with representatives from more than 40 agencies throughout Missouri and Illinois, an exercise in June illustrated how St. Charles County would respond to a biological terrorism incident in our community. Following the County's response plan for this type of incident, the department established a drive-through Point of Dispensing (POD) site to simulate the distribution of prophylactic medication to the public. Despite the fact that the exercise occurred on the hottest day of the summer, more than 200 county residents participated in the drill.

That summer's extreme heat did cast a pall on the community, as St. Charles County recorded its first heat-related fatality in several years. The medical examiner confirmed that a 64-year-old male resident was found inside his mobile home on July 7.

In September, the Division of Environmental Health and Protection's Recycle Works locations introduced Re-Use Mercantile shops that give additional value to items that may have otherwise ended up in area landfills. Materials in the monthly sale are comprised from items collected by the facilities throughout the year, including electronics, appliances, sporting equipment and government surplus. Along with fully functioning or restored devices, customers at the sales can also pick up parts to enhance their existing goods. The sales occur on the third Wednesday of each month (and the Saturday that follows) at both Recycle Works Central in St. Charles and Recycle Works West in Wentzville.

The Division of Public Health works in cooperation with local, state and federal agencies to improve the well-being of St. Charles County residents. The Immunization Clinic administered vaccinations to more than 8,000 residents in 2012 and expanded its services to provide additional free or low-cost vaccinations to children and adults. The division's Health Education program presented nearly 1,000 programs on subjects such as nutrition and fitness, smoking cessation, CPR and First Aid, parenting and child care, STD prevention and more to over 14,000 citizens. Additionally, WIC resources were administered to approximately 1,900 participants each month, and more than 30,000 certified copies of birth or death records were issued. The Communicable Disease staff investigated 821 reportable disease cases and successfully controlled four illness outbreaks during the year.

The Division of Environmental Health and Protection enhances our community by promoting healthy conditions and reducing environmental risks. In June, Ryan Tilley was promoted to division director, replacing Pieter Sheehan. The division conducted more than 1,700 restaurant inspections to ensure food-service safety and recognized seven county eateries as **24 Carrot Gold Food Safety Excellence Award** winners for demonstrating outstanding stewardship. Complementing curbside services, the Recycle Works locations collected more than two million pounds of recyclable material.

Operating the popular Pet Adoption Center and managing the County's Animal Control Ordinance, the Division of Humane Services provides support for animals and their owners. The Pet Adoption Center found new homes for nearly 1,900 pets during the year, and the Animal Control staff reunited 804 lost pets with their families. The spay and neuter program for low-income households cared for 146 animals, while the popular Sterile Feral program treated an additional 253 wild cats to help control overpopulation. Improvements to the facility extended an outdoor play area, painted kennel areas and enhanced a sanitization zone in the feeding area.

While a number of positive events and improvements occurred throughout the year, the department staff was saddened by the passing of their esteemed director, Gil Copley, in November. A public health advocate, and mentor to many, Copley transformed the department into the highly respected entity it has become through gentle guidance and support during his directorship that began in 1996.