



THE NORTH SHORE Health Department



Ann Christiansen (left)



The public health system is comprised of governmental agencies and private organizations that focus on preventing people from getting sick or injured while promoting health and safety by addressing the physical environment and health-related behaviors. The North Shore Health Department (NSHD) is the agency that provides this service to us as a community-wide, public health resource whose mission is to improve health, prevent disease, and safeguard the environment.

Effective January 1, 2012, the NSHD (Bayside, Brown Deer, Fox Point, Glendale, and River Hills) consolidated with the Shorewood-Whitefish Bay Health Department. Under a shared services arrangement, the now combined NSHD serves all seven North Shore communities. It has two clinics that are staffed Monday through Friday from 8am to 4:30pm in the Brown Deer municipal building at 4800 W. Green Brook Drive and in the Shorewood Library at 2010 East Shorewood Boulevard.

The NSHD is organized and administered as a department of the Village of Brown Deer. The 2016 budget is \$734,245. Each constituent community shares in the cost with Fox Point's contribution for 2016 at \$27,757. The NSHD also receives grant funding and revenue from its clinical and license fees.

The NSHD is overseen by a board of health led by a licensed medical adviser, long-time Fox Point resident Dr. Gary S. Lewis, and members appointed by the village presidents or mayor of each community. Former trustee Bill Warner is Fox Point's representative. The staff consists of a health officer, Ann Christiansen, MPH, an administrative assistant, a registered sanitarian, registered public health nurses, and a program manager. Apart from Dr. Lewis, the staff consults frequently with Dr. Claudia Altman (infectious disease) and Dr. Debesh Mazumdar (nephrology), and its board of health representatives.

The NSHD works closely with allied state agencies including the Department of Health Services and the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection.

The NSHD offers a variety of state mandated, grant funded, and fee supported programs and services involving communicable and chronic disease prevention and control, environmental health, emergency preparedness, injury prevention, and community health improvement.

Let's take a look at a few of these.

The NSHD's clinics offer a variety of services including vaccinations, blood pressure screenings, adult health risk screenings, and flu shots. Some services are free while others are available at affordable fees.

In addition, the NSHD offers news and information about public health issues such as the Zika virus, e-cigarettes, radon, and lead in paint or residential water.

Other services include animal bite issues and the quarantine of cats and dogs, Doctors Park, Klode Park, and Atwater Beach water testing, communicable disease control, and information regarding flu, measles, mumps, norovirus, pertussis (whooping cough), bedbugs, lice, E. coli, cryptosporidium, and other infectious agents.

To provide health-related information and education, the staff regularly participates in local events such as farmers markets, National Night Out, and health fairs with the aim to decrease the incidence of preventable diseases and the prevalence of high cholesterol, heart disease, stroke, and food or water-borne illnesses.

The staff does licensing and inspection for food establishments, public swimming facilities, and hotels along with complaint-based investigations involving those matters or other human health hazards or nuisances.

The staff prepares for emergency situations by participating in regional planning and exercises for natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and man-made emergencies, and by providing public education about home, family, and business preparedness.

Registered nurses are available for visits to families with newborns, the elderly, or others with select health concerns. Child injury prevention services include on-staff certified car seat technicians who, upon request, will perform inspections.

In addition, the NSHD disseminates information concerning sharps disposal and medication drop-off sites.

Either clinic can be reached at 414-371-2980. The NSHD's website, www.nshealthdept.org, is also an excellent resource for information concerning most common health and safety issues.

The NSHD is an important resource for all of us to know about and use.

Douglas H. Frazer is a trustee on the Fox Point Village board. The views expressed are his own and not necessarily those of the village, the village board, other village board members, or Best Version Media, LLC.