

# Reviews Activities of Martin County Health Department

## Health Unit Rapidly Gaining in Importance

### General Health Is Boosted By Office In Past 12 Months

#### Report of the Department's Work Is Submitted by Former Officer

Success marked the operation of the Martin County Health Department during the past year, Dr. F. E. Wilson points out in his annual report just recently released. Taking over the work in the early part of 1939, Dr. Wilson extended the program and materially increased the health program as it related to the general public. Resigning his post as of January 1, this year, Dr. Wilson completed on his own time a statistical survey which is advanced in the general report, as follows:

The year, 1939, has completed the first full calendar year for statistical data from the Martin County Health Department, and it has been a year of successful public health work. Advancements have been made in every phase of our work, and these have come about especially from the splendid cooperation of the personnel of the department, the board of health, and the general public. The Martin County Board of Commissioners, the Enterprise Publishing Company, and many interested individual citizens of the county deserve due credit for their stimulating encouragement in the promotion of the general health of the people.

This report covering the major phases of our activities for the year is not intended as a statistical report but as an explanation of the principle programs carried out. The report will be listed under the several heads:

#### Communicable Disease Control

A number of years previous to this organized clinics for the mass immunization of the public against typhoid fever had been established. This year clinics were set up in every section of the county for the immunization of both colored and white for complete immunization against typhoid fever and diphtheria. The total number of persons receiving the complete protection against typhoid were 8178, and for diphtheria 1647. There were 2124 successful smallpox vaccinations given and it is now estimated that better than 95 per cent of all children in the elementary grades have been vaccinated against this disease. This is particularly noteworthy since there is no law of compulsory vaccination in the county.

Conscientious efforts were made through newspaper articles, nursing visits, quarantine of communicable diseases, and by personal interview to stimulate more adequate reporting of contagious diseases. These efforts produced good results, but they are still not adequate.

A tuberculosis clinic was maintained the first of the year with 354 persons attending and from these 341 were given X-ray examinations through the cooperation of the State Tuberculosis Sanatorium and the sale of Christmas seals. Nursing service was rendered to every case of tuberculosis reported.

#### Veneral Disease Control

The most outstanding achievement for the year was the increased service and control of syphilis. An additional part-time nurse and clerk were added to the staff and paid from funds through the Federal Veneral Disease Control Act. During the year 9015 individual treatments were given for syphilis, free of charge, and 2001 blood tests for the disease were taken. The average number of treatments per patient was 28. The

local medical profession cooperated in assuming responsibility of the actual treatments given these patients, with one clinical physician in Williamston and one in Robersonville. By this cooperation the health officer was able to offer administrative help.

A booklet written by the health officer and approved by the State Board of Health was published and distributed to every physician in the county. This booklet included administrative procedures for the control of syphilis as outlined by recent legislative acts.

#### Maternity and Infant Service

One clinic each month was held for the examination of pre-natal women, newborn infants and post-partum examinations. This service increased remarkably during the year with a total of 259 such examinations being made at the clinic. This clinic also served as an educational institution in giving advice and pamphlets to these mothers. The reduction of the maternal and infant mortality is the chief concern of this clinic. An additional M. and I. center was approved for Jamesville with services to start the first of 1940. The local physicians also assisted in the conduction of this clinic.

Efforts were made for the establishment of a birth control clinic for the county, but so far this program has not been carried out. It is now pending the decision from a sponsoring agency.

Nine meetings were conducted for instructing the 32 midwives in the county. These midwives were examined and issued certificates after formal instructions were given. A public health nurse from the State Board of Health was assigned to this department for six weeks for this work.

#### Pre-School and School Hygiene

Pre-school clinics were conducted in all the white schools for the examination and immunization of all children entering school for the first time in 1939. This service included the examination of 149 white children and notification to the parents of any physical defects noted.

The health officer examined 3707 school children for physical defects and this constituted the first complete examination of all children in the first, third and sixth grades. Out of 2314 children examined 70 per cent were found to have physical defects, and about 70 per cent of those with defects were found to be from preventable causes. It was estimated that the cost of these preventable defects in repeating grades was over \$25,000 per year. Since the beginning of the fall term of school the children in all the elementary grades of the white schools, except the first grade, were given visual tests. The results of these tests will be given in a special report.

Whooping cough was responsible for more absences than any other communicable disease. An epidemic of pink eye swept through the Williamston and nearby schools but was short-lived. The nutrition of the children as a whole was fairly good.

A dental program was carried out in the white schools by a dentist from the Division of Oral Hygiene. 2069 inspections were made, with 1058 prophylactic treatments given, and 1072 children received treatment for dental caries. A four weeks program was approved for dental work in the colored schools but no colored dentist was available for this week. This four weeks' program, having been paid for, will be added to this service during 1940.

An illumination survey was made of the classrooms in many of the schools, but since so many were entirely without artificial illumination there was no use in continuing this service. However, a report of the conditions found was mailed to the members of the county school board.

For the first time in Martin County the school bus drivers were given visual tests before being permitted to drive the buses. One-third of all applicants examined were found to have defective vision and were denied the privilege of driving the school children. The grand jury investigated this procedure and commended the health department for this service and recommended a continuance each year. The health officer had this report published in the State Health Bulletin, and it was later published in "The Health Officer," an official publication of the U. S. Public Health Service.

#### Health Education

Public lectures, talks, or demonstrations were made on every one of the different phases of public health work. These talks were made in 116 performances to 4180 persons attending for this purpose or in scheduled meetings. Through the cooperation of the Virginia Electric Power company, a home demonstration agent made many talks before P.T.A. meetings for the purpose of sight conservation and illumination. There were 59 newspaper articles about public health work published in the Enterprise and other newspapers read in Martin County. Also, there were 1515 circular letters and 2732 pamphlets on health distributed from the health department.

A special exhibit was prepared for the Martin County Fair and was located in a booth for public display. The booth showed the clinic set-up for the treatment of syphilis, a telebinocular for the examination of eyes, and an exhibit on dental care.

A 16mm motion picture showing the different phases of public health work in Martin County was started but was unfinished at the close of the

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## Division of Sanitation Has Splendid Record

### Hundreds Of Newly Built Privies Dot the County's Landscape

#### Withdrawal of WPA Forces Last November Interrupts Valuable Work

A marked blow was directed against unsanitary conditions in this county last year, according to the annual report released by Dr. F. E. Wilson covering activities of the Martin County Health Department for the past year. The report as it relates to sanitation and vital statistics follows:

A community sanitation program through the cooperation of the WPA was conducted until November 1, 1939, with a total of 328 sanitary privies installed. This project was discontinued due to the scarcity of available WPA labor.

During the summer a sanitation campaign was carried out by the towns of Hamilton and Williamston for the elimination of breeding places for flies, gnats and rats. The cooperation of all merchants in these towns was obtained in keeping back lots free from garbage and high weeds, and in the promotion of general cleanliness.

A new swimming pool with filters and a circulation system was built in Williamston and the health department assisted in adjusting the chemical qualities of the water and in formulating rules for the sanitary maintenance of the pool.

Realizing the need for a safe milk supply the board of health passed a county-wide milk ordinance which conformed to the standard milk ordinance of the U. S. Public Health Service. At this same time they passed an ordinance regarding the installation of sanitary plumbing and septic tanks. The two laws will have beneficial effects on the future development of both the milk and the plumbing industries from a public health standpoint.

In December the health officer and the sanitation officer called a meeting of all the dairymen in the county for the promotion of an adequate and safe supply of milk, and the possibility of establishing a pasteurization plant. This was the first meeting of the dairymen ever held. It was so successful that an organization of these men was planned for future meetings.

#### Vital Statistics

There were 625 live births and 14 stillbirths reported during the year, with 151 deaths from all causes. Deaths from communicable diseases were as follows: tuberculosis, 16; diphtheria, 3, and whooping cough 1. Of the reportable diseases syphilis was first with 283 cases reported for

## Cites Duties And Activities of Public Nurses In County

### Varied Work Is Carried On By Department Nurses

Supplementing the annual report of activities of the Martin County Health Department to the board of commissioners recently, Dr. John W. Williams, health officer, outlined the activities and duties of the health nurses of the department, as follows:

In this county, as in most of the County Health Departments of North Carolina, the nurses attempt to carry out a generalized program which includes:

Interpretation of the principles of healthful living for the promotion of health and the prevention of disease.

Home visits to teach someone in the home to give nursing care to the sick.

Nursing care during pregnancy and to the mother and new-born baby after delivery.

Supervision of the infant and pre-school child through home visits and group conferences.

Supervision of the health and ha-

the first time, and whooping cough next with 236 new cases. There were 20 cases of diphtheria and five of scarlet fever. This shows a marked reduction in these specific diseases over the previous year, with the exception of syphilis, which shows an increase of cases reported.

### Lists Menu In The Local Schools For Coming Week

Monday, Jan. 22: plate lunch, 10c, ham, cabbage, sweet potatoes, stewed prunes, corn bread, dessert, jello and cream; banana salad, 5c; pi-mento sandwiches, 5c.

Tuesday, Jan. 23: plate lunch, 10c, beef steak, navy beans, marshmallows potatoes, pickles, hot rolls, dessert, cup cakes; Waldorf salad, 5c; banana sandwiches, 5c.

Wednesday, Jan. 24: plate lunch, 10c, baked chicken and dressing, green peas, mashed potatoes, hot rolls, pickles, dessert, lemon tarts; chicken salad, 5c; tomato and lettuce sandwiches, 5c.

Thursday, Jan. 25: plate lunch, 10c, roast pork, potato salad, string beans, carrots, bread, dessert, chocolate pudding; potato salad, 5c; raisin and nut sandwiches, 5c.

Friday, Jan. 26: plate lunch, 10c, liver, corn, baked potatoes, carrot and cabbage salad, hot rolls, dessert, cup cakes; pineapple salad, 5c; pi-mento sandwiches, 5c.

bits of the school child, including assistance in the control of communicable diseases and the correction of physical defects in cooperation with physicians, school personnel and parents.

Supervision of the health of adults especially in regards to prevention and retardation of those diseases specific to adult life.

Teaching and demonstration of the prevention and control of communicable diseases including tuberculosis, syphilis and gonorrhea in clinics, conferences and homes.

Supervision of midwives. Assisting with tuberculosis, venereal disease, maternity and infancy, and immunization clinics, pre-school and school examinations.

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