

Past To Present

Healthy Living In Duplin County

By L.H. Sikes

One of the most meaningful of the many special observances proclaimed in the country each year is Public Health Week. Governor Hunt has proclaimed the week of April

8-14 as Public Health Week in North Carolina.

The reasons for having this week so designated are threefold.

The first is to bring the public health services available to the attention of the people. Second is to attempt to create public awareness concerning the important role of public health by encouraging healthy lifestyles and promotion good health. And third is to promote a better understanding as to what public health is all about, and how the community and individual citizens can participate or improve all of our lives.

The Beginnings of Public Health

The concepts of Public Health have been around for a long time, longer than most people realize. Too few people are aware of the extent of public health's contributions to their health and welfare. Looking back, it can be seen that general public health concepts are by no means "new ideas." It's hard to believe that in the year 1513, the first health ordinances were passed in the New World. They were in Santo Domingo. (In the Middle Ages in England, things were quite different from today. Diseases were widespread; the "plague" comes to mind. The concepts of ordinary sanitation and public health were basically unknown. The origins of most diseases were not known. It is said that it was impolite to even take a bath. The city streets were used as toilets and were nothing more than open, flowing sewers. Illness was rampant. What we know today as "minor" infections were lethal then.)

In 1610 the first hygiene law was established in North America in the Virginia Colony; in 1712 the General Assembly of Carolina created the first position of State Health officer in North America.

In 1793 the first local Board of Health in the U.S. was created in Baltimore and in 1798, the Marine Hospital Service was set up and evolved into the U.S. Public Health Service in 1912.

In 1855, the state of Louisiana established the first State Board of Health in the U.S. and in 1881 New York state enacted the first effective Food Control laws in the U.S.

In 1908, Jefferson County in Kentucky and Guilford County in North Carolina established the first two full-time county health units.

In 1934, minimum restaurant sanitation regulations were proposed as a part of the code of fair competition for the restaurant industry.

The above dates are just a few of the important dates in the history of Public Health. Another significant date that should be mentioned is 1959. In that year, North Carolina became the first state to legislate compulsory immunization against polio.

Duplin County Health Services History

The Duplin County Health Department was organized on July 2, 1934. It has been said that either Dr. J.C. Grady or Col. Owen Hill Kenan were practicing a little public health work part-time as early as 1892. This is the first evidence of a public health service in Duplin County.

The health department first began operations in the basement of the old

Kenansville Elementary school. This apparently did not work out too well, and sometime later the offices were moved to the Gooding building. This building, now torn down, was the two-story structure located across the street from the drugstore, next to the Duplin Times newspaper office. The offices were on the second floor until they moved to the present location in 1954.

In 1948, a fire in the Gooding Building destroyed practically all records. For this reason, it is almost impossible to determine who the employees were or anything else pertaining to the local health department during that period.

Thomas Waters of Warsaw was probably the county's first sanitarian. He was working in the 1930s and 1940s inspecting food service, water supplies, outside toilets and driving the "clap wagon." This was an interesting vehicle. During the late 1930s, the "clap wagon" was a mobile venereal disease treatment center that made rounds throughout the county. This was the pre-penicillin era, so the treatment was not so easy as it is today.

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Duplin County Health Department Staff 1955

These are the members of the health department staff in 1955, made shortly after the completion of the new clinic/office complex. Left to right are: Joe Lee Costin, Ruby Kornegay, Helen Ballard, Mary Lee Sykes,

Melba Sumner, Norma Hill Candrena, Rosemond Brock, William Byrd, Sarah Inez Barclay Hodges and Dr. John Powers. Not shown, Donnie Outlaw

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Keeping Records

Lula Williams, clerk, is shown above registering one of the many clients that use the services that are available. Accurate records are kept on file in a new record filing system and all services are explained in detail.



1954 Photo

This photo, made in 1954, shows the foundation being laid for the new Duplin County Health Department facilities. The modern brick structure was the headquarters for the clinics and the offices and is still in service after 30 years. Additions were made to the building in 1970 and an A-frame roof added in 1984.



Environmental Health Staff

Shown above are L.H. Sikes and Ronnie Kennedy reviewing plans for a new structure. Plan review is only one of the many responsibilities of this section of the Health Department. Restaurant inspections, water supplies, day care centers, milk survey inspections, rabies control, sewage disposal, hospital inspections, nursing home and rest home inspections, and many other categories are listed as their duties. Sam Glasgow, not pictured, is the other member of the environmental health staff.



Teaching The Young

Grace Newton, public health dental hygienist, is shown teaching plaque control to a group of students in elementary school. Mrs. Newton teaches dental health and prevention in all of the elementary schools. She is also available in the weekly Child Health Screening clinic at the health department to counsel with children and parents on dental needs. She is also the coordinator for the fluoride program in the county. Duplin County has seven schools with flouridated water.

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April 14



Warsaw United Methodist Church

Recreation Opportunities In Warsaw

- ☐ Volunteers are needed for the Duplin County Special Olympics to be held on Wed., April 11 at Clement Park in Wallace.
- ☐ Volunteers, Riders & Sponsors are needed for the Leukemia Bike-A-Thon to be held Saturday, April 14.
- ☐ Girls, 13-18 yrs., Register for Duplin County Softball April 16 & 17 from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. at Thompson's Gymnasium.
- ☐ Men's and Church Co-Rec Softball Registration deadline - Friday, April 13 - Thompson's Gymnasium & Town Hall.

For further information contact Debbie Sherrill 293-7182

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