

## Board of Health Annual Report

The Southampton Health Department has had another very busy year with numerous accomplishments. We put the finishing touches on our project to remove about 125,000 used tires from an illegal tire dump immediately upgradient of the Town's public water supply; all within budget. We're very pleased with our contractor, John E. Lavalley & Sons, of Palmer, Mass; and our consulting engineering firm of Environmental Compliance Service, Inc. of Agawam, Mass. By removing the tires we have eliminated a very serious potential threat to our water supply. This is particularly important now that the town has operated entirely for the past year from this water supply. The final report on this work is in the Edward's Library for public review.

Emergency preparedness is a major focal point for the Southampton Health Department this year. We were asked by the Massachusetts Dept. of Public Health, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety, and the U.S. Office of Domestic Preparedness to complete lengthy surveys and needs assessments regarding emergency preparedness for our Town. All of this has come under Homeland Security. As the result of these needs assessments we expect there to be grant funding for the Health Department and possibly other Town Departments to ensure that we are prepared to respond to any natural disasters, medical emergencies, or bioterrorism.

We are an active member of the Hampshire Public Health Preparedness Coalition which includes about 20 cities and towns who are all working on emergency preparedness as it specifically relates to our own communities and mutual regional aid. We are also collaborating with the City of Easthampton and the Town of Westhampton on a Medical Reserve Corps federal grant. This will consist of local medical professionals who would be in place to supplement public emergency medical services. In the future we will be looking for volunteers to serve in this capacity.

The Health Department continues to proceed with a cancer study in the Ponds area of Town by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. This was an outgrowth of the TCE contamination of the Barnes Aquifer from which all of the drinking water in the easterly section of town was drawn by private household wells until 1997 when the Southampton Water Department extended public water service to the Ponds area. We encourage everyone to connect to Town water for their families safety.

The Health Department also ran a flu clinic again in conjunction with the town of Easthampton which was highly successful. At this point. However, we are unable to predict whether or not another flu clinic may be possible for this coming flu season because of state and local funding cutbacks.

Failing septic systems which might otherwise not be repaired in a timely manner (or not at all) are being taken care of through our septic system loan program. We are now distributing loan money for this purpose from a second zero interest loan from the Massachusetts Pollution Abatement Trust. This has been a very successful program for the town of Southampton. Safety and environmental improvements have resulted from this program because the town is entirely serviced by household septic systems, since there are no sanitary sewers installed in the community. Many families have used this program.

We continue to keep abreast of potentially harmful situations like the West Nile Virus and the new life threatening Sars virus which has come out of China recently. Tuberculosis and Hepatitis C are of great concern to the health community. Rabies is also a matter of continuing concern with the Health Department.

The solid waste transfer/recycling station on Moose Brook Road at the site of the old landfill continues to operate well. The bottle collection scholarship program is right on track this year. We continue to operate at a very high percentage recycling rate. The solid waste transfer/recycling station is open 30 hours per week, between the hours of 7:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

The Southampton Board of Health is very actively engaged in keeping up with the demanding charge of "protecting the health, safety, and welfare" of the citizens of Southampton. We are attending various workshops and seminars presented throughout the year by the State DEP and Department of Health, Mass. Health Officers Association, and the Mass. Association of Health Boards; particularly in view of recent concerns over bioterrorism and emergency preparedness. Protection of public health and safety becomes increasingly more complicated each year and involves more professionalism, but we are rising to the challenge. With community support and public funding we will continue to meet your needs.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Southampton Board of Health

Joseph F. Slattery, Chairman  
Geraldine R. Swanson  
Cynthia A. Gaudet