

**Statement by Bob Midden to the Wood County Board of Health
and the Residents of Wood County, Ohio
12/9/2021**

We have some challenging issues that we must address and at this point, I believe it may be worthwhile to review the mission of the WCHD and some of the responsibilities of the Board of Health, even though we may all be very familiar with these.

The mission of Wood County Health Department is to prevent disease, promote healthy lifestyles and protect the health of everyone in Wood County.

The following is excerpted from the Bylaws of the Board of Health under Board Duties:

The Board of Health shall adopt policies and make such orders and regulations as are necessary for the promotion of health, the prevention of disease, and the abatement or suppression of nuisances. The Board shall make such orders and establish such policies as are needed from time to time for the administration of the health district to aid in (1) implementing the Board's mission (2) enforcing the standards, rules and requirements of the Ohio Department of Health, the Ohio Public Health Council, and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency; and (3) performing other duties required by state and federal laws and other applicable state and federal agencies.

*** End of excerpt ***

Note that our role is different from that of elected officials who "represent" their constituents in a representative-style government. Our role is the promotion of health and the prevention of disease for all of the members of our community. I believe that our policies, recommendations, and practices should be based on the best available scientific evidence, not only on popular opinion or the personal preferences of some of the residents of our County. While it is of utmost importance that we very carefully and seriously consider all points of views of our residents, we should base our decisions on science, taking into account all of the other factors that are important for promoting public health. I will be providing some examples of peer-reviewed scientific findings published in highly respected scientific journals, regarding the response in our county to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the hope that this will optimize our effectiveness in preventing disease, promoting healthy lifestyles, and protecting the health of everyone in our County.

Science is responsible for virtually all of the improvement in public health since the 18th century including the development of the germ theory of disease, the discovery of the cause of cholera and the means to stop a cholera pandemic in London by Dr. John Snow in the mid 19th century, the adoption of sanitation of water by chlorination and major improvements in the cleanliness of cities in the early 20th century (this actually accounts for a greater increase in life span than the development of antibiotics), and the elimination of smallpox from the world by

VACCINATION. Now is not the time to abandon science or to neglect its power and value in our efforts to serve the mission of the Health Department. It may not be popular with all residents of our County, but our role is not to seek popularity and instead to work as well as we can to *prevent disease, promote healthy lifestyles and protect the health of everyone in Wood County; and I would add, with everyone's best interests in mind.* We need to be courageous in these efforts and do what is deemed most effective for serving this mission based on the best available scientific evidence.

To do this we should use rules and regulations as little as possible (indeed, our authority to issue rules and regulations is very limited) and instead rely on education and persuasion as much as possible. We need to find the best knowledge about the most effective methods for doing so. There is growing knowledge and expertise in the field of health education and education. We should draw on that to shape the efforts of the Health Department to help our residents understand, appreciate, and adopt those practices that will truly optimize their health and the health of others in our community.

So, my advice is to search intensely and urgently for the best knowledge available about how to mount the most effective possible campaign to achieve this. What have other health departments, public health operations, and others devoted to education, persuasion, and marketing found to be most effective? How can we (the Health Department) adopt and use these practices for all aspects of improving public health in our County? What resources will be needed and how can we muster those resources? This is what I propose as the current focus of our efforts to deal with the pandemic and other critical public health issues for our community.

Respectfully submitted,
Bob Midden