**SOUTH CENTRAL HEALTH DISTRICT**

196 North Main St.

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**Director’s Report**

**Board of Directors Meeting**

**Thursday, February 13, 2025**

**5:00pm**

The new year has kicked off with a variety of exciting initiatives and activities. The health district remains dedicated to our mission of promoting Healthy People in Safe Communities. This report highlights recent efforts, achievements, and our upcoming plans.

**OPERATIONS:**

**Scanning Project**

Middlefield’s files are set to be scanned in early March. The files for Southington and Plainville have already been completed, and staff have had access to digital street files since the summer. Some paper copies have been returned to the district. Once the Middlefield files are scanned and indexed in the cloud-based database—designed specifically for the town’s needs—the final phase of the project will begin. A public-facing portal has been developed and will soon be available on both SCHD and town websites, allowing the public to access all available residential and commercial street files. This project was initiated in 2023 and will offer accessibility and easier Freedom of Information request processes.

**Office renovations**

Phase 2 of the office renovation project is now underway, with a primary focus on upgrading the Environmental Health division’s workspaces. We anticipate completing the renovations by March 1st, with minimal disruption to operating hours. During the three-day project, staff will have the flexibility to work in the field, remotely, or from other office spaces within the towns we serve. Public services will continue uninterrupted, and staff will remain accessible.

**Paychex**

Since 2011, the town of Southington has generously managed the district’s payroll processing at no cost. However, in December, the district was notified that the town would no longer handle payroll manually and that the district would need to take over this responsibility. The town has now contracted with Paychex to manage payroll processing moving forward. We have been collaborating with town staff to extract the necessary SCHD data from the town’s records, customize a contract, and transition to independently managing payroll with Paychex’s assistance. Given the tight timeline, significant administrative efforts have been required to ensure staff receive timely payments. Further work will be needed over the next few pay periods to fully establish the system for payroll processing. Once fully implemented, payroll management will become much more streamlined.

**Inspect2Go**

SCHD has successfully signed and executed a contract for the approved digital inspection platform, which will enhance the inspection process, better serve businesses, and benefit the community. To reduce costs, six districts joined together, lowering the project’s expense to $20,00. This is $5,000 less than originally approved. Weekly meetings are ongoing, and extensive collaboration is in place to ensure the platform’s database is properly developed. The system will be ready for use by inspectors by June 2025, helping address challenges in field inspections and providing tools to manage licensure for all establishments. Additionally, annual renewal applications and payments will be processed through this system. Staff will receive training once the platform is complete.

**PERSONNEL**

**Acting Director Request to DPH Commissioner**

Julia Burdacki, the Chief Sanitarian, completed her Master of Public Health degree in December 2024. A formal request has been submitted to grant her full status as Acting Director of Health, as she currently holds a waivered approval from the Commissioner of Public Health.

**Internship**

In July, we welcomed Jessica Isberg as an intern for the Spring 2025 semester. As an undergraduate in the Public Health Program at Southern Connecticut State University, she will be working 18-20 hours per week through May learning all aspects of the district as well as focusing on specific assigned projects.

**FINANCIAL**

**Annual Report**

An annual report providing extensive details about the organization’s accomplishments, financial standing, and future efforts is being compiled for FY24. This report will be provided to BOD members, community partners, and the public. A March completion date is anticipated. Once complete, the report will be distributed and available on our website,

**Audit**

The FY24 audit was completed by George Sinnamon. The financial audit found the district in good standing with no deficiencies noted and will be further discussed at the February BOD meeting.

**Federal Funding**

The district currently receives four federal grants. However, the new administration has temporarily paused spending. The State Department of Public Health is providing guidance on this matter. Staffing can continue to be supported. The state has asked that all new projects and contracts remain paused until additional clarification is provided.

**COMMUNITY HEALTH**

**Respiratory Illness Rates**

In January, respiratory illness rates, including cases of Flu, COVID-19, RSV, and Norovirus, have steadily increased. These trends are being closely monitored and reported by the state. Prevention tips and statistical updates are being shared regularly through our social media platforms.

**Flu Clinics**

Flu clinics have been completed for the season. Many clinics were offered in all three communities. Town employees, Boards of Education, Senior Services, and open to the public clinics were offered. A complete list of clinics held and total number of vaccinations administered will be provided. Through partnership with Stop and Shop, we were able to offer Flu, Covid-19, RSV, Pneumonia, Shingles, and Tdap vaccination options.

**Home Bound Flu Vaccinations**

The district actively promoted the availability of free flu vaccinations for homebound individuals aged 65 and older throughout late fall and early winter. Information was shared with town senior service staff, partner organizations, and through social media channels. While only a small number of vaccinations were administered, the positive feedback and expressions of gratitude from those who benefited from this service reinforced our mission of serving the underserved.

**Community Health Needs Assessment**

Our Community Health Needs Assessment took place from September to December 2024. The data collection phase has now concluded, and staff are in the process of reviewing the findings. A formal report will be created, along with plans for addressing the needs identified through the assessment data.

**Durham Middlefield Local Wellness Coalition**

Our Public Health Nurse, Aria & Community Health Specialist, Athalie recently participated in the first Durham Middlefield Local Wellness Collation meeting. The meeting set a foundation for a meaningful collaborative approach to understand and address the key issues that matter most to the community. They will be attending future meetings to build meaningful connections and support the coalition’s mission which aligns with SCHD’s.

**Upcoming Health Programs and Events**

* **Health Maintenance with Dr. Bogdanski**
In collaboration with Dr. Bogdanski, the district's Medical Advisor, we are offering a "Health Maintenance" lecture series at local libraries. Dr. B. will visit each town, with the first confirmed session on **February 25th** at the **Plainville Library**. Registration is available directly through the library. Additional dates and locations will be confirmed soon.
* **Partnership with Bread for Life**
SCHD has established a strong partnership with Bread for Life in Southington. Together, we are providing monthly health programs to their clients and planning for this summer’s **Summer Lunch Program**.
* **QPR – Suicide Awareness Education**
We will offer **QPR (Question, Persuade, Respond)** training in May, coinciding with **Mental Health Awareness Month**. Additional dates are being arranged for future sessions.
* **Naloxone (Narcan) Training**
Thanks to Meghan Albanese from **Southington STEPS**, we’re offering Narcan training to district staff on **February 13th**. Meghan will offer her expertise to staff to feel confident providing this life saving program to the community. Plans for community-wide Narcan training events will begin this spring.
* **Save a Life with Local Health – Naloxone Training Day**
On **April 9th**, we’ll partner with other local health districts across the state to host a **Save a Life Narcan Training** event in celebration of **National Public Health Week**. More events and activities are being planned and will be promoted in the coming months.
* **Blood Drive**
The district will be hosting a **Blood Drive** on **March 26th** from **12:00 pm to 6:00 pm** at the **Southington Municipal Center**. The event is open to the public, and you can register directly through the **Red Cross**.

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

**Radon Awareness Month**

In partnership with the State Department of Public Health, the district offered free home radon test kits to residents of the district. In addition to being available for pick up, 4 ‘Radon 101’ information sessions were held in the communities. Evening programming was offered at Southington, Plainville, and Middlefield’s public libraries. A day-time program was offered at the Calendar House in Southington. A limited supply of free kits are still available.

**Annual Food Service Permit Renewals**

In mid- December, all food service establishments received renewal forms and payment instructions for their annual permits. Applications and payments were due by January 31st. Thanks to a variety of communication efforts—including social media reminders and direct phone calls to establishments nearing the deadline. Only a few establishments still have outstanding fees. The introduction of credit card payments has been positively received. SCHD is currently processing and mailing out over 470 active permits. Efforts were made to ensure clear communication, a simplified process, and prompt processing times.

**Body Care and Personal Services Code update:**

The new code is now in use and helping staff enforce proper guidelines for permitted salons, tattoo parlors, massage businesses, and similar establishments. In October and November, four information sessions were held for business owners. Feedback was collected, and additional sessions will be scheduled based on demand from local establishments.

**Avian Flu (Bird Flu)**

As cases of Avian Flu increase among birds in the state, the public has raised questions about potential risks. While the virus does not spread from person to person, it is affecting local bird populations. We’ve shared guidance and updates via our social media platforms and will continue to provide information on our website to address public concerns.

**Inspections:**

Environmental staff conducted 29 inspections of food service establishments and 19 inspections of body care and personal services establishments for the month of January. (Complaint and septic inspections have not been tallied for this report but will be available in future reporting.)

Pre-operational inspections and plans:

* Livewell completed its main kitchen renovation and passed inspection after several months of construction.
* Asia Darbar and Husky Pizza have changed ownership, with Husky Pizza now becoming Mikonos (still not yet open).
* Several salons and restaurants submitted plans for review.
* Renaldo’s and El Sombrero are relocating to the old 75 Center location as a joint venture.
* Rita’s Italian Ice (now closed) has been demolished, and Aroma Joe’s will be built in its place. This plan has been reviewed and approved.
* ATP Barber Salon opened its doors in January.

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS:**

**Community Life Saving Class update**

Thanks to a grant from the KAWFY Memorial Fund through the Main Street Community Foundation, the district was able to certify staff members as instructors for the American Heart Association’s ‘Heartsaver’ and ‘Stop the Bleed’ courses. These lifesaving classes have already been offered to community partners and the Southington CERT team. One of the main goals of the grant is to provide free classes to residents across the community in accessible locations. Plans are underway to host classes in various town locations to ensure broad access.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2025**

A survey will be distributed to all Board of Directors members during the March 2025 meeting to gather feedback and explore potential improvements for the future.

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Report completed by Susan B. Lonczak