

## 10-9-09 Health Fairs: How Does Your Health Fare?

[\*\*\*\*SARA: I am uncertain about the “3<sup>rd</sup> annual”

That should be confirmed. I can call or give you a name and number for that. It is at my office. ]

There's a lot happening on October 13 in Halifax, MA and it is all geared to preventing health problems and increasing the benefits of good health. TRIAD (a partnership of senior citizens & law enforcement & protective services) will host its 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Health Fair at the Country Club of Halifax from 10 to 2. I've been to each one, to represent the local board of health, to meet people and to learn more about our area's wide variety of services. In the past, it's been enjoyable to watch the visitors have reflexology or acupuncture, have the EMT's check their blood pressure, listen to people talk about a service such as visual or audio aides and to watch everyone having fun gathering tokens of appreciation and advertisement in the form of pens, letter openers and re-useable shopping bags. While I admit to collecting those gifts, I also confess to finding myself gravitating toward those people offering apples or chocolate, along with truly interesting information helpful to our senior citizens.

This year is busier than usual, though. In addition to the useful and interesting information from a variety of businesses and our local services and gifts and door prizes, there will be a seasonal flu vaccine clinic included for the first time. With our always-anticipated seasonal vaccine somewhat delayed this year, I was in favor of as many vaccinators as possible playing a role in achieving the inoculation of as many people as possible. The South Shore Visiting Nurse Association from South Shore Hospital will be there with seasonal flu vaccinations. If you have a Medicare card, the shot is free. South Shore VNA can be reimbursed for their time.

Since the time when this fair was finalizing its arrangements, Halifax and Plympton, who both use Partners Home Care for their visiting and public health nurses, have confirmed receipt of enough of their vaccine to begin our clinics with them. So, just down the street, at the Halifax Elementary School gymnasium, on October 13 from 1:30 to 3:30 Plympton and Halifax boards of health will host their first combined flu vaccination clinics. Why together?

Years ago, when health agents and boards of health throughout the Commonwealth were asked to identify a site as the Emergency Dispensing Site (EDS) we were told that small towns could combine forces and that each site could serve for up to 10,000. At the time, this was the very description of Halifax and Plympton. It also made sense because the two towns have worked so well together over the years. On practically a daily basis there has been mutual aide between Fire and Police Departments. Now, there is mutual aide in many ways: Fire, Police, BOH (Board of Health), and CERT (Community Emergency Response Team).

So, years ago, it was decided that the Halifax Elementary School gymnasium would be the EDS for Plympton and Halifax.

We've talked and we've walked but on October 13, 2009, we will have our first actual use of and practice with our EDS. On one hand, it will be an ordinary flu clinic. People over fifty years old and those with chronic underlying conditions are at high risk for complications of the flu and are encouraged to attend a clinic such as this.

On another hand, it is not ordinary at all. Not only do Fire and Police and CERT and BOH get to coordinate and assist with this event, but the teachers of Halifax Elementary School and the employees of the town hall are also invited to participate. We haven't done that in the past, partly out of tradition and partly out of trepidation when it comes to asking for more. Perhaps we can't help but envision a scene right out of *Oliver!* "Did he say more??!!" Yes, we can ask for more vaccine. That is what I discovered. That is, when I asked!

This year, perhaps more than any year since my childhood, the emphasis is on prevention and involvement and on vaccinating as many as possible. We will do this so that we may allow our society and our infrastructure to keep functioning and our schools to remain open. We will do this because it is the right thing. We will do this because it is not time to panic; it is time to prepare.

So, join us on October 13, from 10 to 2, at the Country Club of Halifax for TRIAD's Health Fair and an opportunity to receive your seasonal flu vaccine. You can pick up some gifts and drop off your old eyeglasses and cell phones. I love those two-fer bargains!

Then, if you were so busy at the health fair, or if you really weren't able to get there, stroll on in to the Halifax Elementary School gymnasium on October 13 from 1:30 to 3:30 for the first ever Plympton-Halifax influenza vaccination clinic. We're nice. We don't bite. We just inoculate. And that's with a smile, too.

*Cathleen Drinan is the health agent for the Town of Halifax, MA. She welcomes your comments on H1N1 or anything else! She can be reached at 781 293 6768 or [cdrinan@town.halifax.ma.us](mailto:cdrinan@town.halifax.ma.us)*