

NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK RECOGNIZES SIGNIFICANCE OF PUBLIC HEALTH TO GALION

During the first week of April each year, the American Public Health Association (APHA) brings together communities across the U.S. to observe National Public Health Week (NPHW). This week is a time to recognize the contributions of public health and highlight issues that are important to improving the overall health of communities, counties, states and the nation as a whole.

The Galion City Health Department plays a crucial role in supporting the public health system in Galion with the help of several local and state partners. The department is celebrating NPHW by working on activities throughout the week to further develop the capabilities of the staff in order to prevent the spread of disease, promote healthy activities, and protect citizens against health hazards. Health Commissioner Trish Factor said, "Being healthy requires more than just visiting the doctor's office and the gym. Every resident, organization and business in the city has a role in ensuring that we can all live long, healthy lives here in Galion."

Public health is credited with adding 25-30 years to the life expectancy of people in the United States in this century, according to the CDC, yet if asked, "What is Public health?" many are unaware. Public health professionals focus on protecting the health of entire populations. The goal is to prevent disease and injury through population-based prevention programs. The Galion City Health Department promotes healthy lifestyles through educational programs, developing policies, administering services, conducting research, monitoring community health status to identify community health problems and health hazards in Galion and working with community partners to help solve community health problems. We also focus on controlling infectious disease, enforcing laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety, reducing environmental hazards, substance abuse and injury.

While public health professionals have made significant contributions to improving population health over the last century through public health efforts such as: recognizing tobacco as a health hazard; reducing deaths from heart attack and stroke; immunizations to help eradicate smallpox and dramatically decrease the number of cases of polio, measles and other diseases; healthier mothers and babies; motor vehicle safety; fluoridation of water to prevent cavities; and family planning, there is still much work to be done. For example, the U.S. has had the highest obesity rates across all age groups for decades. U.S adolescents have the highest rate of pregnancies and are more likely to acquire sexually transmitted diseases. In Galion, Chlamydia and Hepatitis C were the most commonly reported infectious diseases in 2014. Drug-related mortality is another public health issue. We lose more years of life to alcohol and other drugs than people in peer countries. The President's 2014 National Drug Control Strategy noted that drug-induced overdose deaths now surpass homicides and car crash deaths. We have a lot of challenges to overcome and it will take change at both the local and national levels to ensure our communities make a positive impact on our health, but we are committed to protecting and improving health in Galion.

Join us for National Public Health Week 2015 and be a part of the effort to make Galion a healthier community! We also invite you to learn more about the services of the Galion City Health Department by reading our 2014 Annual Report which will be posted to our website in April 2015.

To learn more about NPHW visit www.nphw.org. To learn more about The Galion City Health Department visit www.galionhealth.org.