



THE SENTINEL

Reporting on Preparedness



Public Health

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INK Preparedness Fair Participating Partners:

- American Red Cross
- Amerigroup
- Boy Scouts - Troop
- District 2 Public Health
- Gainesville Fire Dept.
- Gainesville Police Dept.
- Georgia Baptist Disaster Relief - Chainsaw Crew
- Hall County Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES)
- Hall County Emergency Management Agency
- Hall County Fire Dept.
- Hall County Sheriff
- Interactive Neighborhood for Kids (Sponsor)
- Northeast Georgia Medical Center
- Salvation Army



INK hosts annual preparedness fair in Hall County

Interactive Neighborhood for Kids hosted the 4th annual *Personal and Family Preparedness Fair* on September 25, 2016 at Featherbone Communitiversity in Gainesville. More than 400 visitors learned about preparedness and safety from local emergency responders.

Each year this event brings together representatives from law enforcement, fire departments, hospitals, volunteer organizations, public health and other groups to provide interactive activities for residents. Through these activities, adults and children can see some of the equipment used during emergencies and ask questions about how it is used. Information about family preparedness, local resources, and community preparedness is also passed out to participants to encourage them to develop personal preparedness plans.

Preparedness is important at all levels of society. Personal and local preparedness are critical to survival in most emergencies because of the time it takes for help to arrive. When individuals know what to do (have a plan), have necessary items (get a kit) and are armed with knowledge (be informed), then they are less likely to become victims of a disaster. Events like this around the U.S. during Emergency Preparedness Month (September) serve to raise awareness for all of us to be better prepared.



The District 2 Emergency Preparedness Team setting up for the Personal and Family Preparedness Fair. From left: Donna Sue Campbell, Katie Jenkins, Brandin Gillman, Dave Palmer and Mark Palen. The District 2 team distributed preparedness information to adults and children. They also used a mosquito trap provided by Environmental Health to describe how surveillance for mosquitoes is necessary for fighting mosquito borne illnesses.

The Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services unit brought their mobile feeding unit (canteen) to demonstrate how they provide meals. Meals can be prepared for response workers, evacuees in shelters, or other groups as need arises. Canteens in different areas are configured to meet the needs of that particular area. Some units can provide 500 meals per day while others are capable of providing 5,000 meals per day.



Left: Amerigroup brought fun fitness activities for adults and children. Center: Donna Sue Campbell discusses items needed for an emergency kit. Right: Mark Palen explains Public Health's role in a disaster.



Hall County partners with YMCA for first drive through flu shot clinic

Hall County Health Department held its first drive through flu clinic at the J.A. Walters Family YMCA in Gainesville on October 17. This was an opportunity for the staff to exercise their mass dispensing plan while providing a valuable service to the community.

Medical Reserve Corps student volunteers from the University of Georgia's College of Public Health assisted with the exercise.



Mark Palen, District 2 Emergency Preparedness Director conducts the initial briefing for staff and MRC volunteers.



Top: Entrance into the drive through was clearly marked and had traffic facilitators on duty.

RIGHT: The registration station reviewed completed forms, collected payment and distributed vaccination information sheets.



At the vaccination station nurses checked all paperwork, asked pertinent health questions and gave clients their flu shot.



Franklin, Habersham and Lumpkin Counties hold drive through flu shot clinics



Above: Franklin County Health Department held a drive through flu clinic on October 13. The clinic was held at the Senior Center located adjacent to the Health Department as it offers an efficient drive through location with one-direction traffic flow. Middle: Habersham County Health Department held a drive through flu clinic on October 3. The covered entrance works well for registration and makes for smooth traffic flow. The vaccination station is located further in the lot to prevent traffic backups. Bottom: Lumpkin County Health Department held a drive through clinic on two separate days - September 23 and October 5. Having a covered entrance with one-direction traffic flow works well for their facility.





“Fire on the mountain” has people singing a different tune about smoke

Southern rock music fans may remember a once familiar song, *Fire on the Mountain* by the Marshall Tucker band. Smoke from numerous forest fires may even have some wanting to follow the lyrics and take their ‘family away from their Carolina (or other location) home’, at least until the smoke clears.

Smoke from forest fires in north Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee made it as far south as Atlanta and other parts of central Georgia, as well as parts of neighboring states. This has caused some tough days for people who suffer from respiratory illnesses such as asthma, emphysema, COPD and other chronic health conditions. Even healthy people are reporting that the smoke is causing burning eyes, scratchy throat, and more coughing.

According to the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest officials, about a dozen fires have burned an estimated 33,361 acres since October 5. The number of fires this year have topped 500 in the Southern Forestry Region which includes 13 states from Virginia to Florida to Oklahoma. Normally the Southern Region has 30 to 50 fires per

year according to forestry officials. Contributing factors include the ongoing drought, accidental fires and arson.

Firefighting teams from the Pacific Northwest have been deployed to help fight the southeastern fires. The U.S. Forest Service’s Pacific Northwest Incident Command Team 3 has been in charge of managing the firefighting effort in North Georgia.

On November 15, a community meeting was held in Rabun County to advise residents of the situation concerning Plum Orchard, Hightower, and Tate City fires. On November 17, a community meeting in Towns County updated residents at Rough Ridge, Rabun Cliff, Chimney (Brasstown Bald), Timber Ridge, Rock Mountain, Hightower, Tate City and Burrells Fire. A third community meeting was held at the Rabun County Courthouse on November 21 to update residents on firefighting efforts.

At these meetings, residents expressed concern about the smoke and questioned how safe it was to breathe the outside air. Many also asked about how to protect their property and how evacuation might work if the fires began to spread into area neighborhoods.

Mark Palen, District 2 Emergency Preparedness Director explained that people should remain indoors on smoky days with windows and doors closed, and that HVAC systems should be set to recirculate inside air if possible. He went on to explain when the use of masks may be appropriate and cautioned that only certain types of masks like the N-95 or N-100 provided any benefit.

Residents expressed their overwhelming support and appreciation for the firefighting teams and local responders who have been working and providing information to the community.

Fire officials urged residents to keep yards raked and roofs clear of fallen leaves. Residents were reminded that burn bans are in effect and officials emphasized that fines would be levied against individuals who violated the ban. For more information about: **Fires** - <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/5100/> **Air Quality** - www.airnow.org **Health** - www.phdistrict2.org



View of the Tate City fire taken from Foster Park in Towns County (Young Harris) as the sun begins to set.

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