

MIDDLE-BROOK REGIONAL HEALTH COMMISSION

111 Greenbrook Road
Green Brook, NJ 08812
(732) 968-5151
(732) 968-5331 [fax]
www.middlebrookhealth.org

Kevin G. Sumner, Health Officer/Director
mbrhc@middlebrookhealth.org [email]

PARTICIPATING MUNICIPALITIES
TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER
TOWNSHIP OF GREEN BROOK
BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
TOWNSHIP OF WARREN

20 December 2023

Every year New Jersey reenacts George Washington's dramatic crossing of the Delaware for his surprise attack on Trenton on Christmas Eve 1776. The victory at Trenton was a turning point which gave Washington credibility as an intrepid leader after his fledgling army's disastrous defeat on Long Island. But his boldest action may well have been taken after this victory in January 1777 when he ordered the Continental Army to be inoculated against smallpox. An estimated 90% of army fatalities were due to disease, and smallpox was rampant. Though vaccinations by today's standards were primitive and dangerous, the effort proved largely successful.

While your primary care physician is responsible for your individual health and medical care, your local Board of Health monitors and cares for the health of the community - the entire "army or regiment." The Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission is an association of the local Boards of Health of Watchung, Warren, Green Brook, and Bridgewater established to provide state mandated public health services to member towns on a cost effective shared basis.

While many perceive public health's function confined to restaurant inspections, we do much more: communicable disease tracking and prevention, inspection of tattoo and massage facilities, inspection of public swimming pools, dog and cat licensing, rabies investigations, public vaccine programs, and health education, just to name a few. This year, the Commission hired a full time health educator as well as an infectious disease preparedness generalist to augment the Commission's services. We applied for and received a Project Firstline Grant to implement an infection control



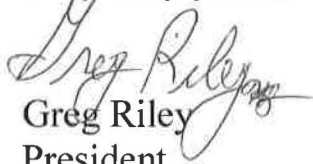
strike team to assist and train staff in long term care facilities, and also conducted five influenza/covid-19 vaccination clinics.

Public health has faced extraordinary challenges over the last few years responding to the covid-19 pandemic. While the national state of emergency may be over, covid is not. The most recent Data Report from the State Department of Health tallied 842 covid related deaths so far in 2023.

Advances in vaccine development, including genetic mRNA vaccines, have provided public health with groundbreaking tools to control dangerous diseases like covid. At the same time, the availability of these vaccines has sometimes led to “vaccine fatigue,” where the public defers or declines inoculation, even for common childhood diseases like measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) which can still be deadly. This is unfortunate and dangerous.

The MBRHC led by Kevin Sumner, M.P.H. will continue to work diligently to monitor and safeguard community health. I thank him and all our employees for their efforts in 2023. Like the Continental Army, the Commission will face new challenges with budgets and funding in the years ahead. We will do our utmost to overcome those challenges and request your support and cooperation to work together for a healthy community in 2024. Happy holidays from the MBRHC.

Very truly yours,



Greg Riley
President

Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission

