

## HISTORY OF THE FULTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Public Health in Fulton County began May 1, 1937 when the first public health nurse, Lydia Hudson, was hired to investigate the incidence of disease in Fulton County. During that year 6 cases of diphtheria, 177 cases of measles, 64 cases of scarlet fever and 17 cases of small pox were reported. Those diseases have been eliminated or are incredibly rare in the population today.

In 1942, an emergency county health department was established to meet the county health problems arising out of the presence of Camp Ellis. On November 5, 1946, the health department was made permanent by a majority referendum with 11,265 votes in favor and 3,252 opposed. The first budget was in the amount of \$50,000. The office was located on the second floor of a bank building in Canton and the sub-office in the Lewistown city building. Staff consisted of a Health Officer, a public health nurse supervisor, seven public health nurses, a Sanitarian, a Communicable Disease Investigator, a secretary, and one part-time 'venereal disease' clinician. In the 1950's the emphasis was on the prevention of polio throughout the county. The Salk Polio Vaccine was administered by Health Department staff in Fulton County eventually eliminating the disease as a threat to our children. The 1960's saw the expansion of preventive health services to include PKU testing, administration of the measles immunization in our well baby clinics, and the establishment of home health services for Medicare clients.

To meet the changing needs of women, the Fulton County Health Department established Family Planning clinics in 1970. The 70's also saw the introduction of the Women's, Infant's, and Children's Supplemental Nutrition Program (WIC) and the Illinois Home Energy Assistance Program for low income and disabled residents of Fulton County. Recognizing the need to make public health services more accessible to the residents of southern Fulton County, the Health Department opened a sub office in Astoria in 1974.

In 1982, the Health Department formed a partnership with the Grant Keime Trust Fund in Cass and Putman Townships and opened a sub office in Cuba. New programs serving at risk teens and families were implemented. These new programs included a Family Living Skills program, Life Skills classes in the schools, Car Seat Programs, Adult Wellness Programs, and the Prenatal Care Assistance Program. In 1983 the Health Department moved to its current location at 700 E Oak Street (the former Isaac Swan school building) with the Board of Health purchasing the building in 1993. During this same year, the CCU (Case Coordination Unit) was established for seniors.

In the 1990's, the first Illinois Project For Local Assessment of Needs resulted in new partnerships being established between the Health Department, schools, local governments, and social service agencies. New programs added to the department included the Healthy Moms/Healthy Kids Program, wellness programs for women and men, a dental sealant program, dental clinics for the medically indigent, the Community Health Action Team, and an innovative computerized reminder service that increased immunization compliance rates for county residents.

Today, over 50 programs that serve the residents of Fulton County are life skills classes that stress refusal skills for teens to prevent tobacco and drug use. Public Health puts professional registered nurses in homes where high-risk infants are identified.

Partnerships between public health, the Susan G. Komen Foundation, and the William F. Mosher Foundation are reducing the incidences of cancer. A partnership with the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority is bringing innovative programs to grade school students to reduce the incidence of violence in schools. In 1999, partnerships with local school districts places school nurses in the classroom and in the community to address the changing health needs of schools and the families they serve.

The Fulton County Health Department has the responsibility of implementing environmental health programs throughout the year. Licensed professionals conduct programs that impact every citizen in Fulton County. These programs help to protect the local food supply, protect the groundwater supply, and prevent the spread of disease to others. A Solid Waste Program is also in place to promote the reduce, reuse, and recycle concepts of solid waste management.