



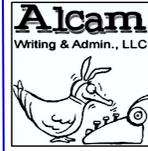
News, Views & Entertainment

Free

"More of the Best of the Valley"

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Lead control program seeks to make homes in Valley hazard free

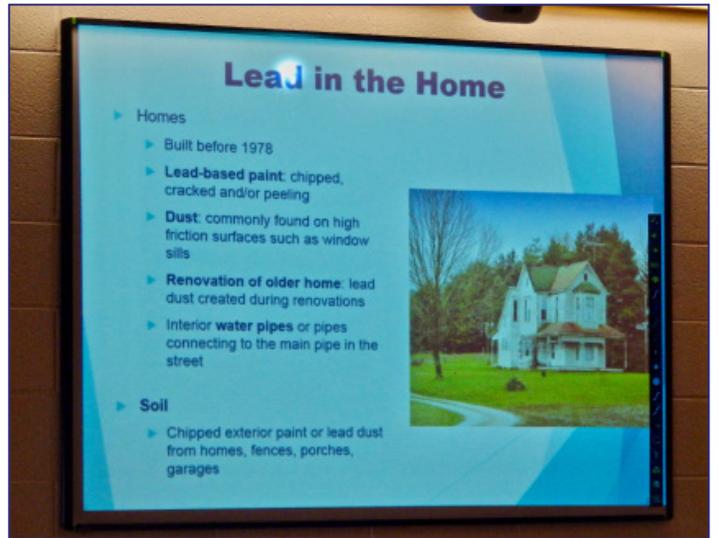
By Patricia Villers

DERBY - Ensuring children are protected from possible lead poisoning is a priority for staff at the Naugatuck Valley Health District.

The goal is to make all homes in the communities the health district serves safe and lead-free, or at least lead-safe.

The communities include Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, Naugatuck, Seymour, and Shelton. Oxford, which is part of the Lower Naugatuck Valley, belongs to the Southbury-based Pomperaug Health District.

Executive Director Karen Spargo Tuesday addressed health and housing professionals, legislative representatives, and Valley Parish Nurses at an official launch of the initiative at the Kellogg Environmental Center.



Spargo said the health district found in 2007 "that the rates of children with high levels of lead were rising." She said no levels are acceptable. "We were very concerned we were starting to equal our larger cities (in rates of lead poisoning)," Spargo said.

The district's Naugatuck Valley Emends Lead (NauVEL) program has received \$2.9 million in Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Some of what the NauVEL program provides for qualified homeowners and tenants includes:

- Inspections and plans for lead and home safety hazard removal;
- Financial assistance to remediate hazard;
- Relocation assistance during construction;
- Lead hazard and healthy homes education.

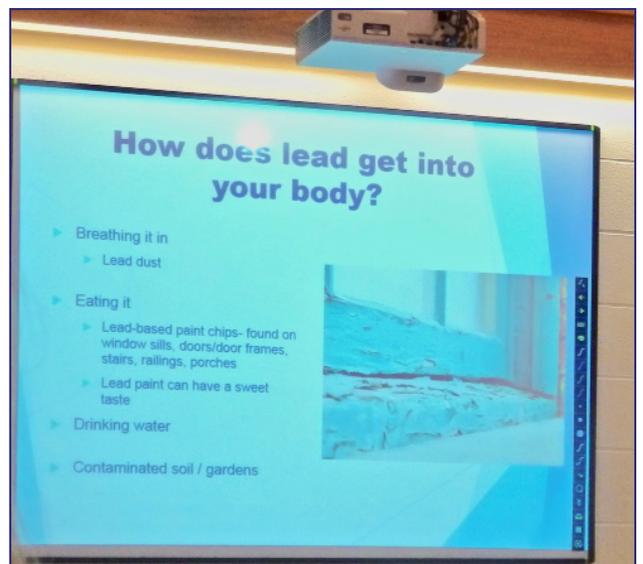
Privately-owned housing built before 1978 is eligible for the program.

Public Health Specialist Carol Slajda said sometimes people buy Victorian-era houses but don't have enough money to renovate them, "and end up poisoning their children."

She said, "We are accepting pre-applications to determine eligibility for our help." A child under six years of age with an elevated blood level is a first priority, Slajda said.

Health educator Ali Mulvihill works with parents of children at risk of lead poisoning.

"Lead can affect almost every organ and system in the body," she said. When parents are notified their child's lead levels are high, they are "very concerned," and question whether it is something that they did to cause it.



The health district is partnering with the [Connecticut Children's Medical Center](#) Healthy Homes Program to protect children before they are poisoned by lead hazards or injured by safety hazards in their homes.

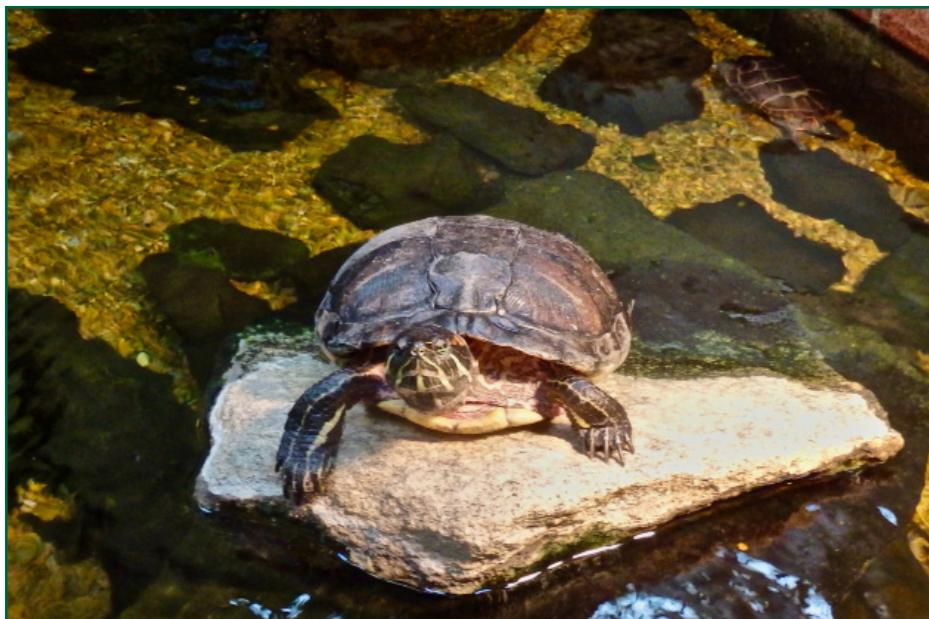
For more information about the NauVEL Lead Hazard Control Program visit www.nvhd.org/nauvel or contact the health district, 98 Bank St., Seymour, 203-881-3255.



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Are you looking at me?



This guy (or gal) was spotted relaxing in the pond inside [Kellogg Environmental Center](#) in Derby this week. The DEEP operates the center at 500 Hawthorne Ave. and hosts a variety of educational programs and workshops throughout the year. Next up is Signs of Animals in Winter. It will be held from 9:30 a.m.-noon Saturday. Participants will look for animal tracks and see what clues animals leave behind that tell us where they've been.

Photo by Patricia Villers

Valley celebrates 11th annual Monkey Love Valentine Drive

Jennifer Sneider, owner of J-Cuts located at 505 Howe Ave., downtown Shelton, has launched the 11th year of collecting stuffed monkeys for children.

This annual community event benefits abused and neglected children, impoverished, adopted and sick children, frightened children involved in police calls, as well as children treated for emergencies, cancer or other illnesses at local hospitals.

Last year, the 10th Annual Monkey Love Valentine Drive collected and distributed more than 303 stuffed monkeys to the Boys & Girls Club in Ansonia and Milford, along with the Lower Naugatuck Valley Boys & Girls Club in Shelton; Yale-New Haven Children's Hospital in New Haven; TEAM Inc. in Derby and Ansonia; BHcare's Center for Domestic Violence Services in Ansonia; Griffin Hospital of Derby; and the Department of Children & Families in Milford.

An additional drop off is Barb's Corner Consignment, located at 25 W Main Street, Ansonia (near the train station.)

Donations may be dropped off or mailed to J-Cuts from now through Feb. 10.

Coordinators also shared 26 of the stuffed monkeys as "26 Random Acts of Kindness."

Since the inception of this community effort to warm the hearts of children in need, 10,630 stuffed monkeys have been donated from all over the World.

Sneider uses her business as the main collection and drop off location.

"This is my seventh year being involved," says Sneider. "It is an amazing feeling to know each and every one of these monkeys will find comfort in the arms of a child in need and the children will find comfort in these monkeys. Each year, we hope to have an even more successful drive to create miles of smiles on the faces of children to show them they are loved."

Stuffed monkeys have already been dropped off by the Milford Fire Department. This is their fifth year participating.

Last year, Bright Horizons child care center of 3 Corporate Drive, Shelton and United Methodist Women of the First United Methodist Church, 47 Franklin Street, Ansonia, joined in by held collections of their own.

Area individuals, corporations and groups are also encouraged to become involved by holding collections of their own.

In celebration of the 11th year, coordinators are hoping to mark this milestone by launching a "monkey love challenge" and have it go viral. They would like to have people participate by buying some monkeys, making a cute video, posting it on social media and calling out others to do the same, then mailing or bringing their donations to J-Cuts.

For health and safety reasons, stuffed monkeys must be new with tags.

J Cuts also holds an annual Back to School Book Bag & School Supply Drive beginning July 1 each year.

For more information, call J-Cuts at 203-924-4107.



This information has been taken from a press release



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