

## **Director's Update to the Board of Health**

### **August 2025**

#### **Improve and Sustain Family and Child Well-Being**

##### **Red Sand**

For the seventh straight year, MPHD participated in the Red Sand Project, an art installation targeted at increasing awareness of human trafficking and highlighting individuals who are “falling through the cracks.” This year, participation was at East Public Health Center, Lentz Public Health Center, Metro Animal Care and Control, South Nutrition Center, and Woodbine Public Health Center. Events also continued at the West Police Precinct with Christina Meadows sharing her personal story and offering insight into the work that she participates in through the Nashville Anti-Human-Trafficking Coalition. Thanks to all that participated in raising awareness of this important issue.



#### **Promote and Support Healthier Living**

##### **Back-to-School**

Last week was the first day of school, when 100 MPHD school health nurses started their year in MNPS buildings. MPHD continues to pursue the goal of a nurse in every school, and we recruit and train new nurses weekly. Schools where a nurse was present had a 90 percent return-to-class rate last year, something that would not be possible without the skilled school health team. This is the first year the School Health program has been fully under MPHD's purview, rather than contracted through MNPS.

On the clinical side, we continue to extend immunization hours, helping students ensure they are up to date on their immunizations for the start of school. The East Public Health Center is open until 6 p.m. on Tuesdays for immunizations, with Lentz extending its immunization hours five days a week and Woodbine remaining open for immunizations until 5:30 each Monday through Thursday. We ask that all children needing vaccination call ahead of time for an appointment, bring their shot record with them, and present with their parent or legal guardian.

According to the Tennessee Department of Health Kindergarten Immunization Compliance Assessment, 92.2% of Davidson County kindergarteners were fully immunized for the 2024-2025 school year.

## **Create Healthier Community Environments**

### **MACC Outbreak**

We recently had an outbreak of panleukopenia in the animal control shelter. Panleuk, for short, is a highly contagious and most often fatal viral disease in cats, especially kittens. We often compare panleuk to canine parvovirus since more people seem to be more familiar with that disease.

The symptoms are lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea, weight loss, and lack of appetite. The virus is hearty and can live in the environment for months to years. Recently there has been a significant rise in these cases not only here but in surrounding counties and cities across the country. We began to see positive cases, primarily in kittens, earlier this year, either from unsanitary hoarding cases or stray over-the-counter intakes especially from a specific area in Antioch. Since then, we have seen increases but not with the normal trend line. We are now seeing adults with symptoms, immunocompromised adults with symptoms, and, unfortunately, spread from kittens to adults as well as adults to kittens. During the first incursion of the virus, we made the decision to discard our cat adoption kennels as they were old, porous, and could no longer be properly sanitized. We have taken extensive measures to quarantine and sanitize while we wait for our new cat kennels to arrive. We have even adjusted our vaccination protocols. However, this also means we have decreased our cat intakes to only those that are severely sick or injured, to minimize the risks.

On Aug. 10 our quarantine for our cat adoption room was lifted and we have resumed normal adoptions for the cats currently in that room. On Aug. 8 our quarantine for the small cat-impound room was lifted and we are working on clearing that room by either sending the kittens to foster or scheduling surgery so they can be moved to the adoption floor. However, that room does not have proper metal kennels (because we are still waiting), so we had been housing kittens in airline crates. This was supposed to be a short-term fix, but now that our kennels have been delayed, we have decided to shut down the use of the room once the kittens have cleared until our new kennels arrive. On August 18<sup>th</sup>, we plan to lift the quarantine for our large multipurpose cat room. Hopefully, then we can transfer cats to rescue or move them to the adoption floor so that we can fully decontaminate the room.

Overall, these measures were put into place to avoid euthanasia to the greatest extent possible. Dr Hunter has reported our positive cases to UT, IDEXX, and Zoetis.

## **Organizational Updates**

### **Grants**

We continue working with Metro Legal and outside counsel hired by Metro on the lawsuit against the federal government over the sudden rescission of three grants in March. As you know we were successful in federal court in Texas and the federal government was ordered to reissue the money. The grant that came directly to us has a very short timeline for expenditure, and we are working to spend at least some of that money in a rational and beneficial way. The other two were state pass-throughs to us and we are working with the state to get at least one of the timelines extended so we can use the funds. The current deadline they have given us is Sept. 1, and the money is not yet available, so if that date holds there is no rational way we could spend it. The other may be available through the autumn of 2027, and we will continue pursuing that one as well.

### **MNN at Board Meetings**

Work is being done in the interest of broadcasting future meetings of the Board of Health on Metro Nashville's Youtube page. Members of MPHD's team met with Metro Nashville Network, the city's Audio-Visual team, with the goal of streaming and recording future meetings. Technological quirks are being worked out, and it appears the September 2025 meeting is likely to be the first broadcast on the MNN channel. This will make meetings of the Board of Health more accessible to the public and could invite more public participation. The Metro Public Health Department extends its thanks to MNN for their assistance in this project.

### **Woodbine Replacement**

We continue looking at potential sites for a replacement of the current Woodbine clinic, which as you know is very old and not ideally located for the clientele it serves. The site currently at the top of our list is a 120,000-square-foot building, a former call center, about a half a mile south of the Hickory Hollow mall site in a development called Crossings. It will require quite a bit of negotiation among us, the Mayor's office and other Metro departments, as we do not need that much space but would be glad to share.

### **MACC Shelter Replacement**

Staff from MPHD and General Services have been working with Animal Arts, a design company for animal shelters. We met with them at the shelter for two days and have had a few calls since. The purpose of engaging with Animal Arts is to right-size the new facility based on current and anticipated needs. We received a draft "Needs Assessment" on 8/13/25. This document will be reviewed and revised over the next week. A final product is expected by the end of the month. Once we have a target size for our building, we will be able to work with General Services in a search for potential site locations.