

# Local citizen endorses Shewmake for supervisor

Chesterfield County and the Midlothian district face some crucial decisions this year. With transportation needs, school spending and growth issues facing supervisors, Midlothian doesn't have time

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

to train a new representative. Will Shewmake, a community leader who has experience on the planning commission, is in the best position to serve citizens and business at this critical time.

I had the privilege of serving with Mr. Shewmake on the planning commission and discovered firsthand that he is a tireless worker with impeccable intellect. A skilled attorney, he has the training and background to represent all the citizens of Midlothian.

from FLU, page 1

I was pleased when he decided to seek the Republican Party nomination. He already has earned respect in the Chesterfield administration building and at the courthouse.

Will Shewmake is in the best position to bring positive change.

Harry L. Marsh  
Matoaca

*Letters to the editor can be e-mailed to letters@chesterfieldobserver.com, mailed to P.O. Box 1616, Midlothian, VA 23113, or faxed to 744-3269. Letters should include the writer's phone number and home address, but neither will be printed. All letters may be edited for clarity or space. For complete guidelines, visit www.chesterfieldobserver.com and click on "letters policy."*

stopped in its tracks, [though] it was not an influenza [virus]," said Nelson.

### How Chesterfield is preparing

The county's emergency preparedness plan addresses pandemic flu and other types of disasters. Chesterfield has hired a pandemic flu team to help with education. "We have already started working with the local airport, businesses and agencies," said Ambrose.

Since a pandemic would potentially impact the health of thousands of people, experts predict it could have a crushing impact on the economy. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the economic cost for a typical flu is \$37.5 billion nationwide. The CDC predicts a medium level pandemic would cost \$71-\$166 billion.

As the virus spreads, it will be more difficult to keep society functioning.

The health department is advising businesses that they should plan to operate with as little as 50 percent of their staff, since many employees may be sick while others will be forced to stay home to care for ill family members.

The health department already has plans in place should county residents need to be quarantined from the general population. "If there is any kind of incident, we would mobilize for communicable disease control, [whether it is] influenza, salmonella like we had at the Bon Air Correctional Center, TB in a school or a bio terrorist act - smallpox, plague or anthrax," said Nelson.

To accelerate the diagnosis of pandemic flu, an epi-response team of 25 nurses has been trained in public health to investigate, collect samples and do statistical analysis. They are regular employees of the health department and work as school nurses or in other public health positions, explained Ambrose.

The team currently investigates food safety and outbreaks of norovirus, salmonella, infectious pneumonia and other health problems found in institutions such as correctional facilities and nursing homes.

Preparations are also being made so the county health department will be able to vaccinate large numbers of people against the flu virus in case of a pandemic. "We are developing a medical reserve corps. If needed, they can be called in," said Nelson.

### If a pandemic occurs

The health department is urging the public to educate themselves about pandemic flu.

Many people confuse the common cold and flu. Cold symptoms include a fever in children, but rarely in adults, a runny nose, sneezing and sore throat with a mild hacking cough.

The flu, however, includes a fever that's usually 102°F or higher, a sudden headache that is sometimes severe and muscle aches. Tiredness and weakness can be extreme,

## Pandemic flu checklist

The following are just a few ways you can prepare for pandemic flu:

- Store a two-week supply of water and food. During a pandemic, if you cannot get to the store, or if stores are out of supplies, it will be important to have extra supplies on hand. Keep the following items for an extended stay at home: ready-to-eat canned goods, protein or fruit bars, dry cereal or granola, peanut butter or nuts, dried fruit, crackers, canned juices, bottled water and specialty items like baby food or pet food if needed.
- Have any nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes and vitamins.
- Assemble other useful items including soap, flashlights, batteries, a portable radio, manual can opener, garbage bags, toilet paper, disposable diapers and other essentials.
- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they will be cared for if they get sick.
- Volunteer with local groups to prepare and assist with emergency response.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

lasting two or more weeks. A runny nose, sneezing, sore throat and cough may be also present.

Since the influenza virus is airborne, people should practice "social distancing," giving everyone a three-foot zone of breathing space, if an outbreak occurs.

At any given time there are more than two billion bacteria and viruses on your hand. Frequent hand washing helps prevent many common illnesses, and will help curb the spread of flu during a pandemic.

Using antibacterial wipes is better than not doing anything, but the most effective way to kill germs on your hands is to scrub them with soap, rinse with running water, and then dry them with a clean towel, explained Ambrose. Also avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Stay home when you are sick and make as few trips out as possible. Avoid places where large numbers of people gather.

To learn more about pandemic flu, visit [www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic) or [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

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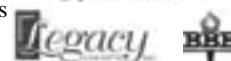
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