

Program seeks to improve food safety in Bibb

By Ecleamus L. Ricks, MPH

ANOTHER VIEW

September 2003 marked the ninth annual National Food Safety Education Month, and it is ironic that just a few days later concerns of foodborne illnesses and food handling are rising among the American public. Underlying forces may make foodborne illnesses more of a problem in the years to come. These include emerging pathogens; improper food preparation, storage, and distribution practices; insufficient training of retail employees; an increasing global food supply; and an increase in the number of people at risk because of aging, prevalence of chronic illness, HIV/AIDS, and a compromised capacity to fight foodborne illness.

The Macon-Bibb County Health Department Environmental Health Office

launched Operation EAT-ERY (Education and Training Each Restaurant Yearly) in September 2003.

Provided in conjunction with the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, Operation EAT-ERY is a comprehensive, environmental staff driven, food safety process to improve food handling techniques and sanitation training of food service employees in Macon-Bibb County and the surrounding area. Utilizing the ServSafe program as the curriculum for the project, the ServSafe program is accepted in almost all United States jurisdictions requiring employee certification.

The ServSafe program provides accurate, up-to-date information for all levels of employees on all aspects of handling food,

from receiving and storing to preparing and serving.

The intent of the program is consistent with the mission of the Macon-Bibb County Health Department and is supported by the priorities of the Environmental Health Office. With funding from the National Association of County and City Health Officials, the Health Department and Extension Service will facilitate the free classes to 2,000 food service employees in Middle Georgia.

All restaurant managers and owners are encouraged to utilize this service. For more information on the program which seeks to protect the health of the people and their environment wherever in our county they live, work, and play, please call (478) 749-0121.

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