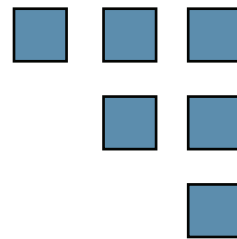




Safe Tables Our Priority's Food For Thought Summer 2008



Mission Statement

S.T.O.P. - Safe Tables Our Priority is a national, nonprofit, public health organization dedicated to preventing illness and death from foodborne pathogens.

In 2008, S.T.O.P. will achieve its mission by advocating changes in public policy, educating and doing outreach, providing victim assistance, and formalizing a victims of foodborne illness registry in order to study the long-term consequences of foodborne disease.

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Long-Term Consequences

S.T.O.P. Work Fills Public Health Gap

S.T.O.P. has been hearing about the possible after-effects of foodborne disease from victims through our toll-free helpline for years, and will now formalize this work in an ongoing program studying the long-term consequences and creating a victim registry. This summer we are starting to seek support for this program through grants and government funding and plan to engage public health and medical expert partners shortly in discussions and forums on the details of the program and registry design.

"Folks often assume once you're over the acute illness, that's it, you're back to normal and that's the end of it," said Dr. Robert Tauxe of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in a syndicated Associated Press article on 1/21/08, titled ***Years later; food poison can bite anew.*** He adds that ***"The long-term effects are an important but relatively poorly documented, poorly studied area of foodborne illness."***

S.T.O.P.'s Executive Director, Donna Rosenbaum, was quoted as saying ***"We're drastically underestimating the burden on society that foodborne illnesses represent"*** and that S.T.O.P. hears from ***"people who develop diabetes after food poisoning inflamed the pancreas, or parents who wonder if a child's learning problems stem from food-poisoning caused dialysis."***

After the AP article came out, S.T.O.P. received a flood of new stories. Here is one story from Phil in Texas that we thought we should share:

"Hi... I am a 59 yr old male.

In 1997 I was 48, working primarily outdoors.

Physically fit, I worked out 3 times a week, had low body fat, and no other health issues

My job required combined physical and mental abilities- I loved my job.

I had been working with the utility for nearly 30 years at that time.

One day I ate a lunch at a drive-inand later I got nauseous.

I started vomiting and having diarrhea and couldn't go to work the next day.

Three days later I became tired and listless, but worked until Friday morning.

When I awoke my right side was nearly paralyzed, my arm, leg and hand were barely functional.

Fearing a stroke I went to the doctor and was referred me to a neurologist.

He diagnosed Guillain-Barre Syndrome... I had never heard of it.

Within 1 week of admittance to the ICU I had lost 25 pounds and was functionally paralyzed...

unable to walk, hold things or take care of my own hygiene.

After 3 weeks in ICU I was sent to a rehabilitation hospital.

To this day my right side is weaker than my left, my gait unsure, my strength low, as is my endurance.

My company retired me as unfit for service.

A bout of food poisoning has altered my life.

I had a very good paying career that I enjoyed, lost.

My physical abilities severely diminished

The depression of the loss and pain, great.

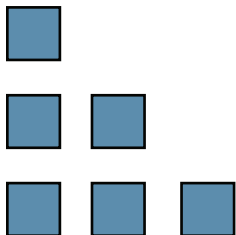
The resources for recovery, few.

The place where I chose to eat a casual lunch irrevocably changed my life, for the worse.

I hope no one else has to have this happen to them."

The basis for our starting discussions on long-term consequences with physicians and public health scientists will be the update questionnaires that we distributed to our entire database a few months ago. If you or a loved one has had a foodborne disease, please return the questionnaire now. To the hundreds of you we have already heard from, thank you.

If you need another copy of the questionnaire, or would like a copy of the Associated Press Long-term Consequences article that featured S.T.O.P. member Alyssa Chrobuck (see dedication, last page) call the office at 800-350-STOP or drop us a message at: mail@safetables.org.



What Do You Think?

USDA wants S.T.O.P. members input:

Which of the following would you pay more attention to?

1. A Public Health Alert issued for a contaminated product or
2. A Recall issued for a contaminated product

Please email your response, either "1" or "2" to: mail@safetables.org or call **1-800-350-STOP** by 7/31/08.

Congratulations to the Achenbach Family (Melissa, Kyle, & Grant) for returning their questionnaire by May 1st and winning our food safety basket for summer.

Notes from Donna

Timely E-alerts Making a Difference

Hello everyone. As I was just about to write to you about the current tomato outbreak and how S.T.O.P. members who have given us their emails get timely updates, in came the following message from one of our members. Tressa said it so well in her email to her friends that I couldn't resist sharing it with you:

*"Hi Friends,
I've received these e-mail alerts from S.T.O.P. - Safe Tables Our Priority for years. I learned about this amazing organization after I contracted Listeria when I was pregnant. I've never forwarded this information before, although I almost have many times. Today I realized I knew about the tomato recall days before I heard about it in the news due to one of these e-mails (also the spinach recall last year and many other smaller but significant recalls that never made the national news), and decided it was time to go ahead and forward one of these, in case you are interested and want to subscribe to help protect your families. I think the best way, if you're interested, is to send an e-mail to mail@safetables.org. I'm sure they'd love/appreciate a donation too (go to www.safetables.org, and in my opinion are very deserving of it, but I just wanted to pass this information along). I think it's invaluable for those with elderly and/or pregnant loved ones, and of course all of us with young children, as these foodborne bacteria and illnesses are most dangerous and fatal to those with weaker and/or compromised immune systems."*

At the S.T.O.P. office we spend a lot of time searching for information that will prevent you and your loved ones from getting sick. Another call came in recently from Fred in Florida. He thanked us for getting the word out about the contaminated pancake mix a few months ago which he removed from the shelf right as his teenage daughter was about to use it.

Messages from people like Tressa and Fred are very rewarding, but we need your help to get our e-alerts into more households across the country. Sign-up now to get your subscription via e-mail and when you forward it to friends and family, copy us so we know we can count on you to help us spread the word. With your help, we are making a difference...one person, one family, one community at a time, all across the country.

Wishing you a summer full of friends, good times, and safe eating,

*Donna Rosenbaum,
Executive Director*

Staff & Board News

S.T.O.P. In the Name of Love: The S.T.O.P. staff and board would like to extend congratulations to Board Member and Secretary Laura Day on her engagement to Patrick. A fall '08 wedding is planned.

Don't S.T.O.P. Thinking About Tomorrow: S.T.O.P. would like to thank former Board Member Sandra Eskin for all of her hard work, dedication, and warm hospitality to S.T.O.P. members for many years. She will be sorely missed!

S.T.O.P. Where You Are: Susan Grooters only thought she was leaving S.T.O.P. in 2004...she's back and with her newly earned Masters in Public Health is assisting us again as our Public Health Specialist and Victim Assistance Coordinator this summer.



S.T.O.P. Staff Retreat - June 2008

You Can't S.T.O.P. the Beat: The staff and board would like to welcome new Board Member Pam Berger, LSCW, MPH, to the organization. Pam came to S.T.O.P. seven years ago after the premature birth of her daughter due to *Listeriosis*. Pam and her husband Charles who reside in Brooklyn, New York, are parents of Louise (7) and Nathan (3). Pam is committed to the work of S.T.O.P., and impressed by the dedication of those involved.

My Scars

My scars remind me
Of the bars of silence
I was locked behind,
Fearing I would lose my mind

For had I lost it?
Forgot it?

No, it was the power that owned me,
Possessed me,
This new mind of mine,
Full of toxins-revealing
Showed me people not there,
Situations not real

They thought I was silent,
But I was screaming and shouting
To be free of this seething, invisible
Creature taking over my being,
One piece at a time

They poked and they prodded
Running faster and faster,
Knowing that time was the only answer

Then one cold night
As I laid awake in my bed-
Sleep never coming-
Unwanted, unwilling

I pondered my fate,
Knowing it was too late,
I heard them plotting, scheming

And as the shadow was closing in,
A light came upon me-
A hand came and grabbed me
From the pit that was closing

Thirty days all through September,
Still I improved
Until they released me,

From the bonds of my terror,
To go back to life, just like that,
It was simple

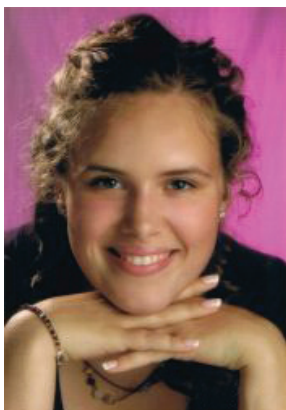
You cannot fathom
The phantoms still lurking,
The scenes that play over and over, unending

The pain and the hurt
Now burned on my skin,
Once silky smooth,
Now torn and unmoved

Six are still left, you can see with your eyes
Not counting the many that are hidden inside
Time passes by, day after day,
But it won't go
away

I saw what I saw
and I felt what I felt,
But by God's
grace
I am saved to
this day

That is why I
can stand here
and say:
I am a miracle-
unworthy its
true,
But maybe my
story can help
someone new



-Anne Dolhanyk copyright 2008

The Parker Family

In September, 2007, I wrote a letter to each Senator and State Representative in the State of Mississippi. Our State Health Officer was under investigation by the State Senate and I hoped that my son's illness and State Health Department's lack of action would be taken into consideration during the investigation.

I was contacted by Senator Alan Nunnlee the day after he received my letter and subpoenaed to testify before Senate concerning the Health Departments lack of investigation in my son's illness.

On June 30th, 2007 the State Health Officer was removed from office and the Board of Health dissolved. A new Board of Health was chosen and Mississippi placed an interim State Health Officer until the job could be permanently filled. I was invited by the interim SHO to come speak with him about my family's experiences with food safety and go over the grading system with him. The grading system was proposed before the new Board of Health and passed unanimously!



On August 8th, 2007, the restaurant grading system was put into action. August 8th was also the 4 year anniversary of the day my son began his battle with foodborne illness, so this was a very special day for the grading system to begin for us. We no longer live in Mississippi but we were able to leave something behind that will benefit countless people for years to come.

This past September over 150 people got together at the Montevideo Community Center, in Montevideo Minnesota for the Carolyn Hawkinson Memorial Concert. It meant a lot to me that so many people came out to support our family and S.T.O.P. The reason we got together was because my Grandmother, Carolyn Hawkinson, passed away over a year ago. She died from *E. coli* 0157:H7 bacteria, which is a type of food poisoning. When the Montevideo Kiwanis club asked for essay on how to spend \$100, I thought that this would be a good way to make the community aware of how they can prevent food poisoning. Nana loved music, and she would love that we are all got together to share music. So I entered the contest and won.

That night, my family and friends performed. We had lots of different styles of music sung. It was fun and the music was beautiful. We had had an expert come and talk about safe food handling. She also had a display in back that people could look at and safe cooking temperature magnets for everyone to take home. It was nice to have an expert there to answer people's questions. There was also a S.T.O.P. display board that I put together to share information on S.T.O.P. and display boards featuring pictures of my Grandmother and family.

Thanks to donations from the community, everyone enjoyed ice cream sundaes after the concert was over. The money we raised for S.T.O.P. from the event was over \$2,100. I was amazed that we raised that much in one night, and I know that the money will be used to help S.T.O.P. continue their mission.

I learned from this event that we can't just keep food safety issues in the dark. We have to tell people about them and make sure that they know how to help make a change. Because if we don't, deaths like my grandmothers might happen, and I don't want something like that to happen to anyone else.

-Lukas Hampton



Food Safety & Policy Forum

S.T.O.P. Writes Comments to USDA- May, 2008

Re: Shiga Toxin-Producing E. coli: Addressing the Challenges, Moving Forward with Solutions

"We commend the agency for advancing strong measures to protect public health against E. coli O157:H7 despite intense pushback from the beef industry. 2007 proved these measures are vital to public health as evidenced by a record number of recalls.... The annual FoodNet report shows no measurable improvement in E. coli infections since 2004 with subsequent years actually reporting a slight up tick. S.T.O.P. has long advocated the need for FSIS to broaden its definition of adulterated products to include primal (intact) cuts of meat and to aggressively address the incidence of disease-causing non-O157 Shiga toxin-producing E. coli (STEC) in the meat supply. We appreciate these initiatives and have several suggestions on how FSIS can make them even stronger in protecting the public's health and safety.... S.T.O.P. also has several areas of concern regarding the use of the N-60 testing regimen as a verification program for E. coli O157:H7."

On Non-O157 STEC:

- The U. S. does not know the extent of illness and death from non-O157 STEC because it's not being looked for.
- USDA should immediately declare the six strain types (026, 0111, 0103, 0121, 045 and 0145) that CDC has identified as highest risk, in addition to O157:H7, to be adulterants in all beef products and immediately expand its testing regimen to include them.
- While industry claims that this would not be a wise use of food safety resources, people are dying from these pathogens.

On Adulterated Primal Cuts (whole cuts) of Beef:

- The full scope of illness and death from whole, intact cuts of beef is unknown because it is not being looked for.
- Cross-contamination from whole cuts either in the production process or in the kitchen is hard to trace, but S.T.O.P. knows that cross-contamination is a huge problem that makes people sick.
- Whole cuts of beef contaminated with pathogenic E. coli need to be declared as adulterated under the law -- just like ground beef -- and therefore become subject to recall and removal.

On the N-60 Testing Regimen:

- (N-60 refers to taking a 60 sample set for microbial testing from a 2,000 pound lot of beef)
- USDA is allowing an industry-sponsored protocol that has not been published, peer-reviewed, or open to public debate to be used as an accepted standard in a public health-based verification program.
- N-60 testing is inadequate in detecting the estimated prevalence level of this pathogen in beef... there needs to be a sample size of 148-298 per lot to be effective.
- The N-60 testing program seems to have been developed by the beef industry and is rooted in economic advantages for industry rather than promotion of public health.

CDC Statistics Released 4/10/08:

The FoodNet diseases active surveillance system was created in 1996 to determine the burden of foodborne disease in the United States, to monitor trends over time, and actively monitor for select lab-confirmed pathogens in 10 population sites. Past data for trends through 2003 exhibited many declines in pathogens compared to the 1996 -1998 baseline rates. The new data for 2007 shows there have been no further declines and rates of disease for *Campylobacter*, *Listeria*, *Shigella*, *Salmonella*, and *Vibrio* have remained steady in 2007 compared to 2004 -2006. Remarkably, *Salmonella*, the indicator microbial pathogen for the new USDA inspection program started in 1996, has actually increased from its rate in 1996 compared to a higher rate in 2007.

Update on the Carbon Monoxide in Meat Issue

Carbon monoxide is used in meat packaging to color meat so it stays red indefinitely in the package and looks fresher than it actually is. On June 2, 2008, S.T.O.P. joined 5 other consumer groups in sending letters to Secretary of Health and Human Services, Mike Leavitt, and Secretary of Agriculture, Ed Schafer, urging their agencies to address the use of carbon monoxide in meat packaging once and for all. Copies were sent to members of Congress and the press.

There are millions of pounds of fresh beef on grocer's shelves right now that have been treated with carbon monoxide and are not labeled so that consumers can identify them. The letter called the two-and-a-half year delay "inexcusable" and asked FDA and USDA to immediately ban the deceptive practice pending thorough legal and scientific review. No formal review, which is required by law for food additives and substance that impart color to food, has ever been conducted on meats packaged with carbon monoxide in the U.S.

FDA Inspection Problems

Food safety and inspection at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has long been under-staffed and under-funded leading to many problems with imported and domestic food products the FDA oversees. On June 9, 2008, Secretary of Health and Human Services, Mike Leavitt, finally asked Congress for help by requesting a \$275 million increase for FDA in the current Farm Bill. This is a feel-good political move that might seem to be responsive to the latest round of summer recalls and outbreaks, but there are a few things that are not being widely reported upon. First of all, of the \$275 million, only approximately \$125 million would go into food safety programs; the rest is for drugs and other medical devices. While this is a baby step in the right direction, it is nowhere near the amount of additional money the agency needs. S.T.O.P. estimates that it would take an increase in budget of about \$1 billion for FDA to marshal the resources it needs to properly address a new risk-based inspection system for all FDA-regulated domestic and imported foods. Furthermore, there will be a large time-lag before we'll see an impact of these funds, as FDA won't get the money before spring of '09, after which the agency will have to hire and train new inspectors. Food safety programs at USDA are currently funded at \$930 million, while food safety programs at FDA are funded at \$510 million.

Produce Problems Will Require Special Attention

S.T.O.P. has a new project on produce safety in the works stay tuned for more news soon. As we go to press with this issue, *Salmonella*-contaminated tomatoes have made 228 people ill in 23 states and *E. coli* O157:H7-contaminated lettuce has caused an outbreak in Washington State. Having the capacity to trace our produce via a mandatory labeling process should be a required component of production. Finding the specific product as quickly as possible would be helpful for farmers and would save lives.

Contact the S.T.O.P. office for copies of original documents on any of these issues:
847.831.3032

S.T.O.P. in Action



Donna Rosenbaum (Executive Director), Nancy Donley (President), & Susan Grooters (Victim Assistance) are pictured above attending a joint CDC, FDA, & USDA tabletop exercise and forum on public health response to recalls and outbreaks on May 15-16, 2008 in St Louis. Thank you to the Ramos, Francisco, Boner, & Lint families for sharing their compelling information about public health gone wrong...we used your input to get better attention to these issues by all health departments.

Margaret Quinn (Outreach Coordinator) attended the May 15, 2008 meeting of the JIFSAN Advisory Council to FDA in Maryland as a consumer and S.T.O.P. representative. Among other issues, JIFSAN works with FDA on research items, student internships, international food safety training, food safety risk analysis, maintaining a foodrisk database and putting on workshops and symposia.

First Giving

- *Have you ever wanted to tell the world how you feel about food safety?*
- *Have you or a friend or relative suffered from a foodborne illness?*
- *Would you like to keep a loved one's memory alive by doing something in their name?*
- *Do you care about S.T.O.P. and want to help us raise much needed awareness and funds?*

If you answered **yes** to any of these questions, we have a program for you called "Voices for Victims." This program allows you to tell your story and educate your friends and family about S.T.O.P.

Sounds like a lot of commitment? Not at all. The whole process only takes about an hour of your time. We do the rest and help you turn your story into a webpage that is emailed to your friends and family!

If you are wondering what the final product looks like, wonder no more. Please visit the following sites for inspiration:

www.firstgiving.com/pamberger

www.firstgiving.com/rosenbaum

www.firstgiving.com/scheelsfamily

Can't wait to get started? E-mail development@safetables.org or call our headquarters at **847-831-3032**.

Thanks to all of our participants from last year for making this program a huge success!

Summer BBQ Tips

Shopping: Make sure meats, poultry and seafood are wrapped in plastic bags and do not drip juice or come in contact with raw food products such as vegetables. Meat, poultry, seafood and other refrigerated perishable foods should be bought last to keep them cold. Keep a cooler in the trunk of your car during the hot summer months to keep food cold on the drive home.

At home place all perishables in the refrigerator immediately. Any ground meats or poultry products that won't be used within 1 to 2 days should be frozen right away. Freeze other whole meats or poultry products within 4-5 days.

Marinating: Always marinate foods in the refrigerator. If using marinade as a sauce, set some aside that will not come in contact with food products until they are fully cooked. Do not re-use marinade that was used on raw meat, poultry or seafood.

Defrosting: Do not defrost meat or poultry or seafood at room temperature. Instead do so in the refrigerator for slow safe defrosting. If using the microwave to defrost, make certain the food will immediately be placed on a preheated grill.

Keeping cold foods cold: This prevents foodborne bacteria from multiplying quickly to harmful levels. Coolers used for raw uncooked items should be different from coolers with drinks and pre-prepared items. On hot sunny days (those days over 90 degrees F) perishable foods served outside should only be left out for one hour – after that throw away any leftovers. When transporting food to another location, use an insulated cooler with enough ice or ice packs to keep the food at 40 degrees F or below and pack the coolers full to keep colder longer.

Don't Cross Contaminate outdoors: If sinks with warm running water are not available for hand washing where you will be barbecuing, make sure to bring hand sanitizer. Only serve fully cooked food on platters that are clean, and that were not used for raw or marinating food products. The same is true for spatulas, tongs, forks, and utensils used when grilling.

Cooking to Temperature: When cooking meat products on a grill make sure to have a properly calibrated or digital meat thermometer on hand. Always check at the thickest part of the food for an accurate internal reading. Sanitize your thermometer before and in between readings.

Steaks & Roasts - 145 °F

Pork - 160 °F

Ground Beef - 160 °F

Chicken Breasts - 170 °F

Whole Poultry - 180 °F

Fish - Properly done when it flakes easily with a fork (generally 10 minutes per inch for thick fillets)

Using Leftovers: Promptly refrigerate leftovers in shallow containers. Throw away any food left out over 2 hours or 1 hour if the temperature outside is 90 degrees or more.



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S.T.O.P. - America's Voice for Safe Food

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Susan Grooters, Victim
Assistance

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Coordinator

Karen Rosen, Grant Writer

Dedication

S.T.O.P.'s 2008 Summer Newsletter is proudly dedicated to college student Alyssa Chrobuck, shown below on the left.



Alyssa was a victim at age 5 of the 1993 west coast Jack in the Box *E. coli* O157H:7 hamburger outbreak, during which time her story was never publicized as her parents protected her from the media. This year she has heroically stepped forward to talk about the long list of health consequences she has continuously suffered from in order to bring much needed attention to the long term effects of foodborne illness. Alyssa's media work with S.T.O.P. in 2008 has brought over 200 new victim families with compelling stories of long-term consequences to S.T.O.P. Thank you, Alyssa, for speaking up and bringing your voice to this long-overlooked area of the food safety debate.