

Flu pandemic:

It's not a matter of "if" but "when", health officials warn

By Tommy Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

BUTLER – A worldwide epidemic of a particularly deadly strain of influenza is coming, health authorities warn.

It is not a matter of "if" such an outbreak will occur but "when".

Bradley Cooper, the Area Seven representative for the Emergency Preparedness Committee of the Alabama Dept. of Public Health, said at last Monday's meeting of the Choctaw Co. Commission that the epidemic – or a pandemic, as such worldwide health catastrophes are called – may not strike this year.

So far, the bird flu has been pretty much confined to Asia, but with persons traveling more and more to exotic destinations for business and pleasure, the likelihood that an America citizen or a foreign visitor who "carries" the virus will show up in a U.S. airport in the near future is not just an idle possibility but a very real probability, he said.

"We do not need to get to feeling like this isn't going to happen," Cooper said. "It is going to happen. Our government is very concerned that we are under an imminent threat from this strain of flu which the human body hasn't fought before."

Traditional strains of the virus generally kill about 36,000 people each year.

"This pandemic could kill more

than that in the state of Alabama alone," he said.

Such pandemics historically occur every 30-40 years, with the last deadly outbreak being the Hong Kong flu strain which killed tens of thousands in 1976-77.

"An extremely powerful strain of avian flu has popped up in Asia," Cooper said. A genetic shift has occurred in this flu that normally only affects birds so that humans that come in contact with these birds can now contract this virus. When it shifts once more to become a virus that can be spread from human to human we are in for a major health crisis."

Prior to 1976, the Spanish Flu outbreak of 1918-19 was another such pandemic.

The first case was reported in Huntsville on Sept. 1st, 1918.

By Oct 13th, 2,360 cases were reported in Montgomery alone. Two days later, most businesses, post offices, hospitals, doctors offices and drug stores were shut down because people were too ill to work or even care for the sick. On Oct. 22nd, more than 20,000 people in Montgomery had become infected.

"Imagine what such an outbreak would be like today," Cooper said.

So, how would such an outbreak affect Choctaw County?

In the Spanish flu pandemic, society and business in general ground to a halt in less than a month.

"You could expect at least 40% of all businesses and essential services to be shut down for at least a month to six weeks," Cooper said. "Schools would be closed, and households would have to be quarantined."

Because the virus has to appear first before researchers can develop a vaccine, it would be at least six months before persons could receive the shots, and by that time it would be too late for many.

"And don't expect the state or federal government to come in at the last minute and bail us out," he said. "They can't, because everybody else will be in the same boat and they can't respond to every hometown in America at the same time."

Cooper said that the state has developed some brochures designed to get people thinking about such a pandemic and how to protect themselves and prevent the spread of the virus. The brochures are free and are available at the Health Department in Butler, at the Courthouse, and at Town Halls.

Cooper said that the county's Local Emergency Planning Committee meets once a month at the ambulance base in Butler.

"We would really like to have a representative from the Commission to come and sit on that committee," Cooper said. "You need to know what is out there and that this is a very, very real threat."

Back by popular demand!



Photo courtesy BTAPC

From left-right the cast of "Smoke On The Mountain" — Sydney Mosley, Ryan Allen, Melissa Snow, Georgia Dozier, Bobby F. Jackson, Kenny Richardson, Tommy Campbell, John Thomas Lindsey, Naman Broadhead, Joy Lewis and Carol Snow. Not visible but seated behind the piano is Nadine Richardson.

Smoke on the Mountain cast reunited for encore performances during Heritage Fest

GILBERTOWN — Back by popular demand for the 2007 Heritage Festival is "Smoke On The Mountain", a hilariously funny and uplifting musical set in the Blue Ridge Mountains in the year 1938.

As the show opens at Gilbertown's Ballet and Theatre Arts Performing Companies Theatre, it's Saturday night in Mount Pleasant, North Carolina, and down at the Baptist church, the Rev. Mervin Oglethorpe has invited the "Sanctified" Sanders Family Singers to provide an upliftin' evening of singin' and witnessin'.

The audience is invited to pull up a pew and join in the rollicking good time, and with more than two dozen songs — many of them vintage

Southern Gospel and bluegrass hymns — and side-splitting stories from the more or less devout Sanders clan, the play leaves audiences clapping, singing, laughing and cheering for more.

The original cast members, who performed this popular musical almost a dozen times earlier this spring to sell-out audiences at the BTAPC Theatre, have been reunited for these encore performances.

Cast members include the two ladies in the "Amen Corner", Miss Maude (Joy Lewis) and Miss Myrtle (Carol Snow), Rev. Oglethorpe (Ian Kimbrough), June Sanders (Sydney Mosley, who also plays the autoharp), Burl Sanders (Bobby F. Jackson), Vera Sanders (Georgia Dozier),

Stanley Sanders (Kenny Richardson, who also plays electric bass), Denise Sanders (Melissa Snow) and Dennis Sanders (Ryan Allen).

The musicians include Nadine Richardson (piano), Naman Broadhead (mandolin and harmonica), John Thomas Lindsey (fiddle), and Tommy Campbell (guitar).

Smoke On the Mountain will be presented at the BTAS Theatre in Gilbertown on Friday, May 25, Saturday, May 26, and Thursday, May 31, at 8 p.m., and on Sunday, May 27 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$10 each and are on sale at the usual banks and businesses in Choctaw and Washington Counties.

For reservations and information readers may call 251-843-5138.

DVD promotes tourism in Black Belt

By Tommy Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

BUTLER — Linda Vice, with the Alabama-Tombigbee Tourism Initiative, presented copies of a DVD entitled "A View From the Porch" to the Choctaw Co. Commission last Monday.

The new DVD, narrated by Alabama author and legendary storyteller Kathryn Tucker Windham, is a tour through Alabama's Black Belt region that gives viewers a taste of the areas unique history, and past and present culture.

"Tourism is economic development of a big kind," she said. "When people come here, they spend money, and when they go home, if they had a good experience, they will tell others,

and maybe they will want to retire or relocate here."

Every new retiree that settles in a community brings with them assets of \$250,000 or more, she said, and the DVD could be a major tool in attracting both retirees and tourists to the region.

The Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission, and Ala-Tom Resource, Conservation and Development agency co-sponsored the DVD project through a grant from the USDA Forest Service.

The script for the video was written by Windham and Vice, with selected music from "Sacred Songs of Gee's Bend", a historical site in Wilcox County. The film was produced by the University of Alabama.

Vice said that several Choctaw County locations are also being fea-

tured in a Nature and History Tour brochure being produced through Gov. Bob Riley's Alabama Black Belt Commission's Tourism and Marketing Committee.

"Bladon Springs, Tusahoma Landing, the historic church at Mt. Sterling, the (Choctaw Co. Historical) Museum at Gilbertown are all great assets, but unless we tie them together with a number of sites in other counties, people won't stay very long.

Vice said that a Native American Trail and Black History Heritage Trail have been established that include a number of sites in the county, and that Ezell's Fish Camp, on the Tombigbee River at Lavaca, is among the "100 Places to Eat in Alabama Before You Die".

Sun Country Calendar

There is no charge to list an upcoming non-profit or charitable event for your church, school, civic group, fire department, etc. Meetings of governmental entities may also be included. Send your announcement as far in advance as possible. The deadline is 9 a.m. MONDAYS for that week's edition.

Time change
MORNING STAR BAPTIST CHURCH has changed the time of worship services on the first and third Sundays. Sunday School will now begin at 8 a.m. and Morning Worship Service at 9 a.m.

Month of May
BARRYTOWN COMMUNITY CEMETERY clean-up. Please plan to clean your lots and remember to bring a bag for your trash.

Thursday, May 17th
GRADUATION EXERCISES, Southern Choctaw High School, 7 p.m., Gilbertown.

Friday, May 18th
GRADUATION EXERCISES, Patrician Academy, 7 p.m., Butler.
GRADUATION EXERCISES, Choctaw County High School, 7 p.m., Butler.
GRADUATION EXERCISES, South Choctaw Academy, 7 p.m., Toxey.

Saturday, May 19th
OLD TOWN SILAS MOW DOWN, 10 a.m. until, a day to celebrate all things rural, lawn mower races, singing, Choctaw Co. Cruizers Car & Truck Show, 18-foot slide for the kids, dog show, much more! Arts and crafts and food vendor space available (\$20 and \$25). Registration for races from 11 a.m. — noon in front of Town Hall, entry fee \$50 (8-22 HP), races begin at 1:30 p.m. Bring lawn chairs, but leave alcohol at home. For more information call Town Hall at 251-542-9505.

BENEFIT SINGING for Wilbur Newton (Lou Gehrigs-ALS patient), Clarke Co. High School Auditorium, Grove Hill, 6 p.m. Featuring The Revelators, Good News and Final Answer. Tickets \$10 each; all donations appreciated.

REGISTRATION for Southern Choctaw Independent Football League, players and cheerleaders, for the Fall 2007 season, Skinner Park, Toxey, 10 a.m. to noon. For more information call Eddie Lewis, president, at 251-843-5237 or Scott Phillips, vice president, at 251-843-2837.

Sunday, May 20th
MEMORIAL, Pleasant Hill Cemetery, CR 25.
HOMECOMING, Chapel Hill Baptist Church (Washington County). Guests will be Dr. Farrell Mills and Bradley Cooper and his group from Gilbertown, 10:30 a.m., business meeting at 11:30 a.m., lunch at noon., and singing at 1 p.m.

HOMECOMING, Hurricane Baptist Church. Singing at 10 a.m., message by Bro Leo Smith. Noon meal afterwards.

SINGING, Lily Baptist Church, Mt. Sterling, 2 p.m., featuring The Spiritual Voices, Stars of Zion, Pleasant Hill Male Chorus, Butler Chapel Male Chorus, The Duff Sisters, and Fairview Youth Male Chorus. Rev. Jerry Elliott is the pastor.

CLASS REUNION MEETING, CCHS Class of 1978, Choctaw Development Center (old East Choctaw Jr. High), 5 p.m. For more information contact Sylvia Bunn Thomas, 205-398-3966 or email sbthomas@tds.net, Gladys Bishop Eddie at 398-2106 or Danita Hampton Washington at 654-2044.

MEN AND WOMEN DAY, Shiloh Baptist Church, Silas, 2 p.m.

Tuesday, May 22nd
AARP MEETING, 6 p.m., Senior Center in Butler. Guest speaker, Butler Chief of Police Chuck Breland will talk about how to avoid becoming the victim of fraud or scams.

Friday, May 25th
NEW HOPE FIRE DEPT. will be selling chicken and pork plates, 11 a.m., parking lot of the Choctaw Co. Historical Museum, Gilbertown. A singing will begin at 7 p.m. at the New Hope Fire Dept. on CR 9.

May 25, 26, 27 and 31
SMOKE ON THE MOUNTAIN will be presented by the Ballet and Theatre Arts Performing Companies at the BTAS Theatre in Gilbertown as part of the 2007 Heritage Festival. Curtain times are 8 p.m. nightly on Friday, May 25, Saturday, May 26, and Thursday, May 31, and at 2 p.m. on Sunday, May 27. Tickets are \$10 each and are on sale at the usual local businesses or by calling Fred or Svetlana Kimbrough at (251) 843-5138.

Sunday, May 27th
TYSON FAMILY REUNION, descendants of Robert Simeon Tyson, Sarah Elizabeth Bush Tyson, and Ona Wilson Tyson, home of Roland and Pauline Tyson, 3686 Ararat Road. Lunch will be served. Bring your lawn chairs, a covered dish, photos and other family memorabilia.

14th YEAR ANNIVERSARY of Rev. and Sis. James E. Sheffield, Little Hope Baptist Church, 1:30 p.m. Rev. Levelle Anderson, of Meridian, guest speaker.

Monday, May 28th
MEMORIAL DAY SERVICE, 8 a.m. at Barrytown Cemetery on the Barrytown Road east of Gilbertown. All veterans and their families are extended a special invitation to attend.

Wednesday, May 30th
HERITAGE FESTIVAL SOUTHERN GOSPEL CONCERT, Heritage Church of God, Gilbertown, 6 p.m.

Thursday, May 31st
HERITAGE FESTIVAL GOSPEL CONCERT featuring soloists, groups and choirs from Choctaw County's African-American churches, Gilbertown.

Friday, June 1st
HERITAGE FESTIVAL BLUEGRASS, SOUTHERN GOSPEL CONCERT, 7 p.m., Southern Choctaw High School Football Field, tickets \$10 at the gate, bring lawn chairs. Concessions/food available. Featured groups: Crimston City Quartet, Cullomburg Quartet, The Lindsey Family, Jimmy D. Mosley and Southern Praise.