February 10, 2020

MCHD food inspectors out inspecting temporary vendors during Carnival

MOBILE, Alabama — To prevent and protect the community from food-borne illnesses, the Mobile County Health Department’s food inspectors are out examining all the temporary food vendors located along the Carnival parade routes.

“All the temporary food vendors must meet the minimum requirements in the Food & Drug Administration’s 2013 Food Code,” said Dr. Stephanie Woods-Crawford, Executive Director of Prevention & Wellness at MCHD. “These are the same standards applied to restaurants.”

MCHD has inspected and issued permits to 27 temporary food vendors and six temporary bars. Brad Philips, who directs Inspection Services, said his team expects more food vendors later in the week when the next round of parades begins.

Inspectors have been conducting spot checks of food vendors every parade night and will continue through the rest of the Carnival season. They will also be on the look-out for any vendors who have not been approved to operate. Those vendors will not be allowed to serve until they are inspected, meet the necessary requirements and have paid any fees due to the city and MCHD.

“So far upon initial inspections, we are seeing issues with hand washing (sinks blocked and not accessible, no water or no hot water), plumbing leaks (equipment and water supplies), means to dispose of wastewater, along with food temperatures (hot and cold holding),” Philips said.

Each location that has been approved will have their score posted in plain view like at any restaurant, along with their temporary food permit. The starting and ending date will be printed on the permit.

“Anyone who is eating from these booths should feel confident it has been reviewed by the Health Department’s food inspectors,” Dr. Woods-Crawford said. “Whether it is special events or outdoor cooking, we will be there to protect the community from food-borne illnesses.”

If you see a vendor selling food that does not have a posted temporary permit or inspection sheet from MCHD, please call the Inspection Services office at 251-690-8116, or call the after-hours number at 251-690-8158.

MCHD wants to remind parade-goers to remember our area is currently at the height of flu season and also facing an outbreak of Hepatitis A. Please follow these steps while in the midst of large crowds:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it;
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way;
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs, such as parade barricades.

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