

discovery in thailand

by Emily Hernandez

September 24 marked a historic milestone. Researchers reported news of a new of a preventative vaccine discovered in Bangkok Thailand. The vaccine—a combination of two previously unsuccessful vaccines—cut the risk of becoming infected with HIV by more than 31 percent in the world's largest AIDS vaccine trial. More than 16,000 residents of Thailand volunteered to take part in the human experiment. The study used strains of HIV found commonly in Thailand.

Like the saying “fight fire with fire” this is similar. The Thailand Ministry of Public Health scientists tried to prevent HIV the same way they treat it. There were two vaccines. But together in a combination it cut down the risk of becoming infected. A “prime-boost” was used, meaning that the first of the two vaccines primes the immune system to attack the HIV and the second one supports or strengthens the response. The vaccines are ALVAC and AIDSVAX. ALVAC uses canarypox, which could not cause HIV. The canary pox transmits three versions of HIV genes into the body. The AIDSVAX also cannot cause HIV contains a genetically engineered version of a HIV's protein.

Before the trials started, all people involved were informed of the potential risks. The men and women of Thailand between the ages of 18 and 30 either received four “priming” doses of ALVAC and two “boost” doses of AIDSVAX over six months or a placebo. A placebo is a “dummy shot.” No one knew what he or she was injected with until after the results came back. They were all given condoms, counseling and treatment for any sexually transmitted infections, and received screenings every six months for HIV. Anyone participating who became infected was given free treatment with antivirals. All involved continued to get tested for HIV test every six months for three years after vaccinations ended. Incredibly only 51 of the 8,197 given vaccine and in 74 of the 8,198 who received dummy shots got infected.

Twenty-six years ago AIDS was discovered and 75,000 people are infected with HIV every year. People thought it was impossible that a successful vaccine would come into play but skeptics were proved wrong this year.



E. Hernandez, Echo

“I think that the vaccine will keep helping people. It's the best.”
-Carly Wood



E. Hernandez, Echo

“It is the first broadly neutralizing these antibodies were isolated using a new screening method in which tested the blood of 1,800 infected volunteers from seven different countries, including the United States.” -Mrs. Curcio.

memorial

by Ben Miller and Mary Elchert



B. Miller, Echo

Out in front of the high school, in the memory garden, there is a new addition. A memorial for Derek Holland resides there. If you don't know Derek Holland, Holland was a graduate of Pen Argyl and after high school, Holland joined the army and he was sent to Afghanistan. Last June, Derek

Holland was killed by a roadside bomb along with an Air Force major. Last year the high school gave him a memorial at the beginning of the school year.

This year, Kathy Andreas, his mom, and Mike Heath, her fiancée, gave a new memorial to the school, dedicated to Derek. The memorial consists of a garden stepping stone that has been converted to a table. It was decorated with an American flag, symbolizing the sacrifice he made for this country. The plaque was made by a couple out in Lancaster. The man who made it was also a veteran and he understood the Derek Holland situation on a whole new level. They also had a plaque with it, telling the story of Derek Holland's tragic death. When asked about it, Kathy Andreas commented, “It would have meant a lot to him because he loves the outdoors and the memorial placed is in such a beautiful spot.” She also stated “It is a great place to reflect and having it there would have meant a lot to him.”

When asked about the new memorial, Mr. Smith commented, “The plaque is beautiful and it really represents Derek. Hopefully, the kids will be able to reflect about the plaque and be able to get something out of it as they sit out there.”



B. Miller, Echo

inelgibility

by Kenny Bush

The ineligibility for co-curricular activities was set up by the Pennsylvania International Awareness Association. It states that a student must be passing with at least four credits and those who are not passing who are in a co-curricular activity are called to the office to be told so. If a student is not passing, his or hers after-school activities are put to a hold until their grades are brought back up. But why is this? “Because school comes first,” says Mr. Oakley, a ninth grade science teacher and substitute principal whenever Mr. Smith is absent. This is reasonable of course, because you're not exactly graded in co-curricular activities, are you? Co-curricular events with ineligibility include all fall, winter and spring sports, marching band, and drama club. Mr. Smith recommends that students “Practice proper values and etiquettes.” to keep from being ineligibile.

By Ryan Hutchison

On October 1, 2009, the Slate Belt Alcohol Task Force put on its 2nd annual Health and Safety Fair at the Wind Gap Middle School. “It feels good to come out and help teach kids to stay away from drugs”, said Alex DeNardo, a student volunteer at the event. There was free food and plenty of things to do, including a fire simulation trailer brought in by Look-out Fire Department and a dunk tank, where Mr. Barry, Mr. Kupec, and several other unfortunate teachers were dunked. Representatives from several community organizations attended, handing out pamphlets teaching kids about topics such as bully prevention and the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Dr. Foster, who is the head of the Alcohol Task Force and organizer of the event, said “We do this to raise people's awareness that the services being presented here are



R. Hutchison, Echo

always available to our community and to make people aware that drug and alcohol abuse is a problem in every community and that there is help available for those who are struggling

health and safety fair

with addictions”. While the purpose of the fair was to educate people about the dangers of drugs, the real reason many went was clearly to have a good time. There were 2 police dogs, and they did a demonstration of their work, and they performed almost flawlessly. Also, the Iron Pigs mascot Ferrous and Scruff McGruff the Crime Dog was there, posing for pictures and signing autographs. The Pen Argyl High School marching band did a performance, and so did Midlife Crisis, the local band led by middle school teacher Miss Hanselmann. Midlife Crisis did excellent covers of many timeless classic rock songs, such as Sweet Home Alabama, Wanted Dead or Alive, and Every Rose Has Its Thorn. There was also a trailer brought in by the fire department. Inside, a smoke machine fills it with smoke and a firefighter guides people how to properly exit a burning building. Dean Parsons, a firefighter, said they came “To promote fire safety to the residents of the school district.” This year's health and safety fair was a huge success. More than 500 people showed up and had a good time. Remember to come again next year!