

Mosquito Control District: Another season

By **JEFFREY C. STIVERS**, special to the Daily News
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The sight and sound of helicopters at dawn and low flying airplanes at 4 a.m. signal the start of another mosquito season in Naples.

To most of the residents of the area the low-flying mosquito control aircraft symbolize the Collier Mosquito Control District (CMCD). Behind those aircraft, however, is a cadre of people dedicated to making it possible for those aircraft to provide safe, efficient, and effective mosquito control to local residents.

Who are these people and what do they do to help protect residents from mosquitoes and mosquito-borne disease?

Like any organization, the CMCD has a person in charge of everything. For the CMCD this is the executive director, Frank Van Essen, a Ph.D entomologist with a background in biological control agents of mosquitoes. A native of Pennsylvania, Van Essen has been with the CMCD for 18 years and oversees all aspects of the daily operation of the district.

The department of administration is responsible for preparing the budget for the Board's approval, paying the bills, approving purchases, answering the phone, and a myriad of other functions without which the district could not operate. Our director of administration, Stacy Welch, has been with the District for 15 years. She has a B.S. in accounting from FGCU and grew up in Miami.

Answering questions about mosquito control, being a speaker for a civic association and school classroom, distributing brochures about mosquito control, and giving tours of the CMCD facility, are the responsibility of the public information officer. Ours, Adrian Salinas, has been with the District for 22 years and is a native of Naples.

The research department is headed by yours truly, a Ph.D. medical entomologist with experience working for the Environmental Protection Agency and in malaria control programs in Central America. Another Pennsylvanian, I've been with the District for nine years and am responsible for designing, implementing, and analyzing a variety of research programs performed in support of operations.

The district's biologist, Marin Brouillard, hails from Arkansas. With a B.S. in environmental science, and four years with the district, she is responsible for assisting with research projects, serving as the district's resource for mosquito-borne diseases, filling in as needed for operational personnel, and preparing much of the information on the District's web site.

The department of operations encompasses several different groups within CMCD. The director of operations, Don Hogan, is another Naples native and has been with the district for 30 years. He oversees all of the operational activities of the District, from the inspectors, who collect the information used to make application decisions, to the mechanics who service the aircraft and the pilots who fly them. This is the person who recommends where and when to treat for mosquitoes to the executive director.

The head of the aircraft maintenance section grew up in south Florida and has worked for the district for 33 years. Jay Wilson and his mechanics are responsible for maintaining all of the district's aircraft, as well as making the spray systems used on the aircraft. They are the people who keep the aircraft flying safely and effectively.

These are the people who make it possible for the pilots, headed by the chief pilot, Chuck Roderick, who has been with the district for 24 years, (another pilot, Kent LeBailly, has been here for 27 years) to actually go out and make the applications that provide relief from mosquitoes for the people of Naples.

The pilots may be the most visible of the district's employees, but without the backing of the rest of the CMCD personnel the pilots would be grounded while the mosquitoes feasted on the residents of the Naples area.