



St. Mary's County Health Department

NEWS RELEASE

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT RESTAURANT INSPECTION REPORTING SYSTEM INTRODUCES GOLD STAR PROGRAM

(LEONARDTOWN, MD) April 20, 2007 -- The Food Safety Program of St. Mary's County Health Department is introducing a new Gold Star Program to recognize superior compliance to food safety standards among food establishments in St. Mary's County.

This program will not only recognize the conscientious efforts of food establishments, but will also alert the public to restaurants that have demonstrated exceptional attention to public health safety and sanitation, according to Victor Krasnokutsky, environmental health supervisor at the health department.

St Mary's County Health Department helps food establishments keep the risk of food borne illness low through education and inspections. There are some safe food handling practices however, that, if not done properly, are more likely to lead to food borne illnesses. Health department inspectors specifically observe and document these food handling practices during a regular routine of monitoring inspections.

Advanced technology in the field enables health inspectors to record and track compliance progress with relative ease, and contributes to the ability to inform the public more quickly about those establishments that are going the extra mile to provide customers a safe and healthy dining experience.

(more)

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The Gold Star Program is being implemented as a direct result of public interest. "Clients naturally want to know how restaurants do on their inspections," said Alan Shick, food program supervisor. "Public inquiries about our inspection work in food services have become much more numerous in the past few years. Both the food establishment and the public win when high standards are achieved, rewarded and made known."

Food establishments that achieve this high level of compliance will receive a certificate and window sticker naming them as Gold Star establishments. The requirements to earn the Gold Star are:

- No critical violations (based on COMAR 10.15.03)
- No temperature violations cited during a monitoring inspection
- All violations noted by an inspector must be corrected by a 30-day follow-up inspection.
- No confirmed unsafe food handling complaints
- At least one food service worker completed a recognized and approved "Food Service Sanitation and Safety Class" within the last two years

For more information about the Gold Star Program, please call St. Mary's County Health Department Division of Environmental Services at 301-475-4321.

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