



# Life's lessons learned at the poker table

In poker and in life, success builds confidence. The more you win, the more you begin to believe that you're the reason why. While the player makes decisions that impact the outcome, you still have to play with the cards you're dealt.

I've always thought that poker isn't really about the cards. You can do the math, count cards and calculate percentages, but you also have to be able to read the players. Even a bad hand can succeed if you convince the others at the table that you have the winning cards.

My wife's sister was visiting from Maryland this week, so we had her over for dinner along with my mother-in-law.

Their family pastime is playing poker.

I like to think I'm pretty good at it. I once beat about 60 contenders to win a Texas Hold'em tournament, which came with a 3-foot-tall trophy, so there's that.

My family doesn't play poker. We mostly play hearts, but I'm also pretty good at spades and pinochle. Thus, I'm well experienced in trash talking, which is a necessary element to poker.

The first night, I was raking in the chips. I was betting high with nothing, scoring some decent pots and doing my best to intimidate my opponents. Midway through the night, my wife complained that the table was

starting to tip under the weight of my chip stash.

I was beginning to think that I couldn't lose. These people are out of my league.

The second night, my mother-in-law said she was making it her goal to take my chips. Good luck, I thought. Luck and skill and youth are all on my side.

My mother-in-law, Shirley, is 90 years old and blind. She can't see the cards on the table, so we tell her what they are. She can't remember what we told her, and she can't see her own cards unless she holds them half an inch from her face.

You might think I'd take it easy on her. You would be wrong.

## Ramblin' Man

By David Porter  
porter@ramblinman.us



As the night progressed, though, I noticed something odd. My chip lead kept getting smaller and smaller. The table started to tip the other direction. By the end of the night, Shirley had cleaned us all out.

Half the time, she didn't even know she had won. She

would lay her cards down so we could see if she had anything. She had it all. Straights and flushers, full houses, four of a kind. I don't think she lost a hand all night. I'm beginning to think she's not as blind as she wants us to think she is.

We had a swell time, the

girls munching on cheese and crackers while I snacked on humble pie. It just goes to show, some days you're the windshield and some days you're the bug.

In poker and in life, you just keep at it. Fold the bad hands, consider your odds, try to play smarter and bluff with confidence.

Try to win gracefully and lose with dignity. Some days are aces and some days are deuces. But try to enjoy the ride. If you can do that, no day is wholly lost.

© Copyright 2022 by David Porter who can be reached at porter@ramblinman.us. In poker and in life, even a deuce beats a fold.

# Public health benefits all of us

By Colleen Lehmann,  
public health liaison  
Douglas County  
Health Department

When you hear the term public health, what do you picture? It's understandable if all that comes to mind is COVID-19, as the virus has taken up the lion's share of most healthcare providers' time and energies for the past two-plus years. But before there was the COVID pandemic there was public health, busily and enthusiastically addressing all manner of health and safety issues.

So, aside from the COVID-related pursuits that consumed a majority of Douglas County Health Department's attention and with precautions in place due to COVID, what else was DCHD doing last year? Our recently completed annual report offers a glimpse at the bigger picture.

Douglas County nursing staff worked with 217 households participating in the WIC (Women, Infants & Children) program, conducted 77 nail

clinic appointments, did 19 lead screenings, the same number of TB skin tests, and helped facilitate nine diabetes support group meetings. They conducted and/or helped facilitate approximately 86 COVID vaccination clinics.

While COVID restrictions didn't fully allow for them, other nursing services typically offered through DCHD include vision and hearing screenings, breastfeeding counseling and support, other women's health issues, immunizations, and communicable disease surveillance.

The well-utilized Douglas County Dental Clinic had 2,889 encounters in 2021, and welcomed 1,006 new patients to its rolls. There were 1,086 adult cleanings, 1,640 child cleanings, 1,240 sealants done, 1,653 cavities filled, 130 dentures made, and 1,133 teeth extractions.

There is a wide array of both preventative and restorative services available to income-qualified residents on a sliding

## For the Health Of It

By Colleen Lehmann  
colleen.lehmann  
@douglascountyil.com



fee scale, and Medicaid patients are welcome here. The dental department also travels to area Head Start programs and schools, as well as assisted living facilities, to provide some offsite dental care as well.

On the environmental side, the department did a total of 326 inspections of varying kinds—including food establishments, septic systems, wells, tanning parlors, and tattoo/piercing parlor. While nine food permits were retired, that was offset by nine new permits being issued. There were 324 violations noted, and 113 gold/silver spoon designations

awarded. Three food safety presentations were done, drawing 45 participants.

Those inspections serve a crucial purpose, helping business owners keep their customers, staff and ultimately their bottom line healthy and safe by identifying potential problems before they cause harm. The same holds true for well and septic reviews, which ensure these systems operate safely and effectively.

Community outreach grant programs made a substantial impact on a large number of households and individuals, even with COVID restrictions.

The Summer Meals program provides free lunches to Douglas County youths ages 18 and under during June and July. There were 54,725 meals served to 1,599 participants throughout the county in 2021.

There were approximately 49 work hours spent on tobacco cessation assistance and education, along with medical marijuana enrollment help and education. Another grant aimed at helping reduce the number of accidental drug overdoses saw 156 adults receive opioid overdose training, and 276 vials of nasal Narcan were distributed to area first responders, businesses, and individuals. Eleven people were provided needle exchange kits through the SWAP harm reduction program.

You don't have to be employed in public health to make a true difference in this sector. DCHD relied mightily on the kindness of scores of volunteers to help facilitate COVID testing and immunization clinics at the height of

the pandemic.

Want some other ideas on how to be a public health warrior? Join or start a community garden, volunteer at or donate to a food pantry to help those facing hunger issues. Offer a ride to folks unable to provide their own transportation to medical or dental appointments. Volunteer with the Douglas County Medical Reserve Corps and you will be helping ensure the health and safety of your community, whether as a health professional or in a non-medical role.

Public health relies on partnerships and collaborations to maximize the impact of its services and outreach. As DCHD continues in its mission to protect and promote healthier lifestyles through prevention and education, we thank everyone who has joined us in making that possible for the residents and businesses of Douglas County.

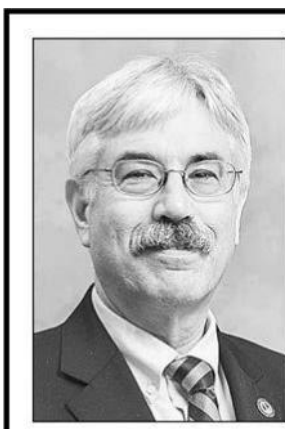
Colleen Lehmann is public health liaison for the Douglas County Health Department.

# Cool, wet weather prevents early planting

There have been a few soybeans planted in Douglas County but overall, there has not been much work done in Illinois or the Corn Belt. A year ago, we had planted both corn and soybeans by the middle of April. Regular rain and cool temperatures have meant little chance for fieldwork. Only Texas and North Carolina have planted any significant part of their corn acres. Our weather seems more like February than April.

The recent trend has been for early planting, basically anytime farmers can get in the field after late March. The only limiting factor for most farmers are the crop insurance planting dates. Corn planted before April 6 and soybeans planted before April 20 in Central Illinois aren't eligible for insurance replant payments. That is about \$30 an acre.

The calculation about early planting involves more than this possible replant payment. We seem to lock into long streaks of wet weather. It could make sense to plant in good conditions before the insurance date if the farmer thinks it might be another 2 weeks until the next good planting weather. Those dates no longer matter this year as we are past the corn plant date and approaching the soybean date.



Douglas County  
Agriculture

Larry W. Dallas  
Illinois Farm Bureau  
District 12 Director

The seed treatments we regularly apply to both corn and soybean seed are what make early planting possible. The old rule was that the soil temperature should be 50 degrees before you plant corn. The even older rule was that the oak trees should have leaves the size of a squirrel's ears. The untreated seed of the past needed warm soil to germinate quickly. A long time in the ground exposed the seed to disease and insects. These rules of thumb gave the untreated seed a better chance to grow in warm soil.

We think we are ready to plant. We would like to put a little seed in both planters to check that they will work properly. It would be unfortunate to get a window of dry weather and then lose precious field time on a breakdown we

should have foreseen.

There are still concerns about parts availability. Everyone has a story about asking for a part and being told it is back-ordered or simply not available. In addition to the ships backed up at U.S. ports, the Chinese lockdown of the city of Shanghai has ships backed up there. A lot of the parts we use come out of China.

The avian flu continues to spread in this country, with cases in more than half the states. For the first time I can remember, eggs were not on special at Easter. The average price of chicken in the store is reported to be 25% higher than a year ago. This disease affects ducks, geese, and turkeys as well. The price of any poultry product is going to be more expensive in the short run.

Commercial poultry flocks are closely watched for signs of the disease. If it is detected, the birds in that building or on that farm are destroyed to try to halt the spread. Everyone hopes the epidemic will end as wild bird migrations move on. The losses to the poultry industry will be quite high. The two cases in Illinois were small backyard flocks. Indiana and Iowa have had large outbreaks.

The rebuilding process for the poultry industry will be shorter than with other species. If you have a hen and a rooster to produce a fertile egg, you can have a chick in 21 days and a chicken wing about 2 months after that. It will take about 6 months for that chick to lay an egg. At least some of these farms are losing their breeding stock and rebuilding will lengthen the process.

From the time you decide to raise a hog to slaughter, it will take about 10 months to have a pork chop, assuming you have mature breeding stock. The time is lengthened out to close to 3 years for a hamburger or steak. Gestation alone for a beef cow is over 9 months. These differences in maturity make animal agriculture slow to respond to market signals.

The world situation continues to keep grain prices high.

U.S. planting progress is well behind average. No one has a handle on how many acres might get planted in Ukraine. Grain shipments out of the Black Sea region are slow and expensive because of the war. After a good start, the corn-growing areas of South America are drying out. The wheat-growing parts of the United States remain in a drought. All that uncertainty makes the grain traders and end-users nervous.

North Africa and the Middle East eat a lot of dishes made with wheat and use a lot of Black Sea, wheat. Egypt is reported to be looking at Australian wheat to fill the void. Our east coast ports would seem like a closer source than Australia. I read that some Brazilian farmers were looking at trying to grow wheat. They have no experience with the crop and the climate is less than suitable. The price is so good, they want to try it anyway. Winter wheat planted now in Brazil would be harvested 6 months after the northern hemisphere crop and might hit a good market.

The county is replacing the bridge over the Kaskaskia a mile west of our shop. The old one was built in 1940 and had been posted for 54,000 pounds in the last few years. It lasted

80 years and spanned the years from the end of the horse and wagon era up to 80,000-pound semis. That speaks well for the design and workmanship of the time.

Infrastructure is often a topic of political speeches and advertising. I do not think we are at a crisis level but orderly maintenance of our roads and bridges is very important to agriculture. One of the farmers on the recent Farm Bureau trip to DC spoke to every legislator about the need to replace the Mississippi River bridge at Chester, IL. If it fails, he will have to drive an hour either way to get across the river.

The bridge near my house should be finished by the end of the summer. A project like a Mississippi River bridge or a lock and dam will take years to complete. We need a government willing to plan for these big projects. Barge operators are willingly paying a fuel tax surcharge to fund river improvements. Illinois Farm Bureau was willing to pay higher gas taxes to fund roads and bridges. We are helping pay for the improvements we ask for.

We are hoping for some dry weather and warmer temperatures. Watch out for us on the roads when we do get to work. Thank you for reading about agriculture this month.