

August 2015 – Article 5 of 5 in a series of interesting and informative articles introducing you to the people working to provide private well owners with the knowledge and tools they need to care for their water wells.

## **The People Behind the Program – Public Health Inspectors**

*The provincial Working Well program provides information, resources and hands-on workshops to Alberta's private well owners. Meet the real people who are helping to deliver it.*

With a career in public health that spans more than three decades in several Alberta communities, Keith Lee has seen a lot during his time as a Public Health Inspector with Alberta Health Services (AHS). Originally from British Columbia, Lee has lived and worked in Drumheller for the past 25 years and loves the community and the people that reside there. He enjoys playing sports and participates in volleyball, badminton and slow-pitch softball on community teams and leagues.

Amongst his work duties, Lee coordinates Environmental Public Health programming in the region and one of the valuable resources he has come across for the area's rural residents is the provincial Working Well program.

The Working Well program is designed to provide well owners with the information and tools they need to properly care for their wells. It also helps well owners understand why it's important to test their well water and how to do it properly.

"There are plenty of people who move from the city to an acreage and don't know the first thing about testing and maintaining a well," says Lee. "Even if you grew up using ground water, there's a lot of new information to know. The free workshops and materials offered by the Working Well program are an incredible resource for private well owners."

Lee is one of the regular presenters at the free Working Well workshops that have taken place in the Drumheller region. Public Health Inspectors around the province are also involved in their own regions in a similar role.

"We present the section on how often to collect water samples, what kinds of testing should be done and where to take samples once they are collected," Lee says. "Water testing is free in most cases for private well owners, but some smaller health centres can only accept samples certain days of the week."

Support for private well owners doesn't end at the free workshops. Across Alberta, AHS Community Health Centres play a key role in delivering water samples from private well owners to the appropriate provincial testing labs. You can't know if your water is safe unless you test it and AHS employees around the province are happy to help with that. Private well water samples are tested for chemical and bacteriological contamination and when the results come back and a sample is found to be contaminated, Public Health Inspectors are there to provide guidance and advice on how to rectify the problem.

"If it's bacteriological contamination, it may be as simple as giving the well a shock chlorination treatment and the Working Well program has information on how to properly do it," says Lee. "It's a little more complicated when you're dealing with chemical contamination. Sometimes you need to find an alternate water supply until the problem can be solved."

The Working Well program exists to assist private well owners, preserve human health and safeguard one of our most important resources – water.



### **Learn how to maintain your well and protect your water supply**

Online resources and free community-based workshops offered by the Working Well program provide well owners with the information and tools they need to properly care for their wells and protect their water supply. For more information, visit the Working Well website at: [www.workingwell.alberta.ca](http://www.workingwell.alberta.ca)

For a list of AHS Community Health Centres visit: [www.myhealth.alberta.ca](http://www.myhealth.alberta.ca)