

Crowley, LA

Daily (ex. Mon/Sat)  
(DIY 5,300; Sun 5,800)

June 7, 2009

## Public Forum

# In support of fluoridation

Dear Editor,

I am writing to respond to the article written by Dr. James Reeves from Lafayette concerning the adjustment of the fluoride level to the city of Crowley's water. I respect Dr. Reeves' opinion and am thankful we live in a country where each individual can express their own opinion. With that in mind, I would like to express mine. I would also add that I believe the citizens of this city and our council should be the ones who make the decision as to whether or not we fluo-

ridate our water. We are not Lafayette, Louisiana and we have the right to govern ourselves based on what we know and believe. This should not be a "witch hunt" based on hearsay, but should be an open discussion based on the facts. If after the discussion our citizens and council decide not to fluoridate the water, then the majority has spoken and we will all continue on with our lives.

Dr. Reeves begins by referring to "hundreds of articles easily found on the internet" as his basis for opposing fluoridating our water. I have found that one may find "hundreds of articles easily found on the internet" that would support aliens are living

among us, Elvis is alive and living in Montana, and the Loch Ness monster is lurking somewhere in Scotland. My point is that anyone can come and give their opinion, but that does not make it a fact based on evidence. Research is done throughout the world every day, some of it is legitimate, and some of it is flawed. My opinion is that decisions should be based on sound, legitimate research.

First of all fluoride is a naturally occurring element that is present in water. Fluoridation of a water system is the adjustment of fluoride in the water to the effective level to prevent tooth decay. That effective level is about one part fluoride per one million parts water. This level was established in 1938 and has been followed and studied since then. For Crowley, the optimum level of fluoride has been determined to be 0.8 parts per million. In fact, before Crowley began to adjust its fluoride level to the optimum 0.8 parts per million, the level of naturally occurring fluoride in our water was between 0.2-0.4 parts per million.

Dr. Reeves says "it is the only forced medication in the U.S., where everyone must take it against their will." What about the fumes we all inhale when the mosquito spray truck drives near our homes or the airplane flies spraying for mosquitoes or spraying pesticides? Is this not "forced" upon us for the greater good of the society? What does Dr. Reeves say about this? I would

venture to say that the incidences of dental decay far outnumber the incidences of malaria or West Nile virus, yet we still allow pesticides to be sprayed for the greater good of our community.

Again Dr. Reeves suggests that ingesting fluoride does not prevent tooth decay. To the contrary, that is exactly how it was discovered that fluoride does actually prevent decay. In the 1930's, Dean reported the inverse relationship of fluoride in the drinking water and the prevalence of dental decay in the population served by its water supply. To state, as Dr. Reeves does, that "ingesting fluoride does not prevent tooth decay" is simply not true. This is based on solid scientific research, not internet articles.

Dr. Reeves also points out the "severe health effects" fluoride has on our bodies. He suggests an increase in hip fractures may occur. Again, to the contrary, the administration of sodium fluoride daily has been used as a treatment for osteoporosis. Scientifically sound studies back the claim that areas where water is at one part per million there is an actual decrease in the number of bone fractures. As for the cancer claims and other health concerns he mentions as "probably" occurring because of fluoride, I present to him the endorsements of the National Cancer Institute, American Medical Association, World Health Organization, and US Public Health Service who all support community water fluoridation.

Dr. Reeves presents himself as an expert in the fight against fluoridation and tries to scare us into not fluoridating our water. He mentions profits from big chemical companies, broken hips in older adults, and bone cancer in children as reasons not to fluoridate. I (and I take the privilege of speaking for all of our dental professionals who live and work in the city of Crowley) believe that we are providing an immense benefit to our citizens by fluoridating our water supply. We are not "retired civil engineer professors", we are in the trenches, seeing children with faces swollen due to dental decay, older citizens who have infections because they do not remember how to use a toothbrush, and lower income families who cannot afford to have their dental needs met. We see the benefits of fluoridating the water. We are trying to help our patients and the people of this community because we care. We are health care professionals who have no financial benefits from having our city's water fluoridated. In fact, there will be less decay for us to treat. This is our goal and our purpose. We are not trying to force this issue on anyone and, as I stated earlier, we would abide by the decision of the community. We would, however, like to give our citizens the true facts and benefits they will see if the water system remains fluoridated so that they are able to make a sound decision on this issue. Do not be intimidated by internet articles and "probably"

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