

Feb. 3, 2014

The Athens-Limestone Foundation for Aging is a non-profit group that serves the community by providing funding and/or equipment for seniors through various other agencies.

The Bean Day fundraiser has been an annual event held in October that helped support these efforts. For the past five years, the Athens-Limestone Foundation for Aging has organized the event with the help of volunteers.

When our board members were notified there was a possible outbreak of salmonella related to our most recent Bean Day event, we notified the Health Department the Monday morning following the Friday event and cooperated fully with health officials.

The News-Courier ran an article on Sunday, Feb. 2, regarding the Alabama Department of Public Health report. The board had not yet received the report at the time this article ran. The board requested a copy and received it this morning (Monday, Feb. 3).

According to the report, salmonella was found in bean samples as well as a strainer and floor drain. Health officials could not determine how or when the salmonella contamination occurred. The report indicated there were 47 confirmed cases reported by Athens-Limestone Hospital. The event served about 850 people.

Our board is dedicated to helping the community. The board certainly did not intend for an outbreak to occur. Without knowing the exact cause of the contamination, it is difficult to address what could have been done to prevent it.

I will address the following issues, which were raised in The News-Courier article:

- 250 pounds of beans were prepared for Bean Day. Organizers used a new galvanized watering container lined in plastic to soak this amount of beans. This is a procedure that has been used for 15 years.
- Gloves were provided to volunteers.
- Clorox mixed with water was used for cleaning equipment.
- Food was prepared, heated, and served based on about 15 years experience of holding the fundraiser.

The board appreciates those who have always supported and who continue to support the Athens-Limestone Foundation for Aging.

Sincerely,  
Helen Carter  
President, Athens-Limestone Foundation for Aging