

## **Initial Middlesex Tick Task Force Newspaper Article: Introducing the Task Force's Mission and Goals**

Spring is almost here, and though they've never quite been gone, DEER TICKS will soon appear in our woods, back yards, grassy areas and trails in full force searching for a blood meal from an animal or human host. Residents in towns in western Middlesex County, where ticks are particularly prevalent, might know or know of a family member, friend or neighbor who has been treated for one of the three tick-borne diseases that are becoming widespread in our area: Lyme, Anaplasmosis (Erlchiosis), and Babesiosis. These diseases can seriously impact an individual's health and life-style, and it's important to learn about the diseases, their symptoms and ways in which you can protect yourself and loved ones in the coming months.

Staff members and residents from local Middlesex towns have been meeting since September 2012 to confront this serious regional public health issue and share ideas and resources regarding prevention of tick-borne diseases. Known officially as the *Middlesex Tick Task Force*, representatives from Acton, Bedford, Carlisle, Concord, Lexington, Lincoln, Waltham, Wayland and Weston envision their mission as providing tick-borne disease education for their residents. The group's goals are to increase awareness of tick-borne diseases in our towns, to educate residents about effective prevention measures, and to promote inter-town collaboration about these diseases in Middlesex County. Each town involved has agreed to use local media to deliver the following messages: 1) *Tick-borne diseases are now prevalent in our towns;* 2) *There are effective prevention measures individuals can take to protect themselves;* 3) *It's crucial to learn about these diseases: the life-cycle of the deer tick, how to do a "tick check" after being outside, how to safely remove an embedded tick, signs and symptoms of the diseases, etc. and* 4) *the importance of self-advocacy and early medical treatment for tick-borne diseases.*

In 2011, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts established the Special Commission to Conduct an Investigation and Study the Incidence and Impact of Lyme Disease. The Commission was comprised of individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds and was established to provide the most comprehensive overview of the various issues related to Lyme disease. The Commission's report, "Lyme Disease in Massachusetts" was released on February 28, 2013 and is available at <http://www.malegislature.gov/Content/Documents/Committees/H46/LymeDiseaseCommissionFinalReport-2013-02-28.pdf>

Please look for continued articles in this series. The following are resources for information on tick-borne diseases:

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health: [www.mass.gov/dph/tick](http://www.mass.gov/dph/tick)  
Center for Disease Control: [www.cdc.gov/Lyme](http://www.cdc.gov/Lyme)  
University of Rhode Island Tick Resource Center: [www.tickencounter.org](http://www.tickencounter.org)