

LDA Presentation to Students at Voorhees High School

by Pat Kerl, Hunterdon County LDA Representative

Voorhees High School, Glen Gardner, NJ

Pat Smith, President of the Lyme Disease Association (LDA) gave a presentation to various grades of a Health class at Voorhees High School on Wednesday, November 10, 2004. The school is located in rural Glen Gardner, New Jersey, Hunterdon County, a county which has one of the highest rates of Lyme disease in the nation. In fact, as Pat pulled in the parking lot at 7am, she stopped and asked a man standing in the middle of the lot where she could park. "Are you the Lyme Lady," he asked very seriously. She said yes and he promptly gave his Lyme history, and followed her into school to ask questions about the disease and told her he had permission to attend her session, which he did. He was a retired policeman.

When asked by the teacher how many of them either had Lyme disease themselves, or had someone close to them who suffered from the disease, about 90% percent of all the classes raised their hands. Even though many of the students suffered from Lyme, there was still so much about the disease that they didn't know. Several teachers came by and confided they had the disease.

As a result, the teachers, and the students alike were grateful for any and all information Ms. Smith could share with them. She started her presentation with a slide show presentation, which explained such things as the various rashes, hosts of the ticks, types of ticks, how to protect oneself, remove a tick properly, etc. The students were paying attention intently knowing the importance of being taught these things that they themselves were personally dealing with. Pat Kerl assisted showing Ixodes tick specimens, and also gave the students some pamphlets to review and take home

to their families. Ms. Smith ended the presentation with a Question and Answer session that the students found quite informative.

The most rewarding thing heard at the end of the day was related by a teacher who told about a student whose life was changed as a result of a previous presentation at the high school several years ago by Pat Smith. A sophomore girl became deathly ill, and none of the doctors had a clue what was wrong with her. Time was of the essence in finding an answer to why this girl was failing quickly. Fortunately, at the eleventh hour, the girl remembered the presentation that Ms. Smith had given to her health class, and after remembering the list of symptoms, the girl insisted on being tested for Lyme disease. Fortunately her test was positive, and she was treated properly, and at this time is doing well. It was rewarding to Pat, and touching at the same time that she had touched a life so profoundly through her Lyme disease presentation.