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Food service inspections up and running

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It's been a month since the health department began contracting with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to perform food service establishment inspections. And the program has already begun to receive positive feedback.

Alan Cheung, owner of Asian Star, said he received plenty of guidance on what needed to be done so that his business would open on time. The restaurant opened June 1.

"Before I even opened, (the inspector) called me three times to tell me what I needed and what I needed to do," said Cheung, who has been in the restaurant business for 38 years. "He followed up really well and did an excellent job."

Since the Health Department took over the contract May 1, 97 establishments have been inspected, said Andrew Stull, Environmental Health Specialist. Several of those inspections included 25 food vendors at the recent Wakarusa Music and Camping Festival, where thousands of people attended the four-day event.

Past national surveys have shown the public expects restaurant and other food service inspections to be performed by local health departments. Taking on food inspections in Lawrence and Douglas County will assist the agency in its strategic plan to diversify its services and expand into an essential area of public health, said Dan Partridge, Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department Director.

Seven other Kansas counties conduct food service inspections. The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department currently has two food inspectors to inspect the roughly 430 restaurants and food establishments in Douglas County. Each location is inspected at least annually.

If concerned with the sanitation conditions of a Douglas County restaurant or food establishment, call the Health Department at (785) 843-3060 or e-mail Environmental Health staff at ehinfo@ldchealth.org.