

AN END TO FLUORIDATION

By Jasmyne Douglas, Texas State University

SAN MARCOS – The city of San Marcos, Texas put an end to fluoridating its water system on November 3 after 60.73 percent of voters voted in favor of Proposition 1 at the polls.

San Marcos voters were given the choice to vote for or against the proposition which states, “The City of San Marcos shall not add, or direct or require its agents to add fluoride in the form of hydrofluorosilicic acid, hexafluorosilicic acid, or sodium silicofluoride to the San Marcos municipal water supply.”

Because of the decision, starting November 12, the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA), whom operates the city’s water treatment plant, ceased the practice of fluoridating the drinking water treated at the plant.

“The City has been working expeditiously with GBRA to insure they are prepared to modify treatment by ceasing the addition of fluoride to the City’s water supply,” Director of the City of San Marcos Water-Wastewater Utility Department, Tom Taggart, said in a newsletter released on November 11 by the city of San Marcos. Taggart added, “Residents should not experience any change to the water’s taste or odor.”

In the November 11 newsletter released by the city of San Marcos, GBRA’s manager of the San Marcos water treatment plant, Jerry Sharp, clarified that the water supply already has some naturally occurring fluoride.

“However, we will not put additional fluoride into the supply,” Sharp said.

Some San Marcos residents are happy about the approval of Proposition 1, including Sam Brannon, organizer of the Fluoride-Free San Marcos Coalition.

“It began as a relatively small group of us that decided it was worth doing something about. That we actually thought it was an important issue,” Brannon said. “One that we could make a direct difference in in our own community. Those are the kind of issues I like. Ones that you can gather a broad base of people around and take local action and get it finished and that’s what we did.”

However, some residents, like Tyla Shackelford, a junior at Texas State University; do not agree with the removal and believe it will have negative effects on the city’s dental health.

“I think that was a bad move,” Shackelford said. “In the next 20 years or so, people will start seeing a change in their dental health and stuff like that. So, that was a really bad move.”

Texas State University senior, Thomas Phelps, says the topic of the removal piqued his interest when he first moved back to San Marcos.

“It interested me because everywhere that I have lived has been fluoridated,” Phelps said. “I’ve also heard from dentists that the concentrations found in most drinking water is too low to actually do any good anyway, so there’s really no need for it. I’m interested to see actually over the next coming five to 10 years if the cavity rate actually goes up.”

However, according to Brannon, the most direct impact of the approval of Proposition 1 is that people witnessed they can make a difference locally.

“Listen, the fluoride issue is a big issue,” Brannon said. “And getting that hazardous waste out of our water is huge. But, I think even bigger than that is people are now understanding that if there is something that they want our local governments to do or to not do, that they have the power in their own hands to make it happen.”