

## One local student H1N1 case confirmed

By PAMELA STAIK STAFF WRITER

**CHARLOTTE COUNTY** — Since heading back to the classroom on Aug. 10, teachers and students have been doing their part to stay healthy this school year.

And for the most part, their healthy habits have paid off.

To date, only one student has been confirmed as having the H1N1 flu virus, better known as swine flu, reported school spokesperson Mike Riley.

Although he was unable to identify the age and school of the child, Riley said the schools are doing everything they can to educate people about good hygiene.

“We’re following the recommendations of the Health Department left and right,” he said. “We have signs in the schools that remind teachers and students to wash their hands, we’re telling kids to keep their hands out of their mouths and to not pick up something if it isn’t theirs. We’re really doing everything we can to educate kids and parents.”

This includes squashing rumors that Meadow Park Elementary School sent home dozens of children Monday with the swine flu.

Actually the Port Charlotte elementary school only sent home seven sick children, none of whom had a fever, Riley said. He added that the school sends an average of five students home every day.

“Kids are sent home sick every day from school, just like they were sent home five years ago,” Riley said. “The truth is we could see hundreds of kids go home sick and not know if one of them has the swine flu until they have been to the doctor.”

He added that if a child is diagnosed with the virus, then a parent or doctor would be responsible for notifying the school. To date, only one doctor has made that confirmation to Charlotte County Public Schools.

The **Charlotte County Health Department** is no longer tracking individual cases, but rather H1N1-related deaths, explained spokesperson Adam DuBois. He said there have been no deaths in the county.

But DuBois said that doesn’t mean the swine flu isn’t making its way around the area.

“It’s spreading because people aren’t taking the proper precautions,” DuBois said. These precautions include staying home from work or school when sick, washing hands with soap and covering mouths when sneezing or coughing.

“As clean as Americans are, we’re still forgetting the basics,” DuBois said.

For more information on how to keep the virus at bay, visit [www.charlottehd.com](http://www.charlottehd.com).

Staff writer Josh Salman contributed to this article.

E-mail: [pstaik@sun-herald.com](mailto:pstaik@sun-herald.com)