Candidates flood Ohio on holiday

By Darrel Rowland
The Columbus Dispatch

CLEVELAND — We’re here “because we know how important this election to Ohio.” Those words happen to have come Monday from Hillary Clinton. But they could’ve been voiced just as easily by Donald Trump. Or Trump’s running mate, Gov. Mike Pence of Indiana. Or Clinton’s running mate, Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia. As if Ohio’s importance in the 2016 presidential election needed an exclamation point, both major-party candidates and their side-kicks wound up about 15

PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS

Partner or pet?

By James Steinbauer | The Columbus Dispatch

The death of his partner consumed Franklin County sheriff’s Deputy Michael Durbin.

He was leaving for work on Nov. 9 when another animal caught the eye of his 3-year-old German shepherd, his beloved K-9 partner Udet. The dog ran into the road and Durbin yelled for her, but Udet kept running and was struck and killed by a

LAW ENFORCEMENT

State Highway Patrol Trooper Jerrold March prepares to release his dog, Jack. March, along with other K-9 units in the patrol, were drilling on apprehending suspects near Rickenbacker Airport.

Officers form intense bond with their canine colleagues

By Holly Zachariah | The Columbus Dispatch

WAVERLY — On Labor Day weekend, if life was as it once had been, dozens of Rhodens would have gathered for their annual family reunion.

They would have swum in the lake, lounged on the campground beach and enjoyed

PIKE COUNTY MURDERS

Reunion one more loss for family

By Holly Zachariah | The Columbus Dispatch

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ZIKA VIRUS

OSU lures top viral researcher to campus

By Emily Tate
The Columbus Dispatch

A small container is kept frozen in a research lab at Ohio State University. Inside are several strains of the Zika virus, which has infected more than 500,000 people this year and continues to spread.

In that lab, you’re also likely to find Dr. Shan-Lu Liu, a virologist the university lured from the University of Missouri to join Ohio State’s Center for Retrovirus Research, as part of its Discovery Themes

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See K-9 Partners, A6

See Columbus, A5

See Candidates, A5

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See Candidates, A5

See Candidates, A5
Zika is real; it’s relevant. Years ago, we never would have thought, ‘Oh, Zika will be a huge issue,’ and now it’s here.”
— Dr. Shan-Lu Liu, virologist

OSU
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initiative to look at societal needs in fresh, creative ways. Although his research on Zika is really just beginning — the outbreak was declared a health crisis only in February — Liu already is considered one of the most promising Zika experts.

In fact, he was one of 50 scientists invited to a conference in Washington, D.C., this summer to discuss the biggest questions concerning the Zika virus.

Liu, 49, who studies emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases such as HIV, Ebola and Zika, turned down several other offers to join Ohio State’s team.

“There are very good people around that are interacting, collaborating and want to do science together,” said the virologist.

Liu has done extensive research on HIV that “has changed how we think about the virus,” said Eric Freed, director of the HIV Dynamics and Replication Program at the National Cancer Institute and National Institutes of Health.

Liu and Freed have co-authored several studies about HIV.

“His work has really been at the forefront of virology fields,” Freed said. “In my view, he is an exceedingly rigorous scientist and effective mentor in his lab.”

The Zika virus was first discovered in Uganda in 1947 — Ohio State has a sample of that strain, MR766, in its labs — but the first major outbreak didn’t occur until 2007, prior to the present, pervasive outbreak affecting the Americas today.

Early cases of the virus originated in Brazil last year. And in the months that followed, health officials connected the Zika virus to microcephaly, a condition in which a baby is born with a small head because its brain failed to develop properly. The condition can lead to a number of debilitating health problems, including seizures, developmental disabilities and death.

Zika is primarily transmitted through mosquito bites, but scientists have learned that it can also be passed through direct sexual contact, from mother to fetus, and perhaps even through blood transfusions.

In February, several international health organizations declared Zika a public health emergency. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had confirmed 2,722 cases in the United States as of Aug. 31, most of which resulted from international travel. Thirty-three of those have been found in Ohio. U.S. territories account for an additional 14,000 Zika cases.

The case count continues to climb, the World Health Organization said on Friday, and with such little understanding of the virus and its transmission, Zika likely will continue to spread.

Liu said this spread is likely why President Obama has sought $1.9 billion in funding for Zika research.

“Zika is real; it’s relevant,” he said. “Years ago, we never would have thought, ‘Oh, Zika will be a huge issue,’ and now it’s here.”

Congress has not granted Obama’s request for funding, and CDC officials said this week that they had nearly spent the $222 million currently allotted to fight the virus.

That limits research, said Liu, who has had to use funds left from an Ebola grant he received from the National Institutes of Health to conduct Zika research. Some scientists are less fortunate.

Michael Oglesbee, chairman of Ohio State’s Department of Veterinary Biosciences, said federal funding must be released.

“Today, it’s Zika, but next year or two years from now it’ll be a new virus,” said Oglesbee, who helped recruit Liu and leads the Discovery Themes initiative for infectious diseases.

“The threat of emerging and re-emerging diseases is something we’ll always face.”

“The challenge is maintaining a constant base of funding.”

Such diseases are unpredictable, Liu said, which is why it’s important to learn as much as we can during outbreaks.

As for what lies ahead, Liu said, he is interested in virus-host interactions, such as how the Zika virus enters a cell and the host’s innate and adaptive immune response to the virus.

Liu also is working toward therapeutic approaches to Zika, including vaccine development and antiviral therapy.

“Our research never stops,” he said. “Even when the crisis is gone, we are still understanding the biology of the virus and working on vaccines.”

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