COVID-19: Golden Ticket
By Dr. Michele Dikkers, Chair of Clayton County Board of Health

While watching TV, I saw a commercial with Roy Rogers. Now, I am not quite old enough to say that I had watched him on TV while I was growing up, but I do know who he is and can say I always remember his smile. Memories of his face under that cowboy hat, are filled with a bright warm smile. The commercial was from a 1975 movie. He was saying “Like most things, what you see, depends on how you look at it.”

It struck me. We have heard it put many ways, but maybe not so well. We all know that our attitude toward something makes it more palatable or less so. If we are in a good mood, anything is possible. When we get up on the wrong side of the bed, nothing goes right, everything and everybody is wrong.

2020 has been overwhelming, to say the least. Sometimes we all wonder, “What next?”. There has been COVID-19, the wildfires, the derecho, the hurricanes and the election. When will it stop? Some say, “I am so over COVID”. That is like a character in a “Nightmare on Elm Street” movie saying they are “So over Freddy Krueger” and refusing to run. He is still around the corner; he isn’t going anywhere.

It doesn’t change the fact that we are all exhausted with the changes. Everyone is longing for normal. We know that COVID-19 isn’t going away anytime soon. So how can we get there?

Those of you that have been reading these columns and following the CDC and Dr Fauci, know what is coming next...yep, you’ve got it. Wear your mask, Wash your hands and Watch your distance. The mask is your ticket, your ticket to be interactive, to be social, to be outside your home, to be in a building that is not your home, with other people. Wearing masks keeps the number of cases down. The fewer cases, the fewer deaths. The fewer cases, the more we can do.

It’s October. Halloween is right around the corner. What a perfect time to talk about masks. As we all get ready for Halloween, incorporating the recommended mask face coverings with our costumes can make the mask fun. The old plastic masks with a hole for the mouth and nose were never comfortable. The cloth mask can be decorated with the theme of the night. And there will be less face make up to scrub off later!

Trick or treating can be done safely with a few adjustments this year.

- avoid traditional costume masks and wear the recommended cloth mask
- make the cloth mask part of your costume
- trick or treat with your family, avoid large groups
- stay six feet away from trick or treaters not in your family group
- wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before eating your treats

Make things safer for the trick or treaters. If you intend to give out treats, avoid offering a bowl full of treats that everyone grabs from. Consider individually bagged treats that can be set out and picked up by the trick or treaters. Hand out the treats outdoors, maybe consider setting them out individually at a "station" for the treaters to pick up. Wear a cloth mask when they come to your door. Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer frequently when handling the treats.
Going trick or treating always held a bit of excitement, wondering who would get the most or the best candy. Something reminiscent of Charlie’s search in “Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory”. We are all looking for the Golden Ticket.

And maybe, just like Charlie, we already have it. The mask. Instead of thinking of it as a restrictive annoyance, we need to take another look at it.

It’s the ticket that allows us to shop safely, go to sporting events, go to a restaurant, and see family. Masks aren’t just for trick or treating any more, they are for protecting each other, to keep each other safe and to keep our economy open.

So, mask up! Be well. We are in this together.