



## SEATC provides valuable training

The Southeast Alabama Training Center began as a vision of Kenneth Ball, administrator of Coffee and Geneva County Health Departments. Ball saw the need to create a training center to provide the most current training and education to home health employees in his region. Ball's dream became a reality in the spring of 1993, when, with the help of the administrators of Barbour, Dale, Henry, and Houston counties, the SEATC was formed to provide on-site orientation, in-service and continuing education programs to the home health employees of those counties.

The training center's programs were successful and caught the attention of State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson. Dr. Williamson asked the training center to work with the Bureau of Health Promotion and Information and Auburn University in a collaborative effort to produce three home health aide satellite conferences. While working on this project, Ball and Dr. Jim McVay, director of the Bureau of Health Promotion and Information, saw the opportunity to increase the health department's ability to educate its employees in a cost-effective manner through the utilization of satellite conferencing.

After Dr. Williamson approved the proposal, an uplink truck was purchased by the department to enable uplink capability wherever a conference was held. Coffee County Health Department built an addition to house the training center staff and a small studio while a state-of-the-art broadcast studio was being constructed in an old school building in Slocomb.

Since the completion of this construction phase, the training center has produced seven home health aide, seven nurse, and seven social work satellite conferences per year, which enabled the department to provide its home health employees their continuing education requirements.

In 1996, Dr. Williamson recognized the SEATC, now led by Janice McIntosh, R.N., M.S.N., as a state-level entity. SEATC is currently charged with the development of a comprehensive education plan that includes all components of home health employees' training including orientation, in-service, and continuing education programs. The training center will provide ongoing support for the plan by utilizing statewide input from disciplines specific committees to continue to provide quality satellite programs and symposia in areas of interest to home health programs.

The future holds many challenges and opportunities for the training center and the Bureau of Home and Community Services as the department readies itself for increased competition from managed care organizations. With the knowledge that health care payors prefer to contract with accredited agencies, the bureau has chosen as its goal to become one of the first public health care providers in the nation to be accredited.

The training center is working closely with bureau staff, area home health educators, and other home health staff across the state to ready the program for the rigors of accreditation in a rapidly changing health care environment. While the methods of ensuring the provision of quality home health care have evolved from cost-effective satellite conferences and programs delivered by area educators utilizing a comprehensive education plan, the Bureau of Home and Community Services and the training center stand firm in their commitment to attain accreditation by consistently providing top quality home health care to the citizens of Alabama.

By *Janice McIntosh, R.N., M.S.N.*

