

## ALABAMA'S HEALTH

A PUBLICATION OF THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

## First Comprehensive State Oral Health Plan for Alabama Released

The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) has released the state's first comprehensive Oral Health Plan, titled "Your Mouth, Your Health, The Connection of Oral Health to Overall Health: A State Oral Health Plan for All Alabamians, 2018-2023."

The plan recognizes that oral health care has an effect on the overall health and well-being of every bodily system throughout life. While there are safe and effective measures to prevent the most common dental diseases, profound and consequential oral health disparities and lifestyle behaviors affect oral health in Alabama and the nation. The plan provides guidance to navigate towards optimal oral health for all Alabamians. It was developed through a collaborative network between ADPH and the diverse, multidisciplinary membership of the Oral Health Coalition of Alabama.

The comprehensive, 103-page written plan addresses desired outcomes that are both attainable and sustainable and identifies specific goals and objectives to achieve improved oral health in five key areas which are as follows:

- Increase access to oral health care
- Professional education and integration
- Improve health literacy
- Capture better data and surveillance capabilities
- Focus on prevention of oral disease

State Dental Director Dr. Tommy Johnson noted that Alabama's Oral Health Plan is a dynamic document designed "to address the changing needs of a deserving population." The plan uses surveys and other statistics to describe the burden of oral disease in Alabamians of all ages. The plan recognizes that disparities hampering certain segments of the

population, such as socioeconomic, ethnicity, race, disability, age, location and pregnancy, create barriers which were taken into consideration.

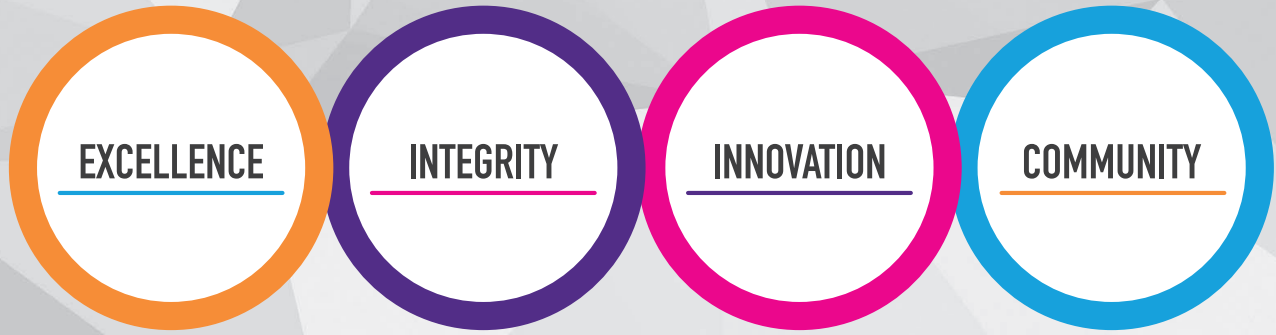
The plan addresses issues that include adult periodontal disease, older adult oral health, adult tooth loss, oral cancer, fluoridation, sealants and the dental workforce in the state. It cites the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-based) objectives made in the plan that helped bring Alabama's national oral health ranking up from 50th in 2016 to 29th in 2018.

The Oral Health Plan is dedicated to retired employee Sherry Goode, RDH, "in recognition of unfaltering passion and commitment to the betterment of the oral and overall health of Alabama residents." Ms. Goode served more than three decades including service as an assistant state dental director, acting state dental

**continued on page 3**



**Dr. Tommy Johnson unveils the State Oral Health Plan to Sherry Goode. The printed document is dedicated to Ms. Goode, a longtime oral health leader in the department.**



## ADPH CORE VALUES

### EXCELLENCE

We believe in providing the highest quality services to our clients.

We believe that all clients should be served with compassion, empathy, fairness, and respect.

### INTEGRITY

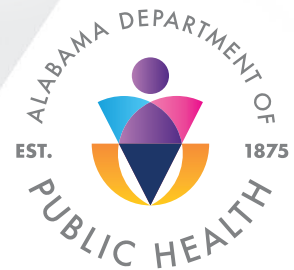
We believe our employees should be professional, competent, honest, and knowledgeable; maintaining the highest level of integrity, accountability, confidentiality, and concern for our clients. We believe in always striving to maintain the public trust.

### INNOVATION

We believe that we should demonstrate the ability to adapt to change and to be flexible in our approach to solving problems and providing services.

### COMMUNITY

We believe that we should build and maintain internal and external partnerships to address public health challenges including effectively utilizing resources, solving problems, and building relationships.



## Alabama Department of Public Health

### Mission

To promote, protect, and improve Alabama's health.

### Vision

Healthy People. Healthy Communities. Healthy Alabama.

### Core Values

Excellence, Integrity, Innovation, and Community.

## Alabama's Health

Alabama's Health is an official publication of the Alabama Department of Public Health, Bureau of Prevention, Promotion, and Support. If you would like to receive the publication or wish to submit information for future articles, please telephone requests to (334) 206-5300. Articles may be reprinted provided credit is given to the Alabama Department of Public Health. The department's website is [alabamapublichealth.gov](http://alabamapublichealth.gov).

Scott Harris, M.D., M.P.H. .... State Health Officer

Jamey Durham, M.B.A. .... Director, Bureau of Prevention, Promotion, and Support

Arrol Sheehan, M.A. .... Editor

Noelle Ahmann ..... Graphic Designer

### **Oral Health, continued from page 1**

director for more than five years, and a mentor to three state dental directors.

An Oral Health Coalition of Alabama work group conceptualized the framework for the plan which would act as the benchmark for the 5-year timespan of 2018-2023. The work group consisted of representatives from Alabama Medicaid, the Alabama Dental Association, the University of Alabama at

Birmingham School of Dentistry, the Children's Health Insurance Program/ALL Kids, the Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, federally qualified health centers, special need populations, older adults, numerous organizational members, ADPH staff and other stakeholders. Dr. Richard Simpson, pediatric dentist, served as coalition chair. At a landmark meeting in July 2019, the coalition discussed the plan and the need to leverage telehealth to address Alabama's oral healthcare and rural health plight.

## **County Health Department WIC Programs Receive 2019 Loving Support Award of Excellence**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has named the Alabama Department of Public Health WIC Programs in Dallas and Walker counties recipients of the 2019 Loving Support Award of Excellence.

Each year the USDA announces the Loving Support Award of Excellence winners. The program was

established to recognize local WIC agencies that have provided exemplary breastfeeding promotion and support activities. The intent is to provide models and motivate other local agencies to strengthen their breastfeeding promotion and support activities and ultimately increase breastfeeding initiation and duration rates among WIC participants.

*continued on page 7*



**Dallas County Health Department award recipients shown, left to right, are Rebecca Stewart, Cecilia Cleveland and Amy Lightfoot.**



**Walker County Breastfeeding Peer Counselors Kayla Cummings, left, and Amy Hicks, are shown.**



# Women Who Shape the State in 2019 – Dr. Grace Thomas

**G**race Thomas, M.D., FACOG, Medical Officer for Family Health Services, has been inducted into the 2019 class of Women Who Shape the State by Birmingham magazine. She is among the 30 Alabama women selected by a panel of judges honored for making a difference in their communities.

A description of the award stated, "These women are united in their commitment to driving movements, businesses and industries that change lives and make a difference in our state."

Birmingham magazine honored Dr. Thomas at a reception for honorees at The Club on November 14.

Before joining the Bureau of Family Health Services in 2005, Dr. Thomas practiced privately in New York and at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital in New York City where she also directed a colposcopy clinic and provided prenatal care at substance abuse and HIV clinics. A graduate of New York Medical College, she is a Fellow of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and a member of the American Society for Colposcopy and Cervical Pathology.

The award was created in 2015.

## **From Birmingham magazine, November 2019:**

Dr. Grace Thomas' path to Alabama was anything but linear. Being born in South America and working in New York City for 10 years were her stepping stones to working in women's health in Montgomery. "The inspiration for my career in obstetrics and gynecology was my mom," Thomas says. "She was a public health nurse and midwife in South America." Now overseeing the Bureau of Family Health Services within the Department of Public Health and serving as the medical director of the Women's Health Division, Thomas is passionate about ensuring that Alabama women are in prime health before, during and after pregnancy.

Biggest woman power moment: "There is no one singular moment, but a compilation of daily bright moments in empowering others through education and providing the best healthcare to those who seek services through their community and county health department."



**Photo by Cary Norton**



# Infant Mortality Reduction Summit Focuses on Community Interventions

To raise awareness about infant mortality and the impact it has on families, communities and the state of Alabama, the 2019 Infant Mortality Reduction Summit: Community Interventions Combatting Infant Mortality was held September 26-27, at Montgomery Marriott Prattville Hotel & Conference Center at Capitol Hill. The summit provided an opportunity for the community to learn about efforts to address poor birth outcomes and discuss potential solutions.

“According to the National Partnership for Women and Families, societal and health system factors both contribute to the high rates of poor health outcomes. Health outcomes are molded by the environment in which people are born, live, work, play and age and not simply by health behaviors of the individual. These factors which contribute to health outcomes are formed by the historical, social, political and economic forces in the individual’s environment,” Perinatal Health Division Director Janice Smiley

said. “Therefore, improving birth outcomes and reducing maternal, fetal and infant deaths requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both societal and health systems factors.

Dr. Regina Traylor, executive director for the Gift of Life Foundation, said, “Infant mortality is a persistent problem that touches families of all ethnicities, and socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. For several years, Gift of Life, Birmingham Healthy Start and March of Dimes have been working at the community level to address barriers that prevent a healthy birth outcome and educating women and their families on ways to reduce their risks. Partnering with ADPH to present this summit is just another way we are empowering the community with strategies that will affect positive change. Using a boots-on-the-ground, collaborative approach is an important way that we can spare Alabama communities the pain of infant and pregnancy loss.”



**Speakers at the summit included, left to right, Janice M. Smiley, Director, Perinatal Health Division; Britta E. Cedergren, Director, MCH and Advocacy, March of Dimes; Sara Mazzone, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Associate Professor; W. Oscar Fleming, DrPH (candidate), National MCH Workforce Development Center, Lead, Evidence Based Decision Making Core; Renée Branch Canady, PhD, Michigan Public Health Institute, CEO; Regina Traylor, DHSc, Executive Director, Gift of Life Foundation, Inc.; Rickey G. Green, CEO-Project Director, Birmingham Healthy Start Plus; and Chris Haag, Deputy Director, Bureau of Family Health Services.**



## Carolyn Bern Receives Planning Award

Carolyn Bern, MPA, Director, Governmental Affairs and Community Relations, was awarded the **2019 Distinguished Leadership Award for an Appointed Official**, by the Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association, during the Chapter's State Conference held in October in Huntsville. The award was presented in recognition of Mrs. Bern's collaborative work on issues recognized by the American Planning Association as important to the field of public and community planning.

Mrs. Bern has been instrumental in a number of planning related initiatives related to transportation planning and access to healthcare. She led an extensive Healthcare Provider-based Transportation Survey in 2015 – a venture that connected her to rural healthcare providers throughout the state – to assess their most significant challenges in providing services. The survey concluded that the largest threat for access to healthcare across the State of Alabama is lack of transportation to healthcare appointments. This data was significant for incorporation into the 2015-2019 Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plans (HSCTP) developed by each of Alabama's 12 Regional Planning Councils.

Mrs. Bern has been an active participant in multiple planning related committees and organizations, including but not limited to: Alabama Obesity Task Force, Governor's Commission on Physical Fitness & Sports, Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) Advisory Council, Alabama Public Health Telehealth Network (APHTN) and Central Alabama Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) Committee, among others. Additionally, Carolyn's work, in collaboration with the Governor's Office on Disability and others, in support of key healthcare transportation legislation saw direct action



**Pictured, left to right, are Todd L. McDonald, AICP, Director of Planning & Development, City of Dothan; Carolyn Bern; Kurt Christiansen, FAICP; and Joel Albizo, FASAE, CAE Chief Executive Officer American Planning Association.**

taken to address the rural transportation threat. This action came in the form of **House Bill 138 – Relating to Good Samaritan laws; to provide civil immunity to persons who provide transportation to a healthcare facility or health care provider**, which was signed into law in July 2019.

Her activities over the years at advancing the cause of planning in the public arena, through her extensive activities in the realm of public health, have put her in the spotlight of Alabama Planners. She has been dedicated to reducing the barriers to healthcare and healthcare access faced by the underserved populations of Alabama with her involvement and leadership in a variety of organizations. As an active member of these committees, she has been able to guide state level planning efforts to improve public health and Alabama's Planning Professionals salute her for her efforts.

By DARRELL RIGSBY

## Environmentalism Takes Charge When Emergency Arises

Public Health Environmentalist Justin Foster believes in the importance of building a working relationship of fairness and trust between the inspector and the food service worker. When he was conducting an inspection at a school cafeteria in Auburn recently, he stepped up to provide valuable assistance to one of those workers.

The cafeteria employee became unresponsive and collapsed, so he immediately called 9-1-1, comforted the victim, assisted the school nurse, and guided the EMS unit to the proper location at the school once

it arrived. In a follow-up call after the event, Foster learned that the victim had recovered.

Tim Hatch, deputy director of the Center for Emergency Preparedness, learned about Foster's actions. He said, "I think this is a great example of how our field staff react to emergency situations, with and without training."

Foster said this was an odd situation, and he is thankful the department has built up a reputation in which everyone works together to solve and correct any deficiencies. Foster has been employed with ADPH for the past six years.



# Families of the Year: Harman Family

**C**hris Harman is a public health environmentalist with the Lee County Health Department. He has been described as a "quiet professional." Many of his co-workers were unaware of his family's story, but it and this award did not surprise them as they are consistent with the respect and compassion evident in his daily work.

Printed by permission of WSFA-TV, Montgomery

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (WSFA) - The Family Guidance Center of Alabama has interviewed families of all shapes and sizes for its Families of the Year awards. One of this year's nominees is on the large side. In numbers and in heart.

One word describes the Harman family: happy. There is another word you can't overlook...and that's BIG.

"My family is made up of five biologicals. My mother-in-law lives with us. We have adopted four children, and we have three fosters," Rita Harman said.

Chris and Rita Harman decided 12 years ago to extend their loving family by becoming foster parents.

"Fosters has made us appreciate what a family really means. I think it makes them appreciate what they have and what they're blessed with," Chris Harman said.

"We learn to give easily, we love easily. It's hard not to be so open to people," Kim Harman said.

Seventeen-year-old Madi came to live with the Harmans two years ago from what she described as "an unstable situation." Now, she's a mother of her own, and a college student.

"Parents and people to rely on and talk to and having siblings to be there for you, it's refreshing. It's nice," Madi said.

Since opening their home 12 years ago, 58 children have come through their doors, and if necessary, they say they are ready to set the table for even more.

By VALORIE LAWSON



**Harman Family. Three fosters are not pictured**



**Pictured at the awards presentation on October 23 in Montgomery are Renee Cole-Walker, Nutrition Director for the West Central District; Amanda Martin, State WIC Director; Rachel Todd, Dallas County Health Department; and Michell Grainger, State Breastfeeding Coordinator.**

## **WIC, continued from page 3**

State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris praised those who have made this significant accomplishment and stated, "I appreciate so much the efforts of our employees that make this award possible."

Local WIC clinics that operated a peer counseling program for at least one year and met all the required core components of the WIC Breastfeeding Model for Peer Counseling were eligible to apply. These clinics have demonstrated excellence in breastfeeding practices and increased community support for breastfeeding mothers.

Amanda Martin, state WIC Program director, noted that 2019 is the third consecutive year that Alabama has received this distinction.



## Childhood Cancer Survivor Leads Cheers!

**A**labama Department of Public Health employees from throughout Alabama promoted awareness of childhood cancer last September by purchasing and wearing "I Wear Gold for Raeleigh Jane" T-shirts in honor of a young cancer survivor. Raeleigh Jane McCartha. She is the daughter of Bureau of Information Technology employee Josh McCartha and his wife Rachel. Raeleigh Jane was diagnosed with Stage 4 high risk neuroblastoma. After about 18 months of treatment and then on a clinical drug trial, her condition remains

stable. In November her physician specialist in Michigan declared Raeleigh Jane has no evidence of disease and is officially a survivor. Her father remarked, "We are sooo thankful for God's blessings on her and for all ADPH does to show support for us."

Pictured at left is a photo of her during hospital treatment on the harrowing night when she stopped breathing five times. She is now 5 years old and is shown in her K4 cheerleading uniform.



## Holiday Wellness

**W**eight gain during the holiday season is not inevitable, nutritionists reminded public health employees at the RSA Tower during a presentation November 14. Employees learned the value of making smart choices in food and drink to trim the calorie load. Nutrition and Physical Activity interns Bailey Saneman of Auburn University and Victoria Navarro of the University of Alabama at Birmingham provided tips in a PowerPoint presentation on Wellness Through the Holidays. A video was also made available.

Have a Happy, Healthy Holiday Season





# Public Health Leadership Skills Enhanced as Employees Participate in Regional Training

**T**wenty-eight public health employees from a variety of disciplines, including three professionals from Alabama, are participating in an eight-month training experience with the Region IV Public Health Leadership Institute (PHLI). Alabama participants Ryan Easterling, Dr. Burnestine Taylor and Elisabeth Welty are in the 2019-2020 cohort of public health fellows.

The training is designed for emerging leaders who work in state, local or tribal public health departments/tribal health organizations in the eight states that comprise the Department of Health and Human Services Region IV. These states are Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

The goal of the PHLI is “to advance adaptive and strategic leadership skills to support multi-sector vision setting and leadership necessary to address the social, community-based and economic determinants of health.”

The institute provides participants the opportunity to apply leadership competencies in the context of public health. Participants engage in peer consulting with colleagues and identify personal leadership strengths. Following a virtual orientation by “Zoom” and an in-person retreat, virtual sessions will focus on leadership principles and practices, cultural competence, managing conflict, collaborative leadership and leading change.

Ryan Easterling, Director of Health Media and Communications, Bureau of Prevention, Promotion, and Support, as well as Dr. Taylor and Ms. Welty, have participated in orientation and the three-day PHLI retreat so far.

Easterling commented, “This experience was a great opportunity to pull together broad knowledge and experiences from various health departments. While we come from different backgrounds, it was invaluable in helping mesh our experiences and knowledge together.” He said he has heard PHLI compared favorably with the former TEAM Academy, a workforce development program tailor-made for ADPH which helped train numerous public health employees at the state and local levels a decade ago.

At the retreat, Easterling especially appreciated receiving an “Emergenetics Profile” that helps class

members understand the way they think and their behavioral traits to improve team performance. The group also did peer consulting with real-life scenarios concerning on the job leadership to appreciate others’ perspectives. The closing event featured an impressive address by District Health Director Dr. Elizabeth Ford. Dr. Ford has been director of the DeKalb County, Ga., Board of Health since February 2005 and is Interim District Health Director for Fulton County, Ga.

“The instructors are top notch,” Easterling added, “and I believe that this will give me skills and knowledge to grow in my career.”

Dr. Taylor, Medical Officer for Disease Control and Prevention, added, “The training gives participants the opportunity to participate in surveys and projects that help define our unique, individual, leadership styles and to recognize how our leadership can attribute to the needs of our organization. It has been interesting to meet and network with participants from other health departments and to realize that we share similar concerns and challenges. I look forward to the remainder of the program and the additional leadership insight this opportunity provides.”

Ms. Welty is an Epidemiological Analyst with the Jefferson County Department of Health. Ms. Welty stated “The PHLI retreat was a meaningful way to meet other public health leaders from Alabama and across the region. The opportunity to collaborate and learn alongside various public health leaders is something that will impact myself, the other participants and each of our organizations in a positive way.”

*continued on page 10*



**Among those participating at the PHLI retreat from Alabama were (left to right) Ryan Easterling, Dr. Burnestine Taylor and Elisabeth Welty.**

# Department Holds PHAB Reaccreditation Training

**W**hen the Alabama Department of Public Health was awarded national accreditation from the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) in June 2017, employees breathed a collective sigh of relief after undergoing a rigorous assessment process to ensure the department met or exceeded a set of quality standards and measures. Initial accreditation involved planning meetings, submitting and reviewing documentation and a site visit. Achieving accreditation demonstrates increased accountability and credibility to the public, funders, elected officials and our partner organizations.

PHAB reaccreditation occurs every five years, and the Office of Performance Management in the Office of Management Support continues working to maintain our status. Accreditation Leadership Team members and Document Review Panel members from the department and other states participated in an intense training for PHAB-accredited health departments November 20-21 in Montgomery. The training titled “Reaccreditation Documentation: Not the Same Old Stuff” summarized the reaccreditation process steps and how documentation fits into the process.

While initial accreditation focused on the department’s capacity to provide the 10 essential public health services, reaccreditation focuses on the department’s standard processes and efforts to continue improving operations.

Participants came from Arkansas, Mississippi and five county health departments in Georgia to attend the on-site training at the RSA Tower in Montgomery. David Stone and April Harris from PHAB conducted the training.

## About the Public Health Accreditation Board

The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), established in 2007, was created to serve as the national public health accrediting body, and is jointly funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The development of national public health accreditation has involved, and is supported by, public health leaders and practitioners from the national, Tribal, state, and local levels. Learn more about PHAB by visiting [www.phaboard.org](http://www.phaboard.org).



**Public health employees from Alabama and other states attended the on-site training.**

## Training, continued from page 9

This training is a partnership between the Region IV Public Health Training Center, headquartered at the Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University, and the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development at the University of Georgia.

For more information about the Region IV Public Health Training Center, go to <http://www.r4phtc.org/leadership-and-management-resources/>.



**PHLI Retreat, October 24, 2019, Decatur, Ga.**



# Commendations

If you would like to praise employees for their accomplishments, send letters of commendation to the State Health Officer or the employee's supervisor and a copy by e-mail to [Arrol.Sheehan@adph.state.al.us](mailto:Arrol.Sheehan@adph.state.al.us) for inclusion in this list. Four items are needed: the employee's name, work unit, name of the person making the commendation, and his or her city and state.

**Cathy Albert**

Montgomery County Health  
Department  
from Donna Jordan  
Montgomery, Ala.

**Alesia Beck****Tashia Childs****Sylvia Foreman****Regina Harbison****Stephanie Mitchell****Elvira Phillips****Cynthia Richardson****Dorothy Richardson**

Health Provider Standards  
from Donna Guthrie  
Hanceville, Ala.

**Georgette Blackmon**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Julia Patel  
Talladega, Ala.

**Cliff Boyd**

Bureau of Information Technology  
from Tim Hatch  
Center for Emergency Preparedness

**Barbara Cook**

Prevention, Promotion, and Support  
from Ryan Easterling  
Montgomery, Ala.

**Melanie Dickens**

Prevention, Promotion, and Support  
from Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids  
Washington, D.C.

**Tony Dunklin****Jim Free**

Office of Facilities Management  
from Hal Starkey, AIA, NCARB  
Birmingham, Ala.

**Betty File****Tanya Haynes**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Sharon Bland  
Wendy Dixon-Flamand  
Jocelyn Wilson  
Huntsville, Ala.

**Tanya Haynes**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Jacqueline Mills  
Ohio  
Qiana Sellers  
Detroit, Mich.

**Sharon Hunt**

Walker County Health Department  
from Jason Azbell  
Jasper, Ala.

**Evelyn Jackson**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Ashley Anchick  
Roseville, Calif.

**Leesa Massey**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Terrill Hughes  
Texas  
Cordetta Spells  
Fairfield, Calif.

**Brittany Marzette**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Ella Brown McCoy  
Houston, Texas

**Gerry Pose**

Baldwin County Health Department  
from Denise Renkenberger,  
RN, MSN, CAPA  
Foley, Ala.

**Georgia Reynolds**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Kerry Funderburg  
Anniston, Ala.  
Royce Grant  
Cleveland, Ohio

**Kimberly L. Robinson**

Montgomery County Health  
Department  
from Sandra Blakely  
Montgomery, Ala.

**Shayla Santiago**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Meagan Hilyer  
Dadeville, Ala.  
Bill Lindsey  
Hoover, Ala.

**Debra Starks**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Janey Bush  
Montgomery, Ala.

**Janelle Varner**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Tamara and Tru'kessa Scott  
Miami, Fla.

**Tamekie Washington**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Yvonne Conyers  
New York, N.Y.  
from Eric Hubbard  
Boston, Mass.  
Brenda McCormick  
Pensacola, Fla.

**Bonita Whitlow**

Center for Health Statistics  
from Karen Goodroe  
Anniston, Ala.  
Lenetta (full name unlisted)  
Anniston, Ala.

# Public Water Systems Receive Water Fluoridation Quality Awards

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) commended 56 Alabama public water systems for their consistent and professional adjustment of fluoride content to the recommended level for oral health in 2017. Awards were presented October 23 at the Alabama Department of Environmental Management Surface Water Conference in Montgomery.

Fluoridation is the adjustment of fluoride in the water to a level that is optimal for preventing tooth decay. The award recognizes those communities that maintained a consistent level of optimally fluoridated water for 12 consecutive months throughout 2018. For 2018, a total of 1,656 public water systems in 30 states received these awards.

“Water fluoridation is one of the best investments that a community can make in maintaining the oral health of its citizens,” Dr. Tommy Johnson, state dental director, said. “Many people do not realize it is equally as effective in preventing cavities in children and adults.”

Studies have shown that for every \$1 invested in fluoridation, approximately \$20 are saved in costs for dental treatment. More than 210 million people, or 75 percent of the United States population served by public water supplies, currently drink water with optimal fluoride levels for preventing decay.



**Jessica Durham, left, and Summer Macias distributed certificates to public water systems at the conference.**

Two water systems in Alabama, Florence Utilities Water Department and Jasper Waterworks and Sewer Board, received 50-Year Awards for fluoridation from 1968-2018. Community water fluoridation has been recognized by CDC as one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th Century. CDC recommends water fluoridation as one of the most practical, cost-effective, equitable, and safe measures a community can take to prevent tooth decay and improve oral health.



**Co-workers in the Office of Radiation Control feted Beverly Jo Bodiford with a retirement reception November 19.**



**Colleagues honored Victor Hunt, director of the Office of Facilities Management, with a retirement reception November 18 in Montgomery. State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris, left, presents a certificate to Hunt.**



**Michael Smith, director of the Office of Telehealth, retired effective January 1. Co-workers honored him for his more than 33 years of service in video communications, distance learning, and telehealth with a reception on December 13.**



# Retirees

The following departmental employees have retired recently:

## July

**Pamela Askew**

East Central District

**Valerie Bailey**

Jefferson District

**Warren Barron**

Southeastern District

**Josephine Forte**

Southeastern District

**Debra McClellan**

Northeastern District

**John Nelson**

Food/Milk/Lodging Division

**Deborah Patton**

Northeastern District

**Pamela Swaim**

Northeastern District

## August

**Ann Brantley**

Center for Emergency  
Preparedness

**Dennis Dean**

Southeastern District

**Teresa Porter**

Southwestern District

**Laura Walker**

Northern District

**Cynthia Winsley**

East Central District

## September

**Gloria Brown**

Prevention, Promotion,  
and Support

**James Brown**

Southeastern District

**Virginia Busby**

Southwestern District

**Timothy Colley**

Information Technology

**Pamela Barrett**

Tuberculosis Control

**Marcia Edwards**

Family Health Services

**Nancy Johnson**

Southwestern District

**Barbara Kirksey**

Jefferson District

**Rebecca Philyaw**

Northern District

**Peggy Roberts**

Southwestern District

**Patricia Stadlberger**

East Central District

**Miriam Williams**

East Central District

**Margaret Willis**

Family Health Services

## October

**Lori Bass**

Southeastern District

**Sandra Bates**

Northern District

**Arline Harris**

Southeastern District

**Kent Holsclaw**

Northern District

**Sharon Hunt**

West Central District

**Rebecca Robertson**

Northeastern District

**April Saxon**

Northeastern District

**Danica Tidwell**

Northeastern District

## November

**Pamela Anderson**

Northeastern District

**Joandra Barkley**

Northern District

**Tammy Carlisle**

Northeastern District

**Anita Gaither**

Northern District

**Terrina Harris**

Northern District

**Karen Jurls**

Southeastern District

**Martha Medders**

Northeastern District

**Loretta Ray**

Northeastern District

**Deborah Shedd**

Northern District

**Stephanas White**

Southeastern District

**Kathy Williams**

Northern District

## January

**Janet Ballinger**

Northern District

**Brenda Brugh**

Center for Health Statistics

**Shirley Cheatham**

Children's Health  
Insurance Program

**Treva Clayton**

Northern District

**John Davis**

Southwestern District

**Glenda Edwards**

Southwestern District

**Valerie Fredrick**

West Central District

**Renee Jacobs**

Northeastern District

**Gerrie McMillian**

Family Health Services

**Mary Mosley**

West Central District

**Nila Oden**

Northern District

**Elvira Phillips**

Health Care Facilities

**Glenda Placek**

Northern District

**Misty Steed**

Southeastern District

**Theresa Tucker**

Northern District

**Ellen Vick**

Family Health Services

**Wanda Wells**

Northern District

## February

**Betty Buckelew**

Northern District

**Alma Tutwiler**

West Central District

# Student Urges Congress to Protect Kids From Tobacco Products During Youth Advocacy Symposium in Washington, D.C.

A Shoals area high school student met with the offices of Sen. Doug Jones, Sen. Richard Shelby and Rep. Robert Aderholt in July 2019 to discuss legislation to address the youth e-cigarette epidemic by cracking down on flavored tobacco products that appeal to kids. He shared special concerns about Juul, a sleek, concealable e-cigarette that has skyrocketed in popularity among youth due to its sweet flavors and high dose of nicotine.

Carson Seat, 14, member of Smoke-Free Shoals, along with Melanie Dickens, the department's youth tobacco coordinator, visited Washington, D.C., to participate in the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids' Youth Advocacy Symposium, a five-day workshop that builds skills in advocacy, communications and leadership. Twenty-seven youth advocates from 22 states participated in this year's event. This is the first time Alabama had representatives participate.

Seat and other participants asked members of Congress to support legislation that puts common sense restrictions on tobacco companies' use of flavors that appeal to kids. Youth often start using tobacco products with a flavored product and report that they use tobacco products "because they come in flavors I like." Cracking down on flavored tobacco products is one of the most important steps Congress can take to reverse the youth e-cigarette epidemic and drive down youth tobacco use.

In Alabama, 14.0 percent of high school students smoke traditional cigarettes, 24.5 percent use e-cigarettes, and 15.5 percent of high school boys smoke cigars. Tobacco use claims 8,600 lives in Alabama each year.

"Youth advocates like Carson are taking action to stop the tobacco industry from addicting kids with exotic flavors," said Matthew L. Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. "With their passion and leadership in protecting their peers, we can make the next generation tobacco-free."

Flavored products, especially Juul, have driven the skyrocketing youth e-cigarette epidemic, which is addicting a new generation of kids and threatening the decades-long progress the nation has made in reducing youth tobacco use. In 2018 alone, e-cigarette



**Melanie Dickens is shown with Carson Seat, a member of Smoke-Free Shoals, in Washington, D.C.**

use increased by an alarming 78 percent among high school students and 48 percent among middle school students, according to the 2018 National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS). More than 3.6 million middle and high school students were e-cigarette users in 2018 – an increase of 1.5 million in just one year.

Flavored cigars are also popular among youth. Cigars are especially popular among high school boys, who smoke cigars at about the same rate as cigarettes, and among African American high school students, who smoke cigars at nearly three times the rate of cigarettes, according to the 2018 NYTS.

There is also more than enough evidence to ban the sale of menthol cigarettes. Menthol cools and numbs the throat and reduces the harshness of tobacco smoke, making menthol cigarettes more appealing for kids who are starting smoking. Over half of youth smokers ages 12-17 – and seven in 10 African American youth smokers – use menthol cigarettes. A comprehensive Food and Drug Administration scientific analysis, issued in 2013, concluded that menthol cigarettes 1) increase smoking initiation and progression to regular smoking among youth and young adults; 2) increase nicotine dependence (addiction); and 3) reduce success in quitting smoking.



# Whose Child is Missing?

in the 2020 Census

## Situations Where Children May Not Be Counted

- The child splits time between two homes.
- The child lives or stays with another family or with another relative such as a grandparent.
- The child lives in a household with young parents or a young, single mom.
- The child lives in a household that is large, multigenerational, or includes extended or multiple families.
- The child is a newborn.
- The child lives in a non-English or limited-English speaking household.
- The child lives in a lower income household.
- The child lives in a household of recent immigrants or foreign-born adults.
- The child lives in a household that rents or recently moved.
- The child lives in a household where they're not supposed to be, for one reason or another.
- A child who is staying temporarily with family or friends but has no permanent home.



**We need your help** closing this gap in the 2020 Census.  
**Learn the solutions at:**  
<https://countallkids.org/>

The 2010 Census should have counted **17,318** additional Alabama children under age 5.



**Our undercount has cost us...**

**\$13,075,090**

Say **#CountMeIn** to **#CountAllKids** in 2020 and help us spread the word.

**every year** in funding from just five of the many federally funded programs for children and families.



Copyright © 2019 VOICES for Alabama's Children. Some rights reserved and must credit as VOICES for Alabama's Children.



## CHIP Employees Celebrate New Year's (Fiscal) Eve

**E**mployees of the Bureau of Children's Health Insurance showed off the new logo design for ALL Kids on their T-shirts and bid good-bye to Fiscal Year 2019

on September 30, 2019. More than 150,000 Alabama children have health insurance coverage thanks to the CHIP program.



## Nutrition for Cardiovascular Health Workshop

**F**ifty-eight nurses, social workers and registered dietitians attended the Nutrition for Cardiovascular

Health Workshop November 8 in Birmingham. A plant-based lunch was provided to those attending.





## Bureau Fundraisers Increase State Combined Campaign Donations

Several Central Office bureaus held an indoor yard and bake sale November 8 in the RSA Tower to benefit the State Combined Campaign. Volunteers began



**Staffing the indoor yard sale are, left to right, Lori Earle, Agnes McCray, Kimberly Freeman, Erin Hill and April Mullins.**

serving hot beverages at 7:15 a.m. and others donated miscellaneous items. Some of the many employees who supported the effort are pictured here.



**Erin Hill, Sandra Harper, LaShunda Williams, Kimberly Freeman, Tamekie Washington, Muslimah Shabazz-Seraaj and Lori Earle.**



**The Bureau of Family Health Services hosted its annual full breakfast on December 6 to benefit the State Combined Campaign. Chef Chris Haag, Meredith Adams and Misty Price are shown.**



**Bureau of Information Technology employees supplied cookies, cakes, bread and more for a bake sale on December 17. Lori Earle is shown.**

## Southeastern TB Controllers Meet

Alabama Department of Public Health leaders attending the Southeastern TB Controllers' Meeting November 13-16 in Mississippi are pictured, left to right, Eric Morgan, TB Manager/Prison Liaison; Claire Payne, TB Division Director; Sheri Carlisle, TB Nurse Consultant; Karen Landers, M.D., Medical Officer Northern District; Burnestine Taylor, MD/ Medical Officer, Disease Control and Prevention.





## Infant Mortality Rate in Alabama in 2018 - Lowest in State's History

Alabama's infant mortality rate of 7.0 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2018 is the lowest in Alabama history and is an improvement over the 2017 rate of 7.4 and the 2016 rate of 9.1. A total of 405 infants born in Alabama died before reaching 1 year of age in 2018; 435 infants died in 2017 and 537 infants died in 2016. The overall rate for the state remains higher than the U.S. 2018 provisional rate of 5.7.

The infant mortality rate for black infants declined to 11.0 in 2018, and the infant mortality rate for white infants decreased to 5.1. Nevertheless, a longstanding disparity between birth outcomes for black and white infants remains.

State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris said, "While we are encouraged that the combined 2016-2018 infant mortality rate is below 8.0 for the first time, we must continue to address Alabama's racial disparities in birth outcomes, increase access to prenatal care, and get women with opioid use disorder to treatment to reduce infant mortality."

In 2018, a 37 percent decrease was noted in Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths (SUID), a leading cause of infant deaths in Alabama. Increased efforts to address SUID through collaboration, education and outreach activities began in the summer of 2014 with the National Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network to Reduce Infant Mortality Safe Sleep Initiative. Efforts continue with the Eunice

Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2015 – present), as well as collaboration with other agencies to include education to healthcare providers, hospitals, day care providers, parents, grandparents, community providers and social media outreach.

Disorders related to short gestation, births at less than 37 weeks gestation, low birth weights and births with no prenatal care slightly increased from 2017 to 2018. Alabama continued to experience a decline in the percentage of births to teens (6.9) and the percentage of births to mothers who smoked (8.7).

Center for Health Statistics Director Nicole Rushing said, "The Alabama Center for Health Statistics worked diligently to ensure all infant deaths were reported. The continuing decline in Alabama's infant mortality is a start to closing the historically large gap between the state and national rates."

The top four leading causes of infant deaths in 2018 were as follows:

- Congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities
- Disorders related to short gestation and low birth weight
- Sudden infant death syndrome
- Bacterial sepsis of newborn

These causes accounted for 50 percent of Alabama infant deaths.

## Elvis Entertains (and Educates) at Food Safety Seminar

Alabama is enrolled in the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards and participates in its Southeast Retail Food Safety Seminar. This annual conference is an opportunity for representatives of the Southeast regional states to network with their colleagues from other states, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, FDA, industry partners and academia.

This year's meeting in Memphis Tenn., October 16-18, took a new twist with a "speed dating" type of format.

Phyllis Fenn and Lauren Gambill of the Food, Milk, and Lodging Division of the Bureau of Environmental Services took a cue from the Memphis native theme to describe their outreach activities across the state.



**Phyllis Fenn and "Elvis" Lauren Gambill**

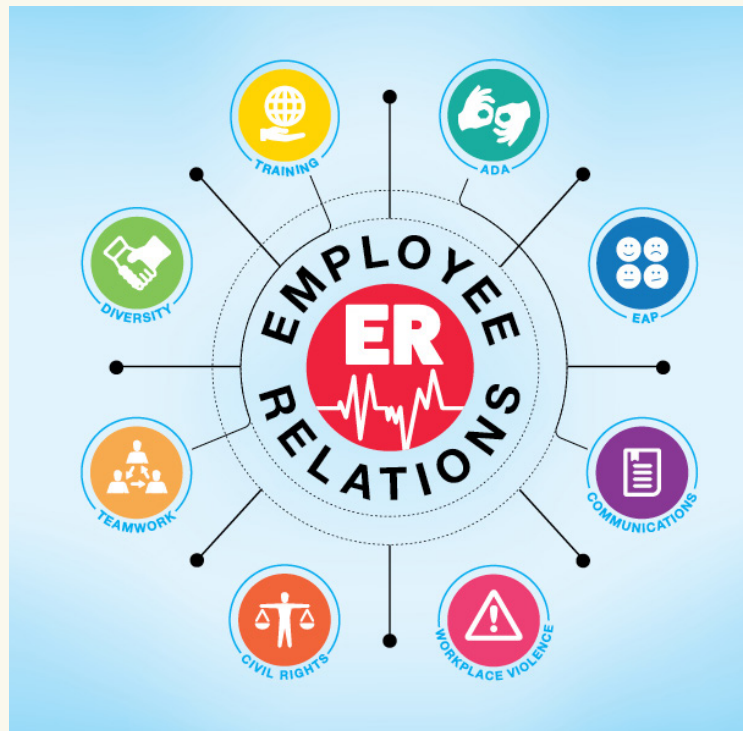


## Civil Rights in the Workplace

**E**mployee Relations (ER) is within the Office of Human Resources and connects with every aspect of employment. Our purpose is to maintain a solid working relationship between supervisors and employees. We must be knowledgeable of all areas within Human Resources to be effective in handling workplace matters.

Although conflict exists in every workplace, if handled poorly, it can have a negative effect on the entire department. Therefore, the department's goal is to ensure that all employees have the right to perform their work duties in an environment free of prejudicial harassment. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws protect employees and applicants against retaliation for filing a complaint about discrimination or for participating in the complaint process. Some forms of discrimination are among the following:

- Employees or applicants over the age of 40;
- Employees or applicants who are of a certain race or have physical characteristics associated with a certain race (e.g. skin color);
- Employees or applicants who have a disability (physical or mental);
- Employees or applicants with genetic information that indicate they (or a family member) have or had a disease or disorder;
- Employees or applicants from a foreign country;
- Female employees or applicants who are pregnant;
- Employees or applicants who practice religious beliefs; and
- Employees or applicants who are treated unfavorably or differently due to their biological sex (male or female), gender identity or sexual orientation.



All employees and applicants are protected under EEO laws against retaliation.

ER maintains an "open door" policy to that ensure employees may discuss a complaint without fear of reprisal. The office staff consists of Donna Barron, Office Manager; Larry Sailes, Equal Employment Officer, and yours truly, Danita M. Rose, Employee Relations Officer/Equal Employment Coordinator. We are located in the RSA Tower, Suite 1698. Employees who wish to schedule an appointment may contact Ms. Barron at (334) 206-9494.

We must work together to understand each other's' needs and expectations to accomplish the mission and goals of the department. The most important element for a successful relationship is communication.

*By Danita M. Rose*

# NEW EMS LICENSE PLATE



All residents of Alabama who are vehicle owners and members of the Emergency Medical Services may now

purchase license plates in this category for private passenger automobiles, pickup trucks and motorcycles.

# Calendar of Events

**January 31 • 10-10:30 a.m.**

## **Share Your Smile With Alabama Smile Contest**

Winners of the Third Annual Share Your Smile With Alabama Photo Contest will be announced. For more information, contact the Video Communications and Distance Learning Division, (334) 206-5618.

**February 4 • 9 a.m.-12 noon**

## **Understanding Substance Use Disorders and Addiction: A Public Health Perspective**

Participants will have the opportunity to explore Substance Use Disorders and the current opioid epidemic through a Public Health lens. For more information, contact the Video Communications and Distance Learning Division, (334) 206-5618.

**March 5 • 3-3:30 p.m.**

**State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris will  
address employees regarding critical issues.**

For more information, contact the Video Communications and Distance Learning Division, (334) 206-5618.

**April 7-10**

## **"The Then and Now of Public Health," Alabama Public Health Association Annual Conference**

For more information, visit [alphassoc.org](http://alphassoc.org).

**April 23 • 12 noon-1:30 p.m.**

## **Asthma Biologics - Pediatric Pulmonary Center**

For more information, contact the Video Communications and Distance Learning Division, (334) 206-5618.