

ALABAMA'S HEALTH

A PUBLICATION OF THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Partner Assistance Allows ADPH to Continue Serving Women at High Risk of Breast and Cervical Cancer

Thanks to the generosity of the Joy to Life Foundation and the Susan G. Komen for the Cure, North Central Alabama Affiliate, the Alabama Department of Public Health can continue to fund the screening of high-risk women for breast and cervical cancer through June 30.

In the past seven months the Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program has served 10,000 women, the number of women ordinarily served during an entire year. All program appropriations have been depleted because of this unprecedented demand for services. To avoid completely suspending the program, the two nonprofit organizations have stepped forward to provide funding for screening high-risk women.

"We are very appreciative of the donation of private funds by the Joy to Life Foundation and the Susan G. Komen for the Cure, North Alabama Affiliate," said Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer. "We would have been forced to suspend services were it not for their donations that will carry the program through the next five months. Last year alone more than 150 medically underserved women were diagnosed with breast and cervical cancer through this program, and more than 1,700 women have been diagnosed since this program began in 1996."

On March 4 Joy Blondheim and her husband Dickie of Joy to Life and Ellen



Pictured are Dickie Blondheim, Joy to Life Foundation; Nancy Wright, Cancer Prevention and Control Division; Joy Blondheim, Joy to Life Foundation; and Ellen Zahariadis, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, North Central Alabama Affiliate.

Zahariadis of Susan G. Komen for the Cure, North Central Alabama Affiliate, participated in a news conference along with Dr. Williamson to announce the continuation of the program.

Early detection of these cancers saves lives. Breast cancer screening services include clinical breast examinations and mammograms. Cervical cancer screening services include pelvic exams and Pap smears. If an abnormality is detected, diagnostic testing for both cancers may include an ultrasound, biopsy or colposcopy. To be eligible for screening, the individual must be female, have an income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, and have no insurance or be underinsured.

In addition, the patient must be age 40-64 and have an abnormal clinical breast exam, or age 50-64 and never had a mammogram in her lifetime, or have not had a Pap smear in the past five years.

Funding for screening services is provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, State of Alabama, and the National Breast Cancer Foundation. Aside from provision of new funds, Joy to Life and Komen have been providing funding for mammograms to women under 50 years of age for several years. Program services are provided by more than 400 contracted physicians, surgeons, radiologists and facilities

continued page 5

Airplane Crashes into Unsuspecting Couple, Carol Gray and Her Husband Escape Serious Injury

The sun was shining and the sky was beautiful on a Sunday afternoon as Carol Gray and her husband Mark drove home along Alabama Highway 14 on Feb. 27. After church, they had eaten lunch with friends and were six or seven miles from their home in Notasulga when their car was suddenly hit from behind by a small private airplane.

"Bam! It hit us and here we went," Ms. Gray said. "We were pushed approximately 50 yards when the car flipped and finally stopped."

Fortunately, both of the Grays always wear their seat belts and they were not seriously hurt when the car overturned from the impact. Safety experts have long known that passengers ejected from their cars are more likely to be killed than occupants restrained by seat belts.

Except for having to dodge a lot of shattered window glass, experiencing widespread bruising and some soreness, and needing to dislodge dirt from every square inch of their clothing, the couple is fine following the bizarre crash. Ms. Gray returned to her duties in Health Administration on March 1 with an incredible story to tell.

"It was quite an experience," she said. The pilot of the Cessna 182 single-engine plane had lost power and the Gray's car happened to be driving along at that very spot on the highway when the pilot gliding onto the highway hit them and crashed into the car.

"You don't expect it," she said. "I don't ever want to live through that again."

While the front and rear windshields of the Gray's car were intact, three of the four side windows were broken in the collision. In the past her family had been concerned about her driving a compact car, a Ford Focus, but all are elated it provided the protection they needed. The car's



Photo by Mark Gray

The Gray's car flipped from the impact.

air bags did not deploy, possibly because it was hit on the sides.

"We had been so knocked around," she said. "Afterward, I didn't want to leave the car because I couldn't find one of my shoes."

None of the three people on the plane was hurt, but the outcome could have been far worse had they collided with a nearby power pole.

An emergency worker from Reeltown then gave the couple a ride home. He admitted to the Grays that at the wreck site he intentionally had parked quite a distance away because he feared that there had been deaths or serious injuries as a result of the plane crash. He was very relieved to find that they were in such good shape after the wreck. The Grays did go to the hospital to be checked out.

As she recovers from her many bruises, Ms. Gray remains extremely thankful that the outcome was so good and that they miraculously avoided catastrophe on their Sunday drive.

Alabama Department of Public Health

Mission

To serve the people of Alabama by assuring conditions in which they can be healthy.

Value Statement

The purpose of the Alabama Department of Public Health is to provide caring, high quality and professional services for the improvement and protection of the public's health through disease prevention and the assurance of public health services to resident and transient populations of the state regardless of social circumstances or the ability to pay.

The Department of Public Health works closely with the community to preserve and protect the public's health and to provide caring quality services.

Alabama's Health

Alabama's Health is an official publication of the Alabama Department of Public Health, Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease. 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 <http://www.adph.org>.

Donald E. Williamson, M.D......State Health Officer

Jim McVay, Dr. P. A......Director, Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease

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

Takenya S. Taylor, J.D......Contributing Editor

Noelle AhmannGraphic Designer

Specific HIV/AIDS Emergency Kits Distributed

Persons with HIV/AIDS in Alabama will be better prepared for emergencies now that AIDS service organizations have received special emergency preparedness kits. Weather radios, a shelter-in-place kit for each organization with an office, and emergency kits on wheels were provided for peer advocates. HIV/AIDS Waiver clients will receive the emergency kits as well.

Items distributed included planning sleeves, planning guides, and HIV-specific record sheets for consumers not receiving large kits. The project also received a gift of smaller personal emergency kits for a wider distribution of needed emergency items. The contents included plastic drop cloths, batteries, flashlights, battery-free flashlights, light sticks, first aid manuals and kits, emergency water purifiers, rain ponchos, work gloves and other assorted items.

Large air purifiers also were provided for each agency.

Stephan I. Mambazo, M.S.W., L.G.S.W., Emergency Preparedness social worker, said, "It is so humbling to see how many people eagerly contributed to this project."

This project was inspired by the many HIV/AIDS consumers Mambazo personally worked with in Alabama from New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. HIV/AIDS consumers are highly vulnerable to devastating complications if they are off medication, nutrition and hydration for even short prolonged periods of time. This project will better prepare HIV/AIDS consumers in Alabama to mitigate a disastrous event.

Students from Michigan State University who spent their spring break volunteering with Alabama AIDS Outreach in Birmingham assisted in picking up and delivering the emergency items.

The kit distribution is a cooperative project of the Center for Emergency Preparedness, the Social Work Division of the Bureau of Professional and Support Services, the HIV/AIDS Division, and the Bureau of Home and Community Services.



Shown helping with the distribution of the emergency kits are Tim Hatch, Center for Emergency Preparedness; William Kennedy, Bureau of Home and Community Services; Charles Crawford, Center for Emergency Preparedness; and Stephan Mambazo, Division of Social Work.



Stephan Mambazo explains the emergency needs of HIV/AIDS consumers to college students who delivered the kits to service organizations.

Everyone Can Help Make Breastfeeding Easier, Surgeon General Says in ‘Call to Action’

Dr. Benjamin cites health benefits, offers steps for families, clinicians and employers

Surgeon General Regina M. Benjamin issued a “Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding,” outlining steps that can be taken to remove some of the obstacles faced by women who want to breastfeed their babies.

“Many barriers exist for mothers who want to breastfeed,” Dr. Benjamin said. “They shouldn’t have to go it alone. Whether you’re a clinician, a family member, a friend, or an employer, you can play an important part in helping mothers who want to breastfeed.”

“Of course, the decision to breastfeed is a personal one,” she added, “no mother should be made to feel guilty if she cannot or chooses not to breastfeed.”

While 75 percent of U.S. babies start out breastfeeding, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says, only 13 percent are exclusively breastfed at the end of six months. The rates are particularly low among African American infants.

Many mothers who attempt to breastfeed say several factors impede their efforts, such as a lack of support at home; absence of family members who have experience with breastfeeding; a lack of breastfeeding information from health care clinicians; a lack of time and privacy to breastfeed or express milk at the workplace; and an inability to connect with other breastfeeding mothers in their communities.

Dr. Benjamin’s “Call to Action” identifies ways that families, communities, employers and health care professionals can improve breastfeeding rates and increase support for breastfeeding:

- Communities should expand and improve programs that provide mother-to-mother support and peer counseling.
- Health care systems should ensure that maternity care practices provide education and counseling on breastfeeding. Hospitals should become more “baby-friendly,” by taking steps like those recommended by the UNICEF/WHO’s Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative.
- Clinicians should ensure that they are trained to properly care for breastfeeding mothers and babies. They should promote breastfeeding to their pregnant patients and make sure that mothers receive the best advice on how to breastfeed.

- Employers should work toward establishing paid maternity leave and high-quality lactation support programs. Employers should expand the use of programs that allow nursing mothers to have their babies close by so they can feed them during the day. They should also provide women with break time and private space to express breast milk.
- Families should give mothers the support and encouragement they need to breastfeed.

Family members can help mothers prepare for breastfeeding and support their continued breastfeeding, including after her return to work or school.

According to the “Call to Action,” breastfeeding protects babies from infections and illnesses that include diarrhea, ear infections, and pneumonia. Breastfed babies are also less likely to develop asthma, and those who are breastfed for six months are less likely to become obese. Mothers themselves who breastfeed have a decreased risk of breast and ovarian cancers.

A study published last year in the journal *Pediatrics* estimated that the nation would save \$13 billion per year in health care and other costs if 90 percent of U.S. babies were exclusively breastfed for six months. Dr. Benjamin added that, by providing accommodations for nursing mothers, employers can reduce their company’s health care costs and lower their absenteeism and turnover rates.

“I believe that we as a nation are beginning to see a shift in how we think and talk about breastfeeding,” said Dr. Benjamin. “With this ‘Call to Action,’ I am urging everyone to help make breastfeeding easier.”

To order printed copies of the Surgeon General’s “Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding” and other materials, please call 1-800-CDC-INFO or email cdcinfo@cdc.gov and reference the publication title.

For more information on breastfeeding, go to www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding or www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/. To speak with a breastfeeding counselor call 1-800-994-9662 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

For more information about breastfeeding in Alabama, contact Michell Grainger, M.S.N., R.N.C., IBCLC, at (334) 206-2921 or michell.grainger@adph.state.al.us.

Health Department Offices Utilize Electronic Signage

County health departments now have a rapid way to communicate messages to the public passing by their locations. Fifty-two county health departments now have electronic signs installed.

The primary use of the signs is to display clinic hours, services available, telephone numbers and web addresses. Signs may also be used to post health alerts, promote particular services, deliver health education/health promotion messages, give emergency and weather-related recommendations for activities that will prevent illness or injury, and provide public recognition.

"This is the most efficient way to disseminate information to a local community," said Bart Crabtree, assistant area administrator for Public Health Area 2. "This opens up many opportunities, especially with animation and pictures to grab the eyes of passersby. We can change the image in an instant if it's needed."

The attractive signs have been helpful in displaying messages about emergency and holiday closings and influenza clinics.

Public Health Area 8 Administrator James Martin said, "I have heard nothing but positive comments about them. They help us get the word out in a community, and it saves on incoming phone calls."

Digital signage has the ability to communicate multiple messages within seconds. A computer with unique software is provided for the single purpose of controlling messages placed on the signs. The signs send a radio signal from the computer.

Before the signs could be placed, administrators had to check right-of-way clearances, setback requirements and ordinances.

No political statements, religious messages, fundraising solicitations or commercial products are endorsed on the signs.

Women's Health, continued from page 1

across the state committed to providing services to underserved women. These providers agree to accept a reduced rate for their services; they also agree to submit required data regarding services they provide for submission to the CDC.

In addition to the Joy to Life Foundation and Susan G. Komen for the Cure, North Alabama Affiliate, other partners include the American Cancer Society, Deep South Network, REACH US/ REACH 2010 Coalition, the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Comprehensive Cancer Center, the University of South Alabama Mitchell Cancer Institute, Southeast Alabama Regional Medical Center, Avon Foundation's Butterfly Project, and many others.



Signs promote services at these county health departments.



Go Red For Women® asks Alabama Women to ‘Make it Their Mission’ to Fight Heart Disease

Activities were conducted across the state to observe National Wear Red Day Feb. 4. The day symbolizes the need for women to become informed and to fight heart disease.



Assistant State Health Officer Dr. Tom Miller addressed an educational session at the RSA Tower.



Some of the Montgomery Go Red participants gathered for this photograph.



Satellite Conference participants shown are Jenean Lord, R.N., B.S.N., Jackson Hospital; Monique Wilson, M.P.H., Health Equity Regional Director, American Heart Association; Julia Sosa, Assistant Director, Office of Minority Health; standing, Elana Parker, Health Equity Program Manager; and Carolyn Bern, Rural Health Outreach Coordinator.



Incarcerated women became more aware of heart disease after hearing presentations by Elana Parker and others who took the heart health message to women's prison facilities.



Employees of the Tallapoosa County Health Department wore red.



St. Clair County staff members also helped make a difference.

AMA honors Dr. Donald Williamson with Top Government Service Award

Donald E. Williamson, M.D., state health officer, was honored by the American Medical Association (AMA) in February with the Dr. Nathan Davis Award for Outstanding Government Service.

"During his nearly 19 years as state health officer, Dr. Williamson has played a significant role in improving the health of all Alabama's patients," said AMA Board Chair Ardis Hoven, M.D.

"Under his leadership, Alabama was the first state to implement the Children's Health Insurance Program to provide health insurance to children of low income families."

The Dr. Nathan Davis Award is named for the founding father of the AMA and recognizes elected and career officials in federal, state or municipal service whose outstanding contributions have promoted the art and science of medicine and the betterment of public health. The awards were presented in conjunction with the AMA National Advocacy Conference at the Grand Hyatt



Pictured: Dr. Williamson (center) with Scott Pelley, 60 Minutes correspondent and master of ceremonies, and Ardis Hoven, M.D., chair of the American Medical Association Board of Trustees.

Washington Hotel in Washington, D.C. This year marks the 22nd anniversary of the Dr. Nathan Davis Awards.

Medical Association of the State of Alabama news release

Chief Accountant Jeffrey Wright Brings Wealth of Skills to Financial Services Post

Jeffrey Wright is drawing from a wealth of varied work experience in the financial arena as he embarks on his new position as chief accountant and director of the Bureau of Financial Services. His career has taken him many places, his knowledge has grown, and he has built new skills in each rising position.

"People either think I have a lot of experience or I can't hold a job," Wright said, "but I like to think it's the former." Acknowledging that he has big shoes to fill to replace former director and current State Comptroller Tom White, Wright said he has been very pleased with the way things are going so far as he transitions from his most recent position at the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries.

"The budget there was \$38.5 million; here it's \$850 million," he said, "but the

principles are the same even though it's a bigger animal."

In introducing Wright to department colleagues Jan. 6, Public Health Administrative Officer Ed Davidson said Wright's numerous and highly positive work references repeated adjectives including "intelligent," "effective" and "hardworking." He added with a smile, "He's the right man for the job."

While still in high school, Wright narrowly escaped being burned severely by hot grease while working a six-week stint at his first job at a Krystal Restaurant. As a high school senior, he began his employment with the Proof Department at Regions Bank where he transferred checks and deposit slips to microfilm until his graduation from Auburn University at Montgomery in 1984.

Other positions he held included work as project accountant with Blount Brothers Construction during the period the Alabama Shakespeare Festival was being built in Montgomery. From there he moved to Tampa, Fla., where he was project accountant as the multistory Barnett Plaza and an adjacent parking garage were being built. He and his wife married in Tampa in 1985. His next project took him to Fayetteville, Tenn., but they lived in Huntsville.

The following year he began working with T.H. Taylor Construction Co. There he worked as a project accountant at a government facility being constructed in Valdosta, Ga. Next he found a job with Premark International which is associated with Hobart Manufacturing and Tupperware.

continued page 8

Wright, continued from page 7

After a few months at a Montgomery bank, he began his career in state government working under contract. In 1989, then Gov. Guy Hunt needed staff to track the savings generated by the Alabama Management Improvement Program using the State Office of Management Analysis (SOMA), a section within the Finance Department. Meanwhile, he earned a master's degree in business administration from AUM in 1990.

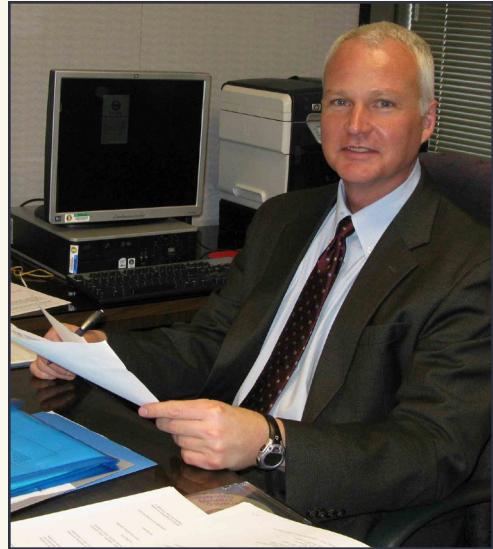
Once this project ended, he entered the merit system. This tracking project in which he prepared monthly reports continued under the administration of Gov. Jim Folsom, Jr., but Gov. Fob James disbanded SOMA shortly after he took office.

Then Wright moved to another section of the Finance Department where he

administered the private activity bond allocation program. These are tax-exempt bonds which governmental entities such as counties and cities issue to finance the construction or expansion of industrial projects. The tax-exempt rate saves the issuers money, and the amount which can be issued in each state is regulated by the Internal Revenue Service.

Between 2001 and 2005, Wright worked as a nursing home field auditor for the Alabama Medicaid Agency. He said that he often ran into public health surveyors while performing these audits. In 2006, Wright was promoted to Associate Director in Medicaid and supervised all nursing home and waiver auditors. In October 2006, Wright transferred to the Department of Agriculture and Industries to serve as Accounting Director.

In order to live in a mutually convenient location for both himself and his wife's work, Wright and his wife reside in Helena, Ala. They have a 22-year-old son who is a graduate student in history at the University of Leicester, England.



Jeffrey Wright

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 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.

Glenda Adams
Florine Croxton
Center for Health
Statistics
from 1st Sgt.
Scott Bowden
Japan

Vernon Adkins
Katherine Blaze
Ron Davis
Danny Doyle
Nick Moss
Sally Palmer
Michael Smith
Kristie Steyer
Danny Williams
Health Promotion and
Chronic Disease
from Tim Hatch
Montgomery, Ala.

Linda Bolding
Center for Health
Statistics
from Frances Lewis
Mobile, Ala.

Veda Ceja, B.S.N.
Ellen James, L.G.S.W.
Mike Garrett, R.N., M.P.H.
Charlyne White, R.N.
Health Provider
Standards
from Mark Manning
Brewton, Ala.

Leigh Ezelle
Betsy Hopkins
Murray Kelley
Christina Leonard
Nancy Morgan
Mary Schroeder
Susan Smyly
Marengo County Health
Department
from Betsy Aydelott
Linden, Ala.

Elana Parker
Offices of Minority
Health/Women's Health
Melanie Rightmyer,
R.N., M.S.N.
Cardiovascular
Health Branch
Julia Sosa
Office of Minority Health
from Tuskegee-Macon
County Parish Nurses
Tuskegee, Ala.

Al Stone
Center for Health
Statistics
from Amelia Wofford
Gadsden, Ala.

Winona Lawson
Center for Health
Statistics
from Gregory Grimes
Conyers, Ga.

Geneva Thomas
from Dana English and
Nancy Webber
Baton Rouge, La.
from E. J. Lowery
Mobile, Ala.

LaShunda Williams
from Elaine Fleming
Nashville, Tenn.

Scale Back Alabama Continues Inspiring Participants

At the kickoff news conference for the fifth year of Scale Back Alabama, Diana Green of Montgomery credited the contest with inspiring her to lose more than 50 pounds in two years.

"As a former dancer now working at a desk job and progressing in age, I knew I had to do something to get healthier," said Ms. Green, Arts in Education Program Manager with the Alabama State Council on the Arts. "I had let my health get completely out of control."

Not only does Ms. Green feel and look better, she was able to stop taking medication for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and arthritis as a result of her weight loss.

Scale Back Alabama is a tremendous volunteer effort and public-private partnership to encourage Alabamians to move more and eat less. The overarching goal of this annual contest is not simply to lose weight; it is to gradually change the lifestyles that lead to weight gain and its health consequences. The majority of Alabamians are either overweight or obese: about one-third of Alabamians are overweight and another one-third are obese. Even more disturbing is the fact that almost one-third of children and adolescents fall into these categories, and this greatly increases their chances of becoming overweight or obese adults.

Obesity is a major public health problem in both Alabama and the nation. That is because an overwhelming majority (about 80 percent) of persons who are obese have additional health problems that include the major chronic diseases of diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and bone and joint problems. In addition to having the effect of shortening life expectancy, people who are obese incur higher healthcare costs than those of normal weight people.

Dr. John Campbell Retires

Colleagues honored Dr. John Campbell upon his retirement as medical director of the Office of Emergency Medical Services and Trauma. A reception was held March 31 in Montgomery.

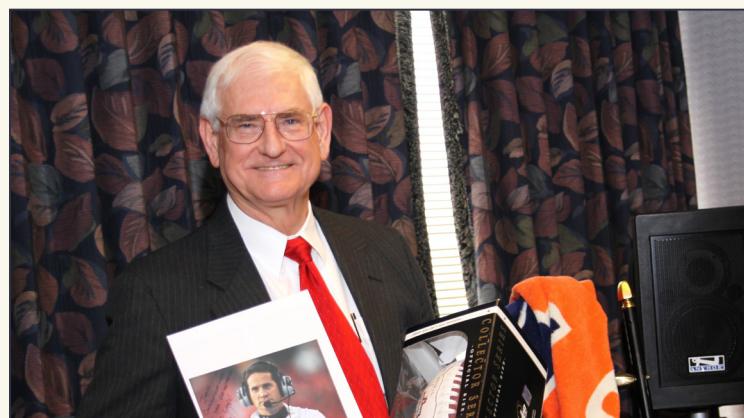


Photo by Earl Langley



Shown are news conference participants, left to right, Donald Jones, chairman of the Scale Back Alabama Committee; Diana Green, Scale Back advocate; and Louis Thornton, AUM Wellness Director.

Over time it has been proven that the basis of every successful weight loss program is a healthful, calorie-controlled diet combined with physical activity. Participants were asked to take a realistic look at their eating patterns and daily routine to identify areas in their lives that could be changed.

For most, this means eating a greater variety and quantity of colorful fruit and vegetables, drinking more water and fewer sweetened drinks, and engaging in regular physical activity.

The final weigh in for participants will be the week of April 9-15. The competition this year included a contest for the most creative team name. "Nobelly Prize Winners" was voted the top prize name, followed by second-place winner, "Stop Praising the Lard."

Brenda Furlow Retirement

Brenda Furlow, director of the CLIA Laboratory Unit of the Bureau of Health Provider Standards, retired March 1 after more than 21 years of state service.



State Health Officer Recognizes Leaders in 'Walk With Your Director Challenge'

Directors in the RSA Tower were challenged to make the most of the crisp fall air and participate in a walking competition sponsored by the Nutrition and Physical Activity Division during November. At least three days a week, directors motivated their employees to walk with them in the "Walk With Your Director Challenge." The directors maintained a log to keep up with their progress in walking with their employees. More than 425 walks with directors were reported.

"ADPH is committed to encouraging employees to be happy and healthy at work and beyond," stated Teresa Fair, R.D., L.D., coordinator of the competition. "We invited employees to walk with their directors, and we hope that this not only provided some release for stress but that it resulted in increased productivity on the job. The employees seemed to appreciate that a director took time to walk with them; one employee stated she "saw a different side of the boss."

Directors who were recognized for walking with staff on three or more days a week all month were Chris Haag of the Bureau of Family Health Services, Jim McVay of the Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease, Cathy Molchan of the Center for Health Statistics, and Sandra Wood of the Office of Human Resources.



Pictured, left to right, are Chris Haag, Sandra Wood, State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson, Cathy Molchan, Jim McVay and Teresa Fair.



Pictured on one of the more than 425 walks with their directors are employees of the Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease.

Retirees

January

Daytha Grier
Home and
Community Services

Andrew Haigler
Clinical Laboratory

Deborah Hall
Morgan County
Health Department

Gayla Hollis
Home and
Community Service

Sandra Howard
Clinical Laboratory

Billy Johnson
Food, Milk & Lodging

Janice McInnis
Russell County
Health Department

Elizabeth Nowlin
Public Health Area IX

Susan Pelham

Houston County
Health Department

Phyllis Randolph
Clinical Laboratory

Ramona Sasser
Clinical Laboratory

Sherry Stabler
Health Care Facilities

Judy Stephens
Winston County
Health Department

February
Beverly Ford
Clinical Laboratory

Pearl Richards
Henry County
Health Department

Betty Wilhite
Public Health Area II

Robert G. Daniel Retires

Friends of Robert G. Daniel, a building construction specialist with the Office of Facilities Management, honored him for his 23 years of state service at a retirement reception Feb. 28. Among those attending were Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer.



Radon: Leading Cause of Lung Cancer in Nonsmokers

Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, and is the leading cause of lung cancer in nonsmokers.

"The Environmental Protection Agency estimates radon causes 22,000 deaths in the U.S. a year," said James L. McNees, director of the Office of Radiation Control, Alabama Department of Public Health. "The best time to test for radon is during the colder months, when your home is closed and radon levels are likely to build to their highest concentrations. So this is the time of year to test your home for cancer-causing radon gas. Then urge friends or family to test their homes."

High levels of indoor radon have been found in many areas of Alabama; however, radon appears to occur most frequently in homes across the Tennessee Valley and in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains from Jefferson and Shelby counties to Cleburne County. Because radon is a colorless, odorless gas that occurs naturally in soil and rocks through the breakdown of uranium, testing is the only way to know the radon level in a home.

Radon test kits weigh only a few ounces and cost about \$15 or less. Testing for radon should be done on the lowest level of the home on which the occupants spend time, so a finished basement or a basement containing a workshop is a good place to test. Kitchens are not recommended testing areas.

"Testing directions are on the kit, and it only takes a few days to obtain a sample," McNees said. "Most people can easily do a radon test on their home. If test results are above 4.0 picoCuries of radon per liter of air (pCi/l), the action level recommended by the U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency and the Alabama Department of Public Health, homeowners should consider installing a radon remediation system."

Radon test kits are available at many larger home improvement stores. As a public service many local offices of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System will sell homeowners a kit to test their own home at the wholesale price of \$5. Call your local County Extension office for details.

The average cost of a radon remediation system is between \$800 and \$1,200, depending on the square footage of the residence and the difficulty in finding a suitable pathway for the radon removal pipe. Homes with a crawl space, no gravel under the slab, or a completely finished lower level sometimes cost more.

The Alabama Radon Program is a joint effort of the Alabama Department of Public Health and Alabama Cooperative Extension System working together to reduce future occurrences of lung cancer in Alabama. To learn more about this and other radiation and health issues visit the ADPH Web site at <http://www.adph.org/radiation/>.



Beverly Jo Carswell is shown with a display to promote radon awareness and action.

Shelia Puckett Retirement



Shelia Puckett of the Office of Professional and Support Services gets a hug from Michele Jones, bureau director. Ms. Puckett completed 30 years of service.

Ruth Underwood Retires



Dr. Donald Williamson bids farewell to Public Health Area IX Administrator Ruth Underwood. Ms. Underwood's distinguished 25-year health career yielded numerous public health and community honors, including the highest awards of the Alabama Public Health Association. In addition, she served as acting area administrator for Public Health Area VII.

What Are the Rules For Someone Who Is Tattooing People Without a License Or Inspection?

It is a violation of Alabama state law to operate a body art facility without a valid license or to perform body art procedures outside of a licensed facility. The Alabama State Board of Health Rules for Body Art Practice and Facilities set minimum standards for operating a body art facility and performing body art procedures. Complaints concerning unlicensed facilities are investigated by the environmental office of the local county health department.

Calendar of Events

April 17-19

10th Annual Diabetes and Obesity Conference, Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center, Montgomery.
For more information contact Dr. Kathleen Tajeu, (334) 844-5523.



April 18

Understanding and Helping a Suicidal Person, 1-3 p.m.
For more information contact Maury West, (334) 206-3383.



April 27

Children with Chronic Respiratory Complaints; When Does Normal Become Abnormal? Noon-2 p.m.
For more information contact Nancy Wooldridge, (205) 939-5498.

April 27-28

Alabama Rural Health Conference, Marriott Prattville Hotel and Conference Center at Capitol Hill. Cosponsored by the Alabama Office of Primary Care and Rural Health, Alabama Rural Health Association and Office of Emergency Medical Services and Trauma.
For more information contact Carolyn Bern (334) 206-5436.

April 30

Third Annual Women's 5K Run/1M Mother/Daughter Walk, 8 a.m., Linn Park, 710 20th St., Birmingham.
For more information contact Deschelle Merritt, (334) 206-5669.



May 2

Power to End Stroke, 2-4 p.m.
For more information contact Elana Parker, (334) 206-7980.



May 11

Caring for Pediatric Patients (Home Health Aides and Attendants) 2-4 p.m.
For more information contact Becky Leavins, (334) 393-5528.



May 18

Woman to Woman: Addressing Social Determinants to Health, 2-4 p.m.
For more information contact Elana Parker, (334) 206-7980.

May 25

WHI FI (ADPH Nursing Continuing Education Series), 8-9:30 a.m.
For more information contact Thresa Dix, (334) 206-3377.



May 12-13

55th Annual Alabama Public Health Association Educational Conference, Renaissance Hotel and Spa, Montgomery. Agenda, registration and other information is available at www.alphassoc.org.

June 16

"Bridging the Gap Between Understanding and Misunderstanding Between Responders and Those Affected by Disasters," 2011 Volunteer Symposium, Renaissance, Montgomery. For more information contact Stephan Mambazo, Social Work Division, (334) 206-7981.