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ALABAMA PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY BECOMES ISO/IEC 17025 ACCREDITED

Medical Laboratory Professionals Week is traditionally a week for daily festivities at the Bureau of Clinical Laboratories (BCL), but this year's celebration was extraordinary. On April 25, the laboratory received word that the laboratory in Prattville was approved for ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation from the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA Certificate #5521.01).

The current defined scope of accreditation is for biological testing of dairy products and frozen desserts using FDA Petrifilm™ and standard plate count methods to determine aerobic and coliform bacteria. Having this accreditation supports the Bureau of Environmental Services' Manufactured Food Program to improve food safety in Alabama by protecting the public from foodborne illness and injury.



Angelica Webb, Jamie Hodges, Pam Pruett and Dr. Sharon Massingale.
Not shown is Ron Dawsey, Bureau of Environmental Services director.

BCL Director Sharon Massingale, Ph.D., was overjoyed with this achievement, because ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation has been a goal since 2015 when an FDA grant was announced. However, she said both personnel and personal challenges caused delays, in addition to complying with changing regulations for accreditation. Resignations, retirements and other human resource issues made reaching this long-standing goal elusive. This was compounded by the multiple high priority demands of completing the new lab facility and moving operations to Prattville, plus the crucial priority of uninterrupted COVID-19 testing. The year-long illness and passing of Dr. Massingale's beloved husband, Herman, was another contributing factor.

As COVID-19 testing slowed, the focus again turned to accreditation and plans were revamped as funding was extended. A core group was formed, and a gap analysis of actions needed was made. Regular monthly progress meetings to brainstorm improvements were held, and finally the notification of accreditation came.

Dr. Massingale wrote, "While the BCL has always taken testing seriously and has always tried to raise the bar for safety and accuracy, ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation reaffirms our commitment to quality."

continued on page 3

SATELLITE CONFERENCE AND WEBCAST HELD: 'BRONCHOPULMONARY DYSPLASIA: NOBODY PUTS BABY IN THE CORNER'

Dr. Christopher Miles Fowler, assistant professor, Division of Pediatric Pulmonary Sleep Medicine, UAB, is shown with LeJasmine Gary, mother of twins with bronchopulmonary dysplasia. Bronchopulmonary dysplasia is the second most common pediatric lung problem affecting 10-15 thousand infants annually. A satellite conference and live webcast titled "Bronchopulmonary Dysplasia: Nobody Puts Baby in

the Corner" was held April 20. The program came about through a partnership with UAB Pediatric Pulmonary Center and was produced by the Alabama Department of Public Health, Health Media and Communications Division. Among the topics covered in the program were comorbidities of BPD, outpatient management guidelines, and routine counseling provided for families.



CONGRATULATIONS CANCER REGISTRY!

The Alabama Statewide Cancer Registry, Bureau of Family Health Services, was recently honored with the National Program of Cancer Registries 2022 Registry of Distinction Award for Data Completeness and Quality by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The registry provides critical and high-quality data that are included in the official federal statistics on cancer incidence

and mortality, United States Cancer Statistics (USCS). USCS data are used to assess the cancer burden, inform and evaluate prevention efforts, and address disparities.

Team members are Aretha Bracy, Zhanndi Driver Angela Gaston, Justin George, Cassandra Glaze, Mark Jackson, Farzana Salimi, LaTunya Scott, Shirley Williams and Elaine Wooden.

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

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Lab, continued from page 1

A laboratory's fulfillment of the requirements of ISO/IEC 17025 means the lab meets both the technical competence requirements and management system requirements that are necessary for it to consistently deliver technically valid test results and calibrations. Having an ISO certification raises the bar for testing standards and assures providers that their specimens and samples have been rigorously tested to ensure high quality conditions. The work is not over once accreditation is obtained; the lab must continue to document, monitor for traceability and ensure ethical standards.

ISO/IEC 17025 is the single-most important internationally accepted standard for test and measurement of products. Accreditation bodies use the standard specifically to assess relevant factors of a laboratory's ability to produce precise, accurate test and calibration data. The BCL used A2LA as its accreditation body as it is a well recognized accreditor of calibration laboratories in the United States. The BCL will seek ISO 17025 accreditation for other programs in the future at the Prattville and Mobile campuses.



For a relaxing break, BCL employees in Montgomery were invited to color in the Lab Week 2023 mural, "We Get Results."

PUBLIC HEALTH SOCIAL WORK CONFERENCE EXPLORES TIMELY TOPICS

The 2023 Alabama Department of Public Health Social Work Conference was held at the Prattville Training Annex March 15.

State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris and State Social Work Director William Kennedy welcomed the 101 attendees from throughout the state. Dr. Harris thanked those in attendance for the work they do and provided a brief update on COVID-19 and current public health issues in Alabama.

The interesting agenda included the following presentations:

"Celebrating the Puzzle of Social Work in Alabama" was the subject of an address by Renae Carpenter, MSW, LICSW, Director of Social Services for Camille Place.

"The Dangers of Fentanyl and Other Drugs" was discussed by Shereda Finch, ABD, MEd, MPA, Executive Director, and Elana M. Parker Merriweather, EdS., AADC, APS, Director of Behavioral Health Prevention at the Council on Substance Abuse-NCADD.



"COVID-19: Alabama Department of Public Health's Response and Ethical Issues" was the topic for Deborah Leigh Dixon, MSW, LICSW, District Response Director, Southwestern Public Health District.



Jennifer Owes, BSN, RN, Nurse Administrator, Emerging Infectious Disease Unit, addressed the conference on the topic "COVID-19, 20, 21, 22, and 23: Where We've Been and What We've Learned."



Public health social workers celebrated March, National Social Work Month, at the day-long conference in Prattville.

REGION IV PUBLIC HEALTH & PRIMARY CARE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE PROVIDES OUTSTANDING TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

Building the capacity of the current and future public health workforce to protect and promote the health of communities in the Southeastern United States is the mission of the Region IV Public Health Training Center, PHPC.

Ryan Easterling, director of the Health Media and Communications Division, was a member of the first cohort in 2019. He encourages other public health employees to take advantage of this excellent opportunity. The 8-month training experience is provided at no charge for individuals from Alabama and seven other states in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Region IV.

Nurse Manager Jennifer Weeks of the Northeastern Public Health District also recommends PHPC. In reflecting on her experience, she said, "I thoroughly enjoyed my time with the Public Health Leadership Institute and felt that it was invaluable to my career. I gained so much knowledge to help me grow as a leader and the encouragement and insight from the other fellows and faculty was inspiring. I would highly recommend this program for anyone looking to increase their ability to be a more valuable leader."



Attending the retreat from Alabama, shown from left, are former department employee Leslie Clark, now at the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs; Jennifer Weeks, Nurse Manager, Northeastern Public Health District; Elisabeth Welty, Epidemiological Analyst, Jefferson County Department of Health; and Ryan Easterling, Health Media and Communications Director.

After a virtual orientation, an in-person opening retreat is held, followed by five virtual sessions by zoom video conferencing lasting 2 hours each before a final virtual 3-hour graduation session. Participants are asked to complete 2-3 hours of work between the virtual sessions.

For information about the Center and the PHPC, visit: <https://r4phtc.org/about-the-center/>



Former PHPC participants attended an alumni retreat at Emory University recently.

DR. MARY MCINTYRE PRESENTED WILLIAM HENRY SANDERS AWARD

The Medical Association of the State of Alabama honored Mary Greene McIntyre, MD, MPH, with the 2023 William Henry Sanders Award. This award is presented to an outstanding person, lay or professional, engaged in full-time public health work, but who has served above and beyond the call of duty. The Sanders Award was created in 1966 in honor of William Henry Sanders, MD, who served as Alabama's State Health Officer from 1896 to 1917.

Dr. McIntyre, now retired, was honored for her many years of distinguished service to public health. The following accolades were made in introducing Dr. McIntyre at the association's annual conference in Huntsville April 29:

"In addition to serving her patients as a physician, Dr. McIntyre spent 25 years in public service in Alabama, first with the Alabama Medicaid Agency, and then as the Chief Medical Officer with the Alabama Department

of Public Health. Just a few of the many advisory committees she has worked on include the State Perinatal Advisory Committee, Oral Health Coalition of Alabama, National Quality Assurance Foundation's Child Health Advisory Committee, Alabama Wellness Coalition, Cardiovascular Health Advisory Council, Alabama Asthma Coalition, and Stroke Systems Operations Group. Dr. McIntyre has certainly gone above and beyond the call of duty to improve healthcare for the people of Alabama."

During her more than 12 years of leadership at ADPH, her many responsibilities included Clinical Laboratories, Disease Control and Prevention, Family Health Services, Health Provider Standards, Home and Community Services, HIV Prevention and Care, District Medical Officers, and Informatics and Data Analytics. Dr. McIntyre retired May 1, 2022.



Former Chief Medical Officer Dr. Mary McIntyre is shown with State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris.

MOLLY KILLMAN PRESENTED 2023 EXCELLENCE IN PRACTICE AWARD

Molly Killman, director of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Division, Bureau of Prevention, Promotion, and Support, was presented the 2023 Excellence in Practice Award from the Association of State Public Health Nutritionists (ASPHN) June 12 at the Grand Hyatt in Denver, Colo.

A message of support for her nomination credited Ms. Killman for establishing a diverse set of partnerships to facilitate many significant milestones in addressing health and hunger in Alabama. These include long-standing partnerships with organizations such as the Hunger Solutions Institute, the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, to the newly established relationship with the Community Food Bank (CFB) of Central Alabama.

In the last year alone, the message noted that Ms. Killman has empowered staff to collaborate on projects involving the development of culturally and linguistically appropriate nutrition education materials for low-income seniors in partnership with the CFB of Central Alabama and expanded the distribution of these materials to include the Montgomery Area Food Bank as well. For more than a decade as the Public Health Representative for the Alabama Wellness Alliance (which was previously the State Obesity Task Force), she was instrumental in the finalization of the Alabama State Physical Activity and Nutrition Plan which was released early this year.

Co-worker Lita Chatham wrote, "Molly works with intention to strategically leverage partnerships and limited resources to achieve the greatest collective impact on our state. Molly is a forward-thinker, a supporter and mentor for staff, a dedicated advocate for public health, and a person whose passion and integrity are evident in everything she does."

According to a notification letter from the association, this award acknowledges and recognizes Ms. Killman's outstanding contribution to the field of public health nutrition and her activities and efforts that have assisted in meeting ASPHN's mission. The letter stated, "Your peers want to honor you for the significant milestones you have achieved in addressing health and hunger in Alabama. They also want to honor your forward-thinking, effectiveness, mentoring, dedication and integrity. Your leadership serves as an example to all ASPHN members."



ASPHN honored Molly Killman, MS, RD, LD, for her outstanding contributions, activities and efforts to meet association's mission.

MEETING PROVIDES RECRUITMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The department promotes early detection and treatment of breast and cervical cancer and sexually transmitted infections, especially with the recent increase in congenital syphilis. Shown recruiting physicians at the 2023 Joint Annual Spring Meeting of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Alabama and Mississippi Sections, are, from left, Kelli Hardy and Misty Price of the Bureau of Family Health Services, Medical Officer for Family Health Services Gary Pugh, DO, FACOG, and STD Division Consultant Agnes Oberkor, MPH, DrPH, CPNP-PC, DTM.



PUBLIC HEALTH PROMINENT IN MILES COLLEGE WELLNESS/JOB FAIR

Employees of the Office of Health Equity and Minority Health and others in the department participated in a wellness/job fair for students at Miles College, an HBCU in Fairfield, on March 30. Latisha Kennebrew, director of the Office of Health Equity and Minority Health, praised the successful fair and said, "There was an amazing turnout. We hope to return in the fall for another event with more services."

Vendors from the Jefferson County Department of Health, including Candace Rachel and Virginia Bozeman, provided STI screenings, fentanyl strip kits and Narcan kits.

Kanissia Rounds with the Addiction Prevention Coalition offered mental health information and drug disposal bags.

Equal Employment Opportunity Officer Shanika Andrews with the department's Office of Human Resources brought state job information and resources.

Stanley Woodson of the department's Office of Primary Care and Rural Health spoke with students about HRSA loan repayment and scholarship information for certain clinical majors.

COVID-19 testing was provided by Merry Crook with the East Central Alabama Area Health Education Center.

Gloria Howard of Aletheia House provided alcohol and substance abuse information.

Kimdeldria Washington and Fayettea Royal with the West Central Public Health District, Tobacco Prevention, spoke

with well over 100 students about their health and state job opportunities that fit in their majors.

In addition, students were given toiletries provided from department's Office of Oral Health and offered copies of the department's Guide to Services.



Health programs, services, scholarship and career opportunities highlighted the wellness/job fair held on the Miles College campus.

STUDY CO-AUTHORED BY DR. LYNDA GILLIAM SHOWS TITLE X FAMILY PLANNING POLICY CHANGES HAVE POSITIVE IMPACT

Lynda Gilliam, MD, FACOG, Title X Family Planning Medical Director, co-authored a study published in the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice* on April 13, titled "Increases in IUD Provision at Alabama Department of Public Health Clinics From 2016 to 2019." The study highlights the success that policy and practice changes have made in expanding the availability of contraception options across Alabama.

More than 300,000 low-income people who could become pregnant in Alabama live in a contraceptive desert. Many live in counties where a full range of contraceptive methods, in particular intrauterine devices (IUDs) and implants, are not readily accessible to patients. The abstract states that the department began allocating Title X funding to IUD provision at family planning clinics in 2019, instated more training

opportunities, and expanded nurse practitioner scope of practice to include IUD placements.

An assessment of IUD provision and protocols at ADPH Title X clinics in 2016 and 2019 before and after ADPH policy changes found the following between 2016 and 2019:

- The proportion of ADPH clinics reporting offering any IUD on-site increased by 61.6 percentage points.
- Stockpiling IUDs on-site increased by 85.9 percentage points.
- IUD placement/removal training increased by 71.4 percentage points.
- Same-visit IUD placement trainings increased by 64.1 percentage points.
- Advanced practice nurses were significantly more likely to place IUDs in 2019, compared with 2016.

PUBLISHED STUDY FINDS COVID-19 AFFECTED HEALTHCARE-ASSOCIATED INFECTION RATES

A study co-authored by Melanie Roderick, MPH, senior epidemiologist with the Infectious Diseases and Outbreaks Division, was accepted for publication in the *American Journal of Infection Control*. The major article is titled “How COVID-19 Impacted CAUTI and CLABSI Rates in Alabama.”

The objective of the study was to quantify infection rate trends for central-line associated bloodstream infections (CLABSIs) and catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTIs) in 89 Alabama hospitals from 2015–2021 to analyze how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted healthcare delivery.

Highlights were that CAUTI and CLABSI rates showed a statistically significant decrease from 2015 to 2019 in Alabama hospitals; however, CLABSI rates did slightly increase from

2018 to 2019. With COVID-19 in the years 2020 and 2021, CAUTI and CLABSI rates increased significantly.

The study concluded that the increases “observed during the pandemic were likely due to the large volume of patients requiring advanced medical care and subsequent depleted resources.” A review of potential causes for the elevated rate of HAIs illustrated that certain practices may have contributed to the increased rates. These include staffing shortages and impending nursing burnout.



Melanie Roderick, MPH

ALABAMA PHYSICIANS CO-AUTHOR STUDY OF GROUNDBREAKING TB TREATMENT

In 2021, an estimated 10.6 million people developed tuberculosis (TB) and 1.6 million died from the disease worldwide. About 450,000 individuals with the infection are resistant to drugs used to treat TB; however, treatment for drug-resistant TB has been transformed. The new all-oral regimen requires less than half the previously recommended time and is safe and effective.

Two of the department's physicians were among the co-authors of a major study in the May 30 issue of *Clinical Infectious Diseases* describing this innovative treatment. The late Asharaf Edward “Ed” Khan, MD, of the Jefferson County Department of Health and Chief Medical Officer Karen Landers, MD, FAAP, were among the co-authors the study titled “Implementation of Bpal in the United States: Experience using a novel all-oral treatment regimen for treatment of rifampin-resistant or rifampin-intolerant TB disease.”

A published editorial commentary in the same issue praises the transformative treatment. Preventive TB treatment protects both the individual patient and the community at large from developing TB disease.

A TB and disease control expert, Dr. Khan passed away in June 2022.



Asharaf Edward “Ed” Khan, MD, was known for his expertise in TB.

TUSCALOOSA VIGIL HONORS LIVES LOST TO COVID-19

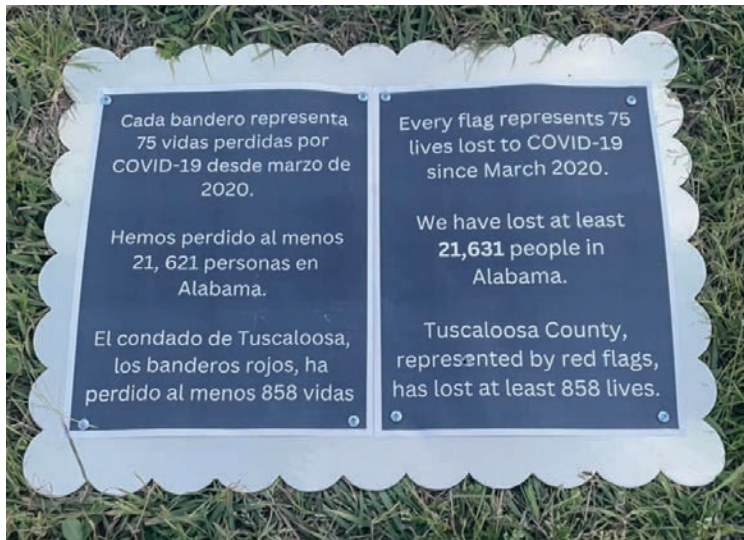
Participants lit candles in remembrance of the many lives lost to COVID-19 at a vigil on the evening of March 24 in Tuscaloosa. The Tuscaloosa Latino Coalition sponsored the event at Snow Hinton Park.

Speakers included Renee Cole, Assistant Administrator, West Central Public Health District. In addressing the attendees, she said, "As we mark the 3-year milestone of the beginning of the COVID pandemic, we reflect on the unprecedented depth and scale of loss as many people grieve, remember, and honor family and friends who have tragically suffered and died. It is hard to imagine that we have lost more than 21,000 Alabamians to this disease. That is more than the total population of Pickens County. There have been more than 1.6 million COVID cases in Alabama since the beginning of the pandemic."

The ADPH West Central District has administered 7,465 COVID-19 vaccines and conducted over 10,800 tests, numerous drive-through clinics, and vaccinations in the community including schools, churches, factories, and homes for homebound individuals. The department continues to serve the community by holding vaccination and testing clinics weekly at each health department location at no charge and without appointments.

Ms. Cole said, "We must remain aware of COVID and work together to prevent another pandemic as we remember those we have lost."

Other speakers at the event were Walt Maddox, Tuscaloosa Mayor; the Rev. Marc Burnette, Canterbury Chapel; the Rev. David Gay, Jr., Whatley Health Services Inc.; and Julia Sosa, Chair, Tuscaloosa Latino Coalition and Whatley Health Services. The program included prayer, song and COVID-19 testimonies.



The monument of remembrance provided by the Tuscaloosa Latino Coalition for the park was inscribed in both the Spanish and English languages.



Each flag in the display shaped like the state of Alabama represents 15 lives of Tuscaloosa County residents lost to COVID-19. Every heart and the spaces around the hearts represent losses that can go unseen by other people. Losses include missing important milestones, not seeing friends and family, and the long-term side-effects of COVID-19.



At the candlelight vigil, Assistant District Administrator Renee Cole urges awareness to prevent future pandemics.

NASCAR DRIVER HIGHLIGHTS OUTREACH EVENT IN TALLADEGA

The Talladega County Health Department partnered with Walmart to host GoLiveBetter, a pre-race public health outreach event at the county health department April 22. Clinic staff offered COVID-19 boosters and provided family planning and cancer detection services to the public. NASCAR racing driver Bubba Wallace attended, and posed with the staff. Shown, front row, from left, are Paula Ball, Rebecca Chisolm, Wallace, Connie Hendon; back row, Darlene Bradford, Rachel Williams, Laura Grogan.



RETIREES

The following departmental employees have retired recently:

APRIL

Alice Freeman

East Central Public Health District

Kuma Girdner

Emergency Preparedness

Brenda Ryals

Information Technology

Paige Taylor

Northern Public Health District

Patricia Williamson

East Central Public Health District

MAY

Nancy Brewer

Southeastern Public Health District

Liane Martin

Southwestern Public Health District

JUNE

Curtis Andrews

Mobile Laboratory

Angie Sims

Northern Public Health District

JULY

Cynthia Ball

Health Provider Standards

Lillian Clayton

Northern Public Health District

Sharon Eiland

Southwestern Public Health District

Jennifer Frederick

Northern Public Health District

Rhonda Guthmiller

Northern District STD

Kelly Haywood

Northeastern Public Health District

Dina Oliver

Northeastern Public Health District

Paula Oliver

Field Operations

BCL EMPLOYEES CELEBRATE MEDICAL LABORATORY PROFESSIONALS WEEK

Medical Laboratory Professionals Week is an annual event to highlight and show appreciation for laboratory professionals. Lab Week is sponsored by the American Society for Clinical

Laboratory Science, coordinated by 17 national clinical laboratory organizations, and was observed April 23 - 29. BCL used the theme, *Saved by the Lab* for Lab Week 2023.

continued on page 12



Bureau of Clinical Laboratories Director Dr. Sharon Massingale receives a proclamation for National Medical Laboratory Week from Prattville Mayor Bill Gillespie, Jr., to begin the week of activities. Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson also proclaimed the week at the Mobile location. Dr. Massingale is dressed for the day's activity, School Days.



Nostalgic feelings from bygone days from different eras were enjoyed by the staff members on #TBT, or Throwback Thursday.



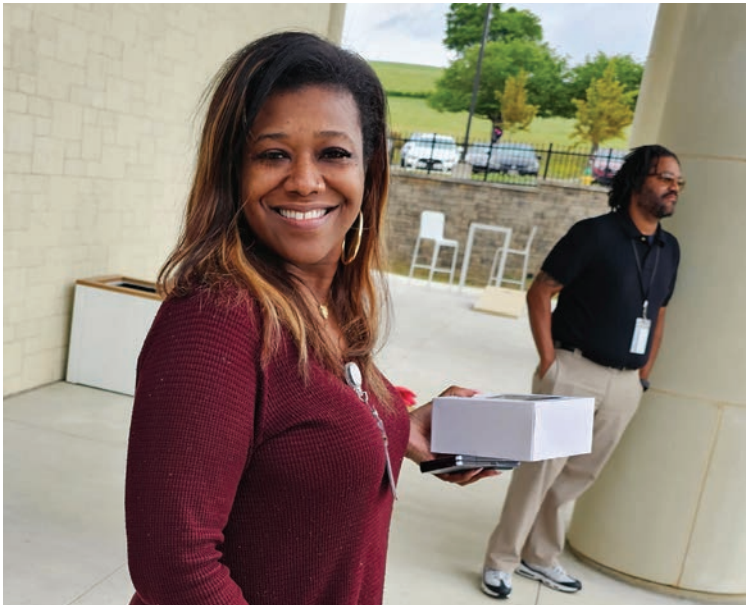
Animal print clothing was the attire of BCL employees as they celebrated Safari Day.

Lab week, continued from page 11

A fun cake walk yielded prizes for BCL participants. Face masks were optional for this year's celebration.



Competitive players have fun and hoist their trophies at the Cornhole tournament.





"Saved by the Lab" was the theme printed on T-shirts for T-shirt day 2023. That is because public health laboratories are a first line of defense to protect the public against diseases and other health hazards.

ORAL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH 2023

Dr. David Bronner Featured in PSA and Interview

April is Oral Cancer Awareness Month. Awareness of oral cancer is important in Alabama because the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention rank Alabama 15th in the U.S. for oral cavity and pharynx cancer incidence. Alabama is third among the states for oral cavity and pharynx cancer deaths. To observe this month with messaging to positively affect lives, the department's Oral Health Office (OHO) conducted several initiatives.

- Gov. Kay Ivey issued a proclamation of this annual observance which promotes prevention and early detection of oral cancer.
- Dr. David Bronner, Chief Executive Officer of the Retirement Systems of Alabama for the past 50 years and an oral cancer survivor, graciously granted the department an interview for use on social media sites and to be shared with partners. It can be viewed at https://youtu.be/S5dpOY8gn_8. Partners include the USA Mitchell Cancer Institute, VAX2STOPCANCER, and the Cancer Prevention and Control Division. Dr. Bronner also volunteered to record a :30 second public service announcement which was aired on 10 different television stations throughout the state for one week and can be viewed on the ADPH website at

<https://youtu.be/8uGdlPYHJm4>. The purpose of the recorded interview and announcements is to bring attention to this disease and make people aware that some types of oral cancer actually have a vaccine to help provide protection.

- On April 14, Alabama observed "Light up Alabama Red." The RSA buildings in Mobile and Montgomery and the lights at the entrance of Regions Field were illuminated in red to highlight Oral Cancer Awareness Month.
- The OHO's ongoing #WatchYourMouth campaign is designed to promote education about the FDA-approved vaccine for the prevention of HPV-related oropharyngeal and other oral cancers. The campaign emphasizes the importance of performing oral cancer self-exams and getting the HPV vaccine. Also of note is the fact the campaign represents an effective medical-dental integration since the vaccine is effective against five other types of HPV-related cancers unrelated to those found in the oral cavity. Presentations have been made to local, state and national offices and organizations, highlighting the strategies set forth for the campaign. Presentations have included audiences such as Georgetown University; School-Based Health Alliance; New York City Department of Health; VAX2STOPCANCER; Merck;

continued on page 15



Shown with the proclamation of Oral Cancer Awareness Month 2023 are, from left, Tommy Johnson, DMD, OHO Director; Amanda Martin, Bureau of Family Health Services Director; David Bronner, PhD, CEO, RSA; Jennifer Morris, RDH, CDHC, Oral Health Coordinator; and Mallory Rigsby, Fluoridation Coordinator.

Oral cancer, continued from page 14

Florida Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics; Tutwiler Prison; and the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors. Alabama is one of the first states to include the promotion of education surrounding HPV-related oral and oropharyngeal cancers, combined with the promotion of the HPV vaccine, during preventive dental visits.

Prevent Oral Cancer

Oral cancer starts in the mouth and oropharyngeal cancer is confined to the base of tongue, soft palate, tonsils and back of throat. The American Cancer Society estimates that 54,540 people will get oral cavity or oropharyngeal cancer this year, and 11,580 people will die of these cancers.

Too many Alabamians are suffering from these cancers, which are often detected too late. Factors which greatly increase the risk for oral and oropharyngeal cancer include tobacco use in all forms and heavy consumption of alcohol, especially when tobacco and drugs are both used. Infection with the human papillomavirus (HPV) is an increasingly common risk factor for oropharyngeal cancer.

While the HPV vaccine was developed to prevent cervical and other cancers of the reproductive system, observational studies by the American Dental Association Council on Scientific Affairs find that HPV vaccination is associated with a greater than 90 percent reduction in oral HPV infection. Reducing the risk of HPV infection is important, as more than 70 percent of these cancers are caused by HPV. Regrettably, Alabama ranks 33rd in the U.S. in HPV vaccination uptake and 25th for HPV vaccination completion.

According to the American Dental Association, HPV can infect the mouth and throat, can cause oropharyngeal cancer, and is thought to cause 70 percent of oropharyngeal cancers in the United States. There are more malignant HPV-associated oral cancers of the oropharynx in men than malignant cervical cancers in women nationally and in Alabama.

Other factors that increase the risk of developing oral or oropharyngeal cancer are prolonged sun exposure, male gender, fair skin, age over 45, poor oral hygiene, poor diet and nutrition, marijuana use, and weakened immune systems.

For prevention and early detection:

- Vaccinate yourself or your children against HPV.
- Stop tobacco use and use alcohol only in moderation.
- Regularly check your mouth for unusual sores, swelling, and areas of red or white lesions.
- Ask your dental provider to screen for oral cancers.

See your health provider if you have any of these symptoms of oral cancer:

- Persistent hoarseness or sore throat
- Earaches or enlarged lymph nodes of the neck
- Difficulty swallowing
- Unexplained weight loss

Regular oral cancer examinations performed by an oral health professional remain the best method for detecting oral cancer in its early stages. When detected and treated early, treatment-related health problems are reduced, and survival rates may increase.

ALABAMA OHO DIRECTOR SERVES ON ASTDD BOARD

Alabama Oral Health Director Dr. Tommy Johnson was recognized at the installation ceremony of the Board of Directors of the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors at the National Oral Health Conference in Orlando on April 16. Shown, from left, are Chris Farrell, RDH, BSDH, MPA, Immediate Past-President, (Michigan); Julia Walcoff, RDH, MS, President, (Arizona); Russ Dunkel, DDS, BS, BA, FACD, FAID, President-Elect, (Wisconsin); Debony Hughes, DDS, Director, (Maryland); John Welby, MS, Associate Member Director, (Maryland); Mona Van Kangan, DDS, MS, MPH, Treasurer, (Illinois); Dr. Johnson, Director; Robin Miller, RDH, MPH, Secretary, (Vermont).



NURSING TRAINING DAY 2023: CELEBRATING NURSING STAFF AND THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING

Field Operations Nursing Division staff presented the Nursing Training Day on May 3, 2023. Over 155 public health clinic nurses and aides gathered to celebrate, learn, and recognize the importance of public health nursing in Alabama.

State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris began the conference with an expression of thanks and appreciation to the staff. Judy Smith, Northern District Administrator, provided a riveting account of public health nursing; emphasizing the impact that public health nursing services have on multiple areas of community health.

Dr. Nathan Erdmann of the University of Alabama at Birmingham provided an overview of data gathered and lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as methods that are being developed to determine the pathways forward as they relate to Long COVID and its treatment. District Medical Officer Dr. Wes Stubblefield, Northern and Northeastern districts, provided information on best practices related to appropriate immunization administration and management.

LaDonna Patton, from the Alabama Board of Nursing, educated the group on Operation Nightingale and fraudulent actions that result in Board on Nursing discipline. The day of education concluded with an inspirational teamwork presentation by ADPH Human Resources Director, Brent Hatcher. In addition to informative education presentations, clinical nursing staff were recognized for their hard work and dedication.

Clinic nurses and aides were also able to experience public health history through a display of public health nursing memorabilia. Items available included nursing bags utilized by public health nurses, glass syringes, infant scales, and other clinical equipment as well as uniform items worn by early public health pioneers. The display also included photos of public health nurses and aides as they provided services throughout the years and photos of all Public Health Nursing Directors from 1919 through 2023.

By Marilyn Knight, MSN, RN



Public health nursing staff from throughout the state were celebrated at the training at Alabama State University on May 5.



Dr. Nathan Erdmann shared data and lessons learned from COVID-19.



Displays featured former directors of Public Health Nursing and memorabilia from bygone days.



STATEWIDE CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED TO ELIMINATE CERVICAL CANCER IN ALABAMA

Alabama ranks third in the nation in the incidence and deaths from a cancer that can be prevented, cervical cancer. To address this serious public health problem, primary care providers and community leaders from throughout the state convened and developed a statewide action plan to eliminate cervical cancer in Alabama by 2033. The launch of “Operation Wipe Out Cervical Cancer Alabama” was announced at a news conference on May 8.

The statewide plan is the result of a summit held in Birmingham in the fall of 2022, where primary care providers and public health leaders representing 42 of the 67 Alabama counties came together to identify barriers, facilitators and solutions to cervical cancer prevention and control in Alabama. Partners with the department are the University of Alabama at Birmingham Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and O’Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center, TogetHER for Health, Rotary Club of Birmingham and the American Cancer Society.

The statewide action plan uses evidence-based strategies to promote HPV vaccination, promote cervical cancer screening, and ensure adherence to follow-up in the event of cervical

cancer screening abnormal results. HPV vaccinations are a powerful tool to protect children and adolescents before they are exposed to the virus. Cervical cancer screening among women 21 to 65 years of age detects abnormal cells in the cervix which can develop into cancer. Appropriate follow-up and treatment for women with abnormal results improves the chance of recovery from cervical cancer. Specific benchmarks will be monitored toward achievement of this goal.

“The launching of the statewide action plan is a historic milestone in the fight against cervical cancer in Alabama,” Nancy Wright, Director of the Cancer Prevention and Control Division, said. “It is an opportunity for all segments of society to get involved, including parents, physicians, business leaders, community-based organizations, public health systems, and academic centers.”

For more information on the statewide action plan to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem in Alabama, please visit https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/bandc/assets/cervicalcancer_actionplan.pdf.



Partners in the introducing the campaign include, from left, Dan Stephens, Executive Director, Rotary Club of Birmingham; State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris; Nancy Wright, Director, Cancer Prevention and Control Division; Isabel Scarinci, PhD, MPH, Vice-Chair for Global and Rural Health, UAB Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology; Dr. Gary Pugh, Medical Officer, Bureau of Family Health Services; Deborah Smith, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Quality of Life Health Services; Anna Lisa Weigel, Cancer Support Strategic Partnerships Manager, American Cancer Society; and Heather White, DrPH, Executive Director, TogetHER for Health.

KELLI WILSON SAVES A LIFE

Late one Friday afternoon just as the Cleburne County Health Department was closing, nurse Kelli Wilson came to the rescue when co-worker Michelle Epperson's blood sugar level dropped and she began experiencing symptoms. Michelle wrote the article below describing how Kelli came to her aid that day.

"Our lives can change in a moment's notice," Ricky Elliott, director of Field Operations, wrote. "In public health, we provide services and care to our clients on a daily basis. This is a great example of how we also take care of one another. Public health nurses are always ready when a need arises."

Michelle Epperson, the office manager for the Clay and Cleburne County Health Departments was closing the office in Cleburne County on May 19, 2023, when she became ill. Michelle, who is a type 2 diabetic, began to feel weak and jittery as she was ending the day. She made her way back to her office and grabbed her glucose monitor, checked her blood sugar, and discovered it was at 65. Michelle was having some difficulty with speech and called out as best she could for help.

Kelli Wilson, nurse for the Cleburne County Health Department, was in her office two doors down when she heard someone call her name. She jumped up and ran into Michelle's office to find her pushing a glucose monitor over for her to see. Kelli opened a small candy for Michelle to put in her mouth while she rummaged through the kitchen searching for sugar. Some type of sugar. Was there any sugar??? Yes! A 2-liter bottle of cola. Flat tasting but still it had sugar in it. Kelli poured Michelle a cup then found some cheese, cut off a piece and made her eat it. Kelli then sat and waited. Normally she would be headed home since it was just after 5 but for some reason she stayed and it's a good thing she did.

After about 20 minutes Kelli told Michelle to check her blood sugar again. Michelle was talking clearly now and had some color to her cheeks thank goodness. The monitor read 113. Kelli stayed until Michelle was finished completely with close-up and they left together. She insisted Michelle stop and get another sugar drink and crackers with peanut butter all while on the phone with her husband.

Once home, Michelle's husband, Scott checked her over. How awesome is he!!! Confirming Michelle was good to go he fixed her up with a big steak. All was well. But... that's not the end. Kelli called to make sure Michelle was doing better and had made it home. She even brought some crackers to work the following week because per Kelli, "Every office needs something just in case." And "Let me know if you find a little jar of peanut butter. It's good to have too... just in case."



Help was just down the hall when Michelle Epperson, left, needed it. Public health nurse Kelli Wilson immediately acted to support her co-worker.

By Michelle Epperson

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has information on how to treat low blood sugar, including when to call 911, at the following website: <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/basics/low-blood-sugar-treatment.html>.

CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives. Protecting People™

Diabetes

CDC > Diabetes Home > Diabetes Basics > Type 1 Diabetes

Diabetes Basics

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes Risk Factors

Diabetes Symptoms

Prediabetes

Type 1 Diabetes

What Is Type 1 Diabetes?

Just Diagnosed

Types of Insulin

4 Ways To Take Insulin

Low Blood Sugar (Hypoglycemia)

How To Treat Low Blood Sugar

Diabetic Ketoacidosis

How To Treat Low Blood Sugar (Hypoglycemia)

[Español \(Spanish\)](#) | [Print](#)

Keeping your **blood sugar** levels on target as much as possible can help prevent or delay long-term, serious health problems. While this is important, closely managing your blood sugar levels also increases your chance for **low blood sugar** (hypoglycemia). Blood sugar below 70 mg/dL is considered low. If you think you have low blood sugar, check it. If you aren't able to check it, go ahead and treat it.

Untreated low blood sugar can be dangerous, so it's important to know what to do about it and to treat it immediately.

If you think you have low blood sugar, be sure to check it.

The 15-15 Rule

For low blood sugar between 55-69 mg/dL, raise it by following the 15-15 rule: have 15 grams of carbs and check your blood sugar after 15 minutes. If it's still below your target range, have another serving. Repeat these steps until it's in your target range. Once it's in range, eat a nutritious meal or snack to ensure it doesn't get too low again.

These items have about 15 grams of carbs:

The 15-15 Rule

STATE EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION WEEK 2023

Central Office employees took time out on May 10 to enjoy Employee Appreciation Day activities in the RSA Park that included music and games.

In an e-mail to employees statewide, State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris wrote, "This week is State Employee Appreciation Week and I just wanted you all to know how much I appreciate you! It is an honor to work with such a dedicated and selfless group of people. Thank you for all the wonderful things that you do to keep Alabamians safe and healthy!"



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.

Allen Adams

Center for Health Statistics
from Kristin Pruett
Birmingham, Ala.

Ashley (last name not given), RN

Morgan County
Health Department
from Haley McInnis
Decatur, Ala.

Alesia Brewer

Information Technology
from Judy Smith
Administrator
Northern Public Health
District
Decatur, Ala.

Casandra Clark

Center for Health Statistics
from Linda Davis
Jasper, Ala.
Christine Casteel
Ardmore, Ala.
Michael Burt
Germany

Jamey Durham April Mullins

Prevention, Promotion,
and Support
from Jean W. Brown, Chair
State Combined Campaign
Commissioner, Department
of Senior Services
Montgomery, Ala.

Minerva Flores-Luna

Home and Community
Services
from Sandra Blakely
Prevention, Promotion,
and Support
Montgomery, Ala.

Ambiir Gray

Office of Informatics and
Data Analysis
from Allison Hatchett
Division of WIC
Montgomery, Ala.

Alisha Jones

Center for Health Statistics
from Richard Hall
Texas

Jessica Jones

Information Technology
from Ryan Easterling
Arrol Sheehan
Prevention, Promotion,
and Support
Montgomery, Ala.

Shamoune Smith

Center for Health Statistics
from Tangela Morris
Lindsey Hopkins
Technical College
Miami, Fla.

Wes Stubblefield, MD, MPH

Medical Officer
Northern and
Northeastern Districts
from Emileigh Forrester,
Anchor, NEWS 19, North
Alabama's CW and WHNT
Huntsville, Ala.

Sharonda Webster

Center for Health Statistics
from Lewis Richardson
Virginia Beach, Va.

Tarnishia Williams

Center for Health Statistics
from Alice Riley
Emeryville, Calif.

SOUTHEASTERN PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT WELCOMES NEW TEAMMATES



Shown at the district's orientation class for new employees held April 12 are, seated from left, Aimee Offutt, RN, Home Health, Geneva County; Savanna Kirkland, LPN, Coffee County; Wanda (Kay) Risner, RN, Coffee County; Angela Craddock, Administrative Support Assistant II, Barbour County; standing Haley Martin, RN-Infection Prevention and Control, Butler County; Amber Newby, RN, Covington County; Kendal Payne, Nurse Practitioner, Covington County.



Welcomed at the June 14 orientation are, from left, Michelle (Eva) Bridges, Staff Nurse-TB, Houston County; Kaley Register, Staff Nurse, Houston County; Lakeisha Jones, Clinic Aide, Coffee County; and Paula Bolinger, Home Care Services Nurse Care Coordinator, Crenshaw/Butler counties.