

Alabama's health

A publication of the Alabama Department of Public Health

Vision Impairment Doesn't Faze Bea Zeigler

Administrative Support Assistant II Beatrice "Bea" Zeigler is an enthusiastic, productive employee of the Quality Assurance and Registration Division of the Center for Health Statistics. Her principal responsibility is to serve as the registration specialist who handles all of the marriage and divorce certificates for the state, a position which means she frequently converses with probate and circuit clerks from throughout the state.

Ms. Zeigler was born with colobomata, a rare eye disease that causes the pupils not to develop. She has also developed glaucoma and cataracts in both eyes. Her congenital visual impairment qualifies her as legally blind.

"I have holes in my pupils, which means there are large parts of my eyes that just do not see," Ms. Zeigler said. To enable her to see her work better, she uses a larger monitor and Zoom Text computer program which enlarges the typeface on her computer screen. Her telephone features a color-coded phone display that enables her to easily answer the phone. These accommodations were provided by Vocational Rehabilitation Services with the assistance of James Coley of Computer Systems Center.

From an early age, Ms. Zeigler adapted to her limited vision. Although the Lions Club provided her with special eyeglasses in the fourth grade, she admitted that she destroyed them out of



Accommodations allow Beatrice Zeigler to be a highly productive employee.

embarrassment. Amazingly, she did without glasses until she finished high school. As a graduation gift, her sister purchased her another pair of glasses. Her education continued and she received an accounting diploma and a data processing diploma.

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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 asheehan@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.

Emily Benton
Jennifer Friedman
Nick Moss
Kristie Welch
 Health Promotion
 and Chronic Disease
from Takenya Taylor
 Montgomery, Ala.

Victoria Broussard
Chris Hall
Debra Hodges, Ph.D.
Samille Jackson
Tracy Klein
Lamont Pack
Kim Wilder
 Health Promotion
 and Chronic Disease
from Col. Kris D. Beasley
 Montgomery, Ala.

Linda Butler
Liz McGraw
Melanie Webster
 Health Provider Standards
from Sherry Ginn
 Phenix City, Ala.

Laarni Cox
Betsy Jones
Barry Riddle
 Tobacco Prevention and Control
from Jack Hataway, M.D.
 Montgomery, Ala.

Chris Daughtry
Shawn Rogers
Guy Woodall
 Logistics
from Frances Holder
 Tuscumbia, Ala.

Rachel Durden
Candy Easterling
Sally K. McAuley
 Facilities Management
from Joan Hart
 Grand Bay, Ala.

John Ellison
Sandra Gallops
Jeff Ward
 Health Promotion
 and Chronic Disease
from Wendy Dixon-Flamand
Carol Mysinger
 Montgomery, Ala.

Environmental Services
Keith Jackson
 Chilton County Health Dept.
Pam New
 Chilton County Health Dept.
John Witt
 Chilton County Health Dept.
from Dianne Wright
 Montgomery, Ala.

Sal Gray
 Environmental Services
from Murline Hannah
 Millbrook, Ala.

Chris Hall
 Health Promotion
 and Chronic Disease
from Wendy Dixon-Flamand
 Montgomery, Ala.

Evelyn Jackson
 Center for Health Statistics
from Barbara Wallace
 Glencoe, Ala.

Ellen James
Vivian Rankin
Frederick Reeves
Carolyn Thomas
 Health Provider Standards
from Joan Hart
 Grand Bay, Ala.

Angela Purter
 Health Promotion
 and Chronic Disease
from Selena Dreadin
 Monroeville, Ala.

Sondra Reese
 Health Promotion
 and Chronic Disease
Brandi Robinson
 Center for Health Statistics
from Geraldine Daniels
 Minority Health

Geneva Thomas
 Center for Health Statistics
from Martha G. Brannon
 Mobile, Ala.

Jeff Ward and Staff
 Health Marketing
from Gwendolyn Lipscomb
 Montgomery, Ala.

Lynn Williams
 Emergency Preparedness
from Kathy Hall
 Wilsonville, Ala.

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

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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 Ahmann Graphic Designer



In Memorium - Jim Lynch

A few of his coworkers expressed the following sentiments after the unexpected death of Jim Lynch.

It is with sadness that the state lost a good friend on Sept. 19. Jim Lynch began working in Tuberculosis Control in 1972. At that time, the state had 918 TB cases in comparison to the 175 last year. In 2004, Jim joined Emergency Preparedness as the Disease Intervention Director in Public Health Area 3.

I was hired by Jim in 1994 as a TB Representative, so I met Jim during the middle of his career. At that time, TB was becoming more prevalent in the foreign born and HIV-positive populations. These new challenges in TB Control did not pose a problem in Jim's eyes.

With the arrival of computers to the health department, along came a new project for Jim. I can honestly say that Jim not only taught me most of what I know about TB, he also taught me about computers. Jim was the first person I knew that had an Ipod, and I didn't even know what an Ipod was.

Jim had a memory unlike anyone I've ever met. He could tell you the nickname of every TB patient in the past 36 years, where they lived, and who their cousin was. Dr.

(Albert) White made reference to this at Jim's memorial service, saying that he could call Jim at any time to ask the history on a patient from years ago, and almost always got a detailed account of that patient beyond what was in the chart.

Pam Barrett

Jim Lynch was a leader in Emergency Preparedness. He always had good ideas and he could be counted on to volunteer his ideas as well as his assistance. His contributions were an important part of the success of EP in the areas of planning and exercises.

Ronnie Moore

I could always count on Jim Lynch to be ahead of deadlines and present information in his own unique way – a better way most of the time! He would send me shortcuts or links to information he and I had discussed, or that he thought I would find interesting and pertinent. He must have been inquisitive about a diversity of subjects, because he would always share what he had discovered.

It was early in the summer of 2007 that Jim approached me about helping him with an exercise he wanted to host in Area 3. His idea was so "on target" for what we needed to accomplish, that we launched a statewide series of conferences. Jim never took credit

for having been the catalyst and the initiator behind the idea. I learned that Jim liked to conduct the research, draft presentations, tabletop exercises and the like – but, preferred that someone else be the focus. Jim was an individual who loved his country, enjoyed politics, and loved emergency preparedness. He always bragged on the Area 3 EP Team and the talent those individuals brought to the table. I miss the laughter and collaboration Jim and I shared.

Michele Williams

I had worked with Jim since 1978 and valued his composure during difficult times. I never heard him speak out of anger and he was always willing to help in any way possible.

Linda Robertson



Jim Lynch

In Memorium - Randall Lee Farris

Colleagues in the Bureau of Environmental Services remember Randy Farris, 61, for his helpfulness, excellent computer skills and for being a "walking encyclopedia" for environmentalists seeking help with a variety of questions. Mr. Farris died Oct. 14 after serving 30 years with the department, beginning with the Autauga County Health Department and concluding as Director of the Onsite Sewage Branch of the Community Environmental Protection Division.

In notifying the department, Pres Allinder, bureau director, said, "Randy will be sorely missed by all who knew and worked with him." Friend

Sherry Bradley commented that he was very thorough in viewing proposed rules and foreseeing potential problems from every angle and frequently worked 12-hour days when called upon.

Mr. Farris was a U.S. Navy veteran of the Vietnam War. During his years with the Health Department, Mr. Farris received the Alabama Onsite Waste Water Association Certificate of Appreciation, Alabama Onsite Waste Water Association Award for Outstanding Educational Service, and the Bill Rawlins Memorial Award.

Steps to a HealthierAL Engages Communities for Health

The Steps to a HealthierAL Coalition continues actively working to improve the health of Alabamians, including developing a state plan and burden document for asthma, promoting healthier restaurant meal choices, and working with children and youth in a rural church congregation to encourage better nutrition and improved physical activity. Program Coordinator Brandi Pouncey prepared this summary of recent activities.

State Team: The Steps to a Healthier Alabama program, along with other statewide partners, held the first Alabama Asthma Coalition meeting on July 31 at the Montgomery County Health Department. The meeting was held to pull together those with an interest and knowledge of asthma from various fields representing the entire state. The

members are helping create an environment for statewide policy and systems changes in multiple settings through the design of a state plan and burden document. From this first coalition meeting a draft state plan has been compiled and is under review by the coalition members. The Alabama Asthma Coalition hopes to have a completed state plan by January 2009.

Beginning in January 2009 the coalition will have regular meetings, and hopes to gain more membership. If you are interested in serving on this coalition or know someone who might be, please let us know! For any questions or if you would like to serve on the coalition you may contact Ruth Whitten at (334) 206-5030 or ruthwhitten@adph.state.al.us.

River Region Team: Steps to a HealthierAL, River Region, is partnering with local restaurants to make selecting healthier choices easier for patrons. Participating restaurants agree to provide healthy foods such as reduced-calorie choices and options that are higher in nutritional value. Criteria include two of the following: Smaller portion sizes; low carbohydrate items; cooked-to-order items, grilled instead of fried; heart healthy items; choice of fruit salad, baked potato, or rice instead of fries; and encouraging patrons to eat half of the meal and package the rest to take home and enjoy later.

For now, the list of participating restaurants in Montgomery is short, but it is an important start: India Palace (3007 McGehee Road), Jason's Deli (1520 East Blvd., Ste. 12);

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ASTHO Honors Scale Back Alabama Program

The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials has recognized Scale Back Alabama, a cooperative program of the Alabama Department of Public Health and the Alabama Hospital Association, with its Vision Award. Other partners for Scale Back Alabama include Barber's Dairies and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama.

This prestigious national award honors outstanding state health department programs and initiatives.

Scale Back Alabama is a 10-week weight-loss program designed to help people lose weight and to do so in a healthy manner by eating sensibly and engaging in physical activity. The weight loss competition is for adults and is offered at no cost to participants. Health departments and hospitals serve as weigh-in stations. For the past two years,

the campaign has begun with an official, statewide weigh-in in January and ended with a similar weigh-in during March.

The 2009 Scale Back Alabama contest is scheduled to begin the week of Jan. 10-16 and end March 10-16. The 2009 goals are to have all 67 counties participate and to lose 500,000 pounds.

Vision awards provide peer recognition for creative state health programs and increase awareness of successful initiatives encouraging replication in other states.

The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) is the national nonprofit organization representing the state and territorial public health agencies of the United States, the U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia. ASTHO's members, the chief health

officials of these jurisdictions, are dedicated to formulating and influencing sound public health policy, and to assuring excellence in state-based public health practice.



Shown with the Vision Award (left to right) are Kathy Vincent, staff assistant to the state health officer; Miriam Gaines, director, Nutrition and Physical Activity Division; Rosemary Blackmon, vice president, Public Relations, Alabama Hospital Association; and Donald Jones, Scale Back Alabama task force chairman and CEO of Marion Regional Medical Center, Hamilton.

Vision, continued from page 1....

After graduation from college she was able to get a job at Jackson Hospital, but was forced to leave when she had a retinal detachment in her left eye. After retina reattachment surgery, she was able to work again and then was employed by Maxwell Air Force Base with the Base Information Transfer Center. In this position, she processed and handled security documents for the military.

She was employed at Maxwell AFB for 14 years, but due to a federal budget shortfall she was laid off. After being without work for one year, a year she called "the longest year of my life," she consulted with her Vision Counselor, Mimi Glisson and Job Placement Specialist, Baron Owes, with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services. Together they developed a game plan to find employment. Owes encouraged her to apply with the State of Alabama. Bea has now worked in the Center for Health Statistics for 14 months thanks to the workplace accommodations arranged by Mr. Owes and Ms. Glisson. Not only does her employment mean she has an income, it brings her the satisfaction of fulfilling her potential.

"I was so glad to be gainfully employed again," Ms. Zeigler said. "I can work because I have the right equipment to do my job, and they encouraged me. I am very fortunate to work here."

Her supervisor in the division, LaTarsha Shine, said, "Bea's a very thorough and highly motivated employee who works well with others. Most people don't know that Bea has a disability. The accommodations allow her to do her job just like everyone else and she excels at what she does."

October is National Disability Awareness Month, and Ms. Zeigler promoted the month by appearing as a guest on both a television and radio program in Montgomery along with representatives from the Department of Rehabilitation Services. When asked, to whom does she contribute her success, she quickly responds, "First, my faith in God because it is He who gives me the strength to do all things; secondly, my parents who never allowed me to give in to my disability; my two sons who needed my attention; and finally, realizing that I have a disability, but the disability does not have me." She hopes that sharing inserts of her life will encourage others with disabilities to pursue employment opportunities.

Of the 46,000 Alabamians with a disability, the Vocational Rehabilitation program has assisted 7,500 in finding permanent employment. For more information visit <http://www.rehab.state.al.us/>

Breastfeeding Room Adds Convenience

Mobile County mothers with infants visiting the Mobile County Health Department's Women's Center, Newburn Clinic and TEEN Center have a new feature--a private breastfeeding room.

Located in the Women's Center, the room features a glider rocker and foot stool, changing table, and magazines. As part of ongoing efforts to encourage breastfeeding, WIC counselors tell mothers with infant children about the new room. WIC peer counselors also inform their clients about it.



Shown from left are TEEN Center WIC peer counselors Sabrina Kelley-Miles, Ronda Westerfield with her daughter Jailynn Brewer, and Lauren Cunningham. They attended the Sept. 12 ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the opening of the new breastfeeding room at the Mobile County Health Department's Women's Center.

Retirees

The following department employees have retired recently:

September

Patricia Fagan - Public Health Area VI

Eleanor Pearson - Birmingham Lab

Live Organ Donor Assistance Fund Established

A Live Organ Donor Assistance Fund has been established to provide financial assistance in the form of reimbursement of expenses incurred in association with the unselfish act of organ donation. The September issue of *Alabama's Health* described Randy Strickland's journey to Arizona to make an anonymous donation of a kidney.

Since Strickland personally experienced the financial hardships which often occur in conjunction with donating, he knows the value of giving assistance for travel, lodging and meals as a means of removing doubts and financial restrictions potential donors may have. By providing this assistance the donor will experience less of a disruption to his/her financial well-being.

Live donors are not seeking financial reward; they are not looking for glory or recognition. They donate because without their organs someone may die. Without their willingness to give someone's health will continue to decline. What a glorious opportunity it is to meet the extremely grateful recipient and be able to see the productive life he or she has the chance to lead. What a shame it would be if a person willing to donate would not because of the expense of traveling to the transplant center. It is a difficult decision to make choosing between real necessities of your family and the expense incurred by performing such an altruistic act. These decisions become even more difficult in today's economy. We, as a society, need to not only

embrace the concept of organ donation but lift up and support those who do choose to provide that second chance to live.

Imagine the impact someone would have on your life if you were dying and a stranger stepped up to save you. How would you feel knowing that without the compassion of another you have a very limited time to live? How do you explain to your children that you are helpless to save yourself and medical science can't supply you with the answer? Think of the impact you have on your kids. Think of how different your life will be and how more precious your time will be with them if just someone will give. That someone is the donor.

It takes a special person to literally give of themselves, before death, so that another may live. It is also an incredible act of selflessness to become a donor after death. Certain organs can only be harvested after the passing of an individual and it is truly a sense of love and compassion for the less fortunate that compels one to offer life after death. It is a testament to the life of the person who died which will be continually celebrated for the duration of the recipient's life. There is no greater legacy to be left.

What are your reservations about donating? Is it fear of the unknown? Is it the hectic schedule of your daily life? Is it concerns about medical issues? Are you worried about the financial implications? Many of these

questions can be resolved by contacting the appropriate agency relating to the organ you are considering donating. Speaking to or reading the stories of other donors may also help to alleviate some fears. Knowledge is power. By educating yourself you can make an informed decision. You can decide if you are willing to be a live donor or simply get that little red heart on your driver's license. You may decide that organ donation is not something you wish to do. Just make an informed decision. Whatever that decision is, please don't equate the value of a human life with the few dollars you would spend in the donation process. With the establishment of this fund we hope to support your decision by offering reimbursement for those expenditures. Please accept our sincere thanks for your consideration to donate.

This fund is administered through the Maria Emilia Strickland Foundation, an organization incorporated in Alabama with a non-profit designation. Financial contributions can be made to the foundation and earmarked for "Organ Fund." Once contributions reach the \$2,500 mark, Strickland will notify the UAB Transplant Center representative and various organizations dealing with organ donation about the availability of assistance. For more information about the goals and aspirations of the foundation please visit www.mariaemiliastricklandfoundation.org.

Event Promotes Breast Cancer Awareness



The Alabama Department of Public Health's Office of Women's Health partnered with the Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, the health department's Comprehensive Cancer Division and Dillard's Nygard brand clothing line to sponsor a breast cancer awareness event Oct. 11 at Dillard's Department Store at East Chase in Montgomery. Shown (left to right) are Kristi Mitchell, Teresa Fair and Julia Sosa, ADPH volunteers; Tabatha Powe, customer-winner; Jacquelyn Rahman, Dillard associate, event co-coordinator; Beth Birch, Dillard's Assistant store manager; Desiree Burnett, Dillard's Associate-Volunteer; Jessica Hardy, event co-coordinator; Natasha Holcomb, OWH intern, volunteer; Frances Purdue, Dillard's supervisor/volunteer; Nancy Bishop, OWH Advisory Committee member.

Expanded Radiological Emergency Response Team Receives Training

Sources of radioactive material are used and transported in Alabama on a daily basis. Fires, industrial accidents and weather-related incidents can occur that involve the use or transport of radioactive material. Radioactive material can also be used to terrorize the public by employing a radiological dispersion device, known as a dirty bomb, or a radiological weapon of mass destruction. During any emergency within the state involving radioactive material, members of the Expanded Radiological Emergency Response Team, known as ERERT, will fill a vital role in protecting the public. State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson authorized the formation of this team in 2007 to help protect the public in the event of a radiological emergency.

Kirksey Whatley, director of the Office of Radiation Control, told 24 team members at a training session in Montgomery Sept. 26, "I hope you never have to use this equipment, but if it's needed you have to be prepared. We will never knowingly put you in a situation where you can be exposed to hazardous levels of radiation."

Tonya Appleyard, director of the Emergency Planning Branch, explained that since the 16-member Office of Radiation Control staff is based in Montgomery, members of the ERERT fill a vital role in being capable of responding to radiological accidents and incidents within the public health areas in Alabama in a much more timely manner.

Two public health environmentalists and two nurses from each public health area serve as members of the ERERT. Environmentalists serve as the point of contact for the Office of Radiation Control and will maintain constant communication should an event occur. Radiation physicists will instruct the environmentalists on what actions they should take upon arriving at the scene and in surveying the area. Nurses will provide assistance to medical staff and potentially contaminated individuals who have been transported to a medical facility or who have remained at the scene. They also will assist with decontamination if needed.

The team has been assigned equipment and provided training in their duties. When called to respond, they will coordinate with the incident commander and communicate with



Jim McNees instructs attendees in their vital roles should a radiological accident or incident occur within their public health area.

the Office of Radiation Control. Responsibilities include providing care for the injured, establishing a restricted area boundary, monitoring for radiation contamination, and possibly conducting a field wipe test for contamination. ERERT members are expected to follow guidance from the Office of Radiation Control and other designated persons in order to protect themselves and others.

Other instructors were David Turberville, Jim McNees and Kevin Hicks.

For information on radiation visit <http://www.adph.org/radiation/>

Steps, continued from page 4....

Smoothies-N-Things Coffee Bistro (109 South Court St.), and Wishbone Café (7028 Atlanta Highway).

To find one of these healthier eateries and new ones when they join, look for the HealthierAL River Region window decals, posters encouraging nutrition and physical activity, and the logo stickers that indicate healthier choices on the menu.

Southeast Alabama Region Team: Steps to a HealthierAL, Southeast Alabama Region (SAR), provided Rock Elvy Missionary Baptist Church with a community mini-grant to introduce the members of the church to better nutrition and physical activity. The church introduced two programs to the members, BodyWorks and Body and Soul. Both programs were geared to the children and youth in the congregation. The church implemented other nutrition

and physical activity components to enhance these two programs. These components included:

- providing blood pressure and blood sugar checks every week for six weeks
- providing counseling and referrals by a registered nurse for all members
- teaching participants how to read food labels
- instructing participants on ways to prepare diabetic, cardiac, and low-sodium meals using the basic food groups
- providing exercise classes
- establishing a youth vegetable garden to teach healthy eating and incorporating more vegetables into the diet
- teaching healthy eating habits while dining out
- taking shopping trips to encourage members to read food labels and to purchase more fresh fruits and vegetables.

Reach Out and Read Program Promotes Literacy as a Part of Pediatric Primary Care

Pediatric primary care clinics in many Alabama communities are handing out books to children who attend well child clinics. With the numerous questions and concerns parents have, why would a pediatric healthcare provider add promotion of reading to the list of subjects to cover?

Research proves that children who live in print-rich environments and who are read to during the first years of life are much more likely to learn to read on schedule. According to Early Learning Left Out, 85 percent of a child's brain development occurs by age 3. The National Academy of Education estimates that 35 percent of American children enter kindergarten unprepared to learn, and most lack needed language skills.

Parents of children living in poverty may lack the money to buy books, may not have easy access to good children's books, and may not themselves have been read to as children. As a result, millions of children are growing up without books.

Reading difficulty contributes to school failure, which increases the risk of absenteeism, school dropout, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse and teenage pregnancy. These perpetuate the cycles of poverty and dependency.

Polly McClure, coordinator of the Alabama program strongly advocates Reach Out and Read -- the only medically based literacy model in Alabama. It is designed to take advantage of the existing structure of pediatric primary care, in which parents of young children have regular one-on-one, developmentally focused visits with pediatric primary care providers during the first years of their child's life.

With Reach Out and Read, pediatric primary care providers give children a new book to take home at every check-up from 6 months

to 5 years of age. Children participating in the program start school with a library of at least 10 books in their homes. Funds to purchase the books come from private and public sources.

Program literature states, "By integrating literacy into standard well-child pediatric visits, pediatric primary care providers participating in Reach Out and Read promote the acquisition of spoken and written language skills in young children, thereby increasing the likelihood of eventual school success."

According to Voices for Alabama's Children statistics, in Alabama, 6.5 percent of children have to repeat the first grade because they were not ready to start school.

Parents whose children are in Reach Out and Read are expected to:

- Enjoy looking at books with children and understand why reading aloud is important
- Know how to read aloud effectively, so that book time is a positive, pleasant, and affectionate episode in the children's day and to have a sense of age-appropriate strategies to build the child's language abilities and pre-reading skills
- Feel supported by the pediatric primary care provider and staff in their aspirations for their children's cognitive and academic success, and ready and able to play their own important roles in achieving that success.

In January 2006, after considerable research and Executive Board action, the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics entered an agreement with Reach Out and Read National Center to launch a statewide "Reach Out and Read-Alabama" coalition under the medical direction of Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP. Dr. Raulerson is a long-time Reach Out and Read proponent.

The number of Reach Out and Read sites has grown to 60. ROR-Alabama is committed to expanding the number of sites to increase the number of children who benefit from this valuable program. The statewide coalition director offers guidance and assistance to coalition practices regarding fundraising and administration of the program at the practice level, and oversees statewide fundraising initiatives designed to expand the program to all corners of the state.

Mission: Making literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric primary care, so that children grow up with books and a love of reading.

Vision: Alabama's children will be better prepared to learn when they start to school because pediatric health care providers incorporated pre-literacy counseling with families into their well-child visits and provided new books at each of those visits.

Calling All Gently Used Children's Books: Help Reach Out and Read-Alabama create literacy-rich environments in pediatric practices by donating your gently used children's books for pediatric reading corners in waiting rooms. They are also used to distribute to children at various other visits in pediatric primary care providers' offices. Conduct a used children's book drive in your community, church or business.

Guidelines for Donations: Used books are accepted if covers and pages are intact, clean and readable. There is a high demand for "board books" with brightly colored pictures for infants and toddlers. We cannot accept encyclopedias, textbooks or books with violent themes or sensitive issues like divorce, abuse or death. For more information regarding the ROR program in Alabama visit www.roralabama.org. Polly McClure,

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State Seeks Input to Improve Medicaid Maternity Care Program

How can the Alabama Medicaid Maternity Care Program be revamped to more effectively increase the number of healthy babies born in the state?

That is the issue to be addressed through a series of meetings scheduled in five Alabama cities from Dec. 8 through Jan. 29. The forums to solicit input from maternity care providers, patient advocates and the general public are a cooperative effort of the Alabama Department of Public Health's State Perinatal Advisory Council, the Alabama Chapter of the March of Dimes, and the Alabama Medicaid Agency.

The upcoming sessions in Tuscaloosa (Dec. 8), Birmingham (Jan. 13), Spanish Fort (Jan. 15), Montgomery (Jan. 22), and

Huntsville (Jan. 29) are free to the public and pre-registration is not required. All five sessions will begin at 5:30 p.m. A free Web conference will be available in conjunction with the Montgomery session for those unable to attend one of the sessions in person. Further details are available on the Medicaid Agency Web site at: http://www.medicaid.alabama.gov/programs/maternity_care/maternity_town_hall_meetings.aspx?tab=4.

"We welcome any opinions and ideas on how to improve Alabama Medicaid's Maternity Care program and the state's infant mortality rate. We have a serious problem with a significant increase in our infant mortality rate, however, I am confident that, like we have done before, together, we can solve this problem," said Medicaid Commissioner Carol Steckel.

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statewide coordinator, may be contacted via email, roralabama@charter.net or by phone at 205-223-0097.

What a book and a parent can do: "I had a 3-year old that came in today with her mom and dad. She had been crying, didn't want to see the doctor, mom was frustrated and fussing, but dad seemed calm and collected. I gave her a book to calm her fears and spoke to her mom and dad about the benefits of reading as positive time with her. I gave her the book, "I Love You Stinky Face" and after I examined her, she, with tears in her eyes, got away from me as quickly as she could, but then sat on her dad's lap and he began reading to her.

Because it is an amusing book, he started laughing at the story line and she stopped crying, began turning pages and looking at the book with her dad. A lot of times in this clinic, there is no dad, and if there is, many times, they are tired or frustrated, just from life's circumstances. I wish I had a camera to capture how this dad took the time to read to his little girl in the room and at the end of the visit, she was no longer crying and all was calm. That is what a book and a parent can do."

*Dr. Maria Meyers, Western Health Center,
Ensley Jefferson County Department of Health*

AREA VI Employees Walk for Breast Cancer



Three employees from Public Health Area VI participated in the 3Day Benefiting Susan G. Komen Walk in Atlanta, Ga., October 24,25,26,2008. This event is a National Philanthropic Trust Project for breast cancer awareness and research.

Lynn Jacobs RN, from Roanoke, Robin Merkel RN, from Sylacauga, and Bobbie Packer CRNP, from Ashland, trained for months, as well as each being successful in raising at least \$2,200 in order to qualify for the event.

Once in Atlanta they walked 60 miles, 20 miles per day, for the three-day marathon. A total of \$8,300,000 was raised that weekend for the purpose of finding a cure for breast cancer.

According to the three health care professionals, it was a remarkable experience in spite of walking in the cold rain on the first day. This was their first walk, but all are determined that it will not be their last. The three are making plans for the next walk and are recruiting other co-workers and friends to join them in this great endeavor.

RSA Tower Employees Enjoy Annual Costume Contest

Employees gathered at the RSA Tower Park Oct. 31 for the 2008 Annual Costume Contest, sponsored by the Office of Human Resources.

Judges awarded prizes as follows:

Best Group Costume

"The King and Queen of Pop - Michael Jackson and Madonna" Brent Hatcher and Jennifer Sumner

Best Group Act

"The Three Blind Mice and the Farmer's Wife" Debbie Moulton, Beth Nichols, Laurie Stout and Chris Haag

Best Individual Act and Costume

"Grandma Pritchett" Janis Pritchett



Medicaid, continued from page 1....

The sessions will be considered by a Medicaid Maternity Care Review Committee that will be convened next year to explore program options available to the state. Current Alabama Medicaid maternity care providers have agreed to continue the present maternity program through December 2009 to allow time to facilitate a redesign of the program.

The state's 2007 infant mortality rate increased to 10.0 deaths per 1,000 births, compared to 9.0 deaths per 1,000 births in 2006. Approximately 48 percent of all births in Alabama are funded by Medicaid.

City	Day	Date	Time	Location
Tuscaloosa	Monday	Dec. 8	5:30 p.m.	University of Alabama Child Development and Research Center 651 5th Ave. E
Birmingham	Tuesday	Jan. 13	5:30 p.m.	Margaret Spain Auditorium UAB Hospital Spain-Wallace Building 619 19th St. S.
Spanish Fort (Mobile area)	Thursday	Jan. 15	5:30 p.m.	Spanish Fort United Methodist Church 6690 Spanish Fort Blvd.
Montgomery*	Thursday	Jan. 22	5:30 p.m.	Alabama Medicaid Agency Central Office 501 Dexter Ave.
Huntsville	Thursday	Jan. 29	5:30 p.m.	Alabama Dept. of Rehabilitation Services 3000 Johnson Road, SW

*A free Web conference will be available Jan. 22 for participants unable to attend one of the sessions in person.

November is National Diabetes Month

November is National Diabetes Month, and Nov. 14 is World Diabetes Day. According to 2007 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data, more than 360,912 people in Alabama are aware they have diabetes. A little over one in 10 adults has been diagnosed with diabetes. Alabama is ranked fifth in prevalence of diabetes in the United States and its territories.

The rate of Type 2 diabetes is steadily increasing and cases are commonly reported among children. The links among diabetes, obesity and lack of physical activity are key targets for efforts to reduce the incidence of Type 2 diabetes and to prevent and control diabetes-related complications in those individuals already diagnosed with the disease.

There is a growing concern about diabetes and smoking. Smoking increases complications

suffered by persons with diabetes. The 2007 BRFSS, indicates that there are 64,022, (17.63 percent), diabetics who are current smokers.

According to the American Diabetes Association, "Smoking cuts the amount of oxygen reaching tissues. The decrease in oxygen can lead to a heart attack, stroke, miscarriage or stillbirth. Smoking increases your cholesterol levels and the levels of some other fats in your blood, raising your risk of a heart attack. Smoking damages and constricts the blood vessels. This damage can worsen foot ulcers and lead to blood vessel disease and leg and foot infections. Smokers with diabetes are more likely to get nerve damage and kidney disease. Smokers get colds and respiratory infections easier. Smoking increases your risk for limited joint mobility. Smoking can cause cancer of the

mouth, throat, lung and bladder. People with diabetes who smoke are three times as likely to die of cardiovascular disease as are other people with diabetes. Smoking increases your blood pressure. Smoking raises your blood sugar level, making it harder to control your diabetes and smoking can cause impotence."

For free information about diabetes, visit the National Diabetes Education Program's Web site at www.YourDiabetesInfo.org or call 1-800-693-NDEP (6337). The Alabama Diabetes Prevention and Control Program encourages community leaders and organizations to join the Alabama Diabetes Network, a council of local advocates actively involved in addressing diabetes in the state. Call (334) 206-2062 to learn how you can be involved.

Prostate Cancer Screenings Reach Rural Men

One in every six men will get prostate cancer some time in his life. The death rate from prostate cancer for African American men in Alabama is higher than in any other state, and late stage identification is a factor in many of these deaths.

To highlight the need for awareness and to announce prostate cancer screening events, State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson and Dr. Thomas Moody, president of Urology Centers of Alabama, held a news conference by satellite in September.

"More men need to take advantage of the screening methods that can find this cancer early, when treatment outcomes are more favorable," said State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson. "Men should talk to their doctors about screening beginning at age 50, age 40 for African Americans, or even earlier if there is a strong family history of the disease."

Dr. Moody said, "There are no noticeable symptoms of prostate cancer while it is still in its early stages so screening is very important."

Screenings were held on Saturdays at county health departments in Hale, Marengo, Perry and Wilcox counties, and 273 men were screened.

November 2008




Two hundred seventy-three men were screened in Hale, Marengo, Perry and Wilcox counties. Perry County staff and other volunteers are shown here.

In 2008 Urology Centers of Alabama and the Urology Health Foundation screened a total of 504 men. Of those men, 13 percent were found to have some form of abnormal result, either an elevated PSA or an abnormal digital rectal examination.



Calendar of Events



**December 11
Satellite Conference**

South Central
Public Health
Training Center,
12 noon-1:30 p.m.

For more
information
contact Video
Communications,
(334) 206-5618.



**January 7
Satellite Conference**

In-service for Nurses
(1 of 6), 8-9 a.m.

For more
information contact
Thresa Dix,
(334) 206-3377.



**January 7
Satellite Conference**

Hair Care for
Different Cultures
(Home Health Aides
and Attendants),
2-4 p.m.

For more
information contact
Shirley Offutt,
(334) 206-2481.



**January 8
Satellite Conference**

ADPH Statewide
Staff meeting,
3-4 p.m.


For more
information
contact Video
Communications,
(334) 206-5618.



**January 21
Satellite Conference**

Infection Control
Update for Nurses,
11 a.m.-12 noon


For more
information contact
Thresa Dix,
(334) 206-3377.



**January 22
Satellite Conference**

Psychological
First Aid,
12 noon-1:30 p.m.


For more
information
contact Video
Communications,
(334) 206-5618.



**January 27
Satellite Conference**

Asthma: New
Guidelines (1 of 2).

For more
information contact
Julie McDougal,
(205) 939-9583.



**February 3
Satellite Conference**

Asthma: New
Guidelines (2 of 2).


For more
information contact
Julie McDougal,
(205) 939-9583.



**February 5
Satellite Conference**

Public Health
Strategic Thinking,
12 noon-1:30 p.m.

For more
information
contact Video
Communications,
(334) 206-5618.



**February 11
Satellite Conference**

In-service for Nurses
(2 of 6), 8-9 a.m.
For more information
contact Thresa Dix,
(334) 206-3377.

Home Health Nurses,
2-4 p.m. For more
information contact
Shirley Offutt,
(334) 206-2481.