

ALABAMA'S HEALTH

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HURRICANE HELENE SHELTER SUPPORT TEAM HONORED AS STATE EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR

Alabama Department of Public Health Shelter Support Team members who responded to Hurricane Helene last October 13-26 were recognized as State Employees of the Year by the State Personnel Department at a presentation May 21 in Montgomery.

Bureau of Human Resources Director Lisa Jones and State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris nominated the group for the award. According to the State Personnel Department, the team's selection was a first in the award's history that a team rather than a single individual was selected to receive this prestigious recognition.

State Personnel Department Director Laury Morgan stated in a letter to employees, "As state employees, we have many reasons to be proud! Nothing embodies the dedication of state employees more than the qualities of the newly announced State Employees of the Year! The winners this year were absolute standouts, embodying state service boldly, and I'm so proud of each of them."

"These dedicated employees took time away from their homes and families to selflessly help others in a dire situation," State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris said at the presentation. "We want to recognize them for their hard work and willingness to serve."

Jamey Durham, director of the Bureau of Prevention, Promotion, and Support, noted, "When North Carolina needed help, these exemplary individuals instantly volunteered to work in mass care shelters in the aftermath of the devastating hurricane."

The relief response team of eight registered nurses and a safety officer worked long hours assisting survivors with a multitude of medical and emotional needs, connecting them to available resources, securing supplies, and driving and riding long distances to shelters in different locations.

Jacynthia Moses, RN, Clinic Nurse Supervisor with the Madison County Health Department, said, "It was an honor to serve others and represent Alabama."



Pictured, from left, State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris with team members Teressa Godshall, Michael Parr, Jason Esslinger, State Personnel Department Director Laury Morgan, Wendy Rose, Jacynthia Moses, Lisa D. Jones, Tina Norwood, Lindsey Laminack, and Jenny Long.

STAYING HEALTHY AROUND PET BEARDED DRAGONS AND LIZARDS HELPS PREVENT SALMONELLA, RESEARCH INVOLVING ADPH EMPLOYEES ADVISES

A report published in the August 21 issue of *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* links contact with a bearded dragon or lizard to the infection in 18 of 25 cases of *Salmonella* Cothan cases studied.

Children less than 5 years of age, especially infants, were disproportionately affected. Most of the children had bearded dragons in the home without direct animal contact. *Salmonella* infections can result in severe gastrointestinal symptoms, potentially leading to hospitalization.

The *MMWR* report is titled "Reoccurring *Salmonella* Cothan Outbreak Linked to Pet Bearded Dragons – United States, 2024." Lindsey Ferraro, MPH, Epidemiologist, Infectious Diseases and Outbreaks Division, Bureau of Communicable Disease, and State Public Health Veterinarian Dee W. Jones, DVM, were co-authors of the report. Amanda Ingram, MPH, and Rachel Tulibagenyi, MPH, Epidemiologist Senior, Infectious Diseases and Outbreaks Division, Bureau of Communicable Disease, were also acknowledged in the publication.

Recommendations made include the following:

- Prevent young children from indirect reptile contact
- Restrict reptiles from roaming freely
- Separate reptiles and supplies from food preparation areas
- Wash hands and change clothes after handling reptiles and before holding infants

The CDC also worked with pet industry representatives to inform them about biosecurity best practices for bearded dragon suppliers and retailers. The fact sheet linked here provides guidance to the public: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-pets/media/pdfs/publications/how-to-stay-healthy-around-pets-H.pdf>

MMWR is a publication of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. To read the report, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/74/wr/mm7431a1.htm>

SUICIDE AWARENESS, RESOURCES SHARED

"Know the Signs; Find the Words; Answer the Call! A Suicide Awareness Toolkit" was the subject of a presentation offered by the Alabama Public Health Training Network. Speakers shared information about the three critical warning signs of suicide, strategies to help someone who is having thoughts of suicide, and what can be done to prevent suicide, including resources. Presenters were Bill Kennedy, LICSW, State Social Work Director, at left, and Brent Hatcher, MBA/GM, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, Deputy Chief of Staff. This topic was especially pertinent during Men's Health Month because males make up half of the population but nearly 80 percent of suicides.



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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CELEBRATING PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY ICONS

Sharon Massingale, Ph.D., is President-Elect of the Association of Public Health Laboratories Board of Directors

For the fifth year, the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) promoted the month of September to recognize public health laboratory professionals. It's a celebration of their vital work in protecting communities through disease detection, environmental testing, newborn screening, and monitoring health threats. The Bureau of Clinical Laboratories (BCL) will join the festivity with activities planned each Friday. This year, the theme is "Celebrating Public Health Laboratory Icons," and we applaud laboratory scientists at the BCL, whether their role is a microbiologist, chemist, or laboratory technician. During this month of celebration, it is fitting to recognize a recent achievement of the laboratory director at the BCL.

During the APHL Annual Conference held in Portland, Oregon, on May 5-8, 2025, Sharon Massingale, Ph.D., HCLD/CC(ABB) was elected as President-elect of the Association's Board of Directors (BOD). It symbolizes an important milestone for service in her public health career. Dr. Massingale has served as a Public Health Institutional State Representative on the BOD since 2022 and witnessed APHL's ability to adapt and evolve, which motivates her to serve and help move the organization into the future. Serving on the Board has allowed her to participate in important public health and laboratory science decisions. Dr. Massingale counts it a privilege to represent this stellar organization that serves the public and protects its health by addressing testing concerns. During her career in public health, she has observed that APHL is the foundation for the public health laboratory system for networking, responding to emergencies, training staff, providing fellowships/interns for workforce development, advocating for policy, and securing funding.

Dr. Massingale's public health career began late at age 40, when she accepted an entry-level position after completing her doctoral program. She is the current director of the BCL, where she has served since 2009. She leads 130 laboratorians between two locations in clinical, surveillance, and environmental testing. She also provides technical oversight for 65 county health departments regarding laboratory testing. Before being appointed as Laboratory Director, she served six months as the Laboratory Assistant Director. Before her administrative role, Dr. Massingale's technical roles included Molecular Diagnostic Specialist, Laboratory Senior Microbiologist, and Microbiologist, where she implemented molecular testing procedures. Her initial responsibilities were establishing the biological LRN and PulseNet programs and managing the associated cooperative agreements. She also established grant-sponsored foodborne, vector-borne, and other emerging and re-emerging testing programs. She helped initiate the Annual Alabama Sentinel Laboratory Conference

in 2005, held yearly until the COVID-19 shutdown in 2020.

Dr. Massingale was afforded many training opportunities for bench-level testing and leadership sponsored by APHL. The leadership and direction provided by APHL made her transition from technical work on the bench to laboratory director seamless. Dr. Massingale served on the APHL Laboratory System and Standards and currently serves on the Workforce and Public Health Preparedness Response Committees. She served on a 3-member workgroup from which the APHL Director's Board Certification Exam Boot Camp evolved. She was selected as a 2009-2010 participant in the second cohort of the APHL Emerging Leaders Program. Dr. Massingale served on an APHL-sponsored Think Tank that provided the laboratory criteria for PHAB assessments. She served on another APHL-sponsored Think Tank that expanded the idea of laboratory reference testing centers and the development of regional laboratory consortia to reserve laboratory resources.

Dr. Massingale has used her leadership abilities to lead the BCL through many challenges and changes, technical and fiscal, as director. She used them to improve the BCL's visibility as a public health laboratory within our state. She used them to oversee building a \$36 million, 77,000 square feet, state-of-the-art laboratory facility. She demonstrated leadership through crises such as anthrax, swine flu (H1N1), SARS, MERS, Ebola, and COVID-19. In 2009, when public health laboratories nationwide scrambled to purchase viral transport media for H1N1 specimens to be shipped, she had staff find a protocol to make their own media. In September 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, she relocated staff to the new laboratory facility in another city without disrupting testing. Under her leadership, the laboratory received ISO 17025 accreditation for its dairy program in 2023.

Dr. Massingale received her B.S. in Zoology/Chemistry from Alabama A&M University, M.S. in Biology from Tuskegee University, and Ph.D. in Microbiology from Auburn University. Dr. Massingale is certified by the American Board of Bioanalysts as a High-Complexity Laboratory Director specializing in microbiology and holds a second certification as a Clinical Consultant. She is also the Southern Regional Representative for their Environmental Biology and Public Health Section. Dr. Massingale was appointed to the Alabama State University Biological Science Advisory Board in 2012, the University of Alabama at Birmingham Clinical Laboratory Science Advisory Board in 2016, and the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Advisory Committee for the 2016-2020 session.



Sharon Massingale, Ph.D.

PROJECT HORSESHOE FARM STRENGTHENS COMMUNITY HEALTH

The image of a farm suggests an area devoted to producing crops or raising livestock. Project Horseshoe Farm, however, is a community built on a shared mission of service, leadership development, and community health and well-being. Project Horseshoe Farm cultivates and feeds the vulnerable neighbors of three communities by lifting the lives of children, youths and adults, including those living with mental illness, the elderly, and other adults at risk. Project Horseshoe Farm communities are located in Greensboro and Marion, Alabama, and Pomona, California.

Since its founding in 2007, Project Horseshoe Farm has taken root, nurtured the communities, and grown. The nonprofit is dedicated to its mission of “working with and building on the strengths of local communities, improving the health and quality of life of our vulnerable neighbors, and preparing community health and citizen service leaders for tomorrow’s communities.” This mission aligns with the ADPH vision of Healthy People. Healthy Communities. Healthy Alabama.

At Project Horseshoe Farm, 1-year Community Health Service Leadership Fellowships are granted to highly accomplished recent college graduates from across the country who are gap-year students in social work, medical school, and dental school. Quarterly [internships](#) go to selected top undergraduate, master's, post-baccalaureate, and health professions students. There are also opportunities for volunteers on a short-term basis and for high school students.

Fellows and interns commit to building relationships as they work in the rural communities, carrying out these important missions:

- Volunteering in youth programs after school and in local schools to help small groups of students by providing academic support, hands-on enrichment, and other learning activities.
- Developing and leading programs at local community centers.
- Providing individual support and group activities at local supporting housing programs and nursing homes.

Each is paired with an individual in the community as a health partner who extends one-on-one community support to navigate the challenges of health care and social services. On any day, fellows and interns may be found tutoring children and youth, assisting with ACT preparation, driving a neighbor to a doctor's appointment, providing career mentoring, playing pickup sports with community youth, and assisting community organizations.

People with a passion for community service abound at Project Horseshoe Farm. Dr. John Dorsey is the founder and executive director. For his years of work with Project Horseshoe Farm, he was named the 2025 Alabama



Fellows and interns value the relationships they have with the community.

Schweitzer Humanitarian of the Year. This award recognizes his dedication to service, community, and mentorship. In Alabama, he is assisted by Sarah Hallmark and site directors LaShanda Richardson in Greensboro, Hale County, and Jennifer McMillan in Marion, Perry County. Both Hale and Perry counties have high poverty rates, and residents have limited economic opportunities and a lack of access to resources.

A Visit to Project Horseshoe Farm Proves Rewarding

During a July visit to the nonprofit's location in the town of Greensboro, bright, energetic, and caring fellows and interns warmly welcomed guests to an introductory tour and a July "Porch Friday" discussion gathering at lunchtime.

Rising second-year UAB Heersink School of Medicine students Christyn Byrd and Samantha Le in the Medical Student Summer Research Pathways program joined their sponsor and mentor, Dr. Amber Clark-Brown, to experience Project Horseshoe Ranch.

Dr. Clark-Brown is the Medical Director of the department's bureaus of Health Provider Standards and Home and Community Services, as well as the Medical Advisor to the Office of Community Affairs. She said, "I am amazed at what an impact Project Horseshoe Ranch has in transforming lives and embedding the heart of public health and public services in rural America. These teams are doing phenomenal work shaping the next generation of healthcare leaders."

The epicenter of the Greensboro site of Project Horseshoe Farm is the historic former Greensboro Hotel on Main Street, an 1830s brick building that was rescued from deterioration and donated as a community center and project headquarters in

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DR. OLUSUNMISOLA OYESIKU RECEIVES ADVANCED RADIATION EMERGENCY MEDICAL TRAINING

Hospitals and laboratories use radioactive materials for medical imaging and sterilizing instruments. Industries also use radiation sources to inspect welds and trace isotopes. Radioactive materials are also used in some mining operations and scientific and engineering research projects. Alabama has two nuclear power plants, and radioactive materials are transported on state highways.

While there are very strict rules, accidents with radioactive materials resulting in injuries do occur on rare occasions. The Radiation Emergency Assistance Center/Training Site (REAC/TS) at the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education helps prepare professionals involved in caring for patients with radiation injuries.

Medical Officer Dr. Olusunmisola Oyesiku was among 15 physicians, other healthcare providers, and emergency medical professionals who received higher-level training when they participated in a 3-day radiation course in August that emphasized the practical aspects of initial management of irradiated and/or contaminated patients through lectures and hands-on, practical exercises.

Dr. Oyesiku said her participation makes her primed to assist with the Center for Emergency Preparedness and the Office of Radiation Control in the event of nuclear radiation emergencies. She said, "It was truly an enlightening and insightful experience, and I am grateful for it."

The course focused on the fundamentals of radiobiology along with the medical care and management of patients involved with radiological and/or nuclear incidents. Topics covered include the following:

- Radiation physics
- Radiation detection/measurement/identification
- Early evaluation and treatment of acute radiation syndrome (ARS)
- Acute cutaneous injuries and internal contamination
- Contamination control
- Mitigating risks to patients, providers, and facilities

All of these principles were incorporated in a culminating hands-on exercise using live patients with mock injuries and transferable radioactive contamination.

Dr. Oyesiku remarked that the excellent training will help her recognize and manage symptoms at a higher level. She is amazed by the new technology and the quick emergency response time in zones throughout the United States. The training has also helped familiarize her with the multiple resources to help manage radiation incidents.



Olusunmisola Oyesiku, MD, MSc, DABFM, FAAFP, developed skills to help treat patients with injuries and transferable radioactive contamination.

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Karen Landers said, "I am very pleased to have another of our medical officers having received this training."

REAC/TS is one of the U.S. Department of Energy National Nuclear Security Administration Nuclear Emergency Response Team assets and has been responding to radiological incidents since 1976. REAC/TS maintains a 24/7 national and international response capability and provides continuing medical education and outreach exercises. REAC/TS also operates a unique laboratory that helps DOE close a critical gap in our nation's ability to respond to a radiological or nuclear incident. The REAC/TS Cytogenetic Biodosimetry Laboratory utilizes the "gold standard" dicentric chromosome assay, a proven technique that can be used to help calculate the absorbed radiation dose in exposed individuals.

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.

Krystal Bailey

Talladega County Health Department
from Jonika Penington, RN
Talladega & Randolph
County Home Health
from Georgette Blackmon
Center for Health Statistics
from Bernadette Jackson
Fayetteville, Ga.

Cassandra Clark

Center for Health Statistics
from Joe Dunn
LaMesa, Calif.

Nicole Cleveland

Center for Health Statistics
from Virginia McCloud
Cincinnati, Ohio
Willette Toole
McIntosh, Ala.
Stephanie Wright
Montgomery, Ala.

Saundra Gray

Center for Health Statistics
from Alma Avery
Manassas, Va.
Bernadette Jackson
Fayetteville, Ga.
Katherine Miller
Birmingham, Ala.

Luke Mayben

Bureau of Information Technology
from Tim Hatch
East Central Public Health District
Montgomery, Ala.

LaTia Myles

Bureau of Financial Services
from Sandra Blakely
Bureau of Prevention,
Promotion and Support

Nekeshia Perryman

Center for Health Statistics
from Carol Johnson
Birmingham, Ala.
Marjorie Ross
Address unlisted

Georgia Reynolds

Center for Health Statistics
from Ethel Moore
Address unlisted

Crystal Smith

Center for Health Statistics
from Orange Mooney
Arizona
Coreen Cook
Birmingham, Ala.
Judy Ann West
Address unlisted

Sharonda Webster

Center for Health Statistics
from Julie Yanuzzi
New Brockton, Ala.

LaShunda Williams

Center for Health Statistics
from Joe Dunn
LaMesa, Calif.

Project Horseshoe Farm, continued from page 4

2014. The ornamented embossed ceilings of the community center are made of pressed metal and blend in with a contemporary open kitchen and dining area and an upstairs common area. The facility even has a mirrored grand ballroom, which Greensboro residents may reserve for events.

The center's beautifully landscaped courtyard was designed by the Rural Studio® of the Auburn University School of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape Architecture. Several other spaces in adjacent 19th-century buildings have been remodeled, including one with gym equipment and indoor pickleball courts.

Community members are comfortable coming to this space, and it is apparent that the fellows and interns are open to and embrace the culture of West Alabama. Both of the Summer Research Pathways students are impressed with the "integrated community care" offered by Project Horseshoe Ranch. Ms. Le summarized by stating, "This is a great blueprint for the emerging community and a model for public health." Ms. Byrd commented, "This is a unique opportunity for aspiring physicians to integrate themselves in an underserved community to learn what holistic care really looks like."

Other Project Horseshoe Farm sites are located on Washington Street in Marion, Perry County, and in Pomona, California.

For more information about Project Horseshoe Farm, including applications for fellowships and internships, visit <https://www.projecthsf.org/contact-us>.



Culinary volunteers, from left, were Danita Rose, Shanika Andrews and Connickle Moore.

FUNDRAISING EVENT BENEFITS THE STATE COMBINED CAMPAIGN

A cheerful team from the Office of Employee Relations planned a new fundraiser to benefit the State Combined Campaign. The team donned aprons, gloves, and masks when preparing and serving hot dogs for employees at the Central Office in Montgomery. The September 5 fundraiser had a great turnout, surpassed its goal by collecting \$500, and made a strong impact in support of the campaign that benefits local and state charitable organizations.

MOBILE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT MENTORS VECTOR AGENCIES THROUGH CDC-SUPPORTED PROGRAM

On January 30, Vector Services at the Mobile County Health Department (MCHD) was awarded a grant through the Vector Control Collaborative: A Vector Control and Surveillance Mentorship Program, supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and administered by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO).

“This opportunity enabled MCHD’s Vector Control team to serve as a mentor to two developing vector control programs, offering critical guidance and training in mosquito surveillance and integrated vector management,” said Dr. Derrick Scott, who oversees MCHD’s Bureau of Environmental Health.

The mentorship period ran from February 3 through July 31. It paired MCHD with two agencies: Henry County in Indiana, represented by Doug Mathis and Emma Cole; and Wichita Falls in Texas, represented by Samantha Blair and Aspen Caristo. Throughout the program, participants engaged in Zoom meetings, reviewed action plans, and conducted a site visit to MCHD’s Vector Control facility.

From June 23 to 26, mentees from both counties traveled to Mobile for an immersive site visit. The visit began with a program orientation and meet-and-greet, followed by a comprehensive tour of MCHD’s Vector Control operations. Over the next few days, the mentees participated in hands-on field training exercises that covered key areas, including routine mosquito surveillance, vector control techniques, the sentinel chicken program, aerial pesticide spraying, and pesticide resistance management. These activities were designed to deepen their understanding of the components of an Integrated Mosquito Management (IMM) system – an approach that MCHD has refined over the past 40 years to effectively manage mosquito populations in Mobile County.

To enrich the site visit experience, the team traveled to New Orleans on June 25 for a specialized training session at the New Orleans Mosquito, Termite, and Rodent Control Board, led by Dr. Claudia Riegel. There, they were welcomed by Janet McAllister and a team of experienced entomologists. McAllister, who has more than 30 years of expertise in pesticide resistance with the CDC and local agencies, led a 4-hour workshop focused on advanced resistance management strategies.

The Vector Control Collaborative is a peer-to-peer mentorship initiative that connects experienced vector control programs with

developing agencies to build local capacity in surveillance and disease prevention. Its core goals include:

- Enhancing local agencies' ability to monitor and respond to vector-borne diseases
- Fostering a national network of resource-sharing vector control organizations
- Identifying local technical assistance and resource needs
- Advancing best practices in surveillance and vector control
- Strengthening collaboration between local, state, and federal partners

This program closely aligns with MCHD Vector Control's mission, which is to protect public health by reducing mosquito and rodent populations using data-driven, sustainable control strategies. Through this mentorship, MCHD not only shared decades of experience but also formed lasting professional relationships with peers from Henry County and Wichita Falls.

“The mentorship was a resounding success, leaving both mentee agencies better equipped to build effective vector control programs in their communities,” Dr. Scott said. “Moving forward, MCHD Vector Control remains committed to supporting these partners while continuing its mission to safeguard the residents of Mobile County through rigorous and innovative vector control efforts.”

By Mark Bryant



Pictured from left are Dr. Derrick Scott, MCHD Bureau Director, Environmental Health; Aspen Caristo, Environmental Public Health Coordinator, Wichita Falls, Texas; Patricia Poellnitz, MCHD Vector Environmental Health Manager; Erika Goodwin, MCHD Environmental Health Secretary; Doug Mathis, Environmental Public Health Manager, Henry County, Ind.; Emma Cole, Environmental Public Health Inspector, Henry County, Ind.; Paul J Folse, MCHD Vector Environmental Health Manager.

UAB MEDICAL STUDENTS RESEARCH PERINATAL CONCERNS

Congenital anomalies and perinatal depression are topics of interest and concern in Alabama. Rising second-year UAB Heersink School of Medicine participants in the Medical Student Summer Research Pathways Program conducted research in these areas and presented the results of their chosen projects to healthcare professionals at the conclusion of the program.

Clinical faculty and collaborating mentors for the summer program participants were Dr. Amber Clark-Brown, Medical Director of the Bureau of Health Provider Standards and Home and Community Services; and Dr. Ana L Oliveira, of the Office of Informatics and Data Analytics.

UAB medical student Samantha Le's research study was titled "Evaluation of Birth Defects Surveillance in Alabama." She noted that surveillance matters because birth defects affect 1 in every 33 babies born in the U.S. every year and these conditions were the leading cause of infant death in Alabama in 2023, 20.7 of the total infant deaths. Birth defect surveillance helps monitor trends and inform education, policy, programs, resource allocation and research. She evaluated a new birth defect surveillance program through data analysis and translation into actionable insights. After educational outreach, a post-survey showed provider understanding of reporting requirements had improved. Challenges include more linkage to vital statistics for a complete picture.

Medical student Christyn Byrd's project was titled "The Examination of Postpartum Depression (PPD) Screening and Education Rates in Alabama: A Pilot Project." PPD is experienced by 16.2 percent of new mothers in Alabama and 34.3 percent of counties in the state are defined as maternity care deserts. Statistics indicate the need is clear—the average cost to Alabama for every mother-child pair with mothers that have PPD is \$37,000. Children of mothers with PPD are at an increased risk of developmental delays (communication, motor, social), health problems, and behavioral issues as a



Shown from left are Dr. Scott Harris, Dr. Amber Clark-Brown, Christyn Byrd, Samantha Le and Dr. Louis Lambiase.

result of parenting impairment. Ms. Byrd's studies concluded that geographic location is a major factor for screening and education, and an intentional effort will be necessary to engage women in urban communities about PPD.

Viewing and commenting on the presentations on July 22 in Montgomery were Dr. Clark-Brown; Dr. Louis Lambiase, Regional Dean and Professor of Medicine at the Montgomery Regional Medical Campus of the UAB Heersink School of Medicine; Dr. Scott Harris, State Health Officer; Dr. Karen Landers, Chief Medical Officer; Amanda Martin, Bureau of Family Health Services Director; Dr. Sherri Davidson, Office of Informatics and Data Analytics Director; and other healthcare professionals.

This is the third year that ADPH has provided students in this program with an introduction to public health through a policy and research lens.

CONTINUUM 2025 CONFERENCE

Several Mobile County Health Department staff members made presentations at CONTINUUM 2025, a prestigious international HIV conference in June. Their presence underscores the agency's leadership and dedication to combating HIV in Alabama and the Deep South—regions disproportionately affected by the epidemic. A poster developed in collaboration with UAB and displayed there highlighted early findings from the COAST-AL project.



FREE NALOXONE KITS ARE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC AT TWO EAST CENTRAL DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

Alabama has been hit especially hard by the opioid epidemic, with overdose deaths straining families and communities across the state. Naloxone (also known as Narcan), is a life-saving medication, and can reverse an overdose from opioids, including heroin, fentanyl, and prescription opioid medications. Naloxone is a lifeline, giving people a second chance at life and a path toward recovery. Individual naloxone kits are now available to the public at no charge without an ID or prescription at health departments at both Montgomery and Elmore counties.

The naloxone kits are offered at an easy-to-use kiosk ensuring individuals, families, and community members can access this critical tool without barriers. Each naloxone kit includes: Two doses of naloxone nasal spray, instructions for use, and resource information for treatment and support. People at an increased risk for opioid overdose, their family members, and friends are advised to carry naloxone and keep it at home. This fast-acting medication has no negative side effects and causes no harm if a person is overdosing on drugs other than opioids.

Kevin Hicks, administrator of the Montgomery County Health Department, said, "By making naloxone more easily available to the public in the Montgomery community, family, friends



Jennifer Allen picks up a kit at the Montgomery County Health Department.

and bystanders can reduce the loss of life from opioid overdoses before emergency assistance arrives. We are pleased that we can offer it."

EAST CENTRAL DISTRICT HOLDS NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

The East Central Public Health District held its Third New Employee Orientation in June to welcome newly hired employees and introduce them to the department's mission and values. Seated from left are Patrice Hood, Bonnie Sheehan, Gabriella Loiero, Jaleel Russell, Sharon Finney, Jayla Tolbert. Standing are Melissa Greene, Keara Jones, Alexis Gatson, Jayla Lane, Taylor Keeble, Neville Ward.



ADPH CLINIC NURSES AND AIDES CELEBRATE 150 YEARS OF SERVICE AT ANNUAL EDUCATIONAL EVENT

On May 8, ADPH clinic nurses and aides engaged in the annual Nursing Instructional Day 2025. The event, which is held in conjunction with National Nurse's Week, offers an opportunity for clinic nursing staff to engage in public health-focused education and interactive learning. This year's event also recognized the 150th anniversary of Public Health in Alabama.

State Health Officer, Dr. Scott Harris kicked off the day with a welcome and his expression of thanks to the staff for their unwavering commitment to the provision of public health services to the citizens of Alabama. Dr. Harris also provided a timeline of public health innovations, challenges, and achievements over the past 150 years. He ended his address by encouraging the nursing staff to persevere in our changing health care environment.

The nurses received instruction from department experts Amber Clark-Brown, MD; Agnes Oberkor, MPH, DrPH, CPNP-PC, DTM, and Wes Stubblefield MD, MPH. Dr. Clark-Brown

provided instruction on how to communicate and provide services to individuals with disabilities. Dr. Oberkor provided the latest training related to syndromic sexually transmitted diseases management, while Dr. Stubblefield instructed the staff on effective techniques that can be employed to avoid immunization errors.

Clinic aides received instruction on how to navigate the State Personnel Department application process from Office of Human Resources Director Lisa Jones. In addition, the aides received naloxone training from State Pharmacy Director Nancy Bishop and training on how to identify possible human trafficking by State Alabama Human Trafficking Task Force Chair, Patricia McCoy.

The event concluded with a combined presentation on how to work within a multigenerational workforce presented by Human Resources staff, Ken Harrison, Crystal Taylor, and Taylor Welch and Deputy Chief of Staff, Brent Hatcher.

By Marilyn D. Knight, MSN, RN



Public health nurses and aides received instruction on a range of topics relevant to their profession.



East Central District



*Northeastern District
Continued on page 19*



Northern District



Southeastern District



Southwestern District



West Central District

MONTGOMERY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES PROVIDE A HELPING HAND

A Montgomery County resident whose daughter's life was cut short by domestic violence is currently taking care of her four grandchildren, ages 8, 10, 14 and 15. After being contacted by a concerned community representative, Public Health Social Worker Cynthia Foster began to seek assistance to help the family during this difficult time.

Ms. Foster immediately spoke with her fellow employees, Veterans Affairs Social Worker Olivia Acoff, and the Love Center Church. In addition to monetary gifts, this wonderful group of people provided items, including towels, bedding, kitchen and eating utensils, small appliances, children's clothing, cleaning materials, and personal care products.

The children's grandmother, who is now living in her daughter's home, expressed her heartfelt gratitude when she received the generous donations for the family.



Pictured from left, first row, Brittany Pritchett, Cynthia Foster, Vivian Humphries, Bennie Williams, Kennita Marshall; second row, Ylaunda Flowers, Shaneka Feagin, Vera Meadows, Shirley Whit, Quincy Strickland, Sheena Johnson. Not shown are Joy Taylor and Shirley Lewis.

PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE PROMOTES WELLNESS AT WORLD GAMES ANGLING COMPETITION



As a nurse with a passion for public health, I've come to understand that meaningful care often happens outside the walls of a clinic or hospital. This was evident during my time volunteering at the World Games Angling competition—a large, outdoor event that drew a diverse crowd from various regions and climates. In that moment, I saw firsthand how a public health nurse can make a difference through prevention, education, and immediate care.

With high temperatures and participants facing long hours in the sun, I identified a clear need for heat relief and injury prevention. I established a small first aid station and began offering cold towels for those showing early signs of heat exhaustion. I also provided ice packs and bandages for minor lacerations, sprains and strains sustained during the event. These simple interventions helped guests, prevent escalation, and ensure that they could safely continue participating.

Beyond the hands-on care, I took the opportunity to educate individuals on heat safety, hydration, and the signs of heat stroke—fostering awareness and encouraging self-care. This experience reinforced one of the most vital principles of public health nursing: meeting people where they are and promoting wellness in real time, in real environments.

In that outdoor setting, I wasn't just a responder—I was a preventative force, an advocate for health, and a visible example of what nursing in public health truly means. Whether in a rural community, a busy clinic, or a sporting event, public health nurses are essential in keeping populations safe, informed, and empowered.

As a nurse with a passion for public health, I've come to understand that meaningful care often happens outside the walls of a clinic or hospital. This was evident during my time volunteering at the World Games Angling competition—a large, outdoor event that drew a diverse crowd from various regions and climates. In that moment, I saw firsthand how a public health nurse can make a difference through prevention, education, and immediate care.

With high temperatures and participants facing long hours in the sun, I identified a clear need for heat relief and injury prevention. I established a small first aid station and began offering cold towels for those showing early signs of heat exhaustion. I also provided ice packs and bandages for minor lacerations, sprains and strains sustained during the event. These simple interventions helped guests, prevent escalation, and ensure that they could safely continue participating.

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In that outdoor setting, I wasn't just a responder—I was a preventative force, an advocate for health, and a visible example of what nursing in public health truly means. Whether in a rural community, a busy clinic, or a sporting event, public health nurses are essential in keeping populations safe, informed, and empowered.

*By Emily Webb, RN
Etowah County Health Department*

HALLS OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT HELP TELL THE PUBLIC HEALTH STORY

Employees of the Southwestern District launched the celebration of the Alabama Department of Public Health's 150th Anniversary as talented and creative teams decorated their doors (and even some walls) to celebrate the services provided for Alabama residents. Most of the colorful decorations incorporated the 150-year logos. Although it was a very difficult choice, the Washington County Health Department was the overall winner.

Assistant District Administrator Suzanne Terrell explained, "For the Southwestern District, we wanted to do something that staff could do as a team and have fun with. We had some very creative ideas. We had a lot of fun with these, and the public has really loved seeing them, too."

The **Baldwin** County Health Department doors were decorated with the following themes: "Protecting Your Health and Serving You," which featured photos and posed questions like "Would You Swim in This Water?" Another attractive door decoration reads: "To Immunity and Beyond," in the solar system. One door's message is "Alabama Clinical Staff keeping Alabama Residents Healthy for 150 Years and Counting," with drawings representing several programs and services. The WIC door highlights the program qualifications and its many benefits. A wall decoration had clever sayings such as "Don't Kale my Vibe" and "Going Bananas" to promote nutrition.

Choctaw County employees designed beautiful, colorful floral door decorations for the 150th Anniversary. "The Emergency Preparedness 10 Essential Items to Be Ready For Emergencies" are shown on its anniversary door.

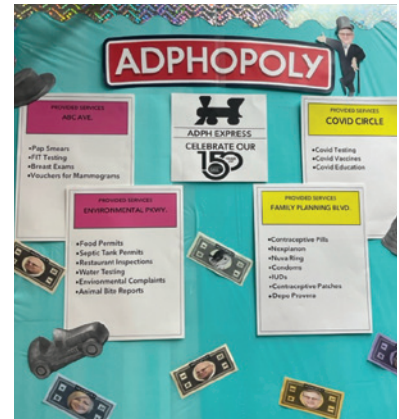
Clarke County took those entering its many doors along "The 150 Year Route Through ADPH" that included mentions of its early days, such as establishing a public health laboratory to ensure the quality of milk and drinking water, along with other key milestones. "Public Health Still Growing and

Serving Our Community" was the title of an appealing door decoration featuring birds, sunshine and clouds, squirrels, a ladybug, a butterfly, and flowers. One door emphasizes the importance of patients and clients by proclaiming, "When You Enter This Office... you are important, you are special, you are respected, you are the reason WE ARE HERE!" Cutouts representing the tools and work of ADPH nurses were shown. Another door featuring colorful fruits and vegetables. A donut theme homophone reminds patients, "DONUT FORGET IMPORTANT MEDICAID REMINDERS." The Environmental Office door has arrows pointing to services and stating "Oh, the Places We Will Go." Statements written within the clouds describe historical inspection and regulation accomplishments, such as the Standard Milk Ordinance, to ensure public health and provide safe food and milk for consumers.

In **Conecuh** County, drawings of fireworks mark the 150-year celebration. On another door, an artistic tree design features the multiple services provided. Another tree-themed door decoration features services and the slogan "150 Years and Growing." The Easter theme is carried out with cutouts of multiple-colored rabbits celebrating ADPH for "Taking Care of Our Peeps for 150 Years."

"Your Safe Place for 150 Years" assures the public in **Dallas** County that ADPH has provided protection throughout its existence. A highway theme invites the viewer to "Travel Along Through 150 Years of Preventing, Promoting, Protecting Alabama's Health." Another door decoration includes printed materials promoting services.

Fruits, vegetables, nuts, cheese, and fish are among the pictures of the edible items on the doorway of the **Escambia** County Health Department in Brewton which reads, "150 Years of Healthy Eating." On another door, a smiling Mrs. Potato Head nurse encourages the viewers to "Spring Into Good Health." The Atmore office has a Hispanic food theme spelling out the lighthearted pun "Let's Taco Bout WIC."



Washington County's winning door decorations

Continued on page 28

Halls, continued from page 25

A **Marengo** County Health Department door features photos of the faces of employees on the bees' bodies in a flower garden with a beehive suspended from a tree with the theme, "150 Years of Helping You BEE Healthy."

The **Monroe** County Health Department's front intake door has a formal look. The door has a navy-blue background, the 150-year ADPH logo surrounded by gold stars with services listed, blue stars, and tulle netting surrounding the door.

Washington County followed the game theme on its doors. Instead of the Monopoly game's property titles (Baltic Avenue to Boardwalk), **ADPHOPOLY** substitutes ADPH titles for services provided, such as COVID CIRCLE, ENVIRONMENTAL PKWY, FAMILY PLANNING BLVD, STD GARDENS, WIC PLACE, VITAL STATISTICS, and IMMUNIZATION AVENUE. The property title cards have bulleted lists of services provided at each address. It advises "DON'T TAKE A CHANCE WITH YOUR HEALTH." Denominations of ADPHOPOLY money feature the faces of Chief of Staff Michele Jones, Director of District Operations Ricky Elliott, and State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris on the \$500 bill.

The **Candyland** game features historical public health accomplishments, with Dr. Harris (King Harris) holding his thumb up at the castle and an Immunization nurse flying as she holds a hypodermic needle.

The Environmental facts of the game of **Life** shows a token of a pickup truck advancing with Jennifer Lang, local environmentalist, driving and Dr. Harris in the truck bed. Winning at the Game of Life means avoiding lead, getting pets vaccinated for rabies, testing well water, and preventing foodborne illnesses.

The **UNO** game cards state that public health responds to all kinds of emergencies, including cyber attacks, mass casualties, earthquakes, pandemics, utility outages, chemical, radiological, terrorism, hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods.

The Medicaid door displays the four aces: Medicare Savings Program, Family Planning Pregnancy Coverage, and Children Ages -19. It advises, "Don't Gamble with Your Health."

O*P*E*R*A*T*I*O*N H*O*M*E H*E*A*L*T*H has an inflated body with the patient wearing shorts with the 150-year logo and an illuminated and blinking red nose.

Fruits and vegetables are featured on a colorful WIC door, "You Are What You Eat from Your Head to Your Feet."

Wilcox County's sunny door display features three-dimensional flowers and the statement "Healthy Habits Help You Bloom." Another door with an Easter theme reads "Get Egg-cited about ADPH," along with educational materials.

RETIREEES

The following departmental employees have retired recently:

APRIL

Angelia Bates
Community Environmental
Protection

Charlotte Detlefsen
Southwestern Public
Health District

Elizabeth Fox
Family Health Services

Mattie Gibbs
Health Statistics

Rosanna Hale
Northern Public
Health District

Monica Kugler
Northern Public
Health District

Wayne Olesen
Logistics

Catherine Sanderson
Northern Public
Health District

Rebecca Stewart
Southwestern Public
Health District

MAY
David Gray
Community Environmental
Protection

Daphne Jordan
Southwestern Public
Health District

Leo Pose
Southwestern District TB

Cynthia Sanders
Northern Public
Health District

JUNE

Paula Bowling
Northeastern Public
Health District

Karen Bush
Immunization

Karen Foster
Southeastern Public
Health District

Robert Hudson
Information Technology

Denise Strickland
Immunization

Harrison Wallace
Communicable Disease

JULY

Troy Black
Health Care Facilities

Kathy Linzey
Northern Public
Health District

AUGUST

Amy Baker
East Central Public
Health District

Wendy Dixon-Flamand
Northern Public
Health District

Gloria Sims
Immunization



The Choctaw County Health Department Open House.

RAM VOLUNTEER FORCE SERVES MORE THAN 470 PATIENTS IN TWO DAYS

A RAM Volunteer Corps (Remote Area Medical) event in Montgomery on June 7-8 was a great success. RAM is a major nonprofit provider of mobile medical clinics. The organization's mission in part is to prevent pain and alleviate suffering by providing free, quality healthcare to those in need. They accomplish this by delivering free dental, vision, and medical services to underserved and uninsured individuals. All services and support are provided at no charge.

An additional part of their mission is to organize and distribute information and provide live educational and training programs for underprivileged youth and adults. Since its inception, RAM has served more than 967,000 people and has provided over \$210 million in free services to those in need. Bethany Seventh-day Adventist Church invited RAM to Montgomery to provide their services to the residents of Montgomery and surrounding communities for the event at the Multiplex at Cramton Bowl.

Ja'Leel Russell, volunteer coordinator for ADPH, reported that more than 550 volunteers contributed their time, over 470 patients were served, and the monetary value of care provided was more than \$270,000.

Volunteers began work two days ahead of the event and assisted from setup to take-down by laying tarp, setting up tents for the dentistry area, helping put together patient chairs for the dentistry area, installing HVAC systems for the tents, and helping set up for the vision and medical areas. ADPH program staff provided education and information. The STD Division provided education as well as rapid HIV/syphilis testing to 40 individuals. Other programs that attended were Alabama Newborn Screening, ALL Kids/Babies, and TB.

Volunteers included Adrienne Armstrong, Dr. Fred Batten, Carlavia Edwards, Glenda Escobar, Charleston Evans, Amelia Flowers, Christy Fountain, Michael Gibson, James Hardin, Yolanda Hill, Dr. Tommy Johnson, Aleacha Manuel, Sara Matthews, Veronica Mixon, Rachael Montgomery, Claire Payne, Franshauna Pritchett, Tabatha Ross, Ja'Leel Russell, Lionel Saulsberry, Janelle Sellers, Tamara Shufford, Janice Smiley, and Maya Smith.



Tent setup for dentistry area



STD Booth setup for testing. Left, Maya Smith and right, Yolanda Hill are shown.

LOOKING BACK... FROM THE PAGES OF ALABAMA'S HEALTH

APRIL-MAY 1967

TB

Tuberculosis was Alabama's number one health problem last year; 1,214 cases were reported in the state and 248 died as a result of the disease. (Burns were Alabama's number one home accident killer.)

Data Processing

A drastic reorganization will soon take place in the Division of Data Processing of the Alabama Department of Public Health. The old data processing equipment will be replaced by a new computer system which will enable the division to increase its service by approximately 300 percent. The system is so complex that present personnel will have to be re-training to operate it.

SUMMER 1969

Historical Immunization Case

The concept of immunization as a requirement for entering public schools originated more than 50 years ago. The Alabama Code of 1907 authorized municipalities "to adopt all necessary ordinances and enforce the same to prevent the introduction or spread of contagious, infectious, or pestilential diseases in the cities or towns, and to that end may provide for a system of compulsory vaccination and enforcement of the same." Smallpox vaccine—developed in 1904—was the only immunizing agent in use at the time.

The City of Demopolis used this state law as the basis for a municipal ordinance which provided that no child could enter Demopolis public schools unless he had been vaccinated. The Demopolis ordinance was challenged by W.F. Herbert, a member of the district school board and father of a child who had been denied admission to the public schools.

The case was heard in Marengo County Law and Equity Court and subsequently appealed to the Alabama Supreme Court. A decision by the Alabama Supreme Court in 1916 affirmed the right of municipalities to make immunization a requirement for entering public schools.

In upholding the lower court's finding that the ordinance was valid, the court noted, "It is difficult to conceive of a higher obligation upon municipal authorities, when sufficiently empowered, than to preserve and to conserve the health of pupils in their schools."

FALL 1969

Radiation Control

The largest nuclear power plant in the world is being constructed by the Tennessee Valley Authority in Limestone County. Scheduled to begin producing electricity late in 1971, the \$500 million plant at Browns Ferry will operate under the watchful eye of state health department physicists.

Cancer Prevention

In 1968 more than 300 women died of uterine cancer in Alabama. Yet, virtually all of them could have been cured if the malignancy had been detected early. Cases reported to the Alabama Central Cancer Registry indicate that the uterus is the most common site of cancer in women. It is exceeded only by breast cancer as a cause of death by cancer among women.

In 1963, when the cancer screening program was initiated, 961 patients received Pap smears over a six-month period. In 1958, the number of deaths from uterine cancer was 380, and in 1968 the number had dropped to 328.

Legislative Summary

Several legislative measures passed—and some bills failing to win approval—are of major significance to the Alabama Department of Public Health. Probably the issue of greatest consequence decided by the lawmakers was the funding of Medicaid. The state's share of the Medicaid program is only 21.46 percent of the total estimated cost. The federal government will pay 78.54 per cent or \$70 million of the first year's estimated cost.

The legislature turned down a bill which would have given the state health department authority to regulate ambulance services. A "grandfather" clause gives industries and municipalities up to seven years to comply with the air pollution law.



WINTER 1976

Conversion of the County Health Department Employees to the State Merit System

This bill brought all of the County Health Department employees that were under a separate merit system under the State Merit System with all benefits.

Continued on page 17

Vital Statistics Fees

This bill will increase the fees for certified copies of birth and death certificates from \$2.00 to \$3.00. If copies are issued by the local health department it stipulates that the \$3.00 charge be retained by the County Health Department.

Reporting Tuberculosis Cases

This bill requires that the director of each laboratory report all positives tests for Tuberculosis to the State Board of Health.

NOVEMBER 1979

Hurricane Frederic Actions

On Wednesday night, Sept. 12, Hurricane Frederic slammed into the Alabama coastal regions with winds exceeding 100 mph and waves reported a high as 20 feet. During a disaster, the Alabama Department of Public Health sends its Disaster Coordinator to the State Civil Defense Office's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in the basement of the Administrative Building.

The EOC workers sent generators to hospitals, sent aid to stranded people and kept in touch with Civil Defense and other agencies in the damaged areas. Others who called in with questions about diseases such as typhoid and tetanus could receive expert advice.

Funding limitations force WIC cutbacks

The Bureau of Nutrition has announced that the Alabama Supplemental Food Program for Women Infants, and Children will begin serving only eligible pregnant and breast-feeding women, infants and children up to age four. Approximately 6,000 postpartum women and children must be terminated from the program by the end of the fiscal year.

MAY 1981

Alabama Public Health Association Annual Meeting

Dr. William H. Foege, director of the Centers for Disease Control, called tobacco abuse "the smallpox of the eighties." Public health is stressed most when reciprocity is removed by distance or time, where benefits will not be recognized for two or three generations.

Gov. Fob James said, "Health care is vital, but health care for the sake of health care must be examined for what it is producing and really costing."

JUNE 1982

Legislature passes law requiring child restraints

Alabama is now one of 13 states which require child restraints to be used when transporting young children.

Task force assists new department

An environmental management task force has been working to ease the transition of several health department agencies to the new Department of Environmental Management. The new department was created by the Alabama Environmental Management Act, Act 82-612 of the Alabama Legislature.

OCTOBER 2025

MARCH 1984

Fire heavily damages Hayneville building

The Lowndes County Health Department is offering full services from its new location following a Jan. 2 blaze that caused extensive damage to the 23-year-old health department building.

APRIL 1984

New system in Vital Statistics allows credit card charging for records

A person who holds a Master Card or a Visa Card now can take advantage of the COM-DATA computer system which went on line Feb. 21.

MARCH 1987

The Department of Public Health is sponsoring seven town meetings on health issues in Alabama in March and April to serve as a public forum to identify the most pressing health problems in our state. The meetings will assist in developing strategies to address health problems which are facing every community in Alabama.

JUNE 1988

Toll-free Elder Care Number Established

In its continuing efforts on behalf of older citizens throughout Alabama, the Alabama Department of Public Health has established a toll-free telephone number to assist citizens obtain answers to questions concerning the care of the elderly.

Clinic Activities Assessed

Every county health department is being visited to observe and assess on-site clinical activities. A six-member state-level assessment team is making an unannounced, day-long visit to each health department clinic site between May 2 and June 30.

MARCH 1990

AZT Appropriation

Legislation recently enacted by Congress and signed by President Bush included an appropriation for HIV/ AIDS drug reimbursement funds for the states.

Passenger Safety

Alabama is enjoying the highest rate of seat belt and child restraint usage ever recorded. According to a recent survey by the Office of Health Promotion and Information, Injury Prevention Branch, 56.9 percent of Alabama children and 40.8 percent of adults were found to be buckled up.

SEPTEMBER 1990

Audio and video production services to expand

A new organizational unit, the Educational Support and Development Branch, has been created to expand the audio, visual and video production services for health department public

Continued on page 18

Looking Back, continued from page 17

information and educational media programs. The necessary equipment will be purchased during the next fiscal year.

MAY 1992

Regrettably, employee layoffs are impending

From State Health Officer Dr. Earl Fox.

It is with a great deal of anguish that I spoke with Central Office employees on April 6 to announce the impending permanent layoff of 150 workers. This major reorganization and down scaling of our Central Office is necessary if we are to meet our obligations.

FEBRUARY 1993

Public Health Nursing Centennial

The Alabama Department of Public Health will join the other 49 states and the four territories in celebrating the centennial of public health nursing in the United States during the year 1993. Professional public health nursing in the U.S. started in 1893 when Lillian Wald began practicing nursing at 265 Henry St. in New York City.

JANUARY 1994

Central Office employees offered worksite wellness program

Improving the quality of life and health of all state employees is the goal of a new worksite wellness program funded by the State Employees' Insurance Board. This voluntary employee program began for Normandale complex employees Dec. 1.

MARCH 1995

Department becomes a leader in distance learning capabilities

Distance learning in the Alabama Department of Public Health reached new heights with the arrival of the department's mobile uplink satellite conference truck. The first satellite conference using the mobile unit, "Personal Safety in Home," was broadcast April 5.

FEBRUARY 1997

Department introduces World Wide Web Site

The Alabama Department of Public Health now has its own World Wide Web Site. The site may be found on the Internet at the Universal Resource Locator Address: <http://www.alapubhealth.org>.

FEBRUARY 1998

Home health changes force painful decisions

Approximately 10,000 homebound Alabamians are losing home health services as a result of changes about by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. The Alabama Department of Public Health sent layoff letters to more than 800 employees at county health departments throughout the state. This has been the largest and most rapid layoff in state history. It is anticipated the actual number of persons laid off is likely to be slightly fewer due to individuals transferring to other

state agencies, voluntary retirements from state service, and changes in caseloads.

JUNE 2000

Transition to PHALCON system completed; enhancement ahead

Now that the PHALCON system is fully operational, the Computer Systems Center isn't content to rest with this sizeable accomplishment. Staff members are working diligently to gather and fine tune the system requirements to meet users' needs for different applications. The approach of the year 2000 meant a replacement had to be found for the character-based application, ALACLAS. This would affect the dated system's many loyal users statewide. ALACLAS, the Alabama Clinic Level Automation System, was nearly 10 years old, had limited member, and was not Y2K compliant.

OCTOBER 2001

State Health Officer Message after 9-11

From State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson

None of us can escape the effects of the national tragedies of Sept. 11. Even though President Bush has encouraged all Americans to "work hard like you always do," it is difficult to return to business as usual. Many health departments are receiving calls from the public about the need for anthrax or smallpox vaccination, our Radiological Health team is staying alert as nuclear power plants are at higher security, and public health employees are playing an integral role in preparing for possible bioterrorism.

Legislation Aids Women with Breast and Cervical Cancer

Effective Oct. 1 the Alabama Medicaid Agency will pay to treat uninsured women up to age 65 who are diagnosed with either disease through the Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program.



Continued on page 19

SEPTEMBER 2006

Office of Radiation Control Hosts Full-Scale National Exercise

Responding to an emergency in a coordinated manner is vital to protect the public's health and safety. The National Nuclear Security Administration holds an exercise every two years somewhere in the nation to test the activation of various emergency operations centers at the county and state levels and to assess how federal field monitoring teams work with local and state teams.

The five-day exercise involved more than 350 participants, many of whom came from distant locations such as Nevada and Washington, D.C.

APRIL 2007

EVERS Begins

As of Dec. 22, 2006, all Alabama birth certificates and fetal death reports are filed electronically over the Internet, eliminating the need to submit paper to the Center for Health Statistics (CHS). All Alabama birthing hospitals now use EVERS (Electronic Vital Events Registration System) to file birth certificates and fetal death reports. EVERS was developed in-house and replaces the DOS-based system birthing hospitals had been using since 1994.

JUNE 2007

1918 Influenza Pandemic Survivors Share Their Stories

The 1918 influenza pandemic was one of the earliest, perhaps the most traumatic experience, in the life of Annie Laurie Williams, age 91, of Selma. That's because her father, a jeweler, contracted the disease and became very ill. Even though she was a very young child, her father's serious illness remains an indelible memory.

The pandemic meant some of the businesses in town had to be closed because their employees could not come to work. But Mrs. Williams pointed out that the closures didn't have legal

implications of a quarantine, rather, people simply did not want to come out and risk possible exposure to the deadly influenza virus.

OCTOBER 2010

Gulf Oil Spill

The explosion April 20 on the Deepwater Horizon Oil Rig, which led to the massive oil spill into the Gulf of Mexico has presented new and challenging concerns for public health. Public Health was among the many response agencies represented at the Unified Command Center.

Infant Mortality

The Alabama Department of Public Health announced that the infant mortality rate of 8.2 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2009 was the lowest ever recorded in Alabama. This represented 513 infant deaths, also the fewest ever, and 99 fewer than in 2008 when the rate was 9.5.

MARCH 2014

Keep Quality Improvement (QI) in the Forefront of Public Health

As the department moves toward accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, quality improvement (QI) becomes increasingly important. QI is a deliberate and defined process that utilizes specific problem-solving tools. When applied in public health, it helps us achieve measurable improvements in health department services or processes.

Scale Back Alabama

Gina McDonald, a Birmingham lawyer and winner in the 2013 Biggest Loser contest, helped kick off the eighth year of Scale Back Alabama January 16.

JUNE 2016

Department Works to Lessen the Impact of Zika in Alabama

The Zika virus is a growing threat in Alabama as our weather warms and state residents travel to Zika-affected areas for business, tourism and mission work. There is no vaccine or



Continued on page 20

specific treatment, and only about one in five people infected experience symptoms. Most concerning is the potential effect that the Zika virus has on the unborn baby because it is the cause of severe birth defects and other poor birth outcomes.

APRIL 2019

First eWIC Cards

An effort that began in 2009 with a pilot project has resulted in the successful first uses of eWIC in the East Central District. Through this new system, benefits for WIC-approved foods are automatically entered onto a card that is similar to a debit card. This card replaces the current paper-based food instruments and cash-value vouchers, which are redeemed at WIC-authorized stores statewide for WIC transactions.

Combatting TB in the Marshall Islands

For Tuberculosis Control Medical Consultant Dr. Karen Landers, her volunteer deployment to the Marshall Islands last August was one of the most meaningful experiences of her career. She devoted three weeks, working long hours daily in the TB+Leprosy Free Majuro Program that promoted screening and education about TB through government channels.

DECEMBER 2020

Alabama at a Crossroads: COVID-19 Vaccine Provides Hope

State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris noted in a holiday message to all employees that the COVID-19 response has presented many challenges and opportunities over the past 9 months. Selfless professionals have worked long, difficult hours in taking the "all hands on deck" approach to the ever-changing situation of the pandemic. He thanked the dedicated employees of the Alabama Department of Public Health for their continued service to fellow Alabamians.

Move to New State Laboratory, Administrative and Training Center in Prattville Accomplished Despite Pandemic

Improved efficiency, productivity and flexibility for the future are provided in newly constructed Alabama Department of Public Health facilities. Planning for a \$30 million laboratory building project began in 2013 when a feasibility study was conducted. The 1970s-era former state laboratory on the campus of Auburn University at Montgomery had more than \$1 million in deferred maintenance needs.

NOVEMBER 2021

Reduced transmission of COVID-19 is Hopeful

Greater Vaccine Confidence Encouraged

As of October 29, COVID-19 deaths in Alabama totaled 15,532. Deaths from COVID-19 in 2021 to date (8,345) have exceeded deaths in 2020 (7,187). One in 330 Alabamians has died due to COVID-19, and for the first time since records have been kept, there were more total deaths than births in the state in the year 2020.



NOVEMBER 2022

Children's Health Insurance Program Day in Alabama Proclaimed and Celebrated

The Children's Health Insurance Program has provided better access to healthcare for children and teenagers and greater financial protection for Alabama families for the past 25 years, and the program marked this milestone with a festive anniversary celebration, which included a news conference and a reception in Montgomery.

Gov. Kay Ivey proclaimed October 14 as Children's Health Insurance Program Day in Alabama. Her recorded message, played at the news conference, applauded the universally popular program that has had a great impact on children's healthcare in the state. "For the past 25 years, the Children's Health Insurance Program, known as ALL Kids in Alabama, has opened new doors to quality health care for more than 1.6 million children in our state by offering an excellent comprehensive health coverage plan," said Governor Ivey.

APRIL 2024

A Centennial of Safe Milk

Milk --- these days, it does a body good. But back in the early 1900s, not so much. Back then, milkborne outbreaks were responsible for 25 percent of all disease outbreaks linked to infected food and contaminated water. Currently, that number is less than 1 percent.

This huge improvement in the safety of milk and fluid milk products can be traced back to the Standard Milk Ordinance of 1924. Developed by the U.S. Public Health Service, the Standard Milk Ordinance called for all cities, counties, and states to follow the same set of regulations regarding milk safety. Alabama was the first state to adopt the ordinance, and the rest of the country quickly followed.

CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF PUBLIC HEALTH

From the first issue of Alabama's Health

The first issue of this publication was introduced by State Health Officer Dr. Ira L. Myers in the spring of 1967. This is a copy of the forward statement printed:

As a progressive state we can no longer be content with just keep abreast of health advances; we must indeed, stay ahead of the torrent of new ideas, developments and scientific data that is increasingly bombarding our time-worn theories.

We must innovate the new techniques in order that Alabama can reach and maintain the state of health which she so richly deserves.

*Ira L. Myers, M.D., M.P.H.
State Health Officer*

In this initial issue, Maggie Ellen King described her public health career spanning from 1935 to 1967 in Russell County. As the editor wrote, her story is an account of some of the highlights of her career as a secretary, told in her own words as she lived it and as she felt it--

FROM RAGS TO RICHES

It would be difficult for one to put into a few short paragraphs all of the happenings of thirty years of service in public health--some of which were sad, some bad, but mostly good (though sometimes hard).

It took some good salesmanship 30 years ago to "sell" public health to professionals as well as lay people. County appropriating bodies were reluctant to budget any "hard-to-get" monies to public health, for they really did not know what public health was. It was difficult to sell public health to lay people and try to make them understand why they should take "shots" to prevent diseases. They considered the prevention worse than the disease. Health education was not on an organized or programmed basis in those days, but believe me, door-to-door and person-to-person education was done with every contact the health department made

Only by back-breaking work in county after county were public health departments organized. They were usually located in the attic or the basement of some dilapidated building, or maybe in an old "about to fall down" unlivable house which, in some instances, was heated—it would be more accurate to say the chill was taken off—by a small open fireplace.

Russell County was no exception to the rule. It took a typhoid fever outbreak with several deaths to convince the people who held the purse strings that something had to be done about protecting the health of the people in the county. After much "cussing and discussing" and raking of the bottom of the barrel, we were allocated enough money to rent a small office space above a café and grocery store. The Russell County

Health Department hung out its sign in November 1934. It was placed at the foot of a flight of long stairs leading to the second floor of the dilapidated building. Even a young athlete would reach the top, panting for breath. The lame, the ill, the aged and sometimes the middle aged had to be literally carried up the stairs in a chair. But---we had a health department and of this we were very proud.

We were even proud of the old second-hand broken down chairs and tables which were given to us by some philanthropic souls who "had rather they would be put to some good use than thrown in the trash pile." And put to a good use they were. They were scrubbed and cleaned, mended, legs sawed off to a usable height for a desk with chair, and painted either a battleship gray or a muddy brown.

Pasteboard and cigar boxes from the grocery store were used for files.

Besides the nurses' desk, the clinic room was equipped with a table and a hot plate and a dime store, doll-size boiler for sterilizing the half dozen syringes and a couple of dozen needles.

We could manage fairly well with this inadequate equipment in the office, but trying to hold clinics in the rural communities was something else. Frequently no electricity was available and often times no water except for a well or a spring some distance from there, a card table had been set up to handle paperwork. In summer the table was located under a shade tree and in winter inside a little country store next to the always present pot-bellied stove.

Then came the day we moved into the first completed wing of the new court house being built in Russell County. We had real metal desks with desk chairs, metal files, a sterilizer and were on the ground floor!! And pretty soon a second nurse was added.

Soon came the push for blood tests for syphilis. Our health officer wrote quite an impressive article for the newspaper about the horrible effects of untreated syphilis and gonorrhea,



Dr. Ira L. Myers



Maggie Ellen King

Continued on page 22

but because the article contained the words syphilis and gonorrhea, the paper refused to print it. The article had to be written so as to circumvent these “crude” words. What a change since then—we now speak of venereal diseases as freely as we do ice cream.

Legislation was passed making it compulsory for everybody between the ages of fourteen and fifteen to have a blood test and, if found to be infected with syphilis, to take treatment. This required from one to two years of two “shots” a week—one of the neoarsphenamine and one of bismuth. Of course, this required a mass or record keeping because the health department had free treatment clinics every day of the week and two nights a week from six o’clock until... In attendance at these were the clinician, a nurse, the secretary and often times the health officer. The “hideous venereal monster” was now out in the open and we could wage a war on it! The word syphilis and gonorrhea now appear in box car letters on posters mounted on light poles all over town.

We were also waging a fight on malaria. Huge clinics were held where atabrine was administered to patients as a preventive measure. A war on the malaria-causing mosquito (anopheles) was also fought.

Tuberculosis is still a gigantic problem in Alabama, but in those days it was a disaster and most always fatal. There was no treatment except bed rest and “proper food.” Patients were isolated almost as if they were lepers. When a Burr cottage could be obtained, it was placed in the patient’s yard (if he could be persuaded to stay in it). A hospital bed, a chair and sometimes a table completed the furnishing. Screen wire was placed on the outside about two and a half feet down from the roof. This was to allow plenty of fresh air which was also considered necessary in the treatment. Only the one taking care of the patient was allowed in the cottage. No wonder there were so many deaths, especially since the disease was rarely discovered until the patient was nearly dead.

Then came mass TB testing, followed by mass chest x-raying. Russell County was included in a tuberculosis study which the U.S. Public Health Service was conducting in Muscogee County, Georgia, just across the Chattahoochee River. (It seemed as if Russell County was included in everything that anybody did, and I am glad. It was a real education.)

Such a thing as planned parenthood was unmentionable and a cardinal sin to boot in those early days. When the news hit the paper that a “Maternal Welfare Committee” (an affiliate of the Alabama Maternal Welfare Association had been organized in Russell County, it created such a furor that the mayor of Phenix City Issued me a special invitation to appear before the City Commission meeting at ten o’clock on that same day. (Why me, a lowly secretary I don’t know, except that the health officer was in the hospital quite ill and I was the home town girl whom everybody knew).

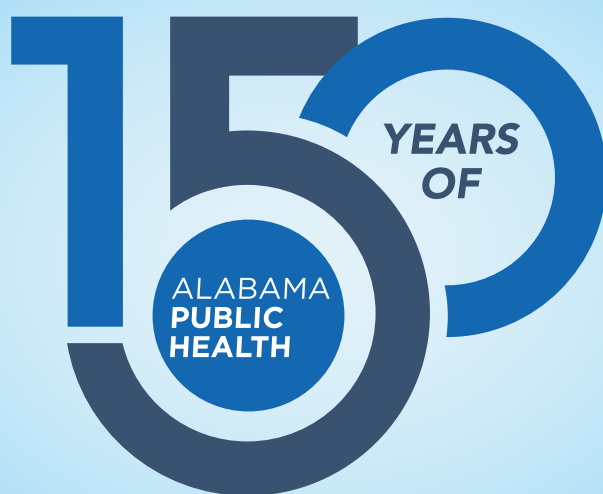
In spite of all the publicity and protest, we went quietly along with our “Maternal Welfare” work but made sure it did not get into the news again. This has since become the “Spacing Program” and is routine in the health department as part of the maternity clinics. We have come far!

There are no longer epidemics of diphtheria, typhoid fever, malaria, smallpox and polio. We seldom hear of tetanus and very little whooping cough. There are fewer maternal deaths and the scores of midwives have been reduced to practically none in comparison to the more than a hundred we once had. (This is only in Russell County.)

We have turned to problems of chronic illnesses, a more concerted effort is directed toward the detection of cancer, diabetes, heart diseases and mental retardation in newborn babies.

More is being done in dental health and maternity care. More emphasis is being placed on solving the problems of air pollution, water pollution, radiation, and many other new programs.

I shall always be proud to say I had a very small part in thirty years of progress with public health in Alabama. I owe public health a debt of gratitude for I received much more than I gave.



EMERGING LEADERS SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN PRESTIGIOUS REGIONAL TRAINING

The Region IV Public Health Training Center has announced that three Alabama Department of Public Health employees have been accepted for the 2025 - 2026 Region IV Public Health and Primary Care (R-IV PHPC) Leadership Institute. Karl Bryant, Director of the Office of Primary Care and Rural Health; Lindsey Ferraro, Epidemiologist, Infectious Diseases and Outbreaks Division, Bureau of Communicable Disease; and Dr. Olusunmisola Oyesiku, Medical Officer, have been chosen.

The PHPC Leadership Institute is offered by the R-IV PHPC headquartered at Emory University in partnership with the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development at the University of Georgia.

The PHPC LI is an 8-month experience providing 40 contact hours of interaction. The Leadership Institute consists of the following:

- A virtual orientation session
- An all-new virtual multi-day opening retreat
- Six virtual sessions that last 2 hours each
- Two hours of intersession work between each session

The virtual sessions use Zoom videoconferencing technology. Topics which will be covered include leadership principles and practices, cultural competence, conflict management, collaborative leadership, and leading change. Leaders work in one of the following states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina or Tennessee.

"This was a highly competitive process, with 110 applications for just 36 spots," Elizabeth Kidwell, training specialist and field placement manager with the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University, wrote in notifying applicants that they had been selected.

Alumnus Ryan Easterling, director of the Health Media and Communications Division, said, "It is a great program, and I know you will take away a lot from it. I took part in the first class in 2019, and still keep in touch with the members of my cohort. We use each other as resources regularly. It's exciting to see the number of ADPH alumni increasing each year."

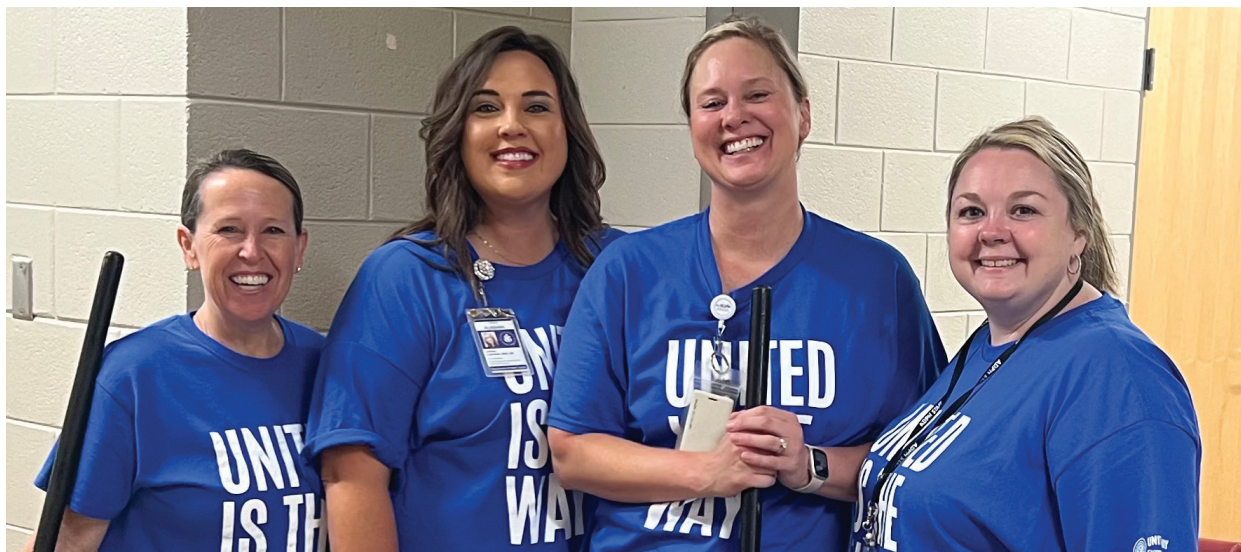
Alumni from Alabama for all cohort years beginning with 2019-2020 are Dana Billingsley, Laura Cepeda, Leslie Clark, Gregory Dodd, Ryan Easterling, Lataya Flowers, Joshua Glass, Alice Irby, Emily Jackson, Janet Langley, Tana-kae Lewis, Valerie Moore, April Palmer, Rebekah Smay, Dr. Wes Stubblefield, Dr. Burnestine Taylor, Amanda Watson, Jennifer Weeks and Elisabeth Welty.

The center's mission is to build the capacity of the current and future public health workforce to protect and promote the health of communities in the Southeastern United States. It is a member of the Public Health Training Center Network, a consortium of 10 regional Public Health Training Centers and a comprehensive resource for public health workforce development.

NORTHEASTERN DISTRICT EP TEAM VOLUNTEERS WITH UNITED WAY

The Emergency Preparedness Team of the Northeastern Public Health District participated in the United Way "2025 Day of Action." The team of volunteers did hands-on work to serve their community.

Pictured, from left, are Teressa Godshall, Lindsey Laminack, Emily Webb and Kaycee Battles.



IN REMEMBRANCE OF RETIRED EMPLOYEES

Dr. Betty Vaughan

Former Assistant State Health Officer for Public Health Area I Dr. Betty W. Vaughan died May 14. A longtime advocate of preventive healthcare for women and children, she retired after a distinguished 30-year career at the Alabama Department of Public Health that began in 1967.

Many honors were awarded to Dr. Vaughan for her continuous efforts to enhance public health services and improve the status of both providers and facilities. Among her significant contributions was her work on behalf of Parents And Children Together (PACT), an organization committed to preventing child abuse and neglect through empowering individuals and families in Morgan County. She became the first woman to receive the William Henry Sanders Award of the Medical Association of the State of Alabama for service in public health above and beyond the call of duty. She received other awards from the Alabama Public Health Association, the Decatur Chamber of Commerce, Rotary International, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and PACT.

After retiring, she volunteered with the Department of Human Resources reviewing medical cases. As monumental as her professional career was, her obituary at age 89 stated she was most proud of her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. Memorial donations in her memory may be made to PACT, 245 Jackson St. SE, Decatur AL 35601.

Evelyn Jackson

Center for Health Statistics (CHS) Director Nicole Rushing emailed a message to employees upon Ms. Jackson's death on May 20.

She wrote, "I am truly saddened to inform you of the passing of a recent CHS retiree and probably longest active employee, Ms. Evelyn Jackson. Evelyn was a faithful and dedicated employee in the Special Services Division, serving here at CHS for nearly 53 years until her retirement in February."

Richard Burleson

Richard Burleson, former administrator of the East Central District and a resident of Deatsville, passed away September 19 at the age of 59.

He met his future wife, Denice Culver, at Huffman High School. He obtained his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, his Master of Business Administration from Auburn University Montgomery, and his Master of Public Health from UAB.

Richard built a 28-year career at the Alabama Department of Public Health, where he started with the WIC Program, later served as the director of several statewide programs, and ultimately retired as the District Administrator of the East Central District. He was a faithful member of Coosa River Primitive Baptist Church, where he served as a deacon and songleader. A volunteer Boy Scout leader, his obituary noted that he was incredibly proud to be an American. Survivors include his beloved wife and three children.

SUMMER BASIC ENVIRONMENTAL TRAINING COURSE



The Bureau of Environmental Services completed its summer session of the Basic Environmental Training Course (BETC) in July. BETC is a two-week long course for all newly employed environmentalists and must be successfully completed prior to their receiving permanent status with the state. Class participants and their locations are, from left, front row, Imberly Flowers, Jefferson County; Britney Rogers, Jefferson County; Dresden Henderson, Covington County; Cana Hamilton, Baldwin County; Emily Trotter, Jefferson County; back row, Miranda Lambert, DeKalb County; Stesha Bankhead, Tuscaloosa County; Joseph Dickey, Covington County; Justin (Jace) Barnett, Shelby County; Marcus Pearson, Greene County; Judith Wright, Seafood Branch.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT HOSTS OPEN HOUSE

County health departments throughout the state are commemorating 150 years of service to the public. The vision of healthy people, healthy communities, and a healthy Alabama has endured well into the 21st Century since its founding in 1875. The department has endeavored to improve the health of the state's citizens, investigated, and helped contain outbreaks of infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis and COVID-19; diseases associated with poor hygiene and poor sanitation, and diseases associated with poor nutrition.



The Montgomery County Health Department held an open house on July 24. Shown, from left, are County Administrator Kevin Hicks, Charleighdia Merritt, State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris, and East Central District Administrator Tim Hatch.



Vera Meadows helped host the celebration.



Many programs and services were on display.

RURAL HEALTH RESEARCH PROJECTS EXPOSE MEDICAL STUDENTS TO PUBLIC HEALTH



The Lee County Health Department again worked this year with the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine students on their rural health research projects.

This year James Hardin, MSc, BSN, RN, NE-BC, assistant administrator for the East Central District, collaborated with three groups of students. They completed introductory research projects on impacts of supplemental nutrition programs, barriers to STD treatment from the healthcare

provider viewpoint, and understanding home health access for infants at risk for high infant mortality.

Hardin said, "While these projects are internal, the students must follow their medical school Institutional Review Board guidelines. The goal is to introduce these students to research projects, but it also allows them exposure to public health. This exposure may be the only experience they take with them from medical school into their careers."

NORTHEASTERN DISTRICT EP TEAM ASSISTS AT WORLD POLICE AND FIRE GAMES

Northeastern Public Health District Emergency Preparedness nurses provided emergency and medical assistance during the 2025 World Police and Fire Games. Thousands of competitors from more than 70 countries participated.



Pictured, from left, are Kaycee Battles, Lindsey Laminack and Teresa Godshall.



ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH CELEBRATES 150 YEARS



A few milestone events and achievements:

Before the department was founded, rampant epidemics led to deaths from illnesses such as cholera, diphtheria, malaria, polio, smallpox, tuberculosis, and typhoid fever. Two in three infants died before reaching 1 year of age. Advocates recognized the need to oversee matters of public health that involved developing “a system of hygiene to preserve and prolong life; to plan an educational program on the rules which govern a healthful existence; and to determine a way to enforce health laws for the welfare of all people.”

On **February 19, 1875**, the Alabama General Assembly passed a law designating the Medical Association of the State of Alabama as the State Board of Health and designated affiliated county medical societies for their respective counties. Alabama became the seventh state to pass a law creating a state public health department and later became the first state in the nation to establish basic public health units in all its counties. Jerome Cochran, M.D., was elected the first State Health Officer.

Early 20th Century - A public health laboratory was established, birth and death certificates were required to be filed centrally, and a groundbreaking Hookworm Commission was established. Enforcement of the “Welch laws” allowed the inspection of most establishments for sanitary conditions without the owner’s consent, and Alabama became the first state to adopt the Standard Milk Ordinance.

1920s & 30s - Tuberculosis was the principal cause of death, and there was a high incidence of pellagra and other nutritional diseases. Typhoid, diphtheria, scarlet fever, and malaria were common, and venereal disease control was costly. By 1939, eight modern, well-equipped TB sanatoria had been built.

1940s & 50s – Funding from the Hill-Burton Act helped build 45 new public health centers and a new central public health laboratory. Accidents, suicides, and upper respiratory infections were the leading causes of death. The State Board of Health began issuing radiation hazards rules and regulations and endorsed water fluoridation as safe, effective, and practical.



1960s & 70s - An attenuated live-virus polio vaccine was given orally, hospitalization of TB patients was required, and a health mobilization program was established to handle civil defense matters. The State Health Laboratory began screening newborns to detect phenylketonuria (PKU). Rules, regulations, and standards were recommended for the operation of ambulances, and Alabama's first WIC Program began operating in six counties. By 1980, all counties had a WIC Program.

1980s & 90s - Dr. Albert B. Sabin, developer of the oral polio vaccine, and Dr. C. Everett Koop, 13th Surgeon General of the United States, spoke at the retirement of State Health Officer Dr. Ira L. Myers. More than 1,000 attended the first statewide AIDS Symposium; coalitions were organized to promote healthy mothers and babies, and Medicaid expansion provided a 3-to-1 federal match to help pay medical bills for pregnant women, children, and teenagers. The original ViSION (Vital Statistics Image Oriented Network) System was implemented statewide to transmit images of actual vital records. Ground was broken for the first of dozens of new county health department buildings. Alabama became the first state whose Children's Health Insurance plan was approved to increase access to care for previously uninsured children and teens.

Early 21st Century - A vaccine shortfall mobilized public health to provide more than 200,000 doses of influenza vaccine, the most ever provided to state residents. ADPH joined other state and federal agencies that responded to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The department played a significant emergency response role when 62 tornadoes struck the state in 18 hours, killing 250. The rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic involved concerted multiple department actions to help combat the virus, which claimed the lives of more than 21,000 Alabamians. A new state laboratory facility, named in honor of former State Health Officer Dr. Donald E. Williamson, was opened in Prattville. The Public Health Accreditation Board first achieved accreditation for the department; accreditation was extended through 2030. The department was honored to be ranked as Alabama's third best place to work on the Forbes list of America's Best-In-State Employers 2024.

Scan the QR Code to view a more extensive historical timeline.

