

ALABAMA'S HEALTH

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FORBES LIST OF AMERICA'S BEST-IN-STATE EMPLOYERS 2024 RANKS ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AS THIRD HIGHEST

The Alabama Department of Public Health has been ranked as Alabama's third best place to work on the Forbes list of America's Best-In-State Employers 2024. This award is presented by Forbes and Statista Inc., a leading statistics portal and industry ranking provider.

America's Best-In-State Employers 2024 were identified in an independent survey from a sample of over 160,000 employees working for companies employing at least 500 people within the U.S. The ranking is open to companies from all industry sectors. Around 4.4 million employer evaluations were considered. Employee feedback was an important factor.

According to Statistica, the consideration of data from three years allowed a robust differentiation between organizations that consistently perform well from those that may only have had a single good year. An employer's final score is determined on a state-by-state basis and is built upon two types of employee evaluations:

1. Personal Evaluations: Employees' willingness to recommend their own employers to friends and family.
2. Public Evaluations: Recommendations from friends and family members of employees, or members of the public who work in the same industry--also known as indirect evaluations.

State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris said, "Caring and dedicated employees are the greatest asset of our team. Our terrific public health professionals provide the highest quality services with compassion, empathy, fairness and respect for our clients. This prestigious ranking recognizes their overall excellence in the multitude of programs they provide throughout the state. I am very grateful to belong to an organization with such talented and committed men and women."

The award list was announced on August 20, 2024, and can be viewed on the Forbes website at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rachelpeachman/2024/08/20/meet-americas-best-employers-by-state-2024>.



EXPERIENCED INFECTIOUS DISEASE SPECIALIST ACCEPTS NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

A motivation to serve patients who experience negative social determinants of health is a focus for Dr. Eduardo Calderon. For the past 15 years, Dr. Calderon has worked with the Mobile County Health Department as physician consultant with the TB Control Program. A board-certified Infectious Disease specialist, he has 21 years' experience in diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of infectious diseases. As he begins a role as the department's new infectious disease physician, he has principal responsibility in tuberculosis control along with other public health activities statewide.

Dr. Calderon is concerned that too many Alabama residents do not realize that TB treatment is safe, free, and private. Hardworking people with TB disease may inadvertently transmit the infection to their families, co-workers, fellow church members and others. While they are ill, bills accumulate and there is hardship for them and their families.

"Eighty percent of active TB comes from latent TB," Dr. Calderon said. Accurate information is important to share with families and the community, especially noting that healthcare providers do not contact Immigration Services. Dr. Calderon wants people with TB to know that they can be healthy, have a future, and remain productive members of the community. He is pleased when he observes a patient transition from being sick and debilitated to once more have the energy to take on their responsibilities and support their families.

Family is important for Dr. Calderon. He met his wife, Dr. Martha Arrieta, while they both attended San Agustin National University in Arequipa, Peru. He spoke with pride of his accomplished spouse, who holds both M.D. and Ph.D. degrees. She recently retired after 21 years teaching biostatistics and epidemiology at the USA College of Medicine and is currently in Peru caring for her 101-year-old mother.

The couple has two children, a daughter who is a talented artist and an educator at the Museum of the Art Institute of Chicago, and a son who is completing his Ph.D. in Analytic Chemistry at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind.

In addition to career pursuits, contributions to the community are important to Dr. Calderon. A soccer player in college, for many years Dr. Calderon coached young people in the sport. He also volunteers to conduct physical examinations for marching band members.

Dr. Calderon has a strong background in both his education and experience. He earned his M.D. at San Agustin National University in 1987, and completed an Internal medicine residency and infectious diseases fellowship at the USA College of Medicine.

After holding positions in the Division of Allergy and Clinical Immunology at the University of South Florida in Tampa, he briefly served as Associate Professor of Physiology at San Agustin National University before returning to Tampa and later working as staff physician at Coastal Family Health Center in Biloxi, Miss. He was a hospitalist at Infirmary West, Mobile Infirmary Medical Center, Mobile and was on the faculty as Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine, Infectious Diseases, at the USA College of Medicine, and Associate Professor of Internal Medicine at USA Health University Hospital in Mobile.

In addition to his expertise in TB, Dr. Calderon has extensive experience providing care to persons living with HIV, implementing screening, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, diagnosing and treating chronic viral hepatitis B and C, and diagnosing and managing common infectious diseases.

Dr. Calderon enjoys living in Mobile where he is based at the Mobile Division Laboratory, 757 Museum Drive.



Eduardo Calderon, M.D.

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

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

Arrol Sheehan, M.A.
Editor

Noelle Ahmann
Graphic Designer

STATE HEALTH OFFICER DR. SCOTT HARRIS SERVES AS NEW ASTHO PRESIDENT

The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) announced that State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris will serve as the organization's 82nd president.

ASTHO is the national nonprofit organization representing the public health agencies of the United States, the U.S. territories and freely associated states, and Washington, D.C., as well as the more than 100,000 public health professionals these agencies employ. ASTHO members, the chief health officials of these jurisdictions, are dedicated to formulating and influencing sound public health policy and to ensuring excellence in public health practice.

As Alabama's State Health Officer, Dr. Harris has worked to improve statewide public health through numerous health policy initiatives and community health improvement campaigns including those focused on infant mortality, opioid mitigation, and emergency preparedness.

"I am honored to take on the role of ASTHO president at this critical juncture for public health," says Dr. Harris. "Our country continues to face many public health challenges, including opioid misuse, the re-emergence of certain

vaccine-preventable diseases, and infant and maternal mortality. Now more than ever, state and territorial health departments must work together to achieve our aims of improving health, safety and wellness. Most importantly, we must do so in a way that fosters trust among the populations we serve."



Scott Harris, M.D., M.P.H.

"Dr. Harris has consistently demonstrated an unwavering commitment to public health and has been a strong advocate for community health initiatives," says ASTHO CEO Dr. Joseph Kanter. "His broad expertise in infectious diseases, substance use, and maternal health will serve ASTHO well in the coming year. As the demands on public health continue to evolve, I am heartened knowing our organization will continue to thrive under such a capable, steady, and experienced leader. I am eager to work alongside Dr. Harris as we chart new territory."

APT CAREER CONNECTIONS FEATURES PUBLIC HEALTH PROFESSIONALS



Hamp Freeman, seated at left, is interviewed for the production.

The Alabama Department of Public Health was selected to be featured in a new television program on Alabama Public Television (APT) called Alabama Career Connections. The State Personnel Department is working with APT to help promote interest and fill job openings in Alabama state government.

The program will spotlight three professions at ADPH giving viewers a chance to learn more about each specific career path. Hamp Freeman, Public Health Environmentalist with the East Central District; Kayla Kelley, Senior Microbiologist at the Bureau of Clinical Laboratories; and Leigh Brumfield, Licensure and Certification Surveyor in the Bureau of Health Provider Standards, all took part in the interviews which will be aired in the coming months.

NURSING INSTRUCTIONAL DAY 2024 CELEBRATED

On May 8, 2024, the Alabama Department of Public Health Nursing Division celebrated its annual Nursing Instructional Day under the theme: Planning for a Brighter Tomorrow. Nursing Instructional Day is held in conjunction with National Nurse's Week recognition which occurs May 6 through May 12 annually. Public health clinic nurses and aides gathered to receive instruction and education on public health related issues. One hundred thirteen individuals attended as the Nursing Division staff acknowledged the hard work that the nurses and clinic aides provide to the citizens of the Alabama.

The instructional day began with a welcome and expression of gratitude from State Health Officer, Dr. Scott Harris. Dr. Harris thanked the staff for their commitment to providing services to some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Chief Medical Officer Dr. Karen Landers also expressed thanks and appreciation in an address to the staff.

Dr. Lynn Dyess provided Breast Health matters recognition, management, and treatment. Dr. Dyess is affiliated with Infirmary Health, the University of South Alabama (USA) and

Children's and Women's Hospital in Mobile. She also serves as a Professor of Surgery at the USA College of Medicine.

The instruction continued with COVID-19 and other emerging infectious disease information provided by Dr. Suzanne Judd, Director of Lister Hill Center for Health Policy and Professor in the School of Public Health at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Dr. Judd provided information and resources that enable individuals to view the latest stats on COVID-19 and other infectious diseases that have an impact on the health status of the population.

The day concluded with Elana Parker-Merriweather who provided instruction on behavioral health topics, substance use, mental health, and self-care. Mrs. Parker-Merriweather provided the group with insights into behavioral health issues, crisis care, and resources available to providers and family members in the state of Alabama. Mrs. Parker-Merriweather is the Adolescent and Adult Substance Use (SU) Program Manager for the Alabama Department of Mental Health.

By Marilyn Knight, MSN, RN



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CHILDREN'S HEALTH A PRIORITY FOR AAP CONFERENCE ATTENDEES

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Karen Landers and District Medical Officer Dr. Wes Stubblefield were among the thousands of pediatricians attending the National American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Conference and Exhibition September 26 - October 1 in Orlando. Participating in the 5K Fun Run and Walk for the AAP Friends of Children Fund were Dr. Stubblefield, medical officer for the Northeastern and Northern Public Health Districts, who is shown with Dr. Nola Earnest (left), outgoing president of the state chapter, AAP,

and Dr. Norma Mobley, incoming president. The purpose of the run/walk event was to promote health and wellness among families and pediatricians, while raising awareness and support for child health initiatives.

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Karen Landers (left) is pictured with Dr. Katrina Skinner, former AAP chapter president and founder of the Women in Pediatrics organization. Women in Pediatrics is a community for female pediatricians whose purpose is "to connect, grow and lead."



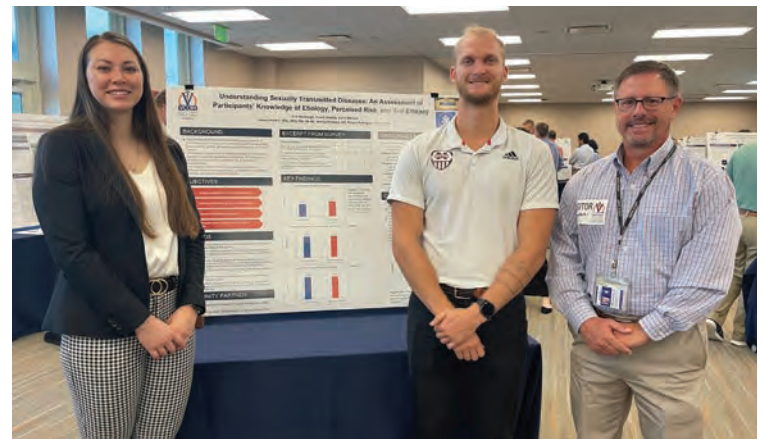
MEDICAL STUDENTS GAIN VALUABLE PUBLIC HEALTH EXPERIENCE

The department recently executed a non-clinical memorandum of understanding with the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine in Auburn to assist with rural health research projects for second-year students.

James Hardin, MSc, BSN, RN, NE-BC, assistant administrator for the East Central District, assisted with the college's data collection on community knowledge assessment on sexually transmitted diseases.

Hardin said, "We hope to continue to work with this medical school on their research projects, as well as allow their students to gain valuable experience with public health."

The private medical college's stated mission is "to prepare globally-minded, community-produced physicians to meet the needs of rural and medically underserved populations and promote research to improve human health."



Students Erin McGough and Caleb Snoddy are shown with Assistant District Administrator James Hardin (right) after they made a presentation at Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine in Auburn.

PERINATAL HEALTH DIVISION PROMOTES CLEAR THE CRIB CHALLENGE

In recognition of SIDS Awareness Month in October, the Perinatal Health Division of the Bureau of Family Health Services promoted #ClearTheCrib Challenge across Alabama. The goal of this social media challenge is to elevate the awareness of safe sleep and how important it is to decrease the risks of sleep-related deaths for infants from birth to 12 months of age.

All caregivers should be aware of the ABC's of safe sleep - alone, on their back, in a crib with only a firm mattress and fitted sheet. Colleges, high schools and individuals are taking the challenge. So far, the following schools have taken the challenge:

- Auburn University
- Holtville High School
- Marbury High School
- Pike Road High School
- University of Alabama Huntsville
- University of South Alabama

This social media challenge is a fun and engaging way to highlight the importance of a clear crib to reduce the risk of suffocation and other sudden unexplained infant deaths. Infants statewide need health department employees and everyone else to help spread awareness by joining the #ClearTheCrib #SafeSleepAL challenge.

Women and Children's Ascension St. Vincent's Hospital has taken it a step further:

- During the month of October, every baby delivered will receive a Halo Sleep Sack with Safe Sleep education attached.
- Safe Sleep Campaign signage will be placed on all units: NICU, 4th, 3rd and 2nd floor
- A Pack 'n Play will be set up in the outpatient department to play "Clear the Crib" with Birth Design patients.
- New parents will play "Clear the Crib" with staff, patients and families on the units periodically throughout the month.
- A flyer will be placed in all lactation folders titled "Breastfeed your Baby to Reduce the Risk of SIDS."

For those unable to afford a safe place for their infant to sleep, visit Cribs for Kids. This program provides portable cribs and safe sleep education to families in need who meet certain qualifications and need a safe place for their infants to sleep.

By Amy McAfee



Aubie holds infant Caroline Casey at Auburn University.



Coach Granger Shook of the Pike Road High School Patriots



Mascot Bruno and cheerleader Marrell Holton of the Marbury Bulldogs



Holtville Bulldogs Mascot Buster looks on after cheerleader Callie Ray Stephens finishes the challenge.

KARL BRYANT PRESENTED 2024 SPIRIT OF RURAL AWARD

Karl Bryant, director of the Office of Primary Care and Rural Health, was presented the 2024 Spirit of Rural Award selected by the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) staff. It honors an NOSORH member who has demonstrated significant contributions to NOSORH and the SORH community through engagement in activities, services, and volunteerism.

In nominating Bryant for the award, NOSORH Communications Director Ashley Muninger wrote, “Bryant joined the Office of Primary Care and Rural Health in 2019 as the Flex and SHIP Coordinator. Through a series of well-deserved promotions, he now serves as the SORH and PCO Director.

“Karl hit the ground running as SORH Director and became engaged in numerous NOSORH activities. Throughout his journey, he has consistently demonstrated a calm demeanor under pressure, laser-sharp focus, and creative thinking skills. With a background in marketing and outreach, he is always attuned to the needs of his target audience—the rural communities he is dedicated to serving.

“Karl’s kind manner and laid-back demeanor make him a natural at building relationships. He’s the kind of person you can always count on for a kind word and an amusing perspective. He isn’t afraid to roll up his sleeves to get the job



From left are Tammy Norville, CEO of NOSORH; Karl Bryant, Director of the Office of Primary Care and Rural Health; Michelle Mills, CEO, Colorado Rural Health Center and NOSORH Stakeholder Engagement & Awards Liaison; and Robert Duehmig, Director, Oregon Office of Rural Health and President of NOSORH.

done and is always willing to lend a hand. Karl truly embodies the Spirit of Rural Award—putting community above self.”

The award was presented September 12 at the NOSORH annual meeting in Niagara Falls, N.Y.

DISTRICT HOSTS NUC/RAD SCORECARD WORKSHOP

The East Central District hosted a NUC/RAD scorecard workshop at the Montgomery County Health Department July 31 to study a public health system’s resiliency to a nuclear or radiological disaster by identifying current strengths and weaknesses. District Response Team Director Kevin Hicks said scorecard survey results will be used to

make recommendations for future improvements. Thirty participants from healthcare and response agencies gathered to complete the assessment. This project was made possible by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and with support from the World Health Organization and spearheaded by the University of Texas Southwestern.



PATHWAYS TO IMPROVEMENT PRESENTED IN LANDMARK DENTAL REPORT



State Dental Director Dr. Tommy Johnson, left, presents an award to Zachary Schutz in recognition of the formal landmark report Schutz authored, *Oral Health in Alabama: Unveiling the Burden and Pathways to Improvement*. The report, which was presented to the Oral Health Coalition of Alabama, found dental health gaps across ethnic and racial groups in the state. Barriers such as lack of dentists and access to them also leads to poorer dental health in rural communities.

PRESENTATION EMPHASIZES SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES

Social media was the topic when Jennifer Allen, Director, Digital Media, Division of Health Media and Communications, addressed the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy – District 3 meeting in Mobile August 13.



OHEMH HELPS SAWYERVILLE PREPARE FOR EMERGENCIES

The Office of Health Equity and Minority Health held a food and clothing drive in the RSA Tower in September and early October to benefit low-income residents of Sawyerville in Hale County. In recent years, the small town of Sawyerville has been heavily damaged by several destructive tornadoes. The team presented boxes of donations when they conducted an emergency preparedness educational program on October 11. Emergency kits, home fire safety tips and health resources were provided at the event.

RETIREES

The following departmental employees have retired recently:

AUGUST

Glenda Ambers

Community Environmental Protection

Laura Crowe

Clinical Laboratories

Derek Kennedy

Clinical Laboratories

SEPTEMBER

Brenda Curenton

East Central Public Health District

Ruth Daniels

Southeastern Public Health District

Pamela Pruett

Clinical Laboratories

Elizabeth Todd

Children's Health Insurance Program

OCTOBER

Mary Crosby

West Central Public Health District

Christina Parker

Southwestern Public Health District

Tonya Taylor

Northeastern Public Health District

Michelle Toolles

East Central Public Health District

LISA JONES RECEIVES ASNA CITATION OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

Outgoing Alabama State Nurses Association President James Hardin presented a Citation of Excellence Award to Lisa Jones, RN, Nurse Manager for the East Central District. Hardin said, "Lisa sets the example for everyone in our district by jumping in and helping with patient care or any need that arises across the district. She is currently on the ADPH response team deployed to North Carolina." She is pictured with her supervisor Joe Rightmyer, East Central District Clinical Director.



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.

Jessica Delashaw, RN

Northern Public Health District
from Administration and Supervisors
Northern Public Health District

Evelyn Jackson

Center for Health Statistics
from Michael Williams, Foley, Ala.

Allison Pounders, RN

Colbert County Health Department
UAB Heersink School of Medicine, Birmingham, Ala.

LaSonyia Vickers

Center for Health Statistics
from Colleen Florence, Cross, S.C.

Yalonda Wheeler

Coffee County Health Department
from Enterprise resident

CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

American Diabetes Month

Lung Cancer Awareness Month

National Alzheimer's Awareness Month

NOVEMBER 21

Great American Smokeout

DECEMBER 1

World AIDS Day

JANUARY 7 • 10 A.M.

Eighth Annual Share Your Smile with Alabama
Photo Contest News Conference

'EVERY TIME YOU EAT, HAVE A PLANT' THEME PLAYED OUT DURING NATIONAL FRUITS AND VEGGIES MONTH

Public health employees enjoyed a unique promotion for National Fruit and Veggies Month in September. The theme for the month-long observance and competition, "Every Time You Eat, Have a Plant," emphasized the health benefits of eating fruits and vegetables--"America's original and favorite plants."



Notes encourage co-workers to consume fruits and vegetables.

Participants were invited to place a small piece of fruit or a vegetable on a co-worker's desk, coupled with a two-sided "You've Been Picked" note cut from a template the Nutrition and Physical Activity Division provided. The note could either be anonymous or the known giver could share a kind word with a co-worker. In turn, the recipients who are "picked" were to return the favor to someone else in the workplace to keep the promotion going.

Molly Killman, director of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Division, congratulated the prize winners and thanked all participants for encouraging everyone to eat and enjoy more fruits and veggies.

Winning prizes were the following employees:

Jennifer Allen – Prevention, Promotion, and Support
Pam Billups – Health Provider Standards
Megan Blackmon – Dallas County Health Department
Sandra Blakely – Prevention, Promotion, and Support
Leah Driskell – Mobile County Health Department
Paula Gilliam – Madison County Health Department
Pam Hill – Pike County Health Department
Sancha Howard – General Counsel
Amy Lightfoot – Dallas County Health Department
Linda Moss – Montgomery County Health Department
Barbara Roberts - HIV Prevention and Care
Tabitha Ross – Emergency Medical Services
Evelyn Shinkarev – Baldwin County Health Department
Rebecca Stewart – Dallas County Health Department.
Tammie Williams – Health Provider Standards

SHELBY COUNTY CONTEST BOOSTS CONSUMPTION OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

The Shelby County Health Department celebrated National Fruit and Veggie Month with a contest. Employees were encouraged to check off new ways to eat fruit and vegetables. The ones who checked off the most items and colored the pictures were entered into a prize drawing.

Reba Brannan, Nutrition Director (center), awarded prizes to Administrative Support Assistant Melissa Etheridge (left) and Interpreter Maira Escobar, Interpreter (right).



'HEALTH POTIONS' ADVERTISED IN JACKSON COUNTY

A bulletin board at the Jackson County Health Department prescribes these "health potions" for Halloween and the season to come. Home Health Supervisor Paula Hancock created the colorful design.



AMAZING EMPLOYEES ADAPT TO NEW ENVIRONMENT AFTER BUTLER COUNTY FIRE

Butler County Health Department employees maintain a caring, positive, can-do attitude as they adapt to their relocation to temporary facilities in Greenville following a fire on June 30 which totally destroyed their work home.

From the day of the fire on, county and district staff have worked tirelessly to provide full services to clients with minimal interruption and have placed their patients' and clients' needs above their own. Many decisions had to be made. While the public was reminded that services are available at every county health department, staff called their clients and determined that clients preferred staying near their homes and wanted to stay in Greenville due to transportation and other concerns.

State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris praised the staff for continuing to do an amazing job in light of the traumatic event and the tremendous loss. He also commended "the greatly supportive community" in Greenville and Butler County and beyond.

As soon as they were notified, Southeastern District Administrator Corey Kirkland and Assistant Administrator Kyle Odom immediately went to work spending many long hours, from making sure the remnants of the building were secure, to meticulously documenting the significant losses, to scouting for temporary locations, to cleanup. Thanks to the generosity of the Jefferson County Department of Health, a mobile unit was deployed and set up in the parking lot of the burned building for clinical services. Then Robins and Morton, project managers, set up a modular unit (basically a triple-wide trailer) which was purchased, utilities connected, and furnished for clinical services.

Kirkland said, "The connections and experience of Robins and Morton were a tremendous help."

Beginning September 11, the majority of services have been provided in the modular facility in the front parking lot of the

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State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Karen Landers paid a visit to employees at the temporary facility of the Butler County Health Department in Greenville on August 9. Shown from left are Dr. Landers, Administrative Support Assistant Shavella Lewis, Nurse Coordinator Jennifer Chesser, Nurse Practitioner Tammy Stokes, Assistant District Administrator Kyle Odom, and Dr. Harris.

original premises, while WIC and Environmental Services are available at a second location opened soon after the fire.

"We greatly appreciate our local elected officials and partners for their support," Susan Wiggins, Nurse Manager with the Southeastern Public Health District, stated in a news release announcing the opening of the modular facility site. "The new unit is a long-term temporary solution during the rebuilding process. We are sincerely grateful for the help and support from so many people, departments, and districts who played a part in this endeavor. To put it simply, we are thrilled to be open for business!"

According to Senior Environmentalist Jim Wood, among the many items destroyed in the fire were the historical records of the county health department which opened in 1937. Many treasured mementoes of employees were also lost including a Bible given to an employee by her grandfather, an engraved stethoscope presented to a nurse upon receiving her nursing license, numerous family photos and other personal possessions. Records, including professional licenses, were burned and had to be replaced.

For the first time in memory, this is the only Alabama health department which has been totally destroyed by fire. All are

pleased that no one was injured, and most records are still accessible since they are maintained electronically.

Rebuilding the county health department is expected to take two years. The department has met with an architect and completed the programming phase to determine square footage needed in the new facility. Local and Central Office leaders have also met with the Butler County Commission to discuss the coordination of the rebuild process.



A modular facility now provides most services in Greenville.



Portions of the Health Department sign can be viewed in the ashes.



Assistant Southeastern District Administrator Kyle Odom and Dr. Harris view the modular building.



The history of the county health department for more than eight decades and numerous mementoes were destroyed.



Dr. Harris speaks with Administrative Support Assistant Ann Cauthen at the temporary home of WIC and Environmental Services.

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL WEEK CELEBRATED

Employees celebrated International Infection Prevention Control (IPC) Week with an informative and fun employee appreciation and demonstration event October 18 in the RSA Tower. The 2024 theme was “Moving the Needle on Infection Prevention.” The theme emphasizes the ongoing efforts to enhance infection prevention strategies and foster safety in healthcare settings.

Jodi Blackburn, BSN, RN, Infection Control and Employee Health Director, recognized the district IPC nurses. Several of the IPC Nurse Supervisors were unable to attend because they had been deployed to serve in North Carolina shelters following Hurricane Helene.

Recognized were Emily Webb, RN, IPC Nurse Supervisor-Northeastern District, and Susan Shelley, RN, IPC Nurse Supervisor-Southeastern District.

After an address by Dr. Wes Stubblefield, Medical Officer for the Northern and Northeastern districts, representatives of the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) conducted handwashing demonstrations using a glow-in-the-dark product with an ultraviolet light to demonstrate germs left on hands after handwashing. They then emphasized proper handwashing technique to reduce the amount of germs left on hands.

The department celebrated the week in partnership with the Association of Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology. Numerous door prizes were awarded, including gifts to the winners of a “germ matching” game and “infection prevention word search” puzzle. Door

prizes were donated by the Office of Clinical Management and Practice, the Alabama WISEWOMAN Program, UAB, and Alabama Tourism Department. Refreshments were also served courtesy of the Office of Clinical Management and Practice. Alabama Governor Kay Ivey also signed a proclamation in observance of the week.



Shown at the proclamation signing with Governor Ivey are, from left, Judy Dicks, RN, CIC; Dr. Burnestine Taylor, Medical Officer for Disease Control and Prevention; Dr. Scott Harris, State Health Officer; Betty File, and Jodi Blackburn, Infection Control and Employee Health Director.



Dr. Wes Stubblefield gives tips to the group.



UAB representatives instructed attendees on proper handwashing techniques.

EVENT SERVES CHILDREN'S ORAL HEALTHCARE NEEDS

Unquestionably, oral health is important for overall health. However, Alabama ranks low in access to dental care and the majority of the state is experiencing a dental care shortage, including Blount County.

On September 20, a partnership of oral health professionals and volunteers from the TeamSmile organization and UAB provided a day-long program of free dental care and education to a large group of underserved children in Blount County at Bartow Arena in Birmingham.

Among the volunteers were State Dental Health Director Dr. Tommy Johnson and Dental Hygienist Jennifer Morris of the Office of Oral Health.

"We both had the opportunity to participate in providing dental services to the children in need from Blount County with TeamSmile," Dr. Johnson said. "It was truly an unbelievable experience with a group of amazing people."

Planning for this dental care event was initiated over 2 years ago after nurses and teachers raised concerns over the children's dental needs. The UAB School of Dentistry faculty and staff spent several months coordinating with Blount County school administrators, nurses and educators to make the event possible.

TeamSmile partners with oral health professionals and professional sports organizations to provide free dental care and

education to underserved children. Since 2007, the organization has conducted more than 275 programs, served more than 55,000 children, and provided over \$20 million in free dental care and education. Through these efforts, TeamSmile emphasizes the importance of oral health to overall health.

A UAB news release reported that the event had almost 170 UAB and community volunteers and served 237 children. Dental services included exams, X-rays, hygiene, fillings, sealants and silver diamine fluoride application, and extractions. The children were also able to enjoy face painting, mascots, UAB sports team representatives, and other fun activities.

According to the release, Blount County removed fluoride from most of its water supplies over time and 82 percent of the county's water is not fluoridated.

Dr. Stephen Mitchell, Director of the UAB Sparks Dental Clinic and chair of the Oral Health Coalition of Alabama, stated, "We are extremely excited to be partnering with TeamSmile, and it's an amazing opportunity to help a group of kids that are experiencing a lot of tooth decay. Why are we seeing so much tooth decay? One thing we do know is that Blount County used to be a heavily fluoridated county. When we look the older kids that experienced fluoridated water, their teeth look healthy. However, our younger kids are having a lot of decay to the point where we needed to host an event like this."

Plans are to hold the event again in 2025.



TeamSmile partners provided dental care to 237 underserved children from Blount County on September 20. Shown, from left, are Dental Health Coordinator Jennifer Morris, RDH, CDHC; State Dental Director Tommy Johnson, DMD;; Community Dental Health Program Coordinator Sherry Campbell, RDH, CDHC, UAB School of Dentistry; and Debra Goble, Blountsville Community Liaison, Equitable Neighborhoods Initiative.

TUSCALOOSA DRIVE-THRU FLU CLINIC USES NEW EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

The Tuscaloosa County Health Department made good use of newly acquired equipment and supplies when it held its annual drive-thru flu clinic October 17 in collaboration with the Tuscaloosa County Emergency Management Agency.

New digital signs directed the public, and speed bumps helped with traffic control. Shading and protecting the staff from the elements were building overhangs and a new tent which features walls that can also be attached or removed.



Making preparation for the next vehicle in line are, from left, Angela Ward, Home Health LPN; Lois Elliott, Emergency Preparedness Healthcare Coalition Coordinator; and Jennifer Waddel, Infectious Diseases and Outbreaks Nurse.

Director of District Operations Ricky Elliott said, "Drive-thru clinics are a great service to the clients because they allow us to provide vaccinations within the comfort of their own vehicle. It's great to see the new equipment and supplies being utilized."

Staff members administered 101 flu shots in the day-long clinic and provided COVID-19 and respiratory virus prevention education to participants. Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Program funds made the new equipment and construction possible.



Shown are, from left, Tyler Smith, Tuscaloosa County Emergency Management Agency; Sonya Hardin, Emergency Preparedness Health Services Administrator; and Delia Ozment, Emergency Preparedness Clerk; and Jon Lambert, Tuscaloosa County Emergency Management Agency.

UAB AND ADPH IMPLEMENT NEW SYSTEM AIMED AT IMPROVING ALABAMA'S STROKE RESPONSE

When a stroke hits, time is of the essence. The longer the time-to-treatment, the longer brain cells are deprived of oxygen, and the higher the risk for poor outcomes including disability and death.

The University of Alabama at Birmingham and Alabama Department of Public Health launched a new system aimed at improving Alabama's stroke response. Leveraging the existing Alabama Trauma and Statewide Stroke systems, they created a model for a more integrated and effective system of emergency stroke care. The implementation of the new model in all six of the emergency medical services regions in the state was completed in October 2024.

"When people with severe stroke are taken to hospitals or centers that do not have the proper resources, we lose valuable time," said Toby Groten, M.D., the James H. Halsey

Jr., M.D. Endowed Professor in the Department of Neurology, director of the UAB Comprehensive Neurovascular and Stroke Center, and principal investigator of the project.

The response model comes from the "Trauma Communications Center Coordinated Severity-Based Stroke Triage" project. The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, one of the National Institutes of Health, awarded UAB \$2.5 million in 2020 to begin the five-year stroke response quality improvement initiative, also known as StrokeSTAT. In addition to UAB researchers, the StrokeSTAT team includes the Alabama Department of Public Health, the Alabama Trauma Communications Center, the Birmingham Regional Emergency Medical Services System and hospitals and EMS providers across the state.

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SHELTER SUPPORT TEAM RESPONDS TO NORTH CAROLINIANS FOLLOWING HURRICANE HELENE

The department deployed an all-volunteer support team to provide assistance in North Carolina following Hurricane Helene. The dedicated team of public health professionals included eight nurses and a safety officer who supported efforts in a mass care shelter by providing public health nursing services and other assistance as needed.

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Team members shown prior to departure, from left, are Jenny Long, Michael Parr, Jason Esslinger, Lindsey Laminack, Tina Norwood, Teresa Godshall, Lisa D. Jones, Jacynthia Moses and Wendy Rose.



Photographed outside the Hendersonville County Department of Public Health, from left, are Wendy Rose, Teresa Godshall, Jacynthia Moses and Lindsey Laminack.

TEAM CONDUCTS CHALLENGING RABIES INVESTIGATION OF WILD HOG BITE, 300-POUND ANIMAL TESTED ON A WEEKEND

Southwestern District Administrator Chad Kent shared the following commendation with his colleagues for an extraordinary job well done in late August, and described the situation as follows: "I'd like to express my appreciation for the after-hours work by your staff. Of course, it happened on Friday afternoon."

On a Friday afternoon, the department was notified that a 300-pound wild hog had bitten an elderly woman in Escambia County. Casey Grant, local senior environmentalist, worked with Dr. Dan Raulerson, local veterinarians, and law enforcement in order to get the investigation process completed.

Early on, it was difficult to find local veterinary assistance. Once on the scene, it was determined the animal was too big to have its head removed. Within minutes on Friday after hours, State Public Health Veterinarian Dr. Dee Jones responded to a text. He and I texted back and forth for a while that evening. His guidance and quick response were a tremendous help. We were having trouble identifying a lab with staff available to assist and take the entire animal.

Contact was made with Dr. Tony Frazier, State Veterinarian, Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, who recommended the animal be taken to Auburn University Laboratory. After 8 p.m., Casey, along with Stacy Williamson, Environmental Supervisor, transported the animal to Auburn. Casey arrived home around 2:30 a.m.



The animal had to be transported to Auburn for testing.

Fortunately, I received notice that the animal tested negative for rabies and the individual who was bitten is doing well. It was learned that this was a pot-bellied pig that had been originally kept as a pet, but the owner turned the animal out into the wild and it grew larger.

This is an example of our staff working as a team to get an important task accomplished. On the beginning of a weekend, they were taken away from family and personal time to assist others in need. Representing the department with great attitudes and going above and beyond, they are to be commended. I want to say, "Thank You and Job Well Done."

District Operations Director Ricky Elliott, also commended the strong and determined team and wrote, "Thanks to everyone for working through this difficult situation to assure the animal was tested in a timely manner. Thankfully, the animal tested negative. Great public health work."

Stroke response, continued from page 16

In the first three years, the team focused on training all EMS providers to identify large vessel occlusion strokes and designating more hospitals that could provide thrombectomy for LVO. Stroke symposiums were also held across the state to increase overall stroke education among physicians, nurses and EMS providers.

"Due to the time sensitivity of a stroke, the ability to identify LVOs helps determine the appropriate level of care without over or under triaging," said Jamie Gray, State EMS director, ADPH. "This knowledge paired with the implementation of the new model will prevent delays in treatment and increase patients' chances of survival."

The team then leveraged the current Alabama Trauma and Stroke Systems infrastructure to develop a new coordination plan for acute stroke care. When an EMS provider suspects an LVO, they connect with the ATCC who help with evaluation, monitor status of hospitals and route patients to the most appropriate facilities.

"The implementation of this model is a culmination of years of collaboration across state entities," Gropen said. "Hopefully, the experience and data we learn from this model will not only save numerous lives in Alabama but will serve as a successful model for other states as well."

UAB Office of Media Relations

GET FIT SELMA! HEALTHFEST SHOWCASES ADPH PROGRAMS

Dallas County Health Department staff attended the 11th Annual Get Fit Selma! Healthfest, Street Olympics and MGLC Carnival event in Selma on October 19.

The goals of the event were as follows:

1. To foster a community commitment to healthy nutrition, an active lifestyle, and smarter personal choices.
2. Increase awareness of local, state and national services and resources for both physical and mental health and wellness.
3. Motivate participants to make positive change in their negative behaviors.

By Sarina Stewart



Promoting public health at the event are, from left, Dallas County Home Care Supervisor Jessica Burnett; Clinic Nurse Manager Sherry Atkins and Administrative Support Assistant Keitha Howard.

Hurricane Helene response, continued from page 17



Tina Norwood provides first aid.



Wendy Rose (right) and Teresa Godshall, are pictured during the night shift at the Hendersonville shelter.

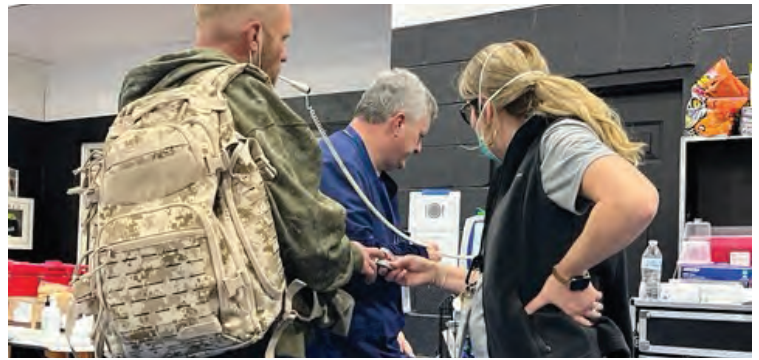


Lisa Jones hugs the child of a displaced family at the American Red Cross shelter. Lisa is assistant clinic director for the East Central Public Health District.

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The Hendersonville, N.C., shelter offers a secure environment for displaced people.



Michael Parr and Lisa Jones check an evacuee's oxygen level.

ALABAMA'S STATE OF DECAY

...in search of a pen...

The following editorial is reprinted from the October issue of the Advisor, a publication of the Retirement Systems of Alabama, which is distributed to the system's more than 390,000 members. In addition, the November issue of the Advisor included a front page editorial about challenges to overcome in access to care including the state's ranking as 51st in the nation in dentist-to-population ratio. A state map showed fluoridated and non-fluoridated water systems by county.

On my first day at Public Health, I was met with a sobering concept from my deputy director: More good can be done by the stroke of a pen than in all my years of private practice. That both scared, and invigorated me. I knew I had a purpose. I still do.

As a dentist, I was accustomed to addressing patients in pain. What I wasn't prepared for was the visceral reaction that screening children with rampant decay and no access to dental care would evoke in me. Children--the most vulnerable of our population--experiencing sleepless nights, inability to concentrate, absenteeism from school, and devastated self-esteem, were sitting helpless in front of me. Although tooth decay is almost 100 percent preventable, it still plagues not only children but adults as well, disproportionately affecting Alabama Blacks and Hispanics.

Since 1945, Community Water Fluoridation (CWF) has been touted as an ideal socioeconomic and equitable method of tooth decay prevention. In fact, it is considered one of the Ten Greatest Public Health Achievements of the 20th Century. By adjusting the level of fluoride in drinking water to the optimal level of 0.7 ppm, decay can be reduced by 18-40 percent for both children and adults. Every \$1 spent on water fluoridation saves \$20 in dental visits. According to 2020 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data, approximately 77.7 percent of Alabama benefits from optimally adjusted fluoride, with some areas demonstrating naturally occurring fluoride in levels that need not be adjusted. But today, the increasing consumption of bottled water negates the benefits of CWF, as bottled waters

typically do not contain fluoride. They also have a wide range of pH levels, raising new concerns. Increasing numbers of water systems are also being met with strong opposition to CWF.

But for many, prevention is no longer an option and dental professional intervention is needed to address their concerns. Ranking 51st in the dentist-to-population ratio, Alabama has many challenges to overcome in access to care. Demographic distribution of dental offices poses a transportation obstacle for many, citing zero or one dentist in seven of our counties. The aging/retiring dentist population continues to diminish, and the number of practitioners is decreasing. Decreased third-party providers reduce the availability of patient visits. While an increased class size of the state's only dental school is poised to provide more dentists, retention of graduates in the state is of concern, with only 38 of 84 most recent graduates taking the Alabama Boards.

We continue to make strides in our efforts for better oral health in Alabama. Increased awareness of the role oral health plays in overall health demands the schism between medicine and dentistry be narrowed through medical-dental integration so the mouth is no longer considered a separate entity from the body. Incentives are available for dental graduates to practice in rural areas such as loan forgiveness via the Board of Dental Scholarships and Loan Awards. The Rural Dental Scholars Program targets applicants from rural areas in Alabama who intend to practice dentistry in a rural community. Hygienists certified as Community Dental Health Coordinators (CDHCs) improve access to care burdens. And there's the hope of legislative changes that will allow teledentistry within the state, enabling CDHCs to operate at their maximum potential.

On a final note, perhaps my favorite quote seems apropos: "Sometimes it's the people no one imagines anything of that do the things no one can imagine." In a state with so much promise, we can certainly assemble the right people to accomplish our oral and overall health goals for Alabama's children and adults alike. I'll be happy to supply the pen...

*By Tommy Johnson, DMD
State Dental Director*