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Nurse-Family Partnership Program will operate in seven Alabama counties

The Nurse-Family Partnership program, an evidence-based program that provides home visits to low-income first time parents from pregnancy through their child's second birthday, started in seven counties this month. News conferences to kick off the program were held in Dothan and Linden.

The logo for the Nurse-Family Partnership reads "Helping First-time Parents Succeed," and the program has improved the health and social functioning of low-income first-time mothers and their babies. The program has been tested in three independent clinical trials and has produced strong positive effects. Originally developed by Dr. David Olds and his colleagues, the program is currently being replicated nationwide and is operating in nearly 250 communities.

This marks the first time the program has been implemented in Alabama. The program is enrolling clients in the following Alabama counties: Barbour, Henry, Houston, Marengo, Perry, Sumter and Wilcox. These counties have been identified as having a great need for the program.

The effort in Alabama represents a partnership between the Alabama Department of Public Health and the National Center for Children, Families and Communities in Denver, Colo., and is funded through a Temporary Assistance to

Needy Families grant for a three-year period. Nurses in Alabama will become part of a national network with the center.

The Nurse-Family Partnership represents a highly



Matthew Buhr-Vogl discusses the implementation of the Nurse-Family Partnership Program with Eileen Rogers (left) and Jeanne Sewell.

refined approach to the long-established service strategy of home visiting. Specifically, the program achieves three important objectives:

- It improves pregnancy outcomes by helping women practice sound health-related behaviors. These include obtaining good prenatal care from their physicians, improving diet, and reducing use of cigarettes, alcohol and illegal drugs.
- It improves child health and development by helping parents provide more responsible and competent care for their children.
- It improves families' economic self-sufficiency by helping parents develop a vision for their own future, plan future pregnancies, continue their education, and find jobs.

Nurses work intensively with families

In the program, nurse home visitors work intensively with families to improve their functioning during and after pregnancy. Participation in the program is strictly voluntary. The program addresses women's health

Partnership.....continued on page 2

Partnership.....continued from page 1

behaviors related to substance abuse and nutrition, which help improve pregnancy outcomes. After delivery, the emphasis is on family caregiving for infants and toddlers to prevent child maltreatment and injury. The program focuses on preventing unintended pregnancies, school drop out, failure to find work and welfare dependence. The program enhances informal support for families.

Throughout the course of the program, there is a consistent focus on the five domains of family functioning:

- Health (physical and mental health)
- Home and neighborhood environment
- Family and friend support
- Parental role
- Life course (pregnancy planning, education and employment)

Matthew Buhr-Vogl, site developer of the National Center for Children, Families and Communities, stated, "The staff at the National Center for Children, Families and Communities are very excited to be welcoming these seven Alabama counties to our national network of program sites. The commitment and enthusiasm in the Alabama Department of Health are extremely high and the program will be serving areas of tremendous need."

Buhr-Vogl added, "What is exciting about the Nurse-Family Partnership is the strong foundation of evidence it is built upon. The program has been tested thoroughly over 20 years, and we know it can have an incredible impact on the lives of participants. We hope that these are the first of many sites in this state."

The nurses involve the mother's support system including family members. They help families use other health and human services they may need.

Consistent benefits found

The program has been studied in three cities and found to be effective, producing consistent benefits for low-income mothers and their children through the child's fourth year of life in the following:

- improved women's prenatal health (especially use of cigarettes)
- fewer injuries to children
- lower rates of subsequent pregnancy
- less use of welfare.

For more information contact Matthew Buhr-Vogl, Site Development Specialist, National Center for Children, Families and Communities, 1825 Marion St., Denver, Colo. 80218, (303) 864-5839, Buhr-Vogl.Matthew@tchden.org.

ALABAMA'S HEALTH

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Informational materials in alternative formats will be made available upon request..

Ribbon-hanging ceremony marks World AIDS Day

Alabama observed the thirteenth annual World AIDS Day on Dec. 1, 2000. The State HIV/AIDS Division sponsored a red ribbon-hanging ceremony in the RSA Park across the street from central offices in the RSA Tower. Approximately 150 people came by to hang ribbons on the tree in remembrance of a person with HIV or because they knew the epidemic was not over. The staff of the HIV/AIDS Division would like to thank all who participated in this ceremony and other similar events across the state.

World AIDS Day aims to increase awareness of the magnitude of the HIV/AIDS epidemic globally and in the U.S. This year's World AIDS Day theme was "AIDS: All Men—Make a Difference!" Because men represent the majority of people living with HIV/AIDS, the World AIDS Day 2000 theme urges all men to increase their awareness of the risk of HIV/AIDS for themselves, their partners and their children, and to use their influence in their families, among their friends and in the communities to help stem the tide of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The global HIV/AIDS epidemic has become so alarming that the United States has declared AIDS a national security threat. As of 1999, 34.3 million men, women and children worldwide were estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS and 19 million have died. Last year alone, an estimated 15,000 people worldwide were infected with



About 150 hung red ribbons.

HIV every day. In the United States, 850,000 people are now infected with HIV. Despite the fact that new AIDS drugs are prolonging years of productive life for many with HIV, the rate of new HIV infections remains high in the U.S. with 40,000 new infections reported each year.

All communities are affected by the continuing spread of AIDS. According to department statistics, 11,487 Alabama residents have been diagnosed and reported with HIV or AIDS, 3,266 of whom have died. Reported cases of HIV/AIDS include 5,045 African American males, 3,748 white males, 1,855 African American females and 601 white females. There have been 97 perinatal cases reported, and 908 cases reported among persons over 50 years of age. The majority of cases reported are still among persons 25 to 40 years of age.

In the United States, World AIDS Day is coordinated by the American Association for World Health, in conjunction with the joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Pan American Health Organization, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

One hundred ninety-one countries around the world observed this day to draw attention to the AIDS epidemic.

Commendations

Health department employees who are listed here have received letters of commendation recently. To recognize other employees, please send letters through your supervisors or the state health officer to *Alabama's Health*.

Diane Beeson

Health Promotion and Chronic Disease

from K. Jeffrey Atkins
Birmingham, Ala.

Sandra Holmes and Leslie Britt
Financial Services

from Carol Holcombe
Montgomery, Ala.

Annie Green
Center for Health Statistics

from June Wang
Huntsville, Ala.

Evelyn Jackson
Center for Health Statistics

from Tony Haynes
Birmingham, Ala.

Self-study course offered on finding and using health statistics

The National Information Center on Health Services Research and Health Care Technology of the National Library of Medicine has added a new distance learning program, "Finding and Using Health Statistics: A Self-Study Course," to its web site at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/nichsr/outreach.html>.

The course was developed by Dan Melnick, Ph.D., and was originally presented by Dr. Melnick at the 2000 Annual Meeting of the Medical Library Association. It is based on Dr. Melnick's latest book, *Portrait of Health in the United States* (January 2001, Bernan Press).

Health statistics can be elusive and difficult to interpret. This course will provide librarians, health services researchers, and public health professionals with some basic concepts for understanding health statistics, as well as pointing to some invaluable Internet portals.

Michael Smith, director of the Video Communications Division added, "This NLM site also lists many of their other distance learning courses and references which are available at no cost. This is a valuable internet resource which public health professionals all over the world can benefit from through the recent advances of the world wide web."

Website provides access to federal government information and services

FirstGov, the first U.S. Government web site to provide the public with one-stop access to all federal government on-line information and services, is now available. Located at <http://www.firstgov.gov>, FirstGov allows citizens to search all on-line federal government resources from one site, conduct searches faster and more efficiently, and access federal government information 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

FirstGov connects Americans to all 27 million federal agency web pages, providing citizens with a single point of entry to one of the largest and most useful collections of web pages in the world.

With FirstGov, citizens can take advantage of a wide array of government services, such as applying for student loans, planning for retirement, tracking Social Security benefits, getting advice on buying a home or starting a business, reserving a campsite in a national park, or conducting research at the Library of Congress.

The FirstGov web site allows citizens to search for government information by topic, rather than by agency; searches half a billion documents in less than one-fourth of a second; and maintains strong privacy standards to safeguard citizens' on-line communications and transactions with the government.

Mary Smith cheerfully assists others with dedication and energy

Mary Smith was named the Employee of the Month for December. Ms. Smith is a certified nurse practitioner who has continually provided high service within the Sexually Transmitted Disease Division for more than 10 years.

According to supervisor, Michael D. Kerr, "Her dedication to service and the energy with which she addresses each assigned responsibility remains a constant quality of hers, both as a valued employee and as a person."

Kerr said, "Ms. Smith can be depended upon to volunteer willingly to assist others within the office in whatever manner she may be of assistance, and to the extent that her own specific job commitments permit. She does this with a cheerful attitude and upbeat demeanor, rather than with one of negativity and procrastination."

Ms. Smith's expertise as a nurse practitioner is often sought by other organizations. In August 2000, she was a panelist on an international satellite presentation titled: "STDs Across the Lifespan." She also has participated in numerous committee and consultation meetings

concerning issues relevant to clinical services assessment and policy/protocol decisions.

In 1997, State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson commended Ms. Smith for her work on the Comprehensive Health Record Committee which revised the medical records used in county health clinics. Dr.

Williamson said, "I know that you put in innumerable hours of work on this project, work which took you away from your normal duties. Thank you for giving your time and your expertise in disease control programs to a project which will benefit staff throughout the Department as well as our patients."



Employee of the Month

By GERALDINE ROSE DANIELS

Veteran immunization director ends public health career

On Jan. 3, Gary Higginbotham retired to enjoy the quiet, peaceful and green scenery of his 52 acres in Titus. A veteran employee with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for 31.5 years, Higginbotham was assigned as the senior public health advisor and program manager for the Alabama Immunization Program in 1988.

According to State Health Officer for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Charles Woernle, "Gary has served the department and citizens of Alabama with distinction during his tenure. He has overseen the development of an effective immunization program that has led to high rates of immunizations among children, curtailed budding outbreaks, recruited private providers into partnership, and launched initiatives such as the maternal hepatitis B program and statewide immunization registry."

Higginbotham also was praised for his exemplary work by Assistant Surgeon General and director of the National Immunization Program for the CDC, Walter A. Orenstein, M.D., "During the past 12 years in your assignment to the State of Alabama," Dr. Orenstein said, "Gary trained and supervised a number of junior public health advisors, and continued his efforts to build the state infrastructure that will be necessary to achieve all of our mutual objectives and ensure high coverage and low incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases well into the future. It was always a source of comfort to me that Gary was at the helm of the Alabama program."

Reflecting back on his years of service as director of Alabama's Immunization Program, Higginbotham spoke highly of his program staff. "I'm especially proud of our field staff. Since I started, we have continued to have the same representatives except for a few counties. We stay together. We are a family.

"I've enjoyed seeing immunizations go up and diseases decline such as *Haemophilus Influenza* which is extremely low now," Higginbotham said. "After the Auburn measles incident in 1989, we really became more like a family because we worked with several field staff members for six to eight weeks.

"One of the first things I did when I arrived," he said, "was to train staff members how to investigate and contain

diseases. Six months later, we had the measles outbreak in Auburn which could have been much worse if the staff had not already been trained."

Higginbotham began his service with CDC four decades ago. During the

1960s and early 1970s, he worked with the

Sexually Transmitted Disease and Prevention Programs in the states of Georgia, Missouri and Tennessee. While assigned as the public health advisor in the STD Program in Nashville, Tenn., the syphilis program was rated the best program in the country.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Higginbotham also provided technical assistance to the immunization programs in the states of Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Idaho, Nevada and Tennessee. In the 1970s, he participated in the Swine Flu program, measles and rubella outbreaks in Miami, Fla., and a measles outbreak in Guam. During the summer of 1999, he assisted the State of Missouri during the rotavirus efforts.

After giving so many years of public service, Higginbotham is looking forward to enjoying his newfound freedom in retirement by fishing, spending time with his wife, Sara, six children and five grandchildren. "It's going to be fun," he said, "watching the grandkids play."



Gary Higginbotham (left) receives a certificate from Dr. Charles Woernle.

By GERALDINE ROSE DANIELS

Retirees

The following employees retired effective Jan. 1:

Yvonne Averett - Coffee County Health Department

Rebecca Gilbreath - Public Health Area V

Carol Holcombe - Health Promotion and Chronic Disease

Ronald Pass - Radiation Control

Benjamin Standberry - Clinical Laboratory

Joyce West - DeKalb County Health Department

Peggy Wood - Computer Systems Center

Reducing teen pregnancy is organization's goal

The Alabama Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy was founded in 1999 to address the goal of reducing teenage pregnancy by one-third by the year 2010. Teen pregnancy is a leading cause of high school dropouts and the beginning of a family's cycle of dependency on public assistance.



Kathy Midgley

Half of all single mothers on welfare were teenagers when they had their first child. Two-thirds of teen mothers never finish high school. This leaves them unprepared for the job market and more likely to raise their children in poverty. Nearly 80 percent of the fathers of babies born to teen

mothers do not marry their babies' mothers. On average, these absent fathers pay less than \$800 annually for child support. The human cost in loss of productive and fulfilling lives is inestimable.

The organization receives funding through Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) dollars (Titles V and X) and from private donations. The organization receives a grant from the Alabama Department of Public Health, through a partnership with the Alabama Department of Human Resources for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) dollars. Title X Family Planning funds and private donations also provide funding.

The campaign's stated mission is "to improve the life prospects of this generation and the next—and, in particular, to reduce child poverty—by influencing cultural values and building a more effective grassroots movement."

Kathy Midgley, Executive Director of the Alabama campaign, said, "Our goal is to provide education, opportunities and support services to prevent teen pregnancy by serving as a catalyst for state and local action."

The campaign has five task forces: business and schools, faith communities, media, teen task force and medical community.

"When it comes to teen pregnancy, why it happens and how to prevent it, teens get a lot of advice from adults, but they aren't often asked to offer their own," Ms. Midgley said. "We want to ask teens directly what they would say to other teens, and adults, about preventing pregnancy. The National Campaign, along with Teen People Magazine, produced a

pamphlet based on suggestions offered by readers of Teen People. We hope to gain insight into the teen pregnancy problem in Alabama by talking with youth across the state. Also, many teen pregnancy prevention programs have focused their efforts entirely upon teen girls. One of our goals is to address the partners of teenage girls, too."

The program already has begun in two areas, Montgomery and Tuscaloosa. The campaign's plans are to initiate activities in every county which will involve the youth, schools, churches, businesses, physicians, community leaders and the media.

She added, "We want to be a resource to help each community. We encourage the participation of a wide variety of people and ideas in prevention efforts. Teen pregnancy is a big problem that has room for many varied strategies, particularly since research tells us that no single intervention is likely to solve the problem entirely."

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy lists at least eight reasons for its existence which are as follows:

- The magnitude of the teenage pregnancy problem is great. The United States has the highest teenage pregnancy rate of any industrialized nation.
- The consequences of teenage pregnancy and childbearing are serious and contribute to many of the nation's enduring social problems.
- The public is deeply concerned about the current state of the family in America and sees teenage pregnancy as an important part of a larger crisis in values and community well-being. These somewhat diffuse but powerful concerns have not been channeled into useful action.
- There are too few leaders at the national level willing to state forcefully and repeatedly that teenage pregnancy is wrong and that the nation must take action to address this serious social problem.
- Reducing teenage pregnancy requires the help and power of the media, but forging partnerships with the media is a national task that individual communities cannot be expected to shoulder on their own.
- Although there are some state and community coalitions focused on reducing teenage pregnancy, more are needed, and all require a higher level of support, power and visibility.
- Even though major disagreements about values and behavior impede the ability of communities to take actions to reduce teenage pregnancy, there is at present no national dialogue on these issues, and no systematic efforts to build common ground and to search for ways to move forward.
- The knowledge base of how to reduce teenage pregnancy through community-based programs needs to be strengthened, which requires new investments in program

Campaign.....continued on page 7

THE ALABAMA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION, INC.
(AIPHA)
ANNOUNCES THE
IRA L. MYERS SCHOLARSHIP
APPROXIMATE VALUE \$6,000

In conjunction with the UAB School of Public Health, ALPHA announces the availability of the Ira L. Myers Scholarship. The scholarship is awarded to honor Ira L. Myers, MD, MPH, former Alabama State Health Officer, for his 40 years of dedicated service to the citizens of the State of Alabama.

The Ira L. Myers Scholarship, funded by ALPHA and the UAB School of Public Health, supports one master's or doctoral candidate for two years of part-time study at the UAB School of Public Health. The scholarship is not intended to cover all costs related to the graduate experience. It does provide tuition and a monthly stipend to cover related expenses up to \$6,000 (the Office of Student and Academic Services will work with the student's needs to determine the best application of scholarship funds).

Eligibility requirements for the Myers Scholarship include membership in the Alabama Public Health Association and acceptance by the UAB School of Public Health to an advanced degree program.

Completed applications for either the master's or doctoral programs must be received by the UAB School of Public Health by January 14, 2001. To apply for the scholarship, request an application packet from:

Linda Mosley
UAB School of Public Health
Office of Student and Academic Services, Ryals Building,
Room 120
1665 University Boulevard
Birmingham, Alabama 35294-0008

Questions about admission to the UAB School of Public Health and the Ira Myers Scholarship should be directed to Linda Mosley at the above address or telephone 205-934-7179. You may leave a message on her voice mail if necessary.

Campaign.....continued from page 6

evaluations and more efforts to put current knowledge in the hands of states and communities.

Ms. Midgley recently addressed local health officers and administrators to give them information about the campaign. She is available to present the information to any interested county.

If your county health department or local organization is interested in scheduling a presentation, please contact Kathy Midgley, Alabama Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, P. O. Box 230788, Montgomery, Ala. 36123, telephone 334-213-6415.

ALL Kids helps sponsor an application workshop in Jasper

The ALL Kids program co-sponsored its first application workshop for parents Dec. 1 and 2 at the Sherer Auditorium in Walker County. A survey by local school nurse Margaret Guthrie found that more than 900 families were not covered by health insurance. Furthermore, Ms. Guthrie was receiving eight to ten calls a day seeking help to fill out the application forms, and she simply didn't have the time to assist them along with her other responsibilities.

ALL Kids Marketing and Outreach Consultant Knoxville Williams of the Children's Health Insurance Program then initiated a strategy meeting involving state and local agencies: the Walker County Board of Education, the organization Covering Alabama's Kids, the Alabama Medicaid Agency, the local juvenile courts, the local hospital, Walker County Health Department, and medical students from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Because of the difficulty many Walker County parents were having completing the application themselves, the groups believed an application assistance clinic would benefit many families in the community.

Ms. Williams said, "We want families to know that getting your children insured is a priority, and we're here to help them get the application filled out. The local participants, organized by Ms. Guthrie, notified the news media, made phone calls, put up advertising banners, and sent letters to identified parents informing them what to bring and where to come."

A play area with clowns and movies was provided by the Walker County Hospital so that parents could bring their children and stations were planned to provide privacy to the parents during the application process. Along with local agency staff, there were medical students, Ms. Williams and Fern Shinbaum of the Children's Health Insurance Program and five representatives from Covering Alabama's Kids available to assist in the approximately 30-minute application process.

Wanda Davis with the Alabama Medicaid Agency trained over 50 participants to be able to give the Medicaid interview. Walker County Medicaid workers were also on hand to answer questions, help the parents fill out the applications, facilitate, and prescreen the applications. Approximately 150 children were enrolled in a health insurance program during the day and one-half workshop.

"We hope that this application clinic can be replicated until all children in Walker County are covered by health insurance. It can also be used as a model for other local areas," Ms. Williams said. "Many other Alabama counties suffer from low literacy rates, and we are hopeful communities will encourage enrollment by planning similar events."

ALL Kids provides no-fee or limited fee health insurance coverage for children under age 19 in families whose incomes are between 100 and 200 percent of the federal poverty level. ALL Kids' private health insurance coverage is provided by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama statewide. At the close of ALL Kids' second year there are over 29,000 children enrolled in the program.



January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month and National Eye Care Month.

Calendar of Events



January 31

Infection Control: It's Your Responsibility, Home Health Aide Continuing Education, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Gayla Hollis, (334) 347-2664, extension 403.



February 7

Senior Citizens Living Healthy Series: Physical and Nutritional Fitness, 10:30-11:30 a.m., part 5 of 5. For more information contact Melissa Galvin, (334) 242-5743, and Barbara Struempfer, (334) 844-2217.



February 14

Adolescent Health, Public Health Nursing Staff Development, 2-4 pm. For more information contact Fay Smith, (334) 206-5655.



February 21

What Happens When We Monitor: A Look at the National Objectives in Diabetes Care, 1-3 p.m. For more information contact Debra Griffin, (334) 206-2066.



March 1

ADPH Statewide Staff Meeting, 3-4 p.m. For more information contact Jim McVay, Dr.P.A., (334) 206-5600.



March 14

Cardiovascular Health in Children and Adolescents, 2-4 p.m. Public Health Staff Development. For more information contact Fay Smith, (334) 206-5655.



March 21

Home Care for the Patient with Diabetes, Home Health Aide Continuing Education, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Gayla Hollis, (334) 347-2664, extension 403.

April 6-7

Alabama's Choice: Tobacco or Health, Marriott Hotel, Highway 280-459, Birmingham. Open to all. For more information contact Dianne Smith-Yoder, (334) 690-8186.



April 10

Alabama WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program, 1-3 p.m. For more information contact Richard Burleson, (334) 206-2929.



April 11

Immunization Update, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Fay Smith, (334) 206-5655.

April 18-20

Alabama Public Health Association Annual Educational Meeting, Marriott Hotel, Space and Rocket Center, Huntsville.



May 9

Women's Health, Public Health Staff Development, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Fay Smith, (334) 206-5655.

