

dhhs Employee UPDATE

Our Mission: To serve the people of North Carolina by enabling individuals, families and communities to be healthy and secure, and to achieve social and economic well-being.

A monthly publication for employees of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

Website redesign released!

DHHS employees who logged into their computers on Monday morning, July 28, saw the new face of the department, our redesigned website. Some features:

- Smart printing of the content, not the navigation buttons;
- Accessible code and design, including high-contrast colors, scalable fonts, tabbed browsing, and an uncluttered page design;
- Four ways to navigate: by topic, by site map, by division/office, and by search;
- Lots of contact information; and
- New Spanish site (see *The Cultural Corner* in this issue for more information).

“So far it has been smooth sailing,” said Lois Nilsen, project director from Public Affairs. “Most comments are very positive, saying the website is attractive and easy to use.”

The redesign will eventually reach all divisions and offices. The timeline for that has not been set, but it will take some years.

The change in look is the most visible aspect of a large project to overhaul the department’s online presence. Last fall, a new website policy and guidelines were unveiled. Each division



now has a web content manager, who is the division/office director’s go-to person for the web.

“To make our website easy to use for the people we serve takes a lot of thought, planning and coordination,” said Nilsen. “The policy and web content managers are the coordinators helping to make that happen. Since it will take time to bring all of DHHS into the template, the policy and guidelines are important for divisions and offices to follow in the short term.”

DHHS employees have their own area in the site. Local agencies and those regulated by the department have clear information intended just for them. Researchers can find facts and figures compiled in one place as well.

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Love and long service at GMS

When school starts in a few weeks at Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh, there won't be any Woods around. After 36 years, GMS will open the school without either John or Mitch Wood there in a classroom. John retired several years ago, and Mitch retired this summer at the end of summer school. So, GMS is entering a new era, and so are the Woods.

A physical education teacher and coach who came to GMS in 1972, John Wood had no experience with visually impaired students, especially those who wanted to play sports. However, he grew up along with his students and learned that their vision loss was an inconvenience, not a handicap, and that they could play competitive sports with the same intensity and success as their sighted peers. In 1978, "Miss Mitch" showed up as a teacher assistant who, among other things, escorted students to and from the gym for their daily classes. It did not take love long to blossom, and soon the couple were married, with both still working at GMS.

Their stories about GMS and its students reflect the changes at the school and in the education of visually impaired students. From parents who would carry their blind children because they thought that the children would get hurt if they walked, to technologies that help students match their clothes or that will read books or computer screens aloud—John and Mitch have seen it all. But what really formed the bond between them and the school is witnessing the students' successes and independence that the Woods have sought to help each student achieve.



Mitch and John on their wedding day

"Braille is my love," says Mitch. "It has always been my goal to help my students love it as much as I do." While technology does make written materials easier to access, Mitch points out the necessity for all blind students to be able to read Braille. Her greatest challenge has been to help students who have progressive vision losses learn Braille so that they will be independent readers by the time their sight is gone. For students who have already lost their vision, it is helping them conceptualize the world around them. Her story of the elementary students on a field trip who were incredulous to see a real horse and to realize the differences between it and the plastic model in their classroom is a funny, yet serious, reminder of the challenges faced both by students and teacher.

Mitch's observations about her students are those of someone who truly has loved her work and the children. It



John and Mitch, July 2008

was always her goal, she says, "to treat them as if they were my own." She talks about the students who are so impressed with her Braille skills that they think she is also blind. She actually reads Braille visually, not with her fingers. Or, students who know she is walking down the hall by the way her bracelets jingle and the smell of her perfume. Yet, it is watching students learn to read Braille for the first time that she says she'll miss most.

Between them, Mitch and John Wood have given more than six decades of service to GMS. Since he retired in 2001, John has been providing support to local organizations for blind adults and contracts with the Office of Education Services to provide assistance with compliance for exceptional children's records. Mitch Wood says her recent retirement will take some time to sink in. After that, she says she'll decide how to continue her work with Braille. ■

Broughton Hospital pilots pharmacy program



Broughton Hospital, Morganton, North Carolina

Broughton Hospital has been chosen by the N.C. Board of Pharmacy as a state pilot site for the pharmacy “tech check tech” program. According to Dr. Jerry McKee, director of Pharmacy at Broughton Hospital, the program permits certified pharmacy technicians who have met additional training requirements to validate the work of other pharmacy technicians, where non-judgmental pharmacy functions are performed.

“What this means in plain English, is that after a pharmacist has screened a physician’s order for proper dosage, the appropriate purpose for drug use, and drug and food interactions, a qualified technician can then review the refill order of subsequent doses,” McKee said. “In an arena where we have a

minimum of resources, it allows us to maximize the potential of the technical professional pharmacy staff as well as the pharmacists.”

Broughton is assessing the impact of using advanced practice pharmacy technicians on the maintenance and implementation of clinical pharmacy services, and will provide data back to the North Carolina Board of Pharmacy regarding its success, McKee said. He added that clinical pharmacist time has freed up staff to provide consultative services to the hospital’s adolescent psychiatric care unit, as well as assisting in the development of clinical services to address JCAHO National Patient Safety Goals on falls prevention and anticoagulation safety.

The pilot was highlighted in a feature article in the fall issue of the journal “North Carolina Pharmacist,” and was later reprinted in the “Journal of Pharmacy Technology” and the American Pharmaceutical Association journal “Pharmacy Today.”

This pilot is a local part of a national effort to further professionalize, recognize and reward pharmacy technicians for their crucial role in the medication use process, and to provide a platform for developing a career ladder for this career track. In addition, the enhancement of the role of pharmacy technicians will allow for further deployment of clinical pharmacists in patient care activities, McKee said. ■

Caswell residents help create outdoor mural

**Every wall contains the seed of a masterpiece.
All that it lacks is the touch of an artist.**

In the case of the Old Well at Caswell Development Center, a group of the center's resident amateur Michelangelos joined professional muralists to create a color landscape where just a concrete wall existed before. The mural, on the walls of Caswell's "old well" on Hull Road, was dedicated in June.

Caswell's mural project incorporates abstract art created by Caswell residents, under staff supervision, with the goal of empowering them through creative expression. In all, 150 Caswell individuals created some 400 designs using acrylic paints on fabric squares of parachute cloth.

The Caswell art mural "*Indelible Collaborations*" is the latest addition to the trail of public art through Kinston as part of the city's Public Arts Initiative and was made possible through a grant from the N.C. Council for the Arts. The goal of the program is to improve the overall appearance of the community, while at the same time providing an opportunity for residents and visitors to participate in the visual arts.

James Burns, a Pennsylvania artist and muralist, was hired as lead artist. Assisted by local artist/muralist Niki Litts from the Kinston's Community Council for the Arts, the artist worked with resident designs to adhere to the spacious containment walls of the old concrete well.



Caswell Mural front view



Caswell Mural back view

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Caswell residents help create outdoor mural, cont. from page 4



Caswell resident Marie and Kim Shivar, Center art specialist

“Over time, our art project evolved into an organic, collaborative effort between myself and the residents, as assisted by Caswell staff,” Burns said. “In some ways, mounting the pieces to the wall is a collage application – but I prefer thinking of it as a collaborative painting.”

The artist collected samples of artwork Caswell individuals had previously created and, using PhotoShop and a box of watercolors, developed a mock-up of the mural based on the “mark making” he had seen in Caswell’s artwork and scaled it to the actual dimensions of the well. Caswell residents had their choice of particular complementary colors in which to paint the squares, using whatever techniques they had previously been using in their creative expressions classes. ■



Caswell resident Tony M and Health Care Technician Brandon Wilson



Caswell resident Kendale and Educational Development Assistant Audrey Hill

Public Health nurse consultant wins national research award



North Carolina School Nurse Consultant Jessica Gerdes, right, congratulates award winners Martha Guttu, left, and Dr. Martha Engelke at the national awards ceremony.

Martha Guttu, RN, northeast region school nurse consultant with the Division of Public Health, has won an award for research from the National Association of School Nurses. The research on nursing case management demonstrated positive outcomes in school attendance, health and academic achievement for school students receiving those services.

Guttu and lead investigator Dr. Martha Engelke, associate dean for research and scholarship in the College of Nursing, East Carolina University, presented their research project and received the award at the 40th annual conference of the National Association of School Nurses in Albuquerque, N.M. in late June.

Entitled “Case Management for Children with Chronic Illnesses,” the project developed resources for case management and tracked the outcomes of the services that the school nurses provided. “We found that the nurses had a positive outcome on the academic, quality of life and health of these children,” Engelke and Guttu stated.

In the award letter, Engelke and Guttu are commended for “the positive impact your work will have on school nursing services, and consequently, on the health and well-being of children.” The project was supported by a grant from the Kate B. Reynolds Health Care Trust.

The Trust has just approved funding for an expansion of the project, allowing development of the project across the state to assist school nurses in developing case management programs for children with chronic illnesses. The project will also strive to strengthen relationships with providers and community agencies serving these children.

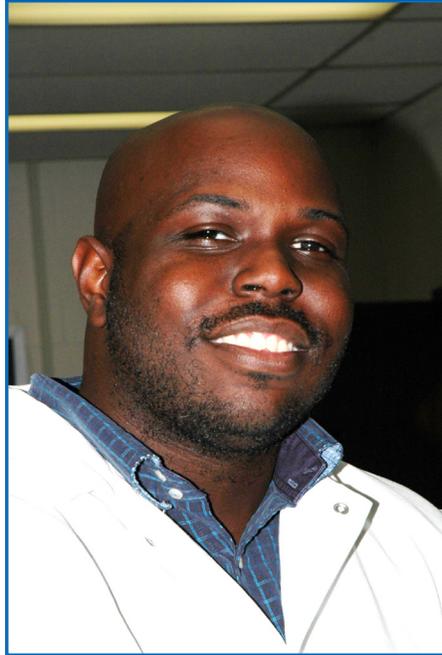


Hargrove to receive national award

Robert Hargrove, a Chemistry Technician III with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner's toxicology laboratory in the Division of Public Health, was recently informed that he will be honored with the Young Scientist Meeting Award (YSMA) at the annual meeting of the Society of Forensic Toxicologists (SOFT) in October.

This competitive award recognizes bench-level scientists with under five years of experience in the field of forensic toxicology. The YSMA is given to encourage training and research in areas related to forensic toxicology.

The research project for which Hargrove received the award involved



Robert Hargrove

post-mortem testing for the drug oxycodone, which is becoming more prevalent and is responsible for an increasing number of deaths. Since 1995, 29 cases have been reported in North Carolina, 27 of which occurred since May 2007. The drug is hard to detect in lab tests; his research will help labs diagnose this cause of death more accurately.

Hargrove earned a B.S. in chemistry from North Carolina State University in 2006 and has been with the OCME toxicology laboratory since February 2007. His other honors include recognition as an American Chemical Society Scholar (2001-2006) and the National Society of Collegiate Scholars (2001-2005). ■

Dameron named state association president

Linda Dameron, director of volunteer services and community relations at Central Regional Hospital in Butner, was installed as president of the North Carolina Association of Volunteer Administration during its 34th annual state conference on volunteerism recently held in Greensboro.

A Durham resident, Dameron holds both state and national certifications in volunteer administration. She has served on the NCAVA Board since 2000 as a regional director, secretary, resource committee chair and president elect before assuming her new role.



Linda Dameron

Dameron was awarded the association's "Marsha Riddle Lifetime Achievement Award" in 2007. The award recognizes outstanding personal and leadership contributions to the field of volunteer management in North Carolina.

NCAVA (www.ncava.net), the state's premier organization for leaders of volunteers, has been promoting the volunteer management profession, fostering volunteerism across the state, and serving as a leader in providing for the educational needs of those who manage volunteers for more than 34 years. ■

AUGUST WELLNESS ARTICLE

DHHS Employee Wellness Program

**Suzanna Young,
DHHS Wellness Director**

Increased support for wellness at work includes two new resources for DHHS employees. The State Health Plan NC HealthSmart website (www.shpnc.org/nc-healthsmart.html), available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, now provides expanded on-line resources to all Health Plan members*. A second resource is a new initiative of the DHHS Wellness Program to make weight management classes with a fitness component available at more worksites within the department.



Your Personal Health Portal

The State Health Plan's NC HealthSmart on-line resources have been recently updated and expanded to help individual members* easily access health information on-line and receive personalized guidance on health issues. Go to www.shpnc.org/nc-healthsmart.html to explore this valuable new resource. NC HealthSmart's new Personal Health Portal is a secure, on-line environment that offers you easy access to reliable, up-to-date health information and support with the click of your mouse.

At the website, employee members can complete a Personal Health Assessment on-line and immediately receive a Personal Health Action Plan. If you have been looking for health information, the new Healthwise Knowledge-base helps you to easily explore a variety of health topics. The Health Crossroads Web Modules provide information on treatment options if you are facing a decision about surgery or if you are experiencing chronic back or joint pain.

The website also provides the Access Lifestyle Management Programs. This on-line resource addresses topics ranging from stress and weight management to diet and nutrition. There is also a helpful tool to assist you in tracking any medications you are currently taking.



The N.C. State Health Plan continues to offer members* access to a variety of other resources including a personal Health Coach. These are specially trained professionals, such as nurses, respiratory therapists or dietitians, who are available to answer questions you may have concerning the health of you or your family. Health Coaches are available, at no cost, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To learn more, call your NC HealthSmart Health Coach at 1-800-817-7044.

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DHHS Wellness Program, cont. from page 8



Weight Management Classes at Work

We know from annual employee wellness surveys that a large number of DHHS employees are interested in participating in a weight management class at work. The high cost of commercial programs (\$175 per person for Weight Watchers at Work) prevents many employees from participating in these types of programs.

We are very pleased to announce that the DHHS Wellness Program, through support from the State Health Plan, will be assisting some agency wellness committees in offering North Carolina's Eat Smart, Move More Weigh Less program to employees. This 16-week series of lunchtime classes, taught by a health professional, is a weight management program that uses strategies proven to work. Each lesson informs, empowers and motivates participants to live mindfully as they make choices about eating and physical activity. The program provides opportunities for participants to track their progress and keep a journal of healthy eating and physical activity behaviors. Each participant receives:

Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less Magazine - a full-color magazine that contains the most important points from each lesson, recipes and more.

Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less Journal - a small booklet that helps participants track their weight, the food they eat, and their physical activity.

More details about the Weigh Less Program will be provided for wellness committees to share in the coming month. Classes will be offered for a nominal fee, but participants will receive a refund of most of their cost if they attend 80 percent of the classes (13 of the 16 classes). A small percentage of the cost will be retained to purchase food for healthy eating demonstrations. Classes will be organized by your wellness committee, so be ready to sign up if you are interested as soon a registration is announced at your agency. ■

*Members eligible for NC HealthSmart Services are those whose primary health insurance is through the North Carolina State Health Plan, and who are not on COBRA.

Website Redesign Released, cont. from page 1

Medicaid information has been revamped, and offers a glimpse to how other programs and services will be presented in the future.

In a “soft launch” that lasted four weeks, more than 2,000 site visitors viewed the new website through a link on the old home page, and 134 filled out an online survey. Eighty-six percent of survey respondents gave the site top marks for design and 88 percent gave it top marks for usability. Two of the most common comments were that the site was user friendly and easy to navigate.

Still, some users of the old site might find the transition difficult. “Change is hard, even when the change is for the better,” Nilsen said. “If you’re used to accomplishing a certain task without thinking, and now everything looks different, you may not welcome the new look at first. Please keep an open mind. If you have ideas about how to improve our online presence, we want to hear them.”

Kudos, comments and suggestions can be sent to dhhswebmaster@ncmail.net . ■

2008 OES Summer Institute is a Success

Four times since 2004, the Office of Education Services (OES) has sponsored a Summer Institute to provide a unique opportunity for staff from the Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf in Wilson (ENCSD), the N.C. School for the Deaf in Morganton (NCSD), and the Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh (GMS) to come together to learn about each other and develop new skills to help meet students’ needs. From July 21 through 24, staff from all three schools gathered at ENCSD to live in the dormitories and participate in workshops to learn new skills and information to meet the challenging and changing needs of the students who attend the schools. Staff had the opportunity to debrief and share observations at shared meals and dinner out on Wednesday night.

Dormitory staff, teachers, teacher assistants, interpreters, principals, and

residential life directors participated in sessions ranging from “Gang Awareness” to “Using Study Island as an Assessment Tool” to “Managing Classroom Behavior.” While some staff from OES and the schools led sessions, outside participants from the Attorney General’s Office, the Pitt County Sheriff’s Department, and other state and local agencies also delivered interesting and useful workshops.

Staff participated in a keynote session on Thursday morning where Dr. Dwight Pearson, OES superintendent, discussed the advantages that technology brings to students with sensory impairments. This discussion was preceded by a video entitled “Shift Happens,” which highlighted how quickly technology is changing the world in which our students will live and work. Dr. Pearson challenged the group to think about the newly developed OES mission

statement. In addition he addressed several priorities for the new school year: how to increase access to effective instructional programs for every student; how to use technology as a tool to enhance student performance and organizational effectiveness; how to demonstrate excellence through high standards for students and staff; and how to create a higher level of accountability for students, staff and families in the total educational process. Dr. Pearson opened a dialogue with staff about their concerns and needs to make the priorities realities in the coming year.

Staff gathered for a final meal before returning to their summer vacations. Students return to the residential schools on Sunday, Aug. 17 with classes beginning on Monday, Aug. 18. ■

THE Cultural Competency CORNER

By Gloria Sánchez, Latino Public Information Officer



Thinking Web Content in Spanish

This month DHHS unveiled our new Spanish central website: espanol.ncdhhs.gov.

Spanish speakers are an emerging, diverse population online. In the United States, most Latino Internet users are 40 years old and younger and navigate in both languages – English and Spanish. Blogs are very popular with Latinos since they offer a sense of connection and immediate communication exchange that sometimes is missing in their local physical communities. Podcasts are also very popular among Spanish speakers, as are the use of cell phones and MP3 players. However, most Latino Spanish-speaking households still report a low use of high-speed Internet access.

The use of public government websites in Spanish is a growing trend among Latinos, and most federal agencies as well as some state departments offer excellent information in this language. One-third of the 19 million U.S. Latinos who went online in 2007 visited government websites, and most of them preferred content in Spanish.

Here are some tips for those divisions and programs who wish to contribute to espanol.ncdhhs.gov:

- Provide information that answers these questions: what service is provided, who is eligible, how to apply, and contacts.
- Know your audience. Be specific about program services requirements such as age, income, area, citizenship or immigration status.
- Collaborate across divisions and programs to deliver web content and avoid duplication.
- Organize content in a simple manner.
- Link to outside Spanish resources, especially federal government websites. If you are linking to English information, make sure to note “en ingles” (in English) after the title in the link. The Centers for Disease Control, the National Institutes of Health, and Medline Plus have wonderful resources in Spanish and are great links. Links to nonprofits are sometimes appropriate, if they follow guidance in our departmental website policy. Links to commercial sites are generally inappropriate.
- Images should be appropriate and with low resolution. They should load fast.
- Provide resources in Spanish – if your program provides a toll-free information line or other phone number, make sure that you have the capability to answer calls in Spanish. Otherwise, you might want to refer them to the CARE-LINE or the N.C. Family Health Resource Line who answer questions in Spanish in a variety of health and human services. (NOTE: Please contact the DHHS Office of Citizen Services or the N.C. Healthy Start Foundation, respectively, before using their numbers – they will need relevant information from you first in order to answer people’s questions.)
- If you make changes to your English web content, do not forget to make corresponding changes to your Spanish web content.

Promote our bilingual department website with the Latino community and make sure to include the Spanish home page (espanol.ncdhhs.gov) in all Spanish-language publications and other appropriate materials or opportunities. Don’t miss any opportunity to draw attention to our site. ■

Adoption Profile

Introducing Tareic

Tareic is a charming young man with a great deal of tenacity and courage. He is relatively open with his feelings and expresses himself in a respectful way. He has terrific manners and is nearly always polite. Tareic is a great athlete and enjoys playing most sports, particularly basketball. Going to the beach, to the mall, to the movies, and swimming are other activities that Tareic enjoys. He would like to be a professional basketball player, a police officer, or create video games when he grows up.

Tareic attends special educational classes at school where he is better able to stay focused and comply with the rules of conduct. He attends counseling to help him learn more appropriate methods of expressing his feelings and frustrations. He has made a great deal of progress with this and the majority of the time he is compliant and courteous.



Tareic, b. September 3, 1991

A Family for Tareic

Tareic requires an adoptive family that can devote a great deal of attention to him and provide him with structure and consistency. He enjoys the company of other children and would prefer to have a brother or sister. With the support and encouragement of his current foster family, Tareic has shown that he is ready to be part of a permanent, loving family.

For more information on this child or adoption and foster care, in general, call NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network toll free at 1-877-NCKIDS-1 (1-877-625-4371). ■