



EmployeeUPDATE

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

September: National Preparedness Month

If Hurricane Fay's recent multiple visits to Florida were not enough to get you to think about disaster preparedness, then the fact that September is National Preparedness Month may not impress you either. But hurricane season has just begun in earnest, so NOW is a good time to think about preparing for the worst.

North Carolina has hurricanes, mudslides, nor'easters, severe thunder-

storms, floods, ice storms, forest and peat-bog fires, tornadoes and droughts. We have also experienced factory explosions, hazardous waste blazes, an anthrax crisis, and other man-made disasters.

So, do you have an emergency supply kit? An emergency plan for your family? Do you know how to prepare for hurricanes and other threats, or know where to go to get information to do so?

If your answer is "no" to any of these questions, then why? It's easy, and government agencies can help.

Through its *Ready* Campaign, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security promotes disaster preparedness and makes it easier for us to take the steps to save ourselves, our families and our friends when

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September is...
National Preparedness Month
Get a Kit, Make a Plan, Be Informed and Get Involved



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emergencies occur. Their website, www.ready.gov, has lots of information to help people prepare. Of special note is their webpage designed to help kids get ready for disasters, appropriately called Ready Kids. In this section of the website, a family of mountain lions help kids learn about preparedness – because who knows more about survival than mountain lions with names like Rex, Purcilla and Rory? Kids can also play games related to being prepared and answer trivia questions. (Did you know that mountain lions don't roar, they purr?)

North Carolina's Department of Crime Control and Public Safety has also created an excellent website titled Ready North Carolina, located at readync.org. This site tackles preparedness problems from three key perspectives: how to make a plan, how to build a kit, and how to get involved to help others through volunteer agencies. While you won't

find any mountain lions on this website, you will find a great deal of North Carolina specific information, along with handy checklists to help you make sure you have everything you need for almost every situation imaginable.

Our own department also has hurricane preparedness websites in English (www.ncdhhs.gov/docs/hurricane.htm) and Spanish (www.ncdhhs.gov/docs/hurricanes.htm) with other helpful information, tools, and links, including a handy, printable "Family Disaster Plan" that covers many different kinds of emergencies (www.ncdhhs.gov/docs/disasterplan.pdf).

The DHHS Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response (PHP&R) promotes preparedness on a daily basis through the innovative use of portable kiosks, computers with interactive programs to involve and teach people how to be ready for disasters. PHP&R

developed the "Be Ready!" disaster preparedness kiosks in 2006. They are distributed to the state's seven Public Health Regional Surveillance Teams and are available to county health departments to use at health fairs, conferences, county fairs, and any other venue where people gather.

With information in both English and Spanish, the kiosks are used to grab people's attention and help them learn about preparedness by simply touching the kiosk's computer screen. The idea is that after having seen how important it is to be prepared, people will be more motivated to look at the printed materials they take home with them.

The bottom line is that everyone should be taking steps to prepare for the worst. And like Rory the Mountain Lion says, "Being prepared is no cat-astrophe!" (OK, he didn't really say that, but he should have!) ■

Working as a team

Eric Montross, former standout player for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, visited with staff from the Governor Morehead School on August 15 for the 2008-09 school-year kick-off. Montross spoke to staff about teamwork and building a team; the visit coincided with Team Day as staff wore their favorite teams' colors. In an effort to make all the staff Tar Heels, Montross handed out UNC pompoms to everyone not wearing UNC's colors or apparel, highlighting that you can have diversity within a team and still support the same goal.



THE Cultural Competency CORNER

By Gloria Sánchez, Latino Public Information Officer



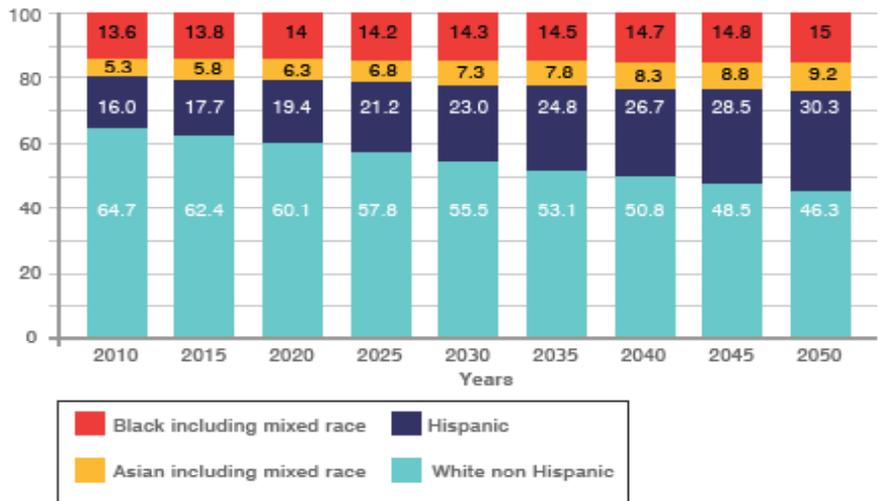
Cultural Competency: A Natural Move

The new U.S. Census Bureau demographic projections for 2042 might change the way the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services will serve and outreach minorities in the coming years.

The new Census projections revealed that minorities will become the majority by 2042. Latinos will make up 30 percent of the U.S. population, while white non-Hispanics will drop below 50 percent; the black population is projected to increase by just 1 percentage point to 15 percent. The Asian population will grow from 5 percent to 9 percent, and the American Indian and Alaska Native population is projected to rise from 1.6 percent to 2 percent. All the changes will show up first and fastest among children.

US POPULATION PROJECTIONS TO 2050

Percentage by race and Hispanic origin



SOURCE: US Census Bureau

The country's changing demographics will require that health and human care organizations across the nation become more culturally competent in addressing the needs of all populations.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Office of Minority Health have set the National Standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services

(CLAS). These standards address three key points:

- Culturally competent care
- Language access services
- Organizational support

A critical issue in the coming years will be developing the training and programs that promote cultural sensitivity, along with the understanding that diverse cultures respond differently to medical and social services. Health care professionals and social

workers need to be aware of ethnic beliefs and practices as well as language preferences and barriers.

Because language and culture play such a key role in how health and social services are delivered, incorporating cultural competency in our work can help to reduce disparities in health and human services and help us build a more fair and healthy society. ■

¡Hasta pronto!
Gloria Sanchez

Helping schools improve kids' diets and activity

North Carolina schools have a new way to track how they are doing in helping kids to eat better and be more physically active. The Successful Students Scorecard was launched this week at www.ncactionfor-healthykids.org to coincide with the start of school. The Scorecard is an online assessment tool to help schools measure their progress toward implementing Local Wellness Policy.

The scorecard is part of the *Successful Students Eat Smart and Move More* program. The program is led by the Division of Public Health and N.C. Action for Healthy Kids, a state branch of the national nonprofit dedicated to improving school food and physical activity environments and their effect on kids' health.

All 115 school districts in North Carolina are required by law to have a written Local Wellness Policy that addresses all foods available on the school campus – including foods and beverages available outside the cafeteria – as well as physical activity, nutrition education, and student wellness activities at the school. The *Successful Students Eat Smart and Move More* program helps schools and school districts fully implement, monitor and evaluate their local wellness policies.

The policies vary across the state. Some address only what the law requires, while more comprehensive policies include other provisions, such as staff wellness. Although these policies are district-wide, each school is responsible for implementing the policy.



The new scorecard will help school staff and administrators see how well they are doing in providing healthy school lunches and making foods healthier all over campus. It asks questions about foods and drinks sold in vending machines, through fundraisers, in concession stands, and meals served as part of school celebrations, as well as their cafeteria foods. The scorecard also provides feedback what is being done to make sure that students get adequate amounts of physical activity at school and on how the policy is being monitored.

Any school that completes the scorecard will be designated as a Successful Students School to show that it is dedicated to improving its students' health. Participating schools will receive a banner, certificate, and promotional materials.

“We find ourselves at a critical place with kids' eating and physical activity habits,” said Kathy Andersen, co-chair of N.C. Action for Healthy Kids. “Our hope is that once schools receive the Successful Students School designation, they will use the feedback from the scorecard to continue to make positive changes in these areas. We have two and three times more overweight and obese kids in our state today than we did 20 years ago, and it's not going to get better unless we all work together – families, schools, and communities – to make sure kids get plenty of activity and eat balanced diets.”

According to state and national data, North Carolina children and youth are increasingly overweight and obese, have poor eating habits, and get too little activity. One in four 5- to 11-year-olds and nearly one in three 12- to 18-year-olds are overweight or obese. And, 50 percent of children eat one serving per day of French fries or potato chips, and nearly one in three eats two fast-food meals per week.

“Kids spend most of their waking hours at school,” said Heidi Carter, a Durham school board member who sits on the *Successful Students Eat Smart and Move More* advisory board. “They need to be active and eat well while they are there so they can feel good and do well in school. Studies show this to be true – it just makes sense. We all need to work to make sure this happens.” ■

Debbye Krueger honored by Academy



Debbye Krueger

Debbye Krueger of the Oral Health Section, Division of Public Health, was one of only six people from across the nation to be inducted into the American Academy of Dental Hygiene at its annual meeting in Chicago on July 31. ADHA is the largest national organization representing the professional interests of the more than 120,000 registered dental hygienists in the United States.

A member of the N.C. Oral Health Section's field staff, Krueger is a public health dental hygienist and educational consultant. She works in the Rowan-Salisbury Schools educating children on the benefits of good oral health and directs a preventive oral health program. She is also a speaker on the national level, presenting continuing education courses to dental professional groups and schools.

The Academy fosters continuing education, provides formal recognition of excellence in the practice of dental hygiene; and recognizes distinguished community service. It is the only organization that approves continuing education courses for dental hygiene nationwide. Members of AADH must also belong to the American Dental Hygienists' Association.

"Debbye is an enthusiastic, committed public health dental hygienist who strongly promotes dental health," said Rebecca King, Oral Health Section chief. "We are so pleased to see her dedication and hard work recognized on the national level." ■

Mosquitoes can spread illness; protect yourself from bites

With the hurricane season comes rain, and with the rain come mosquitoes.

Over the past several weeks, the state's sentinel chicken flocks—birds that are tested regularly for exposure to mosquito-borne illnesses such as West Nile virus—are showing an increase in viruses that can make people and animals sick, particularly Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). Five horses and one emu have also been reported with EEE. An increase in mosquito-borne diseases in animals means that more people are likely to be exposed as well. As of Aug. 27, four people in North Carolina had tested positive for the LaCrosse virus, which is also spread by mosquitoes.

To avoid human illness, Public Health officials are urging North Carolinians to take simple steps to prevent mosquito bites and to reduce mosquito breeding conditions around the home.

"This time of the year provides ideal breeding conditions for mosquitoes," said State Epidemiologist Dr. Jeff Engel. "Mosquitoes can be more than just a nuisance – they can also make people seriously ill. Now is the time to fight the bite!"

Exposure to mosquitoes can be limited by wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants and by using insect repellent, Engel said. The Centers for Disease Control and

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Prevention (CDC) recommends several repellent ingredients against mosquitoes – DEET, picaridin and oil of lemon eucalyptus. However, oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years old, says the CDC. Engel reminded consumers to look for products that contain the CDC-recommended ingredients and to carefully read and follow all label instructions.

Another key to avoiding bites is reducing the numbers of mosquitoes around people's homes, according to Dr. Nolan Newton, chief the Public Health Pest Management Section of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

"You can make your backyard a whole lot less mosquito-friendly by getting rid of any containers that hold water. That will take away mosquito breeding grounds," Newton said.

"Take a good look at your to spot potential problem areas," he said. "Things like bird baths, old tires, planters, toys and even small containers like tin cans can give mosquitoes a place to thrive. Cover rain barrels with tight-fitting screening and clean out birdbaths at least twice a week."

For additional information regarding mosquitoes and mosquito-borne illness, search for "mosquito" on the DHHS website at www.ncdhhs.gov or the CDC site at www.cdc.gov, or go to the following websites: www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/arbovirus (DHHS) and www.deh.enr.state.nc.us/phpm (DENR). ■

Employees, contractors and volunteers take note

Laws require separation of politics, workplace

As we enter the peak of this political season, we are reminding all DHHS employees, contractors and volunteers that while the department encourages participation in the political process, it is very important to keep those activities removed from the work place.

DHHS receives much of its funding from the federal government and must comply with the Federal Hatch Act. The act covers both state as well as local agencies who receive federal funds either directly or as pass-through funding. Penalties for violating the act include requiring the agency (in our case, DHHS) to either "remove the employee or forfeit a portion of the federal assistance equal to two years salary of the employee."

As a DHHS employee, contractor, or volunteer, please remember:

- You may not take any active part in managing a campaign, or campaign for political office, or otherwise engage in any political activity prohibited by federal or state law, nor engage in political activities while on duty or within any period of time during which you are being paid to perform services for the state.
- You may not use the authority of your position or utilize work time or state equipment, information systems, funds, supplies, vehicles, or other resources to secure support for or oppose any candidate, party, or issue in a partisan election. For example, sending or receiving politically-related e-mails on state computers is prohibited.
- You may not promise rewards or threaten losses to encourage or coerce anyone to support or contribute to any political issue, candidate, or party.
- You may not post signs, notices, or other materials related to any national, state, or local political party or candidate in or on property owned, leased, or used by the department in the conduct of official business.

Please be sensitive to those around you. Political conversations, badges, buttons, emblems, posters, and other political items are not only inappropriate in the workplace, but may be offensive to others.

If a public issue involves some aspect of your job, you must follow the proper procedures and use the appropriate channels for distributing such information. The Office of Public Affairs and designated program individuals have

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primary responsibility for informing the media and appropriate concerned citizens when necessary. Department opinions and statements must follow this regimen.

For further information you may refer to the *DHHS Political Activities* policy. The policy is accessible through

the following Internet link: http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dhs/pol-50/man/Pol2_ER_HatchAct.pdf.

Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

If you are in doubt as to whether any particular activity is prohibited, you should present the matter in writing to your immediate supervisor and refrain from that activity until advised by your supervisor. ■

DHHS WELLNESS INITIATIVE

This month, we thought many DHHS employees might be interested in hearing about some of the creative wellness activities DHHS wellness committees have recently provided for employees at their agencies. If you are interested in these types of organized activities and programs at your workplace, let your wellness committee know.



DSS Walking Club members (L-R) Alycia Gaither, Cheryl Passarelli, Dawn Cambridge, Leah Johnson and Glorina Stallworth head off on a walk.

Aerobics at J. Iverson Riddle

A number of our agencies provide some type of fitness class for employees. Aerobic classes have been available to employees at the J. Iverson Riddle Developmental Center in Morganton for a number of years. Staff member Vicki Harper, who taught aerobics at a local fitness center, provides classes three days a week and often an extra class on Fridays. She offers a variety of workouts including step aerobics, kick boxing, light weights, and Pilates-type exercises. Wendy Reynolds, the wellness representative at the Center, tells us that staff who attend are grateful to Vicki for giving them the opportunity to work out without having to leave their job site.

DSS Walking Club Kick-Off

Walking during the workday has been the activity that the greatest number of DHHS employees have participated in since the start of our DHHS Wellness Program. The Division of Social Services in the Abermarle Building in downtown Raleigh celebrated a kickoff for its new Walking Club in July. Walking Club members were provided with downtown walking maps and pedometers to help with tracking their miles. (Walking maps for almost any location can be easily created at www.gmap-pedometer.com!) The Walking Club has daily, 15-minute group walks, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. In addition to the short walks, the group participates in a 30-minute walk during lunch time three days a week.

Although members are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the group walks, some walk outside

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of the group walks and track their miles. Members submit their miles on a weekly basis, and a spreadsheet is maintained to keep up with the number of miles they walk, both as a group and on an individual basis. For the three weeks of July, as a group they walked 265 miles. The DSS Walking Club currently has about 15 members that are actively walking, and more members are joining each week.

Employees Take Wellness Hike

Staff at JFK ADATC in Black Mountain decided to increase their physical activity and enjoy some of our state's beautiful natural scenery by planning a hike to a local waterfall, Tom's Creek in Marion. Based on survey results, the group decided on a Sunday afternoon and extended the invitation to families, friends, and pets. Linda Wikarek, the Center's wellness representative, reports that 11 people and 8 pets turned out and everyone had a grand time and new friendships were started. Besides the increased physical activity, participants commented on how relaxing it was. They found they were able to accomplish the original goal of moving more but also found that the event decreased stress. Staff have since completed another hike to Pearson Falls in Saludia (see www.pearsonfalls.org) and are planning another hiking event as soon as the weather cools down a little.



Umbrellas Support a Smoke-Free Workplace

State offices are now tobacco-free, and many agencies ban smoking within a perimeter of their buildings. Unfortunately, when it rains, some state buildings continue to have a problem with smokers congregating in

doorways. This allows smoke to enter the building and forces other employees to inhale secondhand smoke when entering or exiting the building.

Public Health offices located at the Six Forks Campus in Raleigh came up with an innovative strategy to address the problem of smoking in doorways on rainy days. Umbrellas donated by the N.C. Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch were placed at the back door of each building with a sign reminding employees of the campus smoking policy. The umbrellas are printed with information on the N.C. Quitline. This project was a joint effort with the wellness program providing umbrella holders. In addition to removing smoking from doorway areas, the umbrellas can also be used by walkers to continue their daily fitness walk during inclement weather.

This reminds me to again share information about the great tobacco cessation resources offered by our Tobacco Prevention and Control Program:

North Carolina Tobacco Use Quitline:

Calling 1-800-QUIT NOW (1-800-784-8669) is free and confidential. The Quit coaches will help tobacco users develop a quit plan that works for them. There is a confidential web coach feature available for those who prefer working on a quit plan on the website. Coupling the expert services of the Quitline with cessation medications doubles one's chances of quitting and staying quit. And, the State Health Plan covers nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) through a voucher program. For more information about cessation medications, go to www.tobaccopreventionandcontrol.ncdhhs.gov/cessation/medications.htm.



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Adoption Profile

Introducing Aaliyah

According to her case worker, Aaliyah is a beautiful person, both inside and out. She can also be very silly and has a smile that will warm your heart. Aaliyah has a wonderful sense of humor and wants everyone around her to be happy. She is a popular and outgoing girl with lots of friends. Aaliyah loves animals and volunteers with a pet adoption agency during the summer. She likes to listen to music, shop for accessories, and watch dramatic TV shows like Oprah and Dr. Phil. Aaliyah's goal is to become a product designer and design the smallest, lightest cell phone for her own cell phone company.

Aaliyah receives supportive services at school where, along with her personalized education plan and treatment team, she has been so successful that she will soon transition into regular classes. Aaliyah has also



Aaliyah, b. June 30, 1995

made terrific progress in other areas of her life. She often presents as very mature and does an excellent job of advocating for herself. Aaliyah needs

to continue counseling and working on trusting the adults in her life.

A Family for Aaliyah

Although Aaliyah desires to be nurtured, her adoptive family must be patient and allow the time it will take for a comfortable relationship to develop naturally. Aaliyah is an intelligent and resilient child, and her adoptive family should be prepared for her to test their commitment to her. They must be mature and understand their strengths and weaknesses as parents, and be able to accept support from professionals in a way that will help them become a stronger family unit.

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

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Great new Web-based Quitting Help

through www.becomeanex.org. It's hard to quit tobacco use, but the Division of Public Health wants to be supportive. In the spring of 2008, N.C. DPH helped launch a national campaign called

"Become an EX." It helps tobacco users think about relearning those activities that are often done with a cigarette. We encourage all smokers interested in quitting to take advantage of this fun and interactive website by visiting www.becomeanex.org.