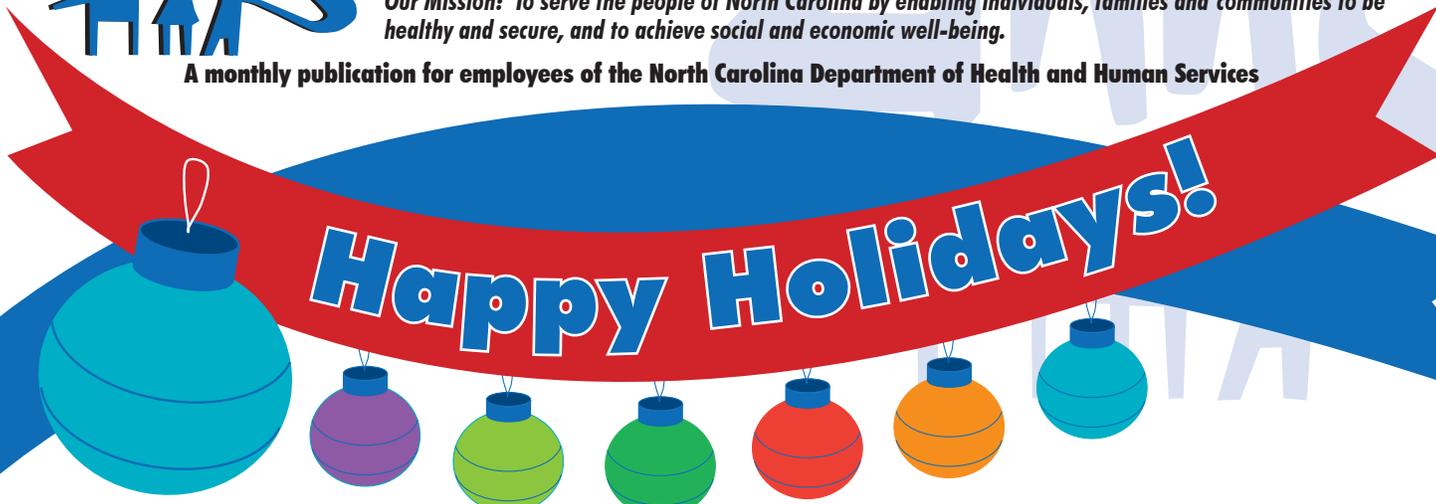


EmployeeUPDATE

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



Happy Holidays!

Dear DHHS Employees,

It has been quite a year. I did not want it to end without taking the opportunity to thank all of our Department of Health and Human Services employees for your service to the people of our state during 2009.

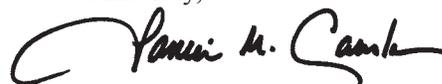
We have seen unprecedented budget reductions brought on by the worst economic conditions in our nation since the days of the Great Depression. We have, and continue to respond to the challenges of the H1N1 flu pandemic. We have been mandated by the General Assembly to reduce our Department budget by a \$1.7 billion. And, we continue to make every effort to minimize the effects that we know such large reductions will have on the vulnerable citizens who depend upon us for critical services. I am very proud of these efforts.

As we enter the holiday season I encourage each of you to pause and reflect on all that you have for which you can be thankful. I also ask, if you are able, that you find a way to help the less fortunate in your communities through donations to the hands-on charities that have direct contact with the needy, or through donation of some of your time off to assist those in need. There is no such thing as wasted effort in this area. All gifts of time, shared concern and food, clothes or other donations are always appreciated. What a blessing to be able to make a positive difference in a stranger's life.

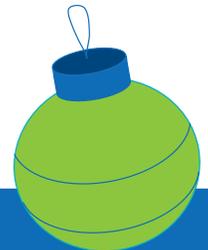
As I think back over the past year, I am in awe of all the wonderful associations renewed with my return to DHHS. I am thankful to have so many friends and so many caring people to work with who truly have the best interests of the citizens of North Carolina in their hearts.

As you prepare to celebrate your holidays in whatever ways your family and cultural traditions guide you, please be safe. My wife, Barbara, and I wish all of you the HAPPIEST OF HOLIDAYS and look forward to the challenges and successes of the New Year.

Sincerely,



Lanier M. Cansler, Secretary



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State health director takes H1N1 message to ACC sports

State Public Health Director Dr. Jeff Engel is taking the H1N1 message to Atlantic Coast Conference basketball fans this season to boost public education about preventing the spread of the virus.

At the season opener at Cameron Indoor Stadium for the Duke Blue Devils basketball team, Engel did an on-camera interview with Bob Rathbun, a Fox Sports play-by-play announcer, during half-time, as the Blue Devils took on UNC-Greensboro.

The Division of Public Health sees the TV exposure of high profile basketball games as a perfect opportunity to take the message of prevention for H1N1 directly to one of the largest groups at risk of getting H1N1: the young adult audience.

“It was the perfect gathering to share information on the causes, prevention and vaccination plan for H1N1,” Engel said. “This group, ranging in age from 16- 24 years old, is the target of many of our messages. If we can get the



Bob Rathbun of Fox Sports with Jeff Engel

information directly to this population we have accomplished one of the greatest points of our mission to protect the public health.”

The H1N1 public outreach media campaign on Fox Sports began with the Duke game in November and will continue throughout the ACC regular season with public service announcements during all Fox Sports coverage of ACC games and Charlotte Bobcats games.

Part of the media campaign also features a radio public service announce-

ment combining the voices of Elmo from Sesame Street and Gov. Bev Perdue to encourage citizens to use good personal hygiene and encouraging vaccinations as they become more available throughout the state.

“I am excited that we are able to reach thousands of citizens with direct messages about ways that they can protect themselves and their families from H1N1,” Engel added. “We are expecting the vaccine to become more widely available for all citizens during the month of January and

encourage everyone to get their vaccinations as soon as possible. Right now we are encouraging those in our high risk populations to receive vaccinations first.”

Target groups include: pregnant women; healthcare/emergency medical workers; people between six months and 24 years old; people who live or care for children younger than six months; adults 25-64 with chronic health or compromised immune system. ■

– Renee McCoy,
DHHS Public Affairs

Medicaid handles influx of H1N1 cases

H1N1 flu is nothing to sneeze at – as staff at the Division of Medical Assistance can attest.

The pandemic influenza virus is known to have sickened thousands of North Carolinians, 45 fatally, as of mid-November. The population of Medicaid recipients, which represents about one in five North Carolina citizens, has also taken a hard hit from the virus.

An analysis of Medicaid claims over the past five quarters (see table) tells part of the story. The claims are for hospital emergency room visits in which influenza was diagnosed – either as the primary diagnosis or as the first, second or third diagnosis coded on the claim form.

To be clear, a diagnosis code of influenza on a claim form does not mean the patient was lab tested to corroborate the diagnosis. As flu watchers already know, few suspected flu patients are tested for a strain of the seasonal flu virus or for novel H1N1. Instead, a network of select providers across the state sends samples to the State Laboratory of Public Health, mostly to monitor the spread of the disease.

The coding, however, does indicate why patients are visiting the ER. And flu or flu-like illness is sending Medicaid patients to the ER in dramatically higher numbers.

In the third quarter (July-September) of calendar year 2008, for example, 59 Medicaid recipients were diagnosed with flu. (One recipient probably made a repeat visit, explaining how 59 Medicaid ID numbers accounted for 60 claims.) But in the same quarter of 2009, flu diagnoses were nearly 80 times higher – surpassing 4,500.

Division of Public Health (DPH) statistics tell much the same story. Patients visiting physicians’ offices with an influenza-like illness typically account for far fewer than 1 percent of all patients during the early to mid weeks of October. But in October 2009, more than 5 percent of patient visits were for influenza-like illness. By mid-November 2009, that percentage had dipped to just above 3, in keeping with DPH’s report of a decline overall in flu cases.

Whether the decline continues or if it will reverse the trend and climb during the winter months, as is characteristic of seasonal flu outbreaks, remains to be seen. Also awaiting is an accounting of the costs of H1N1. DMA, in a year notable for legislatively mandated budget reductions, reports paying \$5.5 million above normal for flu claims – in October 2009 alone. ■

– Brad Deen,
DHHS Public Affairs



www.flu.nc.gov

7/1/08-9/30/09

EmergencyRoom visits coded with flu*- N.C. Division of Medical Assistance

Quarter	PRIMARY DIAGNOSIS ONLY		1st-3rd DIAGNOSIS	
	# distinct MID	# distinct claims	# distinct MID	# distinct claims
3Q08	37	37	59	60
4Q08	171	175	231	237
1Q09	2509	2569	2965	3057
2Q09	625	646	748	777
3Q09	4040	4099	4545	4622

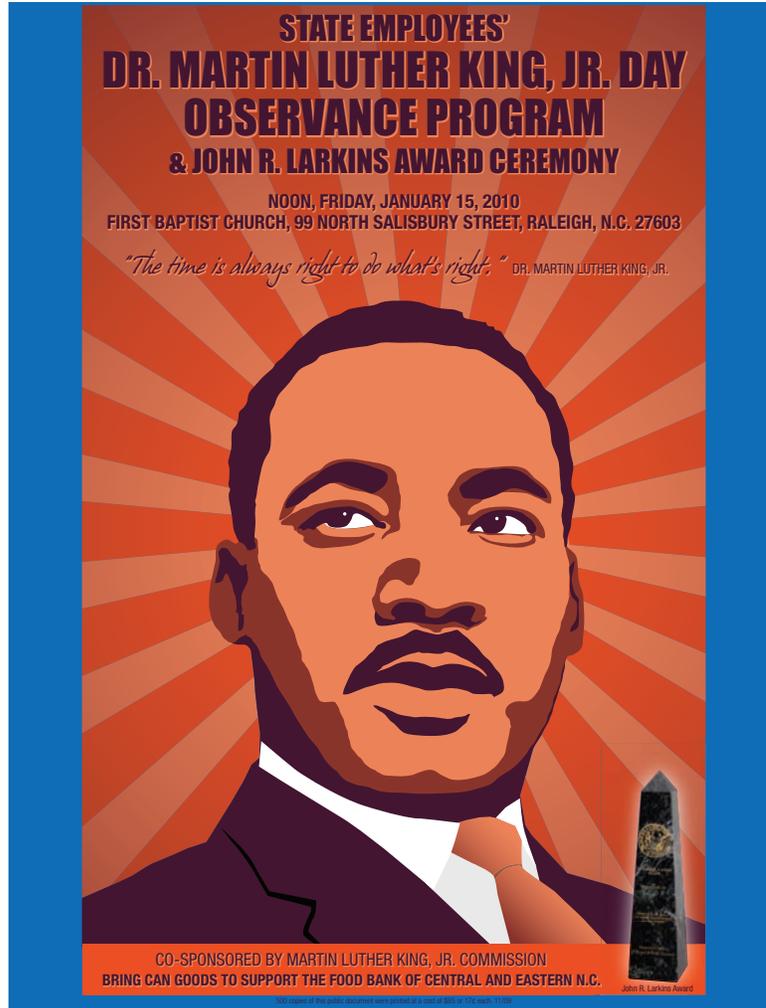
* Codes used:
487- Influenza, 4870 - Influenza w/ pneumonia, 4871 - Flu w/ resp manifest, 4878 - Flu w/ manifestation

Larkins Award deadline nears; employees' MLK Day observance needs volunteers

State employees have an opportunity this month to nominate one of their own for special recognition.

The deadline for nominations for the John R. Larkins Award is Thursday, Dec. 17. The award is a tribute to a permanent North Carolina state employee – with two or more years of service – whose contributions to human and race relations in the workplace or community are especially noteworthy and exemplary.

Established in 1998 as one of the state's highest honors for human service, the Larkins Award is presented annually during the State Employees' Martin Luther King, Jr., Day Observance



John R. Larkins Award

One of North Carolina's
Highest Honors for Human Service



Dr. John R. Larkins
(1914-1980)



*Pioneer in the Quest for Equal
Opportunities for All Citizens*

Program and John R. Larkins Award Ceremony.

Additional information is available on Gov. Bev Perdue's Web page at www.governor.state.nc.us/events/mlkday.aspx. The Web page has a link to a brochure about the Larkins Award that includes a nomination form and instructions. There also is a letter from the governor, and a letter from Kathie C. Pierce, who chairs the MLK Observation Day program. She may be contacted for additional information

regarding the award at 919-733-5201.

The annual MLK Day observance will be held at noon on Friday, Jan. 15 at the First Baptist Church of Raleigh, 99 N. Salisbury St in downtown Raleigh.

Singers are needed for the State Employees Choir, led by Lloyd Inman Lloyd.inman@ncmail.net. Hosts and hostesses also are needed. Contact Mary Johnson at jmh22@doc.state.nc.us. ■

– Jim Jones,
DHHS Public Affairs

**Worried the Holidays
will weigh you down?**



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www.MyEatSmartMoveMore.com.**

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- ▼ Log on to read experts' advice
- ▼ Download a food diary, activity log and weight log to track your progress

November 23 through December 31

(Almost) never too late for a Combined Campaign contribution

DHHS employees who still wish to make a contribution to the State Employees Combined Campaign (SECC) still have time, but time is running out.

If you wish to make a donation, late contributions still may be made directly to the campaign (SECC99 Courier).

DHHS campaign department executives are wrapping up their efforts, and the 2009 campaign is nearing the finish line. Details about the campaign are available on the Internet at www.ncsecc.org/.

For those who already have contributed, a big thank-you from all the department executives across DHHS. Your contributions bring immeasurable relief through the many human services agencies that benefit. ■





THE Cultural Competency CORNER

By Gloria Sánchez, Latino Public Information Officer

New Year, New You?

The New Year is the day that marks the end of one year and the beginning of another. In countries that use the Gregorian calendar, our calendar, the New Year is celebrated on Jan. 1. And as 2010 approaches, many of us will take the time to think of our lives and refocus on our health.

We make resolutions about quitting smoking, exercising more and eating better. These are probably some of the most common resolutions around the globe. And although some of our New Year's resolutions are the same, the way we welcome and celebrate a new year can vary depending on our culture. Many people believe that the food they eat on New Year's Eve will bring them good luck and good fortune in the coming year. Here are a few New Year's traditions and lucky foods from around the world:

Brazilians believe that lentils signify wealth, so on the first day of the New Year they serve lentil soup or lentils and rice. Italians also eat lentils with sausages, symbolizing money.

In Mexico, Venezuela, Cuba, Ecuador, Peru and Spain, when the clock strikes midnight they eat one grape and make one wish with each toll - representing a wish for each coming month - to bring good luck throughout the New Year. Sometimes the grapes are washed down with wine.

In the Philippines, people collect seven different types of round fruits. The round shape of the fruits symbolizes money and seven is believed to be a lucky number. Set on the dinner table on New Year's Eve, the fruits are believed to bring prosperity and sound financial status for the coming year.

It's believed that the more greens one eats the larger one's fortune next. The Danes eat stewed kale sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon, the Germans consume sauerkraut (cabbage) while in the southern United States, collards are the green of choice. Another lucky food in our country is black-eyed peas.

A tradition on New Year's Eve for Chinese families is to gather and spend the evening preparing dumplings. It is common to hide a coin in one of the dumplings. Whoever gets the dumpling with the coin will supposedly have good luck in the coming year. The next Chinese New Year is celebrated Feb. 14, 2010.

Eating pork on New Year's symbolizes progress. Roast suckling pig or other pork dishes are served for New Year's in Cuba, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Sweden United States, Hungary, and Austria. Austrians decorate the table with miniature pigs made of marzipan.

Whatever lucky foods you eat on New Year's Eve or New Year's Day, I wish you all lots of health and the best for 2010, and I hope you can also stick to your resolutions to improve your health and eat better!

¡Feliz Año Nuevo! ■

Jarrett takes first and third place awards from NCAGIO

Tracey Turner Jarrett, a graphic artist for the DHHS Public Affairs Office, is a double winner in the North Carolina Association of Government Information Officers “Excellence in Communications” competition for 2009.

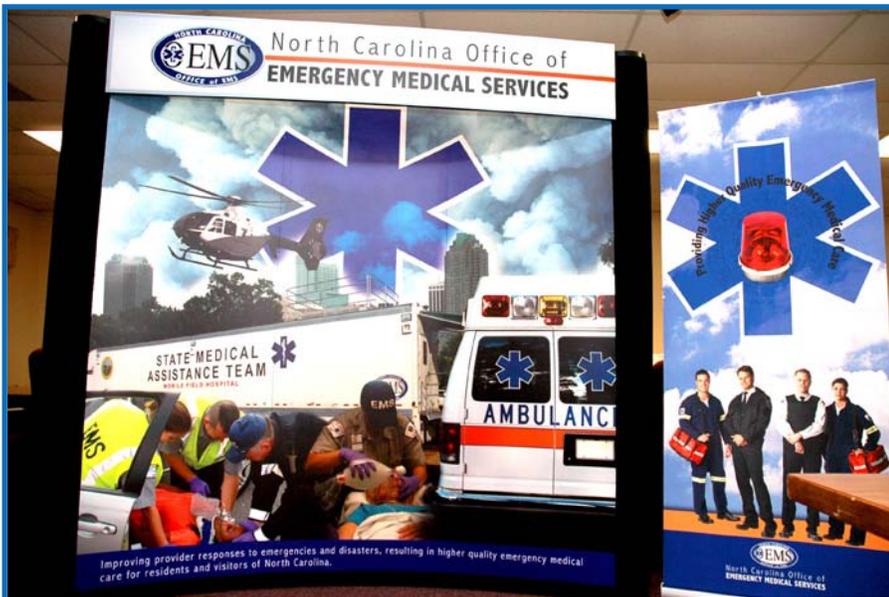
Jarrett took first place in the Audiovisual-Exhibits category for an exhibit she prepared for the N.C. Office of Emergency Medical Services. She also won a third place in the Visual Graphics category for a QUITLINENC Advertisement. Jarrett joined the Public Affairs staff in April 2007.



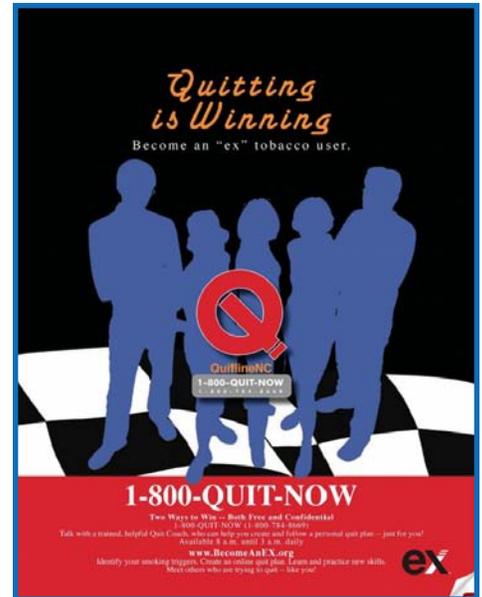
Jarrett shows awards

-Jim Jones, photo

NCAGIO is a nonprofit group of public affairs professionals in state and local government agencies in North Carolina. ■



First Place: Audiovisual-Exhibits category for “OEMS Exhibit Display Unit”



Third Place: Visual-Graphics category for “QuitlineNC”

Disability Determination Services honors vets

North Carolina Disability Determination Services honored 39 employees who served our nation in various capacities in the military with a ceremony on Tuesday, Nov.10.

Each former serviceman and service-woman was given an opportunity to speak of their experiences and each was presented a certificate of appreciation recognizing his and her service. The veterans' stories inspired the audience.

One such soldier, Dr. William Farley, captivated the crowd with his experiences during World War II. Farley served in the Army Medical Corps for three years, assigned to the Hospital Clearing Company.

On April 1, 1945 he arrived at Naha, the Philippines to begin a tour of medical service. That afternoon, his unit was evacuated due to a bombing that wounded 600 soldiers. Farley tells of the ambulance pulling up with a young soldier lying wounded inside. The soldier had lost both arms and legs in the blast. Farley cared for this soldier until he was stable enough to be transferred back to the United States. Years later, the soldier was the subject of cover story of a major magazine.

Farley was stationed in Mendora on Aug. 6, 1945 when the United States dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and the war soon ended. He later transferred to a hospital in Manila before returning to the states. At the time of



DDS veterans gathered for recognition.

his retirement, Farley was a captain.

Today, he is a full-time medical consultant at NCDSS and the oldest full-time state employee, at age 90. His supervisor, Sheila Bennett stated: "At an age when most of his peers have long since retired, Dr. Farley continues to work hard for the citizens of North Carolina. Dr. Farley's energy and continuing enthusiasm for the job are admirable. His work ethic and dedication remain at the highest level and serve as a positive example for others. It is a pleasure to work with him."

November 11 was originally set as a legal holiday to commemorate the end of World War I on Nov.11, 1918. The holiday was first known as Armistice



Dr. Farley

Day. However, in 1954, after our country had been through World War II and the Korean War, Congress changed the holiday to "Veterans Day." On June 1, 1954, Nov.11 became the official day to honor American veterans of all wars.

DHHS salutes Dr. William Farley, and of the department's employees who are veterans for their dedication to the United States and for their service to the citizens of North Carolina. ■

Public Health, OEMS winners at GIS Day in Raleigh

GIS? What's that?? "GIS" is shorthand for geographic information system – a way to turn all sorts of complicated data into pictures, maps or graphs. GIS computer programs enable government agencies, schools and others to view, understand, question, interpret, and visualize complex data in many different ways that reveal relationships, patterns, and trends.

Gov. Bev Perdue proclaimed Nov. 18 "GIS Day" in North Carolina, and events were held across the state. The City of Raleigh, Wake County and state government agencies brought huge posters, computers and other displays to downtown Raleigh to show visitors how GIS helps answer questions and solve problems.

Their demos showed how GIS can be used to analyze disease patterns and possible causes, determine the impact of hazardous waste sites on the health of residents, track crimes, plan community growth, locate people who call 911 – even inside public buildings, determine evacuation routes and shelter needs in case of emergencies, assess damage from adverse weather events, find natural resource deposits such as oil or natural gas, and to model the effects on communities from new industries, construction or other environmental changes.

First prize went to DHHS's State Center for Health Statistics for its GIS poster on 2009 influenza activity in North Carolina, with maps and a graph showing changes in flu activity in the state, nation and world, along with tips for staying healthy.

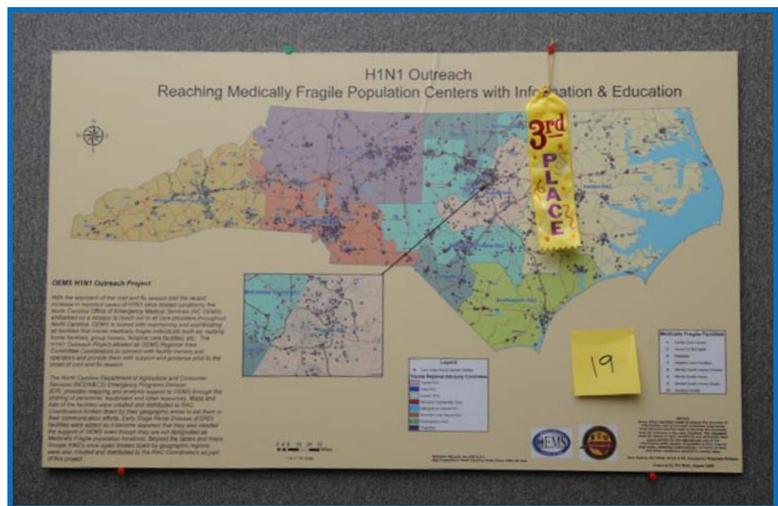
The DHHS Office of Emergency Medical Services took the third prize for its H1N1 outreach project, "Reaching Medically Fragile Population Centers with Information and Education." They mapped the location of facilities for medically fragile people – including hospitals, adult and aged care homes,

mental care facilities and renal disease facilities – to enable regional OEMS to provide those facilities with H1N1 flu education and support to help protect their patients or residents and staff. ■

– Carol Schriber,
DHHS Public Affairs



Dianne Enright (top right), head of Health and Spatial Analysis at SCHS, explains the progress of H1N1 flu in the state to Alexander Johnson, left, and his mother, Elise Johnson, right.



OEMS mapped out facilities across the state that needed to receive H1N1 flu education to protect their medically fragile clients.

- Jim Jones, photos

Advocacy Awards go to two public health leaders

The North Carolina Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (NCAAHPERD) has honored public health leaders Dr. Ruth Petersen and Dr. Paul Buescher with 2009 Advocacy Awards at its annual meeting in Winston-Salem in November.

Petersen is currently head of the Chronic Disease and Injury Section of the DHHS Division of Public Health. A statistician, Buescher retired as director of the DHHS State Center for Health Statistics in September after a 29-year career with the agency.

NCAAHPERD is one of the oldest professional associations in North Carolina dedicated to the advancement of research and education in physical activity and health fields. It provides advocacy, professional development, and unity in those areas to enhance and promote the health of North Carolinians. Its awards recognize outstanding contributions to those efforts in North Carolina.

The 2009 NCAAHPERD Advocacy Award cites Petersen for her leadership in the fight against childhood obesity and overweight. Since joining the N.C. Division of Public Health, she has worked with partners such as the N.C. Department of Public Instruction and the N.C. Institute of Medicine to address chronic disease prevention issues in a comprehensive way across the state and to align recommendations for maximum impact.

Petersen received her MD and MPH from the University of North Carolina. She trained in obstetrics and gynecology in New York and served as medical director at a health department in that state. She returned to North Carolina to complete the UNC Preventive Medicine Residency and a postdoctoral fellowship in health services prior to coming to DHHS.

Paul Buescher was given the 2009 NCAAHPERD Advocacy Award for his efforts and assistance in accepting the organization's In-School Prevention of Obesity and Disease (IsPOD) project at SCHS and getting the IsPOD data program up and running beginning in 2007. IsPOD measures student attitudes toward physical education, levels of physical activity, screen time and eating behaviors. The data include online survey answers from more than one million students as well as FitnessGram assessments of student physical fitness for tracking over four or five years.

Buescher began work at SCHS in 1980 as a statistician. In 1993 he was named head of the Statistical Services Unit, and became director of the State Center in 2005 after serving in progressively responsible roles. He is highly committed to excellence and improvement in health statistics services in support of the mission of public health, improving the health and lives of North Carolinians. ■



Dr. Ruth Peterson and Dr. Paul Buescher

– Carol Schriber,
DHHS Public Affairs

Child care providers join with the state to celebrate 10 years of star-rated child care licenses

The Division of Child Development and the North Carolina Child Care Commission welcomed several special guests to Raleigh on Nov. 5. The first nine child care providers licensed under the state's star-rated license system came to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the system.

“We have seen a marked improvement in the standards of care and learning in our child care centers and family child care homes,” said Deb Cassidy, director of the N.C. Division of Child Development. “The star-rated system has become a model nationally for other states working to improve the quality of the care provided to young children.”

The state launched the star-rated system with the intent of providing parents searching for child care with a better measure of the available facilities. Benefits under this license system include raising the educational environments of child care centers and family care homes while providing facilities opportunities for growth and enhanced services. The star-rated system provides child care programs with specific steps to increase their ability to serve children.

The rating system assigns points to centers and family child care homes based on staff education level, facility/size ratios and programmatic standards that are provided.

“Research has shown that during the first three years of a child’s life, their brain development is crucial to their educational progress later in life,” said

Cassidy. “Combining this with the fact that North Carolina has one of the highest rates of working mothers in the country underscores the need for all our child care centers and homes to be not only safe and clean but also educational environments for the children being served.”

In June 2009 there were 8,767 licensed centers and family care homes in North Carolina serving a total 267,157 children.

Under the star-rated license system, facilities can receive one to five stars.

A rating of one star means that a child care program meets North Carolina’s minimum licensing standards for child care. Programs that choose to voluntarily meet higher standards can apply for a two- to five-star license.

The star-rated system was a finalist for the Innovations in American Government Award from Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in 2004.

For more information about North Carolina’s star-rate child care license, go to www.ncchildcare.net. ■

– Lori Walston,
DHHS Public Affairs



Left to right, Claire Tate, chairperson, N.C. Child Care Commission; DHHS Deputy Secretary Maria Spaulding; Belinda McCray, Praise Child Care Center; Mary White, Loving Care; Wanda Mitchell, director of Hattie Daniels Child Care Center; Rashme Nahkre, former director of Hattie Daniels Child Care Center; Helen Moshfegh, Stepping Stones; and Deb Cassidy, DCD director.

Exum appointed new head of O'Berry Center

Deborah Exum is the newly appointed director of O'Berry Neuro-Medical Treatment Center in Goldsboro. Her appointment was announced Nov. 16 by DHHS Secretary Lanier Cansler.

"I am excited to be a part of the secretary's plan to provide quality customer service for the South Central Region," Exum said. "Enhancing quality of life, providing treatment with dignity and respect, and offering choices and options that support individuality of our individuals will be my priorities at O'Berry."

Exum served as assistant to the director at the O'Berry Center for the past three years.

A veteran of more than 15 years of state service, she has worked at the O'Berry center since 1994. She helped lead O'Berry's transition from a developmental disabilities center to a specialized nursing facility focused on providing person-centered care for medically fragile, developmentally



Deborah Exum, director of O'Berry Neuro-Medical Treatment Center

disabled individuals this past year. As an assistant to the director, she led efforts in the center's strategic planning, and facility-wide policy development. She was also instrumental in working with foundation support groups, community-based client programs, and local business and industry.

Upon her appointment, Director of State-Operated Facilities Luckey Welsh called Exum "a lifelong advocate for people with disabilities. Deborah Exum has dedicated her career to working on their behalf."

She has more than 23 years of experience in serving the developmentally disabled population. Her prior service at the center includes MR Unit director, a community services specialist, and a group home director.

She also served as a director of skill creation; a mental retardation habilitation coordinator at Caswell Center, Kinston; a human services coordinator for Pitt County Mental Health; and a behavioral specialist for Howell Center in LaGrange.

Exum holds a master's degree in administration and an undergraduate degree in psychology. She also is a licensed nursing home administrator. ■

– Mark VanSciver,
DHHS Public Affairs

Improvement funds come from fines

18 nursing homes selected for enhancement grants

The N.C. Division of Health Service Regulation is awarding grants to 18 nursing homes starting this fall to improve their facilities to the benefit of their residents. Improvements range from outdoor gardens that are wheelchair accessible to bistros and ice cream parlors.

The two-year grants are financed by fines paid to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services by homes that have been cited for deficiencies in the provision of services under the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA). The goal is to help de-institutionalize the care setting, while providing enhancements that residents can enjoy. Fifty-two applications were screened by a selection committee to determine the winning proposals.

“The grant efforts help facilities achieve our goal of having the best nursing homes,” said Becky Wertz, grant contract administrator for the Nursing Home Licensure and Certification Section of the Division of Health Service Regulation. “It is a good feeling to know our residents benefit from these culture changes.”

Grant winners are required to develop a method for monitoring the effects of the improvements on the facility’s residents and staff, and for sustaining the projects after grant funds are spent. The grant selection process is run jointly by the Division of Health Service Regulation’s Nursing Home Licensure and Certification Section and the N.C. Coalition for Long-Term Care Enhancement.

“We are excited about the number of applicants this year and their desire to promote culture change in nursing homes by enhancing the environment,” said Leslie Jarema, chairperson of the coalition. “North Carolina prides itself in having the first state coalition to promote enhancements in long-term care.”

Winners, a brief project description and the amount:

- Autumn Care of Drexel, outdoor garden area, \$24,000;
- Blowing Rock Hospital Long-Term Care, outdoor activity and garden area, \$12,794; Brian Center of Lincolnton, aviaries, \$9,085;
- Capital Nursing and Rehabilitation Center of Raleigh, aviary, wheelchair height gardening, \$13,377;
- Century Care of Cherryville, enhanced bathing, \$15,290; Croasdaile Village of Durham, It’s Never 2 Late (IN2N) adaptive computer system, \$18,845;
- Davis Health Care of Wilmington, transform special care unit into a resident centered area, \$11,800;
- Highland Farms Retirement Community of Black Mountain, courtyard, \$24,000; Longleaf Neuro-Medical Treatment Center of Wilson, convert off-unit space for multiple activities including theater and game space, \$24,000;
- Lutheran Home Albemarle, patio, pergola, ice cream parlor, \$24,000; Lutheran Home Hickory, bistro, \$24,000;
- Lutheran Home Hickory West, outdoor recreation area, \$23,307;
- Lutheran Home Trinity Oaks, IN2N adaptive computer system, \$24,000;
- Lutheran Home Winston Salem, IN2N adaptive computer system, \$22,500;
- Mary Gran Nursing Center of Clinton, L.I.F.E (Living Is For Everyone) – multi purpose activity room, \$20,041;
- Pisgah Manor Healthcare Center of Candler, enhanced dining, \$8,729; St. Joseph of the Pines of Southern Pines, IN2N adaptive computer system, and horticultural therapy, \$23,995; and
- White Oak Manor Rutherfordton, courtyard, \$10,988. ■

– Jim Jones,
DHHS Public Affairs

Federal aging officials visit

Officials from the federal Administration on Aging (AoA) visited North Carolina on Oct. 30 to meet with staff from the Division of Aging and Adult Services and DHHS as well as to visit several aging-related programs in the Triangle.

Costas Miskis, AoA regional administrator for Region IV in Atlanta and Dorothy Smith from AoA, joined Dennis Streets, DAAS director and Audrey Edmisten, DAAS nutrition program consultant on the division's weekly Meals on Wheels route in Raleigh while they were in town. ■



Pictured left to right: Alan Winstead, executive director Meals on Wheels for Wake County, Smith, Miskis, Streets and Edmisten.

N.C. Assistive Technology hosts 19th annual conference

A two-day conference in Raleigh highlights the latest innovations to empower people with disabilities to live independently, work, participate in educational opportunities and access their communities.

The 19th annual North Carolina Assistive Technology Expo runs Dec. 3-4 at the North Raleigh Hilton and provides information and hands-on access to state-of-the-art assistive technology. AT

devices include low tech items such as kitchen gadgets to high-tech computer-based environmental control system.

Keynote speaker at 10 a.m. on Dec. 3 is Robert Rummel-Hudson, author of Schulyer's *Monster: A Father's Journey with His Wordless Daughter*. His book tells the story of raising a daughter with a disability and learning to become the father she needed. He will discuss his family's journey to AT and the lessons they've learned along the way.

Last year nearly 600 registered participants from seven states attended the expo, and about 1,000 attended the free exhibit hall, which is open to the public.

The Assistive Technology program is part of the N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. For more information on the expo, visit: www.pat.org, or telephone the state program at 919-850-2787. ■



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- ▼ Download tools to monitor your progress
- ▼ Log on each week to read experts' advice
- ▼ Read how others like you are doing in the challenge

November 23 through December 31