



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

Sec. Cansler makes key MH/DD/SAS appointments

To build a strong leadership team for the continued development and maintenance of mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse services in North Carolina, Secretary Lanier Cansler brought two highly regarded mental health professionals on board with a focus on community-based treatment.

Cansler appointed Beth Melcher, Ph.D., and Steven Jordan to key leadership posts in the Department of Health and Human Services.

Melcher has been named Assistant Secretary for Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services Development. She replaces Michael Watson who is being promoted to Deputy Secretary for Health Services.

Jordan will take over the position of Director of the state Division of MH/DD/SAS. He will succeed retiring



Beth Melcher, Ph.D.

Director Leza Wainwright, who is stepping down from her position after 32 years of state service.

“As the state moves forward in its efforts to build a strong network of community-based and community accessible mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse services, we felt an imperative need to seek out a new generation of leadership for MH/DD/SAS

services with strong roots in local services,” Cansler said. “Beth Melcher and Steve Jordan are the leaders we need at this juncture. They possess a deep and thorough understanding of how community level services operate. They know the system’s strengths and weaknesses from a frontline perspective and their insights and knowledge will be critical as we move forward in our continuing effort to provide the finest level of MH/DD/SAS care in North Carolina.

“I would also like to publicly commend the hard work and dedication that retiring MH/DD/SAS Director Leza Wainwright has contributed to the people of North Carolina. She spent 26 of her 32 years of state service in this division or Dorothea Dix Hospital. As a division leader she served as budget officer, deputy director, co-director, interim director and director. Her

cont. on page 2

INSIDE TOP FEATURES



➔ Pages 4-5

Secretary Cansler announces Pratt as new leader for DHSR

➔ Page 3



Rehab counselor, 78, still helping people

➔ Page 6



MH/DD/SAS appointments cont. from page 1

legacy is a mental health system left stronger and more resilient through her leadership.”

Melcher, who is a licensed psychologist, has headed Recovery Innovations North Carolina as president/CEO since 2008. Recovery Innovations provides recovery and peer support services for people with mental health challenges. Previously, she was clinical director of The Durham Center, the local management entity (LME), from 2005-08 that provided coordination of MH/DD/SAS community services for Durham County. From 2005-07, she was a consultant to the General Assembly’s Legislative Oversight Committee on MH/DD/SAS.

Perhaps Melcher is best known and respected in the mental health community for her advocacy work with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) North Carolina where she served as its executive director from 1994-2000 and as public policy director from 2000-03.

“I am honored by the confidence that Secretary Cansler has expressed in my ability to add to the fine work that has already been undertaken by the department to address mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse service needs in the state,” Melcher said. “I am eager to partner with professional and advocacy colleagues to provide services to support recovery and self determination for our fellow North Carolinians with mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse challenges.”

Since 2001, Jordan has been state director for ResCare – North Carolina, a private provider that delivers services and supports to people with disabilities, and special needs youth. ResCare, which provides services nationally, operates a program in North Carolina serving more than 450 adults and more than 50 children. From 1995-2001, Jordan worked for North Carolina MENTOR, a provider of treatment and rehabilitative services for at-risk youth and people with intellectual and

developmental disabilities. Jordan was state director and supervised a network of more than 20 MENTOR offices that provide seven-day treatment locations and more than 400 therapeutic foster homes in the state. He was MENTOR’s program manager in the Georgetown/Florence region of South Carolina from 1989-2001

He worked in several South Carolina area mental health programs as a social worker as well in Chestnut Hill (S.C.) Psychiatric Hospital, and the Charter Hospital of Charleston.

“I am glad to be a part of this team. I look forward to building upon the secretary’s momentum to make service quality better for all involved,” Jordan said.

Both Melcher and Jordan are expected to begin their new duties in mid-August. ■

– *Mark VanSciver,*
DHHS Public Affairs

Secretary Cansler announces Pratt as new leader for DHSR

Secretary Lanier Cansler has announced the appointment of Drexdal Pratt as the new director of the Division of Health Service Regulation (DHSR) effective Aug. 1.

“I look forward to Drexdal’s leadership in DHSR, and his insight for problem solving. His demonstrated leadership assures us that DHSR will not skip a beat as it continues to provide critical oversight of our many licensed care providers and assures that our citizens’ many care needs are appropriately met,” Cansler said.

Pratt worked nearly 12 years as chief of the Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS). He takes over from Jeff Horton, who served as interim director of DHSR. Horton will return to his previous position as deputy director of DHSR. “I appreciate all of Jeff’s work keeping the day-to-day operations of the division going,” Cansler said. “His depth of knowledge will continue to be a great asset in the operations of DHSR.”



Drexdal Pratt

OEMS serves as the division’s regulatory arm for EMS personnel and agency credentials, as well as designation of qualified hospitals as trauma centers.

Pratt rose through the EMS ranks to become director for the Stokes County Department of Emergency Services and later moved to the state Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) as regional coordinator in 1987. By the late 1990s, he became

the OEMS central regional supervisor responsible for operations in 33 counties. In 1999, he was named chief of OEMS.

He has worked since then with stakeholders and legislators to create what is clearly one of the most advanced state emergency medical service agencies in the nation. In the 2001 session of the legislature, he coordinated efforts that updated the state’s EMS standards of care for the first time since 1973.

Significant advances under Pratt’s leadership include development of a statewide EMS information system and electronic patient chart, overhaul of rules to more accurately reflect the role of the counties and agencies in provision of EMS, and development of the medical disaster program with the State Medical Assistant Team (SMAT) program as its cornerstone. The SMAT program is a result of collaboration with federal, state and county agencies and representatives.

■
– Jim Jones, DHHS Public Affairs



Secretary Cansler holds second conversation with employees Aug. 12

Secretary Lanier Cansler will hold his second live conversation with employees on Thursday, Aug. 12, from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m., from the same N.C. State University video studio on the Centennial Campus that was used for his March conversation.

DHHS employees who wish to submit a comment or question to the secretary should use the DHHS Excels comment line: DHHSExcels@dhhs.nc.gov.

Further information about linking into the webcast will be sent via all employee email. Mark this on your calendar and plan to join in. ■

DHHS Excels Outreach Sessions Coming

The DHHS Excels Outreach/Focus Group Subcommittee has scheduled Outreach Sessions throughout the state in August, September and October. These sessions are being initiated to broaden the knowledge and understanding of DHHS Excels across all of DHHS, as well as, to receive input from staff on how they can embrace the principles and values of this cultural shift.

The sessions will define DHHS Excels by emphasizing the cultural and management transformation desired by the leadership of the department. This includes:

1. Transforming from a siloed approach in the delivery and management of services to a coordinated, open and interrelated approach.
2. Improved decisions and accountability based on solid information/data that looks at the whole and ensures the greatest benefit from available resources rather than protection of turf, beliefs or agendas.

The Outreach Sessions will be led by Deputy Secretary Maria

Spaulding. Spaulding says, “DHHS Excels will de-emphasize divisional and programmatic approaches in the traditional manner and focus on departmental goals and outcomes. It is increasingly necessary that we collaborate and share information, ideas, and resources to solve problems that confront us.”

During the DHHS Excels Outreach Sessions, employees will have an opportunity to have open discussions. Also they will look at how they might apply the values in their different work settings. ■

– *Lori Walston, DHHS Public Affairs*

Website redesign works to meet DHHS Excels goals

As the redesign site is brought to each division and office of DHHS, Public Affairs works to meet the goals of DHHS Excels:

Customer-focused. The redesign process focuses on our audiences and their needs. From the outset, the website redesign has worked to help people find what they're looking for, and not force them to understand our organizational silos. With website surveys and one-on-one usability tests, our customers teach us how to serve them better.

Anticipatory. The Web is only going to become more important with time. Getting a handle on our massive Web presence, and having good Web governance in place – both staff and policies – allows DHHS to better respond to changing realities.

Collaborative. The redesigned DHHS website has been a collaborative project from the beginning, with committees organizing and providing content from across all divisions and offices. Web content managers from across the department meet with Public Affairs and continue to provide feedback on a quarterly basis, and each division and office redesign process begins with a committee representing all units in the organization.

Transparent. The project was communicated widely at its inception. Currently there is regular reporting to all employees in an annual State of the Web report and a newsletter article eight to 10 times a year. Go to www.ncdhhs.gov/redesignproject.

Results-oriented. Each division or office Web content manager studies his or her website traffic statistics and Web survey results as they begin their redesign process. Web analytics are followed closely thereafter and issues handled as they arise. ■

– Lois Nilsen, DHHS Public Affairs



Q&A

From the
DHSExcels@dhhs.nc.gov
Mailbox:

Q: What can I do as an employee to ensure I am embracing DHHS Excels and to help promote DHHS Excels in my work area?

A: This is a great question – one that probably many other employees are asking now that information about DHHS Excels is spreading throughout the department. Thanks for asking.

A good place to start is to become familiar with the department's mission and vision statements and to understand how your job supports those statements. Do you see how what you do every day helps the department achieve its overall mission and vision? Do you understand how your daily responsibilities help the department achieve its mission?

Then take a look at the department's five values statements. Ask whether you and the people in your work unit exhibit those values every day with each other as well as in dealings with other DHHS staff and those external to the department. Discuss these values with your colleagues and supervisor.

Additionally, there are other ways you can learn more. Deputy Secretary Maria Spaulding and other members of the DHHS Excels team will be hosting Outreach Sessions around the state during the months of August and September. There is a new DHHS Excels presence on the DHHS home page that will become a repository of information about DHHS Excels. Check it out from time to time to see what is new!

Central Regional Hospital passes Joint Commission review

Central Regional Hospital was cited by inspectors for its high quality of care after a weeklong review by national hospital surveyors.

The hospital recently underwent Joint Commission survey in order to qualify for national accreditation. Joint Commission surveyors were at CRH from June 29 – July 2. The Joint Commission, a national independent agency for accrediting all public and private health care facilities, conducts full reviews of all hospitals every three years.

CRH Director Mike Hennike reported that the survey team was “very impressed” with the new hospital and particularly with the excellent clinical care and treatment provided to the patients.

“At the exit conference, the surveyors told the Executive Team that CRH was one of the finest psychiatric hospitals they had surveyed,” Hennike said. “This was the highest praise the Joint Commission team leader said that he had given in his 17 years of survey experience.”

Hennike added that CRH has participated in three major surveys within the past 90 days. In addition to the Joint Commission, the hospital received full surveys by the state Division of Health Service Regulation and received no deficiencies as well as a Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services survey.

Hennike credits the hospital’s clinical staff and the entire CRH family for making the facility a “program of excellence.” ■

– Mark Van Sciver,
DHHS Public Affairs

‘That’s where it’s really at . . .!’

Rehab counselor, 78, still helping people

Patrick “Tom” Leeder has no reference points for colors like red and blue. “They’re just words,” he’ll tell you.

Born 78 years ago in Santa Ana, Calif., he was the son of parents who met in California. His father came from Ontario, Canada and his mother was born in 1906 in the New Mexico Territory.

Leeder traveled across the continent and ended up as a servant to the system that gave him a leg up in the world shortly after his arrival in North Carolina. The journey that brought him here is a tale of love and devotion, in addition to the service part. He still serves, with no desire

cont. on page 7



Tom Leeder – Photo courtesy of Becky Wolfe

Rehab counselor cont. from page 6

to retire, even after more than 35 years. He continues to repay the state that valued his talents and helped him get a college education.

Leeder met the young lady who would become his bride when she worked in a Los Angeles branch library about three miles from his West Coast home. A mutual friend who volunteered at the branch thought that Leeder and the librarian should meet, and so they did. "That's how we got acquainted," he says. Leeder regularly sought taped and Braille materials there. A courtship and a wedding ensued.

His bride, Dorothy, a native of Brevard in North Carolina's Transylvania County, soon found that the longer she stayed on the West Coast, the more she longed to return to her home at the edge of Pisgah National Forest.

"She put up with the West Coast about as much as she could," Leeder says. "It only rains 13 inches a year in L.A., and there is *tons* of traffic, so we pulled up stakes in '67 and headed out. It probably rains 13 inches some *months* in Transylvania County!" Average yearly rainfall for Transylvania County is more than 65 inches.

Once in North Carolina, Leeder discovered the N.C. Commission for the Blind shortly after arrival. "I spoke with a counselor at the Asheville office and a few things were knocked around, and I was offered a college scholarship if I wanted to take advantage of it, so I did," he says. He started at Brevard College and two years later finished an undergraduate degree in psychology at UNC-Asheville.

Now he serves five western North Carolina counties – Avery, Henderson, Madison, Mitchell and Yancey – as a rehabilitation counselor for the Division of Services for the Blind's regional office in Asheville. A driver picks him up and takes him wherever he has appointments – to meet with clients, or to speak at area schools' job fairs.

"You name it, they ask it," he says of the 12- to 14-year-olds he speaks with at places like Henderson Middle School. "I try to give these kids a good idea of what we do. Most of them are not going to meet another blind person in their lives," Leeder says. "We show them some of the adaptive aides used by people with vision impairment – how to tell colors, time, junk like that."

Dorothy has been gone now for 12 years. She passed when she was 61. "We'd been together for 35 years," Leeder said. "She looked out for me."



Leeder, right, makes notes in Braille while interviewing Kenneth Rape, who is reading from Braille notes. – Photo courtesy of Becky Wolfe

His daughter, Lee Fraser, and grandchildren Megan and Josh, live with him now in the home he and Dorothy bought in 1989 in the Fairview area on the south side of Buncombe County near the Henderson County line.

He prefers to take his field notes on a slate and stylus, a device he says is easier to tote from place to place. "It's more portable and more reliable" than a Braille, he says.

Leeder still enjoys his work, and counts as successes the folks – clients – who complete training and education through the assistance he is able to make available to them, and who then go on to jobs and self sufficiency.

He continues to leave his mark in the community of blind and those with vision loss in his service area. Those who did attain their education and job skills goals, number more than 1,000.

cont. on page 8

Rehab counselor cont. from page 7

They include a client who was sent to college and became a preacher. “Some stayed in the jobs they had that they were in danger of losing because of poor vision,” he says. Some of his clients get operations that restore enough of their vision that “they just disappear” as clients, he says. Others he may serve again because of health problems or as they become older. His clients include folks with glaucoma, cataracts and diabetic eye disease.

As a VR rehabilitation counselor he handles about 100 to 140 cases at a time. “It turns over every couple of years,” he says. Some of the clients have multiple conditions, diabetes, physical impairments. “Some of them pass away in mid-stream,” he said. “It’s kind of a downer,” But, he said the successes “pull me along – that, and meeting all the different folks. That’s where it’s really at, as far as I’m concerned.”

Leeder enjoys ham radio, but that’s about as technological as he gets. He does not use e-mail, because, “I decided 10 or 15 years ago not to participate in the digital age,” he says. “It’s kind of like being a Luddite,” he chuckles.

In this digital age, he still uses an analog television set and a VCR, and those work fine for him. He plays video tapes made for the blind – descriptive video service – that narrate the images and actions of actors and actresses for enjoyment by people with vision loss.

Leeder’s boss, Karen Torrence, is counselor in charge of the Asheville office for Division of Services for the Blind. She speaks glowingly about Leeder, noting that he “exhibits a professional and compassionate approach in his work with clients.” But it doesn’t end there.

“He’s a valuable asset to the team members in this office because of his vast experience and his knowledge, which is based on over 35 years of employment as a VR counselor with this agency,” she says. “He’s known as the go-to guy here. He has such a superb memory. He remembers clients he has gone to in the past. In terms of, if you’re stumped as to a particular situation with a client, Tom’s the one to go to. He’s always got a story.”

Oddly enough, it is Leeder, the blind employee, who often provides detailed directions to his sighted coworkers if they need help finding their way to a client’s home.

“He’s the best person here to give directions – believe it or not! He’s covered so many counties, and he can tell you how to get where you need to go. He’s better than MapQuest. He doesn’t think MapQuest is very reliable. He’s traveled so many of these roads. I took over one of his counties. I was driving and he was navigating to get me where we needed to go,” she says. “He was spot on. He’s pretty unique.”

For now, Leeder pushes aside any thoughts of retirement. He worries that if he were to retire he would stay at home with little to do. He doesn’t like the thought of it.

“One of the reasons I stayed on is that it’s kind of rewarding, helping out a lot of folks,” he says. ■

– Jim Jones, DHHS Public Affairs

N.C. Disability Determination Services recognized by federal agency

Fourteen employees in the North Carolina Disability Determination Services office have been recognized by the Social Security Administration's Office of Disability Determination with citations for their efforts on the job during fiscal year 2009.

Rhonda Currie, director of NCDDS, was singly recognized with a Commissioner's Citation for "superior leadership and teambuilding skills, and long-term commitment in the pursuit of SSA goals and objectives." Currie said the recognition reflected staff efforts toward maintaining "productivity while implementing

new electronic procedures at the same time."

Twelve employees are all part of a group receiving a Commissioner's Citation for accelerated processing to avoid delays and to move cases forward. They were recognized for "outstanding contributions, passion and leadership." They are Tim Wilson, Juanita Boston, Linda Eckert, John Elrod, Melinda Fox, Shannon Goodson, Joe Howard, Ellen Panella, Nancy Pappenhagen, Jennifer Pounds, Jennifer Smith and Stephanie Sanders.

Belinda McNeill was recognized with a Deputy Commission's Citation for teamwork, collaboration, volunteering and her willingness to assist in projects for other departments and the management team. Her efforts have resulted in streamlining staff access to critical day-to-day information resources.

DDS handles thousands of claims yearly. In 2009, DDS staff closed 147,413 claims and in 2008 they closed 125,476 claims. ■

– Jim Jones, DHHS Public Affairs

Murdoch's Pacemakers Team A wins 'walk' trophy

Late this spring, Gov. Bev Perdue kicked off 'Walk to San Diego in 60 Days,' a virtual pedometer-based team competition. State employees from the mountains to the sea joined in the fun and 243 teams began the trek to the West Coast via the Gulf States. Of those, 145 teams were fielded by 17 DHHS agencies and facilities.

At journey's end, state employees had walked their way toward a healthier lifestyle with a total of 501,152 miles, and two teams from one DHHS facility took first and second place honors in the competition.

The Murdoch Developmental Center's top finishing team, Infirmary Pacemaker's Team A, led the state **cont. on page 10**



First place Pacemakers Team A, left to right: Sarah Azman, Kent Clark, Jonathan Kodack, Julie Carter, Queen Williams, DHHS Deputy Secretary Mike Watson, Gloria Wilson, Mary Oliver, Walking Team Leader Billie Akers, Murdoch Center Director Aleck Myers, Kadijra Green, Barbara Geerchen, and State Wellness Coordinator Ruth Barlow.

Murdoch's Pacemakers Team A cont. from page 9

and logged a total of 9,311,682 steps, or more than 4,655 miles for the annual wellness event. Murdoch's Infirmary Pacemakers Team B placed second in the 60-day event with a total of 8,032,402 steps for a total of just over 4,016 miles.

According to the state Wellness Office, all 2,400 state employees who participated in the Walk to San Diego in 60 Days wellness event were winners. The Office of State Personnel invites all employees to join this fall's walk, which will be to the destination of your choice.

Congratulations to the two top teams at Murdoch Developmental Center! Keep up the good work of being healthy inside and out. ■

*– Mark Van Sciver,
DHHS Public Affairs*



Second place Pacemakers Team B, left to right: Murdoch Center Director Aleck Myers, April Hodges, Suzanne Hornbuckle, Sherry Goss, Sherlean Brownson, Satyavati Bornholtz, Mary Southerland, Ricky Hart, Patricia Green, Walking Team Leader Teresa Pettiford, DHHS Deputy Secretary Mike Watson, and State Wellness Coordinator Ruth Barlow.

DHHS Website Redesign Update

The websites that have been re-designed so far:

Five Divisions/Offices/ Facilities Received New Websites (no prior website existed)

Health IT, O'Berry Neuromedical Treatment Center, Rural Health and Community Care, State Operated Healthcare Facilities (small initial site), Walter B. Jones Alcohol and Drug Abuse Treatment Center

Eight Completely Revamped and Redesigned Websites

Budget and Analysis, Economic Opportunity, Information

Resource Management, Medical Assistance, Public Affairs, Services for the Blind, Vital Records in DPH, Women's and Children's Health Section of DPH

12 Websites in the Building Stages

Citizen Services, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Human Resources, State-Operated Healthcare Facilities (larger site, which includes websites for Dorothea Dix Hospital, Central Regional Hospital, Whitaker School, and Blackley Alcohol and Drug Abuse Treatment Center), Oral Health, Privacy and Security, Public Health, Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Five Websites in Progress

Aging, Child Development, Controller's Office, Education Services, Health Service Regulation, MH/DD/SAS, Social Services

This fall, schedules will be created for the sites in progress and for the sites left to be redesigned. These include facility sites, and the remainder of Public Health and Vocational Rehabilitation Services. ■

– Lois Nilsen, DHHS Public Affairs

Bats In Your Attic? Be Aware Of Rabies, Health Risks

During the height of summer and mosquito season, bats flying through the night sky are typically a welcome sight. After all, they help hold down populations of biting insects.

But when bats venture indoors, it may be a different story. While the insect-eating mammals are important to maintaining ecosystems worldwide, they also can transmit rabies and respiratory disease to humans.

The North Carolina Division of Public Health suggests taking precautions to protect yourself and your family:

- If you awaken to find a bat in your room, tent or cabin, do not release it. Instead, contact your local animal control to have it captured and tested for rabies.
- Seek medical advice immediately. Bat bites can be difficult to detect and may not cause a person to wake from a sound sleep. If you have had any contact with a bat, even if you do not think you have been bitten, you must still talk with a physician. You may have been exposed to rabies.
- If you know you have been bitten, thoroughly wash the wound with soap and water before seeing a doctor.
- Never handle a bat with your bare hands. If you need to capture it



before animal control arrives, follow safety guidelines as outlined in www.cdc.gov/rabies/bats/contact/capture.html. A video demonstration is available at <http://batcon.org/index.php/bats-a-people/removing-a-bat.html>.

- If bat or bird droppings have caused accumulations in an attic for example, care should be taken to avoid stirring up and breathing the dust. Fungal spores in the droppings may cause disease when inhaled by some people. For more information, see www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2005-109/.

If you have bats roosting in an unoccupied portion of your home during the summer months, you may be advised to allow them to remain for a short time as long as the bats can be excluded from living areas.

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) recommends that exclusion of bats from the entire structure (attics, crawl spaces, etc.) not be performed from May 1 through August 1 because breeding colonies may be present. Removing bats during this time may compound the risk to your health because dead pups unable to fly will remain in walls and attics and mother bats will try to create new entry points to reach them. Removal, or exclusion, may also be illegal if it results in the death of young bats, some of which may be federally protected under the Endangered Species Act.

To prevent bats from entering your home, examine your home carefully and seal openings in doors, windows, attics and chimneys that may allow bats access to your living spaces. You may also wish to consult with a trained and licensed Wildlife Damage Control Agent for assistance. A county-by-county listing is available if you disable your pop-up blocker and go to www.ncwildlife.org/Nuisance_Wildlife/Nuisance_Contact_WDCA.htm.

For more information on rabies in North Carolina and links to current rabies data, visit www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/vet.html. ■

– Julie Henry, DHHS Public Affairs