



EmployeeUPDATE

Our Mission: The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, in collaboration with its partners, protects the health and safety of all North Carolinians and provides essential human services.

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

DSS employee's suggestion Yields award from NCThinks

Suggestion improves customer service for elderly

The NCThinks State Review Committee recently approved an award of two days leave for Zebria Booker, an employee in the Division of Social Services (DSS), for her suggestion that led to customer service improvements for clients receiving Food and Nutrition Services benefits.

Booker, an EBT supervisor at the DHHS Customer Service Center in Martin County, recommended that center employees send out form DSS-1688 to EBT card holders who need help with their accounts. DSS-1688 is also known as the "Designation of Authorized Representative" form. The form needs to be filled out before call center employees can talk to a family member or friend about their loved one's care. Previously, the form could only be given out when a caseworker or client specifically requested the form.



Acting Sec. Delia with recipient Zebria Booker.
— photo by Jack Rogers, Division of Social Services

"Case workers can get very busy and may not have time to make the request for the form," said Booker. "By sending out the form instead of waiting for a request, we have been able to help card holders get their benefits faster."

"Customer service is a number one priority for our staff," said DSS Director Sherry Bradsher. "Zebria saw a need, took action and our customers are able to receive the help they need in a more efficient manner. Her actions truly exemplify the values of DHHS Excels and the division is thrilled she received this recognition."

State Personnel Director Linda Coleman thanked Booker for thinking creatively for solutions to North Carolina's challenges. Committee member Lee White of the N.C. Department of Labor called

continued on page 2



INSIDE TOP FEATURES

- Neuro Med Centers ➡ Page 2
- Excels ➡ Page 3
- DMA walkers place first ➡ Page 5

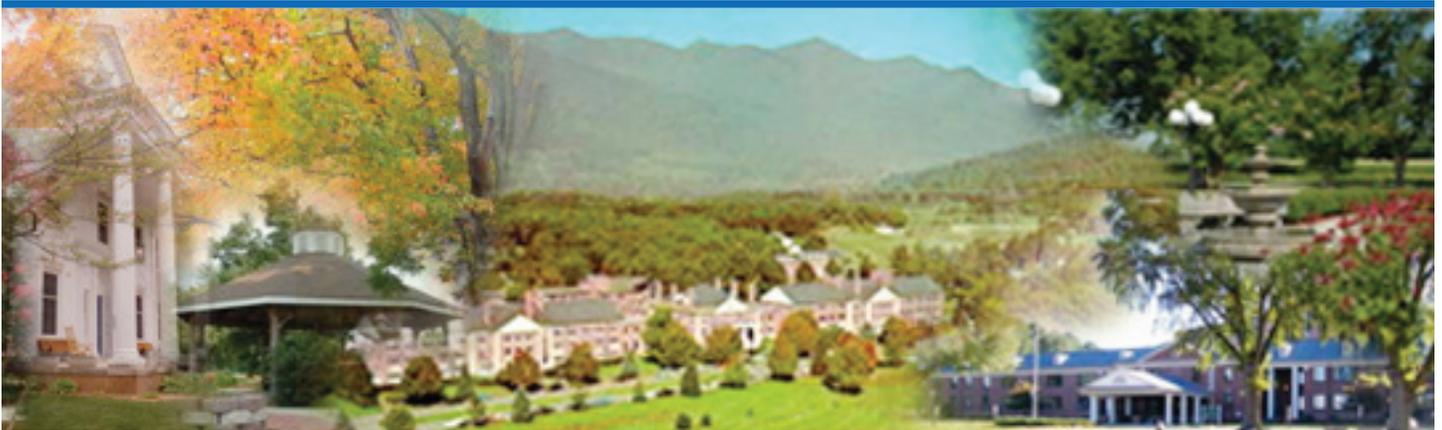
- NCCDD Grant ➡ Page 7
- Advancing Strong Leadership ➡ Page 8
- Look Us Up! ➡ Page 9
- Tax Help ➡ Page 11

NCThinks, continued from page 1

Booker's suggestion an "outstanding example" and encouraged all state employees to submit suggestions to NCThinks.

NCThinks is the state's suggestion system for state employees. It is designed to promote efficiency and economy in state government and to save tax dollars by recognizing and rewarding individual employees for suggestions that improve state government operations. State employees can submit suggestions online at www.ncthinks.nc.gov. ■

– Lori Walston, DHHS Public Affairs



Magazine: DHHS neuro-medical treatment centers among nation's best nursing homes

All three of the neuro-medical treatment centers operated by the Division of State Operated Healthcare Facilities have been recognized with five-star rankings by U.S. News & World Report's annual Best Nursing Homes. The annual review recognizes top-rated homes in all 50 states and offers important guidance to families and healthcare providers caring for people in need of a nursing home.

"More than 3 million Americans will spend part of 2012 in a nursing home, and trying to decide under pressure which one is best isn't easy," says Avery Comarow, health rankings editor. "Top-rated nursing homes are worth considering and deserve special recognition."

Longleaf Neuro-Medical Treatment Center in Wilson, O'Berry Neuro-Medical Treatment Center in Goldsboro, and Black Mountain Neuro-Medical Treatment Center serve adults with severe and persistent mental illness whose medical conditions require residential medical and nursing care. Of more than 15,500 homes rated and profiled on the U.S. News website, they were among the fewer than 1 in 8 that received a five-star overall rating in all four quarters of 2011.

"We take our responsibility to the individuals and families we serve very seriously and are always working to improve the service we provide," said Luckey Welsh, director of state operated facilities for DHHS. "This recognition is yet another opportunity to

highlight the excellent work of our staff in serving specialized populations."

U.S. News' evaluation of nursing homes is based on data from [Nursing Home Compare](#), a consumer website run by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The government agency sets and enforces standards for nursing homes (defined as facilities or portions of facilities enrolled in Medicare or Medicaid that provide 24-hour nursing care and other medical services). Homes earn an overall rating of one to five stars, as well as up to five stars in each of three underlying categories: health inspections, nurse staffing, and quality of care. U.S. News updates each nursing home's ratings data quarterly. ■

– Julie Henry,
DHHS Public Affairs

DHHS Excels, Leadership DHHS to continue



On Feb. 20, Acting Secretary Al Delia had his first meeting with the DHHS Leadership Team. This group is composed of directors of all offices and divisions within DHHS as well as other staff who report directly to the secretary.

During this meeting there were several important announcements made about DHHS Excels:

- **Delia expressed his desire that Excels move faster and deeper into all levels of DHHS. The DHHS Excels Steering Committee is currently reviewing how best to**
- **(1) provide the internal leadership to make this happen;**
- **(2) determine what is needed to reach more DHHS staff members about the expectation that Excels values will be reflected in all work and actions;**
- **(3) recognize and celebrate our successes; and**
- **(4) develop a way for staff members at all levels to become more involved in making suggestions on how to make improvements to work processes.**
- **Additionally, Delia wants to expand on the current Leadership DHHS program to include more cross-divisional and cross-functional training opportunities. Such a program will continue to break down our interior silos and build greater collaboration, transparency and shared-results for our wide array of DHHS services and responsibilities.**

Stay tuned to this newsletter as well as Outreach sessions and other opportunities to learn more. Also, don't forget to share concerns and suggestions through the confidential DHHS Excels comment line at DHHSexcels@dhhs.nc.gov.

A DHHS Excels outreach meeting will be held March 22 in Charlotte. Look in this newsletter for a registration form. Deadline for registration is March 9. ■

– Sandra K. Trivett, Special Projects



DHHS Excels Outreach Registration Form

For Charlotte meeting on March 22, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Calvary Church, 5801 Pineville Matthews Road

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Title _____

Division _____ Unit _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email _____

Work Phone _____ Home or Cell # _____

Session Location _____ Date/Time _____

Accessibility Needs: Sign Language Interpreter _____ Computer Assisted Note taking _____

Assistive Listening Device _____ Braille _____ Large Print _____ Other _____

DEADLINE TO SUBMIT FORM IS MARCH 9TH 2012

Please send completed form to Valerie Williams:
valerie.w.williams@dhhs.nc.gov or by fax to 919-733-7447.

If you have questions call 919-855-4820.

DMA walkers place first in State Wellness Challenge

They may not have made it to Alaska and back, but the DMA Globe Navigators walked into the winners' circle.

The 10-member team walked the equivalent of more than 6,000 miles in 60 days last fall, taking the top spot in the Alaskan Tip Wellness Challenge. The DMA Globe Navigators competed in the highest competitive division, the Super Hares, out-stepping 175 other teams of state employees.

"We ended up walking about 2,300 miles farther than last time and over 800 miles farther than the previous winner in this division," exulted team captain Nick Covey.

In the previous state walking challenge, London to Lisbon, the DMA team placed second in the lowest of the competitive divisions, the Tortoise. Bringing them out of their shell were new members and improved performances by all team members, which vaulted them over Hare into the Super Hare category.

One of the new members, Jessica Ross, is a competitive runner. She accounted for almost 2,000 of the Globe Navigators' 6,248 miles (or 3.9 million of 12.5 million steps).

The Office of State Personnel organizes three wellness walking challenges each year. Competitors wear a pedometer each day of the 60-day challenge, and teams of up to 10 members pool their step totals, hoping their collective walking covers the distance of each challenge's namesake.

For the Alaska Tip Challenge, the DMA Globe Navigators did more than that. Raleigh is 3,887 miles from Alaska's capital, Juneau, according to MapQuest. Another three million steps (or 1,500 miles) would have made a round trip. ■

— Brad Deen, DHHS Public Affairs



Walking Teammates:

(Left to right) Teammates Leigh Ren, Andrea Phillips, Mike Piombino, Annitte Davis, Nick Covey, Meme Holifield, Mark Massengill, gathered on a warm afternoon outside the Kirby Building on the Dix Campus.

Other team members are Jessica Ross, Candace Stancil and Donna Whitlock.

— Jim Jones, photos

Just Culture grant promotes patient safety in state-run facilities

Patient safety and fair treatment of employees will be the focus of a new, grant-funded initiative in the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services' Division of State Operated Healthcare Facilities.

The \$600,000 three-year grant was awarded by the Duke Endowment as part of the implementation of a "Just Culture" approach to safety that promotes employee responsibility and system-wide improvement to ensure safety for patients and residents.

"We appreciate the Duke Endowment's support of our efforts to engage our employees in a positive approach to patient safety," said Luckey Welsh, director of the Division of State Operated Healthcare Facilities (DSOHF). "This model represents a paradigm shift for our organization in putting our focus on education as well as accountability for staff. It is a proven model that is already being used in many hospitals across the state."

The Just Culture implementation in DSOHF will promote organizational learning, remove blame and ensure fair and consistent treatment for employees, while maintaining the accountability expected by regulatory bodies and the public.

Welsh and representatives from the North Carolina Hospital Association (NCHA) provided an overview of Just Culture to DSOHF directors and senior leadership in February. NCHA's Center



Directors of the State Operated Healthcare Facilities at their recent meeting in Butner: Betty Travis (acting director of Murdoch Developmental Center), Tom Mahle (Broughton Hospital), Art Robarge (Riddle Developmental Center), Jeff Linker (Whitaker School), Richard Rhea (assistant director Black Mountain Center), Mike Hennike (Central Regional Hospital), Deborah Simmers (Wright School), Deborah Exum (O'Berry NeuroMed Center), Leon Owens (Caswell Developmental Center), Theresa Edmondson (Walter B. Jones ADATC), Lisa Haire (R.J. Blackley ADATC), Doug Baker (Julian F. Keith ADATC)

Missing from photo: Gail West, director Black Mountain Center, Rusty Benton, director Longleaf Neuro-Medical Treatment Center

– Julie Henry, photo

for Hospital Quality and Patient Safety will guide training for the initiative, beginning with recruitment of steering teams at each of the division's 14 state operated healthcare facilities this month.

The Duke Endowment invests in the quality and safety of patient care through programs that equip providers to improve care and reduce preventable medical errors. The Endowment has awarded nearly \$40 million in 11 multi-year grants to help hospitals create a culture of safety in North Carolina and South Carolina and to reduce mistakes that might harm patients.

During the three year grant period, DSOHF employees at every level of the organization and the N.C. Quality Center will contribute more than \$1 million in staff time in training, implementation and enforcement of concepts associated with Just Culture. ■

– Julie Henry, DHHS Public Affairs

NCCDD grant focuses on western NC needs



North Carolina's Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC) will move forward on an initiative to better prepare physicians to provide primary health care and treatment of pressing medical needs for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities.

This innovative work of MAHEC has been endorsed by North Carolina's Council on Developmental Disabilities, which provided the center a \$75,000 grant. Citing the need for further work in this important area, the Council approval supports a second year of this initiative.

"The Council sees the need to improve access to and the quality of the medical services received by people with developmental disabilities, believing that a lesser standard of care for any group is not acceptable," said Holly Riddle, executive director of the Council. "This grant to MAHEC will further the education of physicians, nurses and dentists as to the health care services needed and to build the knowledge base of those already in practice. Our vision is to support the partnership MAHEC has created in the National Curriculum Initiative in Developmental Medicine."

Led by Melissa Hicks, M.D., of the Family Practice Department at MAHEC, and Irene Jurczyk, the director of continuing medical education,

the initiative presses for inclusion of information on intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD) in medical school curricula and hospital residencies, sponsors seminars and mounts professional outreach efforts.

The need for medical education on developmental disabilities became apparent in 2005 when a MAHEC survey revealed that:

- 81 percent of medical students graduate with no clinical training in how to care for a person with I/DD, and
- 90 percent of primary care residency programs offered no formal training in I/DD.
- 51 percent of graduating dentists reported that they had not treated a patient with I/DD, and
- 75 percent admitted feeling inadequately trained to do so.

Efforts to include education in developmental disabilities as part of medical training will grow in this new stage of the initiative, with additional participation in national and international conferences.

A partnership with the American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry, the WalMart Foundation, the

NCCDD and others, furthers dissemination and adoption of the curriculum goals and objectives that were developed as part of the National Curriculum Initiative in Developmental Medicine, funded in part by the NCCDD.

Under the earlier grant, more than 300 health care providers in North Carolina received instruction on DI/DD and two classes of MDs, eight in one and 22 in the other, received mini-fellowships in developmental medicine.

Caroline Ambrose, a self-advocate and chair of the NCCDD Advocacy and Leadership Committee, said, "This is a very meaningful initiative and step in the right direction. We have some doctors with pre-conceived notions that people with developmental disabilities don't exist, and this helps us get to nurses and medical students and destroy those myths."

The 40-member North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities was established in 1973 and seeks to support effective, innovative initiatives that improve the lives and promote community inclusion for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Council awards grants to grass roots advocacy groups, government agencies, disability nonprofits and other community organizations. ■

Training prepares future leaders; assures I/DD needs will be met

Advancing Strong Leadership in Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (ASLiDD) initiative in North Carolina ended on a high note, amid widespread indications of success. The leadership training program had a targeted goal, to take a group of people selected for their potential to become leaders in the field and to give them the skills needed to succeed.

Nancy Weiss, who co-directs the University of Delaware's National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities with Steven Eidelman, said 25 individuals completed the program. "Our participants took the program seriously; their knowledge and skills will help them play key roles in the field of disabilities in the future," Weiss said. Kerri Erb of the Autism Society of North Carolina, a participant in the program who acted as a spokesperson for the graduates, said they were impressed by the caliber of speakers in each training session, which extended over a period of two years. "We became even more excited about what the future may hold and our commitment to the goals grew," she said. The graduates plan to stay in touch with each other in the months and years to come.

N.C. Council on Developmental Disabilities Executive Director Holly Riddle said a primary reason for the Council to provide a grant for Advancing Strong Leadership was the realization that so many current managers in the field of development disabilities were approaching retirement.

"I think this initiative gives us the sense that these agencies will be in the hands of leaders who embrace the values and principles that matter to people and who know how to translate these into policy and practice," she said.

Agencies and organizations from around the state were represented among the participants, with Easter Seals United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) alone having three people involved. All the employing organizations gave their approval for participation, ensuring regular attendance.

Graduates were enthusiastic about the program and some said it provided a life-changing experience.

"It has been a great experience and has helped me focus my vision for the future and develop a plan of action that will make me a more effective advocate and leader," said Zondra Moss, who is with Easter Seals UCP in Charlotte.

Nationally recognized authorities on disability issues and organizational and management skills spoke to the emerging leaders, who had a chance to interact with them and their classmates, and to discuss questions at length. Partners of the National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities include the American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry, the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and National Association of Direct Service Providers.

Based on the results of the Advancing Strong Leadership Initiative, the NC-CDD has approved a proposal to fund a modified version of this program in the future. ■

HR offers new training opportunities

It's the start of a new year and the Recruitment and Retention section of the Division of Human Resources is off and running.

The newly designed section in the Division of Human Resources has a role of recruitment and staff (human resource, management, and employee) development, accenting training and retaining DHHS employees by promoting a harmonious learning and work environment.

With the new Enhanced DHHS Development and Training Program we offer, DHHS has some additional training opportunities available. A major goal of the program is to have more online classes, distance-learning opportunities, and Web-based resources to reduce in-class time, and to make learning tools and resources available anytime, anywhere.

The division has expanded its education and development offerings for DHHS division managers and supervisors and to DHHS employees. DHHS Facilities have separate course offerings. The program has always included required courses for supervisors and new managers. Now, the expanded program offers growth opportunities geared for managers and employees.

Recruitment and Retention also serves as the point of contact for organizational development requests. (Requests may be forwarded to other central office HR sections, for example, Employee Relations, Classification and Compensation, or Safety and Health, based on the nature of the request or the outcome of a needs assessment.)

Here are some recent milestones in training and classroom offerings:

- Beth A. Barkley, a supervisor in the Division of Health Service Regulation, became the 5,000th student entry in the DHHS Training Database, as she signed up for the required DHHS manager and supervisor classes. She and her DHSR training coordinator, Nikki Kessinger, won tote bags.
- Synthia Humphrey, an employee of the Division of Medical Assistance, registered for a class in the new expanded program and was the 12,000th class registrant in the DHHS Training Database. Synthia and her training coordinator, Georgia MacBride, won tote bags.

Recruitment and Retention staff includes Nina Davit, manager, Annis Barbee and Marilyn Moore; and the section expects to add three new hires in the coming months.

So, look us up...new training opportunities are here... and more are coming! You can also check with your Division Training Coordinators and Facility Training Coordinators about training and development in your area and DHHS. ■

– Marilyn M. Moore, Division of Human Resources

New videos encourage healthier grocery purchases

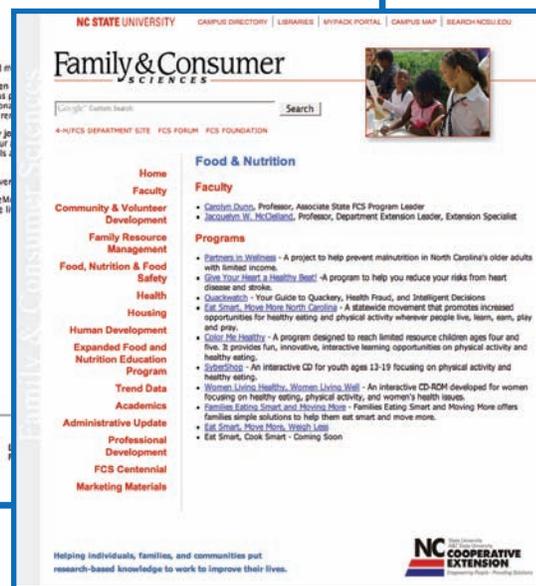
A healthy diet starts in the grocery store, but knowing what to choose when you get there can be challenging. The Division of Public Health in collaboration with N.C. Cooperative Extension has created Aisle by Aisle: Choosing Foods Wisely – a series of 12 free online videos to help North Carolinians navigate their grocery store aisles.

The series provides simple tips on making better choices when buying food. The video series can be found on www.MyEatSmartMoveMore.com.

“Most people know they should eat a healthy diet to prevent disease and promote good health, but there is still a gap between what we know and what we do,” said Dr. Ruth Petersen, chief of the Chronic Disease and Injury Section in the Division of Public Health. “The videos provide great take-along messages with specific information about how to make smart choices for yourself and your family.”

Each video runs about two minutes and covers tips on how to shop, read nutrition labels and understand ingredient lists. Video hosts provide a range of choices to help consumers feel confident when buying and eating healthier food items.

“These videos were designed to specifically improve grocery shopper confidence in making better choices in food purchases,” said Dr. Carolyn Dunn, a nutrition specialist with N.C. Cooperative Extension. “They also help shoppers reach the goal of cooking and eating more meals at home – an impor-



tant strategy for managing weight and controlling sodium, fat and sugar.”

Each video is accompanied by a list that provides specific tips for each aisle in the grocery store, from frozen foods to bread and snacks. The tip sheets are free to download and are sized to fit into a purse, pocket or coupon book for ready reference.

Eat Smart, Move More North Carolina is a statewide movement that promotes increased opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity wherever people live, learn, earn, play and pray. The Division of Public Health works to prevent diseases like diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer, among the

leading causes of premature death and disability among North Carolinians. The video web site also offers information on healthful eating and active lifestyles.

The Cooperative Extension helps individuals, families, and communities put research-based knowledge to work to improve their lives. Contact NC Cooperative Extension’s Family and Consumer Sciences online at www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/F&N.html. ■

– Mark Van Sciver,
DHHS Public Affairs

Revenue, SECU offer help to those behind on taxes

Over the past several years, the weakened economy has led to a large number of people being unable to pay their individual income taxes. To help create a favorable and easy payment opportunity for those taxpayers, the North Carolina Department of Revenue is offering the Individual Income Tax Debt Payment Program.

This time-limited program will help individuals catch up on unpaid taxes, while benefiting from the waiver of certain penalties and fees. Participation will allow individuals to avoid forced collections such as garnishments, liens, and levies.

“This is exactly the type of program we need in North Carolina to help us continue on the path to recovery,” said Gov. Bev Perdue. “We are making it easier for our citizens to work with state government.”

Eligible taxpayers could save as much as 35 to 40 percent by participating in the program, which runs through April 30, 2012.

Any taxpayer who has properly filed his or her tax returns with NCDOR and has received a notice for unpaid taxes prior to Jan. 1, 2012, may participate. A taxpayer who has not filed a return, does not currently have an outstanding tax liability or is the subject of an ongoing criminal investigation or prosecution is not eligible.

NC Income Tax Debt Payment Loan

Tired of waiting for unpaid tax balances to disappear? Don't wait any longer - let SECU help you now through April 30th! [Learn More>](#)

In exchange for a taxpayer paying the balance of tax and interest owed by April 30, NCDOR will waive certain unpaid, civil penalties and fees.

“We are excited to offer this payment program to our citizens,” said Secretary of Revenue David Hoyle. “It will help them resolve their tax liabilities easily and have a fresh start in 2012.”

Anyone interested in participating should contact the NCDOR local service center nearest them or call 1-877-252-4983. For detailed information about the program, please visit the North Carolina Department of Revenue website.

Additional help is available through the State Employees’ Credit Union (SECU), which is teaming up with NCDOR and the Office of State Personnel to get the word out about another special advantage for SECU members – an Individual Income Tax Debt Payment Loan. SECU is offering qualifying members a 5 percent loan to repay unresolved balances, generating tremendous overall savings for these members and allowing them to

take advantage of up to 35 percent in a penalty/fee waiver being offered by NCDOR.

While more than 185,000 North Carolina taxpayers have unresolved tax balances totaling nearly \$800 million, the average unresolved obligation is about \$4,600, with 105,000 taxpayers owing

less than \$2,000.

Under this new loan program, an SECU member who owes \$2,000 in back taxes and interest can expect savings of approximately \$700 via the waiver of penalties and fees on the taxes; one who owes \$4,000 would save nearly \$1,400 in penalties and fees on back taxes. Terms of the SECU loan will, in most cases, allow for payments of \$50 to \$125 per month.

“This program will directly help our taxpaying citizens who have faced financial challenges during this economic downturn,” said Linda Millsaps, NCDOR Chief Operating Officer. “With partners like SECU supporting this effort, more people will be able to resolve their tax obligations and have a fresh start in 2012.”

With 1.7 million members, SECU provides services through 239 branch offices, 1,100 ATMs, and 24/7 contact centers and a website, www.ncsecu.org. ■

Preschool, playground, resource center at Riddle form Early Head Start complex

Family, Infant and Preschool Program (FIPP), a department of the J. Iverson Riddle Developmental Center has completed the addition of an Early Head Start complex featuring infant-toddler classrooms, and parent-child playroom and resource center, office space, and a natural playground. The Family Resource Center is open and features a variety of programs that serve families enrolled in FIPP Early Head Start as well as families with young children throughout the community. The new Family Resource Center was made possible by an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant from the Administration for Children and Families Office of Head Start. The new facility has a staff of 32 and will serve 200 children and their families per year. For more information visit our website www.FIPP.org. ■

– Photos by FIPP staff



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