September 2004

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

State Medical Response Team units expand on-site disaster care

North Carolina is better prepared for its next emergency, whether man-made or by act of nature, with the addition of State Medical Assistance Team (S-MAT) trailers to its emergency response system.

The trailers and trained staff to operate them are going online across the state as quickly as the units roll off the assembly line. They are financed through a $3.8-million share of funds from the Department of Homeland Security, and about $200,000 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resource Services Administration.

A Level II S-MAT team conducts a mock decontamination of a 'victim' exposed to biological agent. The suits worn by the team members seal out the agent, and backpack triple filtered air circulators assure that they breathe clean air.

Units from New Hanover Regional Medical Center and Pender County were on display Aug. 24 on the campus of Dorothea Dix Hospital. They were available for response when hurricanes Bonnie and Charley struck the North Carolina coast. The Pender unit was activated after a tornado spawned by Bonnie touched down.

"While we make every effort to have this kind of equipment on hand, we do this hoping that we will never need it," DHHS Secretary Carmen Hooker Odom told a group that viewed the trailers and a capabilities demonstration. "It is quite fortunate that we already had these units in place in the southeastern part of our state when Bonnie visited us on August 13."

Crime Control and Public Safety Secretary Bryan Beatty told the group, "These units represent a collaborative effort that helps to ensure that should we ever face a building collapse or, more likely in our state, an act of nature like a hurricane or tornado, we will have a strong response team in place."

The units are a result of a collaborative effort that tapped several agencies in North Carolina. The Department of Crime Control and Public Safety, Division of Emergency Management, worked with DHHS's Office of Emergency Medical Services. Planning was coordinated with the Division of Public Health's Epidemiology and

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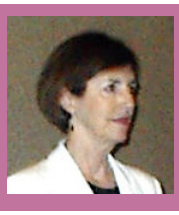

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Jalil Isa

¡Salud y Saludos!

Fiesta del Pueblo promises great mix of offerings

The second weekend in September will mark the 11th time a group of North Carolina residents has gathered to celebrate Latino culture in *La Fiesta del Pueblo*.

This annual event, which had humble beginnings as a small gathering among some Hispanic friends, now draws tens of thousands of people from all across North Carolina over the course of a weekend. The event is put together by the Raleigh-based non profit advocacy group, El Pueblo. And this year, *Fiesta* should be at least as big as last year – when organizers say a record 60,000 people showed up to this largest Latino festival of its kind in the state.

At the event expect to see a variety of Latin American food being offered at more than 30 different booths (a natural highlight of mine, if you're familiar with my take on food from previous columns), performances on three different stages, a special children's section with rides just for them, a cultural art exhibit, and various different offerings from the housing, employment, and health sector. Elements of DHHS will be included in the bunch and some of the local departments of health will be offering information and referrals. There will also be other health educators providing screenings of various sorts.

But the event doesn't just offer educational opportunities. I've had the pleasure of seeing some incredible cultural dance performances. And *Fiesta* has provided a good deal of Latin flavor on a specially set-up dance floor. There have also been fantastic photography exhibits on hand at past *Fiestas*. For those needing help with different issues, the event attracts elected and appointed officials who make an appearance at the festival and are generally accessible to the public. Secretary Carmen Hooker Odom was present last year on the main stage as her family toured the many displays and vendor booths at the event. It was the first time *Fiesta* had changed venues in many years, and took a major step as it set up at the State Fairgrounds. The event proved to be capable of filling the additional space and welcomed larger crowds.

In past years, this event has also served as a market testing ground for a variety of products from businesses trying to get a leg up on the Hispanic market. Everything from drinks targeted to the Latino community … to free services available to the community at large. I can't think of a better location to launch something to the Spanish-speaking masses, in a safe and organized environment. The event is alcohol-free and caters to families. Children under 12 are admitted free. Adults pay only $1 for admission. The bulk of the event is paid for through major corporate sponsors. I'll be helping out with some of the master of ceremony duties on stage. Those who have an interest in getting full immersion into local Latino culture – right here in the Triangle – can learn more about the event by visiting elpueblo.org on the Internet.

Jalil

Some violations result in termination

Security a must in the digital world

Computer security is a term with several meanings to employees of the Department of Health and Human Services.

For those whose work includes computer use, it is important to keep a private password that would *NOT* be easy for anyone – friend, coworker or stranger – to figure out. (If you want help coming up with a good password visit https://security.dhhs.state.nc.us/default.aspx and select 'Password Gen' from the menu in the left margin.)

For 16 employees and contractors over the past 18 months, violations of computer security and usage rules have meant it was time for them to move on – to find jobs elsewhere. Some breaches are not tolerated. Those employees were found to be misusing their state computers.

"We expect every employee and contractor to adhere to the same rules," said DHHS Deputy Secretary Lanier Cansler. "And we expect every employee who uses a computer to exercise common sense in the day-to-day performance of their duties. You're hired to do a job. It does not include visiting inappropriate sites. But we recognize that accidents can happen."

Pyreddy Reddy, DHHS Information Security Administrator, is in charge of computer security for DHHS. "Every employee, whether contractor, employee or volunteer, is subject to monitoring and DHHS can monitor at any time," he said. "Computers are state and department resources. They must be used wisely. If you try and go to inappropriate websites, the department has the ability to monitor and report to management if there has been any inappropriate activity."

Reddy has a few suggestions:

1. Do not visit pornographic, racist or otherwise inappropriate web sites, including sites with racial jokes.
2. If you should happen to land accidentally on such a site, report it to your supervisor.

Most reports of computer use violations are handled through the employee's supervisor and Human Resources section. However, if evidence is discovered indicating that an employee has visited a child pornography website, the matter is turned over to the State Bureau of Investigation. If an employee visits a website promoting terrorism or fund-raising for terrorist organizations, it is reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Reddy said employees may report suspected abuses or security issues involving state computers through a state computer security website, https://security.dhhs.state.nc.us/default.aspx by selecting 'Report Incident' from the menu in the left margin. You'll be asked to provide contact information. Reports are treated with confidentiality.

Do you get spam emails? First rule of thumb, do not open them. Delete them and then empty trash. If you should open one and it contains inappropriate content, you should report that to your supervisor. There is a guide to how to handle spam in an article on page 4 of this newsletter. ■

Computer Security

If you receive spam at work...

The NCMail Team has set up a central spam reporting procedure to enable NCMail users who receive spam to be able to take some level of direct control over this ubiquitous problem that costs time and productivity.

Users who receive spam should report it through this procedure. The user should report the spam.

1. If you are using Netscape/Mozilla, please report spam in the following manner:
    1. Click on View > Message Source
    2. On older versions of Netscape, this may be View> Page Source.
    3. Cut and paste the contents into a new email.
    4. Send the email to spam@ncmail.net with a Subject of "UCE".
2. If you are using something other than Netscape as your email client, see the following URL for method of displaying mailing headers for your mailer agent.

   http://spamcop.net/fom-serve/cache/19.html

3. Forward the message containing the spam to spam@ncmail.net <mailto:spam@ncmail.net>

E-mail that is submitted using this procedure will be sent to SpamCop, which is an effective organization for dealing with spam and pornography that is sent to NCmail each day from many sources. SpamCop searches the headers for information that will identify the source of the spam and generates a report that is submitted to the NCMail Team for verification.

After the NCMail Team verifies the data in the Spam report, it is resubmitted to SpamCop where it is added to the database. NCMail subscribes to this free database and checks all incoming mail to determine whether the source is listed in the SpamCop database. If it is listed there, NCMail rejects the mail as spam.

Please do not use this procedure to report spam you receive at any other address. This procedure is unique to NCMail and will not work for any other e-mail addresses.

You can get information on how to turn on headers here: Turning On Headers <http://admin.ncmail.net/NCMail/Headers.html>

If you have any questions, please contact the NCMail Helpdesk <mailto:administrator@ncmail.net>.

S-MAT, continued from page 1

Communicable Disease Section and the non-profit Special Operations Response Team, a medical team based in Winston-Salem that forms Level I for S-MAT.

Drexdal Pratt, chief of the N.C. Office of Emergency Medical Services, speaks about the State Medical Assistance Team trailers (background), which will assure quick response to natural and man-made emergencies across the state. He is flanked by Secretary Hooker Odom and Secretary Bryan Beatty. Beatty is also the state's Homeland Security coordinator.

These folks comprise the management system that coordinates a disaster response. They ensure that treatment and prevention strategies are implemented, as well as disease surveillance and medical preparedness.

The State Medical Assistance Team (S-MAT) program consists of three types of response teams. These teams are primarily for medical response capabilities and have individual missions and response times. The primary vision is to sustain medical response locally while awaiting federal assistance.

By Oct. 1, there will be seven Level II trailers, each capable of establishing a 40-bed care facility. They will be based at the state's trauma centers. There will be 27 Level III trailers, capable of providing patient decontamination, triage and treatment. They are being distributed to counties that have demonstrated the need and the ability to staff them.

You can run but...

A new and powerful tool is quietly working to ensure children receive the support they deserve.

Like sonar on a bass boat, Financial Institution Data Match, or FIDM, allows Child Support Enforcement to locate those parents who are not paying support but have a bank account full of cash. FIDM also supplies the net that allows CSE to get a hold of that money for the children who are entitled to it.

"Technology is a wonderful thing," said Barry Miller, chief of N.C. Child Support Enforcement. "We're expecting to collect another $2 million a year this way."

FIDM works like this: CSE places a lien on a bank account of a person who has delinquent child support obligation of $1,000 or is 6 months in arrears, whichever is less. Accounts below $250 are not seized.

The non-custodial parent is advised of the action and given the opportunity to contest the levy or pay the arrearage from other available funds. The non-custodial parent may contest the levy in district court.

The bank accounts do not have to be in the state. North Carolina is one of 14 states participating in a project that allows automated enforcement of interstate cases, whereby requests are sent to other states to seize accounts of delinquent payers.

Centralization of the process saves local child support workers time and saves the counties the expense of the lien and levy process.

GAO report highlights N.C. efforts to fight Medicaid fraud

Last month's study by the federal General Accountability Office on Medicaid fraud is no news to North Carolina. Our state's aggressive program integrity staff in the N.C. Division of Medical Assistance and in the Attorney General's Medicaid Investigation Unit work hard to weed out fraud and protect public dollars.

"Medicaid is an $8 billion industry in North Carolina, and the temptation is definitely there for some who bill Medicaid to take advantage of the system," said Gary Fuquay, director of the state's Medicaid office. "Most of those who provide health care to our Medicaid clients are honest and bill correctly, but we employ sophisticated measures to find those who do not."

- In fiscal year 2004, N.C. Division of Medical Assistance recovered $26 million in provider fraud and overpayments. This is six times the amount collected in 2000.

- In the first nine months of state fiscal year 2004, the Office of the Attorney General, working on referrals by the Division of Medicaid, recovered more than $17 million in provider fraud. This is eight times the amount collected in 2000.

"Our automation allows us to examine hundreds of thousands of claims and tens of thousands of health care providers," said Bo Nowell, chief of Program Integrity for N.C. Division of Medical Assistance. "We employ fraud filters with algorithms to identify aberrant billing, such as seeing more patients in a single day than is humanly possible. We are able to model provider bills, comparing them with their peers to look for suspicious aberrations. We have images of all claims at our fingertips to quickly analyze the work of providers singled out by our systems."

Because of North Carolina's high level of automation, the state was asked to participate in a national pilot project to "data mine" fraud and abuse. By combining Medicaid (state) data and Medicare (federal) data, patterns of abuse can become apparent that may be undetectable in the single programs, identifying those providers who overutilize services or overbill, but have managed to do so "flying below the radar." This project is just getting under way in North Carolina, but California reported $58 million in savings in the program's first year.

Anyone who suspects someone is billing Medicaid fraudulently can call the Attorney General's Medicaid Investigations Unit at (919) 881-2320.

Libby Puckett recognized for stroke prevention work

Largely because of the leadership and dedication of Libby Puckett, North Carolina's cardiovascular disease prevention efforts serve as a national model. Puckett has made it her mission to ensure that the citizens of North Carolina are recipients of the most tenacious efforts to address the number one and number three killers – heart disease and stroke. She is head of the Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention (HDSP) Branch of the N.C. Division of Public Health and executive director of the state's Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Task Force.

Libby Puckett receives her award from Dr. Darwin LaBarthe, acting chief of the Cardiovascular Health Branch and the associate director of Cardiovascular Health Policy and Research at the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Of the 33 states receiving funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for heart disease and stroke prevention, North Carolina is the only one to support three major efforts to address heart disease and stroke — Start With Your Heart, the Tri-State Stroke Network, and the North Carolina Collaborative Stroke Registry, all begun under Puckett's leadership.

Puckett received an award for her "Pioneering Spirit, Passion and Support of the Tri-State Stroke Network" at a national meeting of multi-state stroke prevention networks in August.

The Tri-State Stroke Network, encompassing North and South Carolina and Georgia in the heart of the nation's "Stroke Belt," is a direct result of Puckett's tireless work in heart disease and stroke prevention and was the first of its kind in the nation. There are now two additional multi-state networks in the U.S. — the Delta States Stroke Consortium and the Great Lakes Regional Stroke Network — modeled on TSSN.

Due to Puckett's efforts, the $100,000 in recurring state appropriations for heart disease and stroke prevention efforts, mandated by the N.C. General Assembly in 1998, has been turned into a comprehensive cardiovascular disease prevention and control program for North Carolinians. The N.C. HDSP program now also receives $1.54 million per year in federal CDC funding.

Puckett's work nationally, regionally and across North Carolina has earned her and the N.C. HDSP program the respect of top experts, organizations and other states in the cardiovascular disease arena. She served as a national chair of an expert panel on policies and programs for the *Public Health Action Plan to Prevent Heart Disease and Stroke*, which was released April 2003.

For more information about North Carolina's comprehensive HDSP Program and to learn how to prevent heart disease and stroke, visit the Start With Your Heart website at www.startwithyourheart.com. ■

NCSD has new leader

The North Carolina School for the Deaf (NCSD) in Morganton has a new leader. Linda B. Lindsey, Ed. D., has been named school director.

Linda B. Lindsey

Lindsey began her duties on Aug. 6. She was officially welcomed by staff and students to NCSD with a reception on Aug. 18.

"Dr. Lindsey brings a wealth of knowledge in educational programming and strategic planning that will lead NCSD in shaping its future," said Cyndie Bennett, superintendent of the Office of Education Services. "She is of a very progressive nature and innovative in her approach to learning and teaching children. She will constantly strive for excellence that our children so deserve.

"Dr. Lindsey understands the importance of community involvement and partnerships with others. And, we are fortunate to have someone with her experience in residential programming and a good understanding of the operations of our department."

Lindsey brings many years of experience working in education and in the management of residential service programs for children. She also has many years of experience overseeing the creation and management of projects within social service programs. A longtime resident of western North Carolina, Lindsey spent time during the late 1980s and early 1990s working for the Department of Health and Human Services.

Lindsey received her undergraduate degree from Mars Hill College as well as both a master's and a doctorate in education from North Carolina State University.
"The North Carolina School for the Deaf has a long tradition of outstanding service. That history has formed a foundation upon which to build the future," said Lindsey. "It is a pleasure to join hands with the staff and help build that future."

Lindsey replaces Seth Hunt, hospital director/CEO of Broughton Hospital, who has served as acting director at NCSD since December 2002.

"I want to thank Seth Hunt for the time and energy he has devoted to NCSD. It is not an easy task to oversee one state institution, much less two," said Bennett. "Seth's commitment to the education of children at NCSD has been invaluable, and I know that he will be an asset to Dr. Lindsey as she takes over the helm."

NCSD is the oldest school for the deaf in North Carolina. The school serves children ages five to 21.

Simple Ways to Promote Wellness at Work

1. **Start a fresh fruit snack basket**
   Rotate shopping duties (once or twice a week) and charge 25 or 50 cents for a piece of fruit. Make fruit a cheaper and easier option than visiting the vending machine.

2. **Take 10 (or 15) while training or meeting**
   Five, 10 or 15 minutes of physical activity can pay off during training days and important meetings. Activity helps relieve tension and boosts brainpower too!

3. **Plan to "meet and eat" with health in mind**
   Establish easy guidelines for foods and beverages brought (or bought) for office meetings and celebrations. Invite people to share their best tasting, healthiest recipes.

4. **Get a walking group going**
   Peer "pressure" can work in positive ways. People are more likely to get going when they are accountable to someone else. Make it formal, make it informal, just do it!

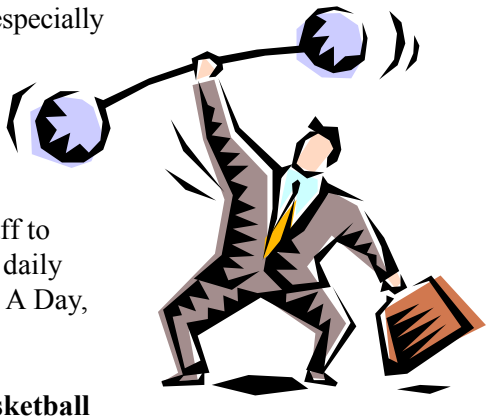
5. **Offer regular office "health day" activities**
   Set regular times, like an hour or two a month, to explore healthy options as a staff. Tour a fitness facility, try a new restaurant, visit a farmer's market or play a game.

6. **Increase your vending options**
   Tired of the same old choices? Visit with the vending company about healthier options like beef jerky, animal crackers, nuts, trail mix or peanut butter crackers.

7. **Add art in the stairwells**
   Want people to take the stairs instead of the elevator? A few murals (painted by school art classes or talented employees) can really increase stairway traffic.

8. **Email motivational messages**
   Short, fun tips via computer screens can remind staff to sit up straight, stand and stretch, eat a fruit, drink some water, take a walk or add a vegetable to lunch.

9. **Create health-enhancing challenges**
   People enjoy a bit of healthy competition, especially with delicious prizes (a fruit and cheese basket!). Challenge staff to increase their daily steps or eat 5 A Day, everyday!



10. **Put up a basketball hoop**
    Put up a real hoop outside or a child-size/foam ball toy inside. Keep a few balls at a reception desk and encourage people to borrow them for breaks or at lunch.

National Nutrition Month® 2003
Adapted by the NC NET Program from Eat Right Montana materials

Schools for the Deaf donate art collection to DHHS

Thanks to students at the North Carolina School for the Deaf and the Eastern School for the Deaf, there's some lovely new artwork gracing DHHS walls.

In a joint collaboration, with NCSD students contributing the artwork and ECD students creating the frames, 40 pieces of art will be contributed to DHHS.

Pictured from left to right bottom row: Cory Gaither and Tasha Gray from NCSD; Cyndie Bennett, superintendent, Office of Education Services. Top row left to right: Kimberly Lazier and Beth Bailey, art teachers, NCSD; Crystal Turpin, Kelly Randall, Tashonda Gilmore, and Gabe Campbell from NCSD; Secretary Hooker Odom; Tyrell Dixon and Braulio Salinas from ENCSD; Stan Corbett, woodworking instructor, ENCSD; and Tony Lassiter, director of Vocational Education, ENCSD.

The first 17 pieces arrived during the Aug. 16 division director meeting. Kimberly Lajzer, who teaches grades 9-12 art at NCSD, said that the artwork was very important to a child's learning experience. She said that teaching art at NCSD has also changed her. "Being at the deaf school has been a blessing," she explained. "These kids give me more than I could ever give them. They're awesome."

The K-8 teacher, Beth Bailey, said that the students study art from a number of different viewpoints. They look at the work of famous artists to learn about "colors, lines, and shapes" and that's how they begin to learn the "language of art."

Bailey's student, sixth grader Kelly Randall, said that the classes are paying off. "I love art," she signed with a broad grin to the crowd of division directors.

Another student, Cory Gaither, said the classes have had a big impression on him. "At home I love to draw and practice my art," he signed.

The frames for the artwork were created by ECD students. Two of them, Braulio Salinas and Tyrell Dixon, explained the process that turns scrap wood into professional frames.

Teacher Stan Corbett, who works with Salinas, Dixon and other students, said that building 40 frames has been a big undertaking. "They asked me to build a few frames," he said. "To me – a few frames means three or four."

For ECU fans, the frames may have particular meaning. Many of them are made of old wood from ECU bleachers, which were donated by the university. Other frames were constructed from old ECD dorm furniture.

DHHS Secretary Carmen Hooker Odom said that she is looking forward to seeing the artwork hanging around DHHS. "I'm proud of these beautiful pieces and look forward to doing a little bragging about what our students can do," she said.

Correction

Helping Paws Pet Assisted Therapy Training Program at Dorothea Dix Hospital has graduated 102 teams of dogs and handlers in three years of classes. The program was the subject of a report in the August edition of the DHHS Employee Update.

Currie leads Disability Determination Services

Rhonda Currie is the new administrator of the Disability Determination Services program in the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. DDS, the state arm of the federal Social Security Administration, processes disability claims made to SSA.

Rhonda Currie

Currie, who began her career with DDS in 1974, has held a myriad of positions at DDS over the years, most recently serving as DDS chief of operations/deputy administrator. She began her duties Aug. 1. She replaces Fred Beckham, who retired as administrator with more than 34 years of service.

"Rhonda Currie has many years of experience in different roles with the DDS and most recently has functioned very effectively as the deputy administrator," said George McCoy, director of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. "I am confident that her skills and talents will enable the DDS to continue to provide great service to our disability applicants."

Currie received her undergraduate degree from North Carolina Central University. She completed the state's Certified Manager's Program in 1992.

"The DDS administrator's position is one of tremendous responsibility. It is both a challenge and an opportunity," said Currie. "It is a test of a person's ability to manage a complex program with compassion and efficiency. It is an opportunity to continue the agency's legacy of providing quality customer service to the citizens of North Carolina and enhance the delivery of services to those in need."

Adoption Profile

NC Kids
Adoption & Foster Care Network

Introducing Brandon

This energetic little boy is a whirlwind of activity, but Brandon will slow down for a big hug anytime! He loves to talk, ride his bike and play games on his PlayStation. Brandon is a loving child who develops meaningful relationships. He likes being around other children and would like to attend an after-school program where he will have lots of activities.

Brandon
b. Dec.3, 1996

Brandon is a very bright and articulate boy who attends a regular classroom at school. Medication helps him stay somewhat focused and frequent reminders help him stay on task. His foster mom says Brandon has made significant progress since moving into their home. He needs to learn and practice better social skills with other children.

A Family for Brandon...

Brandon needs a stable, loving home where he gets plenty of attention and opportunities for activity. Structure and clearly defined limits will help Brandon understand what is expected of him. He would like to have brothers or sisters, and would likely benefit from an older sibling who models appropriate behavior and relationships with peers.

Brandon's adoptive family needs to be actively involved in his schoolwork. They should also be open to some type of relationship with his birth grandparents.

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

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