

The Human Side

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES • FALL 2003

The mission of the Georgia Department of Human Resources is to assist Georgians in achieving healthy, independent and self-sufficient lives.

Commissioner's Corner

When I became Commissioner I was quoted in *The Human Side*: "I'm looking forward to building on the strengths of this department and addressing the many issues that still face DHR. I plan to emphasize professionalism, innovation, and respect not only for those who receive our services but also for the people who work for the department. I want everyone here to feel proud that they work for DHR."

I have had the privilege of working with you, and with the other people and organizations with whom we work, to achieve those goals. I believe we have been successful. As I leave as commissioner I feel a sense of pride in our accomplishments. I also have a real appreciation for the job you do.

The challenges have been daunting: the historic two year decline in state revenues; the enormous budget reductions that we have made; the lack of



public understanding of the difficult jobs we have; and the increasing need for the services we provide. The employees of our department and our partners have met these challenges with professionalism, self-sacrifice, excellent work, and dedication. I could not be prouder of what you have done over the last two years.

My colleagues in the Commissioner's Office have been my strength: **Cyd Powell, Deborah Jester, Delandrial Swift, Antoinette McFadgen** and **Beverly Drake**. The members of the leadership team have been my wise advisors and strong leaders: **Kate Pfirman,**

Juanita Blount-Clark, Ken Bramlett, Jim Bricker, Marion Cornett, Debra Elovich, Maria Greene, Bill Harris, John Hurd, Ken Jones, Steve Love, Gary Nagel, Jed Nitzberg, Larry Ricks, Robert Riddle, Marty Rotter, John Sartain, Karl Schwarzkopf, Jack Senterfitt, Sylvia Swiney, Kathleen Toomey, William Warren, Rosa Waymon, Zelda White, and Dennis Yarman. I am indebted to them.

We have made some mistakes, but we have accomplished more. Governor Barnes gave me a wonderful opportunity and I have tried to serve him and Governor Perdue well. During the Great Depression President Roosevelt said: "The country needs and, unless I mistake, the country demands, bold persistent experimentation. It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something." Rather than sitting on the sidelines we have had the courage to try. I know we have made a difference. Thank you.

Jim Martin

Governor Perdue Appoints New DHR Board Members

Governor Perdue appointed seven new members to the 17-member Board of Human Resources, to replace some of the 14 members whose terms had expired: **LaRon D. Bennett, Sr.** (Brunswick); **Robertiena "Tiena" Fletcher** (Warner Robins); **Vernadette Ramirez Broyles** (Norcross); **Bruce E. Cook** (Atlanta); **Don Cole** (Albany); **Willene Jones Grant** (Elberton); and **Anne O'Quin Mueller** (Savannah). Three members are still serving their unexpired terms: **Lillian B. Darden** (secretary, Atlanta), **Lawrence Cooper, M.D.** (Atlanta), and **Jimmy Fleming** (Atlanta). At the September meeting Bruce Cook was elected chairman. Their biographies and photographs are available at www.dhr.georgia.gov.

In this issue

New compensation policy ..pg. 2
Just a suggestion!pg. 3
Helping older victimspg. 4
Helping kidspg. 4
"GRITS" is on the tablepg. 5
Who's newspg. 6-7
What's newspg. 7-8

Our New Compensation Philosophy

For the first time, DHR has a written philosophy that will guide all future decisions and policies involving employee compensation, throughout the department. Yes, compensation means salaries — what new employees receive and what you can expect when you are promoted, upgraded or transferred within DHR.

The new philosophy will not trigger a change in your paycheck, according to Office of Human Resource Management (OHRM) Director **Rosa Waymon**, who spearheaded development of the philosophy.

"It does mean that in the future, compensation policies will be more uniform and based firmly on DHR's mission and values. Everyone will have a better idea of what to expect and why regarding monetary compensation," says Waymon.

The current complicated blend



Rosa Waymon

of old Georgia Merit System policies and more recent policies that vary among divisions and offices will be replaced by a more consistent system. This should improve morale, help reduce turnover and make recruiting easier. It will not happen all at once, however.

DHR's leadership team arrived at the new compensation philosophy using findings from surveys, focus groups, interviews, and a review of current policies. OHRM has

launched a communications campaign to inform employees of the content of the philosophy. Changes in old policies will be made and new policies written in support of the new philosophy. Finally, managers will be trained to understand the new philosophy and implement related policies.

As one result of the new approach, managers will make salary decisions based on the business need and appropriate policy. Another change is an understanding that DHR's salaries cannot compete with private sector salaries in most instances, but that we can compare favorably with the surrounding public sector.

You can read the new philosophy and find an email address for your questions, on OHRM's web site at www.dhr.georgia.gov.

— *Barbara Joye*

More Funds for Energy Assistance

DHR has been awarded an estimated \$162,000 in extra funds for this winter's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) thanks to non-federal dollars added to the program's funding by the state.

Last year, LIHEAP was successful in obtaining \$6.5 million from the Georgia Public Service Commission and the Heating Energy Assistance Team, Inc., along with in-kind donations from Atlanta Gas Light Resources and other utility providers.

LIHEAP, which is administered by DFCS' Community Services Section, received the award from the leveraging incentive program of the federal Department of Health

and Human Services.

"These additional funds are coming into the state at a time of high fuel prices and scarce resources," said DHR Commissioner **Jim Martin**. "This award will provide much needed heating assistance for approximately 826 Georgia households this coming winter. I am deeply appreciative of the partners who made the resources available, enabling us to receive this award."

— *Edna Jackson*



DFCS Leadership Changes

Juanita Blount-Clark stepped down as director of the Division of Family and Children Services effective September 30, 2003, to assume another position in public service. Blount-Clark will work to assist in the transition to new leadership.

Governor Perdue appointed **Janet Oliva** as special assistant to the commissioner for DFCS. Oliva, who earned her PhD. in May from the University of Georgia, is currently a special agent in charge of the GBI's Child Abuse Investigative Support Center. She began her work with the GBI in 1986 as a narcotics agent.

Oliva has been charged by the Governor with strengthening DFCS child protection and foster care.

2003 Celebration of Excellence Honors 225 Graduates

On June 18, a record number of Georgia's foster children "graduated" at the annual Celebration of Excellence, held at the Fabulous Fox Theatre in Atlanta.

The celebration is a statewide ceremony and scholarship program honoring young people in the state's foster care system who are graduating from high school, college, or a vocational program, or receiving their GED. Over \$50,000 in scholarships was awarded in addition to a certificate of recognition for each student. The keynote speaker was Shane Salter, a former foster child and currently chief of staff for the deputy mayor of Washington, D.C.



Graduates file into the Egyptian Ballroom at the Fox prior to the 2003 Celebration of Excellence.

Just a Suggestion. . . *could make you a winner!*

Did you know that the State of Georgia encourages and rewards employees' suggestions that lead to cost savings and greater efficiency? Suggestions that result in savings can earn awards ranging from ten dollars to \$5,000, depending on the amount saved. Those leading to "intangible savings" such as improved safety, working conditions or morale may win up to \$100.

"This program has been around for decades but not many employees are aware of it," says **Rosa Waymon**, director of the Office of Human Resource Management. "These days we need your ideas more than ever, so we are creating a new DHR Employee Suggestion Program web site

and working on posters and other measures to raise awareness, as well as some ways to recognize submissions even if they don't win a cash award. You will be hearing more about this in the coming months."

State law established the Georgia's Employees' Suggestion Program in 1957. In 2001 DHR's personnel policy #1802 set the rules governing our department's participation. That same year, **Paul Broderson** of Floyd County DFCS was awarded \$5,000 for developing a way eligibility workers could record interview data for processing. This saved an estimated \$380,000 in cash savings and another estimated \$388,000 in other benefits.

You can submit your idea by filling out a form available at www.gms.state.ga.us. A group of

employees can submit a suggestion together and share the award. The suggestions can be sent electronically or in hard copy to the suggestion program coordinator at the Georgia Merit System.

Agencies affected by the suggestion will review it and make recommendations to the State Personnel Board. That board will review all the suggestions and the recommendations, and decide which suggestions will be adopted and rewarded. Suggestions will be excluded from consideration if they deal only with the author's own job responsibilities or personal grievances, job classification or pay, or matters already under study or requiring legislation.

— *Barbara Joye*

You Can Help Older Adult Victims

The story is sad, but true. Unfortunately, it happens too often in our state. Someone's mother, grandmother, aunt, or neighbor has sat in a house without heat, food, or lights because someone in their family has taken their money with the "promise" to take care of them.

"Seniors are being abused and neglected everyday, but many of

them don't realize it, don't know what to do about it, or may not want to confront the person who's misusing them," said **Gloria Bass**, coordinator of the Senior Adult Victim's Advocate Program (SAVA), which is administered by the Division of Aging Services.

"The abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older adults is a national problem and it affects every level of

society, especially females. It is also one of the most unrecognized and under-reported crimes in the United States. SAVA was created so that victims of abuse could receive support beyond what is mandated by law," Bass added.

DFCS's Adult Protective Services Program is the agency that is legally mandated to receive complaints regarding the neglect, abuse, and exploitation of people 18 and older who are not residents of long-term care facilities, according to **Mary Martha Rugg**, program consultant for the division. (DHR's Office of Regulatory Services handles reports of abuse of residents of long-term care facilities).

"SAVA is a new partner in addressing seniors who are victims of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. SAVA volunteers will serve as a liaison between the victim, social service agencies, and the court system," Rugg said.

The SAVA program needs your help, Bass said. "We are initiating public awareness on this very serious issue and are currently recruiting volunteers. Anyone who is interested can call me."

SAVA services include: the Elder Abuse Information and Assistance Helpline; telephone assurance; access to support groups for victims of elder abuse; and help with court appearances and understanding the legal system. SAVA also works with victims to help prevent further abuse.

For more information on SAVA or to volunteer, call the Elder Abuse Information and Assistance Helpline at 404-657-5250 in metro Atlanta or call the statewide toll-free number at 1-888-774-0152.

— *Lola Russell*



Helping Kids Find a Better Path

Theresa was the youngest member of a Latino gang in Dalton, Georgia. She thought it was the way to be "cool" — and get away from a mother who she felt didn't understand her. She was incarcerated for the first time when she was nine, ran away from home many times, and lived with gang members. She dressed like an 18-year old, slept with men and used heroin. She carried a gun, which the gang taught her how to shoot, but she drew the line at killing.

When she was thirteen, at great jeopardy to herself and her family, Theresa turned her back on the gang and street life. How did she do it? She joined Alianza Familiar (Family Alliance), an intensive intervention program for Hispanic families whose children have addiction and/or mental health problems, are at risk for out-of-home placement and are in Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) custody.

The program was started by

DHR's Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases (MHDDAD) in collaboration with DJJ, and funded by Highland Rivers Community Service Board, a provider in MHDDAD's North Region.

"The face of Dalton was changing, and we were having problems meeting the needs of severely troubled and addicted Hispanic youth in our custody," says Bruce Kenemer, juvenile parole specialist 3 for DJJ. "It wasn't just the problem of language, but also of culture. We weren't able to provide the right services to the young people and their families until the Alianza came on the scene."

The Alianza started in September 2002, and serves 24 families each quarter in intensive family intervention services, 60 girls and boys in individual services, and 100 other people on an out-patient basis.

— *Iris McIlvaine*

"GRITS" is on the Table

Immunization registry pilot soon to be statewide

Every parent knows how complicated children's vaccination schedules have become in recent years. When a family moves or changes medical providers or insurance, the records don't always follow. Since May, the Georgia Registry of Immunization Transactions and Services (GRITS), a new statewide immunization registry, has helped families in four health districts keep track of their children's vaccinations without having to make phone calls or carry documents around. GRITS keeps a complete immunization history for each child up to age 18 in a central data bank, while preserving privacy as required by state and federal laws.

The Public Health districts headquartered in Albany, Lawrenceville, Rome and Waycross — covering 40 counties — were the first in the state to use GRITS. The system is expected to go statewide in September.

"This new immunization registry will help us assure that all children receive the vaccinations they need on time, so they can be protected from serious but preventable diseases," says **Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H.**, director of the Division of Public Health. "This registry will bring peace of mind to both parents and providers."

GRITS prints out an accurate, complete copy of a child's immunization history for personal, day-care, school or camp entrance requirements. This eliminates the need for staff to copy immunization information onto certificates, and helps schools and childcare facilities keep immunization records on file

and up to date.

GRITS also provides parents with reminders when an immunization is due or past due, simplifying the complicated task of remembering vaccination schedules that may change as new vaccines become available. Finally, information from the registry allows public health staff to identify populations with low immunization rates so resources can be targeted efficiently.

The registry was authorized by the Georgia General Assembly and developed by the Division of Public Health in partnership with the Georgia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Georgia Academy of Family Physicians, the Georgia Nurses' Association, the

Georgia Hospital Association and other organizations.

Childhood immunization registries are being developed or are already in operation in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has set a goal of enrolling 95 percent of all children from birth through age 5 in a fully functioning immunization registry by 2010.

— Barbara Joye



Parents: The "Anti-Drug"

Did you know that kids who learn about the dangers of drug use from their parents are much less likely to use drugs? It's true.

DHR is pleased to provide all of our employees with access to free, tested resources that can help parents and other concerned adults keep America's youth drug-free.

Want some simple actions you can take to protect your kids from drugs? Need information about the drugs you've heard of and some you haven't? Want ideas from experts and parents about what to say and when to say it?

For online and offline materials with great advice and factual information, call 1-800-788-2800 or visit www.theantidrug.com. You can also look up this information at any time through the DHR intranet on our web page.

DHR brings you this information in partnership with the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, run by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. Through the campaign, caring agencies and companies across America will be providing youth drug prevention information and resources to their employees, and DHR is proud to be among them.

Write it Right

He, she and they

What's wrong with the following sentence? "Make sure your child gets their vaccination." In the same vein, you may have seen a DHR poster some years ago that asked: "Can you spot the person who worked their way off welfare?"

In English, when we mean more than one person we can use the one-word-fits-all pronoun "they," but when we write about an individual we have to choose either "he" or "she." When we don't know the gen-

der of the person the only correct way is to say "he or she," but that usually weakens the sentence:

"Make sure your child gets his or her vaccination." "Can you spot the person who worked his or her way off welfare?" No one talks like that.

It's easier to switch to the plural "they." Unfortunately, singular and plural don't mix. "Their" doesn't agree with the singular noun "person." A better way is to rewrite the sentence so you can use plurals con-

sistently:

"Tell your children to get their vaccination." "Can you spot the people who worked their way off welfare?" Or, take even stronger evasive action: "Can you tell who traded a welfare check for a paycheck?"

— *Marian the Grammarian*



Who's News

Public Health's **Vital Records Branch** has again received a CDC/National Center for Health Statistics award. This year only three states in the nation exceeded the Vital Statistics Cooperative Agreement (VSCP) contract's timetable for delivering vital statistics data: Georgia, Kansas and South Dakota. This is the third year in a row that Georgia Vital Records has won this award. The Vital Records VSCP contract team consists of **Julie Biddy, Lerline Thomas, Pat Collins, Tracie Whitus** and Branch Director **Mike Lavoie**.



Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H., director, Division of Public Health, was recently elected to a four-year term on the Harvard Medical Alumni Council by a vote of all the Harvard Medical School alumni, and will serve as Council treasurer. Serving on the Council is one of the highest honors that recognizes alumni.

Rosa Waymon (standing), director of the Office of Human Resource Management (OHRM), presented the first annual "Shining Star" award to OHRM's outstanding employees: (l to r) **Kimberly Robinson, Deborah Brewer** and **Audrey Hale**, for their teamwork in carrying out complex personnel tasks involved in the reorganization of MHDDAD. Second place winner was **Gretchen Page**, for leadership, and **Stephanie Adams** won third place, for customer service.



Two DFCS staffers were recognized recently for their outstanding work protecting children: Child Protective Services Supervisor of the Year **Jason Griner**, Cook County DFCS (second from l), and Case Manager of the Year **Susan Barr**, Macon County DFCS (third from l). The presentation was made by DFCS Director **Juanita Blount-Clark** (l) and Commissioner **Jim Martin** (r) at this year's Prevent Child Abuse Georgia symposium in Atlanta.



Imogene Bowen

Imogene Bowen, R.N., occupational health and infection control nurse at Central State Hospital, was named a finalist for the 2003 Georgia Nurse Association Nurse of the Year. Bowen has practiced mental health nursing for more than 20 years. She works in behalf of clients at the hospital and is described as a role model for her co-workers.



What's News



Dominique Wilkins with students at Tilson Elementary

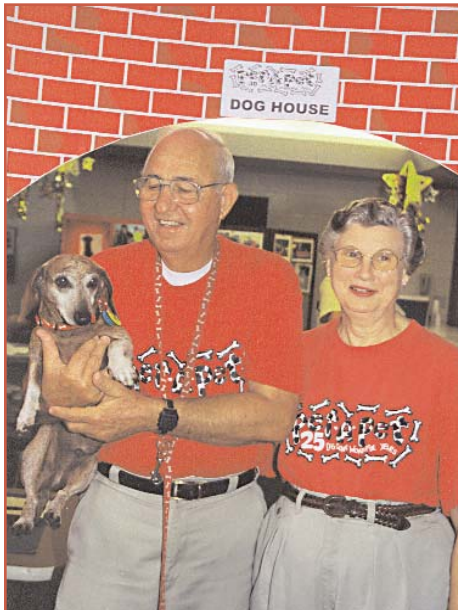
Eleven percent of Georgia's children suffer from asthma. This year on May 6, World Asthma Day, DHR's Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Branch joined the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the American Lung Association of Georgia to bring former Atlanta Hawks star Dominique Wilkins to a get-together with students at Tilson Elementary School in DeKalb County. He shared his experiences managing his own asthma and posed with these students who won the school's World Asthma Day poster contest.



Nan Dismukes, husband Bernie and canine companion Fritz, attended Pet-A-Pet's 30th birthday celebration this June at **Georgia Regional Hospital-Savannah**. Dismukes volunteered for this pet therapy program one week after retiring from the staff of the hospital's clinical laboratory.

Volunteer Catherine Kelly founded the "Pet-A-Pet" program long before pet therapy came into vogue. It has been going strong every "dog day" (Wednesday) since. Volunteers, both human and canine, work with the children, extended care and acute units. The anniversary party featured a giant doghouse, a cake for people and a dog food cake, and special T-shirts, sweat shirts and tote bags for the human volunteers.

-- Cindi Colley



Nan Dismukes, husband Bernie and Canine Companion Fritz



Refugee Youth Program clients learned how to apply for college and financial aid, on June 20, World Refugee Day, during DHR's conference on refugee services.

As anyone who has lived in Georgia for very long knows, the faces of our state have changed considerably in the last 20 years. Families from around the world are coming to Georgia to find a new home and a hopeful future. What they too often find, however, are obstacles to those goals.

To help overcome these barriers, DFCS' Refugee Program hosted a training conference at Agnes Scott College in Decatur, for refugees and

their service providers. This was the first time the annual conference included participation by the refugees themselves. They were joined by refugee program volunteers and professionals from criminal justice, mental and physical health, education, and social services agencies and community action groups. Guest speakers included U.S. Rep. Denise Majette (D-4th) and Clarkston Mayor Lee Swaney.

The conference ended with a celebration of World Refugee Day that brought together the various refugee communities and helping agencies.

— Renée Huie



The Greensboro Georgia Dreamers, 56 fourth graders, recently celebrated their third year in elementary school and their third year in a special program of mentoring and social and academic enrichment funded by DFCS' **Childcare and Parents Services Program (CAPS)**. CAPS uses part of its federal grant to improve the quality of childcare in Georgia. The Dreamers is the first CAPS-funded program of its type in a rural area. CAPS program consultants **Gloria Washington** and **Barbara Sullivan** provided technical assistance.

The purpose of The Human Side is to provide interesting and important information related to DHR employees and their jobs.

Published by the DHR Office of Communications.

Managing editor – Barbara Joye
Editorial staff – Renée Huie; Barbara Joye; Edna Jackson; Richard Quartarone; Angel Rodriguez; Lola Russell; Connie Sumpter; and Elizabeth Wilson.

Please send your letters and story ideas to: *The Human Side*, Two Peachtree Street NW, Suite 29-426, Atlanta, GA 30303, or contact us at 404/656-4937; FAX 404/651-6815; DHR GroupWise e-mail: brjoye; or Internet: brjoye@dhr.state.ga.us.