

ALABAMA'S

A PUBLICATION OF THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

HEALTH

VOLUME 36

NUMBER 5

JANUARY 2003

Alabama healthcare workers to receive voluntary smallpox immunizations starting Jan. 24

President Bush announced his smallpox vaccination policy on Dec. 13. The policy is designed to protect the public by assuring that those who would respond to a smallpox outbreak have previously been protected by smallpox vaccine. The President stressed there is no evidence of an imminent threat that smallpox virus will be released.

The Alabama Department of Public Health, in accordance with guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, will provide smallpox vaccinations to select personnel from hospitals and health departments who volunteer to serve on smallpox response teams. The department plans to begin these vaccinations effective Jan. 24. An estimated 12,000 Alabama healthcare workers will form these teams.

Upon completion of these vaccinations, the department will begin offering smallpox vaccinations to all other healthcare providers and first responders including emergency medical responders, law enforcement personnel and firefighters.

"As stated by the President, I wish to emphasize that vaccination is not recommended at this time for the general public," said Dr. Donald E. Williamson, state health officer. "If, despite this recommendation, there are citizens who feel strongly about receiving the vaccination, we will accommodate them according to forthcoming CDC recommendations."

The department will work with partners in the healthcare and first-responder communities to make this initiative successful.

In Memoriam

Dr. Martha Myers

We would like to express our sympathy to the family of former State Health Officer Dr. Ira L. Myers and environmentalist Grady Myers of the Montgomery County Health Department over the death of their daughter and sister, Dr. Martha Myers. Martha Myers was one of three missionaries slain by a gunman on Dec. 30 in Yemen's Jibla Baptist Hospital where she served as an obstetrician and a surgeon.

On behalf of the department Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "Martha Myers' 25 years at the

Yemen hospital was a daily testimony to her great faith. The outpouring of grief, gratitude and respect from the thousands she served makes her life's work an example of the good that can be accomplished by such dedication. To this family who has exemplified commitment to their faith and to humankind, we offer our deepest condolences and our profound gratitude for their service and sacrifice. May God bless them in this hour of sadness."

Timely public health response, high immunization levels curtail measles outbreak

Eleven infants in a single class of 10- to 11-month-olds in an Auburn-Opelika daycare center contracted measles in October and November. A twelfth case occurred in a hospital nurse who cared for several of the ill infants.

Measles has not been common in Alabama since a 1989 outbreak. There were 24 cases in 1990, but only an occasional imported case has been reported in the past decade.

The index case was an infant who had visited the Philippines. In response to this outbreak, immunization staff provided education to parents and daycare center staff, administered approximately 400 doses of vaccine, and provided an additional 120 doses to hospital staff. A total of 676 persons were identified as potentially exposed and so at risk for contracting measles.

No additional cases occurred in the other 130 children in the daycare center. Since no additional cases were reported by Dec. 7, the outbreak is considered to have ended. Timely Alabama Department of Public Health response and high immunization levels appear to have curtailed the outbreak.

“We could not have done this without the help of the staff of Lee County Health Department,” Ms. Cochran commented. “They were very gracious and helpful during the outbreak. Marci Gilder stayed with us many nights and

on the weekend so that we could use the health department as a base of operations.”

She also wanted to recognize the staff of the Opelika Pediatric Clinic for their quick response and help in identifying contacts.

The staff who helped with the outbreak are the following:

- Area 1 and 2: Andrea George, Lisa Gray, Lauren Roach
- Area 8: Ona Jean Abbott, Linda Bowen, Teri Brown, Nikki Eddins, Maxi Fleming, Andy Mullins
- Area 9: Dan St. Onge, Elaine Reaves
- Area 10: Charlotte Gilmore, Randa Judy
- Area 11: Kim Nathan, Leonis Pruitt, Vivian Rankin
- Central Office: Tammy Barganier, Susan Bland, Valerie Cochran, Angela Faust, John Mosely Hayes, Mike Hudgens, Melanie Legarde, Janet Mitchell, Sherri Poole, Winkler Sims, Denise Strickland, Judy Till, Brian Whitley

Alabama Department of Public Health
Mission
 To serve the people of Alabama by assuring conditions in which they can be healthy.
Value Statement
 The purpose of the Alabama Department of Public Health is to provide caring, high quality and professional services for the improvement and protection of the public’s health through disease prevention and the assurance of public health services to resident and transient populations of the state regardless of social circumstances or the ability to pay.
 The Department of Public Health works closely with the community to preserve and protect the public’s health and to provide caring quality services.

ALABAMA’S HEALTH

Alabama’s Health is an official monthly publication of the Alabama Department of Public Health, Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease. If you would like to receive the publication or wish to submit information for future articles, please telephone requests to (334) 206-5300. Articles may be reprinted provided credit is given to the Alabama Department of Public Health. The department’s web site is <<http://www.adph.org>>

- Donald E. Williamson, M.D. State Health Officer
- Jim McVay, Dr. P.A. Director, Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease
- Arrol Sheehan, M.A. Editor
- Takenya Stokes, J.D. Contributing Editor
- Toni Prater Graphic Designer
- Marion Wilford Photographer

Informational materials in alternative formats will be made available upon request..

Satellite conference series focuses on crisis and emergency risk communication

More than 5,000 persons from 48 states, Puerto Rico and Brazil participated in a six-part satellite conference titled “Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication” which aired in November and December. The series was produced by the Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease and sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services, and the department.

Participants viewed from 563 different sites including health departments, health agencies and hospitals. More than 500 of the persons registered were from Alabama. The purpose of the 12-hour course was to introduce participants to communication principles and tools as they related to emergency risk communication. Topics discussed were critical to successful public, partner and stakeholder communication during an emergency situation.

The course objectives included the following:

- Methods of coping during a crisis
- Execution of a crisis communication plan
- Communication principles concerning death, dying and grief
- Insurance issues involved in a crisis situation
- General liability legal issues in a crisis situation

“We are pleased and excited to have the opportunity to partner with CDC to present this crisis and emergency risk communication satellite conference to the national public health workforce,” said Jim McVay, director of the Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease. “As public health continues to collaborate with new partners, this program provided an opportunity to learn side-by-side with first responders and others involved in emergency preparedness programs.”

Barbara Reynolds, M.A., of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was the principal presenter, aided by Jamey Durham, M.B.A., director of the department’s Risk Communication Unit.

Durham said, “These programs help you develop an effective communications plan and teach you how to deal effectively with the news media to impart crucial information to the public during a crisis.”

One important aspect that needs to be understood is that psychological barriers go up as a result of crisis, Durham added. “It’s important to understand and be empathetic along the way so we can call people up to a higher ideal to take some risks they might not otherwise take. There is a crisis communication lifecycle, and the



Panelists for the segment on new and emerging issues in public health law shown are Jamey Durham; John Wible, Esq.; Barbara Reynolds and Mack Carmack.

most work should go into the precrisis phase.”

In addition to communication theory the course provides plenty of practical advice. In the precrisis phase, for example, the communicator is advised to be prepared by fostering alliances, developing consensus and developing recommendations. In the initial phase during the first 48 hours of an emergency it is important to “be first, be right, be credible.”

During the crisis it is important to help people more accurately understand their own risks, provide background to those who need it, listen to feedback and correct misinformation and empower risk/benefit decisionmaking.

At crisis resolution time, communication objectives include examining problems and mishaps, reinforcing what worked in the recovery and response efforts, and promoting the activities and capabilities of the organization.

Durham concluded, “Crisis communications plans should be short and sweet. The precrisis work we do will ultimately pay off, because we can live or die because of our stakeholders.”

These webcasts and corresponding program materials are available on the Alabama Department of Public Health Web site at www.adph.org. Under search-contents, click on Risk Communications and then Video Room. County health department personnel may also obtain copies of the series by contacting the Video Communications Division at 334-206-5618, e-mail alphntn@adph.state.al.us.

Caring Dallas County employees receive thanks

A letter to the editor printed in the *Selma Times-Journal* recently recognized employees of the Dallas County Health Department for helping an elderly patient obtain her influenza immunization.

The letter of praise from Gail Box Ingram stated that her frail, 86-year-old mother had experienced some problems with balance since her stroke four years earlier, but on the day she went to the health department she was walking well when she left her house.

“So I got her out of the car and headed toward the side door up the sidewalk,” Ms. Ingram said. “She was now very unsteady on her feet and almost lost her balance even with me holding both hands. I almost panicked at the distance and a door to open in addition!” Fortunately, a health department employee helped her open the door and directed them to the seats closest to the room where the shots were given.

The nurse administered the immunizations, helped get the older woman’s coat back on, and asked if she needed

any help. She was grateful for their offer.

“Out came two ladies, the one who had helped Mother and me into the building and another one. They were pushing an upholstered desk chair with arms and rollers. Mother sat down in it and they took charge as I went out to unlock the car. Before I could get back in to get her, here they all came: the nurse with her hands on the back of the chair, one of the ladies from across the hall holding Mother’s feet up so they wouldn’t drag, and the other lady holding the doors and directing! Right up to the car door they came. I was so thankful to them and so relieved to just stand Mother up and seat her in the car.”

In the letter, Ms. Ingram concluded “We are blessed in America to have public health departments to provide so many services. Mother and I were blessed to have been the recipients of much more than free flu shots that didn’t hurt!”

Employees who assisted the women included Amanda Blackmon, Denise Clark and Geneva Ferguson.

Lead poisoning dangerous to young children

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention approximately 890,000 children in the U.S., age 1-5 years, are living with elevated blood lead levels. The Alabama Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Project (ACLPPP) is working to protect the children in Alabama from lead poisoning, which can affect nearly every system in the body.

Created through the collaborative efforts of the CDC and the Alabama Department of Public Health Bureau of Family Health Services and Environmental Services, the mission of the project is to help every child in Alabama develop to his or her maximum potential by promoting a lead-free environment and healthy lifestyle. The project utilizes a variety of methods to achieve this objective such as education, surveillance, investigation and case management.

“Our goal is to make sure that there is public awareness in Alabama about the harmful effects that lead poisoning can have on young children,” said Angela Jenkins, environmentalist and educator of the ACLPPP. Lead poisoning can cause learning disabilities, behavioral problems, and in cases of high blood lead levels, seizures, coma and even death. There are no symptoms for lead

poisoning so screening is imperative to a child’s safety from the poisoning.

“It’s important that every child get screened for lead poisoning. There is a misconception that lead poisoning only occurs in children in low-income neighborhoods, but lead poisoning can come from several different sources,”



The Alabama Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Project created a billboard to bring awareness to the public about lead poisoning.

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said Jenkins.

The major source of lead exposure among U.S. children is lead-based paint which was banned from housing in 1978, but deteriorated lead-based paint and dust can still be found in many homes. Other sources of lead poisoning can be found in upholstery, automobile batteries, brass fixtures, lead pipes and in hobbies such as making fishing sinkers or stained glass windows.

“Families living in older or restored homes, or parents in occupations that have regular contact with lead, such as police officers and auto mechanics, need to make sure that their children are screened for lead poisoning. So far mandated testing is only required for kids entering head start, but every parent should contact their private provider to have their young children tested,” said Jenkins.

The cost for routine screenings done by private providers can be billed to the patient’s insurance company or Medicaid. Blood work for children 6 years old and younger can be sent to the Bureau of Clinical Laboratories at no cost to the uninsured.

There are seven target counties in the state in which the ACLPPP works extensively because of their high risk of lead exposure to children under 6 years old: Coffee, Conecuh, Dallas, Jefferson, Mobile, Pike and Wilcox.

ACLPP provides educational material about sources of lead exposure and reducing lead exposure in the home, as well as trained staff to visit homes and identify sources of lead exposure. The project will also provide agency training workshops and community and home presentations to property owners, contractors, health care providers, medical groups and managed care organizations.

For more information please visit the Alabama Department of Public Health’s Web site at www.adph.org/ACLPPP, or contact Angela Jenkins at 334-293-6553, angelajenkins@adph.state.al.us.

By TAKENYA STOKES

Walking team exceeds goal



The “Women of Success” team came in first in the “Food and Fitness Walking to San Antonio Competition” held from Sept. 9 through Oct. 14, 2002. The team’s goal was to walk 652.2 miles, and the team exceeded that by achieving 185 percent of their goal. All six team members work in the Center for Health Statistics at the Alabama Department of Public Health. The four ladies in the picture are from left to right; Shelia Davison, Letitia Scott, Barbara Gordon, and Elizabeth Gordon. Tamika Lewis and Tralise Dennis were also team members.

Drive-thru immunization clinic serves hundreds of Mobilians

Mobile County Health Department offered flu and pneumonia vaccinations to the public at its second annual Drive-thru Flu Clinic held Nov. 15 in the parking lot of the Hank Aaron Stadium, home of the Mobile BayBears. Over 564 citizens took advantage of this wonderful opportunity to get flu and pneumonia vaccinations while sitting in their cars.

“Each year we strive to protect everyone by offering vaccinations through flu clinics throughout the county,” says Vivian Rankin, director of the county’s Immunization Department. The Mobile County Health Department offers flu and pneumonia vaccinations Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Each year, around 71 flu clinics are held throughout the county during the flu season, vaccinating anywhere from 100 to 400 citizens at each site.

Last flu season, Mobile citizens were offered the opportunity to participate in the community’s first ever drive-thru flu clinic. The tremendous success of these clinics can be attributed to the “drive-thru” convenience publicized through agency outreach activities and the enthusiasm displayed by the Health Department’s Immunization staff while providing this vital community service.

“The holiday season is usually the most hectic time of the year and what better way to keep you and your loved ones healthy this flu season than driving up, rolling up a

sleeve, and getting a flu shot. It’s easy and convenient. We urge everyone to give the gift of health; get your flu and pneumonia vaccinations this season,” says Dr. Bernard Eichold, local health officer.

*By Stephanie M. Woods, Public Information Officer
Mobile County Health Department*



How much more convenient could it be than to receive a flu shot in your own car? This local man rolls up his sleeve to be immunized by Patricia Ramos, R.N., at the clinic.

Melinda Lewis joins Washington, D.C., Relay for Life

Making cancer research a national priority is the goal of Melinda Lewis, area 5 social work manager, and more than 3,000 other volunteers who attended the Relay for Life Celebration on Capitol Hill in mid-September. The volunteers, working on their own time, petitioned Congress for additional support for cancer research.

Ms. Lewis chairs Blount County’s Relay for Life. One reason she has taken on this important responsibility is that her mother Betty Miller died in April 1996 following a battle with breast cancer. She believes this is a way to keep her mother’s memory alive. Ms. Lewis has been involved with Relay for Life since 1997.

The Washington, D.C., Relay for Life was arranged in much the same way as local ones. Tents are set up, various activities are planned, and entertainment is provided for the 12-hour event. A survivor kicked off the event by

walking a relay lap at 10 a.m. and at 3 p.m. a survivor and a caregiver walked a lap. At 8:30 p.m. more than 16,000 luminaries were lighted, and the event ended at 10 p.m.

The luminaries are paper sacks containing a burning candle and bearing the name of a cancer victim to be honored or remembered.

“This was an awesome experience for me—that’s the only word I can use to describe it,” Ms. Lewis said. “It was great to be among people sharing the same passion to find a cure for cancer.”

As one of the community ambassadors, Ms. Lewis wore a dark purple shirt. She said, “Purple stands for passion, and it is one of our signature colors.” The advocacy effort took them to meet with Alabama’s U.S. senators Richard Shelby and Jeff Sessions and local

Relay.....continued on page 7

Coffee County Dental Clinic holds open house

The Jerry Brunson Children's Dental Clinic held an opening celebration on Nov. 17 in Enterprise. The dental clinic is housed within the Coffee County Health Department and is a joint effort by the Health Department, the Coffee County Family Services Center, and numerous Coffee County individuals, businesses and organizations.

The clinic is named in memory of Jerry Brunson, a community leader who obtained the first donations for the clinic. Mr. Brunson was a true supporter of the clinic and was instrumental in making it a reality.

Speakers for the occasion included Tim Alford, mayor of Enterprise; Judy Crowley, director of the Family Services Center; Dr. Stuart Lockwood, Alabama Department of Public Health Oral Health Director; and Dr. Donald Williamson, State Health Officer.

The Coffee County clinic becomes the fourth county dental clinic in the state to become operational, the only one in the southeast part of the state.

The Bureau of Family Health Services in partnership with the Coffee County Health Department worked together to provide the financial resources to make this clinic a reality. "The local staff has worked hard to make the clinic operational," said Sherry Goode, of the Oral Health unit.

Visitors at the reception enjoyed refreshments and took a tour of the clinic. Lively murals depicting a jungle theme are painted in each room. A unique feature is that the children assisted in the painting of the murals themselves.

There are monkeys swinging from trees as they clutch toothbrushes in their tails; men and women with gleaming white teeth are adorned in grass skirts; and a bamboo awning covers the entrance to the clinic.

The dental clinic is staffed by local dental hygienists and dentists who work on their days off to help meet the needs of the community. The clinic began seeing patients in June 28, 2002.



The first three patients of the Jerry Brunson Dental Clinic are shown with staff (left to right, back row) Peggy Searcy, clinic nursing supervisor; Hazel Patton, dental hygienist; Carolyn Lewis, dental clinic clerk; Andrew J. Mills, D.D.S., dentist.

By EILEEN ROGERS, R.N.
Area 10 Nursing Director

Retirees

The following employees retired effective Jan. 1:

- Juliette Bowles** - Macon County Health Department
- Dolores Childree** - Marion County Health Department
- Mary Dunlap** - Talladega County Health Department
- Carolyn Guilford** - Covington County Health Department
- Dorothy Hall** - Tuscaloosa County Health Department
- Patsy Hendrix** - Morgan County Health Department
- Willie Mathews** - Talladega County Health Department
- Ora Moss** - Macon County Health Department
- Mary Robertson** - Elmore County Health Department
- Jacqueline Robinson** - Clay County Health Department
- Martha Sibley** - Franklin County Health Department
- Sara White** - Bureau of Clinical Laboratories

Relay.....continued from page 6

congressmen. The elected representatives were receptive to their cause.

Ms. Lewis will organize the Blount County Relay for Life event that will be held in May this year at the Oneonta recreation park. She has led the local event for the past two years.

More than 3,300 relay events were held in 2002 over the United States, with more than 2.5 million participants, 500,000 of them cancer survivors. She encourages others who feel strongly about fighting cancer to become involved in their local Relays for Life.

Parents' driving matters most, say police!

Do you believe that your teenage driver has only learned all of your good driving habits?

That's how Chief William Morvay of the New Middletown, Ohio, Police department responded to a recent survey by the I Promise Program - a teen safe driving initiative that is sweeping across North America. Police across the United States and Canada were asked by e-mail to respond to one question:

If there were just one important message that you would like to deliver to parents of new teen drivers, what would it be?

Throughout the 101 replies, police were clear that they wanted parents to appreciate their own role in their teen's driving. Many police clearly stated that parents cannot take a "do as I say, not as I do" approach to reinforcing safe driving behavior. Rather, parents have a direct responsibility to promote teen safe driving by demonstrating safe driving themselves.

"Police are not only interested in teen driver safety, but the effect on families and themselves of tragedies involving teens," explains Gary Direnfield, executive director of the I Promise Program. "Police are only motivated by community safety and know first hand the consequence of improper road use."

As an officer from Missouri put it, "The hardest part of the job a patrolman faces is not chasing down criminals or making arrests. Rather it is informing a family that they have lost a loved one in a traffic crash on our roadways." In addition to being a good role model, police want parents of new teen drivers to establish a set of rules for use of the vehicle that include clear consequences for violations. In so doing, police want parents to impress upon their young driver that driving is a privilege and not a right. Given parental responsibility, parents should also know the whereabouts, destination and return time each and every time the teen takes the car. As Chief Ken Robertson of the Hamilton Police Department puts it, "Always set an example in the way you drive and live your life, and establish clear guidelines for teens to follow."

So what would police like to tell parents of new teen

drivers? The top eight answers are:

1. Set rules and expectations-make a contract for use of the car.
2. Remember, you are a role model - hopefully for the better.
3. Monitor your teen's plans and whereabouts - communicate.
4. Slow down - don't speed.
5. Buckle up.
6. Don't drink and drive nor be a passenger if the driver has been drinking.
7. Forbid or at least limit the number of teen passengers.
8. Don't buy your teen a car, but if you must make it an older model and definitely not something sporty or fast.

Lastly, Chief Michael Courville (Ret.) Past President Texas Police Chiefs' Association, reminds parents that it is OK to set strict rules and says, "It's better to be called a mean parent, than not a parent at all!"

This survey was conducted by the I Promise Program-a teen safe driving initiative that promotes parents as role models by entering into a mutual safe driving contract with their teen. To provide accountability, a rear window decal is then affixed to the vehicle. The decal displays a toll-free number and the question, "Am I driving safely?" Calls are received by a call center and responses are sent by letter only back to the family. Youth, parent, community members, police and interested stakeholders in traffic safety have participated in developing this program.

For more information check www.ipromiseprogram.com.

Injury News Published By

The Alabama Department of Public Health
Injury Prevention Division
Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease
Carol F. Mysinger, M.Ed., M.P.A.....Director
Lynn B. Williams, M.A.....Editor

Funded by a grant from the Law Enforcement and Traffic
Safety Division, Alabama Department of Economic
and Community Affairs

Area 9 employees enjoy Clerks Day Out

The Home Health/Life Care clerical employees from all county offices within Area 9 attended a Clerks Day Out meeting Oct. 24 at the Creek Family Restaurant in Atmore. Also attending were representatives of the area staff and the Bureau of Home and Community Services in Montgomery.

The meeting was held in honor of the dedication and hard work performed by all the clerical staff in the home health and life care programs. The day gave the employees the opportunity to put a name with a face for the many people that they have talked to in each of the different counties within the area and at the bureau.

The day included valuable information concerning current Medicare/Medicaid billing policies and Third Party Payor information.

An update was also given concerning the new software program to be piloted in the next few months. Everyone enjoyed the opportunity to see and visit with fellow home care employees.

By *DONNA J. HALL*



Pictured from left to right (back row) are Franny Cantrell, Mary Alice Henson, Donna Hall, Sharon Pleasant, Alice Everette, Karen Marvin and Merita Wiley; (front row) Debbie Lemons, Angel Jeffries, Karen Kennel, Jeanette Dailey, Judy Harris, Suzanne Tate and Joann Johnson.

Employee recognized as Volunteer of the Year



Marion Wilford was named Volunteer of the Year at the Baptist Hospice Annual Volunteer Appreciation banquet.

Baptist Hospice recently recognized Marion Wilford, audiovisual specialist with the Communications and Social Marketing Division, as Volunteer of the Year 2002 for his dedication in serving hospice patients in a three-county area. He primarily delivers medications to hospice patients in the more distant areas of Autauga and Elmore counties after work hours and on weekends.

Volunteer coordinator Donna Thomas said, "Marion has enhanced the volunteer program here. This is a service you can't put a dollar value on. By selecting him as Volunteer of the Year, this is just a token of our sincere appreciation to him."

Ms. Thomas said that Wilford has driven more miles and made more deliveries than many others who have volunteered much longer. The Montgomery organization is seeking additional volunteers to provide supportive care for terminally ill patients and their families.

Commendations

Health department employees who are listed here have received letters of commendation recently. To recognize other employees, please send letters through your supervisors or the state health officer to *Alabama's Health*.

Amanda Blackmon

Denise Clark

Geneva Ferguson

Dallas County Health Department

from Ashvin K. Parikh

Selma, Ala.

Ken Calhoun

Epidemiology Division

from William Johnston, D.V.M.

Montgomery, Ala.

Takeela Ely

Mobile County Health Department

from Jimmy Fauver

Niceville, Fla.

Keith Wright

Communications and Social Marketing

from Julie Miner

Montgomery, Ala.

Booth promotes children's health



Monroeville held its annual "Market Days on the Square" event on Dec. 7. Jamie Manning, ALL Kids representative, and Gerrie McMillian, dental health coordinator, organized a health booth with the theme: "Health, The Best Gift Of All." The booth contained information on WIC, immunizations, dental health, ALL Kids Health insurance and other health information. The children participated in a game called "The Tooth Toss." A Christmas tree was designed with dental floss, toothbrushes, cups, pencils, frisbees and other items that the children could select after playing the game.

Task force reports can be accessed on Web site

Two task force reports are among the information currently available on the Alabama Department of Public Health's Web site. The reports concern the problem of teenage in-vehicle drinking and other related drug use and information on stroke education, prevention and treatment. Both documents are available electronically at www.adph.org/taskforce or by indicating task force under A-Z contents.

• The Alabama Legislature's House Joint Resolution 62 charged the Governor's Task Force on Alcohol Abuse with studying the problem of teenage in-vehicle drinking and other related drug use. The Task Force made a number of recommendations, and the department prepared a report about this problem as a participant organization on the Task Force.

In addition to the Task Force recommendations, this document includes the State Department of Education's Youth Risk Behavior Survey findings on teenagers' self-

reported alcohol and driving behaviors, the proposed "Social Host Civil Liability Act" from the Governor's Alcohol Abuse Task Force, a list of participants, and a copy of the resolution.

• The Alabama Public-Private Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Task Force was assigned responsibility for making available the latest information on stroke education, prevention and treatment to health care providers. The Task Force operates as a consensus group to coordinate efforts in stroke treatment and education.

A preliminary report of the Task Force has been prepared which includes the "2002 Alabama Stroke Report: Statistics for Cerebrovascular Disease in Alabama," a listing of work group membership, and the Legislature's Joint Resolution 62.

SPEAKING OF RETIREMENT Employees' Retirement System

Employees' Retirement System
Most Frequently Asked Questions from Retired Members
ly Asked Questions from Retired Members

When will I receive my retirement benefit check?

The ERS issues retirement checks on the last working day of the month. For example, if your retirement date is Feb. 1, 2003, your first check will be issued on Friday, Feb. 28, 2003, which is the last working day of the month. Electronically deposited checks will be deposited on that same day.

The ERS strongly encourages retirees to elect to have their retirement benefit checks sent directly to their bank by electronic funds transfer (EFT), also known as direct deposit. Members using direct deposit do not have to worry about lost, stolen or damaged checks, nor arrange for someone to deposit their checks when they are out of town or unable to go to the bank. This service is free, secure, reliable and convenient.

To obtain a Direct Deposit Authorization form, contact the ERS at 1-800-214-2158, extension 399.

Will I automatically receive a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) every year?

No. COLAs for state retirees are made on an ad hoc basis by the state legislature. The amount of the increase is based upon the provisions of the legislation. COLAs for retirees of Section 12 agencies (non-state member agencies) usually require approval of the governing body of the ERS agency, which must fund the cost-of-living increase for persons retired from that agency.

What will be deducted from my retirement benefit check?

The following amounts may be deducted from your retirement benefit check:

- * Federal income taxes
- * Health insurance premiums if applicable

Your retirement benefit is **not** subject to Alabama income tax. If you move to another state, your benefit will be subject to that state's tax laws. You can find information about other states' tax laws at www.1040.com.

If you selected the Maximum benefit or the Option 1 benefit, you may change your beneficiary or beneficiaries at any time.

If you selected the Option 2 or Option 3 benefit, you may name a new beneficiary under either of the two following conditions:

- * If the named beneficiary dies before the retired member, or
- * There is a divorce between the retired member and the beneficiary

The retired member should contact the ERS for information and forms. Generally, there will be a recalculation of the benefit amount for the retired member and beneficiary. The replacement beneficiary must be in place for at least two years to become effective. However, if the retired member dies within this two-year period, no monthly benefit is payable.

I retired on disability. What are the requirements for me to continue receiving disability retirement?

A disability retiree will be reviewed once each year for the first five years and once every three-year period thereafter until age 60 (52 for State Police) to determine whether the retired member remains disabled.

Prepared by the Communications staff of the Retirement Systems of Alabama. To have your questions answered in "Speaking of Retirement", please address them to Mike Pegues, Communications, Retirement Systems of Alabama, 135 South Union St., P. O. Box 302150, Montgomery, Ala. 36130-2150.



January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month, Cervical Health Awareness Month and National Eye Care Month.

Calendar of Events



January 21

ADPH Statewide Staff Meeting, 3-4 p.m. For more information contact Jim McVay, Dr.P.A., (334) 206-5600.



January 23

Arthritis Program (Specific topic to be announced), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 12 noon-3 p.m. For more information contact Pam Eidson, (770) 385-7250.



January 29

Infection Control Update 2003, Home Health Aide and Home Attendant Continuing Education, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Janice McIntosh, (334) 347-2664, extension 400.



January 30

Open Access Scheduling, Public Health Staff Development, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Debbie Thomasson, (334) 206-5648.



February 12

Public Health Staff Development, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Annie Vosel, (334) 206-2959.



February 19

ADPH HIPPA Implementation Inservice, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Ashley Hamlett, (334) 206-5209.



March 5

Diabetes, 2-4 p.m. Public Health Staff Development. For more information contact Debbie Thomasson, (334) 206-5648.



March 19

Home Health Aide and Home Attendant Continuing Education, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Janice McIntosh, (334) 347-2664, extension 400.



April 3

ADPH Statewide Staff Meeting, 3-4 p.m. For more information contact Jim McVay, Dr.P.A., (334) 206-5600.



April 9

Public Health Staff Development, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Annie Vosel, (334) 206-2959.



April 24 - 25

Alabama Public Health Association, Mobile. For more information contact Jim McVay, (334) 206-5600.