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Taking a stand...53K! Campaign - 'Dangers of Secondhand Smoke'

Mobile County area Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) and the Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Mobile are taking a stand by educating the community about the dangers of secondhand smoke exposure. On March 15, members of SWAT and the Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Mobile kicked off the **53K! Campaign - "Dangers of Secondhand Smoke"** in Mobile County. SWAT is asking local and state legislators to consider stronger tobacco ordinances, which make all public places smoke-free because 53,000 (53K) people will die each year from exposure to the chemicals contained in secondhand smoke.

Every day 1,200 Americans die from tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke. That's one person every 72 seconds. Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, killing more than 453,000 people every year. That's more deaths than alcohol, illegal drugs, homicide, car accidents and AIDS **combined**. Secondhand tobacco smoke is by far the most dangerous air pollutant most Americans ever encounter.

"Tobacco affects all of us," says Megan Reynolds. "As members of SWAT, most of us have had family, friends or know someone that has gotten sick or died from tobacco exposure, and we pay the price for the \$75 billion tobacco costs our country each year in health care."

The public is exposed to the 4,000 toxic chemicals contained in secondhand smoke. Arsenic, cyanide, lead, benzene and naphthalene are a few of these chemicals, more than 60 of which have been proven to cause cancer and over 300 known to be poisonous. In 1993, the Environmental Protection Agency declared Environmental Tobacco Smoke or ETS a known human cancer-causing agent and classified it

as an environmental toxin equal to asbestos.

"By eliminating our exposure to secondhand smoke in public places we can reduce the incidence of cancers, heart disease, asthma, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome or SIDS, and many other respiratory conditions," states Abe Boykins. "In fact, breathing someone else's smoke may carry the same medical consequences as smoking."

"Our message is simple," says, Jermaine Mitchell, "if you smoke or are around someone who smokes you are shortening not only your life but the life of everyone who breathes it in. Secondhand smoke may not kill as many people as smoking does but it is still a killer. Tobacco and exposure to tobacco are one of the top risk factors that causes death."

Children are especially vulnerable and often powerless to
SWAT.....continued on page 3



2005 Tobacco Advocacy Conference educates over 400 attendees

Over 400 people attended the 2005 Tobacco Advocacy Conference held by the Coalition for a Tobacco Free Alabama. Many youth from around the state were present and were educated about early tobacco use and the dangers of secondhand smoke.

Pat Sullivan addressed the youth specifically when he spoke to conference attendees. He encouraged them to make wise decisions throughout their lives and to avoid tobacco products. Sullivan, the former Heisman trophy winner, is an oral cancer survivor and gave a moving testimony about his cancer battle.

Dr. Jeffrey Wigand, whose life inspired the movie *The Insider*, also addressed the issue of youth tobacco use during his presentation to the group. After educating the group about the dangers of secondhand smoke Dr. Wigand encouraged Alabamians to follow the initiatives of other cities and countries around the world that have gone smoke free including New York City, Dallas, Boulder, Cuba, Ireland and Sweden.

In addition to the group speakers, numerous workshops were offered throughout the day. Life Skills training was provided to over 35 attendees and was taught by Tammy Langlois-Reagan local support coordinator for the Tobacco Program.

This curriculum will enable professionals to educate youth across the state about making wise decisions

regarding tobacco use and other drugs. Reginald Watkins, an adolescent addictions counselor from North Alabama and spouse of Joy Rhodes-Watkins, Tobacco Coordinator for Area 2, presented a very popular workshop regarding youth addiction. Other workshops included coalition building, advocacy training and media relations.

For more information regarding the efforts of the Coalition for a Tobacco Free Alabama please visit our Web site at www.tobaccofreealabama.org.



Dr. Jeffrey Wigand advocates for a tobacco-free life.

*By STACEY NEUMANN
Tobacco Coordinator
Public Health Area V*

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.

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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.

protect themselves. According to the National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids' September 2000 report, every day, more than 15 million kids are exposed to secondhand smoke at home, with millions also exposed to secondhand smoke in schools and other places, as well. That exposure increases the chances that the children will suffer from smoke-caused coughs and wheezing, bronchitis, asthma, pneumonia, potentially fatal lower respiratory tract infections, eye and ear problems, and other health problems. Each year, 280 children actually die from respiratory illness caused by secondhand smoke.

Eric Horn, says, "We want adults and children to understand that tobacco use is serious. It is harmful and affects us all. It causes death!"

Some SWAT members and many of their peers work in restaurants where they are exposed to levels of secondhand smoke, which are three to five times higher than other workplaces. This exposure makes them nearly four times more likely to get lung cancer and three times more likely to have heart disease. Someone who works in a restaurant is exposed to secondhand smoke levels, which are 8 to 20 times higher than exposure in the home. SWAT members and their peers depend heavily on restaurant employment to work their way through school.

- * Waiters and waitresses have about a 50-90 percent greater risk of lung cancer due to their exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke ETS at work.
- * Waitresses also have three times the risk of heart disease of women in other jobs.

Restricting smoking in public places means that they do not become hangouts for underage smoking.

Tobacco use in workplaces:

- 1) The most heavily exposed restaurant workers inhale levels of some poisons equal to actively smoking one to two packs of cigarettes per day.
- 2) Restaurant air contains six times the carbon monoxide levels that one would inhale standing in the middle of Atlanta's busiest interstate.
- 3) The mutagenic potency of restaurant air is 5 to 10 times higher than that of "high risk" industrial workplace air.

"It is the quality not the quantity of life that we should be concerned with. As role models to younger children, we want to teach them that smoking is bad and they have a choice to say no to smoking and all drugs. As students we all experience peer pressure and are around adults and others who smoke - we want to make sure that they know what they are doing to themselves and everyone they

around," says Mitchell.

Secondhand smoke is serious business, and should be a concern for anyone who breathes it in. Non-smokers breathing secondhand smoke share some of the health risk smokers face. But smokers do face the worst of it - the risks of smoking compounded by breathing the smoke in for a second time. Don't underestimate the dangers of smoking. ***Say no to smoking and yes to a healthier quality of life!***

What can you do to help?

Secondhand smoke affects everyone whether they smoke or not. SWAT members are asking for your help. They are asking you to consider wearing a 53K! bracelet to show your support. By wearing a bracelet you are showing:

- * Awareness of the dangers of tobacco and secondhand smoke;
- * Support for effective action against secondhand smoke exposure;
- * Remembrance for a loved one who has died from tobacco; and
- * Support for someone who is trying to quit.

Interested persons may also help by displaying a yard sign to help inform the community of the real dangers of secondhand smoke and, most important, by contacting city, county and state officials to request stronger Clean Indoor Air legislation for Mobile and Alabama (CIA).

For more information about SWAT and its efforts, contact the Coalition for a Tobacco Free Mobile at (251) 690-8824 or the Mobile County Health Department at (251) 690-8818.

The mission of SWAT is to prevent youth from using tobacco. One proven method to reduce kids' use of tobacco is to restrict areas where smoking is allowed. Strong Clean Indoor Air legislation for Mobile and Alabama (CIA) laws do that.

Quick Facts!

- Tobacco exposure causes 75 billion dollars in healthcare costs.
- 4,000 toxic chemicals are in secondhand smoke.
- 53,000 (53K) people will die each year from chemicals in secondhand smoke.

*By STEPHANIE M. WOODS
Public Information Officer
Mobile County Health Department*

40-year public health career gets start to the tunes of Peter, Paul and Mary

Forty years ago Shirley Coleman had an appointment for a job interview with the Bureau of Vital Statistics on Dexter Avenue just across the street from the State Capitol, but she required a special escort that day. That's because her interview was set for the same Friday in March 1965 that the historic Voting Rights march from Selma to Montgomery reached the State Capitol.

A state highway patrolman accompanied the nervous job applicant from Greenville into the building. It was a very special and unusual time because the popular folk singing trio Peter, Paul and Mary was performing at the Capitol. Federal troops were protecting Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the marchers at a mass rally being held on the Capitol steps.

With the monumental activities occurring less than 100 yards away, Ms. Coleman's simultaneous interview was successful, and she began work on March 22, 1965. This was the start of a 40-year career with the Bureau of Vital Statistics, now the Center for Health Statistics. She is an administrative support assistant in the section of the Center where she searches the files to locate vital records.

But the timing of her employment interview is not the only extraordinary aspect of her life. When she was hired and until 1995, Ms. Coleman could barely speak above a whisper because she had a chronic speech disorder called spasmodic dysphonia. Ten years ago, Ms. Coleman first underwent a life-changing procedure when she was treated for this disorder which is characterized by uncontrolled pitch, phonatory breaks and hoarseness.

Since 1958 Ms. Coleman had been unable to speak above a whisper. To treat the disorder, a small amount of a drug called botulinum toxin was injected into her vocal cord muscles. The procedure was done as an outpatient at Emory Clinic in Atlanta.

In an article in the June 1995 issue of *Alabama's Health*, Ms. Coleman described the results as "miraculous." Spasmodic dysphonia is believed to be caused by an abnormality in neurotransmission which sends muscles the wrong message, and this results in involuntary muscle spasms. An estimated 5 to 10 people per 100,000 are afflicted with it.

Botulinum toxin is the now-familiar "botox" which is produced by the *Clostridium botulinum* bacteria. It

paralyzes muscle by blocking the nerve impulse to the muscle. When diluted and injected into the vocal cord muscles in very small quantities, it can provide significant relief of spasmodic dysphonia and a marked improvement in voice quality.

Another injection is needed every three months. Her co-worker Ellen Rodgers in the Center takes her to Emory Hospital every three months and has been regularly accompanying her for the injections since November 1994.

Although Ms. Coleman still experiences problems with her voice from time to time and has a heart pacemaker, at age 68 she is happy to continue to be able to help the public through her work at the Center.



Shirley Coleman searches files to locate vital records.



Outstanding DeKalb County social worker helps ensure children are lead-free, despite language barrier

The mission of the Alabama Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program is to help every child in Alabama develop to his or her maximum potential by promoting a lead-free environment and healthy lifestyle. To accomplish this mission the program provides public outreach and education, case investigation and case management services to help prevent further lead exposure in Alabama's children.

An excellent example of a care coordinator who works to ensure that children live a healthy and lead-free life is Adrian Casey of the DeKalb County Health Department. For him, caring is what it's all about. He works with the lead program in a county in which more than 75 percent of his patients do not speak English.

Even though there is a language barrier, Casey has developed a high level of trust with the Latino population in the Fort Payne area. Many of the health department's patients are from Guatemala, and speak little or no English or Spanish. So with the valuable help of interpreter Maria Francisco and others, the team has established trust with these clients. Public health is required to conduct routine follow-up on children found to have elevated lead levels, and Casey works with the families affected to lower these levels.

"We try to do our best," Casey said. "Most of the Hispanic patients can't read or write, and because of their limited educational opportunities they don't understand the hazards of lead and what potential long-term problems of elevated lead levels mean for children, such as mental retardation and even death. We try to educate them about the potential risks."

With his knowledge of the Latino culture, Casey is able to help inform his clients regarding the hazards of lead in the home. While he tries not to be intrusive in his job, Casey compared his work to that of a private investigator or even a CSI (crime scene investigator). While making home visits he looks at a home in its entirety, including checking the food in the cabinets and inspecting all the bathrooms and bedrooms for potential lead hazards.

Oftentimes, his non-English-speaking clients rent or own older homes containing lead and lead-based paint. They cook in clay pots, which may be stamped "do not cook with this pot," but they may not heed the advisory because they cannot read it. He also advises them not to stir up lead

dust.

"They may want to clean, clean, clean, but many vacuum cleaners can actually stir up the lead dust and pose even greater dangers," Casey said.

Another high exposure item is the small batteries used in television remote controls. Casey remarked, "Kids like to play with them. And I advise parents not to wash the father's clothing along with the children's because the fathers may work in machine shops or as mechanics and get a lot of lead exposure."

In two recent instances, the

only exposure of the children was from the uncovered triple-A batteries used in the remote controls. The solution to lower the lead levels in these children could be as easy as asking them to put tape over the batteries.

A difficult situation resulted when Casey realized some parents did not fully understand the hazards of lead in cooking. After requesting and receiving a donation of a stainless steel pot from a local church congregation, Casey exchanged the family's leaded clay pot for the donated pot that was the same size. On his next visit he was gratified when he looked at the stove and found the family was heating beans in the new pot.

Every three months children with elevated lead levels are required to make a follow-up visit to the doctor to have a venous blood check—the only way to determine the true lead level of a child. Since the parents often can't read, he takes the extra step of either calling or dropping by to remind them of their appointments. Mail reminders are seldom useful.

Casey also accompanies environmentalists when they make visits to the home to collect soil and water samples. He uses this as an opportunity to educate the families

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Interpreter Maria Francisco is shown with Adrian Casey.

Winning posters promote seat belt use in children

The Injury Education Division announces the winners in its Buckle-Up, Alabama! Traffic Safety Poster Contest for 2005, an event designed to promote consistent seat belt usage among elementary school children. Students throughout Alabama in grades kindergarten through six were encouraged to create original artwork that emphasized the importance of buckling-up.

The Buckle-Up contest consists of two levels. Participating schools host a contest to select first place winners for each grade level. These winning entries were then sent to the health department to be judged by employees of the Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease.

First and second place winners at the state level were awarded U.S. Savings Bonds, with first place winners receiving a \$100 bond and second place winners receiving a \$50 bond. These winners as well as those receiving honorable mention, were awarded certificates of recognition. Additionally, the winning entries are featured in a coloring book that will be used throughout Alabama to educate young children about the importance of buckling-up each and every time that they ride in a vehicle.

The 2005 Buckle-Up, Alabama! contest winners are as follows:

Kindergarten:

1st – Kayla Ford
Garywood Christian School
Hueytown, Ala.

2nd – Cole Brown
Trinity Presbyterian School
Montgomery, Ala.

Honorable Mention: Siera McWaters
Boaz Elementary School
Boaz, Ala.

1st Grade *1st* – Scout Alexander
Crestline Elementary School
Hartselle, Ala.

2nd – Courtni Smith
Union Springs Elementary School
Union Springs, Ala.

Honorable Mention: Alexia Williams
Union Springs Elementary School
Union Springs, Ala.

Jordan Weaver
Calcedaveer Elementary School
Mount Vernon, Ala.

2nd Grade: *1st* – Rachel Mitchell
Edgewood Academy
Elmore, Ala.

2nd – Carrington Cole
Trinity Presbyterian School
Montgomery, Ala.

Honorable Mention: Kayla Hull
Prattville Christian Academy
Prattville, Ala.

Joseph Williams
Prattville Christian Academy
Prattville, Ala.

3rd Grade: *1st* – Benjamin Brocato
McBride Elementary School
Muscle Shoals, Ala.

2nd – Caleb Smith
Monroe Academy
Monroeville, Ala.

Honorable Mention: Katie Gray Carlson
Trinity Presbyterian School
Montgomery, Ala.

Nicholas Certain
Mountain Gap Elementary School
Huntsville, Ala.

4th Grade: *1st* – Aariana Bolar
Jonesboro Elementary School
Bessemer, Ala.

2nd – Devin McClure
Harvest Elementary School
Harvest, Ala.

Honorable Mention: Molly Catherine Brown
Trinity Presbyterian School
Montgomery, Ala.

Austin Parrish

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Thomasville Elementary School
Thomasville, Ala.

Ebony Tolbert
Jonesboro Elementary School
Bessemer, Ala.

5th Grade:

1st – John Tomanio
Harvest Elementary School
Harvest, Ala.

2nd – Chelsea Childs
Ashford Elementary School
Ashford, Ala.

Honorable Mention:

Lauren Kendrick
Trinity Presbyterian School
Montgomery, Ala.

Pascual Pablo
Westbrook Christian School
Rainbow City, Ala.

6th Grade:

1st – Ashtyne Cole
Trinity Presbyterian School
Montgomery, Ala.

2nd – Chasity Richards
Westbrook Christian School
Rainbow City, Ala.

Honorable Mention: Sally Matlock
Sparta Academy
Evergreen, Ala.

Lexi Meyer
West Alabama Preparatory School
Demopolis, Ala.

Jamie Sikes
Southern Choctaw Elementary
School
Gilbertown, Ala.

The Buckle-Up! Alabama poster contest is made possible by a grant from the Law Enforcement and Traffic Safety Division of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs. Awards given with this contest are made available by businesses and organizations committed to the safety of Alabama's children. These include the Alabama Head Injury Foundation, ALFA Insurance, the Alabama Department of Transportation, and the Alabama SAFEKIDS Coalition.

For more information about seat belt safety, please contact Amanda Calhoun, Injury Prevention Division, Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease, (334) 206-7063 or 1-800-252-1818, e-mail amandacalhoun@adph.state.al.us.

If a fire started in your home, would you know what to do?

According to a 2004 National Fire Protection Association survey, approximately 23 percent of American households have developed and practiced a home fire escape plan. Given that the typical family has approximately two minutes to escape, creating a fire escape plan can mean the difference between life and death.

The department and other authorities offer the following suggestions for creating a home fire escape plan.

Install and Test Smoke Alarms: Install smoke alarms near sleeping areas and test them monthly. Change alarm batteries yearly and replace alarm units that are over 10 years old. **A useful tip to follow:** When resetting clocks for daylight savings time, change smoke alarm batteries.

Create a Family Fire Escape Plan: Know two ways out of every room to include doorways or windows. Never

use elevators. Designate a safe place to meet once the family escapes, such as a neighbor's front porch, and alert your local fire department. The goal is to get out safely and to stay out.

Practice Your Fire Escape Plan: Practice your plan at least two times per year. If children or others do not quickly react to the sound of the smoke alarm, or if there are infants or family members with mobility limitations, make sure that someone is assigned to assist them during the family fire drill.

For more information on fire safety, please contact the Injury Prevention Division at 334-206-5300, or visit the Web site at www.adph.org/injuryprevention.

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about potential lead sources in their residences and to describe what the environmentalists are doing.

“We have some great translators, and when the environmentalists visit we come along and read all the information about potential lead sources to them and try to educate them about potential lead sources, the soil and water samples the environmentalists are taking. Sometimes even a child’s figurine can contain lead.”

When a Latino family bought a house built in the 1930s which contained a lot of lead paint, Casey worked to see that the family safely sealed the old walls with paint and installed paneling.

“I enjoy working with these families a lot,” Casey said. “Some of the parents are fearful because they are undocumented, but we build a rapport and a relationship with them. Now they come back to me with other problems and I refer them to other public health services such as WIC.”

Colleagues and community are grateful for Casey’s work

In addition to working with the families of children with elevated lead levels, Casey also works with Medicaid patients, children and adults who have problems accessing care. The local medical community often calls him directly when there are problems.

“Adrian always goes above and beyond expectations,” said Carolyn Hall, social work director for Area 5. “And he is one of the most humble people I know. He said recently, ‘to be a good social worker, you have to be humble,’ and I agree.”

Furthermore, she said Casey has the greatest integrity in his dealings with clients and co-workers. His patients “truly love him,” and he has the deepest respect from his colleagues.

During his off time, he cares for his disabled mother at home, mentors and helps with tutoring in public schools, works at a free clinic and coaches a boys’ basketball team. At the state level, he helps train Patient 1st care coordinators.

Casey has been employed with the department for 4 and one-half years. He plans to pursue a master’s degree in social work next year, but Ms. Hall is happy that he can continue working since in DeKalb County since there will be a program in place in Gadsden.

“I can’t say enough about Adrian Casey,” Ms. Hall

said. “He definitely raises the bar for all of us.”

Patsy Rains, clinic coordinator, totally agrees, “He has done so many things in our community, and everyone in the community knows him. Local pediatric clinics call on him for referrals and they know they can count on him to meet the needs of their patients.” When Ms. Rains recently attended a Child Death Review Team meeting, she was amazed at the number of people he knew.

In addition, Ms. Rains said, he is such a good, positive role model and treats his patients and co-workers with great respect. “He’s good at everything, and I’ve never seen him with his feathers ruffled,” she added.

Casey serves on the Spanish coalition, going into schools and providing education for health classes on such subjects as sexually transmitted disease prevention.

Employees recognized for health segment appearances

Each month dedicated department staff appear on WAKA’s Midday News program’s health segment in Montgomery to discuss relevant health issues and to answer calls from the public. To show our appreciation, *Alabama’s Health* would like to recognize these staff members who take the time to participate in this valuable service.

February’s guest was **Mim Gaines**, director of the Physical Activity and Nutrition Unit. Ms. Gaines talked about childhood obesity and creating a healthy diet for children.

In March, two staff members appeared on the show. On March 3 **Julia Hayes**, assistant director of Minority Health, talked about health issues regarding Latinos and Hispanics in Alabama. On March 24, World TB Day, **Pam Barrett**, training coordinator and prison liaison for the Division of TB Control, appeared on the show to discuss tuberculosis and the work being done to control TB in the state.

If you would like to appear on the WAKA’s Midday News Program, please contact Takenya Stokes at 334-206-7026, or e-mail at tstokes@adph.state.al.us.

Get tested for colorectal cancer

The Alabama Department of Public Health wants to remind the public that colorectal cancer is almost 100 percent preventable just by getting tested. The American Cancer Society estimates that 145,290 new cases of colorectal cancer will be diagnosed in the United States and an estimated 56,290 people will die from this disease in 2005. In 2004, the American Cancer Society estimated that 2,330 new cases of colorectal cancer would be diagnosed in Alabama, and 900 deaths would be attributable to colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer, the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the nation, is a cancer that develops in the colon or rectum of both men and women. Before a cancer develops, there often are earlier changes in the lining of the colon or rectum, such as polyps. Early polyp removal, which can be done through a flexible sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy, may prevent cancer from developing.

Every man and woman is at risk of developing colorectal cancer, with a vast majority of cases diagnosed after the age of 50. In addition to aging, additional factors that increase an individual's risk of developing colorectal cancer include a personal family history of colon cancer, a personal history of intestinal polyps, obesity, increased consumption of red meat and alcohol, smoking, and lack of physical activity.

When colorectal cancer is detected and treated early,

there is over a 90 percent survival rate, but only 39 percent of colon cancers are found at an early stage because of lack of screening.

The American Cancer Society recommends that beginning at age 50 both men and women follow one of these testing schedules for colorectal cancer:

- Flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years
- Yearly fecal occult blood test and flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years (This combination is preferred over either fecal occult blood test alone, or flexible sigmoidoscopy alone.)
- Double-contrast barium enema every five years
- Colonoscopy every 10 years

People who are at an increased risk for colorectal cancer are encouraged to talk with their health care provider about a different testing schedule. A physician may recommend that an individual start a screening method earlier.

For more information on colorectal cancer please contact:

The American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345 or www.cancer.org

The National Cancer Institute at 1-800-4-CANCER or www.cancer.gov

By *HALEY JUSTICE*

Scholarly article by environmentalist published

Public health environmentalist Anna Sun was an author of the study published in "Epidemiology and Infection," published by Cambridge University Press. Ms. Sun was among six authors credited with the study.

The paper was accepted in August 2004 and is titled "PspA family typing and PCR-based DNA fingerprinting with BOX A1R primer of pneumococci from the blood of patients in the USA with and without sickle cell disease."

The study determined that a Pneumococcal surface protein A (PspA) vaccine designed for the population at large should also be appropriate for patients with sickle cell disease.

Ms. Sun, who was featured in the March issue of *Alabama's Health*, is a public health environmentalist with the Montgomery County Health Department. Previously she worked with the Biomedical Research and Training Programs at Alabama State University in Montgomery.

Retirements

The following employees have retired recently from the Alabama Department of Public Health:

March 1

Ila Davidson - Marshall County Health Department

Annie Green - Center for Health Statistics

Charlotte Taylor - Cherokee County Health Department

April 1

Carolyn Haddock - Public Health Area I

Brenda Hassell - Home and Community Services

Karen Kennel - Conecuh County Health Department

Joyce Kornegay - Bibb County Health Department

Cecilia Pierce - Health Promotion and Chronic Disease

Speaking of Retirement

DROP Distribution

DROP Distribution explains the funds that make up your DROP account and how to apply for your DROP account funds and how they will be distributed. **No distribution of DROP account funds will be made until you withdraw from service.**

If you **complete your contractual obligation** in DROP, i.e., participate in DROP between three to five years, you may elect to receive the following funds in either a lump-sum payment or make a direct rollover to a qualified plan:

1. The monthly retirement benefits deposited into your DROP account. Benefit deposits are based on the retirement option elected upon entering DROP.
2. Member contributions deducted from your salary and deposited into your DROP account.
3. Interest calculated at 4 percent on your monthly retirement benefit and member contribution deposits made to your DROP account.

The monthly retirement allowance you will receive after withdrawal from service may be recalculated to include accrued sick leave. However, the number of days converted cannot exceed the number of days you had on the date you entered DROP. You are not allowed to change the option for the monthly retirement allowance chosen at the beginning of the DROP participation period.

If you did not fulfill your contractual obligation due to **involuntary termination, disability, or involuntary transfer of your spouse** in the first three years of the DROP participation period, you are entitled to receive the same benefits as a member who has completed the contractual obligation. However, you will have fewer funds accumulated because the DROP participation period is shorter.

If you **withdraw from service voluntarily** within the first three years of DROP, you will forfeit the DROP funds based on the monthly retirement benefits paid to your account. You may elect to receive the following in either a lump-sum payment or make a direct rollover to a qualified plan:

1. Member contributions deducted from your salary and deposited into your DROP account.
2. Interest calculated at four percent on your monthly retirement benefit and member contribution deposits made to your DROP account.

The monthly retirement allowance you will receive after withdrawal from service may be recalculated to include accrued sick leave. However, the number of days converted cannot exceed the number of days you had on the date you entered DROP. You are not allowed to change the option for the monthly retirement allowance chosen at the beginning of the DROP participation period.

If a member **dies anytime during the DROP participation** period and the beneficiary is the spouse, the spouse may elect to receive the following funds in either a lump-sum payment or make a direct rollover to a qualified plan. **Non-spouse** beneficiary(s) may only receive the following funds in a lump-sum payment:

1. The monthly retirement benefits deposited into your DROP account. Benefit deposits are based on the retirement option elected upon entering DROP.
2. Member contributions deducted from your salary and deposited into your DROP account.
3. Interest calculated at four percent on your monthly retirement benefit and member contribution deposits made to your DROP account.

Any retirement benefit based on the retirement option selected by the member at the beginning of the DROP participation period will be paid to the beneficiary(s). The monthly retirement allowance may be recalculated to include accrued sick leave. However, the number of days converted cannot exceed the number of days the participant had on the date he or she entered DROP. The beneficiary is not allowed to change the option for the monthly retirement allowance chosen at the beginning of the DROP participation period. No death before retirement benefit will be paid to the estate or beneficiary.

If you **do not withdraw from service** after completing your DROP participation, you will resume active contributing membership in the ERS for the purpose of earning creditable service. No time spent participating in DROP will be counted as creditable service.

DROP participants may receive distribution of their DROP account funds in two ways:

Receive a lump sum-payment of the total DROP account balance less the required 20 percent federal income tax withholding. No portion of the distribution is subject to state of Alabama income tax.

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Retirement.....continued from page 10

Rollover all or a portion of the account balance to a traditional IRA, another employer retirement plan, a 403(b) Tax Sheltered Annuity, or a governmental 457(b) plan that accepts rollovers. **The RSA-1 Deferred Compensation Plan (457 plan) now accepts rollovers from your DROP account.**

Read the SPECIAL TAX NOTICE REGARDING RSA PAYMENTS that will be distributed to you prior to making your selection. All of the forms listed in this section are available from the ERS, your payroll officer or may be downloaded from our Web site at. No distribution from your DROP account will be made until you terminate employment with any RSA participating agency.

Applying for DROP Distribution — Early Termination

Complete the REQUEST FOR DISTRIBUTION form (RSA 10 D-D) required to authorize distribution of the DROP account balance. The election to receive either a lump-sum payment or to make a rollover will be made on this form. The form must be signed and notarized, but no employer certification is required.

Complete the REQUEST FOR EARLY TERMINATION OF DROP form (ERS 10 D-E). Indicate the reason for the early termination and complete the federal income tax withholding certificate. Sign and have the form notarized before sending it to your employing agency for them to certify your employment. You and your employer need to complete the Insurance Authorization information on the reverse side of the form.

Send both the completed REQUEST FOR DISTRIBUTION and the REQUEST FOR EARLY TERMINATION OF DROP to the ERS. Both forms must be completed and returned to the ERS at least 30 days

prior to termination of employment, if possible.

Supporting documentation must be included with the forms. If the termination is involuntary, submit a copy of the termination letter. If the termination is due to a disability, the DROP participant must complete and submit the REPORT OF DISABILITY PACKET. The STATEMENT OF EXAMINING PHYSICIAN form (also used to apply for a disability retirement) in the REPORT OF DISABILITY PACKET must be signed by the member and completed by his or her attending physician. If the termination is due to involuntary transfer of spouse, submit a copy of the transfer letter on company letterhead.

If you elected to have all or a portion of your account balance rolled over to a qualified plan, the ERS will send you the REFUND ROLLOVER ESTIMATE AND ELECTION form (RSA-ROLLOVER) after receiving the REQUEST FOR DISTRIBUTION and the REQUEST FOR EARLY TERMINATION forms. You will elect how your account balance will be rolled over and to which eligible retirement plan you want your funds rolled into. Sign and have the REFUND ROLLOVER ESTIMATE AND ELECTION form notarized before sending it to the Plan Administrator of the eligible retirement plan you have elected to roll your account balance into. Your Plan Administrator should mail the completed form to the ERS.

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
P.O. Box 302150
Montgomery, Ala. 36130-2150

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*.

Cindy Aldridge
Fran Edwards

Bob Simms
Jeff Ward
Keith Wright
Communications and Social Marketing

from Knoxye Williams
Montgomery, Ala.

Linda Bolding
Center for Health Statistics

from William J. White

Dayton, Ohio

Florine Croxton
Center for Health Statistics

from Andrew A. Zekeri
Tuskegee, Ala.

Dorothy S. Harshbarger
Center for Health Statistics

from David Roberson
Montgomery, Ala.

April is Cancer Control Month,
National Autism Awareness Month,
National Occupational Therapy
Month, National Youth Sports Safety
Month, National Donate Life Month,
Sexual Assault Awareness Month.



Calendar of Events

April 4-10

National Public Health Week. This year's focus is on healthy aging and is dedicated to empowering Americans to live stronger, longer.



April 6

The Application of HIPAA to ADPH Employees and Our Patients, 2-4 p.m. (Required for all ADPH employees.) For more information contact Video Communications, (334) 206-5618.

April 7

World Health Day. Theme is "Make Every Mother and Child Count."

April 13

Kick Butts Day

April 18

Health and Safety Fair, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Biscuits Stadium, 200 Coosa St., Montgomery. For more information contact Melissa Khan, Injury Prevention Division, (334) 206-5541.

April 20

Alabama Public Health Association Pre-conference Seminars-Professional Services Leadership Day, Bryant Conference Center, Tuscaloosa.

April 21-22

Sixth Annual Rural Health Conference and Alabama Public Health Association 49th Annual Education Conference, Bryant Conference Center, Tuscaloosa.

April 24-30

National Infant Immunization Week



April 27

Historical Roots of Bioterrorism and Implications for the Future, 1:30-3 p.m. For more information contact Video Communications, (334) 206-5618.



May 4

Addiction in Women: Building Motivation for Change, Public Health Staff Development, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Annie Vosel, (334) 206-2959.



May 5

Home Health Aides and Home Attendants, 2-4 p.m., For more information contact Brenda Elliott, (334) 347-2664, extension 402.