

May 27, 2008

CHFS Focus Employee Profile

This week, the Focus talked with Dr. Larry Curl, a licensed psychologist at Central State Hospital who has worked for the state for 8 years.

How does your job allow you to impact the lives of your fellow Kentuckians? What's the best part of your job?

The best part of my job as a psychologist is that I get to help people. I work in the Central State Hospital Secure Care Program in the Grauman Building, where patients tend to be among the very sickest in terms of mental illness. It is amazing to see someone progress from the deep, dark depths of mental illness into the light of rationality.

Tell us about your advocacy work and the award you earned for it.

I've been honored to receive two awards in the past several months: the Schuster Advocacy Award was presented to me at the Kentucky Psychological Association Convention last November. In March, the American Psychological Association honored me at the annual State Leadership Conference banquet in Washington, D.C., with their highest advocacy award.

These awards were a result of my volunteer work as the federal advocacy coordinator for the Kentucky Psychological Association. I worked to create and advise a grassroots network of fellow psychologists across the state about federal legislative developments and concerns related to mental health issues. Two examples: In recent years, we have been working with our senators and representatives in Washington to get improved mental health insurance parity legislation passed on the federal level – legislation seeking insurance coverage for mental health conditions on par with physical health conditions that is similar to what our legislators

and their staff have enjoyed for years. We have also been working to improve access to mental health care for Medicare patients, including elderly patients in nursing homes.

What are your interests outside of work?

I am devoted to my family. My wife Norma and I have been married 42 years this month. We have two sons, Brian and Benjamin, and one grandchild who has become a primary focus of our lives since he was born five years ago. Lately I have been helping him learn to read; one of my life-long passions. Nathaniel is amazing, and it is truly a life-affirming and renewing experience to see the world through the eyes of a 5-year-old. He loves fire trucks, garbage trucks, ice cream trucks and airplanes.

DCBS honors foster parents

By Anya Armes Weber

The Cabinet's Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) honored 31 foster families from across the state earlier this month for their exemplary service as foster parents to some of the state's most vulnerable children.

Nine foster families – one from each DCBS region -- were honored with 2008 Excellence in Service Awards for their dedication and commitment to caring for children in DCBS custody. For the first time, DCBS also presented "Longevity Awards" to parents who have served the state foster care program for 30 years or more.

"Foster parents truly are special," DCBS Commissioner Pat Wilson said. "They are doing something the majority of people won't do by welcoming someone else's child into their home and caring for them like their own. They deserve every bit of praise and recognition we can offer." Gov. Steven L. Beshear has proclaimed May Foster Care Month in Kentucky.

May 27, 2008

Portraits and biographies of the parents are on display through the end of the month in Frankfort's Capitol rotunda.

For a list of honored families, check out this [news release](#).

Partnership Involves Churches in Child Protection

By Anya Armes Weber

The Northern Bluegrass Region's Community Partnership for Protecting Children (CPPC) sponsored a meeting with representatives from the faith-based community last month to strengthen child welfare efforts.

The "Breakfast with Pastors" in Williamstown gave CPPC members, including Cabinet staff, and advocates from area churches a chance to talk about child protective services and what children in Grant County need to remain safely in their own homes and in their own communities.

Twelve Grant County pastors attended the breakfast, which was coordinated by Allison Mortenson, the Grant County Schools' Youth Services Center coordinator, and Gene Nelson, a grandparent and member of the CPPC.

The discussion centered around three specific things pastors can do to protect children:

- Help recruit foster and adoptive parents from their congregations, and sponsor foster parent training in their church space.
- Explore the possibility of their churches becoming visitation centers where families with low risks who are separated because of out-of-home care can visit together rather than using the Cabinet's visitation rooms.

- Mentor at-risk families. Churches provide several support services, including emergency assistance. This would require churches to work more closely with parents to ensure they have access to the resources they need to support their families.

Cabinet staff sees the breakfast as a significant step forward in working with the faith community and improving communication. Both the breakfast and last month's judicial forum have resulted in proposals for regularly scheduled quarterly meetings with each group. The churches have also invited Jennifer McComas of the Grant County Department for Community Based Services to their churches to lead a discussion of child protection.

Propane Tank Warning Issued by Police

The Kentucky State Police (KSP) advise Kentuckians to use caution when buying or connecting propane tanks to outdoor grills and RV heaters.

The latest risk isn't explosion or vapor inhalation. Instead, propane tanks from retail store exchange services are among the tools used to produce methamphetamine. Meth cooks obtain propane tanks from discount, grocery, convenience and related retail stores, empty them of propane, and refill the tanks with anhydrous ammonia, a key ingredient in meth production.

When meth cooks are finished with the tanks, they return them to stores where the tanks are refilled with propane and put back in the consumer tank exchange supply.

Anhydrous ammonia is very corrosive and weakens the structure of the tank. It can be very dangerous when mixed with propane and hooked up to grills, heaters, etc.

The KSP advises consumers to carefully inspect propane tanks for blue or greenish residue around tank valves, a sign anhydrous ammonia or other contaminant may be present. If colored residue is present, do not purchase the tank and notify store management.

One way to avoid potential risk is to refill one trusted propane tank instead of exchanging one tank for another. Many farm supply and rural home propane providers offer tank refills.

Postal Rate Increase

The United States Postal Service increased postal rates on May 12. The cost of a 1-oz. letter is 42 cents. Other rates will vary depending on how the mail is sent. If you need specific rates or more information, you can go to www.usps.com or contact the Division of Postal Services at (502) 564-3769.

Living Well: Run/Walk Events

Have you ever considered entering a fun run/walk event (race)? Maybe you thought about it but just didn't know how to get started. Switching from spectator to participant is a big leap, but follow these easy steps to transform yourself and successfully cross the finish line. Training for your first event is not difficult, but making sure that you do the right things at the right times is important.

Before starting any type of training program, check with your physician to make sure that you can start a physical fitness routine.

Once you start your actual training program, it is a good idea to invest in a pair of shoes that are made to fit your specific foot design. After buying shoes, try to find apparel that has a moisture-wicking material versus wearing 100 percent cotton, especially when it comes to your socks. Blistered feet will derail you from your training program.

Maintaining the proper technique is also very important. Follow these quick body positions for optimal results:

- Keep your head level.
- Keep your shoulders down and relaxed.
- Strike the ground with the heel first, then roll to the ball of your foot and push off from the toes.

Use the FIT (frequency, intensity and time) principle as the main element of your training program. People sometimes have to halt their training programs because they do too much too soon. Allow your body to adjust by gradually increasing your efforts. Follow these tips to stay consist with your training program:

- Always take time to warm up, cool down and stretch after each workout session.
- Never increase your mileage by more than 10 percent per week.
- Incorporate a strength training routine on alternate days to maintain muscle balance.
- If you have any aches or pains, take time off until it feels better, and adjust your training program.

Once you start your training program, decide if this is something you really enjoy. If you decide that a training program and the goal of a run/walk event is for you, be sure to take your time and progress gradually. If you decide that you don't or can't stick to a training routine, find another activity you'll enjoy.

CHFS Health Tip

Losing weight can be a struggle. But keeping it off can feel like a losing battle. Now a new study suggests that monthly personal counseling — usually less than 15 minutes by phone — can help. A Web-based program also helped some people keep lost pounds at bay.

Excess weight is the nation's second-leading cause of preventable death. Extra pounds can lead to diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure — all risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Weight loss can reduce these risks, but keeping that lost weight off is rarely easy.

National Institutes of Health-funded researchers compared the success rates of three relatively low-cost approaches to maintaining weight loss. They studied more than 1,000 adults who had lost an average of about 19 pounds. Each person was randomly assigned to take one of three approaches to maintaining their weight loss.

One group had monthly personal counseling on diet and physical activity. People in the second group used an interactive Web-based program that provided similar information. Those in the third group — the “self-directed maintenance” group — were mostly left on their own.

By the end of the 2.5-year study, people who had personal counseling still had an average weight loss of 9.2 pounds. The Web group kept off an average of 7.3 pounds, and the self-directed group 6.4 pounds.

Employee Enrichment

By Anya Armes Weber

Here are some tips from Sam Silverstein, author of “The Power of Choice, The Success Model,” on presenting your ideas so they are more likely to be accepted.

Be prepared. If you are going to be vocal, make sure you know what you are talking about and are able to answer any possible query. You will increase your credibility, and you may become known as an “expert” on your issue.

Listen. It's just as important as talking when you want to sell your idea. Hear out what your

coworkers have to say about your idea to enhance your proposal.

Ask questions – and give the answers. When you start by addressing the problem this way, you get everyone to agree on the problem and can narrow the focus of the discussion.

Be flexible. Don't get so connected to your ideas that you can't accept changing them. Acknowledge any input from coworkers that shaped your proposals.

Be quiet. Know when not to speak. Saying too much can make you seem overbearing or too insistent about your ideas.