KENTUCKY
CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
CHFS FOCUS
Oct. 29, 2007

Employee Profiles: Breast Cancer Awareness

Kathy Williamson is a disability adjudicator at the Department for Disability Determination Services. She has more than 30 years of service with the state.

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

My job is to determine whether a claimant is eligible for Social Security Disability and/or SSI disability benefits. Adjudicators are trained to read and understand medical evidence. This job is a huge challenge because at times I am reading very complicated cases and evaluating whether a person meets federal guidelines for disability benefits. Besides the fact that this is a very intellectually challenging job, I am passionate about helping the citizens of the Commonwealth obtain their benefits when they meet our criteria.

Before answering these questions, I received a phone call from one of my claimants who was newly diagnosed with breast cancer when I first spoke with her. We were able to discuss not only her claim, but also her treatment process. There was a direct connection since I had already been through the process that she was just starting.

Share your story about breast cancer with readers.

I am a six-year breast cancer survivor. I received treatment for a type of tumor referred to as "Estrogen Receptor Positive." Research has been able to let scientists classify different breast tumors. The type of tumor that I had is where estrogen in the body acts as Miracle Grow to an estrogen receptor tumor.

Prior to my diagnosis, I was busy working, maintaining a household with my husband and stepson, as well as caring for my husband's grandmother who could no longer live independently.

In December 2000, I became so mentally and physically exhausted I decided to take some time to think about myself. My options were a day at the spa or a mammogram. I chose the mammogram, not realizing that I had put it off for six years. It was at that mammogram that doctors discovered a tumor that was over 5 centimeters, and there was no doubt it was cancer. However, they were unsure if it had spread to the lymph nodes or other parts of my body. I underwent surgery to have the tumor removed in January 2001, which resulted in a partial mastectomy and removal of all of the lymph nodes under my arm. The removal of the lymph nodes caused my immune system to remain compromised, so I now am very diligent about getting a flu shot and taking care of myself.

How did this change your life?

This illness changed my life because I had to stop taking care of others and focus on fighting the disease. My brother was only 37 when he lost his battle with brain cancer. My dad passed away just months before my brother's brain tumor was diagnosed. It was heartbreaking to watch my mother care for her only son who had terminal cancer. I never wanted her to go through that kind of pain again. Therefore, when I was diagnosed with breast cancer, I had mixed emotions. On one hand, I never needed my mom like I did then; on the other hand, I was thankful that God spared her the experience of fighting this battle with her only surviving child.

I was blessed in that I had the full support of my husband, my girlfriends and the very best group of doctors and nurses. My oncologist, surgeon and radiation oncologist were more than health care providers; they were some of my dearest friends. These folks have a special place in heaven.

What suggestions would you have for readers to help raise awareness of breast health and breast cancer?

Following the surgery I developed a staph infection from the lymph node surgery and was hospitalized again. My husband was also hospitalized, so I was left with only my own thoughts to help me get better. I remember lying in bed thinking "God, why am I left; is there something I'm supposed to do that I haven't done?" I asked myself this question since all of my immediate family had passed before me and I was the "baby" in the family. After recovering from the infection, I underwent radiation, which caused me to be exhausted all the time. Now that I have undergone all of the treatment, I visit my doctors annually and I now include all of the doctors and nurses who assisted with my care in my circle of friends.

My suggestion is that no matter how busy your life may seem, always make time for your preventive screenings. Also, purchase and display pink ribbons on socks, shirts, stickers, etc., that support breast cancer and help raise awareness.

Shannon Ramsey, is a media and publications specialist for the Kentucky Commission on Community Volunteerism and Service (KCCVS). She has worked with the state for 3 years.

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

Many of KCCVS' programs, such as AmeriCorps, the Governor's Awards for Outstanding Volunteer Service and the Volunteer Recognition Program, have a positive impact on Kentuckians and their communities. My role in supporting and promoting these programs gives me a chance to contribute to the good things happening across the state as a result of these programs. As editor of the KCCVS quarterly newsletter, I have the pleasure of spreading the word about good things happening in Kentucky to a circulation of about 6,000 readers, including school personnel, elected officials, non-profit organization staff and individual volunteers and program supporters. I also created and maintain the KCCVS Web site, which is another medium that helps us inform and educate site visitors about volunteerism, community service and KCCVS programs.

The best part of my job is getting to hear so many good stories about how volunteers and community service positively impact the lives of others. That helps keep me motivated.

Share your story about breast cancer with readers.

My mom is a breast cancer survivor. She is completely healthy now, and we enjoy supporting breast cancer research and awareness causes in various ways. We especially enjoy participating in benefit road races. This year we ran in the K9 2K for a Cure in Nicholasville and the Susan G. Komen Race for a Cure 5K in Lexington.

How did this change your life?

I've always known breast cancer runs in my family and that I'm at increased risk for it. But seeing my mother experience the disease firsthand really made me realize how important early detection and healthy lifestyle are. Even though her surgery, chemo and radiation were very challenging, she maintained a positive outlook throughout her treatment that really inspired me. It really taught me that the most important thing is your perspective!

What suggestions would you have for readers to help raise awareness of breast health and breast cancer?

Always perform monthly self-exams and get annual clinical exams and mammograms – especially if you have a family or personal history of breast cancer. And, don't just think about yourself – make sure family and friends are getting regular screenings and doing self-exams. You just might save a loved one's life!

Office of Contract Oversight Offers Procurement Seminar

The CHFS Office of Contract Oversight, Division of Strategic Procurement Services, is proud to offer a broad-based overview on procurement. You are responsible for obtaining your immediate supervisor's approval to attend.

Time: 8:30 a.m. – noon
Date: Nov. 27
Location: Transportation Cabinet - 200 Mero St., Frankfort

Course Highlights:

This course is uniquely designed to assist CHFS staff members responsible for completing the CHFS96 Purchase Requisition Form. The class agenda will identify the process, offer a key understanding of the elements of the procurement cycle, and ascertain ways in which the document can be used to its full capability. Those interested in gaining a thorough understanding of the process are encouraged to attend.

Topics to be covered include:

Procurement Regulations		CHFS 96 Purchase Requisition
Discretionary Purchase Memo		Funding Information
Specifications		Commodity Specific Purchases
Approval Process		ProCard
Post Purchase Activities		Conflicts of Interest

Don't miss out on this wonderful professional development opportunity. Class size is limited to 30 people. Registration will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Registration deadline is Nov. 19. Registration forms can be downloaded from the CHFS Intranet site (http://chfsnet.ky.gov) under the Office of Contract Oversight. Mail or fax registration forms to:

CHFS OCO Strategic Procurement Services
Attn: Sarah Smith
275 East Main, 4E-B
Frankfort KY 40621
Fax (502) 564-5531

If you have any questions, please call (502) 564-7736 and ask for Sarah Smith (ext. 4015) or Cindy Stoops (ext. 4335).

CCSCHN Conf
The Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs' (CCSHCN) "Improving Outcomes through Understanding and Collaboration" conference last month welcomed more than 300 attendees. From left, CCSHCN Commissioner Eric Friedlander poses with conference keynote speaker Deborah Klein Walker, Ed.D., and Deirdre Cummings, CCSHCN's personnel, training and outreach branch manager.

CCSHCN Conference is a Success

By Anya Armes Weber

The Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs (CCSHCN) is getting positive feedback from attendees at its first conference in Louisville last month.

In a survey of the "Improving Outcomes through Understanding and Collaboration" conference attendees, 90 percent of respondents so far have said they plan to attend next year, and 99 percent

said they would recommend the conference to a colleague.

"It is heartening to learn that our peers and clients appreciated the conference," CCSHCN Commissioner Eric Friedlander said. "We feel it was a success in many ways. Staff and parents took away a lot of innovative ideas to help children, and we got to spread the word about our programs. I am so proud of the team that coordinated this effort."

A six-member planning team worked for months in planning the conference, said Deirdre Cummings, CCSHCN's personnel, training and outreach branch manager.

More than 300 staff, community partners and parents attended the two-day conference, which featured keynote speaker Deborah Klein Walker, Ed.D., a nationally respected expert in child development, community programs, and public health. Walker is president of the American Public Health Association.

The conference also included 20 exhibitors and more than 50 presenters leading workshops on topics like childhood obesity management, racial disparity in child health care and supports for children with specific health care needs.

Cabinet staff and community partners could receive continuing education credits for attending conference sessions.

Congratulations to the staff whose hard work paid off for a successful conference.

Living Well: Depression Awareness Helps Everyone

Recent research conducted by Ronald Kessler, a Harvard Medical School researcher, found that depression affects approximately 6 percent of employees. The estimated cost in lost productivity related to depression is more than $30 billion annually. In any given year, about 9.5 percent of the population or approximately 21 million adults will suffer from some type of depressive illness. Some of the symptoms individuals may experience are:

- Persistent sad, anxious, or empty mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that were once enjoyable
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being "slowed down"
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Insomnia, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- Appetite and/or weight loss or overeating and weight gain
- Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts
- Restlessness, irritability
- Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain

The causes of depression are unknown, but studies have linked the following factors:

- Family history
- Low self-esteem
- Physical changes or medical illness
- Serious loss
- Difficult relationship
- Financial problems
- Chronic stress
- Gender
- Age

In some families, depression will occur generation after generation. However, some people are diagnosed with depression whether they inherited it or not. Most cases are often

associated with changes in the brain structure or brain function.

Those who have very low self-esteem, and consistently view themselves and the world negatively or who are overwhelmed by stress are more prone to depression.

Physical changes accompanied by mental changes have also been linked to depression. Illnesses like a stroke, heart attack, cancer, Parkinson's disease, and hormonal disorders can lead to depression. These illnesses often leave people feeling physically worn down, which may cause a breakdown in their ability to fight off negative thoughts.

Other life-changing events like the loss of a loved one, difficult or strained relationship, financial problems, or any type of constant stress that cannot be controlled are also contributors to depression. The combination of genetic, psychological and environmental factors all play a role in the onset of a depressive disorder.

Women tend to suffer twice as often as men. Some researchers may attribute it to hormone changes or fluctuations that women often go through during menstruation, pregnancy, miscarriage, postpartum period, pre-menopause and menopause. Also, many women have additional stress from household and work responsibilities, single parenthood, or caring for aging parents. Men are often less likely to be diagnosed because they tend to mask the feelings with alcohol, drugs, or by engrossing themselves in work and keeping long hours. Men are less likely to be diagnosed than women because symptoms of depression do not manifest in the same manner. Studies show men also are less likely to admit to depression, and medical professionals are less likely to suspect it.

Research is also showing that children experience similar stressors that adults deal with. A depressed child may pretend to be sick, refuse to go to school, cling to a parent, or worry that the parent may die. Older children may sulk, cause trouble at school, have a negative attitude, act grouchy and often feel as if they are misunderstood.

Depression can affect anyone. These studies are catching the attention of the business world where many employers have recognized that treatment and assistance will lead to increased productivity, less turnover and healthier employees. Familiarize yourself and your coworkers with your health plan coverage and resources for assistance with depression. As we move into the holiday season, be aware of the signs and symptoms so that you can help yourself as well as your coworkers.

Cubicle Etiquette Keeps Productivity Up, Annoyances Down

By Jill Bremer, Bremer Communications
www.bremercommunications.com
Reprinted with permission

Is your current workspace a cubicle? Working in a cubicle does have some upsides, such as developing an open and connected staff and creating a feeling of camaraderie. However, studies show that most workers are not thrilled with the idea of working in a cube because of the lack of privacy and the increased noise. Here, then, is a set of ground rules that will help cube dwellers remain both productive and neighborly.

Privacy
Behave as though cubicles have doors. Do not enter before you have eye contact permission from the occupant.
Try not to sneak up behind someone in a cube. Announce yourself at the doorway or lightly knock on the wall.
Post a sign or flag at your cube entrance to signal when you can be interrupted. Avoid making eye

contact with people if you don't want to be interrupted.
Don't loiter outside someone's cube while you wait for him or her to finish a phone call. Come back at another time.
Keep your hands off a cube dweller's desk. Just because there's no door doesn't mean you can help yourself to their paper clips.

Phones
Limit the use of speakerphones. If you must use one, keep the volume as low as possible. Use a meeting room for conference calls.
Watch your volume when talking on the phone. A headset can help keep your voice low.
Never leave your cell phone behind in your cube without first turning it off or to vibrate.
With personal or sensitive calls, be aware that your neighbors can hear your end of the conversation.

General noise
Use e-mail or instant messaging to communicate silently with your coworkers.
Deactivate computer sound effects for incoming messages, errors, etc. Use visual alerts instead (ask your information technology staff for help with these settings).
Play radios at low volumes or use a headset.
Set pagers to vibrate.
Eat quietly. Avoid gum-popping, humming, slurping and pen tapping.

Smells
A good rule of thumb is to never eat hot food at your desk. Food odors can bother your hungry or nauseous neighbors.
Perfume and cologne should be avoided in a cubicle arrangement. Your neighbors may have allergies.
Use only mild-scented air fresheners or unscented odor neutralizers. Don't burn scented candles or use other continuous-release air fragrances.

Employee Enrichment

By Anya Armes Weber

Your sleep pattern can affect your professional performance, especially if you aren't getting enough rest. Marshall Brain, founder of HowStuffWorks.com, writes that missing sleep can hurt our attention span. We find it hard to concentrate and make mistakes more easily.

- Sleep has many benefits.
- It lets our bodies repair or replace cells, tissue and muscles.
- It lets our brains rest and "organize" our thoughts and memories. Some researchers say this is part of the dream process.
- It lowers our energy consumption so we don't need to eat as much.
- Enough sleep generally makes us feel more refreshed than we would with too little. Treat your mind and body right, and get your proper rest.