

## **Discover Geocaching – A Modern Day Treasure Hunt**

*By Barbara Fox, Communications*

With the weather warming up following a long cold winter, many of you are probably eager to spend more time outdoors getting some exercise. Geocaching may be an activity worth exploring for you, your family and friends.

Geocaching (pronounced gee-o-cash-ing), is a high-tech treasure hunt that requires you to find a hidden container or “cache” with the help of a handheld Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver or a GPS-enabled mobile phone, which indicates your exact location on Earth by using latitude and longitude coordinates.

Information on geocaching and cache locations can be found on the official geocaching Web site, [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com). All of the caches have a description and a difficulty rating. Beginning cachers should select a cache with an easy rating so they know what to look for with future caches. Approximately 1 million caches are hidden worldwide, so there are plenty to choose from.

A geocache can be hidden just about anywhere – inside a hollow tree, under a rock, hanging from a tree branch along a hiking trail or in a very busy area in places you might not think would hold a cache.

Steve Hartwig, a child protection specialist in the Child Safety Branch at the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, has been geocaching for three years and is enjoying every aspect of the popular pastime. Hartwig has located more than 1,500 caches.

“I started geocaching in June 2007 when my son and I went to the Philmont Boy Scout Ranch in New Mexico. While my son was attending his programs, I took a course in geocaching and scouting and was hooked,” said Hartwig. “I have now integrated geocaching as part of my wellness and fitness program and am no longer a couch potato watching TV for hours.”

Depending on their size, caches usually consist of a waterproof container of some sort, a log book to record the finder’s visit and small trinkets to exchange. Very small caches, called micros, are so small that they only contain a log; so be sure to bring along a pen or pencil to sign the log. Caching etiquette requires the cacher to leave an item of equal or greater value than the item exchanged inside the cache. Kids love hunting through the cache container to view all of the items. Once you locate a cache and sign the log, replace the cache where you found it so others can enjoy the thrill of the adventure in finding it. Be sure to log your find on the Web site and list any details of your find there also.

“Geocaching gets me out into the community wherever my personal or business travels take me, and I visit places I never knew existed,” said Hartwig. “It also provides me with

an opportunity to learn about local history, geology, geography and even philosophy on a personal level.”

There are many different types of caches to choose from. The traditional cache lists the coordinates and you can go and find it. Mystery or puzzle caches require you to solve a puzzle in order to obtain the coordinates first. Multi-caches involve two or more coordinates, with the final location holding the physical container.

“When I search for geocaches, I am constantly testing my skills in observation, deduction, GPS navigation and most importantly, patience,” said Hartwig.

Local geocaching clubs host events such as meet-and-greets and trash clean-ups. These events are a great way to meet new people, network with local geocachers and share your adventure stories.

“Geocaching is also a great opportunity for my son (who has multiple special needs) and I to do something together that we both enjoy,” said Hartwig. “He has younger eyes than I do and is really good at spotting the smaller geocaches.”

The weather doesn’t hamper Hartwig either.

“I cache in the rain, snow, sleet, mud, briar patches, even caching at night! The local geocaching community is great. There is an opportunity to meet other cachers at monthly events to discuss where the best caches are located and to get tips on finding difficult caches. Geocaching is definitely a great family activity.”

## **Adoption Mentoring Group Receives Honor**

*By Anya Armes Weber*

An adoption support group and one of the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services primary partners has won an award for effectively working with adoptive parents.

Adoption Support for Kentucky (ASK) was named Parent Group of the Year by the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC).

ASK is a University of Kentucky-based, consortium of parent-led adoptive parent support groups throughout the state, and the group works closely with the CHFS Department for Community Based Services and its Special Needs Adoption program (SNAP). DCBS staff nominated ASK for the award.

Adoption Services Branch Manager Mike Grimes, of the DCBS Division of Protection and Permanency, said ASK has successfully guided parents at all stages of adoptions since it was created as a pilot program eight years ago.

“Whether at the initial stage of adoption interest, or far past finalization, ASK has created an all-inclusive setting to fortify families who have generously opened their homes to deserving children,” Grimes wrote in the nomination letter. “The services provided by ASK have proven invaluable to SNAP and adoptive families who have learned to lean on their support.”

ASK currently conducts almost 400 separate support groups across the state and boasts a current membership of almost 4,000. More than 18,400 people have benefitted from ASK events and workshops.

NACAC is a nonprofit organization that promotes and supports permanent families for children in the United States and Canada who have been in care, particularly children in foster care and those with special needs.

ASK will receive its award at the NACAC’s annual conference in August in Hartford, Conn.

Find out about ASK online at <http://www.uky.edu/SocialWork/trc/ask.htm>.

For more information about adoption and foster care, call the Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP) at (800) 928-4303. Or log on to the SNAP home page at <http://chfs.ky.gov/snap>.

### **Living Memorial Shines Light on Child Abuse Prevention Month**

In 2009, 124 children were substantiated victims of childhood abuse or neglect in Lawrence County. For every one case reported, it is estimated three to four are not reported. The Blue Ribbon Coalition for Kids, Three Rivers Medical Center and Lawrence County Department for Community Based Services determined that the community should see a living memorial representing these children.

On April 1, 2010, The Blue Ribbon Coalition for Kids held its inaugural event, the “Stand Up Against Child Abuse Kick Off.” There, in the sun beside the pond at Three Rivers Medical Center, a new era began for Louisa, Ky. The honor choir of Lawrence County High School began the event with a moving version of “I’ll Stand By You.” This was followed by Louisa Mayor Teddy Preston reading and signing a proclamation that April would forever be Child Abuse Awareness Month in Louisa. Afterward, Northeastern Service Region Service Region Administrator Vince Geremia spoke about the impact of drug abuse and other factors leading to child abuse in this region.

Coalition member Cory Borders, Sunrise Children’s Services foster care staff and DCBS staff had gathered 124 people, each person wearing a shirt bearing a number between one and 124. The plain white T-shirts had a simple inscription: “I stand for and a single number.” These shirts represented each child that had been a victim of abuse in Lawrence County the previous year. These people were assembled and photographed to show the sheer number of children abused or neglected, a living tribute to the victims.

Lee Sammons, a local musician, then sang the Jason Michael Carroll song “ Alyssa Lies.” The song reiterated the chilling message of a community failing to stand up for one of its children, which ultimately led to the death of the fictitious Alyssa. School children from the Lawrence County school system then placed 124 pinwheels in a garden by the pond as yet another tribute to the victims. The pinwheels can be viewed at Three Rivers Medical Center for the remainder of April.

The Blue Ribbon Coalition for Kids is a nonprofit organization of community partners in Lawrence County who are dedicated to helping victims of childhood abuse.

Coalition chairperson Cory Borders said, “I can control what goes on in my home, but I can’t control what goes on outside my home. I hope by standing up for these children, others will strive to protect not only their own children, but also other children.”

The Blue Ribbon Coalition for Kids theme this month is “Cause we are tired of fighting alone!” These child victims of abuse truly are tired of fighting alone. The Blue Ribbon Coalition for Kids, Three Rivers Medical Center, and Lawrence County DCBS would like to encourage everyone to stand up this month and wear a blue ribbon in honor of the abuse victims in your community.

A link to the video of the “The Stand Up Against Child Abuse Kick Off:”  
<http://www.wsaz.com/newskentucky/headlines/89741037.html>

### **Living Well: Weight loss and television**

Are you a fan and avid follower of the weight-loss reality shows? If you use the contestants’ battles as motivation in your own life, there may be some controversy over reality and the competition to win the shows’ top-dollar prizes. Since the season opener of The Biggest Loser, producers have taken on heavier contestants (454, 476 and 526 pounds), seen 100pound weight losses in a seven-week time period, and a 34-pound weight loss in one week. Here are two things to consider about the show:

All participants are under medical supervision during their time on the show. The health risks of being obese far outweigh the risks the participants take while at the ranch.

Seventeen contestants out of 22 had a body mass index over 40, rating them as severely obese. Currently, in the U.S., only 6 percent of Americans have a BMI over 40, so this is not a clear snapshot of our country’s obesity issues.

Because I have a health promotion background, several people have asked me my opinion of the show. I cannot say that I have watched a whole episode or series, but I have seen clips. Obviously, this show has been on for several seasons, so it must be popular. I don’t want to quash anyone’s means of motivation, but I do point out these things:

The contestants on the show are inactive people who are not in shape. They are put in a fitness facility for six hours a day and eat a highly restrictive diet.

Some of the fitness challenges are exactly that - too challenging for their current physical fitness.

A majority of their day is spent with a personal trainer, and of course, all results are shown on national television.

In the "real world," weight loss should be a more gradual process. You should attempt to lose only 1 to 2 pounds per week. However, if you are severely obese, you have a lot more weight to lose. Initially after starting a beginning fitness routine and eating healthier, you may see higher losses. But at some point, you will need to stick to the 1 to 2 pound per week goal.

Weight loss and maintenance is something that takes time and requires behavioral changes. Health professionals agree that these changes should be made slowly and one at a time for long-lasting lifestyle changes. The small segments of The Biggest Loser that I have seen do shed light on other factors related to obesity that are often unspoken, but are directly related to weight issues. This part of the show I believe is inspirational and serves a purpose to help those who fight with the scales to identify other factors that may be contributing to their own weight issues. Identifying the obstacles or issues that keep you from losing weight can lead you toward experiencing greater success with weight loss and maintenance.

As for the show, if you like watching it, keep watching! It is important to find things in your own weight loss journey that will keep you motivated. Everyone appreciates the dedication of these contestants. Remember: Be realistic and you will see results!

### **Celebrate National Public Health Week**

Public health is a part of our everyday lives, from the water we drink and air we breathe, to the laws that protect us from injury and vaccines that help us stay healthy. National Public Health Week, April 5-11, is a time to celebrate advancements in public health, assess our nation's current public health status and highlight the importance of taking action.

Here are some things you can do to make a big impact on your health and in your community.

Start small:

- Choose fruits and vegetables instead of sugary sweets at the grocery store.
- Plant a fruit tree in your neighborhood or backyard.
- Quit smoking or using other tobacco products.

- Post the A Healthier America video to your Facebook page, your blog or Twitter account and share your personal health story with your friends. (Find this online at [nphw.org](http://nphw.org))
- Send an e-mail to a friend about the NPHW 2010 A Healthier America survey. (Find this online at [nphw.org](http://nphw.org)) Talk about the survey results and what people can do to make a difference.

Think big:

- Create clean and safe parks in your neighborhood with ball courts and exercise trails.
- Invite local policymakers and other experts to a community roundtable to discuss the role of public health in our nation's health reform discussions.
- Add your own activities, too!

Read more about National Public Health Week online at [nphw.org](http://nphw.org).

## **Employee Enrichment**

*By Anya Armes Weber*

It's hard to schedule meetings with co-workers and partners from a distance. One time-saving and eco-conscious solution to bring people together is teleconferencing. Communications group Toastmasters International offers these tips for the moderator of a successful teleconference.

**Have a realistic agenda.** Prioritize topics and make the most important first on the list. Provide a copy of the agenda to all invited attendees so they can prepare questions or reports.

**Begin on a good tone.** Ask everyone to introduce themselves and identify their roles. Be inclusive. Encourage everyone to weigh in. Ask for input from participants who are silent. If two people are talking over each other, ask one to hold their thoughts until the other is finished speaking.

**Take notes.** Even if someone else is officially keeping the minutes, you'll want to be able to remember your own thoughts and opinions about the meeting.

**Use vocal variety.** Because many of the meeting attendees won't be able to see you, your voice will express your emotions about your project. Use pauses to emphasize your points.

**Know when to quit.** If your call is running long, you have to decide whether to keep it going or end it without hitting some points. Letting the group weigh in can help you make your choice. If you finish your business early, you likely won't hear any complaints.

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**Summarize and conclude the meeting.** Give a quick review of the meeting's key points – especially any action items and deadlines. This is also a good chance for people to ask questions or to clarify issues.