

Feb. 4, 2008

### **Pet of the Week**

Meet Gracie. This 2-year-old pup belongs to Stacy Hait, who works in the Department for Community Based Services. “We adopted her from a local rescue, and she is the sweetest girl in the world,” said Hait. “She and my 3-year-old daughter are just like siblings. They play and get jealous of each other, but can't stand to be away from each another. We love her very much!”



### **Employee Spotlight: Len Lobaito**

Len Lobaito is an information systems supervisor in the CHFS Office of Information Technology. He has worked for the state for nine years.

#### **How does your job allow you to impact the lives of your fellow Kentuckians?**

Since the OIT division services all of the information technology (IT) needs of our entire Cabinet statewide, one of my roles is to verify and approve those needs and present them to the budget committee, thereby allowing our services to be rendered at a more effective and efficient pace.

#### **What do you enjoy about the work you do?**

Working with the hard-working individuals that we have in this Cabinet.

#### **What activities/hobbies/clubs/organizations do you participate in outside of work? How do they benefit you?**

I have many activities, hobbies, etc., but I will start with just one. For many years, I have enjoyed restoring and driving older sports cars. My present project is a '91 Porsche Carrera, which I have almost to its original condition. I also design pieces of furniture and have about 300 signed pieces out in public now. (You can look at some of them online at [www.lenlobaito.com](http://www.lenlobaito.com).) In addition, I have been training horses since 1965 and have a world-registered quarter horse that has been with me for 25 years and a thoroughbred race horse, of exemplary breeding, that injured himself at Turfway in his 12th lifetime race. He has been with me for 14 years now and is training for Dressage (an Olympic Sport).

#### **Would you rather be chased by a great white shark, a moray eel or a piranha? Why?**

Well, because I also am a certified open water diver, I would prefer a Great White because I always carry a Shark Stick when diving with sharks. It would put an end to the chase rather quickly. Moray eels are not very aggressive unless you stick your hand into their hole in the coral. Their teeth are very sharp, but they will only take a small chunk out of you compared to the Great White. You actually can swim with Piranha under three conditions: 1. You do not act aggressively. 2. You do not have any cuts or abrasions that are bleeding. 3. You do not bite them first.

#### **If you could live in any city in the world, where would you live and why?**

I would like to live in Tarawa, the capitol of the Christmas Islands, and open a new business called “Custom Huts by Len.” Because I also love to sail, this may be an attainable goal. I'd like to live there because of the weather and beautiful sunsets and relative tranquility. There are plenty of fish to eat if you live aboard your vessel, and the native people are wonderfully friendly and caring.

Feb. 4, 2008

Many thanks to Len for sharing his story. If you know someone who has an interesting story to tell, e-mail Focus Editor Emily Moses at [emily.moses@ky.gov](mailto:emily.moses@ky.gov).

### Communication Network Recognized as 'Best Practice'

### Kentucky's Grassroots Network Helps At-Risk Populations Prepare

By Ayisha Yahya, CIDRAP Staff Writer

*Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in a publication put forth by the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) at the University of Minnesota. It is reprinted here with CIDRAP's permission.*

A statewide project in Kentucky engages communities to help vulnerable populations prepare for an emergency.

The Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) initiated this grassroots group, called the Kentucky Outreach and Information Network (KOIN). It brings together representatives from diverse community groups, faith-based organizations, health and social service agencies and the media. Creating this network helps state health officials reach vulnerable populations with preparedness information and allows groups working with those populations to find and hone pertinent information.

Barbara Fox, KOIN coordinator and an information officer for the Cabinet, said the network, which began in 2004, now has about 400 members serving "hard to reach" populations, including the deaf, blind, the elderly, the disabled, and those who speak limited or no English. KOIN planners also hope to reach out to homeless populations this year, Fox said.

An additional focus is on rural populations, as a substantial portion of Kentucky's 4.2 million residents live in rural areas. Knowing how to reach them when needed is essential, Fox said.

As the statewide KOIN project continues to grow, Fox said she hopes such networks also can be developed at the local health department level.

### Workshops for educating, getting feedback

Fox holds annual workshops with KOIN members that have a twofold purpose: to raise awareness about disaster preparedness and to hear ideas on how best to reach different audiences. The network members are considered trusted local sources who can convey messages appropriately.

These sources include pastors and leaders of different faith groups, chaplains who visit local horse farms where there are many immigrant workers, and caseworkers from social service organizations that serve specific language or special needs groups. Other members, according to Fox, include ethnic media reporters, local radio hosts with programs that cater to particular populations, translators, health care workers, and others who provide direct services or have otherwise developed trusting relationships with the target populations.

"These are folks who really know their communities," Fox said. "It's kind of hard here at the state level to know what's going on."

Ensuring crisis communication is particularly important for people who do not receive information through conventional channels.

A 2005 study in Kentucky on reaching vulnerable populations during emergencies found that during a crisis, locally trusted sources gain more trust compared with outside sources. That finding underscores the importance of

Feb. 4, 2008

identifying and training such sources to dispatch information during a disaster.

The study also found that few of the vulnerable populations explored "felt adequately prepared for grave crisis, whether terrorism-related or the result of disease or natural disaster," according to the study's authors. KOIN provides an opportunity to improve that preparation.

Fox brings drafts of materials to workshops to solicit feedback from the network members and then incorporates changes.

Network members are expected to share those materials with their constituencies, Fox said. She provides members with items such as community and media information guides, brochures, magnets and coloring books.

"They adapt the information to meet the specific needs of their populations," Fox said.

### **Ever-evolving messages**

Fox mainly communicates with contacts via a periodic newsletter, although in an emergency, e-mail and telephone calls will be used. She tries not to overwhelm members with too much information or responsibilities, she added.

"It's a volunteer network, so we can't demand things of these people," Fox said.

The network has already been tested on a few occasions. Recently, it was used to alert people about a Salmonella outbreak caused by peanut butter. It was also employed in bringing different people together for Kentucky's Pandemic Influenza Summit in 2006.

The KOIN project keeps exploring new ways to communicate emerging concerns such as pandemic influenza with special populations, Fox said. A new set of messages on preparedness is under development now.

"We're going to start testing the messages with seasonal flu," she said, adding that some of the approaches will be tested among different faith congregations, whose members have been useful in evaluating messages.

### **Language, other barriers**

But challenges remain. For example, poor rural communities are of particular concern, Fox said, and communication in these areas may require unconventional methods. She said one of KOIN's member organizations, for instance, is able to reach people on horseback if needed. Health departments and individuals in these areas also have satellite phones in case standard systems break down.

In addition, communications to different audiences pose a number of challenges. For example, Fox said, "It's really hard to get materials into Braille."

Fox is also working on pictograms that teach people how to proceed through a flu clinic, which could be especially beneficial for populations with low literacy rates.

"We're testing that out right now with our KOIN people, and they've been giving us a lot of pointers," she added.

In addition, the state's Vietnamese community would benefit greatly from having more materials translated. The 2000 census identified about 3,000 Vietnamese residents in Kentucky. Today that figure is closer to 7,000, said Thuy-Loan Nguyen, who works with the Louisville branch of Boat People SOS, a social services organization for Vietnamese immigrants.

Nguyen has been a KOIN member for two years. She said barriers such as poor English abilities, lack of transportation, and being poorly informed hinder preparedness in the Vietnamese

Feb. 4, 2008

community. "I don't think they are well-prepared," she said.

Boat People SOS has been sharing KOIN updates with eight local Vietnamese organizations, Nguyen said. More education and resources would be beneficial, a point she has raised at KOIN workshops. "We lack information in Vietnamese," Nguyen said. "We really need help."

### One case study

Working with KOIN has helped the Christian Appalachian Project (CAP) plan disaster outreach and network with other organizations, according to Sherry Buresh, the organization's disaster relief program director. CAP offers more than 60 programs to different vulnerable populations, including the elderly, the disabled, and the poor in Kentucky, West Virginia and Ohio.

CAP has plans to use a pool of staff and local volunteers to call, e-mail or go door-to-door, especially in more remote areas, in an emergency. She noted that preparedness levels remain low among some residents, especially because rural and poor communities have other more pressing concerns.

"I feel real comfortable. . .that we would reach a large number of people" in an emergency, Buresh said. "[The KOIN project] is a very simple tool that could have a lot of impact."

Visit CIDRAP online at:  
<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/content/influenza/panflu/news/jan3008koinpp.html>

### Social Services Staff Invited to Share Thoughts on Profession

By Anya Armes Weber

March is Social Work Month, a time to appreciate and celebrate staff in the social services offices of the Cabinet.

In observance of this month, we want to hear from social services staff around the state for a special feature in the Focus. Send us a short reply about one of the following topics:

- What inspired you to become involved in social services work?
- What resources have been most helpful to you in your work?
- How has assisting others through social services rewarded you personally or professionally?

Address just one of the topics, and submit your replies to [anya.weber@ky.gov](mailto:anya.weber@ky.gov) by Monday, Feb. 25. Include your job title and work county. You may also send a digital photo for possible online publication. Submissions may be edited for length and style.

Thanks in advance for your interest and sharing your ideas about social services work with other Cabinet staff.

### Living Well: What's at Your CORE?

The new year is often a time when people tend to reassess their lives and lifestyles. If your goal is to be a more "positive" person, consider trying to incorporate the CORE acronym into your lifestyle.

Follow this acronym to help you deal with adversity.

**C is for control** - Recognize your own power in a situation.

**O is for ownership** - What part of the problem do you take responsibility for solving?

**R is for reach** - Don't catastrophize, and don't let the problem leak into other parts of your life.

Feb. 4, 2008

**E is for endurance** - Don't let adversity get you down for long.

This acronym comes from Paul Stoltz's book *Adversity Quotient: Turning Obstacles into Opportunities*, where he also writes that "on our own, we can get to the 'core' of our potential for happiness."

If you are wrestling with a tough issue, remember, you don't have to face it alone. Seek the help of family, friends and or a mental health specialist. Also, don't fall victim to bad habits when you may be feeling negatively. It's important – no matter what you're feeling – to maintain a healthy lifestyle and incorporate regular physical activity into your daily routine.

### Health Tip

*By Emily B. Moses*

By now you should know February is American Heart Health Month. This is the perfect time for you to be proactive about your own heart health.

Visit the American Heart Association's Web site at [americanheart.org](http://americanheart.org). You'll find all sorts of information about heart health. But most importantly, you should take the quiz about your own heart health. You will receive a detailed report in return with tips on how to improve your health.

Visit [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org). Place your cursor over the words "Healthy Lifestyle" on the left side of the page. You will see several options to choose from. Click "Health Tools." Scroll down to "Test Your Health IQ or Assess Your Risk." Here you will be able to take several quizzes concerning your health. There's even a quiz that assesses your risk of having a heart attack within the next 10 years.

The Heart Association's Web site offers much to explore. You can sign up for e-newsletters,

magazines, recipes, info on children's heart health and other freebies.

### Employee Enrichment

*By Anya Armes Weber*

Winter is cold and flu season, and germs can easily pass from person to person within our office environments. Viruses that cause these illnesses can spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers these tips for preventing the spread of germs at work.

- **Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough.** Use a tissue. If you don't have a tissue, wash your hands immediately.
- **Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs can live for up to two hours on hard surfaces like door handles, desks and shared equipment.
- **Follow other good health habits.** Choose healthy foods, exercise, get enough sleep and take vitamins as advised by your doctor.
- **Clean your hands often.** Scrub with soap and warm water for 20 seconds. If you can't wash, use a gel sanitizer or an alcohol-based disposable hand wipe.

Finally, stay home and rest when you are sick so you can get well sooner and avoid making a coworker sick. See your doctor when needed.

Visit <http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/> for more healthy habits and common symptoms of the flu.