

## **Employee Spotlight**

### *Employee Uses Talent to Help Children in Need*

*By Emily B. Moses*

Using only her hands and heart, Rebecca Aufderhar is helping to provide comfort to children who are taken from their homes out of necessity.

Aufderhar, administrative specialist in the Health Promotion Branch in the Department for Public Health, helped start a chapter of a national organization called Bags of Love in Anderson County.

Bags of Love, also referred to as It's My Very Own, is a program that provides a duffle bag to children taken from their homes by child protective service workers. The bag – which contains a handmade blanket or quilt, a stuffed animal, age-appropriate toys and personal care items – is given to the children by the workers so the children will have something of their own to start with when they are placed in temporary care.

Aufderhar met the Bags of Love founder in 2007 and was so impressed with her organization that she took the idea to her church group. The women of her church, Lawrenceburg Seventh-Day Adventist Church, decided to start a group.

Aufderhar uses her talents to sew quilts for the bags that, when filled, are taken to the Anderson County Department for Community Based Services office.

“Our group has taken 25 bags to Anderson County DCBS since the inception of our chapter,” said Aufderhar. “I currently am working on my seventh quilt.”

It's My Very Own was started in western Kentucky by Barbara Neher. The organization has 14 chapters in Kentucky, chapters in 45 states and 96 chapters internationally.

To donate to Bags of Love, contact Aufderhar.

## **Employees Awarded for Money-Saving Suggestions**

Thirty-nine state employees were recognized last week for budget-friendly ideas that saved the state more than \$1.4 million. These employees were recognized at the Governor's Mansion during the Personnel Cabinet's 29th Employee Suggestion System (ESS) Awards Ceremony, hosted by First Lady Jane Beshear and Personnel Cabinet Secretary Nikki Jackson.

The commonwealth provided cash awards and certificates for implementing employee ideas that resulted in improved efficiency in operations, cost reduction, cost avoidance, improved public relations, enhanced on-the-job safety or increased state revenues.

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services honored 19 employees whose suggestions were accepted and awarded through ESS. The awards were presented by CHFS Policy Advisor Eric Friedlander on behalf of Secretary Janie Miller.

Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs employees Diana Baker and Susan Walker recognized that one of Kentucky's Medicaid reimbursement rates for the evaluation of hearing aids was out of line with surrounding states and more than similar rates. The pair suggested decreasing the reimbursement amount to reflect that of neighboring states, thus saving precious dollars that could be used elsewhere. For their suggestion, Baker and Walker each received \$250.

Social Service Specialist Susan Brown, who works with the Special Needs Adoption Program, found a method for distributing files to field offices that saves paper, storage space, time and money. For her suggestion, Brown received \$160.

John Carrico, a field services supervisor for the Department for Community Based Services, made a complicated computer process easier and more efficient. The process used to determine food stamp allotments sometimes is based on payments from the Low Income Home Energy Assistance program if clients receive both services. Carrico found an easier way to search and use a database, which allows staff to access the report in a timely manner and reduces user error. For his suggestion, Carrico received \$100.

Angela Cecil, a family support specialist for the Department for Community Based Services, suggested adding a question to a form for people who apply for family support to give workers a way to know if someone applying for benefits received a shift differential that actually increased their pay. The difference saves the state money. For her suggestion, Cecil received \$100.

Linda Clements is a retired field services supervisor for DCBS in Leitchfield. Clements suggested adding a form to the KAMES system so that any employee who accessed the form could see what action, if any, had been taken regarding the client who had applied for assistance. That makes it more convenient for staff and saves time. Clements received a \$100 award for her suggestion.

CHFS Office of the Ombudsman employee Joyce Deaeth found a way to store reports electronically as a backup to those printed in the field - saving money and time. For her suggestion, Deaeth received \$100.

Sandra Heck, a DCBS field service supervisor in Falmouth, suggested that a two-page form be combined into one page, saving on printing costs and paper waste. For her suggestion, Heck received \$212.

Ingrid Jordan, a retired DCBS family services office supervisor in Olive Hill, had an idea that would save time – and headaches – for field staff. Jordan said e-mails sent Cabinet-wide often tie up the e-mail and TWIST systems for some field offices, sometimes for an hour. A version of her solution was implemented almost immediately. CHFS offices that send Cabinet-wide e-mails

are now delaying the messages to all staff unless the messages are urgent. For her suggestion, Jordan earned a \$100 award.

Department for Public Health Radiation Specialist Christopher Keffer brought an important matter to the attention of his supervisors and devised a plan for saving money at the same time. Keffer built a device to test laboratory showers, eliminating the mess and the need for two people to perform the test. For his suggestion, Keffer received \$100.

Sarah Kelly, an administrative specialist in the Office of Human Resource Management, suggested making a change to the Personnel Cabinet's Tuition Assistance form that would save employees time when processing the forms. For her suggestion, Kelly received \$100.

Sandra McClard, a DCBS family support specialist from Albany, suggested adding lines to a commonly used form so employees could check off that all forms were received for services applied for. For her suggestion, McClard earned \$100.

Cabinet Publications Manager Emily Moses found making a few small changes to Cabinet publications could save the Cabinet thousands of dollars in printing costs. Moses embarked on a campaign for Cabinet agencies to create fact sheets rather than tri-fold brochures. The fact sheets were cheaper to produce in printing costs and could be produced quickly – and could be posted to the Web for easy access and home printing. For her suggestion, Moses received \$100.

Sherry Newton, a family support specialist in the Department for Community Based Services, recommended a method to alert workers to benefits fraud. She suggested a notice be put in files in question to alert employees of a case file that is under investigation or has been investigated, reducing the possibility of benefits fraud. Newton earned a \$100 reward for her suggestion.

DCBS Family Support Specialist Holly Peach suggested adding a field to an online system process that would give employees the option to print a form. Previously, the forms were required to be printed, but that was not always necessary. Peach received \$100 for her suggestion.

Department for Public Health Office of Vital Statistics employee Rona Stapleton found a way to save time and money by eliminating an unnecessary process. Stapleton suggested eliminating a category of information entered into a state database because it was often unusable, partially complete or inaccurate, especially when it came from states that were not required to collect the data. For her suggestion, Stapleton earned \$100.

Aimee Timmons of the Department for Community Based Services suggested a method for improvement that cuts paper waste and saves time and storage space. She suggested a policy change that would allow for weekly or monthly records that would free up space in case files and save the cabinet on printing costs. For her suggestion, Timmons received \$100.

Retired Office of the Ombudsman management review officer Rita Yates suggested adding a step into our system of checks and balances to prevent benefits from being errantly awarded. Yates suggested adding a check into our computerized benefits system that allows workers all

over the state to review previous benefits a client has received. By adding the check, employees could avoid giving clients expedited services they did not qualify for. For her suggestion, Yates received \$100.

Finally, Rob Underhill, assistant director of the Cabinet's procurement services division, takes home this year's biggest award for his cost-saving suggestion. Underhill suggested combining the 160 individual janitorial contracts into fewer contracts that grouped buildings within a 30-mile radius into one contract. This provided a one-year savings of nearly \$300,000. It provides a five-year savings to the Cabinet of about \$1.5 million. Congratulations and thanks to Rob, who received \$2,500 for his suggestion.

The Employee Suggestion System was established in 1981. Since its inception, the commonwealth has realized a total of more than \$38 million in first-year savings. Cash awards are paid by the cabinets realizing the savings from the suggestions and may range from a minimum of \$100 to 10 percent of the first-year savings, up to a maximum of \$2,500. Awards of \$100 may be given for ideas that are adopted but have intangible savings.

For more information on the Employee Suggestion System, visit <http://personnel.ky.gov/emprel/kess/>.

### **Staff Can Step into Healthier Routine**

*By Anya Armes Weber*

CHFS' Wellness Committee is encouraging staff to resolve to make healthier choices in 2009.

One way is to join the Virgin HealthMiles program, which was promoted during 2009 Health Insurance Open Enrollment and again in a recent e-mail message from the Personnel Cabinet.

Virgin HealthMiles is a unique program with great tools and incentives to help you make better lifestyle choices that will improve your overall health.

When you create your account, you can complete a short health profile and order your pedometer.

Uploading your data from the pedometer at your worksite may be difficult right now, as staff is still working on some technical issues for the program. But now is the time to register.

Once your pedometer arrives, you may want to activate it at home until technical issues are resolved. Physical activity can still be entered manually online at work or home.

As a bonus, if you sign up now, you can receive the \$150 rewards upgrade free for one year. This offer saves you \$6.99 a month. If you've already signed up, re-register to enroll in the benefit.

Virgin HealthMiles does require a small investment – as little as \$1.50 a month for staff enrolled in the insurance program. Fees vary for dependents and other staff. The investment is small

compared to the valuable rewards – potential for cash or other prizes, as well as better health and well-being.

Staff is asked not to contact the OATS Help Desk, as that office is already working to resolve the technical difficulties.

Log on to [www.virginhealthmiles.com/kehpeemployees](http://www.virginhealthmiles.com/kehpeemployees) for more information, or e-mail [Kris Hayslett](mailto:Kris.Hayslett@chfsnet.ky.gov) or [Noel Harilson](mailto:Noel.Harilson@chfsnet.ky.gov). Learn more about CHFS' wellness activities at <http://chfsnet.ky.gov/wellness/>.

### **Living Well: Quick eating Do's and Don'ts**

The holidays are over, and many of us are selecting healthier options, including physical activity, stress management, personal financial improvement, strengthening relationships or eating healthier meals/foods. Whether you decided to make changes this year or not, all of us are facing busy schedules and often eating on the run.

We've all been in a position in which we're out running errands when an irresistible smell hits our noses and our vehicles or legs go on auto pilot to the destination the smell originates from. For example, I can be on the complete opposite side of the mall and be drawn to the food court area. I have no willpower when it comes to the Cinnabon. However, if they posted the nutritional value or an equally unhealthy comparison, I might be able to talk myself out of a purchase. A regular caramel pecan bun has 1,100 calories, 56 grams of fat (10 grams saturated, 5 grams trans), 141 grams of carbs and 47 grams of sugars. An equivalent to this delicious treat would be to down eight White Castle hamburgers.

I would consider myself an active person who enjoys eating. But even an active person would have a growing waistline eating this on a regular basis. If you would like to learn more, you can sign up for a weekly Eat This Not That! newsletter at [menshealth.com](http://menshealth.com).

You will be surprised that even those things we perceive to be "healthy" could be the caloric equivalent of an unhealthy item. This information alone might help you become a better consumer of those convenience foods we grab on the run. Before your next quick meal you might want to ask for the nutritional information or do some research before heading out so that you can make healthier selections.

### **Fiscal Electricity**

If there is one area of my household in need of a financial adviser, it's the heat pump. Well, actually, you might point the finger at a certain electrical cooperative my husband and I have no choice but to belong to. Our electric bill is atrocious most of the time.

We've tried a handful of things to lower the bill. Because we use an electric-powered heat pump to warm our home, we thought adding a few small space heaters around the house would do the trick. No significant change. Next we surmised drafty windows and doors were the source of the sting in our wallet, so we sought out and implemented solutions for that. Our bill didn't budge.

We had our chimney cleaned, thinking a more efficient burning wood stove would work. No dice. Finally, about two months ago, we added another space heater to the kitchen and that, along with the soot-free chimney, reinforced doors and windows, a commitment to turning off lights and electrical appliances when not in use and what seems to be an ever-burning woodstove, seemed to be a magical combination. Our house felt toasty, yet the heat pump didn't seem to run around the clock.

At the end of the month, we received our highest bill to date.

Finally, we realized we weren't going to be able to do it on our own, so we called the co-op to devise a payment system that I think is more accommodating to the family budget. Under the new system, we pay the same thing every month based on an average of our yearly bills. Granted, we'll now be paying more in milder months than in previous years, but at least the bill won't be a surprise. Honestly, for me that makes it much easier to coordinate the rest of our family spending plan. It's made me realize an important fact about fiscal warfare: You don't always win every battle, but there are times when a truce feels like victory.

**Fiscal War Money Saving Tip of the Week:** This tip comes from Esther Wilhoyte of DCBS. Esther is a whiz when it comes to saving on her electric bill – and her employers'. She advises the following:

- Turn off computer monitors when leaving work. Just think of the money saved if all state offices adhered to this policy!
- Unplug charging devices when not in use.
- When going on a trip, turn off power strips or unplug appliances such as televisions, microwaves, stereo systems, computers or anything that has a standby feature. Not only will this save electricity, but it will also protect from sudden power surges due to storms, etc.
- If you have one room that is colder than the rest of the house, use a small electric heater or oil-filled heater to provide extra heat for that room.

## **Employee Enrichment**

*By Anya Armes Weber*

Did you make resolutions for 2009? Now is a good time to re-evaluate the professional goals you set at the beginning of the year.

Ramona Creel, creator of [onlineOrganizing.com](http://onlineOrganizing.com), says we should ask ourselves these tough questions as we regularly review our goals:

- Have I made significant progress? If not, why?
- Is the goal still important to me?
- Have my priorities changed?

If you do have a new focus that displaces your previously made goals, don't be hesitant to drop an old one from your list to make room for something new.

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