

## **Food Stamp Program Gets Big Boost**

*By Anya Armes Weber*

Federal officials recently awarded CHFS' Food Stamp Program \$1.4 million in federal bonus funds Nov. 15 for its exemplary service delivery to service applicants.

Roberto Salazar, administrator of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service, presented the check in Frankfort to the Department for Community Based Services for the state's performance during the 2006 federal fiscal year.

This is the fourth consecutive year that DCBS, which administers the federal program, has received such an award.

Salazar commended Cabinet staff for their continued productivity.

"Kentucky has done a great job in helping their most vulnerable citizens obtain a more healthful diet through the Food Stamp Program," Salazar said. "One of USDA's top priorities is to continue partnering with states to ensure our nation's 15 nutrition programs are administered with an emphasis on improved access and increased participation among eligibles, while maintaining a high-level of program integrity."

CHFS Deputy Secretary Tom Emberton Jr. said leadership is proud of the staff working to enroll Kentuckians in the Food Stamp Program.

"Our staff has demonstrated a true commitment to delivering the nutrition services provided by the federal government," said Emberton. "Without food stamps, many of our clients would have trouble providing healthy meals for their families."

Kentucky was among the top six states with the highest percentage of timely processed food stamp applications during fiscal year 2006, with an application timeliness rate of about 98 percent.

Emberton also acknowledged CHFS' Office of Information Technology staff.

"Without their systems support, our field staff could not consistently achieve this high processing rate," he said.

## **DCBS Staff, Community Partners Honored**

*By Anya Armes Weber*

Several Department for Community Based Services employees and partners were honored Nov. 13 for their leadership and accomplishments during the past year.

The awards were presented at the DCBS Commissioner's Awards Banquet in Louisville. DCBS Commissioner Mark A. Washington praised employees for their dedication to Kentucky families.

"You want the same thing the department wants – individuals and families living healthier, happier, more productive lives," he said. "You want to see communities moving in a positive direction because

they are your communities, too. The successes we see in the office each day are a direct result of your energies and talents, but most of all, your heart.”

Vicki Blevins, a field services supervisor at South Central Neighborhood Place in Jefferson County, is the winner of the first April Vandeventer Award for supervisors. Vandeventer, a former DCBS deputy commissioner, died last year after a battle with breast cancer. Vandeventer’s husband, David, was at the ceremony to help present awards to Blevins and the other nominees for the award.

Carol Robertson, a social service aide in McLean County, is the first recipient of the Boni Frederick Award for an exemplary social service aide. Frederick was a Morganfield social services aide who died in the line of duty last October.

Justin “Jay” Miller, a social services worker in Jefferson County, won the Paul T. Grannis Award for exemplary service in the social services worker series, or a supervisor with direct service experience, and serves as a reminder of the dangers staff routinely face.

Darlene Staniford, a family support specialist in Lawrence County, was named winner of the Sheila G. Eckler award for exemplary service in the Family Support Worker series.

The Partners in Prevention Most Valuable Player Award went to Ruth Huebner, child welfare researcher and manager of the Information and Quality Improvement Branch.

### **CHFS Staff Attorney Honored**

Gretchen Hunt, a staff attorney for the CHFS Division of Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Services, recently received the annual Leadership Award presented by the Kentucky Women’s Law Enforcement Network (KWLEN). Hunt accepted the award at a luncheon during the annual KWLEN conference Nov. 15 at Louisville’s Marriott East Hotel.

The KWLEN Leadership Award recognizes extraordinary achievement and commitment to women in law enforcement.

“The Cabinet for Health and Family Services should be proud of Gretchen. She’s a great asset to our state,” said Kathy Eigelbach, president of the network.

Eigelbach said Hunt was chosen for the award based on her work and accomplishments on behalf of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking, especially her work with the immigrant community. Hunt organized and chairs Kentucky’s first Human Trafficking Task Force, made up of representatives from the law enforcement, social services, government, business and advocacy communities.

Hunt was commended for her efforts to promote human trafficking training for law enforcement and court officials; encouraging greater trust and communication among and across professional fields and citizen communities; and raising awareness of the human, social and economic costs of human trafficking. Hunt also was recognized for her leadership in the passage of state legislation criminalizing human trafficking.

Sharon Hilborn, director of the Division of Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Services, said Hunt is a tireless and dedicated advocate on behalf of vulnerable and at-risk women.

“Gretchen’s professional experience has made her keenly aware of the valuable, and often dangerous, work law enforcement officers do to protect victims of violence and abuse and bring perpetrators to justice,” Hilborn said.

Accepting the award, Hunt praised the KWLEN as a leader on behalf of women officers and victims statewide.

“By offering training on human trafficking, supporting local human trafficking task forces and nurturing partnerships with non-law enforcement agencies like CHFS, the network is making a meaningful difference in the lives of thousands of women, children and families in Kentucky,” she said. “I’m honored to have been chosen for this award.”

### Meeting Evaluates Kentucky’s Public Health Epidemiologic Capacity

On Nov. 15, the Division of Epidemiology and Health Planning in the Kentucky Department for Public Health hosted a meeting on Building Epidemiologic Capacity in Kentucky (BECKY). The annual event, held at the Transportation Cabinet, was started in 2005 and has continued for the past two years in an effort to bring together many different organizations that are invested and interested in increasing the ability to identify, investigate, respond to, and evaluate success of public health interventions in Kentucky.

This year’s meeting reported on the progress of the group in the development and pursuit of initiatives that were discussed during the first and second year meetings, including:

- Evaluating a baseline for epidemiologic capacity in Kentucky.
- Beginning a process for standardizing epidemiology jobs.
- Collaborating with the state’s four university schools of public health and public health agencies.
- Beginning a mentoring process for epidemiologists and other public health professionals in the state.
- Building on other networks for collaboration to bring non-communicable disease epidemiology into the capacity-building process.
- Improving deficiencies in the electronic Disease Surveillance Module (DSM), the surveillance system used in Kentucky to report all reportable diseases.

In addition to progress reports from each of the initiatives, participants were broken into groups to discuss a variety of topics related to the initiatives. Many innovative ideas were produced from these sessions and will be used in planning during 2008.

More than 60 participants attended the one-day event from a variety of organizations, including representatives of the state health department, local health departments and major universities in Kentucky.

Doug Thoroughman, a CDC Career Epidemiology Field Officer assigned to DPH, created BECKY and is working to establish it for the long term.

“We had great momentum at this meeting, and participants agreed that this is an effort benefiting Kentucky and should keep going,” Thoroughman said. A steering committee will be created to assist Thoroughman with the continued strategy of bringing together key players from across the state each year to brainstorm and implement new ideas.

### **Living Well: Holiday Reminders**

The festivities of the holidays are sometimes dampened by the unspoken fact that a majority of the population will gain anywhere from 2 to 8 pounds during the holiday season. This simple fact is widely known. Yet many people tend to ignore the known trends and declare to lose the added weight starting Jan. 1, in the New Year.

Instead of accepting that added weight gain, take a step back from the feeding frenzy and stick with what we know works. Many of us will search for the best diet or exercise to keep the weight off. The reality is there is not a “best” exercise to lose or maintain weight. The best way to lose or maintain your weight is through actual exercise and controlling your diet.

As far as your diet, consume nutritious foods and recommended portion sizes. This is not the time to declare war on your weight and deprive yourself of treats you have been waiting for all year. Embrace the holiday season by enjoying the holiday foods, but be careful not to overindulge. Most importantly, maintain your physical activity.

While this advice is not new, a refresher course in holiday eating may prove helpful. If you do not have a plan of action and are not planning to diet, *Good Housekeeping* magazine features some surprising slim-down tricks for those who may wish to carry out a do-nothing diet.

- Get a good night’s rest.
- Turn off the radio.
- Never skip a meal.
- Get some sun.
- Don’t store cookies or other treats in glass jars.
- Set the fork down after every bite.
- Lose the anger.

A study conducted by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute at Stanford University revealed that the less you sleep, the less leptin (a powerful hormone) your body produces. Leptin promotes weight loss by sending messages to the brain that actually discourage you from eating, and it also reminds you to expend energy. Those who suffer from a consistent amount of sleep loss have actually been proven to carry more of the hormone ghrelin, which is associated with stimulating your appetite. If for some reason you do not get the recommended amount of sleep, don’t panic. Just try to squeeze in a short nap the following day. These hormones are affected by how much sleep we get in a 24-hour period.

**Never skip a meal.** A skipped meal will not save you big numbers in terms of calories, but it will leave you more likely to gobble up anything and everything you can find. Also, depriving yourself of the nourishment your body needs will only send warning messages to your body to conserve, and your metabolism will slow down, making it harder for you to lose weight.

**Get some sun.** The sun not only provides you with Vitamin D that aids in the absorption of calcium, but it also produces the feel-good hormone serotonin. Serotonin is said to lessen food cravings for sugar and

other carbohydrates. So researchers suggest that instead of giving into your next sweet craving, expose your body to some sunlight, even during the winter months. In addition, make it a point to have drapes and shutters open during the day for a little added sunlight in your life.

**Where to keep your cookies?** A study by experts at Cornell University determined that women ate more Hershey's Kisses when the candies were on their desk in plain site versus when they were in an opaque container or placed farther away. This study just reinforces the saying "out of sight, out of mind." Remove unnecessary temptation.

**Put down that fork.** Putting your fork down after every bite will help bridge the gap between the stomach and the brain. It takes approximately 20 minutes for your stomach to send a signal to the brain to alert you that it's full. As a result, those who eat quickly are not giving their body enough time to communicate with itself, which often results in overeating. Another option is to switch out your everyday conventional fork, knife and spoon for chopsticks. The use of chopsticks will cut down the size of each bite and, due to the technical skills needed to use them, it will slow down the pace you normally would consume a meal.

**Lose the anger.** Food tends to serve several purposes, but for many of us it is to soothe some type of emotion. Anger tends to be the most recognized in terms of your body weight. If anger or chronic stress is a normal feeling during the day, the stress hormone cortisol is often elevated. This hormone is known to cause weight gain, with consistent feelings of anger or stress adding pounds directly to the waistline. This plays an important role in your overall health. Many people with elevated cortisol levels have body types that have been documented to increase their risk of disease.

The perfect "tip" list to keep you from gaining weight during the holiday season doesn't really exist. But by focusing on what we know works, we can enjoy the holidays without having to enlist in boot camp as a New Year's resolution. Maintain a nutritious diet and limit those tasty treats. Also, remember to schedule regular and consistent physical activity into your day, even if it means committing to using the stairs instead of the escalator. We hope these easy tips will help guide you through a healthy holiday season.

## **Personnel Cabinet Launches New Career Opportunities System**

### *New Online System Makes Searching and Applying for State Jobs Easier*

The Personnel Cabinet has launched a new online employment system, Career Opportunities System (COS). This new system benefits applicants, Commonwealth agencies, and the Personnel Cabinet in many ways.

COS will allow applicants to:

- Create, view and update their employment application and personal information online.
- Apply for vacant positions via the Internet at any time and eliminate the need to travel to Frankfort.
- Electronically search for job vacancies and be notified by e-mail of vacancies for which they may want to apply.

COS will allow agencies to:

- Develop job postings that target specific knowledge, skills, and abilities they are looking for in an applicant.
- Receive registers consisting of qualified, interested applicants.
- View applicants' information online.
- Conduct electronic searches of applicant information for desired/required skills, education and experience.
- Have online approval functionality for the hiring process.

COS will allow the Personnel Cabinet to:

- Work closely with the hiring agencies to develop job postings that target specific knowledge, skills and abilities that agencies are looking for in a candidate.
- Continue to qualify candidates for job classifications.
- Have the ability to conduct an electronic search of candidate information based on desired/required skills, education and experience to produce a better register of candidates for the requesting agency.
- Have expanded reporting ability.

For more information about COS, go to the Personnel Cabinet's COS Web page at <http://personnel.ky.gov/employment/>. You'll find links to a five-minute COS Overview, a list of frequently asked questions, a step-by-step application tutorial, and Live Help, where a customer service representative is available to answer your questions.

### Nurses Act as MMQA Liaisons

The Department for Medicaid Services (KyHealth Choices) Division of Medical Management and Quality Assurance (MMQA) has eight regional nurses throughout the state serving approximately 15 counties per region.

The nurses serve the Medicaid members and providers in their local communities by acting as a liaison with the Frankfort office. Most recently, they have been involved with the Diabetes Centers of Excellence by hosting health fairs at these locations. Several of the regional nurses also are active members of the Kentucky Diabetes Network.

MMQA has promoted a Diabetes Disease Management Program for the past two years, following 214 Diabetes Medicaid members in two pilot counties (Bell and Floyd). The regional nurses in these areas provide member and provider education, coordinate medical services for Medicaid members, collect member data for review, and are MMQA's eyes and ears across Kentucky. The services they provide our members and providers are invaluable.

### **Employee Enrichment**

*By Anya Armes Weber*

When you're making a written argument, try to keep your emotions in check. You can be effective without being extremely dramatic, writes William Vesterman in "Reading and Writing Short Arguments." Readers can get annoyed with absolute terms like "without a doubt" and "with all certainty" and search for small faults within your case. Rather than directly telling your readers how you feel, use figurative language to make your emotional appeal positively and more subtly.