

March 3, 2008

## Social Services Staff Speaks Out during Social Work Month

*By Anya Armes Weber*

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

In observance of this month, we asked social services staff around the state to tell us how they became involved in social work, what helps them do their jobs and what has been most rewarding.

Look for responses in the Focus each week this month.

### **Karen McKiernan** **Child specific recruiter, Jefferson County**

I would say that my greatest inspiration came from my parents, Bob and Shirley Swindler.

They were foster parents for the Cabinet while I was growing up. They started doing this when I was 7 years old, and they retired from foster parenting after I was married. In fact, they cared for my first baby and a foster baby at the same time!

They fostered more than 40 children throughout their years of service. I loved being the “big sister” to all my foster brothers and sisters. I played with them, loved and cared for them, got attached to them and watched them leave.

Most of the children transitioned from our home into an adoptive home, so that made us happy (although we felt sad for ourselves because we knew we would miss them).

The first foster child we had stayed for five years, but then returned to her birth mother. That was hard. Her name was Lisa. She came back to live with us as a teenager, and again as a young adult. We still keep in touch.

My parents love the fact that we are able to stay in contact with many of the children who lived with us. We love seeing how they turned out! That is a real pleasure. It is wonderful to think of the positive impact we had on their lives. They seem grateful for it, just as we are thankful for having the opportunity to know them.

I think my parents were the best foster parents ever! They always treated every foster child as their own. My parents are my inspiration. They taught me the true meaning of “family.” My parents just celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary.

I have been a social worker for 22 years, and you can see how it all started. I found my niche working in adoptions. I am the child specific recruiter and SNAP regional contact for Jefferson County. I am the coordinator for featuring our SNAP children on Wednesday’s Child on WLKY-32.

### **Kentucky Social Work Chapter Hosting Seminar, Rally**

*By Anya Armes Weber*

The Kentucky chapter of the National Association for Social Workers (NASW) is sponsoring several events in Frankfort this month.

To recognize Social Work Month, NASW-KY will sponsor several events on Tuesday, March 18. All are open to the public, but some require fees for nonmembers.

The day kicks off at 8 a.m. with a breakfast at the Capital Plaza Hotel, 405 Wilkinson Blvd.

Dr. Nancy A. Humphreys, director of the Nancy A. Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work at the University of Connecticut School of Social

March 3, 2008

Work, will speak at the breakfast. Humphreys, a past president of the NASW, will address the Social Work Reinvestment Initiative (SWRI). The goal of the SWRI is to secure federal and state funding to recruit new social workers, retain current social workers, retrain experienced social workers and reinvest in the profession of social work.

This event is free for NASW-KY members and \$25 for nonmembers.

At 1 p.m., the public is invited to a rally at the Capitol rotunda where CHFS Cabinet Secretary Janie Miller will speak.

The final event of the day is a legislative reception at 5 p.m. at Buffalo Trace, 1001 Wilkinson Blvd. The event is free for members and \$25 for nonmembers.

To register for the breakfast or the event at Buffalo Trace, please contact Toni Joyce at (502) 895- 3715 or [tjoyce@naswky.org](mailto:tjoyce@naswky.org).

Also as part of Social Work Month, NASW-KY has sponsored its first billboard. The display, which emphasizes the experience of social workers, is on U.S. Route 127 in Frankfort.

### **Valentine Tree Promotes Adoption Awareness**

*By Anya Armes Weber*

The Department for Community Based Services' Salt River Region continues to promote adoption in a unique way.

Led by Special Needs Adoption Program coordinator Trish Woods, staff there created a Valentine Adoption Awareness Tree to promote the need for loving permanent families for area children who await adoption. The effort is an extension of the group's Holiday Adoption Awareness Tree.

"Because we have no extra money for recruitment right now, this is a low-cost way to get the word out," Woods said.

The white tree features heart-shaped ornaments with pictures of and information about children awaiting adoption. Adoption information is also included.

The display was recently featured at the Hardin County Public Library and will be moved to the Elizabethtown Community College.

Woods says she is enthusiastic to continue the project for other seasonal events and schedule more locations in her region's 17-county area.

"This is something I hope to do more and plan to contact more businesses in advance for the rest of the year or for next year," she said.

Woods' next themed tree will be for St. Patrick's Day and will feature shamrock-shaped ornaments.

Woods is also considering themed trees for the Kentucky Derby, Independence Day, back-to-school time and Halloween.

### **UK Sponsors Event for Social Work Month**

*By Anya Armes Weber*

The University of Kentucky's College of Social Work is co-sponsoring a day's worth of events in commemoration of Social Work Month.

"A Colloquium on Peace, Social Justice, and Reconciliation: Linking Social Work to the Global Community" is scheduled for Thursday, March 6, in Lexington.

The event begins at 7:15 a.m. with the Reconciliation Breakfast at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

March 3, 2008

At the breakfast, Isabel Taylor, multicultural affairs coordinator for Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government, will speak on "Diversity and Reconciliation in Lexington." And Lexington [Mayor Jim Newberry](#) will deliver a "reconciliation proclamation."

The Drum Major for Peace awards will be presented at the breakfast. These awards, presented for the fourth year, will be presented to three individuals and an organization that have contributed to the Lexington community through reconciliation and peacemaking acts.

From 1 to 3 p.m. in the W.T. Young Library Auditorium, Fulbright Scholar [Samuel Totten](#) will present a free public lecture on genocide in Darfur. Totten is a professor at the University of Arkansas and a member of the Council of the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide and the Centre for Genocide Studies.

The UK College of [Social Work](#) will host a reception at 3 p.m. in the William T. Young Library gallery. International students will introduce videos featuring various sociological issues in their home countries, and international cuisine will be served.

Other sponsors of the day's events are the Lexington Fayette Urban County Government, the Lexington Commission on Race Relations, the University of Kentucky Office of International Affairs, Humanitarian, Lexington Human Rights Commission and Habitat for Humanity.

### **Governor Proclaims March Sexual Assault Awareness Month**

Governor Steve Beshear last week proclaimed March Sexual Assault Awareness Month at a ceremony in the Capitol Rotunda.

"One of every nine adult women in Kentucky has been a victim of forcible rape sometime in

her life," Gov. Beshear said. "That's more than 175,000 of our mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, friends and neighbors - 175,000 too many."

During the observance kick-off event, four programs were honored for their role in preventing or reducing the impact of sexual assault in Kentucky. The Cabinet and the Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs jointly sponsored the ceremony.

"Sexual assault costs the United States \$127 billion every year in medical care, mental health services, lost productivity and related expenses," said CHFS Secretary Janie Miller. "The programs we honor today are models for ways communities and rape crisis programs can and must work together to educate, inform and end the violence."

For more information about sexual assault programs and services and Sexual Assault Awareness Month, please visit <http://chfs.ky.gov/dhss/cadv/> or [www.kasap.org](http://www.kasap.org).

To hear a Sexual Assault Awareness Month audio public service announcement produced by CHFS Division of Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Services and the Division of Communications, please go to <http://chfs.ky.gov/dhss/cadv/>.

### **National Nutrition Month: Fact vs. Fiction**

It's never been easy to sort through the facts and fallacies about food, and marketing ploys, clever phrases, wishful thinking, pseudo-science, media hype and celebrity testimonials don't help. Here are some common and enduring food myths:

**Myth:** Fresh fruits and vegetables are healthier than frozen or canned.

**Fact:** Research shows frozen and canned foods are as nutritious as fresh. In fact, because lycopene is more easily absorbed in the body

March 3, 2008

after it has been processed, canned tomatoes, corn and carrots are sometimes better nutrition choices.

**Myth:** Body weight is a reliable indicator of a healthful diet.

**Fact:** No two people have the same body composition. The measure of a person's diet and your overall health is a combination of factors, including weight.

**Myth:** Eating carbohydrates causes weight gain.

**Fact:** Calories cause weight gain. Excess carbohydrates are no more fattening than calories from any source. Despite the claims of low-carb diet books, a high-carbohydrate diet does not promote fat storage by enhancing insulin resistance.

**Myth:** Eating just before bedtime is fattening.

**Fact:** What you eat, not when, makes the difference. Calories have the same effect on the body no matter when they're consumed. Evidence does suggest that eating regular meals, especially breakfast, helps promote weight loss by reducing fat intake and minimizing impulsive snacking.

**Myth:** Eating sugar causes diabetes.

**Fact:** Diabetes is caused by a lack of insulin in the body. Because foods that are high in sugar are often high in calories, overeating those foods can lead to weight gain. Research shows people who are overweight and obese are at increased risk for diabetes.

**Myth:** Occasionally following a fad diet is a safe way to quickly lose weight.

**Fact:** Many fad diets are developed by people with no science or health background, so some fad diets can even be considered harmful to people with certain health problems. When trying to lose weight, consult a registered dietitian.

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### **Living Well: Exercise at Your Desk**

Exercising at work may be awkward or inconvenient. But compare it to the absolute worst thing we could do – not moving at all – and it's not so bad. Not moving often leads to weight gain, but remaining sedentary in your work space can also lead to stiffness, aches and pains. Follow these 12 simple stretching exercises to ward off pain and stiffness during and after your workday.

**Stand up and sit down without using your hands or your desk.** This is not a race, and no one is keeping track of how many times you do this or how fast. Once you become confident with this motion, you can multitask by doing it while you are on the phone - no one will know.

### **Exchange your desk chair for an exercise ball.**

The exercise ball will force you to use those postural muscles and may even relieve low back pain. If you try this, slowly work up to using the ball all day. Start with 20 to 30 minutes and then gradually increase the amount of time that you use the exercise ball. Also, be sure that you purchase a ball that is designed for your height.

**Shoulder shrugs.** Take breaks and inhale deeply while you shrug your shoulders (draw them up toward your ears). Briefly hold them up and then release while you exhale. Repeat this motion three or more times.

**Arm circles.** Raise arms out to the sides at shoulder level. Do small arm circles forward and then back. After the circles, shake out the arms and hands.

**Clench your fists.** Stretch your arms out in front of you and clench and relax your hands. Repeat this three times, and then shake out your hands.

March 3, 2008

**Torso twists.** Use your chair to rotate to each side holding the rotation for a few seconds. Maintain good posture during the rotation. Repeat on the opposite side.

**Leg exercises.** Hold on to the seat of your chair while lifting and extending one leg so it is parallel to the floor. Hold the leg up and slowly flex and point the toes five times. Maintain your posture, and repeat on the opposite leg.

**Upper back stretch.** Sit up tall in your chair, cross your arms and give yourself a big hug. Inhale and exhale several times, allowing the area between your shoulder blades to relax.

**Arm cross.** Take one arm and stretch it across your body use the opposite arm to increase the stretch by holding it above or below the elbow joint. Also, keep the stretch down below the shoulder line. Repeat on the opposite side.

**Back and shoulder stretch.** Sit on the edge of your chair (if your chair is on wheels, wedge the chair against the desk or a wall to make sure it does not roll). Place your feet together and slowly lean forward so that your chest falls toward your knees and let your arms dangle loosely toward the floor. Sit back up while maintaining a straight back. Repeat this three or more times.

**Upper body release.** While either sitting or standing, raise your arms above your head and intertwine your fingers. Turn your palms to the ceiling and reach up enough to extend the arms. After the arms are up, lift the chin and look at the ceiling.

Pick all or a few of these exercises and set a reminder on your computer or cell phone alarm for every hour to remind you to take a short break to get up and stretch. Relieve those everyday aches and pains, and start feeling more energized.

## CHFS Health Tip of the Week

### Get Screened: Do Your Part to Prevent Colon Cancer

If you are 50 years old or older, it's time to be screened for colon cancer.

That's the message the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) is sending Kentuckians in March as part of National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. Anyone who falls into this age group, or has a family history of the disease, should talk to a health care provider about colon cancer screening.

"Colon cancer is second only to lung cancer as a cause of cancer-related death in the United States, but it doesn't have to be," said DPH Commissioner William D. Hacker, M.D. "If everybody age 50 or older had regular screening tests, thousands of deaths from this cancer could be avoided."

According to DPH, colon cancer is 85 to 95 percent curable when found early, underscoring the need for preventive health exams like the fecal occult blood test, flexible sigmoidoscopy or the colonoscopy. The screening will find any abnormalities or early signs of cancer, like polyps. When detected early, polyps in the colon, which often develop into cancer, can be easily removed during an outpatient procedure.

Both men and women are at risk of developing colorectal cancer and should be screened. However, DPH data shows that only 50 percent of Kentuckians who should have screening tests have had them. Kentucky also has a higher than average population with increased risk of colon cancer due to higher rates of obesity, diets high in fat and lack of regular exercise.

According to DPH, screening is particularly important to prevention of colon cancer because the disease can have no symptoms. When

March 3, 2008

symptoms do develop at a later stage of the cancer, they may include blood in the stool, cramping in the abdomen, changes in bowel habits and unexplained weight loss.

Individual risk for colorectal cancer may be higher than average if you or a close relative have had colorectal polyps or colorectal cancer, or if you have inflammatory bowel disease, according to DPH.