

Focus Holiday Stories

Department Sees Family's Progress

Submitted By Heather Bivens, DBHDID

Every year, the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DBHDID) donates food baskets to families who utilize the Sunshine Center in Frankfort. Families are sponsored at Thanksgiving and Christmas. The Sunshine Center provides a safe and nurturing environment for families in need from Franklin and surrounding counties by offering parenting classes, supervised visitations, domestic violence services and more.

The past couple of years, DBHDID has sponsored a family with children who have developmental and intellectual disabilities (severe fetal alcohol syndrome). It has been a positive and rewarding experience to directly assist this family who deals with some of the issues DBHDID employees see on a daily basis. The family isn't a part of our program, but we've been able to give them information on our programs and services that could possibly help them in the future. We've sponsored this same family for several years and have seen the growth and changes in the children.

Buying and wrapping presents is a joint effort throughout the department. Then, a few employees deliver the gifts to the family. These employees get to see how excited the children are when the gifts arrive. This family is in a position this year that they may not need our assistance with Thanksgiving or Christmas next year. Employees find it really rewarding to know that we have helped the family through hard times and now they are getting back on their feet.

Glasgow State Nursing Facility Helping Hands

Submitted by Kathy Ford, GSNF

Glasgow State Nursing Facility (GSNF) is a 100-bed nursing facility operated by the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DBHDID) in Barren County. This is a busy time of year around GSNF as we participate in community events and do our part to make residents' holidays bright.

This holiday season, GSNF participated in the Coats for the Commonwealth drive and collected approximately 20 coats for Goodwill Industries. We are also collecting new toys for the Marine Corps' Toys for Tots to be distributed to children in the community. Last year, we collected more than 50 toys and hope to exceed that number this year. GSNF staff also manned the red kettle and rang the bells for the Salvation Army at Kmart in Glasgow on Dec. 14. This money is used by the Salvation Army to help people in need. Staff of GSNF also hosted pictures with Santa on Dec. 16 and 17 for people who are unable to pay for mall pictures with Santa. Several of our nurse aides donate their time and resources to take pictures with Santa and distribute candy canes to children in the community.

For the past nine years, the staff has sponsored an angel tree for our residents. Staff members and volunteers take an angel and buy presents for Santa to distribute at our Christmas party and on Christmas morning, bringing smiles to the faces of residents and staff alike.

The staff at GSNF knows the joy of giving and helping others. We wish each of you a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Scarves Warm Hearts of Contributors

Submitted by Kathy Green, DCBS

For the past six years, the disc jockeys at ZROCK 103.3 in Lexington live in a trailer in a parking lot for a week as a holiday fund-raiser for local charities. This year, they collected food, clothes, toys and cash for God's Pantry, Toys for Tots and The Nest.

I have helped with food donations in past years, but this year I wanted to do something that would impact more people. I sent an e-mail in April to Twitch, the morning DJ and host of the Twitch Morning Show, and pledged 100 handmade knitted and crocheted scarves. I knew that I could make them all, but it would take a lot of time. So I put a call for help out to my co-workers at the Department for Community Based Services Creative Drive office in Lexington. Several of them agreed to help me with this project.

We met our deadline and had a total of 104 scarves. On Nov. 19, I delivered the items. The scarves went to The Nest, a center for women, children and families.

The women involved were: Hannah Holden (interpreter), Susan Dominguez (administrative, Central Intake, Lexington), Barbara Hurt (administrative, Family Support, Lexington), Vickie Prater (Family Support Specialist, Lexington), Clarizza Singayao (Internal Policy Analyst, Frankfort), *Melissa Arnett (TAP worker, Lexington), Bobbie Ritchie (Susan Dominguez's mother) and myself, Kathy Green (Family Support Specialist II, Family Care Center).

Read more about the radio station's fund-raiser at <http://www.twitchradio.com>. If you are interested in helping out for next year, please e-mail Kathy at Kathleen.green@ky.gov. We have already started working on our donations for next year.

Lawrence County P and P Goes Extra Mile for Clients

Submitted by Heather Harrison

In 2009, almost a decade into the millennium, it is hard to believe that there are children here in the state of Kentucky who have no idea what it means to have a Christmas tree, presents from Santa and your parents, or a warm meal on Christmas Day. However, here in the heart of the mountains of Eastern Kentucky, Lawrence County Protection and Permanency has set out to make sure that 50 of our in-home Child Protective Services case families have the Christmas of their dreams. That may sound like a small number of families, but in the 50 families, there are 127 children. How can seven social workers, two supervisors and one office support aide manage

this task? The answer is with the help of 80 community partners who have turned out in force to show support and provide a Christmas for these children.

The amount of support provided by the citizens and businesses of Louisa has been overwhelming. Lawrence County Sheriff Garret Roberts has promised 30 children from these DCBS families \$100 each through his Shop with a Cop Program. The County Attorney's office, headed up by Mike Hogan, went out of its way collecting donations and reaching into their own pockets to help with the cause. The local attorneys who practice in Judge Janie Wells' Family Court have donated hundreds of dollars to support the children for whom they advocate. Wal-Mart is an ever-present sponsor of this agency's efforts, and Bob Poole must be commended for all of his efforts. Many other contributors will be recognized in our local paper.

On Dec. 17, the families we are helping were treated to a Christmas celebration. This party included donated refreshments for the families. Mr. and Mrs. Claus made an appearance and read the children "Twas the Night before Christmas" before the children received gifts and had pictures taken with Santa. There were door prizes for the adults, including a space heater, tool sets and lots of other goodies. But most importantly, every family walked out of the party with a gift box containing a complete Christmas dinner with all the trimmings and presents to put under the tree with the "From" space to be filled out by the families. It's a truly magical Christmas for the DCBS staff, community partners and DCBS families who attended the party.

SLTCOP Initiates Silver Bells Project to Care for Nursing Home Residents, Raise Awareness

This holiday season marks the launch of the State Long Term Care Ombudsman Program's (SLTCOP) Silver Bells Project. This project accomplishes two goals: to provide holiday gifts to nursing home residents, and raise public awareness about the SLTCOP and how it serves as an advocate for nursing home residents and their families.

More than 60 percent of nursing home residents never receive a visitor. This is a painful and unnecessary daily reality for those residents.

"The Kentucky SLTCOP has adopted the motto of 'No Elder Forgotten.' This project is a step in ensuring that very message," said Kimberly Baker, Kentucky State Long Term Care Ombudsman.

During the holiday season, residents' loneliness and sense of abandonment is further intensified, due to the overwhelming holiday "hype" that portrays family and community connection and celebration as a central theme to having a "successful" holiday.

"The Silver Bells project further seeks to raise awareness with younger generations by engaging them in creating ornaments, and sharing stories of elders in their family, school and community," added Baker.

The SLTCOP and Kentucky Initiative for Quality (KYIQ), a grassroots advocacy organization dedicated to raising nursing home standards and ensuring the quality and dignity of every resident's life, recognized residents' struggle with getting through the holidays. Together they have created and implemented the Silver Bells Project in response to residents' needs.

Ten of the 15 Kentucky District Long Term Care Ombudsman Programs (DLTCOP) have initiated Silver Bells projects. The project mirrors the Salvation Army's Angel Tree Project. Residents' first names and the items they need or want are collected and listed on a "Silver Bell" ornament. DLTCOs have set up Christmas trees in public areas and hung the Silver Bells on the trees. DLTCOs are partnering with local stores such as Walgreens and Tuesday Morning to set up the trees in these locations. They are also partnering with local community groups such as the Elder Abuse Council, Legal Aid and Area Development District offices, as well as holiday bazaar and craft showcases, to set up trees in a variety of settings. The DLTCOs instruct participants about where to bring purchased items. The DLTCOs take responsibility for wrapping, tagging and delivering the gifts to the nursing homes for distribution during Christmas celebrations.

Several of the DLTCOs have been very creative with the Silver Bells Project. In the Big Sandy District, DLTCO Misty Pugh has partnered with a local elementary school, where the children in kindergarten through fifth grade are making the Silver Bells for the Big Sandy tree. Pugh sent a letter out to the students' parents explaining the project and the SLTCOP. Pugh also took pictures of the children participating and sent the pictures along with an article to the local newspaper, which published the story.

In the Northern Kentucky District, DLTCO Pam Pangburn has her Silver Bells trees up in Walgreens and Tuesday Morning stores. Then Pangburn also got Jared The Galleria of Jewelry to donate teddy bears for the project. Pangburn gives the teddy bears to nursing homes where the bears are used as prizes for bingo games. Pangburn said the teddy bears are getting residents out of their rooms and "getting in the game" so they can win one. To date, 155 teddy bears have been given to eight Northern Kentucky nursing homes, and there are more to come!

KYIQ and the Bluegrass District are working together on the Lexington-area Silver Bells Project. Together they have collected 576 names and are working diligently to provide for them all.

The Pennyrile DLTCO, Randa Ramsey, has organized a project similar to Silver Bells for several years. The number of residents she serves has grown each year. This year, Ramsey has 216 names. More than 100 have already been taken and provided for.

SLTCOP and KYIQ information is made available at the tree sites. The information enlightens the general public about the two organizations, and how they can assist residents and families with nursing home issues.

Both the SLTCO and KYIQ are impressed by, and appreciative of, how the DLTCOs have taken ownership of the Silver Bells Project in its first year. The project is already a success, and the holiday has not yet arrived!

“It is our goal to expand this initiative to all 15 LTCO districts for Christmas 2010,” said Baker.

In addition, long-term care residents need visitors all year, not just during the holidays. A gift you can give freely all year long is to visit residents of your local nursing home. You can also join in the fun of working on such rewarding projects as the Silver Bells. Become a volunteer ombudsman by calling (800) 372-2991. Happy holidays!

Living Well: All or Nothing

Marathon runner or couch potato? These are definitely on the opposite sides of the activity spectrum, but many believe that exercise is an “all or nothing commitment.” In reality, most people fall somewhere in between the two. The answer is not to be on the outside of the spectrum, but to make small changes to increase your fitness level.

Improved fitness levels are achieved by minor behavior changes. In a recent article in the Lexington Herald-Leader, Dr. Peter Murphy in Sacramento, Calif., made a pledge to take the stairs instead of the elevator. He referenced it as his gesture for health, which stems from his profession as a pulmonologist specializing in breathing issues. Before making his pledge he had already fulfilled the “all” side by completing marathons and cycling legs of the Tour de France. The simple gesture of taking the steps versus the elevator may not seem like the most logical pledge to take since he is already an active person. Those with the “nothing” thought might actually tell him to take the elevator believing that after all of that activity he deserves a small break during the day. Even he admits that the elevator doors look attractive. But sticking to his commitment has allowed him to send the message that just taking the stairs or finding small ways to include just 30 minutes of activity in five days a week can be beneficial to our overall health.

If taking the stairs is not an option for you, try some of the following:

- Park your car at the end of the parking lot, farthest away from the entrance.
- Walk instead of driving a car whenever you can.
- Walk to a co-workers office to discuss work matters instead of calling or e-mailing.
- Walk up the escalator.
- Use your break time to walk.
- Combine household chores to result in continuous movement for 15-30 minutes.

Small behavior changes can lead to changes in our physical fitness, as well as our thoughts on exercise. We do not need to visit the gym for hours or pound the pavement. Instead, take a few minutes to identify small changes, commit to them and stick with it – no matter how attractive the alternative might appear. Take this challenge, and help others to discover that activity can be easily achieved and wipe out the “all or nothing” mentality.

Employee Enrichment

By Anya Armes Weber

The year is coming to an end, and it's a good time to evaluate your professional year. Here are some steps you can take for a self-review from job-search Web site Monster.com.

Consider the goals you set for this past year. Did you meet or surpass them? Did they change midyear? Assess what resources and partnerships made your work more manageable and what barriers made it more challenging.

Quantify your work. Count up the tasks you've completed. "Bean counting" may seem silly, but it is satisfying. And it helps explain how you spent your time. Does your list look meager? Now is the time to figure out why.

Review your "thank you's" and tokens of recognition. You can tell what you are doing right by your customers this way. If you don't keep a "kudos" file, start one for next year.

Spotlight your best work. Get "hard copies" of what you consider your shining moments of the year – even if it was part of a group project. Having something tangible can be very useful when you are explaining to others the kinds of things you can do.

Organize your self-review. Use a format that you can share with your supervisor. You'll show him or her that you're serious about developing your skills, and you will have something to refer to during your performance appraisal in January.