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Employee Profile: Heather Bivens, MHMR

This week, the Focus talked with Heather Bivens, an administrative specialist at the Department for Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services. Bivens has been with the state for six years.

How does your job allow you to impact the lives of your fellow Kentuckians? What's the best part of your job?



My job impacts the lives of my fellow Kentuckians by helping to ensure that those with intellectual and developmental disabilities live a rewarding life by ensuring they are involved in the local community in as many ways as they choose. Also, I help these individuals live as independently as they can by providing the supports needed. I know I am helping to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the people we serve.

The best part of my job is the people that I work with on a daily basis and the fact that we're all focusing on the same goal - ensuring people with mental disabilities get the supports they need and are taken care of and lead normal lives in their communities.

Bivens was the recent recipient of the Governor's Adult Innovation Award at the Governor's Annual Volunteer Awards. We asked her to tell us about that award.

The award that I was given was the Governor's Volunteer of the Year Award for Adult Innovation. My group and I - Helping Hands, Healing Hearts Inc., make small blanket bundles - small fleece tie blankets with a toy bundled in

it. The bundles are given to local police officers to use when they come in contact with a child during situations where the child needs security and comfort. Being nominated and actually winning was one of the most humbling experiences I've ever had. I didn't start this organization for the recognition. Being a private person, it was very humbling to be recognized with this award.

State Association Honors Hardin Social Services Clinician

By Anya Armes Weber

The Kentucky Foster Adoptive Care Association has named Hardin County social services worker Nicole Hunt as its Staff Person of the Year.



Hunt will be honored at the Foster Parent Appreciation reception May 18 at Frankfort's Kentucky History Center.

Hunt, a four-year veteran of the Department for Community Based Services, is a social services clinician and a member of the Hardin County recruitment and certification team. She works with foster and adoptive parents to ensure their homes are safe and suitable for placement of children who enter out-of-home care.

"I was amazed that I received an award for just doing my job," Hunt said. "It is an honor to be recognized with this award."

DCBS Commissioner Mark Washington said Hunt's everyday dedication deserves recognition.

"It's all too often that good work goes unnoticed," he said. "But for the families - particularly the children - whom Nicole assists, this good work is making a tremendous

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difference. I am grateful to social service workers like her who make transitions a lot less difficult for families.”

Families’ hectic lives often force Hunt to rearrange her plans, but she adapts.

“Each and every day brings a new experience,” she said. “I often have to reschedule appointments due to other events that occur without notice. I must be flexible and adapt to anything the day brings.”

Hunt said she is fortunate to have supportive co-workers and family “who make my job a lot easier.”

“I try to leave work each day with a feeling of accomplishment in hopes that I made a difference in someone’s life,” she said. “I also tell myself that I have done everything I can to advocate for the children or foster parents.”

Hunt lives in Elizabethtown with her husband, Xavier, and their 6-year-old daughter, Alexis.

DPH Provides Emergency Response Support at Kentucky Oaks and Derby

Unified effort strengthens overall response among agencies

Amid the parade of fancy hats, mint juleps and excitement of horse racing at Churchill Downs this past weekend for both the Kentucky Oaks and Derby, few individuals attending events probably thought of the possibility of a terrorist attack or large-scale emergency occurring at these popular venues. But officials from the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) were standing ready to respond to such a threat, as disasters are unpredictable and could strike at any second.

DPH’s Public Health Preparedness Branch worked in a coordinated effort with the Joint

Emergency Services Unit and the FBI’s Hazardous Materials Response Unit to provide emergency support and secure communications for these events.

“Working together with the Joint Emergency Services Unit, a multi-disciplinary team of officials from fields in public health, law enforcement and communications, is a tremendous opportunity for public health’s role in emergency response,” said Brad Learn, Chemical/Radiation Preparedness Coordinator for the Preparedness Branch. “We hope we will be given the opportunity to support important events like these in the future.”

Team members worked in the Mobile Operations Unit –1, an emergency response trailer equipped with interoperable wireless and satellite communications equipment and climate-controlled workspace.

“This is a valuable opportunity to increase public health’s overall response to emergencies,” said Richard Dugas, Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) coordinator for the Preparedness Branch. “Our response trailer allows DPH to coordinate the agency’s on-site response activities during a health and medical emergency, in addition to supporting both our partner agencies and the general public.”

The response trailer was purchased with federal grant funds to meet goals and benchmarks set forth in grant guidance.

The unit can be dispatched to assist with coordination during large-scale disasters, an outbreak of pandemic influenza or other public health emergencies.



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Louisville DDS Office Collects for Kids



Bears on Patrol is a cooperative effort between Kosair Charities and local law enforcement agencies to provide patrol cars with teddy bears and other stuffed animals. Officers throughout Kentucky and Southern Indiana use these stuffed animals and bears to comfort young children exposed to traumatic situations.

The Derby City Association of Disability Examiners sponsored a drive for the employees at the Department of Disability Determinations Louisville Branch the last three weeks in April, collecting new and gently used teddy bears and other stuffed animals for the Bears on Patrol program.

A contest was organized among sections to see who could bring in the most stuffed animals, with the winner receiving a pizza party. Our office, with about 100 staff, collected more than 1,500 stuffed animals.

Pictured, left to right, are: Suzanne Ferguson, Christina Kurvers, Prentice Spaulding, Deidre Meek and Elissa Hill.

Wellness Committee Sponsors Health Fair

The CHFS Wellness Committee will have its annual health fair Wednesday, May 9, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the CHR lobby. This health fair is for all employees. Employees may use one hour of work time to attend. It will also

mark the near-end of the employee physical activity challenge that concludes Saturday, May 12, at the GHK 5K Run/Walk.

Also, the committee is inviting you to observe National Employee Health and Fitness Day on May 16; and National Women's Health Week, May 13-19. The CHFS Worksite Wellness Committee is asking for your participation to help create an atmosphere that continues to encourage healthier lifestyles.

Questions or comments about these events may be directed to Wellness Committee Chairman Mike Schardein at mike.schardein@ky.gov; or CHFS Wellness Coordinator Kris Hayslett at kris.hayslett@ky.gov.

GHK 5Ks Set for May

Join the Governor's Office of Wellness and Physical Activity (GOWPA) for the Inaugural Get Healthy Kentucky 5K Run/Walk on May 12. A partnership with GOWPA and the YMCA, this event will take place at six locations across the state. This is an exciting collaboration that will help continue to promote health and wellness across the Commonwealth. For more information and to download the brochure, please visit www.gethealthy.ky.gov.

GHK 5K Participating YMCAs

Frankfort YMCA

Race Location: Kentucky State Capitol, 9 a.m.

Mail race forms to:

402 W. Broadway
Frankfort, KY 40601

Online registration:

<http://www.frankfortymca.org>

YMCA of Central Kentucky

In conjunction with the Arthritis Foundation

Race Location: Keeneland, 10:30 a.m.

Mail race forms to any Lexington YMCA or:
3251 Beaumont Centre Circle

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Lexington, KY 40513

Online registration:

<http://www.ymcaofcentralky.org> or
www.active.com

YMCA of Greater Louisville

Race Location: Iroquois Park, New Cut Drive, 9
a.m.

Mail race forms to any Louisville YMCA or:

545 South 2nd Street
Louisville, KY 40202

Online registration:

<http://www.ymcalouisville.org>

Wilderness Trace Family YMCA

Race Location: Mackville YMCA, 9 a.m.

Mail race forms to:

P.O. Box 68
10651 Main St.
Mackville, Ky 40040

Campbell County YMCA

Race Location: AJ Jolly Park, 9 a.m.

Mail race forms to:

1437 S. Ft. Thomas Ave.
Ft. Thomas, KY 41075

Owensboro Family YMCA

**In conjunction with the International
Barbecue**

Festival Committee

Race Location: 1208 Tamarack Road, 7:30 a.m.
CST

Mail race forms to:

900 Kentucky Pkwy.
Owensboro, KY 42301

Online registration:

<http://www.owensboroymca.org/>

Living Well: Focus on Fibromyalgia

By Kris Hayslett, Wellness Coordinator

On May 12, 2007, the National Fibromyalgia Association is launching its Fibromyalgia in Focus campaign. Fibromyalgia Syndrome or

FMS is a condition that affects seven to 10 million Americans, with women suffering more than men, 20 to 1. This syndrome is seen in all age groups, but it's most prominent in the 20s or 30s.

The symptoms of fibromyalgia are:

- Widespread pain
- Fatigue and sleep disturbances
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- Headaches and facial pain
- Heightened sensitivity
- Depression
- Numbness or tingling sensation in the hands and feet
- Difficulty concentrating
- Mood changes
- Chest pain
- Dry eyes, skin and mouth
- Painful menstrual periods
- Dizziness
- Anxiety

FMS cannot be determined by a simple diagnostic test such as a blood tests or an X-ray. This syndrome is often misdiagnosed or viewed as psychological by physicians. Currently, doctors do not know what causes fibromyalgia. However, some follow the theory called "central sensitization" which says that people with fibromyalgia have a lower threshold for pain due to an increased sensitivity in the brain. Researchers have concluded that repetitive nerve stimulation causes a change in the brain that results in this syndrome. These changes in the brain then keep a memory of those pain signals, causing them to overreact to the more common pain signals. The initial stimulus or initiation process of the central sensitization remains unknown. It's likely that not just one factor, but rather a number of the following factors may contribute to the development of FMS.

Possible causes:

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- Sleep disturbances
- Injury
- Infection
- Abnormalities of the autonomic (sympathetic) nervous system
- Changes in muscle metabolism
- Psychological stress
- Hormonal changes

The symptoms of FMS are best defined as lifelong chronic problems with varying intensities. Extensive studies have shown that FMS sufferers do not have arthritis, but do experience extreme, arthritic-like pain. Many people find the pain to be linked to repetitive physical activity. In some cases, the discomfort is so severe that many FMS patients limit their activity and exercise. The result is that many often become unconditioned which worsens the symptoms.

The treatment for FMS is a combination of medication and self-care. The overall goal is to minimize the symptoms and improve general health. Common medications are:

- Analgesics. Acetaminophen, anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin, or ibuprofen or Naproxen sodium
- Antidepressants
- Muscle relaxants
- Anticonvulsants - drugs approved to treat epilepsy have shown some effectiveness in people with chronic pain
- Cognitive behavior therapy
- Treatment programs
- Self-care

Aside from dealing with the chronic pain, most FMS sufferers must also deal with the frustration of having a condition that is often misunderstood. The National Fibromyalgia Association is helping to educate others and reaching out to FMS patients to let them know they are not alone. If you know someone who

suffers from fibromyalgia, the best thing you can do is become educated about the condition to support him or her in this lifelong battle.

For more information about fibromyalgia, visit the NFA's Web site at <http://www.fmaware.org/>.

Frankfort Parks to Host Tennis Tournament

The Frankfort Parks and Recreation Department will host the Third Annual American Founders Bank Spring Swing Classic tennis tournament May 18-20 at Franklin County High School in Frankfort.

The tournament is an open format for players of any age or skill level. There will be men's and women's A and B divisions in singles, doubles and mixed doubles. Registration forms are available at the Parks Office at Juniper Hills and any branch of American Founders Bank.

Entry fee is \$20 for singles and \$25 for doubles teams. Trophies will be awarded for champions and runner-up.

For more information, contact the parks office at 875-8575 or John Arnett, tennis director for Frankfort Parks, at 695-4160.

CHFS Health Tip of the Week

May Marks Asthma Awareness Month

World Asthma Day on May 1 kicked off the month-long observance of World Asthma Month, an opportunity for the Department for Public Health to remind you about the dangers of the disease.

Asthma is a chronic pulmonary condition in which the airways become blocked or narrowed when stimulated by allergens or other environmental triggers. People with asthma may have difficulty breathing and experience coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath.

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Asthma has had a tremendous impact in Kentucky. Currently, asthma affects more than 8 percent of Kentucky adults; 22 percent of Kentucky's high school students have asthma; and 21 percent of middle school students have been diagnosed with asthma. Thirty-six percent of all asthma hospitalizations in Kentucky are for children, and:

- For children 5 to 17, asthma is the leading cause of school absenteeism.
- Asthma is the third leading cause of hospitalizations in the United States.
- Every day in America, 40,000 people miss work or school because of asthma.
- Every day, 14 people in the United States die because of asthma.

Health care professionals recommend an asthma action plan including asthma triggers; instructions for medications; planning for asthma attacks and knowing when to call a health care provider; and keeping emergency phone numbers on hand. To learn more about asthma and combating some of its triggers, visit the Environmental Protection Agency's Web site <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/asthma/about.html>.

For more information about asthma or controlling asthma triggers, visit <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/ach/asthma.htm> or consult your health care professional.

Employee Enrichment

By Anya Armes Weber

May is Employee Appreciation Month, an appropriate time to celebrate workplace successes.

Mark Newton, a writer for the Gwinnett Business Journal, notes the No. 1 reason for employee dissatisfaction is not feeling appreciated. Celebrating employee

accomplishments can do wonders for staff morale. Newton lists the following specific benefits of office celebrations.

They encourage teamwork. Staff trying to reach a certain goal – the actual task and the resulting celebration - know they have to work together to get there.

They help employees feel more successful. People like being associated with winners. Making a group feel like winners will instill them with confidence and give their customers the sense that they are in good hands.

They motivate. Rewarding accomplishments is an incentive to do more good work.

They facilitate a caring atmosphere. Employees feel more enriched when supervisors make the effort to say “thank you,” or go a step further by offering special rewards like certificates or the chance to use a special parking space.