

CHFS Focus Employee Spotlight: Jody Epperson – Health Planner, Department for Public Health’s Immunization Program

Immunization planning to protect public health

By Barbara Fox

Jody Epperson is a woman who can truthfully say she “calls the shots” when dealing with public health in Kentucky. Appointed as a health planner in April 2005 in the Division of Epidemiology and Health Planning’s Immunization Program, Department for Public Health (DPH), Epperson deals with a variety of immunization topics ranging from planning for pandemic and annual influenza epidemics to monitoring school and daycare immunization coverage rates.



In addition to this broad spectrum of topics, her primary responsibilities are assessments, surveys and planning. “I think it’s important to gather data, but I am really excited about the practical application of the data afterwards. The main focus of my job right now is pandemic influenza planning,” Epperson said. “It is a serious and complicated matter and I believe with time and teamwork, DPH could really be effective in saving people’s lives. I don’t know if there is any greater ambition than that and I am really looking forward to being an integral part of the process.”

Epperson was enrolled in a pilot nursing program affiliated with Jefferson Community College and Kentucky State University while attending high school in Shelby County. “I was a junior in high school when I became a state registered nursing assistant,” she said. “I continued with the program after graduation only to discover that while I excelled with my studies, I became too emotionally attached to my patients. My nursing instructor always told us that empathy was healthy, while sympathy was not. I left the program with only a year of clinicals to complete because I could not master my emotional attachment to patients.”

Prior to her current position, Epperson worked in the Vaccines For Children (VFC) program within the Immunization program. As a VFC representative, she was given the opportunity to learn about the immunization program from the ground up, which has given her a solid foundation on which to perform her current job duties. She also served for two years in both Medicaid and the Labor Cabinet. Prior to state government, she was employed in a

pediatrician’s office in Frankfort and also worked at Frankfort Regional Medical Center. “The majority of my working life has been in a health care setting of some sort, which is why I feel like I have found a home in public health where I can continue working in my state government career,” Epperson said.

Married to husband Roy for almost 10 years, Epperson resides in the Waddy, Ky., area and brags that her two daughters (Makayla, age 9½ and Allie, age 6) are the best girls a mom could ask for.

In her leisure time, Epperson teaches a First Steps program for children aged 3 to 6 at her church. “I really like kids and believe that if you nurture them while they are young, it makes a difference in their lives as they grow,” she said.

CHFS Focus Program Profile: Aging services announces first annual Aging Network Conference

Diverse agenda features information on healthy aging

The Cabinet’s Division of Aging Services and the Kentucky Area Agencies on Aging Association will jointly host the first annual Aging Network Conference Sept. 7-9 at the Marriott Griffin Gate Resort in Lexington.



The theme “Healthy Aging – Living the Dream” reflects the conference focus on the value to seniors of adopting healthy lifestyle habits and access to affordable, quality health care, as well as the value to communities of developing resources to accommodate the needs of a healthy elder population.

“Anyone in any aging services field is encouraged to attend,” said Bill Cooper, director of the aging services agency. “From service providers, case managers, social workers and caregivers, to ombudsmen, housing specialists, adult day care administrators and advocates, this conference will have current, useful information and networking opportunities for everyone.”

The conference will offer learning and discussion sessions on topics including nutrition and the state health insurance assistance program, a valuable resource for those seeking information and assistance concerning Medicare, prescription drug discount programs and other elder health insurance topics.

Featured speakers and session leaders include Constantinos Miskis, regional director of the U.S. Administration on Aging, who will open the conference with an update from Washington, D.C.

Marianne Smith-Edge, president of MSE and Associates, a food service and nutrition management consultant service and past president of the American Dietetic Association, will lead a discussion on different management and leadership styles and their effectiveness in the face of a changing aging services industry.

Virginia Drake, a motivational speaker and consultant, will close the conference with a presentation on the "Power of Yes."

Registration remains open until Aug. 26. For more information or to register for the conference by phone, call the Division of Aging Services at 859-564-6930 or download a registration application from the Division of Aging Services Web site at <http://chfs.ky.gov/dhss/das/Programs.htm>.

Jefferson foster parents honored at reception

By Anya Armes Weber

Jefferson County's foster parents were honored at a reception last week for their exemplary service to the children of the region.



More than 50 foster and adoptive parents and couples received awards for their commitment to children on Thursday, Aug. 11. The parents have served the cabinet and cared for children in state custody from five to more than 40 years.

One foster parent, Elnora Fountain, was honored for 43 years of service.

"Foster families serve a vital role in permanency planning to protect the interests of foster children throughout Louisville," said Jackie Stamps, the KIPDA Jefferson Service Region administrator. "By working with birth families and department staff, they can help strengthen these children through what may be a difficult transition. This event is a small thank you in return for so many years of caring for children."

More than 20 area businesses donated prizes for the reception.

Cabinet organizers of the reception also recognized the Greater Louisville Association of Realtors and its Community Service Chairman, Mike Brown. In time for the start of the new school year, GLAR has donated to foster families 600 backpacks filled with supplies like combs, water bottles, toothbrushes and spiral notebooks.

"Realtors in our association know foster families across Louisville, and we know how dedicated they are to providing for their children," Brown said. "We just wanted to help them out during a very busy time of the year."

Remember KECC as school year begins

By Anya Armes Weber

August is back-to-school time for many families, and it can be overwhelming with so many things to remember.



Coordinators of the Cabinet's Kentucky Employees Charitable Campaign encourage staff to remember that now is also the time to help families who are less fortunate through the KECC fund drive.

See your office's KECC coordinator to make a one-time donation or to commit to payroll deduction.

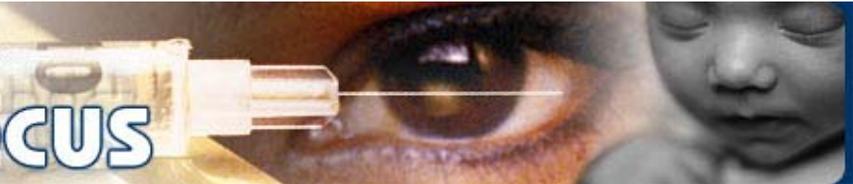
Log onto www.kecc.org for more information about the campaign.

Charity profile: Community Health Charities

Community Health Charities of Kentucky (CHC) is a federation of 23 health agencies with strong, locally-based programs. These programs support medical research, health education and patient services that directly serve more than 2 million Kentuckians every year by a network of about 60,000 volunteers.

Patient services include support groups, housing and transportation assistance, loan equipment closets, exercise programs, summer camps for kids and medication assistance programs.

CHC's member agencies include the American Heart Association, the American Diabetes Association, the American Lung Association, March of Dimes, National Kidney Foundation of America and the Arthritis Foundation.



For more information about Community Health Charities of Kentucky, log onto <http://www.chcofky.org/>.

State Fair begins this Thursday; Cabinet booth has something for everyone

By Anya Armes Weber

The 2005 Kentucky State Fair begins this Thursday in Louisville and the Cabinet for Health and



Family Services will be encouraging its visitors to make better choices to improve their families' health and well-being.

"Get Moving on the Path to Better Health" is the Cabinet's theme, and physical activity and nutrition will be the main focus of the highly interactive display in the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center's South Wing.

"Many major health problems – including obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular ailments – can be chiefly attributed to poor lifestyle choices like inadequate nutrition and exercise habits," Cabinet Secretary James W. Holsinger Jr., M.D., said.

"Lifestyle decisions make a considerable difference," he said. "It's very simple. We have got to take more control of our lives and our health status."

Holsinger said the Cabinet can potentially reach more than 600,000 visitors with that message at the fair.

With guidance from trained staff, guests will be able to get a personalized nutrition assessment from MyPyramid.gov, learn about what type and amount of physical activity is appropriate for them and take advantage of health screenings ranging from diabetes risk assessment to bone density testing.

Staff will also guide guests in activities centered on other health topics like smoking cessation, cardiovascular health and body mass index.

Family services provided by the Cabinet, including abuse prevention, food benefits and adoption recruitment, will also be featured.

In addition to these daily activities, rotating displays featuring different program areas will be featured each day.

CHFS employees are especially encouraged to attend the fair on Sunday, Aug. 21, which has been designated "CHFS Family Day." It's a perfect day to visit with children in your family, because the nationally acclaimed "Nutrition Magician" will be there to entertain us and encourage people of all ages to make the right food choices.

Also in the South Wing, the Cabinet's Nutrition Services Branch staff will assist Louisville's Metro Health Department in staffing the Rock 'N' Relax room near the Kidz Biz area. Parents can stop by the booth to nurse, feed or change their infants and for information on baby safety.

Cabinet staff from Jefferson County's Department for Community Based Services will help manage the Wednesday's Child booth, which will recruit adoptive families, in the center's East Wing.

Listed below is a calendar of rotating display elements and program areas featured daily.

The fair, at the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center, is open daily from 9 a.m.-10 p.m. Advance discount tickets, purchased at Kroger, are \$5 for adults and \$2 for children ages 3-12 and seniors. After Aug. 17, tickets are \$7 for adults, \$3 for children and \$3 for seniors 55 and older. Children 2 and younger get in free. Parking is \$5.

Log onto kystatefair.org for more information.

**Kentucky Health and Family Services
2005 State Fair Schedule**

Rotating Display Elements

Thursday, Aug. 18

Bone density scan – Women's Physical and Mental Health

Friday, Aug. 19

Bone density scan – Women's Physical and Mental Health
Breast and Cervical Cancer Awareness - Kentucky
Women's Cancer Screening Program

Saturday, Aug. 20, and Sunday, Aug. 21 (10 a.m.-7 p.m.)

Nutrition Magician Chef Tom Ohling

Monday, Aug. 22

KASPER and Prescription Drug Abuse – Office of the Inspector General

Tuesday, Aug. 23 (Senior Day)

Stroke Prevention – Department for Public Health

August 15, 2005

CHFS FOCUS

Glucose Monitoring and other Senior Services – Cardinal Hill Hospital

Aging Information – Division of Aging Services
Wednesday, Aug. 24, and Thursday, Aug. 25
Lead – Department for Public Health
Consumer Safety – Department for Public Health

Friday, Aug. 26
Glucose Screening – Jefferson County Health Department

Saturday, Aug. 27, and Sunday, Aug. 28
Substance Abuse Awareness – Division of Mental Health and Mental Retardation

Daily elements

- Nutrition
- Physical activity/arthritis
- Tobacco/asthma
- Diabetes education
- Cardiovascular health
- Food stamps
- Child/adult/senior abuse
- Blood pressure monitoring
- Body fat analysis (KSU staff)
- Bone density scan
- Kids trivia game
- Information station

Hopkins social worker joins with narcotics taskforce

What could be more frightening than living the life of an abused child? When combined with the effects of methamphetamine (meth) addiction, a child's life can be simply impossible to imagine.

Much attention is focused on the location and shutdown of meth labs in Kentucky. It is important to remember the children affected by drug use and meth production.

One Hopkins County protective services worker is stepping up to help educate her community and the surrounding areas on the effects of meth and other drugs on Kentucky's most vulnerable citizens - its children.

Kate Finnearty of Hopkins County Community Based Services has joined with Cheyenne Albro of the Pennyriple Narcotics Task Force to provide training for communities in the Pennyriple area on the effects of meth and other drugs.

"Several initial trainings have been very successful," Finnearty said.

Future trainings will organize information for law enforcement, DCBS, EMS and emergency hospital personnel. These trainings will combine resources along with education to provide the best possible care for children who are taken from a home where meth or other dangerous drugs are involved.

Trainings will also be provided for community members interested in providing assistance for children taken into custody.

Beyond the obvious danger of fire and explosion, children of those who produce meth can suffer respiratory problems, skin irritation, difficulty concentrating and a host of other symptoms associated with exposure to the toxic chemicals. Although these problems are overwhelming, add the trauma of being rushed from their homes with no clothes or toys and taken to the hospital for blood testing and decontamination. Once the testing and decontamination are complete, the children are placed in protective custody.

"One of our goals," says Finnearty, "is to have an overnight bag ready for each child who is removed from a meth home. The bag would include a blanket, a change of clothes for after decontamination, a toy, toothpaste, toothbrush and a comb."

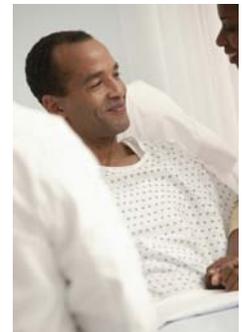
"Remember, any child removed from a meth lab can take absolutely nothing from the home," she said.

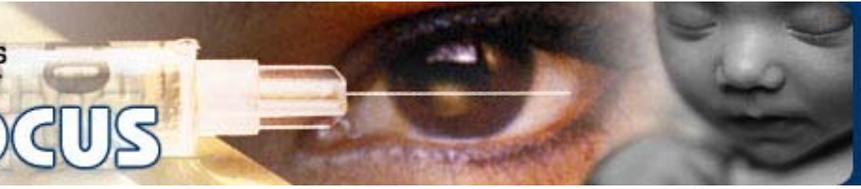
This tremendous effort is providing knowledge to communities in hopes that citizens will recognize the signs and report drug abuse and meth production, helping save these children in such direct danger.

CHFS Focus Health Tip of the Week: Get the facts on organ and tissue donations

By Ann Parr, R.N.

August marks the ninth anniversary of National Minority Donor Awareness, an effort that began in 1996 to educate people across the country about the importance of organ and tissue donation.





Did you know that:

- Twelve percent of the U.S. population is African American, and 35 percent of patients awaiting kidney transplants are African American?
- African Americans have the best chance of a successful kidney transplant if the donor is African American?
- Diabetes and high blood pressure are conditions that can lead to the need for dialysis or kidney transplantation?
- A single organ and tissue donor can save or improve the lives of 50 people?
- On average, 17 people die each day due to lack of organs?

- Set aside opinions. Good listeners suspend judgment. You are there to hear the person out, not the other way around.
- Offer feedback. Be involved with your partner and respond with verbal and nonverbal responses.
- Follow up at a later date. Ask questions that show you have been thinking about the person or advice you've learned from other experiences.

The most important steps to become an organ and tissue donor are to:

- Inform your family members and loved ones of your decision to become an organ and tissue donor;
- Indicate your intent on your driver's license;
- Carry an organ donor card; and
- Sign up on a donor registry.

For more information visit the National Minority Organ Tissue Transplant Education Program at:
<http://www.nationalmottetp.org/>.

Employee Enrichment



By Anya Armes Weber

Employee Enrichment is a weekly feature for CHFS staff. These tips for making work better focus on team building, customer service and personal development.

Psychologists say that the most important need for individuals is to be listened to. Being a good listener to your coworkers – on personal or professional matters -- may help your team become more cohesive.

Here are a few tips to help you actively listen when teammates speak to you:

- Organize in advance. Review mentally what you know about the situation before your conversation.
- Mind your body language. Maintain eye contact and lean forward to show your interest.