

Call for Focus Holiday Stories

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is in the business of helping people. During the holidays, many employees take that mission of service to the next level by lending a hand in their own communities. If you or your office is helping to make the holidays bright for people in your community, we want to know about it. The annual Focus holiday listing will appear in the Dec. 21 edition of the Focus, the last edition of 2009. Send your holiday stories to the Focus editor at Emily.moses@ky.gov. Information should include, but is not limited to:

- Name of your office or branch, including the county
- Your charitable project
- Who it benefited (names not necessary, just a general description)
- Photos of collections or the members of staff who participated
- Other information if desired

Information should be sent to the Focus editor by Wednesday, Dec. 16. If you have questions, e-mail Focus Editor Emily Moses.

DPH Training Staff for Response Efforts

The Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) is looking for additional staff to be trained to work in the Department Operations Center (DOC) to prepare for “All Hazards Events” that may require health and medical support. DPH can use staff with a wide variety of skills (clinical, clerical, data entry, etc.). The DPH Division of Epidemiology and Health Planning is offering a training program to recruit and train additional staff to work in the DOC. Staff who receive permission from their supervisors are encouraged to participate in this training. Trained employees may be called on to work in the DOC during this influenza season and/or for any disaster that may require activation of the DOC. If you are interested, please obtain approval from your supervisor to attend the two-hour training.

The next DOC Awareness Training class will be Dec. 15. During the class, participants will receive training on DOC Operations with an emphasis on current H1N1 response activities, pandemic influenza and Strategic National Stockpile Operations. The class will be from 9 to 11 a.m., Dec. 15, Health Services Building, Conference Suite C. To register, access KY TRAIN at <https://ky.train.org>. Class title: KDPH: DOC Awareness Training. Course ID#: 1019711

For information, contact Jim House or Kim Thomas. E-mail House at jamesr.house@ky.gov. E-mail Thomas at kimd.thomas@ky.gov.

SHIP Offers Help with Medicare

Medicare Part D is the prescription drug component of Medicare, the federal health insurance program for people older than 65, certain people with disabilities and people with end-stage renal disease. Part D has been a Medicare component for four years and offers several prescription drug plans to beneficiaries.

Open enrollment for all Medicare plans starts on Nov. 15 and runs through Dec. 31. Last year, more than 700,000 Kentuckians enrolled in a Medicare plan. CMS suggests all people with Medicare should:

- Review the 2010 costs for their current drug and health plan. (Look at premium, co-pays and deductibles.)
- Compare the cost and coverage to other plans in their area. (Check to see if the plan covers their medicines, works with their pharmacy and doctors and covers the services they need.)
- Choose a plan that meets their needs.

Assistance in choosing a Medicare plan is available through the Kentucky State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP).

SHIP, part of the Department for Aging and Independent Living, provides free information, counseling and assistance to seniors and disabled individuals, their family members and caregivers.

Volunteer SHIP counselors are available to all Medicare beneficiaries to assist in making informed decisions about health care. Kentuckians who want to speak with a SHIP counselor may call toll-free, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., (877) 293-7447. To view and compare Medicare plans online, visit www.cms.hhs.gov.

Living Well: Practice Food Safety this Thanksgiving

Follow Public Health Guidelines to Prevent Illness

For many, Thanksgiving means a home-cooked feast with family and friends. In light of this holiday tradition, the Department for Public Health (DPH) reminds Kentuckians that food safety should also be a part of the celebration.

Many holiday dinners incorporate meat and poultry, a possible source of foodborne disease unless handled and prepared properly. This holiday season, DPH urges consumers to take precautions in preparing food items and to pay close attention to good hygiene practices.

Holiday buffets, party trays or even a poorly stored turkey could be the culprit of foodborne illness. Improperly stored food items provide breeding grounds for bacterial contamination, which causes illness that affects an average of 76 million people each year.

Here are a few simple food safety tips to avoid getting sick during the holiday season:

Wash hands – Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water and dry your hands with a paper towel following restroom use, before preparing foods, after handling raw meat or before eating. Clean hands will help prevent the spread of potentially illness-causing microorganisms.

Clean – Wash and sanitize food-contact surfaces often. To sanitize utensils, immerse for 30 seconds in clean, hot water at 170 degrees Fahrenheit, or immerse for at least one minute in a

clean solution containing at least 50 parts per million of chlorine (one teaspoon of 5.25 percent household bleach per gallon of water). Bacteria can spread and get onto cutting boards, knives and countertops. Wash fruits and vegetables before preparing.

Thaw properly – Proper methods for thawing a turkey include: thawing in a refrigerator with a temperature of 41 degrees Fahrenheit or less (allow 3-4 days for thawing); placing under cool running water at a temperature of 75 degrees Fahrenheit or less; or thawing in a microwave and cooking the turkey immediately.

Take temperatures – Cook at 325 degrees Fahrenheit until the internal temperature of the turkey reaches at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit. Cooked, hot foods should be kept at 140 degrees Fahrenheit or warmer. Be sure to use a food thermometer to check temperatures.

Keep it cold – Cold foods should be kept at 41 degrees Fahrenheit or less. After the turkey is served, immediately slice and refrigerate on shallow platters. Use refrigerated turkey and stuffing within three to four days. Use gravy within one to two days. If freezing leftovers, use within two to six months for best quality.

Transport safely – Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.

Reheat – Leftover turkey and stuffing should be stored separately in shallow dishes or platters. Rapidly reheat leftovers to a minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit.

“Remember the two-hour rule. Do not leave perishable food out at room temperature for more than two hours,” said DPH Commissioner William D. Hacker, M.D.

Employee Enrichment

By Anya Armes Weber

As our work opportunities grow, our expectations from others and of ourselves rise higher. Multitasking can leave us weary by dividing our attention among too many tasks.

Here are some tips to survive multitasking and even improve your overall performance.

Concentrate on one task at a time and complete it before moving on to the next.

Try to handle each piece of paper only once, deal with it rather than shuffling it around your desk.

If you are in the middle of a conversation, don't interrupt it by starting another, until you have finished the first.

Concentrate on the present. The ability to stay focused will give you a sense of accomplishment as you see the completed tasks grow.