

FOCUS

News from and about the Kentucky
Cabinet for Health and Family Services

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Small clues reveal pathway to success

Kissner finds answers through unconventional methods

Often when new projects are discussed the devil is in the details. For Lawrence Kissner, he finds development in those details.

Kissner, Commissioner of the Department for Medicaid Services, has enjoyed a long, winding path to success and the map was assembled by paying attention to the smallest details. Whether it was memorizing 2,000 plays in the Notre Dame football playbook as an offensive lineman for the Fighting Irish or building his own consulting firm, Kissner has looked at life through an analytical lens.

"I love (to know) how it's made," he said, with a grin.

Kissner, who has enjoyed nearly 35 years in the insurance field, has built a successful career using two essential traits – an engaging personality and the ability to see potential in the most unlikely places.

For example, one of Kissner's favorite stories came from a time when he was Vice President for Distribution for UnitedHealthcare. One of his goals was to identify best practices and spread that knowledge throughout the company.

"I remember I was reviewing expense reports one time and we had about 200 sales people. I took the top 10 percent – 20 people- and I reviewed their expense reports for a six month period," he said. "It was not uniform and that was my first 'a ha' moment. I thought they all must spend money on their brokers, schmooze people and take them to lunch and do the thing expense reports are designed to do. What I found were the unique things – like 50 dozen live shrimp. Another guy had a case of chicken soup – Campbell's Chicken Soup.

"It was during flu season. So I called him up and said, 'Tell me about the chicken soup. What do you do with the 24 cans of chicken soup?' and this isn't a big expense. Back then it was less than a dollar a can. So he said, 'If I'm working with a broker and they're out sick I do a ding and dash.' I said, 'What's a ding and dash?' He said, 'I take a can of soup and I tape my card to it and write 'get well soon' on it. I ring their doorbell and then I run



away because I don't want to shake their hand because if they are sick I don't want to get sick too. So it's a ding and dash.' But the more I dissected that simple thing it became apparent that this was a best practice because how many of my salespeople knew where their top producer's home was? This guy had been to their home before so that's really building a deep relationship. Then the average secretary isn't going to say, 'Larry isn't in today because he has the flu.' They are going to say, 'Larry is out today.' You have to build a level of trust that someone is willing to tell you they are out and why. That's so many layers of success in that one simple gesture."

Kissner has been building relationships in the business world from the minute he graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 1982 and started his career as a group sales agent with Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.

The skill was a matter of survival in 1982 as the country was mired in a deep recession and he had conducted 40 interviews during the spring semester of his senior

See KISSNER on Page 6

Learning about colleagues helps avoid conflict

If you and a colleague have trouble getting along, or you just want to relate to someone better, take some advice from communications consultant Judy Ringer (judyringer.com). She suggests taking the time to better understand these coworkers and their point of view.

When you take steps to understand someone, you are taking initiative, Ringer says. That not only helps you learn something about the person, it gives you some command over the relationship - you're taking the lead in showing "we can get along better." You set a good example that they are likely to follow in trying to better see your point of view, too.

So how do you do this? Ringer suggests considering these questions:

Who is this person away from work? Seeing the other roles of a person - parent, grandparent, pet lover, sports fan - can make them seem more likable, and maybe reveal a shared interest.

What do they really want? Try to uncover the positive motivation of this person's behavior. Are they looking for respect, attention or acknowledgment? You could realize

PEAK PERFORMANCE

Anya Armes Weber



that you have similar goals.

What's behind their behavior? Realize that any disrespectful behavior probably doesn't have anything to do with you. Many people can't get out of the habit of acting this way unless they have a mentor to guide them in another direction.

It's easier to get along with someone you know and have something in common with, even if they demonstrate challenging behaviors.

In the end, taking the time to get to know a difficult colleague will give you insight and maybe an improved working environment - and a new office ally.

Health departments conduct disaster preparedness exercise

Ohio, Indiana, federal agencies participate in two-day drill

A major disaster preparedness exercise was conducted on April 16-17, 2014 involving state and local health departments and partners in Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana, and also their federal partners.

The two-day drill was designed to test the state's ability to order, receive and distribute large amounts of medicines and supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) in the event of a multi-state emergency such as a natural disaster, terrorist attack or disease outbreak.

Simulated supplies from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) were received during the exercise at a designated location in Ohio and then transported to North-



Emergency Preparedness

ern Kentucky.

The supplies were then broken down and distributed to pre-designated locations, where dispensing of the medicines and supplies was simulated.

Border states that participated in this exercise included Ohio and Indiana. State and federal agencies that participated included: Kentucky Department for Public Health; Kentucky Office of Homeland Security; Kentucky Army National Guard; Kentucky

Division of Emergency Management; local law enforcement and emergency management agencies; the CDC; U.S. Marshals Service and the Northern Kentucky Independent District Health Department.

The federal government initially established the CDC's SNS program in 1999 to assist states and communities in responding to public health emergencies, including those resulting from terrorist attacks and natural disasters.

The SNS program can deploy medicines, antidotes, medical supplies and medical equipment to any U.S. location within 12 hours. Each state has plans to receive and distribute SNS medicine and medical supplies to local communities as quickly as possible.

More information on the Strategic National Stockpile program is available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/phpr/stockpile/stockpile.htm>.



kynect named one of Top 25 Dreamers and Doers

By Matt Williams
Govtech.com

States have taken their fair share of criticism for bungling the design and execution of health insurance exchanges, the online marketplaces where Americans can determine eligibility and purchase insurance that's mandated under federal health-care reform.

Kentucky is one of the few states, though, where the benefits exchange functioned smoothly without fanfare. The state's no-frills system, called Kynect, enrolled more than 116,000 people by the end of 2013 — mostly without drama or the widespread outages that have plagued other states.

The kynect Health Benefits Exchange was honored as one of the

Top 25 Dreamers and Doers in the public sector for 2014 by Government Technology Magazine.

Kentucky made some wise moves under the leadership of Carrie Bana-han, executive director of the Office of the Kentucky Health Benefit Exchange. A big one was getting to work soon after the Affordable Care Act was signed into law in 2010. Several states waited another two years, after the Supreme Court ultimately upheld the health-care law. With more time, Kentucky reportedly tested Kynect for three months, unlike some states that did so only for a few weeks.

Kynect also doesn't require customers to complete a password-protected login and registration to view and compare the many health plans

that are available.

This might seem like a minor point, but it eventually helped avoid those pesky error screens that plagued the federal HealthCare.gov site and other state exchanges when open enrollment started on Oct. 1.

Kentucky's exchange was built so users could seamlessly determine their Medicaid eligibility on the same website — another sticking point for states that chose to build their own exchange instead of using the federal government's version.

Crucially, Kentucky also appears to have selected a skilled vendor in Deloitte. The consulting firm also worked on high-performing insurance exchanges for Connecticut, Rhode Island and Washington.

Weight Watchers seeks new members for monthly meetings

Frankfort-area staff is invited to join Weight Watchers for its monthly meetings.

Weight Watchers at Work hosted an open house on Tuesday, May 6, in the Bluegrass Room on the 4th floor of the CHR Building and will continue to meet at 11:30 a.m. every Tuesday

in the Bluegrass Room. New members can join any time, because it is a continuous meeting.

State employees, contractors and retirees are welcome to join at the discounted rate of \$39.95 a month, to be paid by credit, debit or PayPal through automatic deductions.

The membership fee includes ETools online, unlimited meetings, materials, phone app and scanner app.

For more information or to join, contact Beth Morris at (502-564-9592) or betha.morris@ky.gov.

413,000 Kentuckians enroll in health coverage with kynect through first enrollment period

More than one in every 10 Kentuckians now have affordable health care – many for the first time – thanks to the successful initial open enrollment period for kynect, Kentucky’s state-based health benefit exchange.

Governor Steve Beshear today announced that 413,410 Kentuckians enrolled in health care coverage through kynect in its first open enrollment period, which ended March 31. At its peak in the final three days of enrollment, kynect processed more than 7,000 applications each day.

Another 30,000 individuals signed up for healthcare coverage during the April 4-11 kynect special enrollment period. More than 11,000 Kentuckians finalized health plan choices by the April 15 deadline, bringing the total of enrolled Kentuckians to over 413,000 – or the approximate combined populations of Lexington, Owensboro and Bowling Green.

Surveys of kynect enrollees revealed that about 75 percent of applicants reported that they had no health insurance prior to signing up for kynect.

kynect has been hailed as a national model since its launch on October 1, 2013, for its continuous smooth operation and easy interface for users looking for affordable health coverage. Since enrollment began last fall, hundreds of thousands of Kentuckians swarmed the website and call center in search of affordable, quality healthcare coverage.

“As the famous line from the movie *A Field of Dreams* goes, ‘If you build it, they will come.’ Well, we built it and they came by the thousands,” said Cabinet for Health and Family Services Secretary Audrey Tayse Haynes. “In fact, Kentuckians were so anxious for the opportunity to finally have the healthcare coverage they need and deserve that the first person was signed up as soon as the site went live. Our kynect staff added more servers to expand capacity and brought on 55 more customer service reps at the contact center to handle call volume. The response has been tremendous and truly exceeded our greatest expectations.”

Midway through its first full day of operation, nearly 60,000 individuals seeking information about affordable health care had visited the kynect website. By day

10 of open enrollment, nearly 10,000 Kentuckians had enrolled in healthcare coverage. In its first full month of operation, more than 32,000 people had enrolled in coverage through kynect, an average of about 1,000 Kentuckians a day.

The final days of enrollment saw a crush of people rushing to enroll. About 21,000 signed up in the final three days. Now, more than 1 out of every 10 Kentuckians has health insurance through kynect – or 9.6 percent of the state’s population. These figures do not include previously uninsured individuals who may have purchased health insurance outside of kynect.

Some paper applications are still being processed, so the total number of kynect enrollments will likely increase as those are completed.

Fifty-two percent of all kynect enrollees are under the age of 35. Of private health plan enrollees, 33 percent

are under age 35.

Approximately 80 percent of enrollees qualified for coverage under the Medicaid expansion with the remaining 20 percent purchasing a private insurance plan.

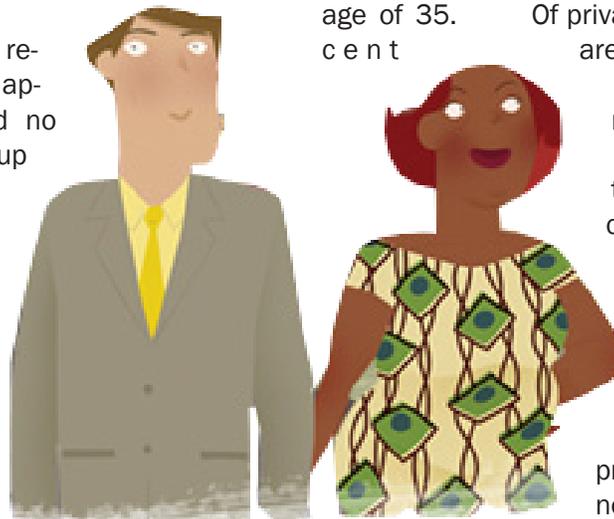
Of those who purchased private insurance plans, 72 percent qualified for some level of premium assistance.

Seventy-five percent of Kentuckians who purchased a private insurance plan through kynect selected the Kentucky Health Cooperative as their insurer with the remaining 25 percent equally

divided between Anthem and Humana. Currently, 68 percent of those who enrolled in a private insurance plan have paid their first month’s premiums.

Activity statistics on kynect as of Monday, April 21:

- 413,410 Kentuckians are enrolled in new health coverage
- 330,615 have qualified for Medicaid coverage
- 15,427 individuals who qualify for traditional Medicaid have undergone a required annual recertification since April 1, which is now handled through kynect
- 82,795 have purchased private insurance
- 52 percent of all kynect enrollees are under the age of 35
- 1.5 million unique visitors viewed 57.7 million kynect web pages



Staff weight loss summer challenge begins May 13

CHFS staff is invited to be part of the Biggest Loser Summer challenge, a fund-raiser for the Kentucky Employees Charitable Campaign (KECC).

The challenge begins Tuesday, May 13, and ends Tuesday, Aug. 5. Cost to join is \$10. The male and female participants who lose the highest percentage of body weight will each win a cash prize. The remaining money raised will go to KECC.

Weekly weigh-ins will be at 11 a.m. on Tuesday mornings in the CHR Building's Bluegrass conference room unless otherwise posted.

Staff outside of Frankfort may be able to participate by emailing weekly pictures of their scale readings.

Registration deadline is Monday,

May 12.

Contact Mary Gaetz (Mary.Gaetz@ky.gov) or Beth Morris (BethA.Morris@ky.gov) for more information or to participate.

Biggest Loser Spring Challenge update

Staff who joined the Biggest Loser Spring Challenge just completed their 10th week. The more than 40 CHFS employees participating in the government-wide challenge have collectively lost more than 250 pounds.

The challenge ends on Tuesday, May 6, with every participant who lost at least 9 percent of their body weight getting a cash prize. The remainder of the registration money collected goes to KECC.

Winter Update

A total of 38 CHFS employees participated in the Biggest Loser challenge. Each participant paid a registration fee with the total pot of \$1,000 on the line.

First place went to Carl Ishmael, who lost 51.1 pounds or 18.14 percent of his body weight. For his efforts he took home \$925.

Second place went to Jessica Jump, who lost 31.5 pounds and 15.6 percent of her body weight. She won \$50.

Third place went to Nicole Walker, who lost 25.6 pounds and 12.46 percent of her body weight. Ishmael, the first place winner, contributed \$25 of his winnings to Walker.

DCBS implements new procedures for walk-in customers

The Kentucky Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) is implementing new office procedures for walk-in customer benefit interviews at its family support offices. The new office procedures have been tested in 28 counties with great success. The change started Monday, April 21, at all county DCBS offices.

Face-to-face interviews are staff will be available from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Customers who arrive at an office by 2 p.m. will be seen that day. Customers who arrive after 2 p.m. and request a benefit interview will be given instructions for completing their applications through alternative methods on the same day.

Customers can obtain information, report a change, and leave paperwork – such as verifications or information updates – at DCBS offices at any time during regular office hours of 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

DCBS is part of the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services. Staff of DCBS' family support offices meet with customers and accept applications for benefits such as food benefits, Medicaid and health insurance benefits through kynect, the state's health insurance marketplace.

DCBS Commissioner Teresa James said the goal of this change is to improve customer service.

"The well-being of our customers is our first priority,"

she said. "This new approach is intended to improve the timeliness and accuracy of public assistance benefits, while ensuring that needy Kentuckians have improved access to services."

The change will allow DCBS to process pending food benefit, Medicaid, and qualified health plan applications more quickly.

"We all know there has been an overwhelming response to the new affordable health options made available through kynect," said Carrie Banahan, executive director of the Office of the Kentucky Health Benefit Exchange. "DCBS is making this change to ensure that applications are processed as quickly as possible for Kentuckians seeking coverage."

Customers applying for health care benefits through kynect can log on to <http://kynect.ky.gov> or call (855) 4kynect – (855) 459-6328 – or (855) 326-4654 (TTY).

Customers seeking food benefits can initiate the application on-line at <https://snapfoodbenefits.chfs.ky.gov> or call (855) 306-8959. A family support worker will contact the customer to complete the interview and eligibility determination.

For help with other DCBS applications or annual benefit renewals, customers may call (855) 306-8959

To learn more about DCBS services, log on to <http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dfs/>.

KISSNER

Continued from Page 1

year. His break came as a result of playful banter exchanged with a Met Life recruiter while waiting for another interview at an on-campus event.

“It was about 11 o’clock and I walked up to him and there was a table set up. When they set up at the beginning of the day they had annual reports and glossy brochures and they were all lined up perfectly symmetrical and by a quarter to 11 the table is a jumbled mess because nobody ever grabs the top one,” Kissner laughed. “So I’m standing there looking at it and I’m talking out loud because I know the guy is standing there so I said, ‘I cannot believe a company with, and I grabbed the annual report, \$6 billion in assets would put out a table like this. We’re impressionable college students! I’m expecting presentation, cleanliness and organization!’ The guy starts laughing and says, ‘What are you here for’ and I say, ‘I’m interviewing with the personal (insurance) department.’ He said, ‘You’re the kind of guy we would like in group insurance. Do you know anything about group insurance?’ I said, ‘I don’t know anything about personal insurance.’ He said, ‘I’m free for lunch. How about we get together and talk about it then?’

The fortuitous meeting led to a job offer in Chicago but he was engaged with plans to move to California following graduation. Another opportunity followed from the same person as he knew a friend in the Los Angeles office. It was there where Kissner began his career following graduation.

It began a whirlwind that took his family to San Francisco, Tampa, Miami and Lexington. Along the way he learned about all facets of insurance including sales, management, grievances and appeals, and maintaining a 1-800 customer service line while keeping in mind a piece of advice he learned long before from his father.



“One of the things my dad taught me was if your employer ever asks you are you willing to – blank – you need to really think hard about your always and nevers,” he said. “I will never leave Lexington because my kid’s in high school,’ because your employer probably won’t ask a second time. I took that to heart. I never declined an opportunity and it has served me well in my career.”

Each opportunity allowed him to use his natural child-like curiosity to ask the right questions and learn the common traits of successful people in each field. While in Los Angeles Kissner put his time on the busy freeway system to good use, listening to tapes from a variety of speakers and subjects to hone his skills on dozens of topics. He also considers the time he spent in the company’s year-long President’s Leadership Development Program, capped off with a week-long stint at the prestigious University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business, as one of his career highlights.

The moments that still bring a smile to his face involve learning from others, such as the time when he created a sales advisory council and brought the company’s top 20 sales agents together for recognition and brainstorming.

“During that time I did things like put a laptop on the table and ask, ‘Who is willing to log in and show me your email?’ Somebody did and we put it on the big screen and I just started asking questions. ‘How is your inbox organized? How is your outbox organized? If somebody sent you an email from six months ago how do you find it?’ There is no right or wrong answer,” Kissner said. “The right answer is this is what I do and it works for me. As somebody shared and more came forward I asked more questions and they said, ‘Well I don’t do it that way.’ I said, ‘OK. How do you do it?’ What it did was it got them talking and sharing information. The top producers all do it differently the consistency is they are top producers. Whatever they do they do it well and they have a system. That was the whole purpose – to learn from each other.

“Success breeds success. The top producers become friends with the other top producers. They call each other if they have a problem. It created an informal network of people that benefitted everybody.”

Kissner had a chance to see success early – starting with his own family. One of seven children, five ultimately received college scholarships. Each of the four brothers attended

college on a football scholarship. Oldest brother Michael attended Florida State, second brother Tommy attended Millikin University while youngest brother Andy attended Purdue. During his senior season Kissner was named the player of the year in his home state of Florida and had by his estimation 40-45 collegiate suitors. He decided to attend Notre Dame, the reigning national champions.

“Notre Dame was the only one that came to my high school and talked to my high school guidance counselor before they talked to my high school coach. They wanted to check to see if I could handle the academics,” he said. “Notre Dame believed you were a student-athlete in the appropriate order – student first. They didn’t have athletic dorms; I roomed with regular students. You take regular classes and if you have a class that starts at 3:30 on a Thursday the school doesn’t move the class to facilitate the football schedule. You just arrive late to practice.”

Young for his class, Kissner was 17 when he enrolled at Notre Dame and played as a senior at age 20. He recalled that he immediately knew life would be different in South Bend when he looked around the room. Of the 28 players in the Notre Dame recruiting class that year, every single player had been named to some form of high school All-America team. The sobering point was later driven home one day in practice as a member of the scout team.

“My first ‘oh wow’ moment was when Bob Golic almost knocked me out. I got in a fight with him in practice,” Kissner recalled. “He was playing middle linebacker and I was on the scout team. I have no identity. I was the left tackle for Michigan or Michigan State or Purdue. I wore a different number every week. The guy slanted in and the guard took



him so I slide out to the next level to hit Golic.

“Now this guy is a two-time All-American. I blocked him and I remember punching him pretty hard in the gut. Next thing you know we start trading punches. We’re fully padded up and the coaches let it go for a while like they always do before they step in and break it up. I’m standing toe to toe with him and I’m starting to see stars. The little lights are disappearing. I remember going back to the huddle and it’s like ‘Am I even in the right huddle?’ We actually became pretty good friends.”

Kissner’s latest challenge came in 2012 when he became the Commissioner for the Department for Medicaid Services. His approach to his latest endeavor draws from the processes and successes he has experienced over the past four decades.

“My agenda is simple – I am very transparent. I am constantly looking for the creation of dashboards,” he said. “I like it color coded. I firmly believe what gets tracked gets trended and what gets trended gets done. There’s no way you can look the other way when the performance is red for two, three, four months in a row. At some point you have to say what are we doing to fix that? When I started in July 2012 it was a very difficult time. We learned a lot about what not to do when moving fee-for-service into managed care. You should take your

time, you should think through the consequences, you should cut stuff out, you should have a communication plan.

“When the house is on fire you focus on water. After there’s no fire you can ask is the structure of the house appropriate? Is there anything that needs remodeling? Is there anything we can do to make the house more efficient?”

Kissner views success as a series of small, achievable goals as part of a bigger overall picture. For example, the year 2012 was largely spent transitioning to managed care and taking copious notes on what worked and what didn’t. By the second year the goal was to get the program on solid financial footing. With that goal achieved Kissner classifies the current year as being about performance.

“The financial issues are behind us, the MCOs are making a small profit on a quarterly basis, we’ve expanded Medicaid. Now we’re at the point where we are really focusing on outcomes, what’s happening,” he said. “Are we delivering better health care? I think we have created a framework for a significant increase in healthcare outcomes and the results associated with Medicaid outcomes.”

These days Kissner’s curiosity is still being fed. He participates in Zumba to stay fit. “I hate to just run. Always have,” he says. He has also found his artistic potential through painting. What started off with a Bob Ross art class has turned into a hand-painted gallery that adorns his office. He proudly points to a bowl he painted depicting scenes from a k-y-n-e-c-t pamphlet.

“I’m just a natural learner,” he said. “I’ve always been that way. It’s fun for me to try something new or just see how it is done.”



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