

June 9, 2008

**Employee Spotlight: James R. House**

*This week, the Focus talked with James R. House, an exercise coordinator for the Department for Public Health. House has worked in Frankfort for DPH for six months. He spent five years at Lake Cumberland District Health Department.*

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

My job directly affects the lives of my fellow Kentuckians as public health agencies across Kentucky have increased their level of preparedness through exercise programs and stand ready to prevent and/or respond to a wide variety of natural or manmade disasters. The best part of my job is being allowed to work with public health personnel across the state and learn how they increase their level of preparedness through an active training and exercise program.

**What is something interesting about your job that most people wouldn't know?**

The Preparedness Branch participates in preparedness exercises with seven other states that are in Region IV ESF8 Unified Planning Coalition, including Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

**What are your interests outside of work?**

My interests outside of work include fishing, gardening, bicycling, and playing sports such as basketball, baseball and golf with my son. I also play the guitar and like to play songs using flatpicking, crosspicking and fingerstyle techniques. My family and I love to drive through the back roads of Kentucky and enjoy the beautiful scenery.

**Give us your thoughts on the work that you have been doing most recently with coordinating exercises for the state.**

My job as the Exercise Coordinator allows me to work with many programs relating to public health preparedness throughout the state and throughout FEMA Region IV. My primary responsibilities are to plan, conduct, coordinate and evaluate exercises in compliance with the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP). I am currently working with the staff of the Preparedness Branch to develop a multi-year training and exercise plan that will outline a training and exercise schedule for the next three years. This plan will help ensure KDPH meets the preparedness requirements as set forth in federal mandates and will help increase our level of preparedness in the event of a disaster.

**Kentucky Officials Participate in Florida Hurricane Exercise**

*By Barbara Fox, Public Information Officer*

The Public Health Preparedness Branch in the Kentucky Department for Public Health recently participated with other states in Florida's 2008 statewide hurricane exercise as a member of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region IV Unified Planning Coalition. The objective of the exercise was to provide assistance to the state public health and medical response agencies by identifying and acquiring needed resources through the intrastate Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).

The exercise play initially began on May 29 with Kentucky officials monitoring a "simulated" hurricane that was approaching Florida. The participating states used Georgia's WebEOC, an incident management software program that acts as a virtual emergency operations center, to monitor the response activities in Florida.

The program allowed Kentucky officials to participate in the exercise from Frankfort without having to travel to Florida. Main exercise play took place on June 2 and 3 beginning with a series of conference calls and situation updates. The mock hurricane had made landfall in Florida causing

June 9, 2008

extensive damage throughout the central portion of the state.

The Kentucky Department for Public Health identified a team of personnel who would be available to assist Florida with resource coordination, communication support and as members of damage assessment teams. The Kentucky Board of EMS identified ambulance strike teams that could respond to help evacuate nursing homes and special needs populations. The Kentucky Emergency Operations Center coordinated all resource requests received from Florida through the EMAC system.

“This exercise was an excellent opportunity to interact with the Region IV Unified Planning Coalition,” said Jim House, exercise coordinator for the KDPH Preparedness Branch. “The exercise allowed us to measure both our strengths and weaknesses in order to improve our response and collaboration capabilities.”

Members of the Region IV Unified Planning Coalition include Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. The coalition was formed to ensure that in the event of a large scale disaster, integrated and effective coordination exists between member states and with the federal government.

### **Riggs Named Junior Scientist Officer of the Year**

Lieutenant Commander Margaret Riggs, Ph.D, an epidemiologist for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention working with the Kentucky Department for Public Health, will receive the 2008 Junior Scientist Officer of the Year Award. The honor, chosen by a panel of scientists from the Scientific Professional Advisory Committee, will be awarded this week by the United States Surgeon General during a meeting of the U.S. Public Health Services Scientific and Training Symposium in Tucson, Ariz.

The award is intended to recognize junior commissioned officers in the scientist category whose professional career and work performance have resulted in significant contributions to the health of the nation and to the mission of the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS). As a CDC commissioned corps officer, Riggs has worked on numerous scientific studies and responded to needs in the field. She also has completed all of the requirements for the Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) while assigned to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) at the CDC, gaining experience and training in epidemiology, and in environmental and occupational health.

“I feel truly honored to receive this recognition from my fellow officers and grateful for all the collaborative efforts of my colleagues at Kentucky DPH and CDC,” said Riggs, a native of Erlanger.

Riggs was instrumental in national response efforts to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, spending 40 days in the greater New Orleans area on deployment. Some of her work included an outbreak investigation of mold exposure in New Orleans and she served as co-lead for a study of respirator use in the greater New Orleans area during disaster cleanup.

During her time in Kentucky, Riggs has initiated environmental public health preparedness projects such as training regional epidemiologists, public health nurses and environmental health specialists for participation in a full-scale preparedness exercise. She is also leading a preparedness pilot project to evaluate the usefulness of handheld devices to collect surveillance data following a disaster.

Riggs also has assisted DPH with investigations of shiga-toxin producing E. coli, cryptosporidium, shigellosis, pseudomonas and nationwide food recalls. In response to highly publicized MRSA cases in the fall of 2007, Riggs provided technical leadership in drafting recommendations for schools regarding infection control and environmental

June 9, 2008

cleanup. Riggs also initiated a collaborative investigation between NIOSH, the Kentucky Coal Association and DPH into the low participation rate of coal workers in a NIOSH funded x-ray surveillance program.

“In less than three years as a USPHS Commissioned Officer, LCDR Margaret Riggs has emerged as an exemplary officer,” wrote Stephanie R. Ostrowski, Riggs’ supervisor at the CDC, in a letter of recommendation for the award. “She has shown dedication, determination and professionalism in her support of the mission of Kentucky’s state health department, and of CDC, USPHS and DHHS (Department for Health and Human Services) missions.”

### **Upcoming CDC Broadcast to Feature Kentucky Preparedness Work**

*By Barbara Fox*

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) traveled to Kentucky last week for a taping in their satellite broadcast series entitled “Mass Antibiotic Dispensing” to highlight the work that the Kentucky Department for Public Health has accomplished in the field of communicating with at-risk populations during emergencies in support of the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS).

“We are pleased that the CDC has recognized the extensive work Kentucky has accomplished in the field of communicating with at-risk populations,” said William D. Hacker, M.D., commissioner for public health and acting undersecretary for health at the Cabinet for Health and Family Services. “Highlighting our work in this field is an opportunity for us not only to showcase our progress in this area, but to assist other state and local partners who are working to establish lines of communication with at-risk populations.”

Among the topics that the upcoming CDC broadcast will encompass includes: the Kentucky Outreach and Information Network (KOIN), a grassroots information network designed to reach vulnerable population groups in Kentucky; development of pictograms (pictures in place of words) to serve as way-finding devices for at-risk populations in SNS Points of Dispensing (PODs); and Kentucky’s pilot Special Needs Registry program, a voluntary database of registered individuals that may require evacuation assistance during an emergency because of special needs.

The federal government initially established the 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.

The satellite broadcast is scheduled to air on Aug. 14.

For more information on the Strategic National Stockpile program, visit <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/stockpile/>.

### **OIT Asks for Staff Help during Retirement Wave**

Many Cabinet employees will retire this year. A significant number of those will take place during the next six months.

All staff have a Network/e-mail account and possibly a mainframe account(RACF ID) or a VPN account. Those accounts will need to be decommissioned/deleted for people who are retiring.

June 9, 2008

All supervisors should make sure the “User Account Request Form” requesting deletion of the network accounts or VPN account is completed for any staff member that is leaving the Cabinet or changing jobs.

If staff leaving have files saved in their “User folder” and “pst folder” that need to be passed on to other staff, please address in the appropriate section on the form:

- Who the files should be transferred to.
- If the files need to be transferred to the “P” drive (Public) for access by numerous staff members. Due to storage space issues, OIT will not be making duplicates of employee files.

For supervisory field staff, it may be helpful to contact your local OIT technician as far in advance as possible to develop a plan for transfer of files that best allow for continuity of documentation within your office.

If employees have access to Mainframe applications (i.e., KAMES, KASES, Personnel, etc.) it is also necessary for supervisors to notify the “CHFS OIT Security Helpdesk” of the name of the staff person and date leaving so that more timely deletion of RACF ID’s can occur.

Find the forms you need at <http://chfsnet.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/8A1A3DC8-B788-4B97-AE5D-8AB88F5C7DC5/0/NetworkAccountEmailRequestFormandProcedures.xls>

### **The Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program**

If you suffer from arthritis pain or discomfort, there is a new class being offered in the CHR building that will help you reduce pain, increase flexibility, muscle strength and endurance, as well as improve balance, coordination and posture. The Arthritis Foundation has designed a recreational exercise program to meet the needs of these specific therapeutic problems. The

classes are taught by a certified instructor consisting of the core content that includes:

- range-of-motion exercises
- strengthening exercises
- endurance exercises
- weight-bearing activities
- balance and coordination activities
- posture/body mechanics
- body awareness
- breathing/chest expansion exercises
- relaxation techniques
- health education

Each class will be customized to meet the needs of each participant. However, please consult your physician before starting this exercise program. Classes will be during lunch time on Mondays and Thursdays for an eight-week period. Participants will perform a series of gentle movements and activities to achieve the goals of the exercise program. If you are interested in participating in these free exercise classes and would like to learn more, please contact Jennye Grider at [jennye.grider@ky.gov](mailto:jennye.grider@ky.gov)

*This week, the Focus brings you a new, regular column about personal finance and money saving tips in lean times. We welcome your input and hope to share as many of your money saving tips with readers as we can.*

### **Living Well: Exercise and Allergies**

If you have experienced itchy eyes, a runny nose and constant sneezing recently, then you are probably an allergy sufferer. For those of you who suffer from allergies but enjoy the outdoors, here are some tips to follow to maintain your physical activity routine without being limited.

- Avoid all activities that increase the impact of the pollen count. Pollen concentrations are at the highest level

June 9, 2008

between 5 and 10 a.m., so avoid these times.

- Watch for changes in weather, for example: temperature changes, windy conditions, humid days and precipitation.
- Monitor pollen levels and keep a log of how you felt to discover your personal tolerance level.
- Hit the shower, wash your hair and put on clean clothes immediately after a workout.
- Wear goggles or wrap around sunglasses if you suffer from itchy, water eyes.
- Wear a light paper face mask when doing outdoor activities or yard work.
- Use a saline nasal spray to clear the nose of any excess pollen after exercising.
- Be aware of oral allergy syndrome, a reaction between the pollen count outside and what you eat. For example, if you are allergic to birch trees and you eat apples, cherries or peaches it may intensify allergy symptoms. Also, chamomile tea, melon and bananas are known to interact with ragweed and other weed pollens.
- If allergy symptoms flare up after an outdoor exercise session, go inside and stay in an air-conditioned area until symptoms subside.
- Always warm-up and cool-down for at least 15 to 30 minutes before beginning strenuous activity.
- Pay attention to how you are feeling. Slow down or stop exercise when appropriate.
- Always use a mat when on carpet to avoid indoor allergens like dust, dust mites and animal dander.

Allergy season is definitely something to consider when scheduling your outdoor physical activity routine, but experts are saying that it is still safe to venture outdoors if you follow the above instructions. Exercises that involve a higher degree of movement increase both your

respiratory rate as well as increasing the amount of airborne pollen and mold spores inhaled and around your face.

Some allergy friendly workouts include yoga, swimming, Tai Chi, stretching and weight training because these activities are more sporadic and do not require a high intensity level over a prolonged period of time. Experts recommend allergy sufferers pay attention to pollen counts and to use common sense when exercising outdoors remembering that warm, breezy and dry days usually have the highest pollen counts versus rainy or cooler days.

### **Wendy's Raising Money for Adoption Awareness this Weekend**

*By Anya Armes Weber*

Staff can celebrate Father's Day and help the state's adoption recruitment efforts this Father's Day weekend by stopping for a sweet treat at the Wendy's restaurant franchise.

On Saturday, June 14, and Sunday, June 15, 50 cents from every Frosty purchased will be donated to the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption (DTFA).

A grant from DTFA's Wendy's Wonderful Kids program finances the salaries of two of Kentucky's child-specific recruiters in the Cabinet's Special Needs Adoption Program office. Tori Mack has worked for SNAP in Louisville since 2006, and Diane Underwood became part of the Lexington office this year.

Learn more about DTFA online at [davethomasfoundationforadoption.org](http://davethomasfoundationforadoption.org).

### **Employee Enrichment**

*By Anya Armes Weber*

June 9, 2008

Has a friend or family member told you they think you are a workaholic? If you are impatient, resistant to change, constantly multitasking and always have the need to be in control, they might be right.

Professional speaker and trainer Jack Singer recommends that workaholics – or “type A” personalities – have an outlet for their emotions. A hobby, a sport or counseling are some options.

Here are Singer’s other tips to avoid burnout:

- Make time for fun.
- Include relaxation in your daily schedule.
- “Unplug” by taking time away from electronics — even your cell phone.
- Integrate physical activity into your schedule to reduce stress.
- Communicate openly with family and friends.
- Be a support to others. Pay attention to those closest to you.
- Get help if you need it. The Kentucky Employee Assistance Program is a good place to start. Learn more at <http://personnel.ky.gov/programs/keap/>.