

# Staff deserve gratitude, honor for service

Last month, almost 100 DCBS staff from every region and every division were recognized at DCBS CARES Day, a special time to recognize exemplary service in several program areas. It was a special day, made even more special because Gov. Andy Beshear proclaimed it “DCBS Employee Appreciation Day,” a time to give

## From the Commissioner



praise and thanks to all DCBS staff for their strong level of performance and contributions to helping every Kentuckian meet their highest human potential.

The statewide honors were just the beginning. Since then, leadership and I have been travelling across the state for regional award, training and recognition events, where local teams could celebrate their own DCBS CARES Day winners and other staff who have made significant contributions to their program areas in recent years.

[Read more here](#)

# Outstanding staff recognized at DCBS CARES Day event



DCBS CARES Day, on Oct. 26 in Frankfort, was a celebration of exemplary staff and a chance to recognize employees from every division and every region for their above-and-beyond dedication and commitment to the children, adults and families of Kentucky and their fellow DCBS staff.

[Read more and see photos here](#)

## Public Health



## Corner Public Health

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Dr. Trinidad Jackson, Senior Advisor on Public Health

# Determinants of health are vital in policy planning

Hello DCBS!

In September’s newsletter, I referenced a video featuring public health science educator Deboki Chakravarti who stated that, “The conditions that people live, work, and play are what we call the social determinants of health and they can have an even more profound impact on our well-being than genetics alone.” She discussed key determinants including access to both quality health care and education, economic stability, the built environment, and the social environment.

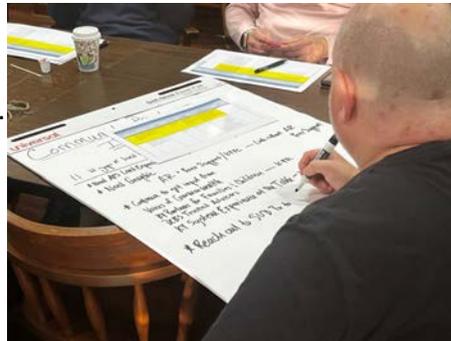
As I have referenced multiple times throughout past newsletters, these determinants are resources that we need to survive.

[Read more here](#)

# DPP leadership retreat focuses on family

This month the Division of Protection and Permanency had its leadership retreat at Cumberland Falls State Park Resort. The team identified barriers and systemic themes to placement for high acuity youth and discussed primary prevention and the DCBS vision for preventing child welfare involvement and the importance of early childhood education, infant home visiting programs and lifting families out of poverty.

Staff also participated in a poverty simulation conducted by the University of Louisville and learned about the burdens that our low-income families carry with them every day. There was also a great discussion and ideas about the DCBS 18-month strategic plan and how to move forward so that we can better support Kentucky families and create a system that eliminates barriers to accessing the services provided by DCBS. Great ideas and great discussion are leading to a rejuvenation in the DCBS vision toward creating a better system for all of Kentucky's families!





## Innovative Ky child care staffing support is featured in report

In October, NPR ran a great story about how Kentucky is supporting its child care workforce and local economies. All employees at regulated child care programs are eligible to have all household income excluded from the CCAP benefits application process, so they are eligible for free child care. This plan was intended to help alleviate child care staffing shortages, and so far it appears to be working.

The story quotes child care advocates who say providers are pleased that they finally are able to fully staff up their operations. Other states have also shown an interest in what Kentucky has done to help bolster child care options.

Read or listen to the story at <https://tinyurl.com/yc35s6jy>.

For full guidelines about CCAP for child care employees, visit <https://tinyurl.com/4v8pexmu>.

To apply for CCAP, call the DCBS Call Center at 855-306-8959 or go to [kynect.ky.gov](https://kynect.ky.gov).

## Kentucky Adoption Benefit Program supports employees on journey to their forever families

State employees interested in adoption can utilize the state Adoption Benefit Program. Through this assistance, employees have the option of a stipend and/or reimbursement, based on the needs of the family. State employees who adopt may receive up to \$5,000 for a standard adoption and up to \$7,000 if the child is certified by CHFS as having special needs.

DCBS staff who are interested in learning more about this benefit and applying can visit <https://extranet.personnel.ky.gov/Pages/Adoptionbenefit.aspx>.



## DFS staff are hungry for policy review at training

**Assistant Director Tonya Feese and Branch Manager Jessica Womack show their creativity in keeping participants engaged in Family Support Self-Sufficiency Branch training in October at Eastern Kentucky University.**

DCBS staff was hungry for policy review last month! Our Family Support Self-Sufficiency Branch held an in-person policy panel meeting at Eastern Kentucky University for program specialists across the state. Staff discussed best practices in administering benefits like Kinship Care, KTAP and Kentucky Works Program assistance. Here, Assistant Director Tonya Feese and Branch Manager Jessica Womack show their creativity in keeping participants engaged in the training!

Thank you Jessica and Tonya for giving your team an appetite to learn!

# DCBS supports fathers at annual meeting

Our staff joined the Commonwealth Center for Fathers and Families (CCFF) and CHFS at the 2023 Kentucky Fatherhood Summit in Lexington on Oct. 17-18. Commissioner Lesa Dennis gave opening remarks, focusing on how staff is recruiting more fathers with lived experience working with DCBS into agency roles as one way to improve services. Gov. Andy Beshear and Secretary Eric Friedlander also provided video remarks thanking fathers for their involvement and positive influence.

One terrific workshop was led by our own Executive Advisor Mary Carpenter, Kentucky Youth Advocates Strategic Initiatives Associate Valerie Frost and Theda Simpson-Mosby, member of KY SEAT, the state birth parent council. They discussed the importance of inclusive practices to better recognize fathers and mothers in all aspects of child welfare services. Through the Thriving Families, Safer Children movement, Kentucky is prioritizing the voices of those with lived experience – like dads involved with the child welfare system – to improve family services and keep kiddos safe and well.

Our Division of Family Support staff hosted an exhibit table and helped staff the event.

Learn more about TFSC at <https://kyyouth.org/tfscopy/>.

Learn more about CCFF and how you can become involved with their work at <https://www.ccffky.org/>.



# NBSR supervisors meeting honors staff

On Oct. 11, the Northern Bluegrass Service Region hosted its Regional Joint Protection and Permanency / Family Support Supervisor Meeting at the Boone County Library. Leadership recognized its regional nominees for the DCBS CARES Awards and worked through the day

on regional implementation of the strategic plan. The day concluded with a presentation on leadership skills and how to grow future leaders in the agency.

See more photos from the NBSR meeting [here](#).



# TRSR gives family of 11 OOHC youth its first 'trick or treat' experience

Last month, staff in our Logan County Protection and Permanency office helped a family get into the Halloween spirit!

The team has a sibling group of 11 youth in out of home care. Every week they have a large visit in the office with the parents and all of the kiddos. Staff learned that these children had never had the opportunity to trick or treat or celebrate Halloween, so they wanted to help them enjoy this childhood tradition.

This Two Rivers Service Region team was able to quickly decorate their offices, find costumes, buy candy and pizzas. They surprised the family with a pizza party and trick or treating in the office. It was such a fun afternoon for the whole family and the staff.

This is one way that DCBS staff go above and beyond to uplift families who are facing difficult circumstances.

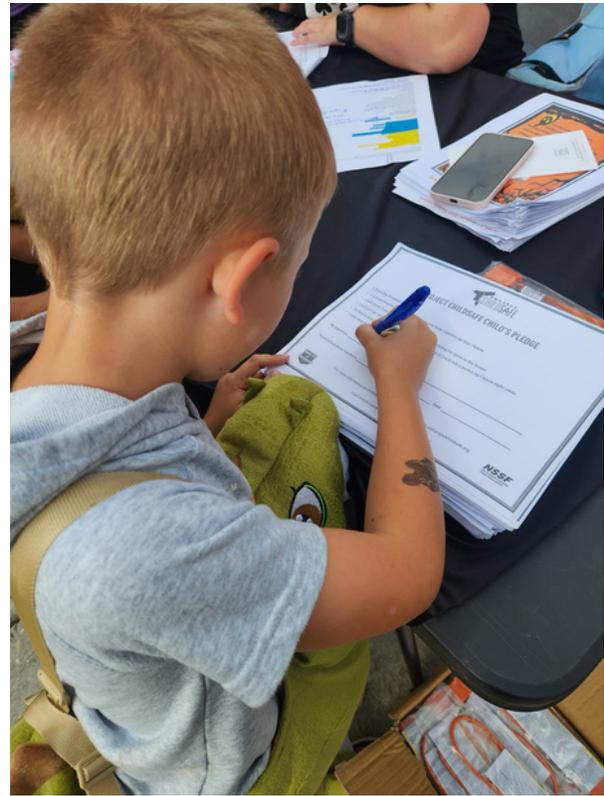
Do you want to help vulnerable children and families? Go to [kyfaces.ky.gov](http://kyfaces.ky.gov) to see how you can help.



# Whitley Halloween event focuses on home safety

The Whitley County Protection and Permanency team in our Cumberland Service Region coordinated a free family Halloween event last month at Kentucky Splash Waterpark in Williamsburg to raise awareness on gun safety and proper medication storage. DCBS and a host of community partners provided educational material, gun locks and medication lock boxes to prevent accidental gun shootings and medication ingestions. Families signed a pledge and were provided a gun lock and medication lock bags. This community has encountered several gun-related deaths among children, and this initiative helped to raise awareness for the need to properly secure guns and medications to prevent further incidents among children in the community.

Thirty community partners – including the Whitley County Sheriff Department, Williamsburg Police Department and United States Penitentiary (USP) McCreary -- contributed to the safety cause and provided helpful resources to families. More than 1,000 families from across the Tri-County area (Whitley, Knox and Laurel counties) attended, with children and adults dressed in their best Halloween costumes. Each DCBS office in Cumberland Service Region has been provided with medication lock boxes/bags and some have gun locks to provide to families as a preventative measure. Thank you Cumberland Region team and partners for keeping children and families safe!



# CSR gives London community Halloween fun

Our Cumberland Service Region recently held its 3rd annual Trunk or Treat event in London for foster children, complete with local partners giving out candy, treats, resources and great information. More than 200 families and children came out for free Halloween fun! Each DCBS team and community partner group embraced a theme, and prizes were given for the best-themed booth!

This great event allows foster parents, foster youth, community partners and staff to connect in a fun and friendly setting. It is also prime opportunity for DCBS to engage potential new foster parents. Current foster parents bring friends or family member to the event in efforts of recruiting new families. Thank you Cumberland DCBS team and partners for your engagement with families!



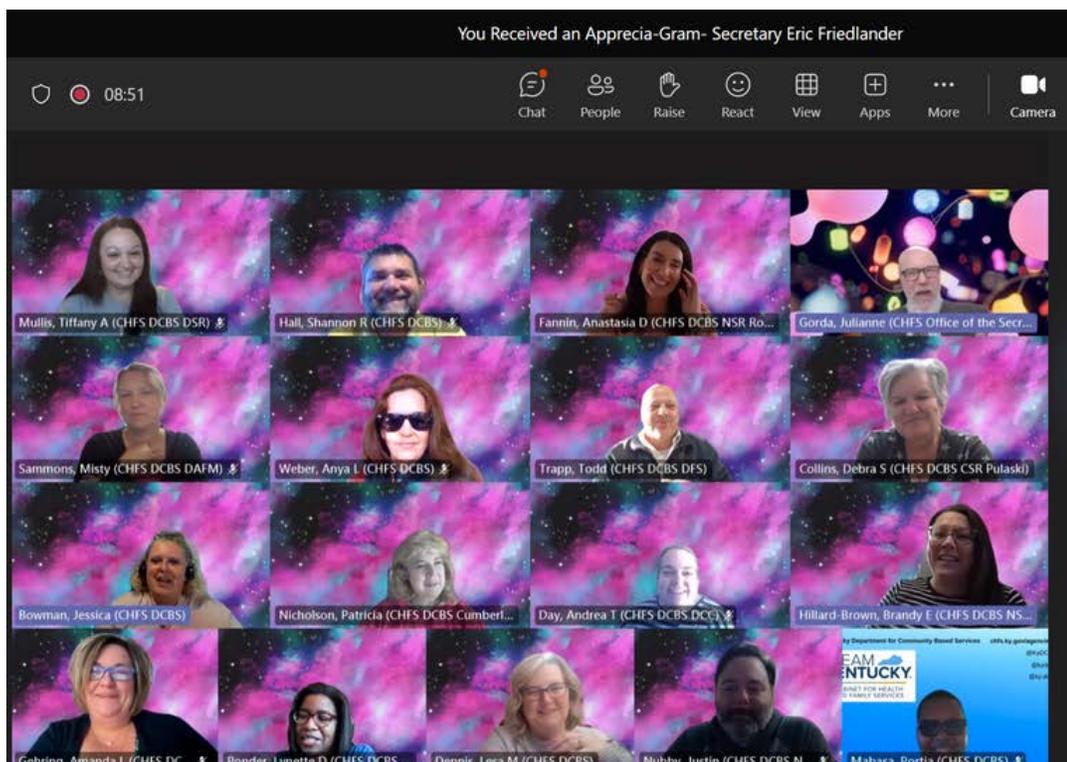
# Apprecia-Grams are a hit with KECC donors

Some of the biggest musical hits of this giving season are DCBS Apprecia-Grams, part of the department's KECC fundraising campaign.

In efforts to raise money for the Kentucky Employee Charitable Campaign and give beloved colleagues a shout-out, the DCBS KECC Committee has introduced Apprecia-Grams. These musical messages are a way for you to show your colleague how much they mean to you, and also a way to contribute to KECC. As of Nov. 13, Apprecia-Grams have raised more than \$600 for KECC!

With Apprecia-Grams, you can send your coworker a song of your choice (which will be sung to them via Teams by the DCBS KECC committee leads) or you can send your colleague a written note on why you appreciate them so much! You can send these "grams" anonymously or can be a part of the singing/delivering the message.

Apprecia-Grams are just \$2, and all funds raised go directly to KECC to provide services to our Kentucky families, children and vulnerable adults.



**Earlier this month, DCBS staff delivered an Apprecia-Gram in the form of the song "Celebration" by Kool & the Gang to CHFS Secretary Eric Friedlander for his support of staff and our work with customers and stakeholders.**

Want to see – and hear! – some examples of recent Apprecia-Grams? Visit <https://tinyurl.com/39645fvb> to check some out!

You can order Apprecia-Grams at <https://go.rallyup.com/appreciateyourcolleague>.

Learn more about the KECC mission and its charities at <https://www.kecc.org/>.

Thanks to all DCBS staff who are supporting KECC!

## Remember to redeem LivingWell Rewards by 12/31

Don't forget to redeem the LivingWell Rewards you have earned before Dec. 31 – they expire then and will not roll over to 2024 and cannot be accessed after the end of this year. KEHP members can earn up to \$200 in rewards for gift cards and goods. Medically enrolled spouses can earn up to \$100.

Log on to your LivingWell account at <https://webmdhealth.com/kehp/>.

**November is Diabetes Awareness Month**  
November is National Diabetes Month, a time when communities across the country seek to bring attention to diabetes. This year's focus is on taking action to prevent



diabetes health problems. There are many factors that can put you at risk of developing prediabetes. This can then lead to type 2 diabetes and other health conditions.

Some of the things that can put you at risk include factors that you can't control like your age, race and family history. However, some risks can be controlled with the support of a provider and certain medications.

These risks include:

- Being physically inactive
- Not being at a healthy weight
- Having high blood pressure
- And more

The good news is that small changes in these areas can make a big difference when it comes to diabetes. Whether you're living with the disease or trying to lower your risk, there are things you can do to improve your health.

Take the next step by talking to your provider about what you can do to prevent or better manage your diabetes.