



**DSSK TALK**  
*“People Focused & Service Driven”*

**MISSION STATEMENT**

*The mission of the McDowell County Department of Social Services is to respectfully assist families and individuals by helping them to maintain, and/or enhance their quality of life; and to prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable people in our community.*



**DIRECTOR’S EDITORIAL By Phillip Hardin**

**Continuous Improvement**

Our agency is moving forward by leaps and bounds. We are putting things in place that benefit the citizens that we serve and I think we should reflect on those accomplishments as well as plan for the future. As I have said before, these are trying times but this is also a time for opportunity for you personally as well as our agency.

We have been informed that the agency is going to be a recipient of a \$650,000 grant for Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing. This will enable us to provide a longer term solution to families concerning unmet housing needs. There is a community effort going on to provide a Health Navigator to work with individuals in the county concerning their medical needs. We are looking at out-posting Social Workers into our schools to better facilitate the work that we do in coordination with school personnel. We are working diligently to increase our participation in the Food and Nutrition program by having a staff member do outreach in this area in conjunction with MANNNA Food bank. In a coordinated effort with the hospital we have stationed a Medicaid worker in their facility to better serve the needs of our citizens. We established a Community Garden project this year to help our Work First clients gain work experience, give our Food and Nutrition clients the opportunity to grow their own food and promote a sustainable way of life as well as bring cooperation with our community partners.

These are just a few of the areas that the agency has been proactive in to make sure that we are serving the community as best we can. My message to you would be two fold. First thanks to each of you for all of the hard work over the past nine months in making these accomplishments a reality. I think we can be very proud of the work that we are doing and the agency that you work for. Second, I would like to challenge you to not sit on our laurels. Organizations continually have to change to meet the needs of our changing world. We can only stay on top of our mission by looking for better ways to do our business, improving ourselves internally and making a better place for our families to live and work. The work that we do is extremely important, especially in these challenging times. I look forward to bigger and better things from this group in the future. I truly believe that organizations as well as individuals can live by this motto; “life is a journey, not a destination”. I try to live up to that thought day in and day out. I hope that I am not the same person I was ten years ago, one year ago or even one day ago. I believe that an organization should adhere to the same train of thought.

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## ECONOMIC SERVICES

### FOOD & NUTRITION SERVICES

By: Denise Prewitt, Supervisor



On August 18, 2008 the Food & Nutrition Unit took on the task of operating a food pantry. This project fed 118 families from August 2008 to December 31, 2008. From January 1, 2009 to August 31, 2009 this project fed 226 families and a total of 344 families since the project began. This could not have happened without the hard work and dedication of the workers of that unit and the agency as a whole.

The Food Pantry has received several donations and a grant over the past year to help fund this project. As well as a donation made by the Employee Relations Committee on behalf of the employees of DSS. These grants and donations are instrumental in the continued success of this project. If you are interested in supporting this wonderful project that helps so many families in need in the McDowell County community, please contact Denise Prewitt at 828-652-3355 ext. 102.

If you would like to make a food donation, the Pantry is in need of the following items: Peanut Butter, Saltine Crackers, Instant Oatmeal, Jell-O (in a cup), Pudding (in a cup), mixed fruit (in a cup) and cans of mixed fruit.

The Food & Nutrition Unit would like to thank everyone who has contributed to The Food Pantry. With your continued support we hope to continue to help the families of McDowell County who are in need and we know that with your help, this next year will be even more successful.



### FAMILY & CHILDREN'S MEDICAID

By: Eileen Irish, Supervisor



On August 26, 2008 the Family & Children's Medicaid Unit started taking applications for the Medication Assistance Prescription Program. Since that time, we have served 224 patients and ordered 906 prescriptions totaling \$675,683.22.

We have started receiving program referrals from the Free Clinic, God's Country and continue to work with local Doctors and Medical Clinics throughout the county to deliver no or low-cost medications to low income individuals.

We look forward to the next year and we will continue to work hard to assist those who are in need of prescription assistance in McDowell County. If you know of someone who needs this kind of help, please have them call Jill Kehler at 828-652-3355 ext. 126 to schedule an appointment.

## ECONOMIC SERVICES

### ADULT MEDICAID / CLERICAL UNITS

**By: Trish Fields, Supervisor**

The front lobby has had a makeover. We now have beautiful bulletin boards that represent each unit in the Economic Services Division of DSS. The Brochure Corner has been updated and if anyone has a brochure that represents any of the services provided by DSS please feel free to utilize this corner. We have placed mail in applications out in the foyer for people to pick up for Food & Nutrition Services, Family & Children's Medicaid and Adult Medicaid. We have placed a new Lock Box in the Lobby for the Satisfaction Survey's that have been implemented by the ERC. The Number System has been implemented and is working well with providing the client's consistent customer service. The Desk Top Logger is currently undergoing some changes to improve speed. Soon you will be directed to access the Desk Logger directly from an IP address to improve efficiency for each worker.

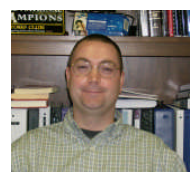
If anyone has any suggestions on how to improve Customer Service, please contact Trish Fields. Our number one priority at the front desk is to direct the clients to receive the services they need as quickly as possible. A good relationship between case workers and the front desk is essential to be successful at providing Great Customer Satisfaction. Working together to provide the client with the services that they need, brings great satisfaction to the client and to us as workers. Thanks to everyone for making this happen.

### WORK FIRST FAMILY ASSISTANCE UNIT

**By: Shaneah McCauley, Supervisor**

#### Work First Financial Social Worker

As we begin a new fiscal year at DSS, we have made another new addition by bringing on a Financial Educator to assist clients with household budgeting, EBT allotment management, credit repair, and money management. Steven Edwards is very qualified to be our clients Financial Educator. Prior to taking this position he was our Human Resource Placement Specialist (or Employment "Job" Coach); however, this position was eliminated due to budget cuts. As part of his new position, Steven also counsels with clients who are unemployed. Along with working with clients, this position is also responsible for researching and writing new grants for DSS. This position continues to serve clients through employment coaching as well as supervising the community garden project located on 226 South in Marion.



Steven Edwards

# EMPLOYEE RELATIONS COMMITTEE NEWS

By: Connie O'Brien

The holiday season is quickly approaching and The ERC has been very busy planning some exciting events involving the holidays during the next few months. On October 21st we will be hosting an information booth at the Health Fair. **Please don't forget to attend this event, your health insurance premium will be affected if you don't.** We will have an Office Clean Up Day on October 30th and The Bosses Day Luncheon will be held on October 16th at the Senior Center. We have set a date for the Annual Christmas Party for December 17, 2009 and it will be held at the church hall that we used last year. We will be having another Silent Auction on October 26th—28th. Please be sure to bring in any donations by October 26th. On November 24th we will be having a "Snack Day" too.

As you can see the Employee Relations Committee has been very busy. We would also like to mention that the success of this committee comes from the support of our employees and we would like to thank each of you for all that you do for this agency and the citizens of McDowell County. Keep up the great work.

## PICTURES FROM THE EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION LUNCHEON



Michelle Hinson, Tammy Webster, Stacey Poteat and Lynn Freeman



Jennifer Morgan, April Pope, Amy



Marie Yap was serving up drinks.



Lisa Sprouse and Dooley.



Marie Yap, Phillip Hardin and Jennifer Morgan taking a break.



DOOR PRIZES!!!



Gene Wahl, Roger Elliott, Susie Welborn and Kristen Hollifield.



THE DESSERT TABLE !!!

## ADULT SERVICES

BY: MIRIAM EARLY

Carole Woody Markum has accepted the CAP-DA Case Management position vacated by Gary Dale. Carole is a McDowell County native, and was employed by McDowell DSS from 1973 until 1984 in the Children's Services Unit. She has since lived in New Mexico and Los Angeles, California. Carole is married to Don Markum.

Ray Burluson and his wife, Becky recently adopted their fourth child, Patrick Ronald Burluson, who is 19 months old.

The state has recently frozen slots for the CAP-DA program. However, we worked very hard, and had all of our allocated 68 slots filled at the time of the freeze implementation. We've been told that we will be allowed to refill slots, unlike the freeze of 2001. We continue to maintain a waiting list, and operate on a first come, first serve basis.

We will soon be making plans for Christmas. We usually do "goody" bags and small gifts for our clients. Please consider making a donation to our effort. Any member of our team can speak with you about our needs if you have questions.

## Customer Service Survey

The agency undertook the process of surveying its customers as of July 1<sup>st</sup> to get their feedback about the experience they had while doing business with the Department of Social Services. To this point we have received 257 completed surveys. The results show that the agency which prides itself on providing good customer service is doing just that.

Here is a breakdown of the results:

- 146 surveys were marked "very satisfied" on all questions asked.
- 70 surveys were marked "satisfied" on all questions asked.
- 30 surveys were marked with a combination of "very satisfied and satisfied" on all questions.
- 11 surveys were marked with a combination of "satisfied" or dissatisfied.
- No surveys were marked as completely dissatisfied.

This shows a satisfaction rating of 96% of the surveys were marked as either very satisfied, satisfied or a combination of both. Only 4% of the surveys showed any form of dissatisfaction. The agency allowed customers to put their name and phone number on the surveys if they wish to be contacted and the agency has followed up with those customers.

As an agency that provides the types of services that we do, I think we should be proud of the fact that we have a 96% satisfaction rating. Also being a person who believes that there is always room for improvement we will strive to meet the 100% satisfaction rating. I applaud all staff and their hard work in making sure that we are on track with our interactions with customers. It is important that we strive to treat all customers with dignity and respect and it appears we are doing a very good job at that.

## SENIOR CENTER NEWS AND INFORMATION

### D.S.S. Employee Relations Committee Makes Donation to McDowell Senior Games



Pictured on the bottom row from left to right-Marie Ledford (McDowell Senior Games Ambassador), Renee Barrier, Abby Pittman, Jennifer Greenlee, Cindy Reel, & Cheryl Woody. On the back row-Weyland Prebor (Senior Center Director), Elizabeth Gartner, Susan Wilson-Taylor, Stacy Poteat, Jay Lingerfelt, & Connie O'Brien. Not pictured Rob Farkas, Jill Kehler, Becky Burleson, Denise Freeman, Marcie Ownbey and Cynthia Nettles.

We would like to thank D.S.S. and the D.S.S. Employee Relations Committee for the \$600.00 donation to Senior Games. The money will help sponsor the Senior Games State Finalists on their trip to Raleigh for the 2009 North Carolina Senior Games State Finals to be held September 21<sup>st</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>.

### Mary Grindstaff Retires

Mary Grindstaff, the first and only Nutrition Site Manager for Old Fort Nutrition Program for 32 years retired on July 31, 2009. Mary started with the program on March 23, 1977 at the original nutrition site located in the fellowship hall of the Old Fort Presbyterian Church. Over the years she has been a spokesperson for the senior nutrition program, helped implement the home-delivered meals program for the Old Fort area and was a key figure in the planning and building of the A.C. "Bud" Hogan Community Center which now houses the senior nutrition program.



Phillip Hardin, director of McDowell County DSS, presented Mary with a special certificate thanking her for her dedication to the seniors of McDowell County. He also mentioned that it was through her work that the seniors have such a wonderful new community building to come to each day. Weyland Prebor, director of the McDowell Senior Center, presented Mary with a printed message that read "In Honor of Mary Grindstaff for 32 Years of Service to the Seniors of Old Fort". He said that the message will be included on a plaque that will be installed at the community center in recognition of her work.

Even though Mary is retiring from her position she has no plans to stop being involved with the senior programs in McDowell. She is going to take some time to spend with her family and then plans to come back as a home delivered meals volunteer. Commenting on her last day of over 32 years Mary said " I have been so blessed, it has been a pleasure to get up in the mornings and go to work; not everyone can say that." Thank you Mary for your caring of the seniors of Old Fort!



Do you know someone who is on Medicare and needs assistance in paying for prescription drugs? Medicare beneficiaries may be eligible for the federal Extra Help low-income subsidy program if he/she has limited income and resources. The Extra Help program can increase cost savings by paying for all or part of the monthly premiums, annual deductibles and provide lower prescription co-payments under a Medicare prescription drug plan. To qualify for Extra Help, the annual income must be limited to \$16,245 for an individual (\$21,855 for a married couple living together). Additionally, the total resources must be limited to \$12,910 for an individual (\$25,010 for a married couple living together). The resources do not include a primary residence or a vehicle. If you believe someone you know may qualify for the Extra Help program, please encourage them to apply on-line

at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov), or contact our office 828-652-8953 to speak with a SHIP volunteer who can assist them with completing the on-line application process.

# Happy Birthday!

## OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Tonia Bartlett— 2	Peggy Grantham—12
Sheila Justice—4	Anita Woods—13
Gwen Conley—8	Elizabeth Gartner—16
Jiselda Lingerfelt—11	Linda Randolph—21
Veronica Long—11	Susie Wilhoit—23
Phillip Hardin -11	Lynn Freeman—26
	Theresa Beam—31

## NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Neva Galle—5	Margie Tilley—12	Kristen Hollifield—24
Cheryl Woody—7	Amy Snider—14	Carole Markum—27
Eileen Irish—8	Miriam Early—17	Abby Pittman—28
Cynthia Nettles—8	Sharon McKinnon—17	Helen Allison—29
Phyllis Long—10	Donna Shelton—20	Vicky Styles—30



## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Teresa Duncan—6	Debra Smith—24	Margo Monigle—15	Denise Prewitt—30
Stephen Brosky—21	Melinda Cole—31	Ted Young Jr.—23	Gene Wahl—31



## Work First Garden Report

By: Steven Edwards



We have been very blessed to have the wonderful soil and rain this year along with the right amount of sun. We have seen some plant damage due to the odd weather our region has seen earlier this year. As crops are harvested we are cultivating the land again and replanting new crops for this fall in hopes of pushing the garden season as long as possible using techniques from other community gardens from neighboring counties.

The latest on the garden is that we have worked together to plant over 40 rows of seeds and plants. We have planted cabbage, red cabbage, broccoli, radishes, carrots, beets, tomatoes, crookneck squash, straight neck squash, strawberries, green peppers, hot peppers, golden queen corn, potatoes, peaches & cream corn, bush beans, half runners, pumpkins, watermelons and cantaloupes. So far we have harvested 35 lbs. of radishes, 49 lbs. pounds of green onions, 95 lbs. of cabbage, 251 lbs. of squash, 322 lbs. of cucumbers, 104 lbs. of tomatoes, 13 lbs. green peppers, 5 lbs. of banana peppers, 6 lbs. of hot peppers, 19 lbs. of red cabbage, 850 lbs. of corn, 26 lbs. of bush beans, 36 lbs. of pumpkin, 189 lbs. of watermelon, and 15 lbs. of potatoes which were donated to the Senior Center, Friendship Home and to the local Men's Shelter.

We want to thank everyone that has been involved in making this a huge success and want to encourage those who have not taken part in this project to please participate when you can. We have been meeting on Wednesdays & Fridays between the hours of 9am-1pm. If you would like to volunteer please contact Steven Edwards at [828-652-3355 ext 151](tel:828-652-3355) or email [steven.edwards1@ncmail.net](mailto:steven.edwards1@ncmail.net) a day ahead so he can schedule activities for your participation. The daily projects vary day to day as we are learning and tracking the progress of the garden as well as battling the weather elements which has caused many reschedules. We typically do not go out in the mud and rain. If there is a question as to whether we will be going out to the garden on a specific day please call Steven for instructions, his voicemail is updated by 8:30 a.m. daily. Remember, there will only be notices on Steven's voicemail related to the garden on Wednesday and Friday. Volunteers are welcome and the help is greatly appreciated.

**NEW HIRES**

**Felicia Norman**—Felicia has taken the position of Income Maintenance Caseworker I in the Food & Nutrition Unit.

**Susan Wilson-Taylor**— Susan has taken the IA&T Social Worker Position in CPS.

**Sandra Thorne**— Sandra has also taken an IA&T Social Worker Position in CPS.

**Melanie Evans**— Melanie has taken the Social Worker II Position in CPS.

**Vanessa Conley**—Vanessa is now our Front Desk Receptionist in the Clerical Unit.

**Carole Markum**— Carole is working in the Adult Services Unit as a Social Worker II.

**Misty Biddix**— Misty has taken the Processing Assistant IV position in the Child Welfare Administration Unit.

**Alicia Buchanan**— Alicia has taken the Income Maintenance Caseworker I position the Adult Medicaid Unit.

**Jamie Bryant**— Jamie works in the Family & Children's Medicaid Unit as an Income Maintenance Caseworker I.

**Rachel Hawes**—Rachel will be working as the McDowell County DSS Attorney in the Administration Unit.

*The reason a dog has so many friends is because he wags his tail instead of his tongue. - Unknown*



**Renee Barrier (Foster Care)** & D.J. Barrier welcomed son #2 Isaac Jeffery Barrier, born 8/22/09 weighed in at 8 lbs 7 oz. and 22 inches long.

**Shirley Ward (Child Support)** would like to announce that her daughter Courtney Blasko married Kevin Turner on August 15 at Sunnyvale Baptist Church in Marion. The Bride is the Asst. Mgr. of Shoe Show and the groom owns Cecil Smith Barber Shop and is Associate Pastor of Lighthouse Baptist Church in Nebo. Congratulations!

Congratulations to Michael Brandon Freeman & Ashley Nicole Harris who were married on August 14, 2009. The groom is the son of **Lynn (Adult Medicaid)** and Randy Freeman.

**Shannon McKinnon (CPS)** would like to announce that her daughter Sage started Kindergarten at Eastfield Elementary and will be participating in the SPLASH Program. She is well on her way to being b i - l i n g u a l . Congratulations Sage!

**Announcements:**

**Jill (Family & Children's Medicaid)** and William Kehler would like to recognize their daughter Madicyn Kehler for being elected Vice President of Student Council at Marion Elementary. Madicyn had to prepare a speech, make up a skit to perform in front of the school and find a campaign manager. She made posters and hung them throughout the school and handed candy out to the student body. She put a lot of hard work into her campaign and it paid off. They are very proud of her. She is an honor roll student and is in the AIG Program as well. Sometimes in our busy lives as parents we forget just how hard our children work. They well deserve our praises too.

**Jenny Price (Clerical Unit)** would like to acknowledge her son Mark A. Huffman who is a federal Police Officer at Fort Hood in Killeen TX. Has been chosen as the Employee of the Month for August . He has also been chosen for the Color Guard. Mark is married and has two daughters Kylee and Morigan. Jenny is very proud of him.

Congratulations to **The Work First & Child Care Unit** for scoring a 100% on their recent Child Care State Audit. They did this despite restructuring in the organization of the unit. **Janice Hensley** and **Abby Pittman** now do intake, case management and provider reimbursement and have case loads of nearly 200 children each. **Sharon Morrison, Sheila Justice and Debbie Street** manage all WFFA childcare cases. This unit has also been able to deplete the waiting list for child care subsidy services. **Rose Wakefield** has also been helpful in training new workers and implementing the new Expanded Eligibility Program. This program provides child care for recently unemployed parents so they can look for work. Supervisor, **Shaneah McCauley** would like to thank them for a job well done.

Congratulations to **Marcie Ownbey (CPS)**. She became engaged to Aaron Walker on August 19, 2009. Marcie says that the wedding will be held sometime in August 2010.

**Jiselda Lingerfelt (clerical)** would like to announce that her nephew Cooper Reed Jackson has started the first grade at Nebo Elementary School and is doing a great. Aunt Jay is very proud of him!



Robert Lee Reel, son of **Cindy (Adult Medicaid)** & Mike Reel graduated NJROTC boot camp on 8/1/09. Mom & Dad are very proud of him.

**Charity Anderson (CPS)** would like to announce that her son Elijah Anderson graduated Early Head Start and will be attending First Baptist. Congratulations!

After weeks of asking "Do you have a name picked out yet?" She finally has arrived and has a name! Meredith Claire Snider. **Amy (CPS)** and Dave Snider welcomed their beautiful daughter on 7/27/09. She weighed in at 6 lbs 12 oz. And 19 inches long. Congratulations on your new bundle of joy!