

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, NEGLIGENCE, AND EXPLOITATION OF VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY



DIRECTOR’S EDITORIAL By Phillip Hardin

WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR ATTITUDES

In thinking about what to write for this edition of the newsletter I came across something that seemed to be appropriate for these times. I know that we place a lot of expectations on the families that we serve, like providing verifications to determine eligibility for services or following through with plans to be reunified with their children. The following is an excerpt from a John Maxwell book, *Developing the Leader Within You*, that I believe validates something for the families that we serve as well as ourselves and how we approach our jobs.

Our destinies in life will never be determined by our complaining spirits or high expectations. Life is full of surprises, and the adjustment of our attitudes is a lifelong project.

The pessimist complains about the wind.
 The optimist expects it to change.
 The leader adjusts the sails.

We choose what attitude we have right now. And it’s a continuing choice. I am amazed at the large number of adults who fail to take responsibility for their attitudes. If they’re grumpy and someone asks why, they’ll say, “I got up on the wrong side of the bed.” When failure begins to plague their lives, they’ll say, “I was born on the wrong side of the tracks.” When life begins to flatten out and others in the family are still climbing, they’ll say, “Well, I was in the wrong birth order in my family.” When their marriages fail, they believe they married the wrong person. When someone gets a promotion they wanted, it’s because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Do you notice something? They are blaming everyone else for their problems.

The greatest day in your life and mine is when we take responsibility for our attitudes. That’s the day we truly grow up.

I really believe this premise. We are only as happy as we want to be. Wouldn’t the world be a better place if we all took Mr. Maxwell’s advice?

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The Front Lobby Gets A Kid’s Corner

By: Connie O’Brien

If you have not had the chance to see the new edition of the Kid’s Corner in the front lobby, you really should take a look. Jay Lingerfelt and Ann Carroll took on the task of creating a Kid’s Corner for the children of our clients.

We now have a place for the children to sit and play as their parents or caregivers are waiting to be seen by someone on our staff.

Jay was able to go over to our Day Care that we recently closed and pick out and deliver the nice tables, chairs, toys, rug and books that now make up our Kid’s Corner. Jay says that she really enjoyed working on this project and it is rewarding to see the children playing and reading every day.

Thanks for the great job Ladies!

FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

By: Renee Barrier

McDowell County Department of Social Services currently has custody of 53 children. Each of these children are in need of love and nurturing, in a stable environment, while the agency works towards reunification with the biological parents, adoption, or another permanent plan for the child. Our goal in this agency is to be able to provide foster homes for all children in our custody, within their home community. At this time, only 7 of the 53 kids in foster care are placed in our county foster homes. This is due to many of our current foster homes being at capacity already, and because we just don't have enough foster families capable of caring for teenagers and sibling groups. As a result, many of our children are required to change schools, move to other counties, and be disconnected from their family, church, and friends. For these children to remain in the county, we need foster families for children of all ages, but specifically for teenagers, sibling groups, children with special physical and emotional needs, and children of minority backgrounds.

In an effort to increase the number of foster parents who are willing to care for children ages 13 and up, the agency has decided to increase the monthly payment that foster parents receive to cover the cost of caring for a child in their home. This rate for children ages 13 and above is \$1,000 per month per teenager. We, as an agency, understand that caring for children, especially teenagers, is a rewarding, challenging, and sometimes overwhelming experience. We hope that by being able to provide a little more money, to assist families in caring for these teenagers, more families will be able to share in the joy of caring for children who, more than anything, need a stable, loving home in which to learn and grow. Our goal as an agency is to be able to keep these children in their community as we serve their families stated Phillip Hardin, Director of DSS. We hope that by providing a little extra money that there will be families who step forward and fill the needs of the agency by opening their hearts to the children of the county, Mr. Hardin said.

Currently, foster parents receive a monthly payment based on the age of the child whom they are caring for. The rates are as follows:

- Ages 0-5 \$475 per month
- Ages 6-12 \$581 per month
- Ages 13+ \$1,000 per month



This money is intended to provide for the child's food, board, clothing, personal needs, and the general costs associated with providing care for a child. Since this money is considered as reimbursement for expenses for the child, this payment is not included as income for the family for tax purposes. Also, foster parents may claim a child in their care on their taxes if the child is under the age of 19, has lived in their home for more than 6 months of the year, and is not providing their own support or living expenses.

For more information about becoming a foster parent, visit our website at www.mcdowellcountyncdss.org or contact Renee Barrier, Foster Home Licensing Social Worker at 652-3355 ext. 122 or email me at renee.j.barrier@ncmail.net

ECONOMIC SERVICES

The Food & Nutrition Unit has been busy with their Food Pantry. This project has really been a great benefit to the families in McDowell County that have been effected by the recent downturn in the economy. So far this year they have been able to help 126 Adults and 70 Children for a total of 205 people as of March 27, 2009.

The Unit has held several fund raisers and has had donations from several outside organizations. Baxter Healthcare Inc. sponsored our Food Pantry for the month of January. We also received a large food donation from Karen Hoerner and her Sunday School Class.



Baxter's employees & donations.

This is a great example of a community that comes together during difficult times to take care of each other. A great big THANKS goes out to the caring citizens in our community that helps us, help people.

The Family & Children's Medicaid & Adult Medicaid Units now has an outpost Income Maintenance Caseworker stationed at the McDowell Hospital. Since January 5, 2009, Susie Wilhoit has been located at the hospital to assist in the application process for those people needing help with medical assistance. You can find Susie at the hospital outpost Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 5:00. She can be reached at 652-5291.

This is just another way that our agency is expanding its services so that every citizen in McDowell County that is eligible, and in need of assistance, is taken care of.

The Work First Unit would like to get the word out about domestic violence and what you can do if you find yourself in a domestic violence situation. The following is a Safety Plan for women in danger:

Have the following items hidden in a place where your partner can't find them:

- \$50.00 or more in cash.
- A small bag with extra clothes for you & your children.
- Any important papers including: Bank Account & Check Book Info., Social Security Numbers, His Date of Birth or Work Place, Insurance Policies, Marriage License, Birth Certificates and Important Phone Numbers.
- Sentimental valuables and photos.
- Any special medication for you or your children.
- Extra keys for your house and car.

Do not tell him where you are going!

If you have any questions about domestic violence please contact Family Services of McDowell County, Inc. at 652-8538 or the 24 hour line at 652-6150.

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

- 1 - Amanda Thawley
- 3 - Janet McCall
- 4 - Renee Barrier
- 7 - Jenny Price
- 10 - Rusty Watkins
- 28 - Agnes White



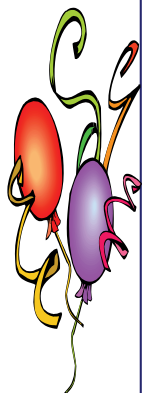
MAY BIRTHDAYS

- 4 - John Hughes
- 9 - Marie Yap
- 10 - Frances Martin-Standley
- 11 - Julian Grant
- 14 - Laura McCurry
- 18 - Jill Kehler
- 31 - Andy Webb



JUNE BIRTHDAYS

- 3 - Brandon Gaddy
- 4 - Rhonda Wheeler
- 12 - Rosa Upton
- 17 - Linda Waters
- 19 - Tammy Webster
- 19 - Cindy Laughter Reel
- 28 - Steven Edwards



Work First, Food and Nutrition Team Up to Grow Community Garden

Getting Back to Basics

In early January, Work First Supervisor Shaneah McCauley and Job Coach Steven Edwards were brainstorming about jobs for clients, basic food needs and the economy in general. As they talked the more excited they got about a simple but important concept: GROW YOUR OWN; **Food** that is. In a traditional rural mountain setting, farming and gardening has been a way of life since this area was settled in the mid 1700's. The land, volunteer expertise, job creation, self sufficiency, and basic independence to support your family and share with your neighbor made this initiative gain steam. Shaneah spoke with Food and Nutrition Supervisor Denise Prewitt, and then took their idea forward for Agency approval. "The first place we went outside the agency was to Cooperative Extension Agent Dan Smith, said Edwards. "Dan became sold on the idea early, and has been an integral part to get us where we are at this time." We immediately traveled to US 226 South at Landis Road, where Shaneah's Dad, businessman Jack Ross donated two plus acres for the garden site. Soil samples were taken, boxed and sent to Raleigh for nutrient testing.



Dan Smith collects a soil sample for testing.

The next step was to recruit a volunteer base of seasoned gardeners who could move the project forward as plowing, planting, maintenance and harvesting will be required. To further demonstrate the two unit's commitment, four agency staffers have enrolled in a 13 week Master Gardeners Class led by Dan Smith at Cooperative Extension. After a presentation by Edwards in February, ten Master Gardeners signed up to assist in the project. "Gosh, it was like an alter call at a tent revival" said FNS Outpost Worker Andy Webb. Edwards and Webb have approached the small business community of the county to ask for their assistance of supplies, plants, and equipment to get this project off the ground. "We have had 100 percent cooperation from every business owner we spoke to, said Edwards. "This simple concept is what our community wants to support; hard work and self-sufficiency. Participating in the garden will reap short and long-term rewards for our clients, and all who participate, hopefully for another generation of basic gardening," Edwards stated. It is DSS at its best, working internally and in collaboration with our community partners to find solutions to problems caused by the economic down turn, stated Phillip Hardin, Director at DSS.

This project also has a second year goal: A small green house for teaching and growing of plants to save money and valuable time. Edwards and Webb have already received commitments for materials and construction on the site for late 2009.

Please contact Steven, Sheneah, Denise or Andy for any questions or suggestions. Come and eat a "Mater" sandwich later with us!



SENIOR CENTER NEWS AND INFORMATION

A.C. “Bud” Hogan Community Center Project

The McDowell County Senior Center is seeking your help to complete the A.C. “Bud” Hogan Community Center. The building is entering the final stages of construction and now we are asking for assistance in furnishing the building for use by our seniors. The new building opening this spring will expand opportunities for older adults in the Old Fort area with the senior lunch program, educational classes, arts and crafts, fitness programs, as well as volunteer opportunities. If you, your church, or business would like to contribute to this project please call Weyland Prebor at (652-8953) or Mary Grindstaff (668-4867).

The A.C. “Bud” Hogan Community Center Wish List:

Tables (15), Chairs (128), Piano, Benches, Blinds, Clocks, Microwave, Refrigerator, Sound System, Bulletin Boards, Office Furniture, Stage Risers, Audio and Visual Equipment and Exercise and Fitness Equipment.

(We are currently accepting financial donations to help pay for the following items to be used by seniors at the new site)



A.C. “Bud” Hogan Community Center Grand Opening & Dedication

The A.C. “Bud” Hogan Community Center will have a grand opening and building dedication on Sunday, March 29th, at 2:00PM. The community center is located at 909 East Main Street in Old Fort and is directly across from the Ethan Allen plant. The 3,700 square foot building has a large dining room, classroom and fitness area for seniors to use along with additional office and kitchen space. The community center will serve as the focal point for senior citizen services in the Old Fort area. In addition to providing a daily lunch on site for area seniors Monday-Friday the new facility will expand opportunities for classes, fitness programs, as well as volunteer opportunities. Also the Old Fort part of the McDowell home-delivered meals program will be ran out of the new site bringing meals to homebound senior citizens.

The current site of the senior program in Old Fort is at the 1st Presbyterian Church on Main Street. The church has been very gracious over the last thirty years to allow the program to operate in the fellowship hall. Tremendous growth in participation has occurred in recent months and the building is no longer adequate to meet the growing number of seniors who wish to participate on a daily basis. Parking is an issue, as well as handicapped accessibility.

Mr. A.C. “Bud” Hogan saw the changes taking place at the current location and has worked for several years with McDowell County government to get a new location for the Old Fort senior program. Last year Mr. Hogan purchased and donated the land for the project to the county. McDowell County Commissioners accepted the donation and agreed to build a community center with a central purpose of serving the seniors in the Old Fort area. Mr. Hogan was quoted as saying he is “very pleased” with the building.

The upcoming ceremony will start outside with the Pledge of Allegiance and ribbon cutting. The service will then move inside the new building and will include several guest speakers and a special performance from the Old Fort Community Chorus. Light refreshments will be served following the ceremony and guests attending may tour the building. Donor opportunities will be on display for those that would like to help with the building fund and donations will be accepted. The ceremony is open to the public and everyone is invited to attend. Overflow parking will be located next door at the Ethan Allen Plant.





BITS AND PIECES



JOB CHANGES

Teresa Beam— Teresa is now working in the Foster Care Unit as a Social Worker. She brings years of Social Work experience to the position.

Debbie Street— Debbie Street is now the Community Employment Case Manager in the Work First Unit. Debbie has worked in several other departments within the Agency such as an Income Maintenance Caseworker in the Food & Nutrition Services Unit and The Child Care Caseworker in the Work First Unit.

Janice Hensley—Janice is now an Income Maintenance Caseworker and will remain in the Child Care Unit where she has been since she came on board in January 2004.

Tonia Bartlett— Tonia is now an Income Maintenance Caseworker in the Food & Nutrition Services Unit. She was previously working as the Receptionist in the Clerical Unit.

Phyllis Revis—Phyllis is now working in the Clerical Unit as the Receptionist.

NEW HIRES

Abby Pittman—Abby has filled the position of Child Care Caseworker that was vacated by Debbie Street.

Cindy Laughter Reel—Yes! We now have 2 Cindy Reel's. This Cindy has been hired to take Pat Biddix position of Processing Assist IV in the Adult Protective Services Unit.

Marcie Ownbey— Marcie graduated from the University of North Carolina Asheville with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Minor in Sociology. She has worked as a Nanny and was a Field Organizer for the Barack Obama Campaign in McDowell & Rutherford Counties. She is an Income Maintenance Caseworker in the Adult Medicaid Unit.

Tammy Webster—Tammy comes to us from The McDowell Hospital where she worked for over 12 years. She is now working as an Income Maintenance Caseworker in the Adult Medicaid Unit.

Ian Allen— Ian was born and raised in Western NY. He moved to North Western Pa. in his twenties where he worked his way up to Office Manager in a Staffing agency. In September 2006 he moved to NC and worked at Shadowline Inc. in Morganton. He has taken the position of Income Maintenance Caseworker in the Family & Children's Medicaid Unit.

QUOTE OF THE QUARTER

Human Beings, by changing their inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives. William James 1842-1910

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ann Carroll— Charlie Carroll and Amber Amator welcomed a beautiful daughter by the name of Mayce Carroll. Mayce was born on 12/26/08. She weighed 7 lbs. 4 oz. and was 21.5 inches long. Charlie is the son of Ann Carroll, Lead Worker of the Clerical Unit.

Becky Burleson— Michael "Justin" and Tiffany Vess Riddle welcomed a beautiful little girl named Macayden Marie Riddle. She was born on 1/22/09. Justin is Becky's son.

Sabrina McIntyre- Sabrina and her husband Steffona welcomed a beautiful baby girl named Kristen Michelle McIntyre on 12/26/08. She weighed 8 lbs. 12.5 oz. and was 21.5 inches long.

Alison McCall- Alison's daughter Marley McCall, 5th grader at Chesterfield Elementary School, competed in the speech contest and won in the poetry category. She recited Casey at the Bat. On February 3, Marley competed at the County level. Congratulations on a job well done!