

# 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 SHOULD BE PROUD

In thinking about writing this article I was trying to put together all of the things the agency has accomplished in the last year. I finally decided that they were too numerous to list in the small space that I get in the newsletter. I will say that we should be proud of the work that we do and all of the progress this organization has made over the last year.

The economic situation in the county, as well as the country, has certainly presented its share of concerns for our agency. Our business is booming. The real challenge with that is how to accomplish more work with less resources and staff. We have certainly risen to the occasion by taking a look at how we do our business and adjusting our processes to meet those challenges. We have automated more of our process, been proactive in developing outreach positions to take our work into the community, streamlining how citizens can apply for benefits with outreach and also with the use of our web site, and being accountable to our clients, ourselves and our co-workers. I think that everybody has just put their nose to the grindstone and worked really hard to serve our ever increasing caseloads in a timely, efficient, and quality manner. For that I thank you and once again say be proud of the work that you do, it is important.

I also do not foresee any abatement of the current economic situation therefore, I think it is imperative that we continue down that path we have taken over the last year. I also think it is important to not rest on our laurels and continue to be diligent in looking for better and more efficient ways to serve our customers. I have the utmost confidence that our staff will again rise to the occasion and continue to go about changing the way we do our business, to be more client driven, family centered and quality focused. For that I thank each and every one of you for making this a wonderful Department of Social Services, a good place to work, and an organization that cares about the families that they serve. I hope all of you have a wonderful Holiday Season.

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### CIP ASSISTS THOSE WITH EMERGENCY HEATING NEEDS

By Eileen Irish

The Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) serves individuals and families who are experiencing a heating or cooling-related crisis. At the beginning of each fiscal year (July through June), each county receives an allocation to fund CIP. As a block grant program, funding is limited.

To qualify as a crisis, the household must be experiencing an event beyond its control, have no heating or cooling source or the source is in jeopardy, have a household member whose life is at risk because of no heating or cooling source due to weather conditions, and have no other means of alleviating the situation.

A temperature of 32 degrees or below for a two or three day forecast is considered a situation to put a household at risk due to weather conditions, which was the prediction in McDowell County area effective November 6, 2008.

From the start of the fiscal year through December 11, the Department has authorized \$156,991.86 in CIP funds. Those funds assisted 442 families, and of those families 150 had at least one individual 60 years of age or older, 176 households included at least one disabled person, and 87 families included a child age 5 years or under.

Funds are limited to one time per household for the fiscal year, and at a limit of \$500 or 100 gallons of heating fuel, whichever is less. The family income must be below 150% of the Federal Poverty Income Level.



# DSS LAUNCHES WEB SITE

The McDowell County Department of Social Services (DSS) recently unveiled a new tool to help citizens of the county navigate the programs that it administers. DSS now has a web site available to provide information to the general public. To reach this site, go to [www.mcdowellcountyncdss.org](http://www.mcdowellcountyncdss.org)

The agency will strive to provide the most current information about all of the programs it is responsible for on this site. There is information about Food and Nutrition Services, Medicaid, Children’s Services, Crisis Assistance, Work First, Child Support, and more. We also have tried to include basic eligibility information about these programs so that citizens can come prepared when applying for benefits. There are also links to many of the forms the agency uses for its programs that can be completed prior to coming into DSS. Some of these forms include applications for programs such as Food and Nutrition Services and Medicaid that can be mailed back into DSS and may keep you from having to come to the agency and apply.

Our agency will also post current news about its programs; post all job listings within the agency and keep copies of its agency newsletter on the site. The agency has also tried to provide links to community, state, and federal programs that are of interest to citizens on this site. “Our goal is to give residents easier access to information and the ability to apply for our programs” stated Phillip Hardin, Director of DSS. “This is just another tool in the agency’s outreach efforts and ability to provide services out in the community and away from the main DSS office” Hardin said.

We welcome any feedback or input on this website. Please direct your comments to Phillip Hardin or Stacy Poteat at 652-3355.



## ADULT SERVICES MIRIAM EARLY, SUPERVISOR

### Adult Services

Merry Christmas from the Adult Services unit! We have been busy for several weeks collecting donations, making treat bags, and delivering Christmas cheer! Many of you have contributed, and we, as well as the less fortunate elderly and disabled, are very appreciative. We were able to serve well over 400 clients. Margie Tilley (Food and Nutrition) obtained 120 donated blankets, and we were privileged to deliver them. They were a big hit!

We have attempted to still enjoy the season in the midst of the rush. Pat and Shannon took time to decorate a tree, and the unit shared food and fellowship. Everyone was grateful for a little time to relax!

Adult Services wishes every one a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



Pat Biddix



Donna Shelton, Ray Burluson, Gwen Conley, and Gary Dale



## ECONOMIC SERVICES

### Economic Times Increase Business

BY: PHILLIP HARDIN

When the economy goes south, our business continues to grow. With the hard times many families are facing across the country, families in McDowell County are faring no better. We continue to see our caseloads grow, especially in our Economic Service Programs such as Food and Nutrition Services (formerly Food Stamps), Medicaid, and Crisis Services such as heating assistance.



The Food and Nutrition Services caseload has increased approximately 50% over the past 18 months. We have grown from around 1600 cases to around 2400 cases. This has put a real strain on our staff and resources to be able to process applications in a timely manner while still meeting our quality standards. We have done some internal shifting with staff in order to meet these demands. Our Medicaid Program continues to increase, especially due to the large number of layoffs in the county. We have increased our Medicaid Program approximately 10% over the last 12 months. Our demand in Medicaid in the nursing home and assisted living area has also increased. The demand for heating assistance has been unprecedented this year. We opened up our funding to the general public in November of this year and went through \$117,000 in two days. We received another \$43,000 and it was gone in 4 days. Our funding for subsidized child care has been stagnant with a small cut during this budget crunch that has left us with over 200 families on the waiting list for this service.



The real challenge has been how to handle the increase with existing staff and resources. With the economy so hard on families, it also takes a toll on county governmental finances. We are being proactive about cutting our budget, and this means freezing some existing positions and doing with less. We have also seen a new group of families in our agency that we have not seen before which has presented us with certain challenges. I want to personally thank the staff for all of their hard work during these times of increased stress and caseloads. I think we have pulled together as a team and provided the services to families in the community with dignity and respect. I think the old adage of **worker smarter, not harder** plays well during this time and we welcome any ideas, input or suggestions to continue to serve the families that come through our door.

### JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1st- Debbie Williams
- 11th- Denise Freeman
- 13th- Teresa Burleson
- 14th- Shannon Jones
- 16th- Barbara Gautney
- 19th- Trish Fields
- 19th- Lisa Sprouse
- 20th- Leighann Ayers
- 21st- Stacey Poteat
- 27th- Charity Anderson
- 29th- Robin Ayers
- 31th- Roger Elliott



### FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1st- Ann Carroll
- 1st- Jennifer Morgan
- 2nd- Donna Wilson
- 5th- Manuel Guzman
- 5th- Linda Jackson
- 13th- Allison McCall
- 20th- Amy Brooks
- 23rd- Mary Grindstaff
- 24th- Nancy Day
- 26th- April Pope



### MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 6th- Weyland Prebor
- 9th- Jennifer Greenlee
- 14th- Barbara Braswell
- 23rd- Debbie Gardin
- 25th- Judy Hartman





## A Different Christmas Poem

Submitted by Alan Mainer  
County Veterans Services Officer

The embers glowed softly, and in their dim light, I gazed round the room and I cherished the sight.  
My wife was asleep, her head on my chest, my daughter beside me, angelic in rest.  
Outside the snow fell, a blanket of white, transforming the yard to a winter delight.

The sparkling lights in the tree I believe, completed the magic that was Christmas Eve.  
My eyelids were heavy, my breathing was deep, secure and surrounded by love I would sleep.  
In perfect contentment, or so it would seem, so I slumbered, perhaps I started to dream.

The sound wasn't loud, and it wasn't too near, but I opened my eyes when it tickled my ear.  
Perhaps just a cough, I didn't quite know, then the sure sound of footsteps outside in the snow.  
My soul gave a tremble, I struggled to hear, and I crept to the door just to see who was near.

Standing out in the cold and the dark of the night, a lone figure stood, his face weary and tight.  
A soldier, I puzzled, some twenty years old, perhaps a Marine, huddled here in the cold.  
Alone in the dark, he looked up and smiled, standing watch over me, and my wife and my child.

"What are you doing?" I asked without fear, "Come in this moment, it's freezing out here!  
Put down your pack, brush the snow from your sleeve, you should be at home on a cold Christmas Eve!"  
For barely a moment I saw his eyes shift, away from the cold and the snow blown in drifts..

To the window that danced with a warm fire's light then he sighed and he said "Its really all right,  
I'm out here by choice. I'm here every night." "It's my duty to stand at the front of the line,  
That separates you from the darkest of times.

No one had to ask or beg or implore me, I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before me.  
My Gramps died at 'Pearl on a day in December," Then he sighed, "That's a Christmas 'Gram always remembers."  
My dad stood his watch in the jungles of 'Nam', and now it is my turn and so, here I am.

I've not seen my own son in more than a while, but my wife sends me pictures, he's sure got her smile.  
Then he bent and he carefully pulled from his bag, the red, white, and blue... an American flag.  
I can live through the cold and the being alone, away from my family, my house and my home.

I can stand at my post through the rain and the sleet, I can sleep in a foxhole with little to eat.  
I can carry the weight of killing another, or lay down my life with my sister and brother..  
Who stand at the front against any and all, to ensure for all time that this flag will not fall."

"So go back inside," he said, "harbor no fright, your family is waiting and I'll be all right."  
"But isn't there something I can do, at the least, "Give you money," I asked, "or prepare you a feast?  
It seems all too little for all that you've done, for being away from your wife and your son."

Then his eye welled a tear that held no regret, "Just tell us you love us, and never forget.  
To fight for our rights back at home while we're gone, to stand your own watch, no matter how long.  
For when we come home, either standing or dead, to know you remember we fought and we bled.  
Is payment enough, and with that we will trust, that we mattered to you as you mattered to us."

## SENIOR CENTER NEWS AND INFORMATION



Coming January 8, 2009

Thursday Evenings

6:00 pm – 7:00 PM

\$5.00 per class or \$20.00 for 4 weeks

Instructor: Betty Coleates

Experience a Fitness class like no other!

The [Zumba®](#) Gold Fitness program is second to none. It is an innovative, fun and exciting program. It was designed for the active older adult, the true **beginner**, and/or people who are not used to exercising, or people who may be limited physically.

This amazing program is very easy to follow so anyone at any age will be able to do Zumba Gold. Dances that are specifically highlighted in this program include the Merengue, Salsa Cha-Cha, Cumbia, Salsa, Rock & Roll (including Twist and Charleston), Belly Dance, Flamenco, and Tango.

Zumba can leave a person with a “feel good” sensation by using easy to follow dance steps coupled with infectious music to create a truly fun and party-like atmosphere.



### Walk to Jerusalem Program



What is the Walk to Jerusalem Program?

The McDowell Health Department, The Corpening Memorial YMCA, and McDowell Senior Center are partnering to offer the Walk to Jerusalem activity challenge. The main mission of Walk to Jerusalem is to provide a faith-based physical activity program for community members.

The Walk to Jerusalem program goal is to organize teams at the senior center, with your family, a club, or in your church. The goal of the team is to walk the number of miles from Marion to Jerusalem (approximately 6,267 miles) between New Years and Easter.

“Health leaders” are needed to organize teams to participate and be responsible for turning in the number of miles walked each month to Cheryl Woody. ALL AGES CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE WALK. 20 minutes of physical activity is equal to walking one mile. The overall goal is to get people moving and therefore possibly reduce their health risks.

### McDowell Senior Games Brings Back 12 Medals

The McDowell Senior Games competed in Raleigh from September 22<sup>nd</sup> until October 14<sup>th</sup> in the State Senior Games Finals. They represented McDowell County well and came back with 12 medals.

- |                 |                             |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Jeter Laws-     | Gold, Bowling Mixed Doubles |
| Ruth Laws-      | Gold, Bowling Mixed Doubles |
|                 | Bronze, Bowling Doubles     |
| Opal Beavers-   | Bronze, Bowling Doubles     |
| Bob Beavers-    | Silver, Bowling Singles     |
| Hilda Messer-   | Silver, Shuffleboard        |
| Thomas Johnson- | Gold, Spin Casting          |
|                 | Gold, Softball Throw        |
|                 | Bronze, Croquet             |
| Judy Hensley -  | Gold, Bocce                 |
|                 | Bronze, Cycling 1Mile       |
|                 | Bronze, Cycling 5K          |



Pictured from left– Judy Hensley, Opal Beavers, Ruth Laws, Thomas Johnson, and Jeter Laws. Second Row: Bob Beavers,

Marie Ledford, Elizabeth Plemmons, Gene Moffitt, and Betty Prebor. Not Pictured- Charlotte Pike, Susie Sweet, Gwen Straub, and Hilda Messer.

The wind suits worn by the Senior Games participants were purchased by McDowell County DSS employees who worked all year raising money at various fundraisers. **Thank You!!**



# BITS AND PIECES



## JOB CHANGES

**Trish Fields**—Trish has taken the position of Adult Medicaid, Clerical and Transportation Supervisor. She has worked for McDowell County DSS for five and a half years. She was an Income Maintenance Caseworker in the Family & Children’s Medicaid Unit for four and a half years and she was the Work First Case Manager for the last six months.

**Phyllis Lowe**—Phyllis has taken the position of Processing Assistant III in the Clerical Unit.

**Stacy Poteat**—Stacy is now the Transportation Coordinator. Stacy is also responsible for updating our new website.

## NEW HIRES

**Ray Hemphill**—Ray has taken the position of Transportation Driver. Ray will be driving our new Chrysler Van.

**Tonia Bartlett**—Tonia has taken the position of Receptionist and is from McDowell County and worked at Southern Traditions Credit Union. She is married with 3 children.

**Steven Edwards**—Steven is working in the Workfirst Unit as the Job Coach. He is married with 2 children. He was stationed on the USS Kittyhawk for 4 years while serving in the US Navy. He also served in the Asheville Naval Reserve Unit for 2years and has 13 years manufacturing experience and 2 years engineering experience.

**Kendra Helms**—Kendra has an accounting background and worked at Blue Ridge Health Care System before she took the position of Income Maintenance Caseworker in the Family & Children’s Unit.

**Jill Kehler**—Jill is the Family & Children’s Medicaid Unit Clerk. She came to us from Child Support where she worked for 3 and 1/2 years as an Office Assistant III. She is married and has a 10 year old daughter.

**Janet McCall**—Janet has taken a position in the Foster Care Unit. She and her husband own a Bar-B-Que catering business.

**Cynthia Nettles**—Cynthia is the new Income Maintenance Caseworker in our Food & Nutrition Unit. She is from Florida where she worked as a corrections officer. She transferred to McDowell County and worked for the North Carolina Department of Corrections before she came to work here.

**Jennifer Greenlee**—Jennifer recently moved back to Old Fort where she grew up and has taken a position in the Foster Care Unit. She lived in Virginia and has some background in Medicaid.

**Phyllis Revis**—Phyllis has taken the position of Income Maintenance Caseworker in the Adult Medicaid Unit. She retired from Baxter’s where she worked in Purchasing for 25 of her 35 years.

**Andy Webb**— Andy has taken a position as Outreach Income Maintenance Worker in the Food & Nutrition Services Unit. This position was made possible by The Manna Food Bank to help reach to under served people of McDowell County.

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## QUOTE OF THE QUARTER

**REAL INTEGRITY IS DOING THE RIGHT THING, KNOWING THAT NOBODY IS GOING TO KNOW WHETHER YOU DID IT OR NOT. - OPRAH WINFREY**

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**Connie O'Brien's** son, Airman Anthony O'Brien and his wife Brittany O'Brien welcomed their first child, Anthony Jordan O'Brien Jr. on October 16, 2008 He weighted 8 lbs. 3 oz. and was 20 and 1/2 inches long.

**Anita Woods** became a NaNA on November 11, 2008. Jalaya Nicole Hamilton weighed 7 lbs. 9 oz. Mom is Anita’s daughter Courtney Adams and Dad is Calvin Hamilton.

**Barbara Hollis'** daughter, Christine and her husband Long Tran welcomed twins, Wren Mia Tran weighed 3 lbs. 16 oz. and was 16 inches long and Serin Ly Tran weighed 3 lbs 8 oz. and was 16 inches long. They were born on December 2, 2008. Barbara and her husband Fred are very excited.

**Denise Prewitt's** son Sgt. Levi Andrew Grooms married Summer Dawn Butler at Blue Creek Baptist Church in Jacksonville, NC on December 6, 2008. Levi is a Sgt in the US Marines and Summer is a Federal Government Travel Agent.