

Karen's Corner



West Virginia's health statistics indicate there is a high incidence of chronic diseases and unhealthy lifestyles. According to 2013 data, we are among the bottom in America's health rankings, and, unfortunately, these statistics have not moved in a positive direction over the years. As number 50 in preventable hospitalizations, number 49 in heart disease and number 45 in high blood pressure, it is evident that we need to support the people of our state as they begin to take control of their health.

DHHR has been working to change this culture by encouraging good preventive measures like flu shots, mammograms, blood pressure screenings and others. We need to be proactive, not reactive. Taking personal responsibility for your healthcare today can lead to a healthier tomorrow for both you and your family. There are many important services that can help individuals stay healthy and several are available at little or no cost. Understanding your healthcare needs and how to access services is a key component of this initiative.

Many of our newly insured population are not accustomed to accessing the health care system until they become acutely ill. That's why members of the West Virginia Health Innovation Collaborative worked with Tom Susman and his TSG Consulting staff to produce a public service announcement (<http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/News/2014/Pages/PSA.aspx>) on preventive services available to those with coverage. I had the opportunity to introduce this 60-second clip in Beckley on July 22, and I was encouraged by the passion and interest shown by local leaders. It is my belief that awareness of health benefits available to our citizens will improve the overall health of the state and reduce costs in the future.

It all starts with our commitment as individuals. As Cabinet Secretary, I ask myself every day, "How will the decisions I make improve the health and well-being of the people of West Virginia?" I challenge you to do the same.

American Red Cross Honors Roy Frasher of MMBH

Individuals, businesses and organizations from 20 counties throughout the 100-county American Red Cross Greater Alleghenies Region were honored during the organization's annual meeting at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, on June 5, 2014. The honorees included Roy Frasher, volunteer services director at Mildred Mitchell-Bateman Hospital in Huntington.

Roy joined the Mildred Mitchell-Bateman team in the Recreation Therapy Department of what was then Huntington State Hospital. He has worked for the hospital for more than 53 years in many different capacities, and is widely recognized for his dedication as a mentor, volunteer and philanthropist. Roy is seldom seen without a smile and a kind word.

Roy also serves as Employee Assistance Counselor for Mildred Mitchell-Bateman Hospital. He refers employees to local agencies that can help them with personal or family issues that may impact their ability to perform their work with the same confidentiality and compassion he shares with patients.

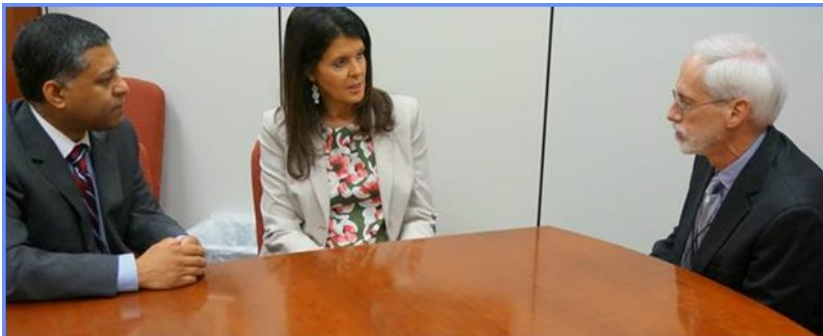
"Roy truly understands the importance of teamwork and the role the Department fills statewide," said Cabinet Secretary Karen Bowling. "We are proud of the positive impact Roy makes personally and professionally with patients and coworkers."

Roy has coordinated MMBH blood drives for more than a quarter-century. The hospital, which holds six or seven blood drives annually, nets approximately 18-20 donations at each visit, including some short-notice blood drives in place of blood drives cancelled elsewhere. Roy includes information about each blood drive in his monthly newsletter; emails and calls donors from previous blood drives to schedule them; and also writes a personal memo to scheduled donors to remind them of their appointment and hand-delivers the memo. He volunteers at each drive and is always very accommodating to donors and staff. Roy takes great pride in coordinating blood drives, evidenced by the fact that he always has a full schedule and his blood drives average 92% operational efficiency.



Roy Frasher & DHHR Secretary Karen Bowling

Chemical Spill Evaluation Work Continues



Secretary Karen L. Bowling discusses the toxicological studies to be performed in West Virginia in connection with the Jan. 9 Elk River chemical spill with Dr. Rahul Gupta (left), Kanawha-Charleston Health Department, and Dr. John Bucher (right), associate director of the National Toxicology Program. Bowling, Dr. Letitia Tierney, Gupta and Bucher met with West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, Dr. Thomas Frieden, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other federal officials in Manchin's Washington office on July 23.

Immunization Summit and KidStrong Conference a Huge Success



More than 900 educators and health care professionals from around the state gathered at the Charleston Civic Center on June 17-18 for the 2014 Immunization Summit and KidStrong Conference.

Dr. Letitia Tierney, Commissioner of the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health

The Immunization Summit, hosted by the West Virginia Immunization Network, featured state and national speakers addressing some of the biggest issues facing immunization today. KidStrong, coordinated by the West Virginia Department of Education, focused on solutions to improve the overall wellness of school children. The combined conferences allowed participants to receive the latest tools and strategies in their fields as well as network and hear dynamic messages from national and state experts.

Dr. Anne Schuchat, Assistant Surgeon General and Director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, addressed the opening session of the Immunization Summit. Dr. Schuchat spoke about the measles outbreak occurring in nearby Ohio. Only 85% of West Virginia toddlers are vaccinated against measles, one of the lowest rates in the nation, but West Virginia has one of the highest rates of measles vaccination among children at school entry (due to immunization requirements for school entry).

Paul Reiter, Assistant Professor in the Division of Cancer Prevention and Control at Ohio State University, focused on the current state of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination. Reiter discussed HPV vaccine coverage among males and females in the United States and potential strategies for increasing coverage. To

date, only about 33% of adolescent girls and 7% of boys have been fully vaccinated against HPV in West Virginia.

The impact of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) on adult immunizations was discussed by Litjen Tan, PhD, Chief Strategy Officer at the Immunization Action Coalition. Tan believes 2014 will bring opportunities to improve adult immunization coverage rates as nearly all of the population will have insurance, and insurance plans are mandated to provide immunization and other preventive health care benefits. Some states have not expanded their Medicaid programs to include all low-income adults and a few private health plans remain "grandfathered" from mandates of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), but Tan noted those were few and diminishing over time.

Dr. Letitia Tierney, Commissioner of the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health and the state's health officer, addressed attendees from both conferences during a lunch presentation. Dr. Tierney discussed her vision for the Bureau for Public Health and the importance of partnerships in advancing the health of students in West Virginia.

The West Virginia Immunization Network (WIN) is a statewide coalition of more than 200 representatives from both the public and private sectors who work to create an environment in West Virginia where every resident is appropriately immunized. Jeff Necuzzi, director of the Bureau for Public Health's Division of Immunization Services, is an ex-officio member of the WIN leadership team.



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