

Karen's Corner



As I write this, I reflect on all the wonderful accomplishments of the past year. Each bureau and individual has worked tirelessly and I could not be prouder of the results. These include the launch of new programs and the addition of services to meet the needs of West Virginians.

In 2014, the Bureau for Children and Families initiated a collaborative effort to reform the child welfare system. A competitive federal IV-E Waiver grant was sought and we successfully launched the Safe at Home West Virginia demonstration project in October. Safe at Home will strengthen and support families by reducing the number of children receiving services in out-of-home care facilities. The Bureau for Medical Services also launched a new program, West Virginia Health Homes, to provide care coordination through a team model to ultimately improve the quality of care and decrease costs for qualified Medicaid members.

The Bureau for Public Health made strides in its goal of accreditation and the Cancer Registry achieved the Gold Certification, reflecting the hard work and dedication of all employees. The Bureau for Child Support Enforcement also showed innovation with the permanent implementation of remote workers, allowing for a more stable workforce and consistent level of service to customers statewide.

With the support of the Governor's Advisory Council of Substance Abuse, the Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities continues the fight against substance abuse with the addition of beds, recovery coaches and homes, regional youth services centers and outpatient services.

Those are just a few of the amazing things the DHHR team accomplished this year. I am confident that 2015 will bring more success. Thank you for all you do to help DHHR fulfil its goal of protecting and improving the quality of life for the citizens of West Virginia. I am honored to serve DHHR and I know that each of you are, too. Remember, *"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."* (President John Quincy Adams)

West Virginia WIC Named 2014 Program of the Year

West Virginia's Women, Infants and Children's Program (WIC) has been named the 2014 Program of the Year by E-Government Payment Council, an association of professionals involved in the design, development and operation of payment systems that deliver government benefits or payments to consumers.

The award was received at the 2014 EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) Next Generation Conference and was presented on December 11 to the WIC Office by Pam Santone, Director of the Office of EBT.

West Virginia's WIC team was nationally recognized for its timely and effective implementation of WIC EBT, completing implementation acceptance testing within 3 months and concluding the statewide rollout this year. Despite challenges, including a delay in the State Agency Model (SAM) information system in 2012 and other technical issues, the WIC Office succeeded.

"I am so proud of WIC, EBT, DHHR Finance and Purchasing, and everyone who contributed to this success," said DHHR Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling. "Because of each individual's investment, West Virginia can serve as an example to other states."



From left to right: Cindy Tanner, WIC EBT Coordinator; Cindy Pillo, Director of the Office of Nutrition Services; Kathy Legg, MIS Project Lead; Denise Ferris, Former Director of the Office of Nutrition Services; and Pam Santone, Director of the Office of EBT.

DHHR Partners with the State Department of Education to Prevent the Spread of Flu

In a collaborative effort to combat the flu in West Virginia's schools, West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling and State Superintendent of Schools Michael J. Martirano have joined forces to promote the "My Pledge" flu prevention campaign.

The pledge is being distributed to schools statewide, along with other education materials, and encourages good hygiene to prevent the spread of flu: "I pledge to cover my cough, sneeze into my sleeve if I don't have a tissue and wash my hands as often as possible to keep myself, my family and my friends healthy."

"With students returning to schools from a long holiday break, it's important for West Virginia's health and education leaders to join forces to help stop the spread of the flu," Bowling said. "In the coming weeks, flu cases are likely to increase among school-aged children."

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention declared a flu epidemic, with West Virginia among the states with widespread activity. The predominant strain circulating, influenza A H3N2, is associated with more severe illness and mortality, especially in young children and older people.

"We know that one of the hardest hit populations has been school-aged children," Martirano said. "It's important for us to double our efforts to ensure students and staff are taking the preventive measures necessary to ensure their safety and well-being."

Bowling has tasked Bureau for Public Health Commissioner and State Health Officer Dr. Rahul Gupta to collaborate with the State Department of Education to prevent further spread of the flu. Gupta recommends these preventive steps you can take to fight the flu:

- Get a flu shot. It's not too late. While the flu vaccine this year does not match the dominant strain (H3N2) circulating, it can still protect against other circulating strains and reduce the chances of developing flu related complications.
- Wash your hands frequently, cover your cough and sneeze into your sleeve if you do not have a tissue.
- Wipe down frequently touched surfaces with a disinfectant.
- STAY HOME when you are sick.

Flu symptoms include quick onset of fever, body aches, extreme tiredness and dry cough. Persons who may be suffering from influenza-like symptoms should see a medical provider right away.

Students, teachers, parents and all those who use social media are encouraged to take a selfie and hashtag **#MyPledgetoStoptheFluWV** to share the message of prevention with friends and family.

For more information about the flu, go to www.dide.wv.gov and click on "Influenza."

"Expressions" Art Exhibit at Sharpe Hospital



Artwork created by patients at Sharpe.

The staff at William R. Sharpe, Jr. Hospital invited the public to an art exhibit of patient work, titled "Expressions," on December 12.

The art exhibit was an outgrowth of the therapeutic classes through the Rehabilitation Department, designed to allow patients to express creativity in different formats. The Expressive Communication class, also known as art therapy, is based on a belief that the creative process is healing and life affirming. In this class patients are able to learn about themselves by painting and drawing. Patients express emotions through their work, along with improving self-esteem, self-awareness and confidence. Artwork is displayed for others to view, which boosts the artists' level of self-appreciation as well.

The Rehabilitation Department also offers a creative writing class. Patients are able to express thoughts, feelings and images through words. This class provides patients the opportunity to contribute to the hospital's monthly newsletter.



DHHR Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling discusses the importance of flu prevention with children at a joint press event held at Mary C. Snow West Side Elementary School in Charleston on January 5, 2015.