

Karen's Corner



Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." This is especially true when it comes to moving more individuals and families toward self-sufficiency, which is why DHHR has teamed up with Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College (Southern) to offer an innovative program for individuals receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits.

This partnership was initiated several months ago when I put out a request to collaborate with an educational institution to change the way we do things when it comes to providing support to individuals. One college president was very receptive to this idea – one who shared my same vision. I'm proud to say that former Southern president Joanne Jaeger Tomblin, also our state's First Lady, helped initiate this important program. It will allow TANF recipients to enroll in a cohort pilot program at Southern to gain skills to succeed in the workforce by providing support to those seeking to improve their opportunities for gainful employment.

The educational component of the program will begin in the fall 2015 semester, and 21 TANF recipients qualified to participate in the pilot. The Department, in conjunction with representatives from Southern, has assisted the students to complete their enrollment to the college, gain assistance with financial aid and seek advisement from counselors regarding the program in which they'd like to participate. Participants will work toward a certificate or degree with support from Southern, which will offer boot camps to increase math, English, soft skills and any other skills needed to succeed in their chosen program.

To further enhance the training, employers in the area were contacted to determine workforce needs so that individuals in the cohort would gain skills needed for emerging occupations in the area. Data will be collected through the pilot period and if it is successful, we will be able to implement this type of partnership in other areas of the state.

I appreciate the support of Governor Earl Ray Tomblin and First Lady Joanne Jaeger Tomblin, as well as Interim Southern President Merle Dempsey and the community college's commitment to preparing individuals for careers. It is my belief that family stability will increase when parents are better prepared to enter the job market and access higher-level skilled jobs. This pilot is setting an example that will likely be emulated across the nation, and I am excited to see how this partnership improves the overall well-being of West Virginia's children and families.

New CEO Named for Sharpe Hospital

In August, West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling announced the appointment of Patrick W. Ryan as Chief Executive Office of William R. Sharpe, Jr. Hospital. Ryan replaced Kim Walsh, Deputy Commissioner of Programs for the DHHR's Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities, who served in the role of interim CEO for the past eight months.

"Kim Walsh has done a tremendous job, and I thank her for her dedication and willingness to take on the interim role," said Bowling. "Great things have been happening at Sharpe Hospital and I am pleased to welcome Pat, a well-respected behavioral health professional in our state, to the DHHR team. His working knowledge of the issues facing the field and his established regional and state relationships will greatly benefit him in this position."

Since 2008, Ryan has served as Regional Director of Operations for Diamond Healthcare and Director of Behavioral Medicine at Fairmont Medical Center which included administrative oversight of psychiatric inpatient and outpatient programs at seven facilities in Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia. His 25 years of health care service includes work at Horizon Health-Camden Clark Memorial Hospital, United Summit Center, St. Joseph's Hospital, Valley Comprehensive Community Mental Health Center, and the former Weston State Hospital.

"My start in behavioral health was at the old Weston State Hospital many years ago," Ryan said. "The patients we cared for and the people I worked with provided the foundation of my professional career. I feel blessed to be able to, in a sense, "come home" and be in a position to work with many of the same folks as we overcome the challenges that the system currently faces."

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New Sharpe CEO Pat Ryan, DHHR Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling, BHHF Commissioner Vickie Jones and Assistant Sharpe CEO Randy Housh.

New CEO, *continued*

Ryan holds an MA in psychology from Marshall University and a BA in psychology from Elon College.

Additionally, Randy Housh was named Assistant CEO of William R. Sharpe, Jr. Hospital effective July 16, 2015. For the past 12 years, Randy has been an employee of Seneca Health Services Inc. (SHS) in Summersville, WV and has worked in the field of social services, behavioral health and non-profit management. In 2011, he was appointed to serve on the Governor's Advisory Council on Substance Abuse (GACSA).

On August 21, 2015, DHHR hosted a welcome reception at Sharpe, providing an opportunity for local community members, leaders and legislators to meet the hospital's new leadership.

Hopemont Hosts Olympic Games

Ninety-eight residents from nursing facilities in Preston, Monongalia and Garrett County, Maryland, arrived on the campus of Hopemont Hospital on August 6, 2015, for the 20th annual Geri Olympics North. The Geri Olympics Program is the longest running active aging program for residents of nursing homes and nursing care facilities in West Virginia. Facility staff believe the program helps increase physical activity for nursing home residents and promotes active living through sports and competition. Charleston also hosts a Geri Olympics, but according to Hopemont Hospital Administrator Terry Strawser, the travel distance led Hopemont to create a separate event. Eight facilities competed in this year's Olympic games.

Olympians chose up to four events for competition from basketball, moonball, sticky ball, beanbag toss, assisted bowling, unassisted bowling and wheelchair races. Preston County Commissioner Don Smith attended the event and enjoyed talking with athletes and volunteers, and helped present medals. Opening ceremonies were assisted by the Veterans of Foreign War Post 1589 of Masontown, who presented the colors, and Leona Rodeheaver, a retired Hopemont employee, sang the National Anthem.



Joe Barker Reflects on a Life of Service



Joe Barker's career has covered a wide range of leadership positions, all connected to his deep commitment to service and the common good. Joe, who served as the director of the Office of Community Health Systems and Health Promotion in the WV Bureau for Public Health, retired on August 31, 2015. Since February 2009, he had managed the work of four diverse divisions and a staff of 60 that administers programs and services in the areas of health promotion, primary care, rural health and recruitment, chronic disease and tobacco prevention. Prior to this position he served as the director of the Office of Epidemiology and Health Promotion, the Executive Director of the WV Rural Development Council, a project consultant for the WV Rural Research & Policy Institute, director of the Local Development Division for the WV Development Office and director of the Office of Economic Opportunity. As he considers the adventures since his graduation from West Virginia University, Joe offers this advice: "Trust your journey."

"My career journey has given me a wide variety of opportunities and places to work. I am so fortunate to have worked alongside many bright and hardworking people who do good things every day to improve the health of West Virginians and make people's lives easier. I will miss them a lot. I am confident that they will continue to build upon the many initiatives that were implemented."

Prior to his jobs in West Virginia, Joe worked for the Energy Laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and served as the vice-president for a computer software design and consulting firm in the Boston area. He received his B.A. in Political Science from West Virginia University and a Master's of Science in Management and Public Administration from the West Virginia Graduate College. He has also worked as a trainer, presenter and/or consultant for a number of public and private organizations and has worked on several international volunteer technical assistance and training assignments in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania and Hungary.

"I had no idea that I would wind up working in public health. I spent the previous 15 years working in the field of community and economic development. These experiences gave me the opportunity to see and value the connection between community and economic development and public health. When the chance to work at BPH was presented to me, I was enthusiastic because I could see the possibilities. So much of everything we do in public health is centered in the community. My journey had taken an unexpected turn, but I trusted that it was the right place to be. There is great work going on in the Office of Community Health Systems and Health Promotion, in BPH and throughout DHHR. I know there are more great things to come."