

### Karen's Corner



March is National Nutrition Month – a great time to promote healthy eating habits for West Virginia families and communities. The DHHR team encourages West Virginians to make healthy choices on a daily basis through many of our statewide programs and support services. Two of these programs are highlighted below.

WIC, the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, provides nutrition services to qualifying pregnant women, new mothers and young children. These services include nutrition education, breastfeeding support, free supplemental healthy food and immunization screenings. WIC helps women and children eat well and stay healthy with balanced meals and physical activity.

DHHR also promotes healthy eating by connecting West Virginia farmers markets with the technology to accept Electronic Benefit cards, allowing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients to purchase fresh, locally-grown fruits and vegetables. This project is so important to those families who might think they cannot afford healthy, fresh food.

However, you don't have to be directly involved with one of our vital nutrition programs to make a difference to families across the state. Together, we can set the standard for healthy living for ourselves, our families and our friends. Start by sharing these tips from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics on how to “savor the flavor of eating right.”

- Eat breakfast
- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables
- Watch portion sizes
- Be active
- Consult a registered dietitian

For more tips and resources on how you can improve your health, visit <http://bit.ly/1KsWfxM>

### Safe at Home Providing Youth an Alternative to Institutional Care

An innovative demonstration project is helping children and teens with behavioral health needs thrive in their home communities. Since phase one implementation in October 2015, the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), Bureau for Children and Families (BCF) has been working to reduce the State's reliance on in-state and out-of-state group care for youth ages 12-17 through Safe at Home West Virginia.

To date, BCF has referred 104 youths to the program. Of those, 14 have returned to the state; 14 have moved from in-state residential placements back to their home communities; and 31 have been prevented from entering residential placement.

“While Safe at Home is still in the early phase of its demonstration, the program is already proving to be a revolutionary approach to the way we serve children and families,” said DHHR Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling. “Through this project and with the support of our many partners, we are giving youth the opportunity to live safe, healthy and successful lives in familiar and comfortable environments. I look forward to seeing more children's lives changed as we prepare to expand statewide.”



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## Safe at Home, *continued*

Counties in the phase one area include: Berkeley, Boone, Cabell, Jefferson, Kanawha, Lincoln, Logan, Mason, Morgan, Putnam and Wayne. Youth involved in Safe at Home are being served through the wraparound model, a planning process that helps ensure youth grow up in their homes and communities when safely possible. With help from a wraparound facilitator, key players in the child or youth's family work together, coordinate activities, and blend perspectives of the family's situation.

The next phase of the project, expected to launch in summer of 2016, includes 24 counties: Barbour, Brooke, Grant, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Hancock, Hardy, Harrison, Lewis, Marion, Mercer, Mineral, Monongalia, Monroe, Nicholas, Ohio, Pendleton, Pocahontas, Preston, Randolph, Summers, Taylor, Tucker and Upshur.

The long-term goal of Safe at Home West Virginia is to serve 12-17 year olds and their families in all 55 counties over the course of the next two years, providing wraparound services to children, family members, caregivers and foster parents to support developing and maintaining a stable and loving environment.

Learn more at <http://safe.wvdhhr.org/>.

## March is National Social Work Month



The 384 social workers of the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources have amazing tenacity and talent. These men and women are found in three of our bureaus, Behavioral Health, Children and Families, and Public Health, and confront some of the most challenging issues facing individuals, families, communities and society. They collaborate to find solutions that not only help people reach their full potential, but make West Virginia a better place to live.

We celebrate the contributions of the social workers in our DHHR family during National Social Work Month in March.

This year's Social Work Month theme, Forging Solutions out of Challenges, was chosen by the National Association of Social Workers to celebrate the work done by social work pioneer Frances Perkins, the first female secretary of labor and cabinet member in President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration, and countless other social workers to improve lives and communities.

Did you know:

- Social work is one of the fastest growing professions in the United States, with more than 600,000 people employed in the field.
- Social workers take on tough challenges. They develop solutions to make mental health and health care more available, to reduce poverty, to eliminate injustice and discrimination, and to protect vulnerable children and adults from harm.
- Social workers are the largest group of mental health care providers in the United States, helping people overcome depression, anxiety, substance abuse and other disorders so they can lead more fulfilling lives.
- After earthquakes, floods and other disasters social workers are on the front lines, helping survivors get needed services and handle stress and anxiety.
- Social workers help older Americans get the health care and mental health care they need. They also work with older people and their families to improve their quality of life and ability to live independently as long as possible.

Credit to the National Association of Social Workers Press Room, [www.socialworkers.org/](http://www.socialworkers.org/).