

Karen's Corner



Recognizing Our Work and Years of Service

September was my first opportunity to participate in Public Employees' Recognition Week. The week of festivities, which for some offices – including mine – were delayed due to scheduling conflicts, provided the opportunity to recognize the work that we do at the Department of Health and Human Resources and the years of service our employees have contributed. On September 19, I was honored to personally thank some of the longest serving employees during a reception in their honor at the Culture Center. The Leadership Team joined me in recognizing these employees, who were presented with certificates for their many years of service to DHHR and the State. Later in the day, Governor Tomblin honored all state employees with significant years of service in the Great Hall of the Culture Center.

Everyone may not have had the opportunity to travel to Charleston for the festivities and you were missed! To you, I extend a special thank you and I hope to congratulate you personally as I continue to visit DHHR offices and facilities around the state. To our honorees who attended the reception, I enjoyed

getting to know each of you and learn about the important work that you do every day. I was pleased that a representation of employees from all five bureaus and the Office of Inspector General along with their Commissioners were able to attend.

Whether you have 1 year, 5 years, 25 years or 40 years of service, the work that you do by being a part of the Department of Health and Human Resources makes a difference in the lives of the people we serve each day. We work for the Department because we want to make a positive impact and I know that we share the goal of improving the lives of families, communities, and the people we serve.

I hope you looked around the table during your office luncheon and realized the strengths and talents of the assembled group and the true purpose of the meal. Together we celebrate our successes and our work as we seek to make a better West Virginia. I thank each and every one of you, and look forward to continuing to recognize the accomplishments we achieve every day and in the coming year.

A listing of the 204 Department of Health and Human Resources employees recognized for 20, 25, 30, 35 or 40 years of service is available on 1DHHR, <http://1dhr.wvdhhr.org/post.cfm/2013-public-service-recognition-week>.

Karen L. Bowling, Cabinet Secretary

Employee Spotlight: Aimee Bragg

Aimee Bragg, assistant administrator at Jackie Withrow Hospital, has extremely busy days fulfilling the needs of daily operations at the long term care facility in Beckley. However, her abilities expand well beyond an administrative capacity, and in 2009 Aimee's artistic strengths found an opportunity to shine.

Angie Booker, CEO of Jackie Withrow, is always thinking of creative ways to improve the facility. She mentioned the need for something to brighten the surroundings and was surprised when Aimee offered to paint.

Aimee's work now fills multiple walls in the facility. There are paintings of women with styled hair in the resident's salon and others with coffee, newspapers, bingo cards and checkers in the activities area. Residents have been inspired by the artwork and more engaged in the activities offered.

Outside of work, Aimee is very busy with the education, sports schedules and activities of her four children: Olivia, age 10; Gideon, age 8; Fallon, age 6; and Ava, age 5. She is also active in her church and volunteers as a Sunday School teacher.

When asked about her favorite aspects of being part of the team at Jackie Withrow, Aimee said, "The team at JWH is my family. I love working here. My coworkers are like my sisters. We are honest with each other and we push each other to make ourselves the best we can be."



EER/L Graduate Spotlight



EER/L participants Verena Mullins (OHRM), Diana Given (Finance), Kenya Burton (BPH), and Cassandra Toliver (BHHF)

If you are an employee who is pursuing a degree, needs to take a course to keep your license current, or simply want to further your education without pursuing a specific degree, the Employee Education Reimbursement and Leave (EER/L) program can help. This program is available to all permanent, full-time DHHR employees who have completed their probationary period, and will reimburse an employee up to \$1,400 for undergraduate courses and up to \$1,800 for graduate courses four times a calendar year.

“When I decided to continue my education, the EER/L Program was available to offer me assistance. Not only can you receive financial assistance for multiple disciplines, but also the team offers support throughout the entire process. You are well informed, and you never feel alone,” said Kenya Burton, Public Health Specialist with the Bureau for

Public Health. Kenya received her Master’s degree in 2012 and is now working toward her Ph.D. with the assistance of the EER/L program. Anyone interested in returning to school or getting started should visit the EER/L website at: <http://intranet.wvdhhr.org/ops/ED/ceerl.html>. Vicky Means, the EER/L Program Manager, is available for on-site Lunch and Learns, conferences or seminars to talk with employees and provide presentations about the program.

DHHR Welcomes New General Counsel



Karen Villanueva-Matkovich, general counsel for the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, joined the Cabinet Secretary’s Office on August 16, 2013. While new to the department, her diverse background includes experience with the Bureau for Public Health and the health care industry. The complexity and critical importance of the work of DHHR attracted her to the position at One Davis Square.

Karen grew up in West Virginia, but her law career began in the city of her birth, Philadelphia, where she worked as an advocate for the homeless and handled cases in immigration and landlord-tenant relations. She returned to West Virginia to work as an Assistant Public Defender in the Beckley Public Defender’s Office, where she served from 1995-2001.

Her continual desire to make lives better is broad-based. She left the Public Defender’s Office to expand her abilities through the field of medicine. Karen enrolled in the Marshall University School of Medicine and began a new phase of her career, studying chemistry and researching biologic pharmaceuticals. She then worked as a consultant for pharmaceutical entities regarding regulatory and strategic issues in the areas of biomedicine and biotechnology. She later joined the State of West Virginia’s Tax Division as an attorney, a move that eventually led her to the Department of Health and Human Resources. “Many of my interests will assist the Department with

its goals and objectives. Everyone is trying to do the best that they can do – to do what’s best, to do what is right. It is a good fit for me and I am very excited to be here and to work for Secretary Bowling,” states Karen.

She is already a familiar face to many in the Bureau for Public Health, having served as a member of the State AIDS Advisory Committee and West Virginia Healthy People 2010 Objectives. In 2004, Karen was recognized by the Bureau for her outstanding service and dedication to AIDS awareness and HIV/AIDS prevention.

Karen holds degrees from Pennsylvania State University, Rutgers University School of Law and the Johns Hopkins University’s Zanvyl Krieger School of Arts and Sciences. She is a member of the WV State Bar, a certified trained mediator and holds a certificate in bioterrorism. Outside of work, Karen enjoys golfing, running, and time with her family, which includes a golden retriever.