

Karen's Corner



As 2014 draws to a close, I reflect on the valuable experiences I've had while traveling across our beautiful state to DHHR's county offices. Over the last year, I've had the privilege to visit each and every one and meet some of the most dedicated and passionate members of the DHHR team.

I started this initiative to get a closer look at what the Department is doing across the state and to meet the many talented employees. Thank you for welcoming me into your offices and workstations. Each conversation offered a new perspective and, ultimately, a better understanding of the challenges and highlights unique to each region, office and individual.

The feedback you provided is valuable and I was so glad to be able to address and resolve some of the issues you brought to my attention. Each visit was also an opportunity to learn more about our Department's many programs as I had questions of my own. These discussions truly highlighted the knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment of DHHR staff.

I've also spent time at some of the facilities and look forward to continuing to visit and collaborate with our employees to find solutions to issues still impacting our work and ability to serve our citizens. Although I have not yet been able to personally speak to every one of you, please know that from Hancock to Mercer and all the counties in between, you are DHHR and I'm proud of and appreciate your work.

"Individually, we are one drop. Together, we are an ocean." – Ryunosuke Satoro

Employee Spotlight: Martha Cooper

Martha Cooper, Roane County Family Support Specialist, was honored as the Collaborator of the Year by the West Virginia Regional Service Agencies (RESA) in October 2014. Martha was nominated by the Region 5 RESA, which encompasses the county schools in Calhoun, Jackson, Pleasants, Ritchie, Roane, Tyler, Wirt and Wood, in recognition of her dedication to clients who receive services through the DHHR-RESA partnership.

"I am very proud of Martha," said Myhaulina Workman, Martha's supervisor. "Martha loves her job and she loves Roane County and the people in it. Martha gives 110% every day. She remembers how hard it was trying to raise a family and working two jobs to provide for them. That's why she takes her job very seriously. She is so excited when the families she works with become self-sufficient. She is very much a part of that success."

Martha joined the staff of the Roane County office in January 2005. Prior to joining the Department, Martha and her husband operated their own business in Spencer for 22 years. Roane County has been her life-long home.

"I have learned so many things since beginning my career with the State of West Virginia. I was among the oldest employees attending training when I started working here and the trainers were so patient with me as I struggled with the computer programs...due to my age I had not grown up working with computers on a daily basis and this was certainly an eye opener. I believe that after 10 years I have finally overcome many of the fears that I had when I entered this job," said Martha.

Martha says she feels honored to be recognized by RESA, but stresses the partnership with RESA 5, as well as with local employers, instructors in ABE (Adult Basic Education) and SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge for Employment Success) is what allows her clients to achieve success. She also recognizes the strong support and teamwork from her co-workers. "When we work together, families win," affirmed Martha.

When asked about the impact of her work and the work of the Department, Martha explained, "What gives me joy is seeing the way that a family changes and improves when I am able to assist them in finding a job that fits them here in Roane County. The program that I work with, WV Works, has helped a lot of families become self-sufficient; it offers them the tools they need through supportive payments, job readiness classes, and individual case management to be self-sufficient and hopefully, long term, break the cycle of poverty. Just thinking that I am some small part of that brings me great joy and satisfaction."



Martha Cooper

inROADS Goes Paperless



For more than a decade, inROADS has provided West Virginia citizens the opportunity to apply online for benefits offered by the Department of Health and Human Resources. Many enhancements have been made to inROADS, including the creation of the “My inROADS Account,” enabling recipients to review, manage and check their benefits online. In December 2013, more than 12,000 West Virginians enrolled in

Medicaid Expansion by using the inROADS website, <https://www.wvinroads.org/selfservice/>.

Beginning December 22, 2014, inROADS customers will be able to access client notices electronically through their “My inROADS Account.” Customers will have the option to go paperless and only receive electronic notices for all programs, excluding the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Paperless customers will receive an email alert when a new notice has posted to their account.

This enhancement is driven by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services final rule, strengthening Medicaid and CHIP programs by making electronic notices available to applicants and recipients. A waiver to allow SNAP customers the option to go paperless is being developed by the Bureau for Children and Families, Division of Family Assistance for approval by USDA Food and Nutrition Services.

Artistic Talents of Mt. Olive Inmates Net \$8,500 to Support WV Youth



Carrie Dawson, Public Relations Director at Mission West Virginia and Jim Rubenstein, Commissioner of WV Division of Corrections, at the art auction.

On October 9, 2014, the FrameWorks program of Mission West Virginia held the inaugural “Giving Back with Heart” art auction. The auction was held at the WV Culture Center and featured over 175 pieces of art created by more than 30 inmates from Mount Olive Correctional Complex. The proceeds will fund two scholarships, one for youth who experienced a foster care placement for at least 12 months while under the age of 18 and one for youth who have or have had a parent incarcerated for more than 12 years of their childhood.

“Giving Back with Heart” has its roots in a partnership between Mission West Virginia and the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources. The agencies work together to find permanent loving homes for children in foster care. As a result of this work, Mission West Virginia began working on a campaign called Carry-On,

a project to replace the use of garbage bags as luggage for children in foster care. Mission West Virginia then developed a relationship with WV Division of Corrections and Correctional Industries (WVDCCI), who began making duffel bags and blankets for children in foster care.

Youth who age out of the foster care system are more likely to end up homeless or incarcerated, a trend that led WVDCCI staff and inmates to expand their partnership with Mission West Virginia. The result is “Giving Back with Heart.” One inmate was quoted as saying, “I am thankful that my talents combined with Mount Olive’s administration have allowed me to be a part of this charitable act.” He went on to say, “It feels good to be a part of something that helps others in life. It’s not often that someone in my situation can be a part of something so wonderful. Thank you for letting me be a part of this.” The event raised more than \$8,500.

Mission West Virginia’s Heart Gallery of West Virginia was also featured at the Culture Center event. The Heart Gallery is a traveling photography exhibit featuring portraits of children in West Virginia’s foster care system that are eligible for adoption. This exhibit seeks to bring a name and a face to the children who need and deserve the love of a forever family. Photographers statewide donate their time and talents to create one of a kind photos of the children. The Heart Gallery is always in need of additional photographers willing to take part in this worthwhile project.

For more information about Mission West Virginia, please visit <http://missionwv.org/> or call 866-CALL-MWV.

