

Karen's Corner



Thomas Edison once said, “good fortune often happens when opportunity meets with preparation.” With these words in mind, and the start of the school year upon us, it is important that our children are ready to begin or resume their classroom learning. The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) helps by assisting many families with the purchase of school clothing and reminding parents and caretakers of required school vaccinations.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2013 Survey, nearly 100,000 of West Virginia’s children live in poverty. In order for these children to focus on learning as opposed to what to wear, the Bureau for Children and Families partners with retailers across the state in an initiative called the School Clothing Allowance Program. In 2015, approximately 87,200 school-aged children received \$200 in vouchers that allowed their parents or guardians to purchase new school clothing and shoes at participating retailers across West Virginia.

Through October, School Clothing Allowance recipients may purchase clothing appropriate for school such as pants, shirts, skirts, dresses, shoes, coats, underwear and other basic clothing. Families may also use vouchers to purchase piece goods to sew new clothing. For a list of participating retailers, visit www.dhhr.wv.gov/bcf/Services/familyassistance.

Another key to a successful start to the school year is immunizations. Throughout the summer months, our Bureau for Public Health reminds parents to check their child(ren)’s immunization status for required school-entry vaccines. This helps families avoid delays when enrolling their children, and works to keep everyone healthy from vaccine-preventable diseases, including those with weakened immune systems, and the elderly.

There are specific immunization requirements for school-entry, kindergarten, 7th and 12th grades. You can find them by visiting our website, <http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/immunization/requirements/>.

I am proud to be a part of an agency that supports our most vulnerable and valuable population – our children. These important summer initiatives help make the start of the school year a less stressful and more exciting time for families, and I am thankful for our dedicated employees and partners who have made this their mission.

Empowerment Expo to be held in McDowell County

DHHR is partnering with the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs to host an empowerment expo in McDowell County on August 12, 2016 at the Welch National Guard Armory.

“The DHHR and the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs, along with Delegate Clif Moore, joined forces in an effort to empower McDowell County by showcasing the numerous programs and services that are readily available for children, families and seniors,” said Carolyn L. Stuart, Director of the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs.

Free health services also will be offered including blood pressure and pulse screenings, pulse ox, glucose, A1C, cholesterol screenings, PSAs for men, and vaccines. Mammograms will be offered by Bonnie’s Bus. Information on substance abuse services will be available.



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Empowerment Expo, cont.

“McDowell County has some of the greatest health-related challenges in the state, and our goal is to deliver residents the resources they need to be healthy,” said Karen L. Bowling, DHHR Cabinet Secretary. “Bringing health screenings directly to the citizens of McDowell County is an important step toward reaching that goal.”

Highlights of the expo include a video greeting from Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin and remarks from DHHR Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling and Dr. Rahul Gupta, State Health Officer and Commissioner of the Bureau for Public Health.

The expo, free and open to the public, will be held Friday, August 12, 2016 from 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. at the Welch National Guard Armory, 600 Stewart Street, Welch, WV.

For additional information, please contact the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs at 304-558-3179.

DHHR Employee Receives SADD National Distinguished Service Award

On June 28, DHHR’s own Kim Walsh, Deputy Commissioner for the Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities, received a prestigious national award recognizing her outstanding commitment and dedication to SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) and SADD’s vision of empowering young people to have a positive impact in their schools and communities. A recipient of the SADD National Distinguished Service Award, Kim is the first West Virginian to receive a SADD national award – an honor bestowed annually by the SADD National Board of Directors.

Kim became involved with the student-led initiative four years ago when she attended West Virginia’s state SADD conference. There she met a group of diverse and exceptional young people who work to provide critical information and positive messaging to help students make informed choices about issues including impaired and distracted driving, substance abuse, bullying, mental health and more. Since then, she’s been involved in the organization and its leadership and education event hosted annually by the WV SADD Student Leadership Council (SLC). The SLC works with an adult advisory body year round to identify and prioritize focus for current efforts and future efforts.

When asked about the significance of this honor, Kim said it means more to her than any other award she’s received during her career: “I am honored to watch these young people lead and guide one another and create positive environments all across West Virginia. I am so very fortunate to be part of what I describe as a movement of young people making a positive place for themselves and peers to coexist. The group that we have in West Virginia is exemplary and was recognized during this national event. They deserve all the recognition.”

Travis Helmondollar, Assistant Director of Community Connections, Inc. and State Director of West Virginia SADD, nominated Kim for the award for her commitment, devotion, and activism. He explains that Kim was especially deserving of this honor: “Kim’s keen leadership and commitment – and her heart – have helped guide West Virginia into the forefront of peer-to-peer engagement and leadership development. In multiple respects, West Virginia SADD now serves as a model for SADD programs throughout the nation. Without Kim’s involvement, West Virginia SADD would not be as strong and focused as it is today.”

Travis isn’t the only one who knows how hard Kim works to be a positive voice in the state. Vickie Jones, Commissioner for the Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities, said: “I am so proud of the incomparable dedication Kim provides as a leader in not only the Bureau, but on a state and national level. Her passion for helping people is incredible, and I am thankful to have her on team DHHR.”

The SADD National Distinguished Service Award was presented to Kim during SADD National’s 35th Anniversary “Power of You” Celebration in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, among more than 600 SADD students, advisors, and advocates.



Kim with the WV SADD Student Leadership Team