

### Karen's Corner



The holiday season is a special time of year often filled with family, friends and food. While it may seem impossible to eat healthy when surrounded by our favorite seasonal dishes, there are a few tips we can follow to navigate the upcoming festivities in a healthy way.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture suggests the following:

- **Tweak the sweets:** Fruits make delicious desserts!
- **Cheers to good health:** Drink water to manage calories.
- **Bake healthier:** Use recipes with pureed fruits instead of butter or oil.
- **Skim the fat:** Try skim or evaporated milk instead of heavy cream.
- **Swap the grains:** Choose whole wheat flour instead of white flour.

In addition, for those with young children and grandchildren, now is a great time to get them in the kitchen so that they can be a part of the healthy holiday tradition. Involving them in the cooking process might be an easy way to get them to try new and nutritious foods.

When it comes to getting children to drink more water as opposed to sugary juice, try putting out some fruit-infused water in a self-serve dispenser. Children may enjoy pouring themselves a cup.

Another thing we need to keep in mind during this busy time of year is physical activity. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encourages families to bundle up in cold weather and look for ways to build in exercise with activities such as sledding, visiting parks and window shopping.

With these tips, the holidays do not have to mean extra calories and inactiveness. Let's take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of healthy living not just during this special time of year, but every day, so that we can ultimately have even more blessed holidays together.

### Making a Difference: An Adoption Story

Employees in DHHR's Bureau for Children and Families (BCF) work to protect children, and this oftentimes means helping them find the support they need to be safe and successful with forever families. BCF adoption specialists have connected thousands of children with loving homes, and while all adoption stories are special, the story of two siblings stood out to Region I adoption supervisor Mary Rosanna.

Eleven year old Hope and four year old Ryann had a "rough start in life" like many children impacted by West Virginia's drug epidemic. In need of a stable home, the girls' maternal grandfather Ronald Duelley and his companion, Peggy Tanzy, saw an opportunity to help the sisters enjoy their childhood with the love of a forever family.

With the assistance of BCF worker Stacy O'Dell, Ronald adopted Hope in 2010 and four years later adopted Ryann. Looking back on his decision to adopt his grandchildren, Ronald says "It was the greatest thing that has ever happened."

The couple cannot imagine life now without Hope and Ryann. "People always come up to us and tell us how lucky the girls are to have us. We are the lucky ones," explained Peggy.

Ronald, a retired carpenter, and Peggy, a retired school teacher, are very invested in the children's lives. Hope has never missed a day of school, she plays baseball and softball and is an avid swimmer. Hope also loves to bake and Peggy is teaching her how to cook. Both girls love to read and Ryann is involved in the "thousand books for kindergarten" program. In one month, she has read one hundred books and was invited to participate in a reading



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program at the local library. Ryann knows her alphabet, loves math games and is learning addition. She also enjoys puzzles, volleyball and badminton. Both girls enjoy tumbling, gymnastics and dance.

“To know that we played a small role in helping children like Hope and Ryann thrive in a forever home means more than words can express,” said adoption supervisor Mary Rosanna.

This year, Mary’s unit, which covers 19 counties, was able to finalize more than 170 adoptions. “I am looking forward to hearing the many success stories that result from the love and care of individuals who made stability a reality for these children in 2016.”

To learn more about adoption, visit [www.dhhr.wv.gov/bcf](http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/bcf) or <http://missionwv.org/>.

## Celebrity for a Day: Sharpe Hospital Hosts Virtual Trip to Hollywood



William R. Sharpe, Jr. Hospital was transformed into Hollywood on November 18, 2016, when employees in the C2 Unit coordinated a virtual trip for their patients. During the event, attendees walked across the Hollywood Stars and were served dinner while listening to beautiful music provided by the Recreation Department.

“The event was a huge success and the patients enjoyed the special day,” said Krista Adkins, Volunteer Services Coordinator for Sharpe Hospital. “One patient commented that it felt like they weren’t in a hospital, but a ‘fancy restaurant,’

while another said that the Hollywood trip made her feel ‘like Marilyn Monroe.’ We’re so glad we could provide a memorable experience for these individuals.”

The virtual trip was made possible with the dedication of many volunteers and staff who attended the event. “I want to extend a special thanks to the Recreation and Rehab staff, Dietary, Housekeeping, Maintenance, and everyone who helped make the day a success,” added Krista.

For more information regarding this event or to become a volunteer, please contact [Krista.D.Adkins@wv.gov](mailto:Krista.D.Adkins@wv.gov).

## TANF Recipients’ Flood Volunteer Efforts Lead to Employment

When the devastating floods hit West Virginia in June, countless people stepped in to help. Among the many heroes were two adult students working to achieve self-sufficiency for their family with support from DHHR’s Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which provides a variety of services to strengthen economic independence.

Enrolled in SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge for Employment and Success) as part of the TANF program, the students were given the opportunity to assist those affected by the disaster. Kimberly and Dorsel went above and beyond to oversee a donation site at Valley Fork Learning Center where they organized items for infants and young children.

Dorsel reflected on the experience with gratitude: “Some people have lost everything. [Kimberly and I] have a young child, and I’m glad that we were able to help out families who are in need.”

While the couple was thankful to help others, their efforts during the two-month volunteer initiative made a huge impact not only in the community, but in their own family. Dorsel’s demonstration of a solid work ethic was noticed by the community service site supervisor at Valley Fork Learning Center, and he’s now employed through the Human Resource Development Foundation’s Stream Clean-Up in Clay County.

Kimberly and Dorsel’s DHHR Family Support Specialist, Glenna Triplett, is proud of the progress they have made on their journey: “This is just one example of how those who want to improve their employment opportunities can do so with the right support and encouragement. Dorsel and Kimberly’s desire to learn new skills is not only helping them achieve self-sufficiency, but is ultimately improving family stability and outcomes for their child.”

