

the healthadvisor

DOH Mission:

To promote & protect the health & safety of all Floridians.

Sept./Oct. 2002

CDC grant pumps up heart health initiative

Floridians will become more aware of cardiovascular health thanks to a new federal grant that will allow the Department of Health's Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention to develop and implement a new statewide comprehensive cardiovascular health program.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in July awarded \$1 million for each of the next five years for the program. Program goals include increasing awareness of cardiovascular disease and promoting prevention. Health officials will emphasize prevention by encouraging public and private policy and environmental changes that will increase opportunities for people to make healthier choices during everyday aspects of their lives. The program will be designed so that regional coordinators can help bring awareness of needed changes to school officials, city and county planners, and other decision makers involved in policy and planning. Regional coordinators also will work with health care professionals to raise awareness of primary and secondary prevention methods to reduce the disease.


Cardiovascular disease refers to a wide variety of heart and blood vessel diseases, including coronary heart disease, hypertension (high blood pressure), stroke, rheumatic heart disease, atherosclerosis (narrowing of the coronary arteries) and heart failure, and is the leading cause of death in Florida.

"In 2000, this disease accounted for 64,588—or 39.7 percent—of all deaths in our state, making it a major public health concern," says Secretary Agwunobi.

The recently published DOH report, "Florida Cardiovascular Surveillance Summary and State Plan for Action," provides current data that documents the need to make changes at the individual, community and organizational level. It will serve as a guide during the development of the statewide comprehensive program.

The plan for action emphasizes the importance of reducing the burden of cardiovascular disease by supporting and promoting changes that make healthy choices the easier choices.

Opportunities to be physically active include providing more accessible and attractive stairways, sidewalks and "walkable" communities, and learning to engage in lifelong physical pleasures like dancing, skating, hiking and bicycling. Ways to improve nutritional health include providing healthier school lunch programs, vending machine choices, snacks and meals at home and at fast-food and other restaurants.



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In addition to the statewide comprehensive CDC-funded program, 11 new Community Cardiovascular Health Projects have been awarded between \$100,000 and \$145,000 by DOH through the federal Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grants. These projects, funded for four years, are county specific and will promote cardiovascular health by implementing programs that will encourage environmental, social and policy changes. These projects are based at the following county health departments: Alachua, Baker, Collier, Duval, Hendry, Hernando, Indian River, Orange, Pasco, Pinellas and Washington/Holmes.

SUSAN ALLEN, BUREAU OF CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION

interpretation services program is a lifeline for refugees

"I would tell the doctor 'Okay,' but I didn't understand anything."

The above is a quote taken from the survey report: "What A Difference An Interpreter Can Make, Health Care Experiences of Uninsured with Limited English Proficiency." The report, released by The Access Project—a Brandeis University-affiliated national resource center—documents the importance of interpreters in medical settings.

In an effort to address this issue, the Florida Department of Health Bureau of TB and Refugee Health contracted with McNeil Technologies, Inc., to launch the Interpretation Services Program (ISP) in July 2001. The program celebrates a year of reducing language barriers for those with limited English skills and increasing their abilities to access health care.

McNeil Technologies, Inc., is a premier program management support and linguistic services provider offering statewide interpretation/translation services to DOH, Department of Children and Families (DCF), Voluntary Refugee Resettlement Agencies, and other organizations serving refugees and entrants to Florida in four fields: medical, social services, legal and law enforcement. These services include telephone interpretation, interpreter training, document translation, management/provider training and strategic planning.

The Interpretation Services Program celebrated its first anniversary in July, having provided free interpreter training to more than 400 employees within DOH, DCF, Voluntary Resettlement Agencies and hospitals serving refugees. Of the total number of people trained and qualified, 125 employees work within county health departments. The interpreter training is a 24.5-hour course of instruction for bilingual staff within ISP qualified agencies. It utilizes a university-based curriculum developed and taught by Dr. Eric Camayd, professor of modern language at Florida International University.

During the year, ISP also provided more than 680 free, translated documents in more than 23 languages to assist refugees/entrants in their resettlement process. Through Pacific Interpreters, ISP also connected more than 400 agency sites for telephonic interpretation services, free for refugees and entrants, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For more information about the ISP, contact Ron Davis, ISP manager, at (850) 245-4444 ext. 2315/SC 205-4444 ext. 2315 or Tim Stack, program manager at McNeil Technologies, at (850) 386-5378.

WILMA JACKSON, LAURA SMITH, RON DAVIS, BUREAU OF TB AND REFUGEE HEALTH

ISP celebrates a year of service



medical quality assurance enforcement reunites with licensing

As of July 1, 2002, the enforcement component of the Division of Medical Quality Assurance (MQA) reunited with its licensure component in the Florida Department of Health. When MQA was formed in 1988, both the licensing and the enforcement functions of health care practitioner regulation were performed under the Department of Professional Regulation. These functions remained together under the same division through some other organizational changes until 1997, when DOH was formed. At that time, MQA was housed in the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA). On July 1, 1997, the licensing function of MQA was transferred to the new DOH, but the enforcement function remained with AHCA under an interagency agreement.

The enforcement section of MQA consists of three components: Consumer Services, which handles complaints, performs some investigation, and provides reports on enforcement activity; Investigative Services, comprised of investigators in 11 field offices around the state; and Prosecution Services, which litigates for MQA when a health care professional is disciplined. Managers for these sections include Charlene Willoughby for Consumer Services, Tom Hannah for Investigative Services, and Nancy Snurkowski for Prosecution Services.

In all, 253 MQA enforcement employees were transferred July 1. However, it was more of a "paper" transfer, since these employees have been part of the MQA team all along. The transition was accomplished very smoothly and with high morale.

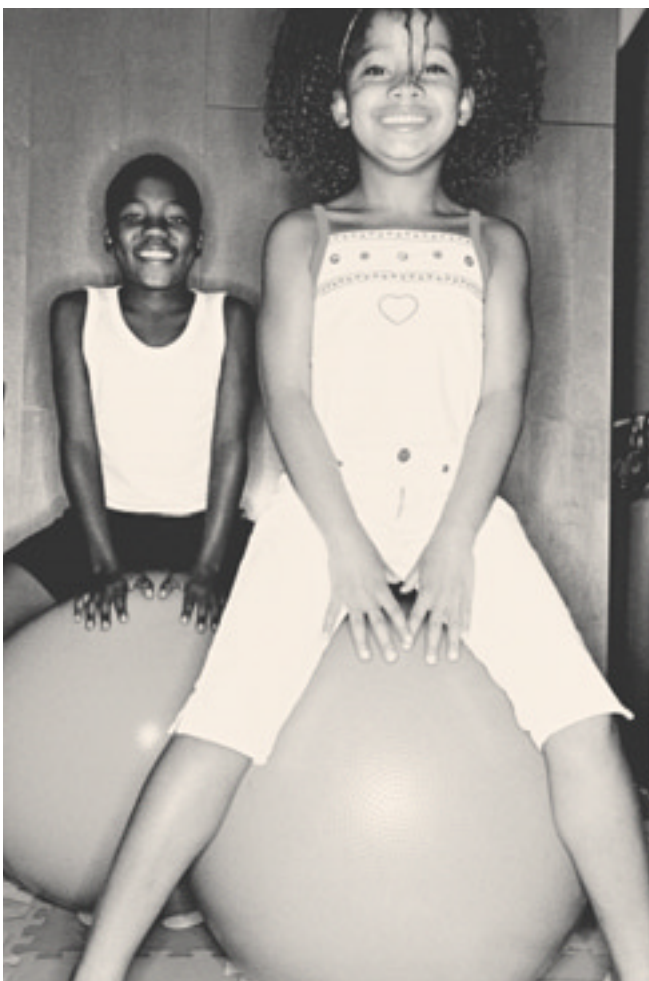
The department is now looking forward to incorporating this "homecoming" into our strategic plans. During the next year, MQA will concentrate on developing short and long-range plans to make the enforcement component more efficient and more responsive to meet the high expectations it sets for itself as well as those the public expects for a safe and high-quality health care system in Florida.

DIANE ORCUTT, MEDICAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

2002 quality management showcase slated for sept. 18 & 19

The 2002 Quality Management Showcase is scheduled for Sept. 18 & 19 at the Wyndham Westshore Hotel in Tampa, with this year's showcase theme as "Vision with Action Can Change the World." Public health leaders and quality management experts will present strategies and provide information that can be used to further the Florida Department of Health's mission. For more information, including registration and hotel information, please visit the Office of Performance Improvement intranet site or contact Bonnie Gaughan-Bailey or Cetta Barnhart at SunCom 205-4007 or (850) 245-4007 in the Office of Performance Improvement.

BONNIE GAUGHAN-BAILEY, OFFICE OF PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT



saturday, sept. 28, is family health & fitness day usa—a national health and fitness event to recognize the importance of families staying active together.

Mark your calendar and promote physical activity among your family and help achieve one of the goals of the U.S. Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity and Health. You deserve to take a hike, play on the beach, go for a bike ride, and play tag! Check out www.fitnessday.com for more ways to observe the event.



bilingual booklet aids spanish-speaking floridians

A new bilingual booklet is available to aid Spanish-speaking families select appropriate health coverage for their children. "Protect Your Family's Health With Confidence" is designed to assist parents by helping them understand the benefits of enrollment in the State Children Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and Medicaid.

The book was unveiled recently in Miami by Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson. Remarks from Secretary Agwunobi and Deputy Director for the Centers of Medicaid and Medicare Ruben King-Shaw followed Secretary Thompson. Each expressed an earnest desire to increase the

number of Hispanic children enrolled in public health programs.

Outreach programs with materials such as the booklet have proven effective over the past few years. A recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showed a 31 percent increase in the number of American children receiving health care benefits from 1997 to 2001.

"We were honored to have Secretary Thompson unveil his new Hispanic outreach initiative in Miami," said Dr. James J. James, Miami-Dade County Health Department director. "He is making a great impact on our Hispanic community."

KidCare is Florida's version of the nationwide SCHIP program. Doctor visits, surgery, prescriptions, vision checks and other medical services are all provided by the plan for children through the age of 18. Applications for KidCare can be requested by calling 1-888-540-KIDS.

OLGA CONNOR, MIAMI-DADE CHD

Florida KidCare

spotlight on correctional medical authority

The Florida Department of Health's Correctional Medical Authority (CMA) is an independent nine-member volunteer board appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. Board members represent various health-related professions associated with the delivery of health care. The purpose of CMA is to advise the Department of Corrections (DC) on its delivery of primary, acute, emergency, convalescent, dental and mental health care, and provide management of costs consistent with quality care.

The creation of CMA stems from a 1972 lawsuit that two state inmates filed in federal court, challenging the adequacy of the health care provided by the Department of Corrections. The court agreed problems existed, and for many years maintained control of the health care delivery system, but continued frustration led to the 1986 Legislature's creation of CMA.

In December 1990, the federal court relinquished the physical health care survey function to CMA. In July 1992, mental health survey responsibilities were placed within the purview of CMA. Legislative action expanded the then-five member board and provided additional staff to support increased responsibilities. CMA's nine-member board is assisted by 12 staff members.

In March 1993, the lawsuit was closed, returning control of Florida's prison health care system to DC and assigning the responsibility for ongoing monitoring and oversight functions to CMA. CMA remains the sole "outside and independent" oversight entity.

In addition to the CMA Board, there are three subcommittees: a mental health subcommittee monitors and evaluates the performance of DC's mental health program; a budget/personnel subcommittee monitors financial and management activities; and a quality management subcommittee oversees the DC's clinical QM program.

PEGGY STEVENS, CORRECTIONAL MEDICAL AUTHORITY

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a year ago—our wake-up call to terrorism in america

America's wake-up call to the reality of terrorism was Sept. 11, 2001. And while there were public health issues from the onset because of the nature of the mass casualty events in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, and lingering environmental health risks, the wake-up call for public health preparedness was Oct. 3. It was on this date that health officials confirmed the first case of inhalation anthrax in Palm Beach County, Florida.

Even with the backdrop of Sept. 11, the thought that this initial case was a deliberate act of terrorism was not in the forefront of the minds of epidemiologists investigating this case. (Everyone's preconceived image of a bioterrorism attack was an aircraft spraying a bio-agent or toxin with hundreds of cases clogging hospital emergency rooms.) A single case of inhalation anthrax was an anomaly, but nonetheless in need of urgent investigation.

While inhalation anthrax is very rare in the United States, several cases of cutaneous anthrax are reported each year west of the Mississippi River. It also is endemic in many countries in the Caribbean, Africa and Asia. Last year's investigation first focused on where the victim had traveled and what imported materials he had in his home that might harbor anthrax spores. The investigation followed

tried and true epidemiology procedures.

It was a week into the investigation—after the second case of inhalation anthrax was confirmed in a man who worked in the same building as the first victim—when it became immediately clear that this event was deliberate and the beginning of an anthrax-terror campaign aimed at media and political leaders and using the efficiency of the U.S. mailing system to terrorize the rest of us. Terrorists have a way of teaching us to expect the unexpected.

A year later, our epidemiology surveillance radars are more finely tuned. We are enhancing our web-based disease reporting software and expanding the number of subscribers. We are tying in electronic laboratory reports, and developing a disease alert system for Florida that parallels that used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

At the beginning of 2002, Secretary Agwunobi created the Office of Public Health Preparedness to review and coordinate the multitude of programs within DOH that impact preparedness to respond to natural and man-made disasters.

The Office of Public Health Preparedness works closely with Florida's Domestic Security Task Force and the seven regions to assess health and needs at the local level and provide bioterrorism-response project funding through two federal Department of Health and Human Services grants totaling approximately \$47 million. Projects funded this year and next include purchasing personal protection equipment for hospitals and first responders and hospital decontamination equipment, equipping public health laboratories to analyze biological agents, enhancing epidemiology reporting systems, and upgrading information technology systems against equipment failures and cyber attacks.

Communication procedures that enable the public to be informed and up-to-date also are being developed. Bioterrorism awareness training exercises are being performed throughout the state.

Efforts also have been made to safeguard against risks associated with any possible radiation contamination. DOH recently purchased antidotes for chemical nerve agents and cyanide compounds and potassium iodide and they have been pre-positioned throughout Florida to rapidly augment the National Pharmaceutical Stockpile that would be flown into Florida in response to a chemical or bioterrorism event.

Are we better prepared now than in September 2001? Yes. Are we satisfied with our preparations? No. Much is left to be done. We will continue to improve our public health preparedness. But our enemies are clever and unpredictable. We can never again rest, nor can we be satisfied.

JACK PITTMAN, DIRECTOR FOR PUBLIC HEALTH PREPAREDNESS

The Office for Public Health Preparedness was created this year to coordinate preparedness and response for bioterrorism and other emergency events.

Got Radon? A quick look in your refrigerator won't tell you if your home has elevated levels of radon, but there is a relatively simple way to find out if you and your family are exposed to unsafe levels of radon, the second leading cause of lung cancer. There are some areas of the state that have shown to have amounts that exceed those deemed safe. The Florida Department of Health's Indoor Air Quality Bureau encourages you to test for radon amounts in your home during National Radon Action Week—October 14–20—and become aware of the mitigation processes to reduce any high levels.

Test kits are available for about \$10. Leave a test in your home undisturbed for two to four days, then seal and mail to the laboratory for analysis. A report is returned in a few weeks. A professional can perform the test, as well. Make sure to use a DOH-certified radon measurement business.

Since the Radon and Indoor Air Quality Program began in mid-1988, thousands of buildings, including homes, schools, hospitals, nursing homes, condominiums and apartments have been mitigated for elevated radon levels.

In fact, DOH radon data of more than

70,000 buildings shows that more than 12 percent have concentrations greater than the Environmental Protection Agency's "Action Level" of 4.0 picocuries per liter (pCi/l) of air. If your initial measurement is at or above the 4.0 pCi/l action level, and is confirmed by a follow-up test, you can take action to reduce the radon. The greatest reduction is obtained by installing a radon "mitigation" (reduction) system, which a certified mitigator can install for about \$1,200 to \$2,000.

Studies indicate that approximately one-third of the estimated 18,600 annual U.S. radon-induced lung cancer deaths can be averted if indoor radon levels in all buildings are reduced below the action level. In Florida, radon levels vary widely. Unfortunately, some of our most populous counties have elevated radon in 15 percent or more of their buildings.

Discover how much radon has been reported from your zip code area on the department's web site at www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/facility/radon/index.html. You also can find lists of certified radon businesses. Also, call the radon information line at 800 543-8279 for sources of radon test kits and mitigation information.

**WALTER KLEIN, M.S.,
BUREAU OF FACILITY PROGRAMS**

radon awareness week is a prime time to test your home



navigate the net for public health information

A public health grant allows Florida Department of Health staff in the Big Bend to learn to navigate the Internet for public health information while earning continuing education credits. The "Information Access for Public Health Professionals" applies to those in the following counties: Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor, Washington and Wakulla. Courses may be conducted in other counties based on request.

The service, made possible through the University of Florida Health Science Center Libraries, covers such topics as web search engines, search strategies, and evaluating the quality of web sites specific to public health professionals.

The course is designed for physicians, nurses, environmental health specialists, administrative assistants, nutritionists, and social workers, and has been approved for continuing education credits.

Call Linda Butson, coordinator for Outreach Services, or Nancy Schaefer, reference librarian, at SunCom 622-4016 or (352) 392-3585. Or email Ms. Butson at Linda@library.health.ufl.edu.

BONNIE GAUGHAN-BAILEY, OFFICE OF PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

october is national brain injury awareness month

Statistics are bleak, as brain injury is the leading cause of death and disability in children and young adults in the country, and brain injury among older Americans is on the rise due to falls. Each year, it is estimated 25,000 people in Florida sustain a traumatic brain injury, or what used to be called a closed head injury

or blunt trauma to the head. Motor vehicle accidents, falls, bicycle crashes and assaults are the leading cause of injury. While many of these injuries are classified as mild, the Florida Department of Health's Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program's Central Registry receives approximately 2,500 moderate-to-severe injury reports each year.

While program officials help connect the injured with appropriate services and help them reintegrate into their communities, another one of their missions is injury prevention education.

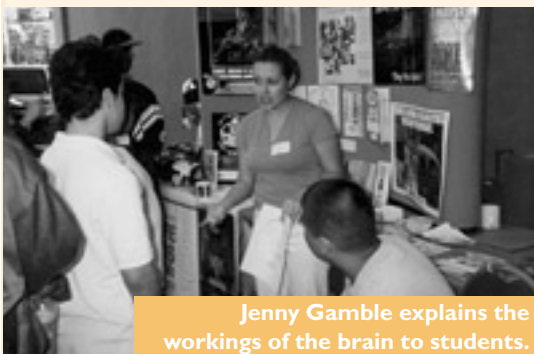
One awareness tactic that attracted attention among school-aged children was a gelatin-molded brain created by Region 5's Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program (BSCIP) during last spring's Annual Career and Safety Day in Miami. The event exposed some 2,100 middle and high school students from 45 Miami-Dade County public schools to career options and safety awareness.

BSCIP/CMS staff worked at the exhibition booth and reminded students about the importance of safety gear during such activities as bike riding and skateboarding. Yet it was the gelatin "brain" that got the "oohs" and "awes" and helped gain attention while staff members explained the realities of brain injury to youngsters.

The career and safety event attracted 120 exhibitors from the private, non-profit and the city, county, state and federal government sectors. Donations from local private and public community businesses made it possible.

To learn more about the Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program, contact Thom DeLilla or Janet Collins at (850) 245-4045 or SC 205-4045, or call the toll-free number, 866-875-5660 or visit the Brain Injury Association of Florida's web site at www.biaf.org.

JANET COLLINS, BRAIN AND SPINAL CORD INJURY PROGRAM



Jenny Gamble explains the workings of the brain to students.



L to R Doctors Howell, Brooks, Agwunobi, Mahan and Prather.

people in public health

a wealth of health meets

Secretary Agwunobi recently met with former State Health

Officers/Secretaries

James T. Howell, M.D.,

M.P.H., Robert G. Brooks, M.D., Charles S. Mahan, M.D., and E. Charlton "Skeeter"

Prather, M.D., M.P.H. Secretary Agwunobi shared his thoughts with them about the organization of DOH and asked for their input.

"Dr. Agwunobi sees the value of the old regime in seeking his vision for the future," said Dr. Prather. "Dr. Agwunobi's goal is to develop the best state public health program in the nation—one that truly addresses the needs of Floridians. Knowing the history of the department can help with future public health issues."

hendry and glades county nursing director named a robert wood johnson executive nurse fellow

Patricia Dobbins, R.N., M.S., executive community health nursing director of Hendry and Glades county health departments since 1990, has been selected as a Robert Wood Johnson (RWJ) Executive Nurse Fellow. The program is an advanced leadership program for nurses in senior executive roles in health services, public health and nursing education who aspire to help, lead and shape the future of the U.S. health care system.

The award includes a \$30,000 grant for a leadership project at both CHDs, as well as opportunities for educational and national exposure. Dobbins' project will focus on assisting in the future direction, mission and quality improvement at the two rural health departments.

pinellas CHD violence prevention coordinator receives first hosking award

Wendy Loomas, Pinellas County Health

Department Violence Prevention coordinator since 1998, was among the award recipients honored by

the Florida Public Health Association (FPHA) in July.

"I just hope the work I have

done, and will do, honors

Richard's life and work in

some meaningful way, and

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family experienced."

Wendy Loomis

Loomas received the Richard Hosking Award for Distinguished Service in Domestic Violence Prevention.

This is the first year the award has been presented, as it is named in memory of longtime public health official Richard Hosking who was

killed last year. He served as assistant director for the Pasco County Health Department at the time of his death.

"I just hope the work I have done, and will do, honors Richard's life and work in some meaningful way, and can help prevent the kind of violence that he and his family experienced," Loomis said, adding that she was touched that Hosking's family attended the award presentation.

Loomis has been instrumental in improving domestic violence screening and intervention techniques among health department staff and local domestic violence officials. She also helped implement the all-employee, in-service training of domestic and workplace violence in 1999. Screening training has been given to all existing staff and is now part of the New Employee Orientation.

SUSAN GILBERT, PINELLAS CHD

FPHA awards

The Florida Public Health Association (FPHA) honored several individuals with awards during its annual conference at Tampa in July. George Churchwell, biological scientist II, and Nancy Pickens, biological scientist III, with the Bureau of Laboratories were recipients of FPHA Graduate Scholarships. Both are enrolled in the Master's in Public Health program at the University of North Florida. Annette Phelps, A.R.N.P., M.S.N., received the Maternal and Child Health Leadership Award for outstanding contribution in that field. Janet Baggett received the J.Y. Porter Award in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the health promotion profession, while state Rep. Jerry L. Maygarden and Sen. Ronald A. Silver were honored with FPHA's Legislative Awards in recognition of their support of legislation that advocates and supports public health. Amy B. Smith, Ph.D., received the Homer D. Venters Award for her work at the Bureau of Laboratories. This annual award recognizes an individual's outstanding achievement early in their public health career. Eldert C. Hartwig Jr., Sc.D, former Chief of the Bureau of Laboratories, received the FPHA's Meritorious Service Award for outstanding contribution to FPHA and public health for several years. Wendy Loomas from Pinellas County Health Department received the FPHA Richard Hosking Award for Distinguished Service in Domestic Violence Prevention.

SUSANNE CROWE, BUREAU OF LABORATORIES

palm beach CHD awarded for anthrax investigation work

The Palm Beach County Health Department was awarded the J. Howard Beard Award for its investigative work last October on the first case of inhalation anthrax and bioterrorism. The honor was presented in July during the annual conference of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO).

"It's an honor to be accepting this award on behalf of the over 200 people within our department and from around the state who worked tirelessly to diagnose, investigate and treat over 1,000 persons who were potentially exposed," said Palm Beach CHD Director Jean M. Malecki, M.D.

thanks!

Thank you to those who helped make the 2002 springtime employee Health and Safety Fair Extravaganza in Tallahassee a successful and fun event. Your dedication and energy were obvious. Thank you to Stormie Andrews, Cathy Brewton, Brenda Crosby, April Crowley, Jan Davis, Ellen Farrell, Jennifer Harrell, Jennifer Hemphill, Sarah Howell, Victor Johnson, Bea Kenyon, Susanne McDaniel, Ary Miller, Tracey Moxley-Bragg, Tracy Pike, Kathy Reeves, Yolanda Sacipa, George Smith, Rhonda Thomas. SHANNON HUGHES, BUREAU OF CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION

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Please send stories and information for the Nov./Dec. issue by e-mail to Juli Bergstrom-Wasson by Oct. 1, 2002. Phone: 850/245-4444, ext. 3158 Fax: 850/488-6495

The Health Advisor is available on the DOH intranet. Click "publications" then "newsletters" then "Public Health Advisor." e-mail: Juli_Bergstrom-Wasson@doh.state.fl.us Suncom: 205-4111; Suncom Fax: 278-6495

minority health director makes military history

Carrie Nero, director of minority health at the Pinellas County Health Department, recently became the first black female brigadier general for the U.S. Army Reserve. She serves as chief nurse of the 3rd Medical Command, responsible for all medical care of the U.S. military in battlefield operations. Her command coordinates the flow of all medical supplies, be it blood or bandages. Her staff also monitors food service and water quality and coordinates patient evacuation, among other things. Her command has been responsible for about 340 men and women participating in the war against terrorism. A story about her and her accomplishments was featured in the May 26 *St. Petersburg Times* newspaper.

"I never cease to be impressed with the caliber of our team," said Secretary Agwunobi, "Congratulations, Carrie."

director of emergency medical services and community health resources appointed

Phil Williams, M.S., joined the Department of Health in July as director of the Division of Emergency Medical Services and Community Health Resources. Williams most recently worked as staff director of the Committee on Health Promotion in the Florida House of Representatives, where he had oversight responsibility for health care service delivery.

As division director, Williams will be overseeing 132 employees and a \$68.8 million budget. Within the division are the Bureau of Emergency Medical Services (EMS), the Office of Local Health Councils, the Office of Rural Health, the Office of Health Professional Recruitment, and the Bureau of Brain and Spinal Cord Injury.