

# ALABAMA'S

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# HEALTH

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## Alabama Abstinence-Only Education Program is changing attitudes among teens

**T**he Alabama Department of Public Health is spearheading an effort to reduce teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases through its Abstinence-Only Education Program.

With support from Section 510 of Title V of the Social Security Act, the department has provided funding for abstinence-only education to community-based projects targeting teens in 41 of Alabama's 67 counties.

Participating counties are Barbour, Blount, Bullock, Calhoun, Chambers, Choctaw, Coffee, Colbert, Conecuh, Coosa, Crenshaw, Dale, Dallas, Elmore, Franklin, Geneva, Greene, Hale, Henry, Houston, Jefferson, Lamar, Lauderdale, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Mobile, Montgomery, Morgan, Pickens, Pike, Russell, Shelby, St. Clair, Sumter, Tallapoosa, Tuscaloosa and Winston. From 1998 to 2003, over 180,000 young people have participated.

Gerald Halpin and Glennelle Halpin, professors at Auburn University, are conducting a comprehensive, intensive, longitudinal evaluation of the Alabama Abstinence-Only Education Program. The evaluators are tracking the rate of pregnancies, abortions and births to teens and the incidences of sexually transmitted diseases. Further, they are assessing knowledge, attitudes and behavioral intentions regarding abstinence-only-until-marriage.

Results from their evaluation show that projects throughout Alabama are making a difference. Following participation in the abstinence-only educational interventions, teens have a significantly greater

understanding of the social, psychological and health gains of abstinence until marriage as well as of the harmful effects of not abstaining.

They understand that abstinence is the only certain way to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, and they know that sexual advances can be rejected. More believe that abstinence by all school-age children and a monogamous relationship in the context of marriage are the expected standards. Thinking that they can abstain, large percentages say that they intend to do so next year

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## Hypertension Program to end Dec. 31

**P**atients of the department's Hypertension Program were notified in November that because of the state budget crisis the program will end effective Dec. 31.

In a letter to the program's patients, Dr. Donald Williamson stated, "It is very important that you continue taking your high blood pressure medicine and receive medical care. You may continue to return to the County Health Department for your other health needs as you have done in the past."

Participants were furnished a list of 49 potential organizations across the state to possibly help with high blood pressure treatment. They also were provided a fact sheet listing eligibility criteria for Alabama Senior Rx Partnership for Medication Access.

The toll-free Age Line telephone number (1-800-AGE-LINE (243-5463)) of the Department of Senior Services was also included. Persons calling that number will be given information about applying for drug assistance programs provided by pharmaceutical manufacturers.

# World AIDS Day observed across the world and in Alabama

On Dec. 1 people across the world paused to recognize a worldwide epidemic by observing World AIDS Day. Embarking on its 16th year, this year's theme was "Live and Let Live." The aim of the campaign was to raise awareness of HIV-related stigma and discrimination, two factors that contribute to the HIV epidemic.

Even with increasing education about HIV/AIDS, five people worldwide die of AIDS every day. The continued devastation of AIDS has affected people across the world, infecting 42 million women and children, with five million infected last year alone. Proponents in the fight against AIDS feel that targeting HIV-related stigma and discrimination will aid in reducing the epidemic.

"Speaking about HIV may include talking about sex, discrimination and drugs making it difficult for people to hear or communicate about the disease. Open dialogue is the best way to inform people and help prevent the spread of the disease," said Brenda Cummings, health educator for the Division of HIV/AIDS at the Alabama Department of Public Health.

Among the most serious consequences that can result from stigma and discrimination are that people may choose to ignore the possibility that they are HIV positive or decide not to take measures to protect themselves because of fear of being associated with HIV.

"It's important that we make sure that we are not creating an environment where people are so fearful of HIV that they don't get tested, ask questions, and actively protect themselves and others," said Cummings.

This year World AIDS Day activists asked people to help fight fear, shame and injustice worldwide. World AIDS Day links communities throughout the United States in a unified observance when the White House dims its lights on the evening of Dec. 1. This visual demonstration signifies the commitment to fight the AIDS global epidemic and gives tribute to people living with HIV/AIDS and to those who have died from AIDS. Here in Alabama memorials and activities were held on Dec. 1 in the following cities:

- \* Information Booths, Activities at Calhoun Community College, Decatur.
- \* Interdenominational Prayer Breakfast and free HIV screenings, J.F. Drake State Technical College, Huntsville.
- \* Information booth, mock dramatization, free HIV screenings, at Oakwood College Seventh Day Adventist Church, Huntsville.
- \* Parade and Cookout with free HIV screenings, Alabama A&M University, Huntsville.
- \* Information Booth, University of Montevallo,

*AIDS.....continued on page 6*

## Alabama Department of Public Health

### Mission

To serve the people of Alabama by assuring conditions in which they can be healthy.

### Value Statement

The purpose of the Alabama Department of Public Health is to provide caring, high quality and professional services for the improvement and protection of the public's health through disease prevention and the assurance of public health services to resident and transient populations of the state regardless of social circumstances or the ability to pay.

The Department of Public Health works closely with the community to preserve and protect the public's health and to provide caring quality services.

# ALABAMA'S HEALTH

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Informational materials in alternative formats will be made available upon request.

## Many toys may cause choking and other injuries

For many children the holiday season is a time of enjoying brand new toys, but some toys can lead to serious injury. Parents can help protect their children from injury this year by educating themselves about toy safety and toy recalls.

“Parents need to shop wisely for toys. It’s important to not only choose the right toy for the child’s age, but parents also need to be cautious of hidden dangers toys might have,” said Melissa Khan, injury epidemiologist with the Injury Prevention Division, Alabama Department of Public Health.

Be sure to read the label. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission requires toy manufacturers to meet stringent safety standards and to label certain toys that could be a hazard for younger children. Look for labels that give age recommendations and use that information as a guide.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reminds everyone to keep their holiday season safe and be aware of the following CPSC 2003 recalls:

- Multi-colored and solid-colored sidewalk chalk, manufactured by Agglo Corporation and imported by Toys “R” Us.-the multi-colored and solid-colored chalk contains high levels of lead, posing a risk of poisoning to young children.
- Bear Jack-in-the-Box Toy, manufactured by Schylling Associates Inc.-the red bead on the crank of the toy can detach, posing a choking hazard to young children.
- Amazing Baby™ Listen and Play activity books, manufactured by Advantage Publisher’s Group-the hub of the pink dial embedded in the inside back cover can come off posing a choking hazard to young children.
- Plan Toys Solid Drums, manufactured by BRIO® Corp., —the three rubber feet, which are screwed into the bottom of the drum could be removed in some cases, posing a choking hazard to young children.
- Pet Me Platypus™, manufactured by Neurosmith-any of the four plastic button covers can detach posing a small parts choking hazard to young children.
- Toy necklaces, manufactured by L.M. Becker and Co. Inc.-the necklace’s pendant contains high levels of lead, posing a risk of poisoning to young children.
- Falcon Action Toy Jets, manufactured by C.D.X. Trading Inc., small parts of the toy jet can detach,

Toys.....continued on page 4

## Alabamians urged to support rural health care industry

Alabama’s rural health care industry is being challenged in assuring that quality health care is available to meet the needs of its vulnerable rural residents. When compared to residents of urban areas, Alabama’s rural residents tend to be older, have higher percentages of disabled persons, have less formal education, have greater racial diversity, have lower income, experience greater unemployment, and have greater transportation limitation. These characteristics bring an increase in health care needs.

“Assuring that enough health care practitioners bypass the social attractions of urban life to practice in rural areas is one of the greatest challenges that rural health is facing today,” said Dale Quinney, program manager of the Alabama Rural Health Association. “Compared to their urban counterparts, primary care physicians practicing in rural Alabama have approximately twice the number of potential patients.”

However, the single greatest challenge to Alabama’s rural health care industry may be from the people that it exists to serve. Many rural residents fall victim to the belief that higher quality health care can be received in urban areas.

Dr. Wayne Myers, president of the National Rural Health Association, recently stated that rural medical practice requires a much broader range of skills than urban practice where specialists are abundant. Studies of medical errors show that mistakes are less likely to happen when information does not have to move from person to person. The care that a person will receive from a rural practitioner can be as good as one could receive anywhere.

Dr. Myers points out another very important benefit from using local health care providers. By keeping health care dollars near home, rural residents are helping to keep a local health care system which will be there for emergencies as well as routine situations. They are helping to maintain local jobs and to assure community vitality by having health care dollars spent and then re-spent locally.

For more information contact Dale Quinney, Director, Alabama Rural Health Association, (334) 206-5396, e-mail [dquinney@adph.state.al.us](mailto:dquinney@adph.state.al.us).

## Toys.....continued from page 3

- posing a choking hazard to young children.
- ✦ Happyvillagers Toy Sets, manufactured by HearthSong—the head can detach from the body of the villagers, posing a choking hazard to young children.
  - ✦ Puzzibilities Recycling Truck Puzzle, manufactured by Small World Toys®—one of the puzzle pieces (a stack of newspapers) poses a small parts choking hazard to young children.
  - ✦ Earlyears Bobbie Bear Stacking, manufactured by International Playthings Inc.—plastic knobs on the rings can detach, posing a choking hazard to young children.
  - ✦ Crib Mobile Toys, manufactured by Fisher-Price—if batteries used in the mobile leak, the caustic liquid can seep out of the battery compartment, posing a risk of chemical burns to babies. There have been six reports of minor burn injuries to babies.
  - ✦ Toy Drumsticks, manufactured by the Step2 Company—the tip of the drumstick can break off, posing a choking hazard to young children.
  - ✦ Little People® Animal Sound Farms, manufactured by Fisher-Price—two small screws that hold the toy stall doors in place can come off, posing an aspiration or choking hazard to young children. There has been one report of a child that aspirated a screw into his lung which required the child to be hospitalized and undergo emergency surgery to remove the screw from his lung.
  - ✦ PlaySkool® Magic Start Crawl ‘n Stand, manufactured by PlaySkool—the toy, which is designed to encourage crawling babies to pull themselves up and stand, can tip over during use and strike falling babies in the head, face or neck, resulting in injuries. There have been 26 reports of babies suffering injuries, including one minor concussion and various bumps, bruises, black eyes and cut lips.

For a more extensive list of toy recalls, visit the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission’s Web site at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov), and for more injury prevention information visit the Alabama Department of Public Health’s Web site at [www.adph.org/injuryprevention](http://www.adph.org/injuryprevention).

## How to create a watermark for Lotus Word Pro documents

**T**o create a watermark such as “DRAFT” in a Word Pro Document, complete the following steps:

1. Place the insertion point at the top of the page.
2. Click the right mouse button and then choose the “Page Properties” option.
3. Click the Graphics tab. (This is the third tab from the left and is represented by a camera.)
4. Click Watermark.
5. Select a watermark from the list and click Open. (You can choose “Other” from the list to select a watermark in a different location.)
6. Select “Transparent” if you want to display a background pattern and/or color behind the watermark. (For example, in a frame that has a background color, choosing “Transparent” allows the color to show

- “through” the watermark graphic.)
7. placement, scaling, rotation and image processing options.

Tracey Cannon  
Computer Systems Center

# Alabama Suicide Prevention Task Force offers new educational resource

Suicide is a crucial public health problem. In 1998 in Alabama, there were 567 deaths from suicide for a rate of 13.6 per 100,000 population. In fact there were substantially more suicide deaths than homicide deaths in 1998 in Alabama and the nation. Alabama's suicide death rate exceeds the national rate and is ranked in the top 15 among all other states for suicide deaths.

Research shows that almost all people who die from suicide have a diagnosable mental or substance abuse disorder. In fact, according to the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, having a mental or substance abuse disorder is nearly a necessary condition for suicide to occur.

The recently formed Alabama Suicide Prevention Task Force has developed a Web site titled "There is Hope, There is Help" which provides useful information including a suicide prevention hotline number (1-800-SUICIDE) and other resources. Alabama's Suicide Prevention Plan is outlined, and information, referral centers and contacts are listed.

Ms. Hambrick said, "We are all very proud of this resource and would like to share it with as many people as possible."

The web address is [www.adph.org/suicideprevention](http://www.adph.org/suicideprevention), or this site can be accessed by entering [www.adph.org](http://www.adph.org), choosing A-Z Contents/Search, choosing A-Z Contents, then clicking on Suicide Prevention.

Task force members acknowledge that the Web site is not accessible for many Alabamians, but this is a start in providing outreach without funding. Even though the site had not yet advertised its existence, 140 hits were made from mid-September through October.

Patterns of suicide by age group, race and sex in Alabama are similar to the U.S. as a whole. Of the 4,468 suicide deaths from 1991 to 1998, 68.9 percent were white males, 11.6 percent were black males, 17.3 percent were white females and 2.2 percent were black females. In Alabama and the U.S., approximately 20 percent of suicides were in those aged 65 and older. Studies have shown that depression is the sole predictor of suicide among the elderly.

From 1993 to 1997, Alabama's five-year suicide rate of 12.5 per 100,000 fell exactly in the middle of the 50 states. The Western states of South Dakota, Oregon, Idaho, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Alaska, Wyoming, Montana and Nevada had the 10 highest five-year rates. Nevada's rate was 23.6.

A suicide attempt with a firearm is often immediately lethal, leaving little opportunity for rescue after the

attempt. From 1993 to 1997, Alabama was second only to Mississippi in the percentage of suicides by firearms, 76.7 percent. The percentage of suicides by firearms in Alabama was much higher than the nation for both men and women.

Suicides in adolescents and young adults have increased sharply since the mid 1950s. This trend has been seen both in Alabama and the U.S. Some of the reasons are increased access to particularly lethal means like firearms, a younger age for use of alcohol and drugs, earlier onsets of severe mental illnesses and increasing rates of depression.

The rate for black males aged 15 to 24 increased sporadically from 2.9 deaths per 100,000 in 1980 to a record high rate of 27.2 in 1995. Since 1995, age-specific rates have decreased for all young men of this age group for Alabama and the nation.

The most promising way to prevent suicide is through the recognition and treatment of depression, substance abuse disorders and other psychiatric illnesses. One goal is to improve the ability of primary care providers to recognize and treat depression, substance abuse and other major mental disorders associated with suicide risk. For instance, 70 percent of elderly victims of suicide had seen a health care professional in the month before their death.

Depression is common throughout the world, but it is widely unrecognized and untreated.

The following descriptions were reprinted in a 2000 Center for Health Statistics publication, "Suicide in Alabama and the United States."

## Recognizing depression

| <b>A depressed person may report being:</b> | <b>Others may describe the person as being:</b> |
|---|---|
| Down  | Gloomy  |
| Sad   | Pessimistic                                     |
| Unhappy                                     | Cynical   |
| Discouraged                                 | Grim  |
| Empty                                       | Negative  |
| Miserable                                   | Moody   |
| Beaten                                      | Serious   |
| Defeated                                    | Stern   |
| Hopeless                                    | Severe  |
| Helpless                                    | Oppressive                                      |

Preskorn S. Outpatient Management of Depression: A Guide for the Primary Care Practitioner, PCI, 1999.

Persons interested in obtaining more information are advised to contact Dollie Hambrick or Sheila Blackshear, Office of Professional and Support Services, at (334) 206-5226.



# ABCCEDP participates in UAB health evaluation

**M**uch of the success experienced by the Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program is due to the strong partnerships at the local, county and state levels. ABCCEDP has established partnerships with the University of Alabama at Birmingham, American Cancer Society, county extension agencies and other community organizations.

On Saturday, Nov. 15 UAB faculty, staff, students and other volunteers including several from the Alabama Department of Public Health, gathered at Mount Moriah Missionary Baptist Church of North Pratt City to provide health screenings to members of the church and community.

The project was sponsored by the Alabama Underserved Health Partnership, a unique collaborative effort involving various schools within UAB. ABCCEDP provided information on how to access cancer screenings. A total of 25 women received information about the provided services; 13 of those ladies actually qualified. Health screenings offered included:

- Blood pressure
- Cholesterol
- Blood sugar
- Lung function
- Physical activity
- Nutrition
- Dental
- Vision
- Cancer risk
- Health history

The last station was health education where physicians, nurses and health educators spoke with each participant about their individual results from all the screenings. This component of the event added to the value of the information provided to those people who received the test. Lastly, the participants received an appreciation gift and refreshments.

*By JORA THOMAS and ANN SMITH*

## AIDS.....continued from page 2

Montevallo.

- \* Candlelight Service and March, from at King Memorial Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery.
- \* Candlelight Vigil Procession and short service, Stillman College, Tuscaloosa.
- \* World AIDS Day Gospel Concert, First Missionary Baptist Church, Huntsville.

One hundred ninety-one countries around the world observe the day. In the United States, World AIDS Day is

coordinated by the American Association for World Health, in conjunction with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Pan American Health Organization, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

For more information on HIV/AIDS prevention, please visit the Alabama Department of Public Health's Web site at [www.adph.org](http://www.adph.org).

## Retirees

**T**he following employees retired effective Dec. 1:

*Anita Shores* - Personnel

*Glenda Weems* - Public Health Area VI

# Abstinence.....continued from page 1

and even until marriage.

The impact of the Alabama Abstinence-Only Education Program is seen in health statistics for counties involved. From initiation of the abstinence-only education interventions in 1998, pregnancy and abortion rates for 15-17-year-old females have dropped considerably. Birth rates for 15- to 17-year-old unmarried females and for 10- to 14-year-old unmarried females have also dropped. These drops in the project counties are substantially greater than the decreases seen in non-project counties throughout the state of Alabama.

Rebecca Warren, RN, MSN, coordinator of the Alabama Abstinence-Only Education Program, said, "The positive impact demonstrated by our community-based projects establishes the importance of abstinence-only-until-marriage education in changing adolescents' attitudes and behaviors and is key to protecting the health and future of Alabama's youth."



Members of the Alabama Abstinence-only Education Program are pictured (left to right) Rebecca Warren, R.N., M.S.N., coordinator; Susan Stewart, R.N., M.S.N., director; Gerald Halpin, Ph.D., and Glennelle Halpin, Ph.D., AAEP evaluators, Auburn University.

The specific projects which are making a difference for teens, the areas they serve and the number of participants are summarized here:

## Abstinence in Motion (AIM) Project

Troy Regional Medical Center and Charles Henderson Child Health Center's Abstinence in Motion (AIM) Project targets teens in the following counties: Pike, Crenshaw, Barbour, Coffee and Bullock. From 1998 to 2003, over 19,000 young people have participated in the program. The impact of the AIM project is seen in health statistics for the counties involved. From initiation of the

abstinence-only education interventions in 1998, pregnancy rates for 15-17-year old females have dropped considerably. This drop in the AIM Project counties is substantially greater than the decrease seen throughout Alabama.



A presentation by the Abstinence in Motion (AIM) Project of Troy Regional Medical Center and Charles Henderson Child Health Center.

## Boligee 2000

Boligee 2000 promotes abstinence-only-until-marriage and targets youth in Paramount Jr. High School, Carver Middle School and Greene County High School. From 1998 to 2003, over 1,700 young people have participated in the program

A comparison of attitudes and behaviors of participants as measured by a survey before and after programmatic interventions shows clearly that Boligee 2000 is making a



Boligee 2000 staff present educational materials at a health fair.

difference. Before the program began, only a small percentage (20 percent) thought that they could abstain from sex and still be popular. After participating in Boligee's program, 90 percent believed that they could. In fact, 95 percent pledged to abstain from sex until marriage.

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Analyses of county health statistics confirm that pregnancy rates for 15- 17-year-old females have dropped considerably since the initiation of the abstinence-only education interventions in 1998. Abortion rates for the 15- 17-year-old females have also declined. Most noteworthy, though, may be the drop in birth rates for 10- 14-year-olds— decreases greater than the decreases seen throughout the state.

### 4-H T.G.I.F. (Teens Getting Involved for the Future) program

The Alabama Cooperative Extension Systems' 4-H T.G.I.F. (Teens Getting Involved for the Future) program targets sixth-grade students as program participants and eleventh and twelfth grade students as teen leaders in Choctaw, Conecuh, Coosa, Elmore, Marion, Pickens, Sumter and Tuscaloosa counties. From 1998 to 2003, over 26,000 young people have participated in the program.



The 4-H T.G.I.F. project works with sixth graders and teen leaders in the eleventh and twelfth grades.

The impact of the T.G.I.F. project is seen in health statistics for the eight counties involved. From initiation of the abstinence-only education interventions in 1998, pregnancy rates for 15- to 17-year-old females have dropped considerably. This reduction in the T.G.I.F. project counties is substantially greater than the decrease

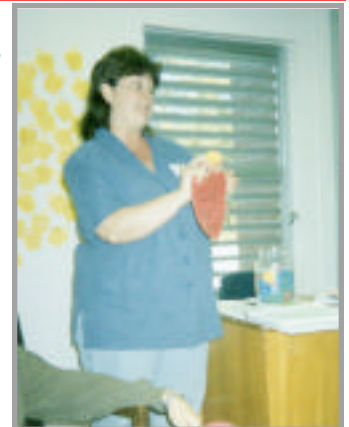
seen throughout the state.

### Lee County Youth Development Center

The Lee County Youth Development Center targets teens in Macon, Tallapoosa, Russell and Lee counties, Auburn City, and Opelika City Schools as well as youth who receive residential and community-based services at the Lee County Youth Development Center. From 1998 to 2003, over 3,500 young people have participated in the program.

Health statistics for the project counties show the

impact the Lee County Youth Development Center project is making. From initiation of the abstinence-only education interventions in 1998, pregnancy rates for unmarried 15- to 17-year-old females have dropped considerably. Pregnancy and abortion rates for all 15- to 17-year-old females have dropped as well. These decreases in the project counties are substantially greater than those seen statewide.



Lee County Youth Development Center staff

### “Right Choices/Real Talk” Program

Crittenton Youth Services' “Right Choices/Real Talk” program promotes abstinence-only until marriage and



Classroom presentation by the Crittenton Youth Services' “Right Choices/Real Talk” program staff

targets elementary (6th grade), middle (7th and 8th grade), and high (9th-11th grade) school students in the Mobile County Public School System and parochial schools.

From 1998 to 2003, over 52,000 young people have participated in the program. Results from their evaluation show that Crittenton Youth Services' “Right Choices/Real Talk” project is making a difference. Analyses of health statistics for Mobile County confirm that pregnancy rates for 15-to 17-year-old females have dropped along with abortion rates from initiation of the abstinence-only education interventions in 1998. The birth rates for unmarried 15-to 17-year-olds have also fallen as have the birth rates for 10- to 14-year-olds. These decreases in Mobile County are generally greater than the decreases

*Abstinence.....continued on page 9*



seen throughout the state.

## Sex and Family Education, Inc. (S.A.f.E.)

Sex and Family Education, Inc. (S.A.f.E.) targets



More than 16,000 young people participated in the Sex and Family Education, Inc. (S.A.f.E.) during the last school year.

public and private school students 12 to 18 years of age in Blount, Colbert, Dallas, Franklin, Geneva, Henry, Houston, Lauderdale, Jefferson, Shelby and St. Clair counties. During the 2002-2003 school year alone over 16,000 young people participated in the program.

Results from their evaluation show that the S.A.f.E. project is making a difference. Following participation in the abstinence-only educational interventions, more believe that sex outside of marriage is not okay, especially for young people their age, and they think that they can stand up for themselves and resist pressures to have sex. Even if they have been sexually active, they come to understand that they can stop. They are aware of the negative consequences of having children out-of-wedlock, and they realize that abstinence is the only certain way to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

## “SmHeart Choices” Program

The Circle of Care Center for Families “SmHeart Choices” program promotes abstinence-only-until-marriage and targets teens in Chambers County and Lanett City Public Schools as well as in local private schools. From 1998 to 2003, over 9,000 young people have participated in the program.

The impact of the “SmHeart Choices” project is seen in health statistics for Chambers County. From initiation of the abstinence-only education interventions in 1998, pregnancy rates for 15-17- year old females have dropped considerably. This drop in Chambers County is substantially greater than the decrease seen throughout the state as a whole.



SmHeart Choices classroom presentation

## Wiregrass Abstinence Instruction, Training and Support (W.A.I.T.S.) Project

The Wiregrass Abstinence Instruction, Training, and Support (W.A.I.T.S.) project promotes abstinence-only-until-marriage and targets teens in Dale County and Ozark City Schools. From 1998 to 2003, nearly 5,000 young



Peggy Lawler (second from left) is project coordinator with the Dale County W.A.I.T.S. Project. She is shown with AAEP leaders.

people have participated in the program.

The impact of the W.A.I.T.S. project is seen in health statistics for Dale County. From initiation of the abstinence-only education interventions in 1998, pregnancy rates for 15- to 17-year-old females have dropped considerably. This drop in Dale County is substantially greater than the decrease seen throughout the other Alabama counties.

For more information, to request free abstinence-only educational materials, or to find out how to become involved in promoting abstinence-only-until-marriage among adolescents, please contact Susan R. Stewart, RN, MSN, director, at 334-206-2901, or visit the Alabama Abstinence-Only Education Program’s Web site at [www.adph.org/abstinence](http://www.adph.org/abstinence).

# Improved health outcomes goal of Medicaid's Pediatric Asthma CME Project

**I**mproving health outcomes for more than 35,000 Medicaid-eligible children in Alabama with asthma is the focus of a new, interactive CD-ROM produced by the Alabama Medicaid Agency's Research and Development Unit with the assistance of Dr. Jack Hataway, director of the Chronic Disease Prevention Division of the Alabama Department of Public Health.

One of several quality improvement initiatives within the Medicaid Agency, the CD-ROM provides primary care physicians with a convenient opportunity to obtain current information on best practices and national guidelines regarding pediatric asthma. Additionally, physicians are eligible to earn up to 7.5 hours of Category 1 and/or AAFP CME credit by completing the educational activity on the CD-Rom.

The CME activity was authored by eight Alabama physicians with expertise in asthma, allergy and/or pediatrics. The content includes nine seminars on pediatric asthma, six case studies, "curbside" teaching points and an extensive library of downloadable materials for physicians to use in the office. An advisory committee of pediatricians and family physicians assisted the authors during the project's development to ensure that the material addresses issues of importance to primary care physicians.

For more information, contact the Alabama Medicaid Agency at 334-353-5203 or email [rrawls@medicaid.state.al.us](mailto:rrawls@medicaid.state.al.us).

*By TRACY MINNIFIELD*

# Unit wins 2003 Spirit Award

**T**he Governor's Commission on Physical Fitness presented the Nutrition and Physical Activity Unit of the Office of Professional and Support Services with its 2003 Spirit Award. The award was given at the fall conference of the Alabama Society of the Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance.

Guidelines were developed by the Governor's Commission to promote good nutrition, regular physical activity, health education, recreation, fitness and sports activities and to encourage involvement in healthy, active lifestyles as part of National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, National Physical Education and Sports Week, and National Employee Health and Fitness Day, with emphasis placed on activities and events celebrating the Spirit Month (May), Spirit Week (May 1-7) and Spirit Day, the first Wednesday of May.

Also winning awards for 2003 were Connie Thomas, physical education teacher at Hayneville Road Elementary School; and Fred Thomas, director of Montgomery Therapeutic Recreation Center.



Shown with the plaque (left to right) are Heidi Hataway; Anita Sanford; Miriam Gaines, director; and Mollie Pettijohn.

# Commendations

**H**ealth department employees who are listed here have received letters of commendation recently. To recognize other employees, please send letters through your supervisors or the state health officer to *Alabama's Health*.

***Billy Clifton, R.N.***

Marshall County Health Department

from Rhonda Morgan, R.N.  
Decatur, Ala.

***Angela Hard, R.N.***

Marshall County Health Department

from Rhonda Morgan, R.N.  
Decatur, Ala.

***Zandra Hinton-Samuel***

Public Health Area 3

from Deborah D. Bivins  
Montgomery, Ala.

***Vivian Jones***

Morgan County Health Department

from Tony L. Tucker  
Decatur, Ala.

***Melissa Smith, R.N.***

Limestone County Health Department

from Rhonda Morgan, R.N.  
Decatur, Ala.

***Christie Waldrep, R.N.***

Marshall County Health Department

from Rhonda Morgan, R.N.  
Decatur, Ala.

***Jo Wood, R.N.***

Marshall County Health Department

from Rhonda Morgan, R.N.  
Decatur, Ala.

# Prevent holiday decoration injuries

**D**ecorations are a huge part of the holiday season, but careless regard to hidden dangers can lead to serious injuries. This year the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Alabama Department of Public Health offer the following tips to prevent holiday related injury.

## **Tree safety**

While many artificial trees are fire resistant, live, dry trees are not. Take precautions to protect your home from fires.

- ☼ A fresh tree will be less of a fire hazard and stay green longer. A fresh tree has needles that are hard to pull from branches and do not break. The trunk butt of a fresh tree is also sticky with resin.
- ☼ Keep trees away from fireplaces, radiators or other heat sources.
- ☼ Cut off about two inches of the trunk to expose fresh wood for better water absorption.
- ☼ Place tree out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways.
- ☼ Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials.
- ☼ Remove all wrapping papers from tree and fireplace areas immediately after presents are opened.

## **Safety precautions for children**

Some holiday decorations can be particularly dangerous for young children. Safety proof your home from the following potential hazards.

- ☼ Make sure to read container labels on artificial snow sprays. Improper use can irritate lungs if inhaled.
- ☼ Avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable.
- ☼ Keep trimmings with small removable parts out of reach of children. Pieces could be swallowed or inhaled.
- ☼ Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food, a child could eat them.

## **Lights and candles**

- ☼ Never use electronic lights on a metallic tree.
- ☼ Turn off all lights on trees and other decorations when you go to bed or leave the house. Lights could short and start a fire.
- ☼ Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections.
- ☼ Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens.
- ☼ Keep candles away from other decorations and wrapping paper.



December is National Drunk & Drugged Driving Prevention Month and Safe Toys & Gift Month.

# Calendar of Events



**December 8**

Stroke Program. For more information contact Video Communications Division, (334) 206-5618.



**December 10**

Reproductive Health Issues for Women Over 40, Public Health Staff Development, 2-4 p.m., For more information contact Debbie Thomasson, (334) 206-5648.



**December 15**

ADPH Family Planning Services Update, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Annie Vosel, (334) 206-2959.



**January 8**

ADPH Statewide Staff Meeting, 3-4 p.m. For more information contact Jim McVay, Dr.P.A., (334) 206-5600.



**January 14**

Public Health Staff Development, 2-4 p.m.



**January 28**

Risk Communication (SCCPHP), 12 noon-1:30 p.m. For more information contact Video Communications, (334) 206-5618.



**February 11**

Public Health Staff Development, 2-4 p.m.



**March 10**

STD Update for Clinicians and Counselors, Public Health Staff Development. For more information contact Annie Vosel, (334) 206-2959.



**March 25**

Tuberculosis. For more information contact Anic Lopez, (334) 206-5923.

**April 21-23**

Alabama Public Health Association Annual Meeting; Social Work; Nursing; HIV/AIDS; and Rural Health Seminars, Bryant Center, Tuscaloosa.



