The Dec. 8 Foster & Kinship Care Holiday Party gathered approximately 250 foster and adopted youth at the Life-House auditorium in Eureka for fun and good cheer. Social Services staff coordinated the event, which included gifts, singing, a buffet meal (donated and served by Rotary Club of Arcata Sunrise members) and a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Claus to hear all the children’s Christmas wishes.

“A foster,” page 7

The Public Health branch of DHHS has been awarded national accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board. One of 141 accredited health departments nationwide, Humboldt is the first California county of its size to achieve this status. Accreditation shows that the department is meeting many complex standards required of a public health agency and is expected to make the department more competitive.

“Accreditation,” page 3

DHHS Public Health is the first small county health department to be accredited in California.
Volunteers needed for Point-in-Time count

► With the biennial Point-in-Time (PIT) count of homeless people coming up Jan. 31, the PIT committee is looking for volunteers, and gathering donations.

During the morning of Tuesday, Jan. 31, volunteers will go to places throughout the county where homeless people are known to sleep, and take a head count.

The count is a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development requirement. Information gathered during this count is used by local planning departments and by county nonprofit agencies in applications for grant funding and planning.

Throughout the day volunteers will also be stationed at hubs across the county that homeless people frequent for services. Willing homeless participants will be asked to complete a survey to find out some basic information about them.

Currently, PIT committee members said they are expecting four hubs in Eureka, one in both Arcata and Fortuna and two in McKinleyville.

The homeless count further east is expected to be conducted by DHHS Mobile Outreach staff. Throughout the week, as staff venture to different locations, they will survey homeless people, and ask where they slept on the night of Jan. 30.

“The results help us get a clearer picture of the demographics of our homeless population which aids us in planning for the future,” said Sally Hewitt, DHHS senior program manager and co-chair of the Humboldt Housing and Homeless Coalition (HHHC). “Getting accurate numbers is especially important this year with the recent passing of the No Place Like Home Initiative. The initiative will provide $2 billion for housing and services for homeless people in communities across California.”

Once the count has been completed, staff at the California Center for Rural Policy will analyze the count data and produce a final report.

The HHHC is looking for people interested in assisting with the count, as well as people interested in donating new socks for homeless people who participate in the survey. Food for count volunteers is also being sought.

For more information, contact DHHS Secretary Wendy Choate at 707-441-5520. Information is also available at the HHHC’s website humboldthousing.org.

Flu season began in October, but health officials say now is still a good time to get vaccinated.

Nationally, flu season lasts from October through May, but Public Health officials in Humboldt said the season tends to hit hardest locally starting at the end of January. It takes up to two weeks after receiving the flu vaccine to achieve the best protection.

A flu vaccine is needed every year to maintain existing immunity because flu viruses are continually mutating. The flu vaccine is formulated annually to keep up with the flu viruses.

“If you feel like you don’t need a flu shot, think about those around you who may be more vulnerable,” said Susan Buckley, Public Health director for DHHS. “Children, grandchildren, and friends and family who are pregnant or may be immune compromised can be more susceptible to the illness. The shot will help you stay healthy as well as protecting those around you.”

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when applying for grant funding.

This is because a public health agency that follows the processes and standards outlined in the accreditation requirements is more likely to do a better job and result in better health outcomes for their community, explained Public Health Director Susan Buckley.

“This status is something for staff to be proud of,” she said. “As our greatest strengths, the accreditation board highlighted our innovativeness and forward thinking, our authentic engagement with the community and the dedication and commitment our staff has to the work of public health.”

The years-long process to become accredited included working with community partners to develop the Community Health Assessment (CHA) in 2013 and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) in 2014.

The CHA is a collaborative, comprehensive overview of the health of the community. The CHIP’s purpose is to identify how to strategically and collaboratively address priority areas to improve the health and well-being of county residents.

Public Health also established internal committees dedicated to workforce development and quality improvement; reviewed, updated and developed policies and procedures; developed a performance management system; and developed and implemented a strategic plan.

As part of the process, hundreds of examples of work done by Public Health staff were evaluated by the Public Health Accreditation Board demonstrating that it meets or exceeds 97 measures related to the 12 Domains, which include Assess, Investigate, Inform and Educate, Community Engagement, Policies and Plans, Public Health Laws, Access to Care, Workforce, Quality Improvement, Evidence-Based Practices, Administration and Management and Governance.

“Receiving PHAB accreditation is an impressive achievement,” stated a letter to DHHS Public Health from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Thomas R. Frieden and Dr. Jose Montero director, Office for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support. “CDC recognizes the time and effort that leaders and staff members from all levels of your health department have dedicated to this effort. We commend the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services – Public Health for this extraordinary accomplishment.”

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continued from “Flu,” page 2

Public Health Clinic in Eureka. Flu shots are also available through medical providers and at some area grocery stores and pharmacies.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older be vaccinated.

Common flu symptoms include a fever or feeling feverish, a cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headache and fatigue. Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, although this is more common in children than adults.

There is more you can do to prevent the spread of the flu in addition to getting a flu shot. Health officials recommend practicing the “3 Cs:” Clean your hands, cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough and contain your germs by staying home if you’re sick.

The cost of the flu vaccine at the Public Health Clinic is $17, although no one will be turned away for inability to pay. Medicare is accepted. Flu vaccine is offered by appointment only.

To make an appointment for a flu vaccine, call your health care provider or the Public Health Clinic at 707-268-2108. The clinic is located at 529 I St. in Eureka. 

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Have you ever considered fostering a child? If so, there’s something you should watch.

It’s DHHS’s eight-minute Foster Parent Outreach video which highlights the rewards and challenges of taking in foster children. The video features foster parents, social services staff, a former foster youth and even local actors.

Check out the video and please share with anyone who you think might be interested in making room in their lives for a child.

youtube.com/watch?v=EstwksH_Av0

As of December 2016, there are 354 children in foster care in Humboldt County.

Humboldt County Supervisor Ryan Sunberg, Adoptions & Placement Program Manager Deb Engs and Adoption Horizons Executive Director and adoptive parent Cynthia Savage.

Left side from bottom to top: Engs, Adoptive Family Recruitment Liaison and adoptive parent Mickey Harris, Adoptions & Placement Administrative Analyst Julie Perata, and Adoptions Social Worker Jim Bragg. Right side from bottom to top: New Directions Foster Family Association President and adoptive parent Melissa Nordwood, Adoptions Supervisor Alyssa Thom, Savage and adoptive parent Rose Baker.

FOSTER CARE BY THE NUMBERS

The Board of Supervisors proclaimed November as Adoption Awareness Month. The proclamation acknowledged the priority agencies give to keeping adopted children connected to birth families, community, tribes and culture.

Caregivers gather for adoption awareness

VSO move makes services more accessible

It’s been just over a month since Veteran’s Service staff moved into its new office at the corner of Sixth and L streets, and already they are seeing benefits of the new location.

The more accessible spot is easier for disabled veterans to get to and doesn’t require vets with backpacks to pass through the courthouse security system. It’s also adjacent to a bus stop and has two 12-minute parking spots at the front door, which Veterans Service Officer Rená Maveety said is often enough time for a typical VSO visit.

“The old space had outlived itself,” she said. “Now we have a chance to thrive and grow.”

There are a number of services available to Humboldt veterans, and VSO employees are available to assist veterans and their dependents and survivors with federal and state programs. Those can include compensation claims, survivors’ benefits, requests for military records, home loans as well as medical and education benefits.

The new office is located at 1105 Sixth St., Suite F, in Eureka. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments are available. For more information, call 707-445-7611.

From left, VSO staff Susan Morrison, Zac Demant and Rená Maveety at the new office.
Students hear about the difference between abuse and sacred use of tobacco products.

DHHS' Child Welfare Services (CWS) partnered with the Humboldt Network of Family Resource Centers (HNFRC) and the North Coast Clinics Network to sponsor the Service Provider Roundtable on Nov. 9, at the Humboldt County Office of Education in Eureka. More than 100 people attended the fourth annual event which provided networking opportunities for staff from service-providing organizations across the county.

Tribal Nations and organizations in attendance included the Karuk Tribe, United Indian Health Services (UIHS), California Tribal TANF Partnership, Trinidad Rancheria and Two Feathers Native American Family Services. Staff from more than 10 HNFRC offices were in attendance, as well as the Humboldt Independent Practice Association’s Priority Care Center. North Coast Clinics Network staff included representatives from Open Door Community Health Center’s Member Services, North Country Clinic, Eureka Community Health Center and Southern Trinity Health.

Staff from the Social Security Administration, Department of Child Support Services, Betty Kwan Chinn Day Center, Food for People, 2-1-1 Humboldt, Healthy Kids Humboldt, Paso a Paso, Redwood Community Action Agency and Partnership HealthPlan of California also attended.

The following presentations were among those given at the event:

- UIHS Health Promotions and Education Programs Manager Andre Cramblit presented an overview of its services including health and dental clinics. Cramblit also talked about the distinction between the abuse of industrial tobacco products and the sacred use of traditionally-grown tobacco, the utilization of culturally appropriate services such as traditional Indian doctors and healing ceremonies such as the Sumeg Brush Dance and the correlation between the health of the environment and the health of the people. For more information, visit unitedindianhealthservices.org.

- DHHS Program Manager Alison Phongsavath represented the department’s Transition-Age Youth (TAY) Division. TAY helps young people ages 16 to 26 in their transition to independence. TAY staff provides behavioral health services, foster care services, and a youth development/leadership program.

The TAY Division also has peer coaches on staff. Specialized services such as behavioral health require that the recipient be Medi-Cal eligible. TAY’s main line is 707-476-4944.

Other attendees from DHHS included employees from Social Service’s CalWORKs program, staff from Public Health’s Women, Infants & Children Supplemental Nutrition Program, Field Nursing, SafeCare and Nurse-Family Partnership programs and Adult Mental Health’s Healthy Moms and Alcohol and Other Drugs programs representatives.

Thanks to all the agencies who participated. Special thanks are due to our co-organizers and co-sponsors: HNFRC’s Taffy Stockton and her staff, North Coast Clinics Network’s Tim Rine and Trisha Cooke and Cultural Coach Melanie Gensaw who played a critical role in reaching out to Tribal partners.

Peer Support Specialists earn Certification

- Nine locals completed an intensive two-week training in November and graduated as Certified Peer Support Specialists. Araundu Rapp Saucedo, Cole Vanwey, Ipolani Ma’e, Tyler (Jade) Wing, Jim Woolsey, Jesse Katz, Kellie Jack, Rebecca Ware and Steven Bridenbaugh were celebrated with a graduation ceremony at the Humboldt Aquatic Center on Nov. 18.

The training was led by Markov Manalo of RI International, which teaches mental health courses throughout the world. Attendees described his teaching style as both detailed and inspiring. RI’s peer training goal is to promote both recovery and resiliency in peer support specialists.

“At first I just thought it was going to be another county training, but I was really blown away by it. I was thrilled,” said Jesse Katz, who is a Hope Center Peer Coach II. As part of his job, Jesse regularly interacts and assists clients, frequently lending advice for their problems.
“I learned that instead of saying ‘this is what I think you should do,’ I learned to ask, ‘what do you think is the best way for you to solve this problem,’” Jesse said. “It’s important to help them come up with their own solution.”

Empowering clients to help them obtain life skills and negotiate challenges was a big takeaway for Katz.

The training called for 76 hours of hands-on and take-home “modules” study. Katz said the format was set up to encourage success.

“I’m very proud of the work they do every day and even more proud of their commitment to this training,” said Interim Mental Health Director Donna Wheeler. “Peers are a tremendous asset to our team. We all know how hard it is to leave the office for training—their commitment to this shows dedication to their own professional development and to the department but even more, it shows their commitment to our clients and our community.”

The Board of Supervisors named Nov. 17, as The American Cancer Society’s Great American Smokeout Day in Humboldt County, lending official approval to smoking cessation efforts. Smokers continue to be encouraged to give it a shot. Go a day without lighting up. When a person learns they can make it a day without a cigarette, they’re more likely to quit for good.

Humboldt County celebrates the Great American Smokeout

DHHS is currently recruiting qualified applicants for a variety of positions. For a list of job opportunities, visit humboldtgov.org/hr and click Job Opportunities, or contact Employee Services at 707-441-5510.

Help Wanted

CALFRESH BY THE NUMBERS

November 2016

- Humboldt County CalFresh recipients: 21,219
- Average monthly benefits: $454 for a family of four
- Average monthly benefits: $15748 for an individual
- Average total monthly cost of the CalFresh program: $2,973,014

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Chief Probation Officer Bill Damiano and DHHS’s Employment Training Division Program Coordinator Connie Lorenzo made a special presentation to Board of Supervisors on Dec. 13, about the newly funded Humboldt 2nd Chance Program. The project is designed to support job readiness, vocational training and rapid employment for probationers (ex-offenders) and work with small business employers who are recruited, educated and supported to establish on-boarding and training processes that focus on retaining ex-offenders.

Local artists with persistent mental health issues have a creative outlet at Arts for Life Studio. Started in 1992, the day treatment program was created to link clients with established artists to learn technique. On Dec. 8, the Rainbow Room at Mental Health was filled with their paintings for the annual Arts for Life Studio Show and Holiday Celebration.