IN THIS ISSUE:

Director's Report  
by Connie Beck, page 2

Housing programs available to keep people off the streets this winter  page 4

Public Health Lab featured in national magazine

Hazardous Materials training offers hands-on demonstrations  page 9

Youth substance use prevention focus of $625,000 grant  page 10
Two thousand eighteen turned out to be a busy year here at DHHS. In addition to our day-to-day workloads, there were a lot of things on our to-do list that we’ve accomplished. Here are some of the highlights:

- We completed our most recent Strategic Plan, outlining the goals and priorities of the department. [Click here](#) to read the document.
- Early in the year, we collaborated with partners on Sequential Intercept Mapping, a cross-system approach to strengthening services and strategies to address how people with mental health and substance use disorders flow through the criminal justice system. Staff from DHHS, Probation, Sheriff’s Office, District Attorney’s Office, Public Defender’s Office, St. Joseph Health, treatment facilities and other interested community representatives mapped the process with Policy Research Associates. A final report was recently completed.
- Child Welfare Services (CWS) and the Humboldt County Sheriff’s Office signed a settlement agreement with the California Attorney General’s Office, accelerating some of the changes we were already making. This summer, we opened a CWS Ombudsperson Office, and we’re in the process of updating Policies and Procedures to ensure that Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act and state requirements are met.
- CWS also partnered with the Humboldt County Superior Court and the Yurok Tribal Court, through a joint powers agreement, to create Family Wellness Court (FWC) as an alternative to the juvenile dependency system. The FWC is presided over by a tribal court judge and a state court judge and operates under California state law, federal law and Yurok tribal law.
- After Mental Health’s Mobile Response Team pilot project proved successful, we secured grant money to expand the program. The teams work with people of all ages and respond to mental health crises in the field in an effort to prevent hospitalization.
- Our Employment Training Division (ETD) moved to our main Social Services campus on Koster Street after years of being located across town and opened an Employment Resource Center. Being close to other services makes it easier for our CalWORKs and General Relief clients to access a variety of employment services.
- This summer, ETD also launched Helping Humboldt. This program provides job skills to help assist participants into permanent employment.
- DHHS continues to work with Danco Builders, and over the next few years, Danco is scheduled to break ground on three affordable housing developments including permanent supportive housing units for adults with serious mental illness.
- Public Health has been working on its Community Health Assessment and is getting ready to finalize it, and present it to staff and the community.
- With regular openings for Eligibility Workers, we’ve made recruitment a priority and hosted multiple informational nights for potential applicants.
- Internally, we launched an Employee Engagement and Retention Workgroup to do just that. Twenty staff were selected to participate and have been focusing on wellness and positive workplace culture, employee strengths and talents, and bureaucracy busting.
- We also launched a peer-led orientation/overview of what DHHS is and how new employees fit into the agency. Orientations are held monthly.
- The work we do here can be difficult and challenging mentally and emotionally, so we contracted with the University of Kentucky to do a secondary trauma assessment of all DHHS employees. University staff is assessing the data and working with DHHS teams to use tools and strategies to help the department become more resilient as we work to become a Trauma Informed Organization.

As the year winds down and comes to an end, our work continues to go full force and we look forward to the exciting, challenging projects we have ahead of us.
The Dec. 5 Foster and Kinship Care Holiday Party gathered more than 200 foster and adopted youth at the Arcata Community Center for fun and good cheer. Social Services staff coordinated the event, which included gifts, singing from the Arcata Interfaith Gospel Choir, 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 Christmas wishes.

From left: Randee Norwood, Santa, Mkenz Norwood and Mrs. Claus.
From left: Elizabeth Greene, Myrna Corder and Shoshanna Rose.
Amnisty Clanton and Nevaeh Ellis.
Brassily Ubedei was there for face painting.
The Arcata Interfaith Gospel Choir sang holiday songs.
Tanya "Tea Fairy Garden Gnome" Nordberg.

Supporters of The Center at McKinleyville packed the Board of Supervisors’ chambers Nov. 6, celebrating as the Board voted to execute the lease on the long-planned project. The Center is a collaborative project between the McKinleyville Family Resource Center, Open Door Community Health Centers and DHHS. Once built, it will offer a one-stop location for services for county residents from McKinleyville north. To learn more about The Center and the specific services that will be provided, visit tinyurl.com/ycfba4ta.
As the days get shorter and nights get cold, DHHS reminds residents of housing programs that can keep many of the county’s most vulnerable off the streets.

“We’ve had several nights already with temperatures down to freezing,” said DHHS Director Connie Beck. “I want to make sure we get as many people as we possibly can out of the cold.”

Beck went on to say that there is funding available to assist eligible families, disabled children and adults, young people and the elderly with housing support. There is some funding earmarked specifically for winter sheltering. There are no housing supports targeting people considered to be able-bodied adults.

Families can be screened for a variety of services available through the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program. Services include temporary and permanent homeless assistance. Funding is also available through CalWORKs’ Family Stabilization and through its Housing Assistance Program, both of which help families secure housing and work toward self-sufficiency.

Other programs focus on families involved in Child Welfare Services (CWS), on emancipated youth and on transition-age youth participating in the Independent Living Skills program. These funds assist with rent subsidies or other short-term housing assistance to prevent young people and families from becoming homeless.

DHHS also partners with the Redwood Community Action Agency and the Betty Kwan Chinn Homeless Foundation to work with homeless families. Both organizations provide limited-time housing and case management services to families referred by DHHS.

The county also has funding from the Mental Health Services Act to provide rent subsidies or housing vouchers to clients who meet certain criteria, as well as supportive housing funds through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that aim to prevent homelessness among youth and adults experiencing severe mental illness.

There is also funding available for temporary shelter and care for some clients in Adult Protective Services, as well as DHHS’s General Relief program, which provides eligible indigent county residents with supports to assist with deposits and rent.

“Even if you’ve applied for housing assistance before, come back and see us again,” Beck said, adding that new programs and funding sources have come online in the past few years. She acknowledged that housing stock remains a challenge, both for temporary and permanent housing, but said staff are working diligently and creatively to get people off the streets.

Residents are encouraged to apply in person for housing and other services at Social Services’ main campus located at 929 Koster St. in Eureka. Offices are open for regular business hours Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
The owners of American Star Private Security addressed a group of potential employees at DHHS’s Employee Resource Center (ERC) recently, giving them a sense of what a job at their company looks like.

“Getting employees is extremely difficult,” said Mark Boyd who owns American Star with his wife Doris. “We have more work then we have employees. We have to turn down work.”

The couple has been working closely with staff from DHHS’s Employee Training Division (ETD), which they said has assisted them in hiring employees over the years. They’ve participated in employee panels for the past five years.

The panels, which typically take place on the last Thursday of the month, include two to four employers and give clients an opportunity to hear about specific companies and organizations and ask questions, meet the owners or supervisors and find out what it takes to succeed in that field of work.

ETD Program Coordinator Sherman Landry said he also tries to include an organization that has volunteer opportunities.

“Sometimes volunteering provides a great opportunity for someone to get to know an organization,” Landry said, adding that some of the clients ETD staff work with have never had a job. “Being able to build those soft skills and get some experience is invaluable.”

In addition to talking about the services they provide, employers let participants know what it takes to apply for a job with them, qualities they look for when hiring and the importance of first impressions and interviews.

DHHS Social Services Deputy Director Kelly Hampton said the employee panels are a win-win for businesses and clients. “We’ve seen great success with this model, matching employees with employers,” she said.

So what are the owners of American Star looking for in an employee? Private security guards must be at least 18 years old, pass a criminal background check and Live Scan and pay the state certification fee. The firm is willing to train them. “We want employees who want to work,” Mark said.

As the panel wrapped up, three clients waited to speak with the couple. “If you’ve been displaced or you’ve been down and out or never had a job,” Doris told them, “we’re willing to give you an opportunity.”

ETD employer panels provide opportunities to clients and companies.

From left: ETD Program Coordinator Sherman Landry, Doris and Mark Boyd of American Star Private Security and ETD Vocational Counselors Apryle Mercado and Alec Bonner.

ERC BY THE NUMBERS
July to October 2018

330 clients
5 went to College of the Redwoods
4 completed high school diploma equivalency
37 entered work experience training
74 entered employment
DHHS’s Division of Environmental Health (DEH) is reminding people about the importance of making food safety a priority this holiday season.

DEH, along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and California Department of Public Health, offers simple tips to help keep you and your friends and family free from foodborne illness this season.

Supervising Environmental Health Specialist Amanda Ruddy said staying healthy is an important part of making the holidays enjoyable.

“As we gather to celebrate the holidays and enjoy delicious meals and each other’s company, it’s important to remember a few basic safe food handling practices to keep our loved ones healthy this holiday season,” she said.

Refrigerate or freeze turkey and other meat and seafood promptly after purchase. Refrigeration temperature should be kept at 41 F or colder.

Frozen turkeys and other meat should be thawed in the refrigerator, in a sink with cool water that is changed every 30 minutes, or in the microwave. Never thaw poultry by having it sit on the counter.

Keep hands and food contact surfaces clean. Always wash your hands with warm, soapy water before and after handling food. Thoroughly clean all work surfaces, utensils and dishes with hot, soapy water and rinse with hot water before and after each use. And, keep sick people from participating in the food preparation process.

Wash fruit and vegetables under cool, running water. Even if you plan to peel them, it’s important to wash them first because bacteria can spread from the outside to the inside as you cut or peel.

Keep fruits and vegetables away from raw meat, poultry, eggs and seafood. Also, keep raw animal products separate from each other. When taste-testing food, ladle a small amount of it into a dish and taste with a clean spoon.

Cook food to proper temperatures. Set the oven temperature no lower than 325 F, and be sure turkey is completely thawed before cooking. Using a food thermometer, make sure that the internal temperature of turkey is at least 165 F at the thickest part. Cooking times will vary. For optimal safety, cook stuffing outside turkey in a casserole dish.

Turkey and other perishable foods should be refrigerated within two hours after being cooked. Do not eat leftover meat that has been refrigerated for longer than three-to-four days or leftover stuffing or gravy that has been refrigerated for longer than two days.

For more information about food safety, call the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s Safe Food Information Line at 888-723-3366 or the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Meat and Poultry Hotline at 888-674-6854.

Holiday food safety tips are also available at foodsafety.gov.
In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) clients and providers were given thanks by DHHS staff at a tea and dessert party on Nov. 28. “It was an opportunity for us to thank care providers for the hard work they do every day,” said DHHS Adult Services Program Manager Keri Schrock. “Our community is very fortunate to have such dedicated and compassionate people.” The IHSS program provides aid to blind, aged and disabled individuals who are unable to remain safely in their own home without the aid of a care provider. IHSS care providers help with everything from cleaning, meal preparation and running errands to transportation and protective supervision. To learn more about the program and how to become a care provider, call 707-476-2100.

IHSS shows caregivers appreciation

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.
Law enforcement training focuses on addressing mental health crises

- Thirty-five law enforcement officers and mental health service providers from agencies across the county participated in a four-day Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training in mid-October to learn strategies to better respond to people experiencing mental health crises.

DHHS has been collaborating with law enforcement agencies and other community organizations to hold the state-certified CIT trainings since 2007. CIT gives law enforcement officers and administrators tools to identify major mental health disorders and other disabilities when working in the field. These tools can help to de-escalate a crisis and divert those suffering from mental health challenges away from the criminal justice system and into treatment.

Law enforcement professionals, service providers and nationally recognized experts led the training, covering topics like how bias can affect an officer’s approach to someone in crisis as well as techniques that keep officers and a subject safe during an encounter. Attendees also took a virtual tour of local mental health services to increase awareness of available resources.

“It’s important that law enforcement, mental health service providers and the community work together to understand the signs of mental illness and recognize when people are in need of emergency assistance,” said Kelly Johnson, a senior program manager for DHHS’s Mental Health branch. “The Crisis Intervention Team continues to see increased involvement from community stakeholders in its effort to improve outcomes for people experiencing mental health crises and improve public safety for everyone.”

The Humboldt Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Arcata and Eureka Police departments, Humboldt County Sheriff’s Office, Zwerdling Law Firm, the Public Defender’s office, Probation Department and DHHS collaborated to offer this year’s CIT training.

More than 400 people have completed the course locally, including representatives from law enforcement agencies, law offices, parks systems, ambulance services, DHHS, tribes and medical facilities.

Humboldt County Sheriff’s Deputy and Crisis Negotiation Team leader Jason Akana received the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Responder of the Year award at the CIT training’s closing ceremony on Thursday, Oct. 18, at Eureka’s Sequoia Conference Center. DHHS and community partners have been organizing state-certified CIT trainings since 2007 to bring law enforcement officers and mental health service providers together to learn strategies to better respond to people experiencing mental health crises.
Hands-on training focuses on hazardous materials

► Staff from DHHS’s Division of Environmental Health (DEH) partnered with Eureka Oxygen Co. and Humboldt Bay Fire to offer a hands-on safety training Nov. 14, for local professionals who handle hazardous materials. Attendees learned effective fire extinguisher use, spill management and ways to properly label and store materials among other skills. DEH offers trainings like this quarterly to teach skills that help keep employees safe on the job and help businesses comply with local, state and federal regulations. For more information about the Division of Environmental Health’s services, visit humboldtgov.org/564/Environmental-Health.

An attendee of the hands-on safety demonstration practices proper fire extinguisher technique.

Hazardous Materials Specialist Dean Adams describes techniques to control spills and how to properly dispose of hazardous materials.

DEH Supervising Environmental Health Specialist Larry Lancaster shows attendees how to properly label hazardous materials.

Environmental Health Specialist Matthew Swoveland.

Senior Hazardous Materials Specialist Shannon Townsend-Bettis.
A $625,000 grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Support Program will continue to provide funding for the Humboldt Allies for Substance Abuse Prevention (ASAP).

A community coalition founded in 2002, ASAP works to reduce and prevent substance use among local youth.

The grant was awarded to DHHS, which provides staff for ASAP. It will be distributed in $125,000 increments over the next five years.

ASAP is made up of members of all ages from across the community working together to build safe and healthy communities, free of drug-related harm. Strategies include youth leadership development, media campaigns, community education and events, and advocacy for policies that impact communitywide change.

"Collaboration and caring are what this Coalition is all about," said ASAP Chair Art Wilson. "It's a diverse bunch of people with skills, passion and creativity who are dedicated to making our community healthier. That's what keeps me coming back."

An earlier DFC grant supported the Coalition's efforts from 2010 through 2015, and included a focus on safe storage and proper disposal of prescription medications. It also supported the passage of a social host ordinance in Eureka which penalizes hosts of underage drinking parties. Additionally, ASAP has sponsored youth-focused Photo Voice projects as well as participating in other community awareness campaigns.

In March 2016, ASAP collaborated with DHHS, Humboldt Waste Management Authority, the Humboldt Independent Practice Association and Cloney’s Pharmacies to install medication disposal bins at Cloney’s McKinleyville location and one of its Eureka locations. There are currently 12 disposal bins across the county, many of which ASAP has helped establish.

The new grant will continue to support existing projects such as these as well as make it possible for the Coalition to create a community-informed plan to support future goals and activities.

According to the 2017-18 California Healthy Kids Survey, Humboldt County teenagers have reported easy access to alcohol and other drugs. Studies show that early onset of substance use can affect brain development and is linked to higher rates of addiction later in life. Communities across the country with DFC coalitions consistently report decreases in alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and prescription drug misuse among middle and high school students.

Community members are invited to attend ASAP’s meetings and join the Coalition.

For more information, check out the Coalition's Facebook page at facebook.com/humboldtasap or call 707-445-6023.

The Forgotten Initiative (TFI) works with local faith communities to support foster families, now called Resource Families, through service projects and mentoring. TFI members wanted kids in care to feel more comfortable when they meet with case managers and family members at the Plaza, so the group worked with DHHS staff to hang paintings and install new furniture in the lobby and family areas.
Fall at TAY

- Fall has been busy at the Transition-Age Youth (TAY) Division. In addition to weekly events and workshops, young people learned about nutrition at a Halloween-themed food demonstration, got crafty at a pumpkin carving contest and enjoyed a traditional Thanksgiving meal at the annual Fall Feast. The TAY Division helps youth and young adults ages 16 to 26 progress toward independence.

Check out some photos from the events, and learn more about TAY programs at humboldtgov.org/TAY.

Fall Feast

- More than 50 young people turned out for the Transition-Age Youth (TAY) Division’s annual Fall Feast on Friday, Nov. 16. Staff and youth enjoyed a traditional Thanksgiving meal while getting to know each other and learning more about TAY services.

Spooky Food

- Staff from the Healthy Communities Division of Public Health taught more than a dozen young people how to make snacks fun and healthy at a Halloween-themed food demonstration at the Transition-Age Youth Division in early October.