



# Tennessee Public Health Association Newsletter

Healthy People in Healthy Communities

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## CHARTING THE COURSE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH IN TENNESSEE : NEW CHALLENGES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

*Theme for the 2006 Annual Meeting*

Submitted by Glenn Czarneci, Program Committee Co-Chair

The TPHA Program Committee remains hard at work putting together another informative and educational program for 2006. The theme “*Charting the Course for Public Health in Tennessee: New Challenges, New Opportunities*” allows for an agenda that covers numerous emerging public health issues.

Day One kicks off the conference with Dr. Vincent Covello as our luncheon speaker. Dr. Covello is known world-wide for his expertise in risk communications and has authored numerous books and published dozens of articles on risk assessment, management, and communication. He will address some of the past and future challenges faced by public health and speak to our group about how we can best use risk communications to relay factual and appropriate information in times of crisis.



Surgeon General, Vice Admiral Richard H. Carmona, M.D., has been invited to join us as our keynote speaker. America's chief health educator will present to us his administration's public health priorities along with the best scientific information available on how to improve our health and reduce the risk of illness and injury.

Day One will conclude with 6 concurrent sessions ranging in topics from childhood obesity to water fluoridation.

Day Two is filled with more informative concurrent sessions with popular past presenters like Andy Core

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## Information on the “O” issue... Obesity, that is

Submitted by Elizabeth Cook, , South Central Region

Have you heard about the obesity problem? If not, you must be Rip Van Winkle! An epidemic of obesity exists. Today, approximately 65% of adults in America are overweight or obese. Since the 1970s the prevalence of obesity has more than doubled for pre-school children aged 2-5 years and adolescents aged 12-19 years. It has more than tripled for children ages 6-11 years. Tennessee has the 2nd highest level of overweight high school students (15.2%) in the U.S., per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The prevalence of obesity brings with it a rising incidence of Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and dyslipdemia (high levels of the bad fat in blood).

Steps for confronting this epidemic in TN involve the following groups:

- Federal government
- Industry and media
- State and local governments
- Health care professionals
- Community and non-profit organizations
- State and local education authorities
- Parents and caregivers

Each of these groups has tasks that may work to combat this epidemic.

1. The federal government has provided the *Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004*. This law requires every school district that participates in the federal school meals program (free or reduced meals) serving pre-kindergarten through eighth grade, to enact a wellness policy by the first day of the 2006-07 school year. All boards of education must have a school wellness policy signed by July 1, 2006. Included in this law are minimum nutrition standards that prohibit the sale or availability of foods high in fat or sugar with low nutrition content, such as candy

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and new names like Dr. Barry S. Fields, Senior Partner for Biodefense Programs, Edward Martin and Associates Consulting in Arlington, VA. The annual TPHA awards luncheon will feature Comm. Robinson who will inspire and motivate us in his very special way.

Finally, Day Three will conclude with the TPHA business meeting, passing of the Presidential gavel and a Pandemic Flu Panel which will discuss the newest insights in vaccine development, response plans, and future efforts.

In addition to these quality educational opportunities, attendees will also be treated to the usual slate of fun events and entertainment. From the Fun and Fitness competition to great food and dancing, you can always count on a good time. We look forward to a great conference in 2006 and hope to see you there.

## TPHA Sees Great Success in 2006 General Assembly

Submitted by Bart Perkey, Chair, Legislative Committee

The TPHA Legislative Committee is pleased to report that the General Assembly enacted two important new laws promoted by TPHA during the 2006 session. First, House Bill 3750/Senate Bill 3991, which requires 90 minutes per week of physical activity in grades K – 8, was approved overwhelmingly. TPHA actively supported this legislation because of our interest in reducing childhood obesity.

Second, House Bill 3269/Senate Bill 3368, which prohibits smoking in state buildings, was approved unanimously by the Senate and with 80 supporting votes in the House. This is a great victory for state employees and citizens doing business in state offices. This is particularly significant for those who work and visit state legislators at Legislative Plaza. No longer will they be subjected to second hand smoke while conducting the state's business.

Tobacco control remains a top priority of TPHA and we are now preparing for next year's legislative battle. We joined with CHART and other organizations this session in support of several bills to prohibit smoking in public places, raise taxes on cigarettes, and to remove the pre-emption of local control over tobacco. While we made progress in the Senate, the House remains a problem since this legislation continues to be routed through the Agriculture Committee where it gets buried. Nevertheless, momentum is on our side and we are expecting even greater success next year.

We are dependent on the active involvement of our members and other public health advocates across the state to overcome the money and influence of the powerful tobacco lobby. We will be expanding the TPHA Legislative Network which was established this year. Members of the network receive email "Calls to Action" which provide information about legislation and upcoming key votes. They then call, email, or write their legislator(s) asking for their vote and support. We know this was an important

factor in our success this year. If you wish to join the TPHA legislative network, please send an email to bart.perkey@nashville.gov.

Please join me in expressing your appreciation to Hugh Barnes, Larry Bowles, Rosemary Cotham, Darrell Holden, Bob Stolarick, Mark Jones and Tony Emison for their good work on the Legislative Committee this year.

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and regular carbonated beverages.

2. Industry and media are getting on-board with new, healthier products and increased consumer education. Have you seen the new reality-type show "Honey, We're Killing the Kids" on The Learning Channel? It provides a real look at the causes of childhood obesity within three families while offering both motivational and practical help for the families on the show.

3. State and local government have the opportunity to change ordinances and provide capital improvement programs to promote physical activity in the community, such as safe walking trails and sidewalks for children to walk or ride bikes to school.

4. Health care professionals can offer training on tracking body mass index (BMI) in children and youth and offer appropriate counseling and guidance to the individual or community.

5. Partnerships can be established with community agencies and non-profit organizations to share resources and network to provide better services to high risk populations. (We do these activities through our Health Councils)

6. State and local education associations will be working to improve the environment in schools that will foster healthier food choices and increased physical activity.

7. Lastly, and certainly not least, parents, caregivers and children can be given more opportunity to engage in and adopt healthier life choices. As a member of Tennessee Action for Healthy Kids Coalition, I have heard of more than a few counties in Tennessee that are well on their way to making eating healthy and regular physical activity part of the normal school day for elementary and middle school children. These counties accomplished these changes by having local support of the school board, principals, teachers, parents, coordinated school health programs, and health department personnel, many of whom volunteered their time in developing these school-wide activities. Few, if any, of these programs receive monetary support. We will see many more schools move toward providing similar changes in the upcoming 2006-07 school year.

We, as public health professionals, need to continue to involve key stakeholders in addressing policy and programmatic changes in our local county and region. As TPHA members we have provided resolutions for 2005 and 2006 that address our concern with obesity and physical activity in children. No matter what position you work in, we all can choose to contribute to building a healthier Tennessee. Get involved!

## Above and Beyond "Routine" PFGE Testing

Authors: A. M. Woron<sup>1</sup>, Jones, T. F<sup>2</sup>., Kimberly, M. W<sup>1</sup>., and Gibson, J. A<sup>1</sup>.,

Affiliation: <sup>1</sup>Tennessee State Department of Health, Laboratory Services, Nashville, TN.

<sup>2</sup>Tennessee State Department of Health, Communicable and Environmental Disease, Nashville, TN.

Laboratory Services at the Tennessee Department of Health in Nashville routinely performs pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE), or "genetic fingerprinting" on all isolates of *Salmonella* spp., *Shigella* spp., shiga-toxin producing *E. coli*, *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Campylobacter*. PFGE is a powerful tool for monitoring and investigating clusters of illness caused by foodborne bacteria of concern to public health. These data can be useful in guiding outbreak investigations and is submitted to a national database for the detection of foodborne disease case clusters and early identification of common source outbreaks. In 2005, we performed PFGE on 627 routine and 118 non-routine isolates. Five non-routine testing methods were developed in response to outbreaks or specific epidemiologic investigations. These protocols included *Yersinia enterocolitica*, vancomycin-resistant enterococcus (VRE), *Serratia marcescens*, *Burkholderia cepacia*, and *Staphylococcus aureus*. Methods used were drawn from published literature, the PFGE Protocol Conditions Guide, and in-house studies. All five non-routine testing protocols provided useful information for our epidemiologists.

In 2005, Laboratory Services in Tennessee had a very busy year with PFGE certification and testing. Within this timeframe, the three microbiologists assigned to the molecular biology laboratory were certified by the CDC PulseNet program in all routine organisms. Not all PFGE requests are for routine organisms. Molecular Biology routinely receives phone calls from epidemiology that begins with "Can you do PFGE on...?" Non-routine testing accounted for 15.8% of all PFGE isolates tested in 2005. All of the protocols used have yet to be optimized for our laboratory; however, the interpretations yielded information that the epidemiology department could use in their investigations.

### ***Yersinia enterocolitica***

Laboratory Services had performed PFGE on *Yersinia* once in 2003, and the same protocol was used in 2005, with the addition of a second enzyme for added specificity. The resulting data were successful in evaluating the relationship between *Yersinia enterocolitica* isolated from chitterlings with 13 children under the age of one. The *Yersinia enterocolitica* analysis showed the importance of including a second enzyme with this organism. In 20% of our isolates (3 of 15), a second enzyme was required to differentiate strains.

### ***Vancomycin-Resistant Enterococcus***

The nine isolates examined consisted of six clinical isolates from four patients and three environmental

samples taken from a hospital room. Two of the four patients had patterns indistinguishable from each other, and a third patient had a pattern indistinguishable from all three environmental isolates. These specimens were collected as part of an investigation of a unique cluster of linezolid-resistant VRE.

### ***Serratia marcescens***

In 2005, Laboratory Services had two requests for PFGE on a total of 16 *Serratia marcescens* isolates. The challenge was accepted with high hopes, but no guarantees, since we had never performed PFGE on this organism. The resulting images indicated that none of the isolates had a common source origin.

### ***Burkholderia cepacia***

Laboratory Services has been performing PFGE on *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Pseudomonas putida* since 2001. Given the close relationship between *Pseudomonas* sp. and *Burkholderia* sp., it was not a difficult leap to attempt PFGE on *Burkholderia cepacia* when asked. Results were acceptable to assist epidemiologists with an outbreak, linking nosocomial patient illness with a hospital product.

### ***Staphylococcus aureus***

The most common request for non-routine PFGE testing was for *Staphylococcus aureus*. A combination of clinical, environmental and food isolates accounted for 61 of the 118 non-routine isolates pulsed in 2005.

The State of Tennessee Public Health Laboratory has a wonderful working relationship with Communicable and Environmental Disease Services epidemiologists. These epidemiologists are comfortable requesting non-routine tests while understanding that novel PFGE testing can produce results that are unproven. The laboratory is always up to the challenge, and thus far has been able to provide useful information. In many cases, results obtained from these special requests have been helpful in implicating same-source lineage. Results that disprove same-source lineage can be just as useful. These protocols have not been fully optimized, but offering them to other PulseNet laboratories will invite suggestions for improvement and may help other states to entertain the needs of their own epidemiologists when the inevitable question is asked.

### Acknowledgements:

We would like to acknowledge the Tennessee Department of Health Communicable and Environmental Disease Services for allowing us the opportunity to assist with these cases. The protocols used by Laboratory Services were presented by Microbiologist Mike Sharp at the 10<sup>th</sup> annual PulseNet meeting in Miami, FL on April 2006.

Doris G. Spain, Editor

Phone: (615) 646-3805

Fax: (615) 646-1039

Email: dgspain@tnpublichealth.org

Articles for the next Newsletter due by  
August 10, 2006

## Dot Watson Selected a Winner in the "Live With Regis and Kelly Make Your Mom's Dream Come True" Contest

Submitted by : Sherry Adams, South Central Region

Dot Watson, recipient of TPHA's PAL (Partnership and Leadership) Award in 2005, is a founding and current board member of Partners for Healing, a low-cost health clinic for the working uninsured in the Tullahoma area. On Friday, May 5, Dot received the surprise of her life when she learned she had been selected as one of five winners across the country in the "Live With Regis and Kelly Make Your Mom's Dream Come True" contest.



Shown left to right: Regis Philbin, Kelly Ripa, Mary Beth Bass, Elizabeth Gass, Dot Watson and Tom Watson

As one of five national winners, Dot and the Partners for Healing clinic were visited on May 5 by Dot's two daughters, three of her five grandchildren, and representatives from the "Live With Regis and Kelly" show in New York and Toshiba America Medical Systems, Inc. in California. The surprise visit was to announce Dot's selection as a contest winner and to present some unique and valuable prizes.

In addition to an all expenses paid trip to New York to appear on the "Live With Regis and Kelly" show, the Partners for Healing clinic received much needed office and medical equipment, including a fetal monitor and ultrasound machine for use in the prenatal clinic. The medical equipment alone is valued at \$80,000.

Dot's daughter, Mary Beth Gass of Virginia, who nominated her for the award, described her mother's life as being "punctuated by service to others." A retired public health nurse, Dot once served as Chairman of the Board of the Charleston Naval Base Nursery. She also taught at the Bahrain International School in the Persian Gulf, where she helped to organize a Girl Scout troop.

During her husband's 30-year naval career, Dot raised two daughters and relocated her family 20 times. Since her retirement, she has become the full-time volun-

teer extraordinaire for Partners for Healing, functioning as the workforce behind the vision to establish a free medical clinic for the working uninsured. Dot currently serves on the Coffee County and South Central Regional Health Councils, Centerstone Mental Health Development Board, Bedford/Coffee County Latino Health Coalition, and numerous other community organizations. She is a member of the Tennessee Public Health Association and the Rural Health Association of Tennessee.

## TEHA Merges With TPHA

Submitted by Mark Houser

The Tennessee Environmental Health Association (TEHA) has merged with the Tennessee Public Health Association (TPHA) and will serve as the official environmental section of the larger organization. The move came after successful negotiations between the two groups and a statewide vote by members of TEHA on October 13, 2005. The decision to merge TEHA with TPHA was made in an effort to make environmentalists more visible in TPHA and give the organization a more prominent position in the environmental community.

Discussions centered on the prospects of increasing membership for both organizations; combining the TEHA Annual Educational Conference held each fall; and improving the environmental section of TPHA. The consensus of TEHA members at the October meeting was that becoming a section of TPHA, while not losing the identity of TEHA, would be a win-win situation for both organizations. Membership in TEHA had fallen in recent years with only three active affiliates statewide. By becoming members of the larger organization, TEHA will be able to continue the commitment to an agenda beneficial to environmentalists while reducing the costs of operating the organization independently.

A membership drive for the Environmental Section is currently underway. TPHA annual membership dues are \$20.00 with the section dues an additional \$20.00. TEHA is determined to be a supportive voice for the environmental professional in the years to come. Among other initiatives a letter is currently being considered which would again make the Registered Professional Environmentalist registration viable in Tennessee state government.

## MEMBERSHIP

Submitted by Kay Kelly, Chair, Membership Committee

**We Need Your Help!** If you haven't renewed your membership please do so now. Ask a co-worker to join, think about agencies or organizations who have an interest in public health that you could recruit to join. Membership is not limited to Department of Health employees only the success and continued growth of our organiza-

tion depends on an actively participating membership. Listed below are incentives for recruitment.

#### Individual Member Recruitment Incentives

- For every 5 new members recruited, the sponsor receives one-year free membership.
- All new members and their sponsors will be included in a \$50.00 cash drawing.
- The individual who recruits the most new members will receive a cash award up to \$50.00 depending on the number of members recruited.
- The region with the highest percentage increase in membership will receive a rotating trophy.

#### Agency Members Recruitment Incentives

- Earn \$40.00 toward registration or hotel voucher by recruiting one new agency member or \$60.00 for recruiting two agency members and one year's free membership for each member recruited above three.
- Region with the largest number of new agency members will be recognized with a rotating plaque.

**Individual and agency membership applications may be obtained by contacting Kay Kelly, Chairman of the Membership Committee at (731) 423-3020 ext 2031 or the TPHA Office at (615) 646-3805. Applications are all so available at the TPHA web site: [www.tpha.info](http://www.tpha.info) under the Membership section.**

### CALL FOR ABSTRACTS TPHA 2006 Poster Session

Submitted by Ami Sklar, Chair, Poster Session Committee

The Tennessee Public Health Association is currently accepting abstracts for poster presentations at the 2006 TPHA Annual Conference, November 1-3 at the Cool Springs Conference Center in Franklin. The conference theme is "*Charting the Course for Public Health in Tennessee: New Challenges, New Opportunities.*" All public health disciplines are encouraged to participate.

Abstracts on all topics related to public health in Tennessee are welcome. Abstracts will be reviewed by the Poster Session Committee, and presenters will be notified of the Committee's suggested revisions, if any. All presenters will be notified in writing of the set-up requirements, location, dates, and times of the poster sessions.

You do not need to be a TPHA member to submit an abstract; however, if your poster is accepted for presentation you must become a TPHA member and register for and attend the annual meeting. Submission of an abstract implies a commitment to present your poster at the annual meeting. As an organization committed to providing quality continuing education activities to its membership and meeting registrants, TPHA asks poster session participants to distribute a 1-2 page summary of their project, be avail-

able for questions, and discuss the poster with conference attendees.

Abstracts must be typed and submitted in electronic format (Microsoft Word). Use 12-point font, double-spaced, and **250 words or less**. (Note: Word count excludes title, authors, affiliations, and contact information). Please use the spell checking and word count features of your word processor to check the text of the proposal before submitting it. Accepted abstracts will be printed in the conference brochure distributed at the meeting.

Submissions must be e-mailed to Ami Sklar at [amisklar@jmchd.com](mailto:amisklar@jmchd.com), no later than July 31, 2006. Final selection of abstracts and notification of presenters will be made by August 18, 2006.

Please contact Ami Sklar by phone at (731) 927-8531, or e-mail at [amisklar@jmchd.com](mailto:amisklar@jmchd.com) if you have any questions.

## TPHA REGIONAL MEETINGS

The East Tennessee Public Health Association Grand Division Meeting was held at the Museum of Appalachia in Norris on April 7<sup>th</sup>. Over 180 attendees came from all over the East Tennessee Region from Chattanooga to Bristol. Attendees were given a gift bag with fantastic give a ways and chances to win door prizes. Welcoming words came from Anderson County Mayor, Rex Lynch; East Tennessee Vice President, Art Miller; and TPHA President, Barbara Medlin. East Tennessee Regional Director, Dr. Paul Erwin introduced Acting Assistant Commissioner of Health, Theresa Lindsey who gave the group an update of activities regarding health in Tennessee. Conference speakers included Ms. Ryan Kelley from the TV show Biggest Losers and now serves as "Mrs. Tennessee" gave an inspiring and emotional presentation on obesity. Other presentations were from the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA)'s head, Col. Gary Ellis; Ms. Jill Beason, with St. Mary's Health System spoke on Medicare Part D. TPHA Executive Director Ms. Doris Spain gave an update on the TPHA Annual Conference coming up this fall. She also introduced Chart Director Jeanette Schatz who led a panel discussion on Advocacy and Tobacco with State Representative James Hackworth and newscaster Ben Senger of Channel 10 WBIR of Knoxville. A humorous presentation was given on the history of the Museum of Appalachia by founder Mr. John Rice Irwin. Breakfast and lunch were served for the all day meeting which ended with free tours of the museum and networking for all the attendees. Sponsors included Scherling Plough and BCBS Shared Health. Members of the East Tennessee TPHA planning committee were: Cathy Cowart, Chattanooga/Hamilton; Melissa Davis, ETRO; Beth Delaney, SE Re-

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gion; Nancy Foshee, ETRO; Susan Fowlkes, Knox, Gail Harmon, ETRO; Ruth Ann Lewis, Sevier Co.; Beth Rader, NE; Donna Raines, Roane Co.; Michael Thomas, Knox; Brenda Vowell, ETRO; Carlos Yunsan, ETRO; and Art Miller, Anderson, Morgan and Scott Counties. The Planning Committee received rave reviews from the attendees on the over all conference evaluations.

The West Tennessee Grand Division of TPHA held its annual meeting on May 19, 2006 at Jackson State Community College. The theme was "Blues on the Move" and the focus was "Personal Health". Approximately 90 people were in attendance. All seemed to enjoy the day filled with lots of good information and a good dose of fun.

The day began with a TPHA Update from our President Barbara Medlin and Ms. Doris Spain, our Executive Director. Tommy Smith, an environmental specialist told us all that we need to know about "Pools, Spas, Tanning and Tattoos". He gave us helpful pointers on what to look for when we enter these establishments. This will be really important as we enter the summer months.

Dr. Conner gave an update on the Regional Wellness program. Numerous regional employees are participating and getting great health benefits from the program.

Jeanette Schatz, the Executive Director of CHART gave the group pointers on how to advocate for laws concerning the use of tobacco.

Ms Bethany White, a registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist spoke about Metabolic Syndrome.

One of our local authors and former TDH employee, Myrtle Russell, discussed the benefits of journaling. She also gave an overview of the book *small change*. The fun part of her presentation involved a demonstration with hula-hoops. Myrtle showed us how this childhood toy can be used to achieve fitness.

Rev. Rick Kirchoff gave us a very personable and inspiring session on "Perceptions", which is also the title of his book. Some of us assumed that he would speak about our perceptions of others, however he focused on our perception of ourselves.

LeBonheur Hospital's Community Outreach Program provided a continental breakfast and refreshments. They also brought one of their mobile outreach units for members to peruse.

Everyone enjoyed the day. We shared good food, good information, great door prizes and lots of laughs.

**Hotel reservations for the annual meeting are available by contacting the Cool Springs Marriott at (615) 261-6100. Rates are \$105.00 single or double. Be sure to tell the hotel you are with TPHA. Deadline for reservations is October 9, 2006. You must notify the hotel two weeks in advance of the meeting if you have to cancel the reservation in order to avoid penalty.**

## Rural Health Association of Tennessee Schedules 12th Annual Conference

Submitted by Susan Veale

The Rural Health Association of Tennessee (RHAT) has announced the theme of its 12th Annual Conference to be held November 15-17, 2006 at the Park Vista Hotel in Gatlinburg. The theme is "The Kaleidoscope of Rural Health in Tennessee" and will focus on EMS, Chronic Disease Management, and Rural and Critical Access Hospitals. The opening speaker is Frank Boehm, MD, whose presentation will be on "Building Patient/Doctor Trust." The closing speaker is Jack McCall. An added feature will be a Poster Session with monetary prizes!

### REPORT OF THE NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Submitted by Carter Garner, Chair,  
Nominations and Elections Committee

We are pleased to present the following slate of nominees for the Membership's consideration:

President Elect - East Tennessee  
Glenn Czarnecki  
Karen Pershing

Vice President - East Tennessee  
Robert Goff  
Beth Rader

Vice President - Middle Tennessee  
Lorraine MacDonald  
Teresa Thomas

Vice President - West Tennessee  
Bradley Dodd  
Beverly Ferguson

Board Representatives - Middle Tennessee  
Sherry Adams  
Melissa Blair  
Debbie Hoy  
Rick Johnson

Ballots will be mailed at least 30 days prior to the Annual Meeting. The ballots may be returned to the TPHA office by mail or they may be dropped in a ballot box provided at the registration desk until 3:00 PM on the **second day** of the Annual Meeting.

## CANDIDATES FOR PRESIDENT-ELECT

### Glenn Czarnecki



Glenn Czarnecki is the Regional Director for the Southeast Region of the TN Department of Health. He has spent most of his career in public health, beginning as the Director of Community Development for the Southeast Region in the late 1990's. After facilitating

health councils and coordinating the program for 5 years, he left the state in 1999 to direct the local Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. In October of 2002, Glenn returned to state employment, as Emergency Response Coordinator for the Southeast Region where he was later named Assistant Regional Director, and became the Regional Director in April of 2005.

He earned his BS and Masters in Public Administration from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Throughout his career, he has been involved in numerous special projects and educational opportunities such as: being a member of the First Commissioner's Leadership Class, spending two years as an Objective Grant Reviewer for the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, and a graduate of the 2003/2004 UNC-Southeast Public Health Leadership Institute.

Glenn has been an active member of TPHA since he began his public health career. He has participated in numerous TPHA activities, and currently serves as Co-Chair of the 2006 Conference Program Committee. He has worked diligently to assure an educational and informative program for the 2006 conference.

His community involvement includes previously serving on the Board of his local YMCA, homeowner's association and church's capital campaign. He is currently Chairman of the Board, Chattanooga Goodwill Industries.

Glenn was raised in Chattanooga, where he resides with his school-teacher wife, Cathy and their one year old son, Keaton. Glenn enjoys trout fishing, yard work and spending time with his family and friends.

### Karen Pershing



With over 15 years of Public Health experience, Karen Pershing continues to be excited and challenged with the evolution of the field and the opportunities that continue to present themselves. Karen began her public health career in 1986 with the Knox County Health Department as a Social Counselor II. Since

that time, she has held positions in health education, immunization outreach, community development, communicable disease, and in the newly formed Healthy Weight Initiative. Having spent several years (1997-2002) in the private healthcare arena, Karen returned to public health at the ETRO with a much greater understanding of the healthcare delivery system and the challenges we as a nation face. She returned to her "career roots" in January 2005 when she joined the staff at the Knox County Health Dept.

Karen recently graduated from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville with a Master of Public Health degree with a concentration in health planning and administration. She found the program to be very beneficial in understanding the bigger picture of public health and the importance of the work being performed on a daily basis. "Public Health was somewhat invisible to many in this country until 9-11. We are now in a position to show our value and demonstrate our effectiveness in handling situations and creating new partnerships," says Karen.

Ms. Pershing has been a member of TPHA for several years. Most recently, she has served as Vice-President for the East Grand Division and Chairperson for the Resolutions Committee. She has enjoyed serving on the Board and has gained a greater understanding of the operational side of the Association. "The strength of leadership within the organization is the key to the continued growth and development of TPHA," Karen states. "It is an association that we should be very proud of."

On a personal note, Karen is married to Ed Pershing and has 2 children, Ryan, 18 and Kristen, 11. Ryan will be attending Carson-Newman College in the fall and Kristen will be starting Middle School. The family is very active in church and civic organizations and enjoys music as well as the performing arts.

## Candidates for Vice President East Tennessee

### Robert Goff



Robert Goff is the Emergency Response Coordinator for the Southeast Regional Office and has served in the position since November 2004. Robert moved to the Southeast Regional Office from the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department,

where he served as Volunteer Coordinator. While with CHCHD he established the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), the first MRC in Southeast Tennessee and the third in Tennessee. He was instrumental in establishing Public Health emergency preparedness practices still being utilized across the state. Before working for CHCHD, Robert was a Community Development

Coordinator for the American Red Cross. He was responsible for the coordination of all Red Cross services across three counties. While serving in that role, he responded to several disasters, including the coordination of local Red Cross services in response to September 11, 2001.

Since his employment with the State of Tennessee, Robert has been very active in TPHA, serving as the first chairperson of the TPHA Emergency Preparedness Section, established during the 2005 conference. He has served as a TPHA Board Rep, a member of the TPHA Program Committee, chair of a TPHA Program Subcommittee, and on the TPHA Awards Committee. Robert is also a member of the local American Red Cross Disaster Services Committee and the State of Tennessee Pandemic Influenza Response Plan subcommittee.

Robert resides in Chattanooga with his wife, Melissa, and three children, Garrett, Sophia, and Annabelle. He enjoys trying to keep up with his kids, singing, and cheering on the Pittsburgh Steelers.

#### Beth Rader



Beth Rader is a 1977, B.S. Degree graduate of ETSU. Over her twenty-nine year career with the TN Department of Health, she has held various education and administrative jobs, including WIC Clerk/Health Educator; Family Planning/Family Life Educator; Health Promotion Director, Public Information Officer; TennCare Liaison and is currently the *Better Health: It's About Time!* Coordinator and the Director of the Community Services Division for the Northeast TN Reg. Hlth. Office.

Beth has been an active participant in the Tennessee Public Health Association throughout her career and was in the first class of graduates from Comm. Freda Wadley's Public Health Leadership Class. She is currently a student in the Tennessee Public Health Workforce Development Consortium and will receive her certificate in the Public Health Leadership Curriculum in the spring of 2007.

Beth is married and the mother of two college-age children. She is active in community affairs: serving as a Board Member of the Johnson City Boys and Girls Club, Past President of the local March of Dimes Chapter, previous Board Member of ACCESS to Community Services and as a twenty-five member of the Northeast TN Council on Children and Youth. She is avid "softball mom", having watched her daughter play from the age of 6 and currently a player for Maryville College.

## Candidates for Vice President Middle Tennessee

#### Lorraine MacDonald



Lori was born and raised in Canada and came to the United States in 1994. She was educated at McMaster University in Hamilton Canada, receiving her MD in 1986. She completed her fellowship in Internal Medicine in 1989, is board certified by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, and is a member of the American College of Physicians. Lori was a Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine at McMaster Univ. from 1989 to 1993, with both clinical and teaching responsibilities.

Lori was in private practice for 12 years prior to coming to the Dept of Health, Mid Cumberland Region in 2004. Currently, she serves as the Regional Director of Primary Care for the Mid Cumberland Region, and has been working with the Regional Office to staff Mid Cumberland's Primary Care clinics. MCR currently has 42 providers (FNP's and MD's) in the region.

Lori's interest clinically is in Evidence Based Medicine, which she believes we practice within the Department of Health. She is an Associate Editor for the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, and the *British Medical Journal* supplements - the *American College of Physician's Journal Club*, and *Evidence Based Medicine*, which are published quarterly.

Lori is married with two sons, one large Labrador retriever, and one adopted stray tabby cat, and lives in Brentwood TN. The overwhelming interest in the family is ice hockey. All members of the family are active players, and both she and her husband are advanced level coaches certified by USA Hockey. Lori and her son are USA Hockey Officials and regularly referee games together which she says keeps them modest while they are heckled at 5:00 am on weekend mornings, usually by unhappy parents.

Lori says that she enjoys working in the Department of Health, in particular working with the wide range of very qualified people with whom she interacts on a daily basis. She is particularly excited by the expansion of Primary Care to the underserved populations, and believes public health does an excellent job in that capacity.

### Teresa Thomas



Teresa Thomas currently serves as Director for Nutrition Services at the Metro Davidson County Health Department. She is responsible for providing leadership, supervision and management of the Women, Infants and Children Supplemental Feeding program and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program. Teresa has served previously as the School Director for the Tennessee Technology Center in McKenzie Tennessee, Secondary School Principal in Murray Kentucky, as a Commercial Foods Teacher and Clinical Dietician and Foodservice Director for Charter Hospital in Paducah Kentucky.

Teresa received her Bachelor of Science degree and Masters of Science Degrees in Home Economics/Dietetics and 30 hours above in Vocational Education Administration from Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky. She is a registered dietician and holds a Kentucky Industrial Education Teaching Certificate and a Vocational Education School Principal Certification.

Teresa is a member of the Tennessee Public Health Association and Past President and Secretary of the Murray Area Nutritionist Association (MANA). She is a member of the Western District Kentucky Dietetics Association (WDKDA) and a graduate of the first Kentucky Tech Leadership Academy. She has been the recipient of several awards including the Outstanding Professionalism and Leadership Award and the Outstanding Administrative Staff Achievement Award.

Teresa has a great appreciation for nature and enjoys hiking and gardening and is an avid bicyclist. She loves to travel to exotic places for scuba diving ventures.

### Candidates for Vice President West Tennessee

#### Bradley Dodd



Bradley Dodd is a 1991 graduate of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga with a B.S. in Environmental Science. Following graduation, he worked for Geologic & Environmental Services, Inc. of Chattanooga in underground storage tank bioremediation.

In 1995, Bradley began his career with the State of Tennessee and the Department of Health as an Environmental Specialist I and is currently serving as an E.S III in the southeastern portion of West Tennessee, covering Decatur and Henderson Counties. He often re-

sponds to calls from home since he is a hometown boy and is known by many.

Bradley finds time in his busy schedule for community service. In 2000, he was elected to the Decatur County School Board and is currently serving his second term. As the father of two sons, he restarted the inactive Boy Scout Troop 29 in 2004 and is serving as Scoutmaster. He is also a member of the Order of the Arrow for Boy Scouts, the only honor society whose candidates are elected by non-members as well as members. Recently, Bradley attended a training workshop to become qualified to help organize and coach three 4-H shooting teams for the youth of Decatur County.

For his commitment and dedication to the State of Tennessee and the Tennessee Environmental Health Association, Bradley was awarded the Lynn B. Hearn Environmentalist of the Year Award in 2002. He currently serves as president of the West Tennessee Environmental Health Association. He has been a member of the Tennessee Public Health Association for several years.

#### Beverly Ferguson



Beverly Ferguson is a Public Health Nurse with the Obion County Health Department. She is an America Red Cross Nurse and also an active member of the local Obion County Chapter. She has also served as a board member of the Dyer County Chapter. Beverly served two years as a state delegate for the Tennessee Nurse Association and officer of the Dyers-

burg State Nursing Alumni Association. She is also a recipient of the Dyersburg State Outstanding Alumni Award. Beverly currently serves as a committee member for TPHA and TESA. Beverly and her husband reside in Trimble, Tennessee. They have two children and two grandsons.

### Candidates for Board Representative Middle Tennessee

#### Sherry Adams



Sherry Adams is Family Planning Program Administrator and Public Information Officer for the South Central Region. In addition, she is South Central's Hiring for Diversity trainer, CSS hearing aid coordinator, and is responsible for the region's QM administrative and Title VI reviews.

Sherry has worked for the Department since 1970, starting as a typist (now office assistant) with the Marshall County Health Department in Lewisburg. She has served

as Regional Clerical Consultant, Regional Planner, Assistant Regional Director, County Director for Marshall, Bedford, Coffee and Moore counties, Special Projects Administrator in the Bureau of Health Services and Commissioner's Offices, and Regional Program Administrator for MCH.

Sherry has a Master's Degree in Business Administration from MTSU. She served as TPHA's Vice-President for Middle Tennessee in 2002, and has participated on several committees for the annual conference. On a personal note, Sherry claims to have two "high achievement" adult children and one "genius" granddaughter.

#### Melissa Blair



Melissa Blair has 14 years of state government service with 10 years in the Department of Health serving in several capacities. Melissa is currently the Section Chief of Nutrition Services/WIC. She is responsible for the oversight of the Nutrition Services Section

including statewide guidance involving multi-program development, administrative, and supervisory work. Her responsibilities also include oversight of Community Nutrition Services which entails nutrition and education programs, Breastfeeding Promotion, 5 A Day Nutrition Program, and Medical Nutrition Therapy.

Prior to serving as Section Chief, she was an Administrator to the Director of the Bureau of Health Services, Dr. Wendy Long. In this role, she provided assistance in the administration of the Bureau. She participated in program development and design and had responsibilities in the origination and development of policy and procedures.

Melissa's initial tenure with the Department of Health began in Upper Cumberland in the Community Development program where she was responsible for establishing Health Councils and the implementation of the Community Diagnosis program. She was also responsible for the oversight and direction of the federal Community Health Center grant for the region.

Melissa has a Master's Degree in Science and has received her Certificate of Epidemiology through the Public Health Workforce Consortium Program. She has completed the Southeast Public Health Leadership Institute Program, and has served on various Advisory Committees and Boards.

Melissa is married to Pat Blair and they have 3 children; Ryan, a Sophomore at UT Knoxville; Tyler, a Sophomore at Springfield High School; and Macie, a Freshman at Franklin High School.

Melissa has been active in TPHA for many years and has chaired the Exhibits/Sponsors/Ads Committee for the past 4 years including this year's conference. Prior to that, she served as the Legislative Chair, Membership

Chair, the Public Relations Committee and the Upper Cumberland Regional Planning Committee.

Melissa enjoys working with people and is always willing to take on a new challenge. She is a career public health employee and is energetic, committed, and dedicated to the mission of public health. She would like to thank the TPHA Nominating Committee for nominating her as one of the candidates for Board of Directors and appreciates the opportunity to dedicate her time and energy to the mission of TPHA.

#### Debbie Hoy



Debbie Hoy is the Epidemiologist and Communicable and Environmental Disease Surveillance Director for the Upper Cumberland. She has been employed in Public Health for 12 years and worked for 20 years in the hospital setting with a focus on Infection Control and Education.

Debbie holds a BSN and MS in Health Education. She is married with two teenage children and is active locally in Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and her church.

#### Rick Johnson



Richard "Rick" Johnson has announced his intention to seek election as Board Member for the Tennessee Public Health Association. Johnson is currently President of the Tennessee Environmental Health Assoc. where he has worked with membership to move that organization into the current arrangement of being an extension of TPHA. This will hopefully strengthen the Associations by increasing membership and purpose. Rick has been a member of both organizations for over twenty years. He has served as president of TEHA on several occasions and as Board Member in that capacity with TPHA.

Johnson began state employment in summer jobs with TDOT and became a full time employee upon graduation from Austin Peay State University in 1977. He completed graduate work in Public Health Administration while employed as an environmentalist. Rick worked as a field environmentalist and regional supervisor before becoming Director of General Environmental Health in 1995. After leading the Division for four years, Johnson was lured into private industry.

He served as Vice President of Contract Properties, a multi-million dollar maintenance company for three years and became a licensed general contractor in the process. Rick returned to state service in 2002 as Field Office Manager at Mid-Cumberland Regional Office where he is

currently employed. Johnson has served locally in Cheatham County as a county commissioner and was chairman of numerous committees. He is a city councilman with Ashland City and Chairman of the Budget Committee.

Rick is an active member of the Methodist Church where he serves as Finance Chair, on the Administrative Council and a member of the choir. He and Adrian, his wife of thirty two years, have three adult children. Johnson enjoys spending time with his family, fishing, golfing and singing with a local band in his spare time.

"I am seeking board membership as a way of giving back to an organization that promotes all health professionals," Johnson said. "I will appreciate your support and vote."

## REGIONAL NEWS

The **Mid-Cumberland Region** has experienced tremendous growth over the past few months. Through the Governor's safety net initiative, 55 positions have been added throughout the region. As of May 15, 2006, there were 20 physicians and 23 nurse practitioners providing primary care services within the region's 12 counties.

Along with staff growth, the number of encounters generated by physicians and nurse practitioners has grown substantially as well. In looking at encounters generated by the practitioners and physicians from January through April 2004, 2005 and 2006, region-wide a 50% increase has occurred since 2004. County by county the growth in encounters is as follows:

County	Jan – Apr 2004	Jan – Apr 2005	Jan – Apr 2006
Cheatham	77	85	409
Dickson	1,065	1,321	1,854
Montgomery	1,780	2,631	3,594
Robertson	268	349	959
Rutherford	2,000	1,876	2,319
Stewart	1,025	970	1,344
Sumner	2,324	2,535	3,201
Williamson	2,089	2,238	2,456
Wilson	1,215	1,101	1,634
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,843</b>	<b>13,106</b>	<b>17,770</b>

On April 11, the **South Central Region** participated in a multi-county, multi-agency emergency response drill, sponsored by Homeland Security District 8. The emergency drill took place in Lawrenceburg and involved a large number of law enforcement, emergency management and first responder personnel from the seven counties in District 8.

The health department's role in the drill included

opening the RHOC (Regional Health Operations Center) and testing our Incident Command structure. Participating in the health department's portion of the drill were 64 health department staff from Maury, Lawrence, Lewis, Hickman, Perry, Giles and Wayne counties, 8 regional office staff and approximately 36 community volunteers.

The health department's Incident Command Post, located in the Regional Office in Columbia, was the coordinating point for all activities involving the regional Emergency Response team and health department players. A total of 59 "victims" were treated at Crockett Hospital, with another 50 being seen at Maury Regional Medical Center in Columbia.

The Regional Volunteer Coordinator was responsible for operational procedures at the POD (Point of Dispensing), which was set up at the local high school to dispense antibiotics to "victims" of the disaster. At the POD, over 400 student "victims" were treated within one hour.

The lessons learned include "We can do it!", as well as "We need more practice!"

**Knox County's** Healthy Weight Initiative partnered with several local agencies to promote walking and bring to light issues impacting walkability. At the Building Walkable Communities Workshop held on April 28<sup>th</sup>, pedestrian advocate Mark Fenton spoke with more than 100 political leaders, planners, engineers, public health advocates and neighborhood advocates about the importance of building physical activity into community design. Local developer Mike Stevens spoke about Northshore Town Center, an example of pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use development currently being built in West Knoxville. More workshops focusing on Building Healthy Communities are being planned.

To create awareness among high school students about alternative transportation, a Commuter Challenge was issued among Bearden High Students. Students car-pooled, took the bus, rode their bikes, and walked to school for the chance to win cash prizes, and also create awareness about air quality issues and school accessibility. More than 1,000 students signed a petition during the challenge to get sidewalks added to the streets surrounding the school. Because of the students' efforts, sidewalks have been added to an upcoming intersection improvement plan for the area.

The **West Tennessee Region** has been a busy place this year. Commissioner Kenneth Robinson presented the Dyer County Mayor, Richard Hill, with a one million dollar check in Safety Net funds to assist with the construction of a new



Dyer County Health Department. This new building will allow additional space for primary care services and preventive health services.

Another new health department has recently opened in the West Tennessee Region. The Crockett



County Health Department is now seeing patients and will be offering primary care services

soon.

A West Tennessee Community Diabetes Forum was held in Weakley County. The forum was sponsored by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Emory University, UT Martin Nursing Department, and Tennessee Department of Health. A one-day, interactive program was designed for all community members with an interest in reducing diabetes in Western Tennessee.

In the **Northeast Region**, the Washington County Health Department has a program going on that is quite unique. The Health Educators provide an educational program one Sunday night a month to female inmates in the city jail which offers information and/or skills that each woman will be able to use once she returns to society. Participation rates have ranged between 75 and 120 women every month. Information about this program is available from the Health Education Department at (423) 975-2200.

The region recently participated in the “Breath of Jihad”, an elaborately planned emergency preparedness drill aimed at biological terrorism. The March exercise allowed public health to partner with the 45<sup>th</sup> Civil Support Team of the TN National Guard and the Emergency Management Agency of Washington County to assess our region’s operational readiness to react to a terrorist event.

The Northeast region also participated in the Dis-

trict 1 Homeland Security CBRNE Tabletop exercise in June conducted at the Bristol Motor Speedway. The scenario addressed the complex readiness issues involving a catastrophic terrorist event at the speedway.

The Emergency Preparedness Division is deeply involved in Pandemic Flu planning. The Regional Pandemic Flu Summit will tentatively be held July 21. The Northeast Region will also participate with a joint Tennessee/Virginia Pandemic Flu Summit in July. Emergency preparedness staff network with the five-state Mountain Empire Public Health Emergency Coordinating Comm.

## CALLING ALL SOCIAL WORKERS AND CASE MANAGERS

Submitted by Sammie Walker, Chair, Committee on Sections

Public Health has so many excellent Social Workers and Case Managers and TPHA would like to give you the chance to network at our Annual Meeting. How would you like to have your own Section and be afforded all of the privileges of Section Membership. Each year your section would have a member represent you on the Board of Directors, have a designated meeting time, have the option to have a breakfast or lunch, bring in high quality speakers and most of all, be afforded the opportunity to share ideas with colleagues across the state. Membership in TPHA is only ten dollars the first year and then twenty dollars a year. If you are interested in becoming a charter member of a Social Worker/Case Manager Section, please contact Marcella Henry in the Jackson Regional Office at 731-421-6769 or [Marcella.Henry@state.tn.us](mailto:Marcella.Henry@state.tn.us), or Sammie Walker, Hardeman County Health Department at 731-658-5291, ext.120 or [Sammie.Walker@state.tn.us](mailto:Sammie.Walker@state.tn.us).

Tennessee Public Health Association  
P. O. Box 210147  
Nashville, TN 37221