

# The Inside Word

## Newsletter – April 2006

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Published by Edgecombe County Department of Social Services

Phyllis Talbot -Editor

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### A Message from our Director

April Showers brings May Flowers! WOW! That statement takes me way back to my grade school days of yester-year. However, it is a fact of nature that every action brings a reaction. Therefore, some rambling thoughts about our recent actions and hoped for positive reactions.

In August 2005, our agency helped to develop what is now called the Edgecombe Nash Youth Congress. The Congress is devoted to seeking solutions for identified problems of area youth. Positive reactions have been the active participation of the majority of the organizations (public and private) that work with youth leading to the "Tune in for Success" project on April 8, 2006. We hope that parents who do not readily involve themselves in the needs of their teenagers will take an active part after attending the "Tune in for Success" event. Lots of resources devoted to teenagers will be on display. Help by encouraging parents who fuss about problem teenagers to attend.

Just a few days ago, we were offered funding to host a regional "Domestic Violence Summit" as a result of our participation in what might be best described as the Twin County Domestic Violence Group. Planning has started for this event to take place in May 2006.

We have set up an In-House Scanning Project team which will monitor the Imaging System being put in place. Our hope is that this project will save staff members time and make the work process go so much smoother. Additional benefits include file space savings. More to come on this important project!

Due to space considerations, I will conclude with a short review of the Department of Social Services Board Retreat and what I consider the WAVE of the future. Our Social Services Board members agreed that our Vision and Mission Statements remain appropriate and has agreed to participate in efforts to define "Success for Families." As a beginning start, all supervisors and managers have been asked to provide me with one characteristic of a successful family. I encourage you to ask your supervisor or manager about this and thereby begin to help us with this effort. I value your input and your community – Edgecombe County – can only benefit from it. Do not be shy!

*Mavis E. Rouse*

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### April is "Child Abuse Prevention" Month

#### Safe Children and Healthy Families Are a Shared Responsibility

The US Department of Health & Human Services has chosen the theme "Safe Children and Healthy Families Are a Shared Responsibility" for the April 2006 Child Abuse Prevention Month.

A nurturing home environment, safe places to play, good medical care, stimulating schools – so many ingredients are necessary to help children grow up to be safe and healthy. When children are surrounded with secure relationships and stimulating experiences, they draw from that environment to become confident, caring adults. The primary responsibility for children's health and well-being rests with parents, but they cannot do it alone. All families benefit from the help of strong, supportive neighborhoods and communities. We all play a role in helping our children thrive.

Most parents share a desire to provide the best for their children. But raising healthy, confident children can be difficult, especially when parents are frustrated, inexperienced, have serious mental health problems, or are facing stressful conditions such as relationship difficulties or financial crises.

Research has shown that parents and other caretakers who have resources and support are more likely to provide safe and healthy homes for their children. Specifically, parents need a network of supportive personal relationships and other resources for coping with stress, knowledge and understanding of critical child development issues, and financial and other concrete support such as shelter, food, and childcare. A lack of these critical supports, on the other hand, can cause otherwise well-intentioned parents to make poor decisions that can lead to neglect or abuse. As we learn more about why child abuse and

neglect occur, more organizations, agencies, and communities are recognizing the best way to promote prevention is to provide parents with the skills and resources they need to understand and meet their children's emotional, physical, and developmental needs and protect their children.

Parenting is one of the toughest and most important jobs in American, and we all have a state in ensuring that parents have access to the tools and support they need to be successful. With the help of family support activities, many families are able to find the strength and resources they need to raise safe, healthy, and productive children.

To help prevent child abuse and neglect, you can:

- Be a nurturing parent!
- Help a friend, neighbor, or relative if they are having difficulty with their family.
- Get involved – advocate for services and resources that help families.
- Help to develop parenting resources at your local library or community center.
- Ask for help for yourself.
- Support all of the parents in your community!

(Thanks to [www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org))

## April Service Anniversaries

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Yrs.</u>
Anne Pittman	Program Integrity – Rocky Mt	29
Cheryl Bynum	Clerical – Tarboro	22
Martha Price	Food Stamps – Rocky Mount	20
Carol Mitchell	Child Support – Rocky Mount	13
Regina Rogers	WFFA – Tarboro	13
Grace Cobb	Child Support – Rocky Mount	10
Henry Mercer	Children Services – Rocky Mt	10
Phyllis Talbot	Director's Unit – Tarboro	10
Margaret Wiggs	Clerical – Rocky Mount	10
Annie Godwin	Fiscal – Tarboro	6
Wayne Pitt	Director's Unit – Rocky Mount	6
Terill Pitt	Work First – Tarboro	5
Herbert Tillery	Children Services – Tarboro	4
Natasha Thomas	Medicaid - Tarboro	2

## April Birthdays

<u>Day</u>	<u>Employee</u>	<u>Unit/Area</u>
Apr 5	Ruby Hill	Housekeeping – Rocky Mt
12	Michelle Cherry	Children Services – Rocky Mt
14	Suzette Mercer	Clerical – Rocky Mount
15	Iris Batts	Children Services – Rocky Mt
15	Clara Dundas	Clerical – Rocky Mount
15	Margaret Wiggs	Clerical – Rocky Mount
16	Annetta Pitt	Adult Services – Tarboro
19	Latasha Williams	Work First – IDA – Rocky Mt
20	Martha Price	Food Stamps – Rocky Mount
28	Lucretia Greaux	Children Services – Tarboro

## Shining Star Award

On March 6<sup>th</sup> our Director, Marvin Rouse was surprised and honored to receive a "Shining Star" award for his work with the Down East Partnership for Children's Board to improve the lives of children in Edgecombe County. Mr. Rouse credited his efforts and any success to the dedication and work of the Edgecombe County Department of Social Services staff and to the support he receives from the Social Services Board.

"Way to go Boss!" There is a "Method to the Madness" as you always say!



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## Edgecombe Nash Youth Congress

### “Tune in for Success”

The Edgecombe Nash Youth Congress will hold a conference on April 8, 2006 at the Rocky Mount Campus of Edgecombe Community College. The conference will begin at 9:00 a.m. and includes several speakers, presentations, and resource fair.

The Edgecombe Nash Youth Congress was born out of Mr. Rouse’s frustration with the changes in the mental health system and the impact of children coming into foster care. A merger with Nash County came about after a meeting with Laura O’Neal, Director of Nash County DSS and the Chief of Rocky Mount Police Department. In August of 2005, the Edgecombe Nash Youth Congress began meeting with providers of youth services in the twin counties to engage in conversation about the impact of service delivery for youth and teens in the twin county area. Of the discussions so far, all have agreed that lack of parental involvement is a key factor involving youth. Out of those discussions, the need for a signature event evolved, hence, “Tune in For Success” conference. April was chosen to have this event because it is Child Abuse Prevention Month.

The conference will begin with registration and breakfast snacks at 9:00 a.m. followed by a welcome by Mr. Rouse and Ms. O’Neal, Directors of Edgecombe and Nash County Departments of Social Services (respectively). Lela Chesson, a retired educator will then speak on “The Need for Parental Involvement”. Remember, the lack of parental involvement is the core basis for the conference.

“Music and Media’s Influence on Teen Choices” will be presented by Michelle Reaves of Consider This Production, Inc. Ms. Reaves will enlighten parents about the music in which their children listen and the electronic games that they play. She will give specific examples including song content and other media hype.

“Impact of Gang Activity on our Youth” will be presented by Lt. Larry Woodley of the Rocky Mount Police Department. Lt. Woodley will inform audience members of tactics specific to gangs and such topics as “tagging”. He will also be able to inform community members and leaders of things they can do to make their communities safer.

Lunch, sponsored by Rocky Mount Area United Way, will be provided to all who have pre-registered for the conference. Participants will also be able to visit over 20 booths (of information) of local community agencies.

Former Coach Herman Boone of the movie “Remember the Titans” will be the guest speaker. Mr. Boone is originally from Rocky Mount and will give a motivational presentation for parents and communities relating to youth.

So, if you would like to become more involved with youth and the community, you need to be there! Not to mention, great door prizes will be given away! April is also Child Abuse Prevention Month ... so come out and get your blue ribbon!

This event is being sponsored by Consolidated Diesel, Sara Lee, and Sprint. For more information about the event or to pre-register for the conference, please contact Phyllis Talbot @ 641-7631 or email her at: [phyllistalbot@co.edgecombe.nc.us](mailto:phyllistalbot@co.edgecombe.nc.us)

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## Local Food Drive

In collaboration with the Edgecombe County Food Providers Council, Edgecombe County Department of Social Services will be participating in the Feinsein Food Drive during the month of April. For the ninth straight year the Feinsein Foundation will divide \$1 million among hunger fighting agencies nationwide. For every can of food that is donated to the Edgecombe County Food Drive, the Feinsein Foundation will donate \$1.00 per item to our Food Provider Council. The food items are also donated to our local food providers and pantries. Food collection boxes are located in the lounges of both Department of Social Services offices. Help us “take a bite out of hunger” by donating a few cans of food to those less fortunate citizens of Edgecombe County. For more information on the Feinsein \$1 Million Challenge to Fight Hunger visit: <http://www.feinseinfoundation.org/> For more information on our local food drive contact Nancy Cochran at 985-5028.

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## Edgecombe County Talent Search

Edgecombe County is seeking talented county employees to participate in the 2006 Employee Service Awards Program that will be held on June 16, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. If you can sing, dance and/or act, please submit a registration form to Betty Battle, our Human Resource Officer. Deadline for registration is April 28<sup>th</sup>. Registration forms have been distributed to each member of the agency’s management team for distribution to staff. The county is also looking for singers to join in the Edgecombe County Mass Choir. Auditions will be held on May 9, 2006 at 2:00 p.m. in the auditorium of the County Building.

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## Edgecombe County Distinguished Social Worker Award

On March 29, 2006, the annual Distinguished Social Worker luncheon was held at 11:30 at Stack's Restaurant in Tarboro. The celebration was grand, with an enlightening speaker, Mrs. Karen McLeod Executive Director of the NC Director's Association. For the thirteenth consecutive year, a social worker was nominated by agency peers and judged by community partners based on the nomination information to be the "Distinguished Social Worker of the Year". This year's Distinguished Social Worker was Iris Batts, an Intensive Services social worker in Child Welfare. Iris has come through the ranks in the agency and has developed a reputation of commitment, diligence and respect from families and colleagues. We congratulate Iris on her outstanding social work and commitment to the citizens of Edgecombe County.

Distinguished Social Worker of the Year Iris Batts (center) shown receiving the award from Social Services Board Vice-Chair Dana Alexander (left) and Director Marvin Rouse (right).



Other agency winners nominated by their social work peers for Team Social Worker Awards were:

Shawn Sylvester - Adult Services

Bobby Heath – Children Services Team I

Candy Jones – Children Services Team II

Miller Moore – Children Services Team III

Aimmie Edmondson – Children Services Team IV

Henry Mercer – Children Services Support Team I

Lucretia Greaux – Children Services Support Team II

Dorothy Lancaster - Work First Child Care Team

Anna Davis –

Kiersten Talbot -

Congratulations to all the winners, keep up the great work!!

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## Who They Are & What They Do

### Adult Protective Services

The Department of Social Services definition of "Protective services" is services provided by the State or other government or private organizations or individuals, which are necessary to protect the disabled adult from abuse, neglect, or exploitation. These services consist of evaluation and mobilization of essential services on behalf of the disabled adult.

North Carolina has been providing protective services to adults through the departments of social services since 1975. The nation made this one of their first initiatives to recognize the needs of older and disabled adults who had been abused, neglected or exploited and to develop a protective services program to address their needs.

The mistreatment of elderly and disabled adults is not a new problem; however there has been an increased demand for Adult Protective Services in North Carolina since the mid 1980's. Several factors have contributed to this need for service. The nationwide growth in the elderly population combined with the North Carolina being a place where retirees return after retirement. Another factor is that adults are living longer, experiencing a serious decline in mental or physical functioning, and have not anticipated or planned for circumstances. These adults are more vulnerable to abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Elder abuse can be physical or verbal. Physical abuse includes any kind of physical battery, such as slapping, pushing, kicking, punching, or injuring with an object or weapon. It also includes deliberate exposure to severe weather, inappropriate use of medication and unnecessary physical restraint.

Neglect is any lack of action required to meet the needs of an elderly person. This includes a disabled adult who is either living alone and not able to provide for himself the essentials to maintain his mental or physical health or is not receiving services from his caretaker. "Exploitation" is the illegal or improper use of a disabled adult or his resources for another's profit or advantage.

In order for the agency to accept a referral on an adult, they must be mentally or physically incapacitated or suspected of being abused, neglected, or exploited, and is in need of protection.

Some of the signs to look for in elder abuse are;

1. Discrepancies between a person's standard of living and his financial assets, or depletion of assets.
2. Inadequate physical care, including dehydration or lack of food, poor hygiene, urine sores, or bed sores.
3. Physical injuries, such as bruises, burn marks, welts, rope burns, broken bones that can't be adequately explained.
4. Medical needs not met.

The Department of Social Services recognizes that Adult Protective Services is a shared community responsibility. This is a community problem that can best be addressed through the cooperation and support of public and private agencies, professionals and lay people, and involvement of families, friends and other informal caregivers.

## Work First is Working in Edgecombe County

Since Work First began on July 1, 1996, Edgecombe County has made great strides in reducing the number of able bodied adults receiving a welfare check rather than a pay check. Over the years, we have developed a good system that works to identify barriers and to offer assistance to overcome those barriers before a citizen goes on welfare. Our percentage of people retaining jobs and staying off welfare continue to rise. However, our work is not complete and probably never will be completed, and therefore within lays the challenge to develop a workforce with the skill sets that allows new learning to insure prosperity for the workers and the employers.

One of the ways that Edgecombe County Department of Social Services and its Work First unit is evolving to meet this challenge is participation in efforts to develop the work force of the future ... our children. We play a growing role in community based efforts at combating the negatives our youth face. We invite our Business Community partners to help out when and where you can. We thank you for your support of United Way, Community Enrichment Organization, Edgecombe County Relay for Life, and of course the Nash Edgecombe Boys and Girls Club and appreciate your support for the current Boys and Girls Club's fund raising campaign to name just a few of the community based efforts that impact our future work force.

Yes, Work First is working in Edgecombe County because enlightened business leaders understand the need to assist in developing our future work force ... our children ... in Edgecombe County. Edgecombe County Department of Social Services salutes you and thank you for your support!

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## Safe Surrender Law

A desperate woman may abandon her infant in a panic, not thinking that the baby may die, that she may be found out and tried criminally and that she will regret this hasty act for the rest of her life. The law is designed to help that woman make the best choice for her baby – to allow the infant to live.

In North Carolina, an average of two infants are left abandoned every year, sometimes resulting in fatality. So far, 45 states across the country including North Carolina have passed Safe Haven or Safe Surrender laws in an attempt to save lives. Edgecombe County and others have been diligent in getting the word out; however, more education and public awareness is still needed locally and statewide for a better understanding of the law. The goal is to have the baby adopted into a safe and loving home as quickly as possible.

What everyone needs to know about North Carolina's Safe Surrender of Newborns Law:

- **What is the new Safe Surrender Law?** An infant up to 7 days old may be left with a responsible adult, legally and anonymously. This is North Carolina state law, properly called the "Infant Homicide Prevention Act."
- **Why is there such a law?** The risk of homicide on the first day of life is 10 times greater than the rate during any other time of life. Every year, several babies are either killed or left to die in North Carolina by a parent in crisis, who may feel they have no other choice. The law hopes to provide such parents a way to surrender their unwanted newborn safely and anonymously.
- **Who can receive an infant through safe surrender?** The law states that a baby may be surrendered to "any responsible adult." Some people are especially cited: on-duty health care provider, law enforcement officer, social services worker or emergency medical services worker. However, "any responsible adult" could mean just about anyone.
- **What happens to these babies?** An adult who receives the baby is required to keep it safe and warm, and to call 911 or the local department of social services right away. They should know that the surrendering parent is not required to give any identifying information. The goal is to have the baby adopted into a safe and loving home as quickly as possible.

- **How big a problem is infanticide and child homicide?** In our state, an average of two infants are killed or left unprotected to die every year. Every two weeks, a North Carolina child is killed by a parent or caregiver in some form of child abuse.
- **Has the law worked?** No official numbers exist, but since the law was enacted in 2001, at least two newborns have been highlighted in the media as having been safely surrendered. However, at the same time, a number of newborns have also been abandoned unsafely or killed (six have died). Public awareness is crucial to help parents know this option exists, and also to alert the public that receiving a surrendered newborn is legal. Help us spread the word by copying and distributing these facts.
- **What about fathers? Don't they have rights too?** There is a natural concern that a woman may have a baby and surrender it without the father knowing it exists. Any man who hears of a surrendered infant and believes it may be his should come forward.
- **Is Safe Surrender the same as Safe Haven?** Many states have what are called Safe Haven laws. These designate places where a baby may be surrendered. North Carolina's law is unique in that it designates people, not places.

For more information on Safe Surrender of Newborns visits: [www.safesurrender.net](http://www.safesurrender.net) or call the Children Services office at 641-7668. Please feel free to share the facts in your community and help save a life.

## Relay for Life – “Sailing On Course”

The Desperately Seeking Survivors Team's "Relay for Life" efforts have proven to be smooth sailing. Team members and co-workers "christened" the 2006 DSS "Relay" Campaign by wearing Blue Jeans on Fridays for \$3.00 beginning last October. Silent Auctions, Basket Raffles, Bake Sales, and all-around sponsorship have given wind to the Team's sails. Don't worry if you missed the first few fun things. We have even more "goodies," activities, and challenges in store as *"we search the ocean blue to find a cure for you."*

Speaking of challenges! I know that you remember Miss Kayla Lyons. Kayla passed away from cancer this year at the young age of 6. Her grandmother, Beverly Clark, is a fellow employee of Edgecombe County Department of Social Services Food Stamp unit in the Rocky Mount office. Our Director, Mr. Marvin Rouse, has issued the agency a challenge. His challenge: ***If 100 DSS staff members donate \$10 each, he will donate another \$100 in memory of Miss Kayla Lyons!*** Wow. Kayla was an inspiration to all, and remains so even now.

Speaking of inspiration, take the time to visit our DSS team's web page. Our team members, who have registered, also have Personal Web Pages. The web page reflects on-line donations, but don't let that steer you to the wrong conclusion. The majority of our donations are not contributed on-line, so they are not reflected as such. The Desperately Seeking Survivors have already raised over \$1,000.00 Our Relay Team has a membership goal of 30 members. At the rate of participation, enthusiasm, creativity, diligence and excitement that the existing team members have shown, the whole agency may decide to walk a few laps for Relay!

If you want to see another treat, check out the Edgecombe County "Relay for Life" web-site at: [www.edgecomberelay.org](http://www.edgecomberelay.org). any questions you have regarding relay or the Edgecombe County Relay Teams can be answered by accessing this site. There is also a link to the "Relay" page on our official Edgecombe County Government web-site. Take a few minutes and check it out.

There is never a dull moment on Ship Survivor because Co-Captains Carol Mitchell and Linda Jackson are hitting the docks, the seafood restaurants, the fish markets, the supermarkets, and everywhere that there may be a "nibble!" Our team will be selling "Fish Plates" at the relay event. Our captains are charting the course and steering the team towards a goal of \$4,000! At the rate that the team is sailing, we hopefully will reach our goal. It's not a mirage. We see it on the horizon: Goal met. Cancer Cured.

## DSS Weight-Off Project

Dewana Murrey, Office Support Unit, was the lucky winner again of the \$25 Wal-Mart gift card for February 2006. Dewana lost a total of 4 ¾ pounds during the month of February. Congratulations! Just a few statistics for February:

- Overall loss in both offices was 13 ¼ pounds.
- Overall gain in both offices was 13 ½ pounds.
- Total loss in Tarboro was 8 pounds
- Total gain in Tarboro was 5 ¾ pounds.
- Total loss in Rocky Mount was 5 ¼ pounds.
- Total gain in Rocky Mount was 7 ¾ pounds.



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## Other Agency News

### Child Support:

- Child Support continues to strive to collect as much money as possible for the children of Edgecombe County. Our ability to collect money prior to court to avoid the non custodial parent attending court has increased our court collections as well as other changes implemented by Judge Evans has decrease the overall time workers are spending in court each month. This leaves more office availability time for the caseworkers to work on cases.
- Rocky Mount Child Support welcomes Felicia Spooner as a new Establishment worker. She is still in training and we are working hard to get her up to speed as soon as possible. The Tarboro Unit certainly appreciates Medicaid finally turning loose Dorothy Rowe to their unit, maybe we can decrease those caseloads soon! Now both units are fully staffed for once in quite a while!
- Trysten Roberson, son of Tracy Roberson recently won a trophy for basketball. We are very proud of him and hope that his interest in sports continues!
- Rocky Mount Child Support Unit continues to be real go-getters for Relay for Life! They have already held an auction and a bake sale and are constantly planning more fundraisers. The Child Support unit challenges each and every unit to collect, collect and collect some more for this great need! We never know when cancer will knock on our door or the doors of our relatives and friends.
- And remember in closing, "If you don't hear from us again by Easter, don't forget to hide the eggs."

### Work First – Day Care:

- Congratulations to Dorothy Lancaster, who received the unit's Social Worker Award at the Social Work banquet.
- "Weddings Bells are in the Air." Minister Anthony Adams got down on one knee and proposed to Terill Pitt on March 19, 2006. She said YES!!! Honest!!!! All Daycare Staff heard her on tape. The wedding date has not been set at this time. Congratulations Terill, We Love you and are happy for you.

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## 10 Ideas to Help You Remember

You are busy and you have tons of things to do. How can you possibly remember it all? Having a sharp memory recall can be as simple as finding ways to help jog your memory throughout the day. Here are 10 quick ideas:

1. Write it down. With the amount of things you have to remember in any given day, why should you try to stuff it all into your memory bank? When you want to remember something, the very best thing to do is write it down.
2. Keep it together. When you write down things you want to remember, keep them in one consistent place. Otherwise, you are going to spend a lot of time looking for your notes.
3. Maintain Good Health. Eat healthy foods, get enough sleep, and exercise. These are all important for your memory, staying focused and being alert.
4. Record your thoughts. Sometimes you might want to remember something, but it's impossible for you to write it down, such as when you are driving. A little hand held tape recorder is a wonderful gadget to carry around with you and record your thoughts, or your parking space number, or a phone number you see on a billboard.
5. Call yourself. If you are at the office, and you want to do something when you arrive home, call your answering machine and leave yourself a message. When you get home, you will listen to your message and remember.
6. Believe in yourself. If you keep saying you have a bad memory, you will probably continue to have a bad memory. It's important to have a motivated, I CAN remember attitude.
7. Send yourself e-mail reminders. Send yourself what you want to remember by e-mail.
8. Post sticky notes. Those wonderful, little sticky notes can be amazing memory helpers. Jot it down on a post-it note and stick it on the inside of your door.
9. Set times and alarms. Take advantage of alarm clocks and timers throughout the day.
10. Use visual reminders. Visual reminders can help you remember and focus. Find a picture or ornament that will help remind you.

(Thanks to Maria Garcia – *Get Organized Now.*)