

## Louisville Arena, Health, Education among 2006 Legislative Issues

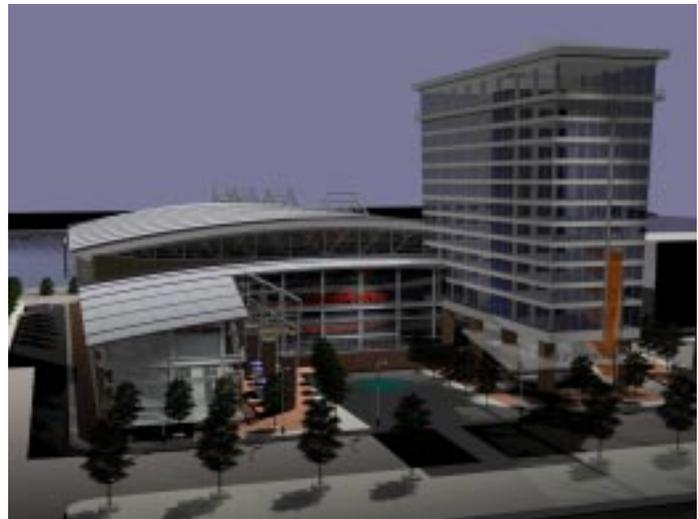
As legislators plan to tackle an aggressive 2006 agenda, Governor Fletcher continues to move the Commonwealth forward. One major recent project is advertising the bluegrass state in Forbes magazine, which is aimed at promoting Kentucky's economic development and tourism.

In another boost for the economy and tourism, Governor Fletcher says he will push legislators to approve the \$75 million needed to build a sports arena in downtown Louisville. The economic impact of the \$299 million project is expected to increase funding for education, health care and infrastructure building in several surrounding counties.

The Governor also says Kentucky needs to grow jobs by becoming more competitive with other states. "We as a state need to leapfrog other states," Governor Fletcher told business leaders at a December Kentucky Chamber of Commerce meeting. Before the Commonwealth takes that leap, the Governor says Kentucky needs to work on basic issues such as graduating more high school students and making Kentuckians healthier.

In his December radio address on health, Governor Fletcher said health issues can greatly affect the Commonwealth's economy. "We (Kentuckians) are overweight and don't exercise enough. We eat and smoke too much. Health Insurance costs are high and so are Kentucky's rates of diabetes, heart disease and cancer," he said. The Governor pointed to the Medicaid program as needing reform, calling it the health insurance program for the poor, elderly and disabled. Higher Medicaid costs have forced the Commonwealth to choose between paying for Medicaid or funding other priorities such as better schools and safer highways. For this reason, Governor Fletcher con-

(Issues, Continued on pg. 5)



Proposed Arena

Photo courtesy, Commerce Cabinet

## The History Behind the Berry Hill Mansion



Situated on a prominent western bluff overlooking the state Capitol and Frankfort, the George Franklin Berry Estate was originally called Juniper Hill because of the many red cedar trees on the property. Berry was a prosperous distiller executive with the Frankfort firm of W. A. Gaines and Company. Constructed in 1900, the original stone mansion was designed by the eminent Louisville architectural firm of McDonald and Dodd. The structure's design is a notable example of mansions erected between 1865 and 1917 in the Colonial Revival style. Stones used to build Berry Mansion came from the property and it rests on a full stone cellar blasted from solid rock. Its most outstanding feature is an elaborate music room built in the Gothic Revival style, and designed by notable architect William J. Dodd. With pipes rising behind an intricately carved oak

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## Message From Governor Fletcher



Most of us know all too well that Kentucky is not a very healthy state. We are overweight and don't exercise enough. We eat and smoke too much. Health insurance costs are high, and so are Kentucky's rates of diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

This crisis reaches beyond health to other critical issues facing the commonwealth. It reduces our quality of life. It costs

money that could otherwise be invested in education or jobs. And an unhealthy work force limits our economic productivity.

Nowhere is this crisis as pronounced as in our Medicaid program. Medicaid is the health insurance program for the poor, elderly and disabled that Kentucky operates with the federal government.

Kentucky's Medicaid program is very expensive – costing \$4.7 billion this year and rising.

It is a one-size-fits-all program that offers little or no choice to members about their care. And it focuses on simply treating members when they get sick, not keeping them healthy in the first place. This contributes to the commonwealth's unhealthy population. If this all sounds like a recipe for disaster, that's because it is. Through Medicaid, Kentucky pays too much for medical care that is often delivered in the wrong place, at the wrong time, and without proper patient involvement.

What caused this crisis? Simply put, Medicaid is an outdated government program that struggles to cope with the realities of health care today.

Medicaid hasn't changed much since it took effect in 1966, except in one key aspect. That year, it cost American taxpayers a total of \$1 billion. Last year, it cost more than \$309 billion.

Along with the Medicare program, Medicaid was intended to prevent Americans from having to choose between food and medicine. Today, it forces states like Kentucky to choose between paying for Medicaid or funding other priorities such as better schools and safer highways.

From coast to coast, states are dealing with runaway Medicaid spending, often by cutting tens of thousands of people from the rolls or slashing benefits. States like Kentucky are left to treat a 21st century problem with a 1960s health plan. When a program like Medicaid still offers the same one-size-fits-all treatment to its many different members, it's no wonder costs are skyrocketing without corresponding gains in peoples' health.

My administration will not neglect this problem. That's why we're modernizing Medicaid to meet Kentucky's 21st century needs.

A central part of Medicaid modernization is our application for a "waiver" from the federal government. Known as Kentucky Health Choices, this waiver will give us flexibility to avoid many cumbersome federal regulations and design programs specifically for the commonwealth.

We realize there is a big difference between the health needs of seniors in nursing homes, children with disabilities and pregnant women. What we don't understand is why Medicaid currently treats them all the same. Under the new waiver, these categories of Medicaid members will be served by unique health plans tailored to their specific needs. We also realize that empowering people to make choices about their medical care will lead to better decisions and better health.

Today's Medicaid benefits are largely free and unfettered. So it's not surprising to see instances of overuse and abuse, with some individuals taking dozens of prescriptions at the same time, or visiting the emergency room 50 times in a year. No incentives exist for members to make responsible decisions, such as choosing a family doctor over an unnecessary ER visit. By making wise choices like this one, Medicaid members can improve their own health and the state's financial outlook.

Kentucky's Medicaid program has come a long way in two short years. Last year, we balanced a \$526 million projected deficit without cutting anyone from the Medicaid rolls. We actually reduced our pharmaceutical costs in 2004, after they had skyrocketed by 80 percent over the previous four years.

But these measures alone are not enough. Over the next three years, Medicaid spending growth could consume all new revenue growth. That leaves no money to fund other priorities such as better schools and universities – the long-term investments that Kentucky needs to get ahead in the new economy.

At age 40, Medicaid faces a midlife crisis. To emerge from it, Kentucky must take bold action by modernizing the program for the 21st century. And as the leader of this commonwealth, I intend to do just that.

In the months and years ahead, Medicaid will look much different from the 1960s-era relic we see today. These changes won't be easy, but they're necessary for progress in Kentucky.

As we move forward, I need and appreciate the support of the General Assembly and concerned citizens like you. Together, we can guarantee a modern and enhanced Medicaid program will be around to serve our children and grandchildren.

Thank you,

Governor Ernie Fletcher

*"States like Kentucky are left to treat a 21st century problem with a 1960s health plan"*

## Statewide Escape Notification Plan Enhanced

Through a partnership with Louisville-based Appriss® Inc., developer of the VINE® system, the Kentucky Department of Corrections has enhanced its statewide escape notification service.

The notification system, AlertXpress, will now allow individuals who live near Kentucky's 13 state prisons and three private prisons to hear detailed information about the inmate in the event of an escape from that institution. When the escape notification system was launched last year, residents only heard a recorded message informing them of the date and time of the escape. Now those registered will know exactly who escaped, including a description of the inmate and their charges.

Residents will still call the same toll-free number, 1-866-445-2867, to register and all those previously registered will be "rolled over" by Appriss onto the enhanced system. Residents can register as many numbers as they wish – for instance a home tele-

phone, a cell phone number and a work number.

The enhanced notification system also calls registered individuals when the escapee is back in custody.

"This enhanced escape notification plan is a continuation of our plan towards ensuring the safety of residents of the Commonwealth and carrying out the mission of not only the Department of Corrections, but the Justice and Public Safety Cabinet as well," said Corrections Commissioner John D. Rees. "We work diligently to make our prisons safe and secure and want to do everything in our power to make the residents who live near our prisons feel as safe as possible."

*"The Kentucky Department of Corrections has been on the cutting edge of technology for more than 10 years"*

Early in 2004, the Department of Corrections began exploring the idea of an escape notification plan when its LaGrange prisons attempted to update their lists of nearby residents wishing to be notified of an escape. Due to the number of residents who responded and the volume of calls it would require, it was not feasible for prison staff to manually make the telephone calls. Department officials approached Appriss President Mike Davis, who agreed to provide the

(Escape, Continued on pg. 5)

## Department of Criminal Justice Training Graduates 26

Law enforcement officers from 21 agencies across Kentucky graduated today from the Department of Criminal Justice Training's Law Enforcement Basic Training Academy.

The 26-member class underwent 16 weeks of training, which consisted of more than 660 hours of recruit-level officer academy instruction. Major training areas include law offenses and procedures, vehicle operations, firearms, investigation, first aid/CPR, patrol procedures and mechanics of arrest, restraint and control.

The academy is located on the campus of Eastern Kentucky University.

**Graduates of Class 363 and their agencies are:**  
**Kenneth T. Armstrong**, Shepherdsville Police Department  
**Todd A. Bennett**, Hopkinsville Police Department  
**Mark C. Boaz**, Kentucky State Police – Henderson Post 16  
**Charles N. Brown**, University of Kentucky Police Department  
**Kenna M. Burton**, Richmond Police Department  
**Chris Cantor**, Winchester Police Department  
**Christopher R. Castle**, Raceland Police Department  
**Adam C. Childress**, Somerset Police Department  
**Todd Chitwood**, Eastern Kentucky University Public Safety  
**Joshua J. Cole**, Johnson County Sheriff's Office  
**David K. Gibson**, Albany Police Department  
**Gabriel R. Gillingham**, Hopkinsville Police Department  
**Jason A. Hale**, Hopkinsville Police Department  
**James P. Jenkins**, Muhlenberg County Sheriff's Office  
**Ben A. Jones**, Scott County Sheriff's Office  
**Chad A. Ledington**, Shepherdsville Police Department  
**Jerry P. Meadows**, McCreary County Sheriff's Office  
**Timothy B. Merrick**, Princeton Police Department  
**Steven Z. Molen**, Pulaski County Sheriff's Office  
**Daryl M. Nease**, West Buechel Police Department  
**James K. Oakley**, Henderson Police Department  
**Kelly W. Rouse**, Richmond Police Department  
**Billy E. Snipes**, Park Hills Police Department  
**Brandon N. Stice**, Murray Police Department  
**Dave C. Willis**, Scott County Sheriff's Office  
**Jarrett M. Woodruff**, Paducah Police Department



DOCJT Class 363

Story Submitted by Justice and Public Safety Cabinet

## Kentucky Education Agencies To Receive \$750,000 in Grants

Kentucky Education Cabinet Secretary Virginia G. Fox, along with representatives of the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), announced that Kentucky will receive a \$750,000 one-year grant to improve high school graduation and college readiness rates.

The funding is the second phase of the National Governors Association (NGA) Center's Honor States Grant Program. This phase of the funding totaled \$5.2 million, and is designed to help states implement targeted high school reform initiatives.

Twenty-nine states submitted detailed proposals. Of that total, 17 states were awarded 27 grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$500,000 each. Kentucky's three grants included \$500,000 for expanding advanced placement course participation, \$100,000 to increase virtual learning, and \$150,000 to develop a statewide longitudinal K-16 data system. Only Nevada, receiving \$850,000, exceeded Kentucky.

Two Kentucky school districts, Fayette County and Pike County, will partner with the Department of Education in these grants. The two will receive funding and other resources to help improve graduation rates and successful transitions to college and work.

"This is a good day for Kentucky and a great day for Kentucky's high school students," said Secretary Fox. "Our collaborative structure in the Education Cabinet is not only working, it's winning national attention again. I am simply delighted by the effort put forth by KDE and CPE in this joint effort. It goes without saying that I believe the judges made a wise decision. We are grateful to NGA for their support and confidence in Kentucky."

"The NGA grants continue our momentum toward the goal of increasing high school student participation in Advanced Placement courses, and the Kentucky Board of Education's interest in increasing academic skills through online virtual learning situations," said Kentucky Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit. "Reliable research demonstrates that these two activities can significantly increase our ability to better prepare high school students for postsecondary study. Without rapid and substantial redesign, America's high schools will be relegated to preparing our students for careers that no longer exist."

"Literally thousands of Kentucky students, both young and adult, will be positively affected by the development of a cutting-edge data system that tracks a student's academic progress from kindergarten through college," said President Thomas D. Layzell, CPE.

"Our goal is to develop a more seamless transition between high

school and postsecondary, so that Kentucky citizens might have educational attainment comparable to the national average."

Phase Two of the NGA's Honor Grant States Program was made possible through the support of seven national foundations.

"BellSouth understands that we must invest in education today to make sure our students are prepared for the careers of tomorrow, said Eddy Roberts, President of BellSouth's Kentucky operations. "The BellSouth Foundation looks for partnerships with organizations that focus on sustainable education reform, and we are very pleased to be part of Kentucky's nationally recognized initiatives. Virtual learning can better prepare students for college and the workplace by expanding their access to a broader curriculum and quality online instruction."

The BellSouth Foundation promotes educational improvement and reform in the Southeast region served by BellSouth. A key focus is the integration of technology in education. The Foundation believes that technology helps students enhance their skills to succeed in an increasingly competitive marketplace and makes learning relevant to the world beyond the classroom.

A committee independent of NGA selected the 17 grantee states, that will develop and implement state strategies to help more young people graduate from high school prepared for college and work success. In addition to Kentucky, the committee awarded grants to: Alabama, Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Maine, Mississippi, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

The Kentucky Education Cabinet coordinates learning programs from P-16, and manages and supports training and employment functions in the Department for Workforce Investment. For more information about our programs, visit [www.educationcabinet.ky.gov](http://www.educationcabinet.ky.gov) or [www.workforce.ky.gov](http://www.workforce.ky.gov), or call 502-564-6606.

*Story Submitted by Education Cabinet*

*"Our collaborative structure in the Education Cabinet is not only working, it's winning national attention again"*



**Kentucky Employee  
Suggestion System**

**EARN UP TO  
\$2,500**

**FOR YOUR IDEAS**

**Check Out the New**

**Employee Suggestion System**

**Electronically Submit Your Suggestions**

**Personnel Cabinet's Home Page**

## State Employees Awarded for Suggestions

Thirty-one state employees received awards at the 26<sup>th</sup> Employee Suggestion System Ceremony held at the Governor's mansion on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

Cash awards to employees amounted to \$17,668, while the first year savings for their suggestions is valued at \$447,778.

Cash awards and certificates are awarded for implementation of ideas resulting in improved safety, efficiency in operations, cost reduction and cost avoidance, improved public relations and increases in state revenues. The cabinets realizing the savings from the suggestion pay the cash awards, which may range from a minimum of \$100 to ten percent of the first-year savings, up to \$2,500. Awards of \$100 may be given for ideas that are adopted but have intangible savings.

The Kentucky Employee Suggestion System has been reaping substantial savings from the case incentive program since its implementation in 1981.

The employees recognized for their suggestions include Glenn Cranmer, John Moreland, Stuart Reed (Education Cabinet); Donna Cassity, Donna Lancaster, Shawna McMichael, Nancy Miller, Brenda G. Perkins, Harry Ryan, Jr. (Environmental & Public Protection); Dru Hawkins (Finance); Jennifer Waddell, Melissa Wibben (Department for Veterans' Affairs); James Hord, Keith T. Jackson, Judy Montfort, Donna Puckett, Rebecca Rich, Wesley Swarner, Gene Swift, Tina Tower (Health & Family Services); Larry Todd Clark, Melissa Deluca, Randal Howard, Terry Runner, Vivian Stewart (Justice & Public Safety); Valerie McGraph, Debbie Mitchell, Michael Rice (Personnel); Jeff Kaiser, Roy Rice and Ron Willhoit (Transportation).

*Story Submitted by the Personnel Cabinet*

(Issues, Continued from pg. 1)

tinues to work with the General Assembly to modernize and enhance the Medicaid program.

Regarding education, legislators may consider whether to make changes to the assessment and accountability system for elementary and secondary students. The contract for the development and implementation of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) expires after the spring 2006 administration. CATS is a standards-based account of student achievement. Performance funding for postsecondary education institutions will also be discussed.

Other issues affecting the overall economy, education and well being of the Commonwealth will be tackled in the 2006 session. For information about the 2006 legislative schedule and upcoming agenda, log onto [http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/sch\\_vist/schedul2.htm](http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/sch_vist/schedul2.htm)

*Story Submitted by the Personnel Cabinet*

## State Parks Will Now Serve "Bluegrass Blend"

The Louisville-based John Conti Coffee Company can now be found in all Kentucky State Parks.

It will be a new blend of the upscale gourmet coffee. The blend sold in the State Parks will be called Bluegrass Blend. It will be packaged specially for the Parks Department. The "Kentucky Proud" and

"Unbridled Spirit" logos will be on the package.

"I appreciate the efforts the Kentucky Parks Department has made to add Kentucky Proud products to its parks and the cafes it operates," Agriculture Commissioner Ritchie Farmer said. "Bob Perry and the rest of the Parks Department staff are to be commended for going all-out to work with Kentucky companies and Kentucky producers."

The deal with John Conti follows the September announcement that the state changed its regulations so that the Parks Department can buy Kentucky meat and dairy products. In 2004, the state set up a program for Kentucky fruit and vegetable growers to sell their products at the state parks and state-run cafes.

*Story Submitted by Department of Agriculture*

(Escape, Continued from pg. 3)

service as an added component of its existing VINE contract.

"The Kentucky Department of Corrections has been on the cutting edge of notification technology for more than 10 years," said Davis. "We are thrilled to, once again, work with the department to ensure residents living near state prisons have as much information as possible during an escape."

Kentucky became the first state in the nation to implement VINE in 1996. The victim notification service is now available in more than 1,500 communities in 40 states.

*Story Submitted by Department of Corrections*

## Submit Your Stories

We'd like to hear from you... stories of inspiration... stories of accomplishment. Share these touching stories with us!

You can e-mail these stories to us at  
LoriR.Aragon@ky.gov or  
AmberL.Owens@ky.gov.

## KDA CHECKS PRICE SCANNERS TO PROTECT CONSUMERS FROM OVERCHARGES

Merchandise flew across price scanners in stores all over Kentucky over the last few weeks shopped for Christmas presents for their loved ones. Amid the stress of the season and the dizzying pace of purchasing, Kentucky Department of Agriculture



inspectors worked to make sure every Kentuckian paid only the price that's on the tag.

“The Department checks

price scanners for accuracy as one of its duties as a consumer protection and service agency,” Agriculture Commissioner Richie Farmer said. “Kentucky consumers should never pay more than the price that’s marked. Our inspectors are there to see to it that doesn’t happen.”

KDA inspectors check retail establishments at random and choose items to scan according to a random sampling plan. The UPC codes on the selected items are scanned to make sure the price on the cash register matches the price that’s marked on the item. Discrepancies between the marked price and the price on the register – even if the register price is less than the marked price – are placed in an inspection report.

A business fails the inspection when two or more UPC codes do not match the prices marked on the items. The Department usually issues a warning and revisits the establishment within 30 days. The KDA can fine a business that fails an inspection and even can order it to use a manual pricing system until the prices in its computer system are corrected.

About 30 KDA inspectors check price scanners all over the Commonwealth. They are cross-trained to perform other duties, such as gasoline pump inspections, motor fuel quality checks, and egg inspections. The Department has lost about 12 inspectors through attrition over the past five years.

At one point, KDA inspectors had conducted 36,092 scanner checks (including follow-up rechecks) in 2005, of which 541 failed.

Consumers who suspect a store’s price scanners may be overcharging customers may contact the Department at (502) 573-0282 and ask for a Weights and Measures Program administrator.

*Story Submitted by Department of Agriculture*

### Child support collections increased by 849 percent since 2003

Governor Ernie Fletcher announced that the Kentucky Department of Revenue collected more than \$2.3 million in past due child support on behalf of single parents and their children during FY 2005, an increase of 849 percent over child support collections just two years ago.

The Department of Revenue estimates that total child support arrearages in FY 2005 totaled \$1.4 billion. Thirty percent of parents who owe child support don’t pay anything at all.

“As a father, I find the number of child support delinquencies we have in Kentucky astounding and profoundly unacceptable,” Governor Fletcher said. “During my first two years in office, I have been committed to doing something to correct this terrible wrong.”

Under the direction of Finance and Administration Cabinet Secretary Robbie Rudolph, Revenue collections officers are working with the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) to aggressively collect past due child support on behalf of Kentucky’s single parents and their dependent children. To date, nearly 14,000 child support cases have been referred to the Department of Revenue by CHFS, resulting in more \$4.8 million in support that has been recovered on behalf of these families.

“This money not only provides the financial support these custodial parents and their children deserve, but it also helps them regain their independence and self-esteem and reduce their reliance on temporary government assistance,” Rudolph said. “We have not yet calculated the long-term savings this increase will provide to the taxpayers, but the human savings are priceless.”

Under the Fletcher Administration, the Department of Revenue has steadily increased child support collections. In FY 2003, the department recovered \$244,356.92 in past due child support. In FY 2004, \$366,805.52 in delinquent payments were collected. During FY 2005, the first full fiscal year of the Fletcher Administration, collections increased to \$2,317,957.14. Since July 1, 2005 another \$1,905,448.111 has been collected on behalf of Kentucky families.

(Child Support, Continued on pg. 8)

## From Your Secretary

By: Erwin Roberts  
Personnel Cabinet Secretary



Preserving Kentuckians health and wellness is at the forefront of Governor Fletcher's goals. As part of the new self-insurance plan, effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, state employees will have access to the "Get Healthy Program" established by Humana, Kentucky's managed health care facilitator.

Starting in January, Humana is offering the following services to Commonwealth employees:

- Health Risk Assessment (HRA) customized for the Commonwealth: this will afford the opportunity for early identification of candidates for clinical programs
- Risk Awareness Counseling: One time consultation with a health coach where participants discuss HRA results and behavior change opportunity
- Wellness Communications: Quarterly online newsletters
- Wellness hot line (call-in telephone service): Answers general health and wellness questions, connect with a health coach, assistance with HRA questions

Later in 2006, the "Get Healthy Program" will offer other wellness initiatives aimed at improving our health and reducing health care costs such as a smart-snacking program and a program called "Get Walking".

### TRANSPORTATION CABINET IS INCREASING ITS USE OF BIODIESEL FUEL

The Transportation Cabinet recently announced that it used 49,668 gallons of biodiesel in October, more than double the amount of the previous month.

The Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Mobile Science Activity Center uses biodiesel where it is available in its travels to schools across the Commonwealth. The Mobile Science Activity Center is a 42-foot-long trailer with 10 workstations to provide opportunities for students to conduct investigations about agriculture and the environment.

Biodiesel is made from soybeans and recycled vegetable oil. It is blended with petroleum diesel. No alterations are necessary for a diesel engine to use biodiesel fuel. Biodiesel is available at more than 80 locations in Kentucky, according to the Kentucky Clean Fuels Coalition.

Commissioner Farmer supports increasing the use of biofuels, including biodiesel and ethanol, in Kentucky as a way to help family farmers, protect the environment and reduce the nation's dependence on foreign sources of energy.

For more information on biodiesel, go to [www.kentuckycleanfuels.org](http://www.kentuckycleanfuels.org).

*Story Submitted by Department of Agriculture*

All of us could eat a little healthier, especially after the holidays. There's no doubt that smart food and beverage choices lead to health rewards. The "Healthy Eating at Work" program" will encourage employees to make good food choices and offer additional nutritional information. For example, signs and labels will be hung to call attention to healthy choices.

The "Get Walking" program is designed to help employees improve their health and feel better - one step at a time. This personal walking program encourages employees to get moving and gradually step up their activity level. The program includes step pedometers, program workbooks and step diaries for setting goals and tracking progress. E-mail communications will offer motivational messages and weekly walking tips.

Don't let poor health keep you down. With the right tips, food and moderate exercise, we'll all be on the right path to good health.

Sincerely,

Erwin Roberts  
Personnel Cabinet Secretary

## KENTUCKY EMPLOYEE MEDIATION PROGRAM

Five new mediators were trained the end of November for KEMP, Kentucky Employee Mediation Program. This program is an alternative way to resolve workplace conflicts and does not replace the grievance process or the Personnel Board appeal.

Mediation is a process where a neutral person meets with those in dispute and assists them in reaching their own mutually acceptable solution. This is a free, confidential service to state employees. Either an employee or a supervisor can request mediation. It is usually scheduled within a week or two and takes approximately three hours to complete.

There are 17 part time mediators from different agencies in the KEMP mediator pool. No one mediates in their own cabinet, so they can remain as neutral as possible. In order to be considered for the mediator pool, the employee must have the approval and recommendation of his or her supervisor and agency. The basic mediation training takes an entire week, followed by an extra day of training in issues such as performance evaluations, harassment and discrimination, progressive discipline, regulations and statutes, ethics, ADA and FMLA.



*KEMP mediators*

Participants in mediation say that it improves working relationships, helps them see the other's point of view, and increases productivity. An agreement is reached in 80% of mediations.

To request mediation or get more information about how it works, visit the website at <http://personnel.ky.gov/kemp> or call 502/564-3433 or 866/725-5463. Ask for Linda Patrick or Tina Goodmann.

*Story Submitted by KEMP Director Linda Patrick*

**(Berry Hill, Continued from pg. 1)**

grill, a massive cathedral organ dominates the north wall of the music room. Two European wood carvers spent two years carving ornamentation for the room. Large bay windows, stained glass and a library balcony once used to seat string ensembles further attest to the room's prominence. Completed in 1912, the music room still remains the mansion's architectural focal point.



*Berry Hill Mansion*

The Commonwealth of Kentucky acquired the property in 1957 and it became known as the Berry Hill Estate. It once housed the State Department for Libraries and Archives and has been used for state offices. Now Berry Mansion serves as a premier conferencing and special event facility.

The first floor of Berry Mansion is available for self-guided tours during regular business hours. The facility is also available to rent for meetings and special events such as weddings, receptions and fundraising parties. Contact the Division of Historic Properties at (502) 564-3000 for scheduling information or e-mail Paula Weglarz at [Paula.Weglarz@ky.gov](mailto:Paula.Weglarz@ky.gov).

*Story Submitted by the Finance and Administration Cabinet*

**(Child Support, Continued from pg. 6)**

"We are now collecting almost more per month that had previously been collected per year," Rudolph added.

The Kentucky Department of Revenue estimates that nearly 9,000 cases with an arrearage of \$55 million have not yet been assigned to collections officers. In 2004, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimated that nationally 17 million American children are victims of a non-custodial parent's failure to pay child support.

*Story Submitted by the Finance and Administration Cabinet*

### Top Job Markets in the United States

This list was compiled with data from the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics by the American City Business Journal.

1. Las Vegas, NV
2. Phoenix, AZ
3. Washington, DC
4. Sarasota, FL
5. Orlando, FL
6. New York, NY
7. Boise, ID
8. Seattle, WA
9. Tampa – St. Petersburg, FL
10. Miami, FL

The city of Louisville made the list coming in at 72.

## More tools to help you keep your New Year's Resolutions

Each year many people use January 1 as their start date for making positive changes in their lives. They often make resolutions to loose weight, resolutions to limit alcohol, resolutions to save money, and resolutions to quit smoking.

If your New Year's resolution is to remove tobacco from your life you have one more tool at your disposal to help you reach that goal. Kentuckians can now take advantage of a tobacco cessation quit line: 1-800-QUIT NOW (1-800-784-8669).



1-800-QUIT NOW is a statewide telephone service that provides brief intervention and support for people who want to stop smoking or using other tobacco products. Calls are answered by highly trained cessation specialists Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM. Callers to the quit line after regular hours can leave a message and a cessation specialist will return their call the next business day.

The quit line offers a one-on-one proactive counseling program for tobacco users who are ready to quit. After the initial call, smokers may receive up to five scheduled call backs from their counselor. For smokers considering quitting, the quit line staff will provide information about tobacco use and treatment options. Counselors will provide state and local resources to callers as another option for tobacco cessation. Parental consent is required for callers under 18.

Quit Lines are one aspect of a comprehensive tobacco cessation network of services. Scientific reviews have established that proactive telephone counseling through quit lines is an effective cessation method. Additionally the cessation specialists staffing the quit lines are Master's-level counselors who have undergone extensive classroom and practical experience.

1-800-QUIT NOW is available in English and Spanish. TDD is available for the deaf and hard of hearing. Counseling and materials are provided at no charge to callers.

In addition to being a resource for smokers, family and friends of smokers may also call the quit line and receive information to encourage a tobacco user to quit, how best to support a tobacco user's quit attempt, the dangers of secondhand smoke, and other tobacco cessation information.

1-800-QUIT NOW is funded through a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to the Kentucky Department for Public Health. For additional information about the quit line, contact RaeAnne Davis with the Kentucky Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program at 502-564-7996, ext. 3858 or [RaeAnne.Davis@ky.gov](mailto:RaeAnne.Davis@ky.gov).

Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States. Nearly 4,000 Kentuckians die prematurely each year of tobacco use. Smoking is a major risk factor for the four leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, stroke and chronic pulmonary disease.

Kentucky's local health departments also offer tobacco cessation support in communities across the state. Visit <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/ach/tobacco.htm> for information on other tobacco cessation options.

*Story Submitted by the Cabinet for Health and Family Service, Public Health Department*

## Merit Task Force Recommendations Submitted to Governor Fletcher

Recommendations by the Blue Ribbon Task Force on the Merit System were submitted to Governor Fletcher in December. Fifteen of the 27 merit recommendations would require statutory change. Personnel Cabinet Secretary Erwin Roberts, who led the task force, wanted to share its history with state employees so that they might have a greater understanding of the Governor's goal.

### Merit Task Force History

On July 11, 2005, Governor Ernie Fletcher established the Blue Ribbon Task Force for the Merit System to evaluate the current merit system laws, policies, and practices. Governor Fletcher charged the Task Force to:

- Review the merit law, as it stands, to understand its complexity and breadth.

- Examine how the merit system has been implemented in the past and the present.
- Review and address the 1993 Task Force report findings and recommendations.
- Make recommendations to him regarding any changes that are needed in the merit system law and implementation.

In addition, Governor Fletcher encouraged the Task Force to develop a law and process that:

- Gives the appropriate protection to our state workers from capricious and arbitrary hiring practices.
- Ensures that a democratically elected governor can advance his or her vision that the people of Kentucky endorsed through the

(Recommendations, Continued on pg. 10)

(**Recommendations**, Continued from pg. 9)

- election process.
- Provides clear safe harbors and clearly defined procedures that ensure compliance meets the goals of protecting employees and protects those implementing the system from arbitrary civil and criminal actions.
- Is efficient, practical and reflective of modern practices to ensure that state government will be run efficiently and effectively.
- Fosters the recruitment, retention and development of a competent and motivated work force.

### 1993 Merit Task Force

In 1993, Governor Brereton Jones established a Task Force to study the current merit system. The findings were striking. They determined that:

- Programs were not reflective of modern practices;
- There existed confusion of and compensation inequities in multiple systems;
- Statutes and regulations were also confusing and rigid;
- The law was obsolete and ineffective with inconsistent interpretation and enforcement;
- Rules and regulations were elaborate, confusing, outdated, inappropriate impeding the ability of government to recruit, develop, engage and retain a competent and motivated work force; and
- Agency specific personnel systems have resulted in a fragmented state personnel system that is cumbersome, inefficient and inequitable.

Twelve years passed, and nothing of substance was done with these poignant Recommendations.

The Task Force began its work by reviewing the 1993 Brereton Jones Study and the 1996 Hay Group Study. The 1996 Hay Study evaluated the pay system, provided salary market comparisons, and reviewed all the merit system job classifications to determine if there were possibilities for consolidation or elimination of some of the job classifications.

“The Blue Ribbon Task Force for the Merit System worked very hard to gain a working understanding of the merit system in order to evaluate the current law, policies, and practices,” said Secretary Roberts, who chaired the Task Force. In addition to presentations on basic merit system principles, the Task Force received presentations from experts on best practices in human resources and merit system reform.

Once the Task Force had a high level of knowledge regarding the Commonwealth’s Merit System, it focused its attention on understanding employee interests and concerns. The Task Force gave strong consideration to the information that state employees provided. Based upon the work and efforts of the Task Force, in-

formed final recommendations were made. Secretary Roberts said, “The members of the Task Force worked cooperatively in a non-partisan manner to make recommendations that are employee friendly and in the best interest of the public.”

Under an aggressive timeline, the final recommendations of the Task Force represent the strongest recommendations possible. Merit System reform is a long term process and the final recommendations are just the beginning of the process. The final recommendations are not the answer to all issues and concerns related to the Commonwealth’s Merit System. Accordingly, the Task Force encourages further and sustained review and improvement of the Merit System to ensure that the Merit System exceeds the highest standards for state employees and the citizens of the Commonwealth.

*Story Submitted by the Personnel Cabinet*

### Office of Drug Control Policy Takes Part in Midwestern Governor’s Association Regional Methamphetamine Summit

Kentucky’s Office of Drug Control Policy recently attended the Midwestern Governors Association Regional Methamphetamine Summit in Indianapolis, Indiana. This summit was hosted by Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels and was the first in a series of regional meth summits to be held in coordination with the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy.

This summit was designed to allow Midwestern governors and key state decision makers to come together to discuss their experiences and approaches to combating meth. Participants also had the opportunity to hear from national and regional experts and tour the Clean Lifestyle (CLIFF) Therapeutic Community Correctional Facility which is a 240-bed meth treatment center in Bunker Hill, Indiana.

*“The use of methamphetamine is one problem we must keep pressure on constantly and not surrender to.”*

“Methamphetamine use and production was on the rise in Kentucky until the passage of Senate Bill 63 which limits the amount of precursor that can be purchased. We have developed a multifaceted approach to dealing with this in Kentucky by increasing law enforcement, treatment beds and education/prevention efforts. But the use of methamphetamine is one problem we must keep pressure on constantly and not surrender to,” said Teresa Barton, Executive Director of the Office of Drug Control Policy.

Statewide, meth labs are at their lowest in Kentucky since 2001. Thus far Kentucky has recognized an approximate 75% drop in meth labs since SB 63 went into effect on June 20, 2005. Kentucky has a particular interest in bordering states that limit or schedule pseudo-ephedrine, especially Illinois and Ohio.

(Meth, Continued on pg. 11)

## Avoiding Predatory Lending and Loan Scams

More than 30 different organizations ranging from the Office of the State Treasurer and the Kentucky Real Estate Commission to the Louisville Urban League and the Kentucky League of Cities, are working together to help tackle issues related to predatory lending in Kentucky.

They're all a part of the *Don't Borrow Trouble*<sup>SM</sup> Kentucky Committee, which kicked off its educational initiative during the Kentucky Affordable Housing Conference in October 2005.



In today's thriving real estate market, more and more homeowners are being bombarded by aggressive marketing campaigns for various refinance and home equity loan products. These products may not be a consumer's best alternative and, over the long run, may jeopardize one's home, as well as one's financial stability and security. Educating the public about protecting their financial health and recognizing predatory lending tactics is the challenge presented to Kentucky and consumer protection advocates around the country. It's a challenge that Kentucky has decided to take on in a number of ways.

The *Don't Borrow Trouble* Kentucky Committee is developing a marketing/advertising strategy, coordinating and promoting financial counseling and classes, as well as special outreach activities. The main message: let the public know that a reliable source of information is available to answer their questions about safe borrowing.

A state-wide toll-free number is available for people who need information or help related to a bad loan they may have signed. **The toll-free number is: (866) 830-7868.**

Ben Cook, chief executive officer at Kentucky Housing Corporation (KHC), said, "Don't Borrow Trouble is helping borrowers across the state and the country to more effectively manage their money and make sound financial decisions."

"*Don't Borrow Trouble* is a two-pronged program," said Mae Crawford, assistant director of Homeownership Education and Counseling with Kentucky Housing, "It combines an extensive public education campaign with comprehensive counseling services. Our goal is to help homeowners and/or potential homeowners avoid scams and resolve any financial difficulties in an informed and confident manner."

*Don't Borrow Trouble* Kentucky is focusing its initial efforts on eleven cities: Covington/Newport, Lexington, Hopkinsville, Elizabethtown/Radcliff, Louisville, Ashland, Hazard, Bowling Green, Morehead, Mayfield and Frankfort.

For more information, contact Charla Jackson Peter, (502) 564-7630 or (800) 633-8896, extension 454, or email [cpeter@kyhousing.org](mailto:cpeter@kyhousing.org).

(Meth, Continued from pg. 10)

Meth use and production is a significant and complex problem in the Midwest. According to a 2004 Drug Enforcement Agency Study, over 50% of all meth lab incidents in the United States occurred in the Midwest alone.

Story submitted by: Office for Drug Control  
Policy

## Tips for Avoiding Borrowing Pitfalls

Here are some tips on how you can say NO to "easy money". Borrowers should be aware if someone claims "credit problems won't affect the interest rate." Avoid solicitations for loans that sound too good to be true. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If a solicitation is really interesting get it in writing! Here are some more tips to keep in mind:

1. Shop around.
2. Understand the loan terms
3. Find out about prepayment penalties
4. Make sure documents are correct and complete
5. Ask about additional fees
6. Understand the total package
7. Work with credit counselors
8. Protect home equity
9. If you are not sure, don't sign!

Source: Freddie Mac

Story and Tips submitted by Kentucky Housing Corporation

## ANXIETY MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Most people experience feelings of anxiety before an important event such as a big exam or when starting a new job. Anxiety Disorders, however, are emotional disorders that can fill a person's life with overwhelming fears that are chronic, unremitting and can grow progressively worse without treatment. People with anxiety disorders are more likely to suffer from depression, and they may abuse alcohol and other drugs in an effort to gain relief from their symptoms.

Types of anxiety disorders are panic, phobias, obsessive-compulsive, post-traumatic stress and generalized anxiety. Each of the anxiety disorders has its own unique characteristics and symptoms which fall into three typical clusters: 1) the physical arousal that constitutes terror or panic 2) the feelings of being stressed out and pit-of-the-stomach doom and 3) the mental anguish of rumination or thinking distressing thoughts. Since each group has its own unique characteristics, there are specific techniques that work best with each of them. You can learn to control your anxiety by learning some techniques for managing the symptoms. It's like riding a bicycle, once you learn to do it, you have that knowledge for the rest of your life. The techniques are not difficult to learn, but they do require patience and determination.

The first cluster, which is physical arousal, can best be managed by the following techniques:

**MANAGE YOUR BODY** – Eat right, avoid alcohol, nicotine, sugar and caffeine. Get enough sleep and exercise daily.

**BREATHE** – Do conscious deep breathing for about 1 minute at a time, 10-15 times per day.

**MINDFUL AWARENESS** – Close your eyes and breathe, noticing your body, how the intake of air feels, how the heart beats, the sensations you have in your gut, etc. And then, with your eyes still closed, focus your awareness on everything you can hear or smell or feel through your skin.

The second cluster, which includes tension, stress and feelings of dread, can best be managed by the following techniques:

**STOP WORRYING** – Worry is a habit you can make a conscious decision to control by using rational self-talk and practicing a relaxation exercise.

**KNOWING, BUT NOT SHOWING, ANGER** – Write down what you are angry about and note the connection between your anger and your anxious feelings. The very feeling of anger can produce anxiety.

**LIGHTEN UP** – Laughter is a great “medication” for tension and anxiety.

The third cluster, which is the mental anguish of rumination, can best be managed by the following techniques:

**COOL YOUR BRAIN** – Close your eyes and focus on an image of an open box and put your issues/worries in the box and put a lid on it. Or make a list of your issues/worries and put the list in a drawer to give your mind a chance to rest and calm down.

**INTERRUPT YOUR RUMINATION** – Use “thought stopping” and be persistent every time you catch yourself ruminating.

**PLAN INSTEAD OF WORRY** – Identify the problem, list the options for solving it, choose one of the options and write down a plan of action.

Many people with anxiety disorders don't seek help and may not even realize that there are effective treatments to relieve the symptoms. To take an anxiety screening please go to the KEAP website <http://personnel.ky.gov/stemp/keap/online.htm> and type the password Kentucky.

*Story submitted by: Kentucky Employee Assistance Program*

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