



## HIGHLIGHTS

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## Director's Report

by **Connie Beck**

► I'm very excited to introduce the future Humboldt Navigation Center. In the beginning of April, DHHS consultant Hannah Ozanian and I presented the concept to the Board of Supervisors.



Located at the corner of Third and Commercial streets near St. Vincent Free Meal and close to other services, the future Navigation Center will serve our neighbors who are experiencing homelessness by developing a centrally located facility. It will be a place where people can connect with services, have a cup of coffee, take a

shower, get assistance with laundry and have a safe place to be during the day. The facility will include storage lockers for people's possessions and kennels where they can safely keep their pets while they are inside. There will also be a bike kitchen and other transportation help in the form of bus passes.

The Humboldt Navigation Center will include service providers from agencies, community groups and other organizations throughout the county who work with people experiencing homelessness. Services will include assessments, access to social workers, mental health clinicians and substance use disorder counseling, access to hygiene ser-

VICES, a community classroom and a computer lab. There will also be non-congregate shelter upstairs where people can live temporarily while they work with a case manager to assist them in transitioning to permanent housing.

Additionally, 24-hour security will be provided, staff will be trained in de-escalation techniques, and the Eureka Police Department's Community Safety Engagement Team will play an active role in outreach and community engagement.

The concept is similar to Sacramento-based Loaves and Fishes which started as a soup kitchen in



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Architect's rendering of the Humboldt Navigation Center.



## Decreasing the Digital Divide for our Elders

by **Keri Schrock**, LCSW, Program Manager II, Adult Services

► An exciting grant was recently awarded to Adult Protective Services and In-Home Supportive Services through the California Department of Aging to connect older adults and adults with disabilities to technology to help reduce isolation, increase connections and enhance self-confidence.

This grant was borne out of the pandemic, which accelerated the delivery of critical services online, including telehealth, grocery deliv-

ery and opportunities for online engagement. These options, obviously, are only available to those who already had online access before the world abruptly changed. The pandemic left elderly people who lived alone even more isolated than before. While enhanced online services benefited many, older adults lagged behind the rest of the population in having the means and ability to access the internet. While many older adults are technologically adept, as a group they are not as savvy as younger populations. Older adults in California have limited internet access in their own homes, and in rural areas such as Humboldt County, accessing the internet can be especially challenging.

## 'You love my Mama?'

by **Nate Ask, Camellia Wire and Trevlene Blood**, CWS

► Child Welfare Services (CWS) staff would like to take a moment to tell a true story that perfectly embodies and highlights an initiative that is shifting the work we do: the Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI).

A bright-eyed and lively 5-year-old boy was placed in a foster home. One of the initial visits with his mama occurred at a youth baseball game. During the visit, the foster mom could not help but notice the unique quirky endearing quality the mama possessed as she engaged with her son and the people around her. As

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## Digital Divide, continued from page 1

In August 2020, Gov. Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order (EO) N-73-20 to improve broadband speed and access in California, including improving download speeds for all Californians and to bridge the digital divide for 2 million Californians who lack broadband access. The EO specifies older adults as a priority population who are likely experiencing reduced interactions with other people and their communities. The EO is also in alignment with goal three of the Gov. Newsom's Master Plan on Aging that prioritizes addressing the digital divide that directly impacts older adults.

In 2021, the governor signed California Assembly Bill 135 into law, which required the California Department of Aging to create the Access to Technology (ATT) Program. This pilot program is designed to meet the needs of older adults, and adults with disabilities, by helping to reduce barriers when accessing technology for daily living

and subsequently reducing isolation, increasing connections and enhancing self-confidence. In October 2022, DHHS's Adult Services program was awarded \$308,728.00 in ATT funds, which must be spent by the end of December 2023.

High-quality social connections are essential to our mental and physical health and our well-being. Social isolation and loneliness are important, yet neglected, social determinants of the health of older people. Among older adults, social isolation and loneliness has been linked to higher risks for multiple physical and mental conditions: high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, a weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline, Alzheimer's disease and even death. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, loneliness and social isolation are "serious public health risks" and "nearly 1 in 4 adults aged 65 and over are considered socially isolated." People who

find themselves unexpectedly alone due to the death of a spouse or partner, separation from friends or family, retirement, loss of mobility and lack of transportation, are at particular risk.

To reduce the digital divide, Adult Services staff have been meeting with community partners including Senior Resource Centers, Family Resource Centers, Tri-County Independent Living and the Area 1 Agency on Aging for input on how to optimally use these funds to meet the needs of older adults and adults with disabilities. Plans include purchasing equipment, creating user-friendly spaces to access Wi-Fi, providing hotspots, improving connectivity for individuals and facilities, increasing outreach and providing training. Adult Services is also in the process of procuring an all-wheel drive vehicle equipped with connectivity to reach older adults and adults with disabilities living in remote areas of Humboldt County. ◀



### Equity Update

by Neftali Miller-Rubio, Racial & Cultural Equity Manager

► Hello and welcome to the first "Equity Update" from the DHHS Racial & Cultural Equity team! This article is the first of what will be a regular addition to the DHHS newsletter. We'll share about the folks behind the work, current initiatives and, in future articles, include updates on training, events, hot topics in diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and news to stay tuned for. We also aim to be relevant and welcome suggested topics you would like to see here.

While doing equity work within program service delivery has been long occurring, this is a relatively new sphere of work at DHHS, expanding the focus internally on how we, as staff and leadership, show up at work, how we support each other and the policies and expectations we operate from... all aiming to dismantle structural racism and become



DHHS's Racial Equity Steering Committee, from left, Monique Upshaw-Smith, Oliver Gonzalez, Amy Cone, Jamie Elkins, Rachel Patterson, Kelsey Reedy, Lara Zintsmaster, Marian Strong, Alison Phongsavath, Neftali Miller-Rubio and Laurel Johnson.

an increasingly equitable, anti-racist organization where all people feel a sense of belonging when they come to work each day.

The Racial Equity team is made up of a few components—a program manager, staff services analyst and a steering committee. I returned to DHHS in 2022 as the department's first Racial & Cul-

tural Equity Manager. I facilitate steering committee meetings, partner with staff and leadership to advance goals related to equity and implementation of the Racial Equity Strategic Plan and collaborate with Human Resources on countywide initiatives. Lara Zintsmaster, Staff Services Analyst III, works department-wide on racial equity, workforce

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## Director, continued from page 1

the early '80s and has grown into a five-acre campus with 13 programs serving men, women and children who are experiencing homelessness in the downtown Sacramento area. Currently, Loaves and Fishes serves between 600 and 1,000 people a day by providing basic survival services and access to resources.

Hannah is the former director of Friendship Park, a day program of Loaves and Fishes for adults experiencing homelessness, and we are very lucky to have her working on this project with us.

The idea for this Navigation Center has been years in the making, and First District Supervisor Rex Bohn and former Fourth District Supervisor Virginia Bass both participated in discussions with us over the years while we learned more and developed this concept. The City of Eureka has also been involved since the beginning and Eureka City Manager Miles Slattery confirmed at the Board of Supervisors meeting that the project has been permitted for more than six months.

Once a lease is negotiated at 80 W. Third Street, we can break ground. I cannot wait to celebrate that moment with all of you. ◀

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## 'Mama,' continued from page 1

the visit was ending and the foster mom was walking back to their vehicle, she casually in a natural manner said, "I just love your mama" to the foster child. In her mind she was referencing and noting the quirky and unique way the boy's mama seem to engage with the world. Immediately after the foster mom said this the child stopped, looked up and responded with his eyes lit up, "You love my mama?" The foster mom responded, "Of course I do; she seems so fun."

After this moment the foster mom observed a notable calmness and a sense of ease with the foster child

she had recently been entrusted to care for. This kind of connection can make a huge difference in a foster child's life. It can help them feel more secure, normal and loved during probably the most traumatic time in their lives, and that is truly what QPI is about.

At the center of the QPI movement is relationship and connection which is counterintuitive to the professional and medicalized perspective that historically has shaped our institutions. The movement strives to shape CWS practices to be more human-centric and relationship-based by understanding that harm and trauma cut deep at the relationship level. The movement encourages foster parents and professionals to be inquisitive and eager for knowledge about the child's life and family they are nested in.

Of course, we couldn't even write this article without the dedication and commitment of our amazing caregivers, CWS professionals and community supports that come to the table each month to support the QPI movement in Humboldt County. We are constantly amazed by the love and care that our caregivers provide to the children in their homes, and we are grateful for everything that they do to support reunification and maintain connections with biological families. It really does make a difference.

Humboldt County is a QPI site that is making every effort to update our culture and practices to have more "you love my mama" moments. We can't wait to tell you more about what is happening. As we like to say, "Come for the Quality Parenting, stay for the revolution." If you are interested in learning more about the Quality Parenting Initiative, or if you are interested in becoming a caregiver (foster parent) yourself, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at 707-499-3410 or via email at [dhhsfoster@co.humboldt.ca.us](mailto:dhhsfoster@co.humboldt.ca.us). Together we can. ◀

## Equity, continued from page 2

development, performance management and data and strategic planning.

The Racial Equity Steering Committee (pictured) is a diverse group of staff from across DHHS. They are a mix of races, gender identities, roles, tenure and divisions. They have been meeting since 2020, spearheading much of the equity efforts happening today.

The committee meets twice monthly to advance goals found in the Racial Equity Strategic Plan, share from our spheres of work, and develop our own understanding of race, racism, culture and equity through "Learning Together" activities. Our most recent Learning Together focused on the history of Black American Sign Language (BASL) and how, through segregation, it developed as a separate dialect from American Sign Language (ASL). BASL is being revitalized, in part, through the work of Nakia Smith, a fourth generation deaf black woman and influencer, who shares BASL and highlights her grandfather's experiences growing up as a black deaf person in the American South. Just after this activity, we learned the 2023 Super Bowl pre-game show featured a mix of ASL and Plains Indian Sign Language (PISL) during the singing of "America the Beautiful."

PISL was once so prevalent that it was used by both deaf and hearing people to communicate between tribes that didn't share the same spoken language. This activity emphasized how language and culture are inter-connected and how loss of either can negatively impact individuals and society.

Exciting news from our corner of DHHS is that we have two new staff trainings in the works, created in partnership with Stepping Stone Consulting. The first, on implicit bias, is expected early this summer, and this fall we'll launch a foundational training covering a broader view of racial equity. Stay tuned!

If you have questions, comments or are DHHS staff in need of resources, contact the Racial Equity Manager and Steering Committee at [DHHSRacialEquity@co.humboldt.ca.us](mailto:DHHSRacialEquity@co.humboldt.ca.us). ◀

# Social Services Report

by **Ryan Bishop**, Deputy Branch Director

► The Social Services Branch (SSB) is currently focused on supporting the community as the Consolidated Appropriation Act of 2023 ends CalFresh Emergency Allotments and the continuous Medi-Cal coverage requirement in our community.



CalFresh Emergency Allotments have been provided to all eligible CalFresh households on a monthly basis since March 2020. These CalFresh Emergency Allotments ended February 2023 and the last emergency allotment was issued in March 2023. This means households are no longer receiving extra CalFresh beginning April 2023. All households will continue to get their regular CalFresh benefit amount, which is the amount deposited onto their EBT cards within the first 10 days of the month, as long as they remain eligible for the program. CalFresh

benefit amount is based on household size, income and other circumstances. The continuous Medi-Cal coverage requirement has ensured uninterrupted Medi-Cal to all eligible Medi-Cal households since March 2020. The Continuous Medi-Cal coverage mandate ended March 31, 2023. This means that Medi-Cal households are once again required to complete an annual Medi-Cal eligibility review and may be subject to termination or reduction in benefits based on program eligibility rules. It is anticipated that many Medi-Cal households will go through an automatic renewal process, but many will still be required to complete a renewal packet at some point between April 2023 and June 2024. SSB wants to encourage Medi-Cal recipients to ensure we have accurate contact information on file, including address and phone number, so we can ensure these annual reviews are conducted timely so ongoing eligibility to Medi-Cal can be redetermined without a break in aid. Recipients can update their contact information by logging in to BenefitsCal.com,

stopping by one of our many offices, or by calling our Call Center at 1-877-410-8809.

In order to best support the community during this transition, SSB will be increasing staffing at the Call Center and in early April we reopened the Call Center on Wednesdays. Although we are taking these measures to improve access to services, we are still anticipating long wait times at our local Call Center due to an anticipated increase in call volume, and the need to continuously onboard and train new Eligibility staff to fill our many vacancies. Once again, utilizing BenefitsCal.com to apply, manage or renew benefits online is an effective alternative option to calling the Call Center. SSB is also equipping our staff with updated community resources and providing staff with refresher trainings to keep them up-to-date on program changes and other health coverage programs to ensure our staff have the tools needed to assist the community in addressing their unmet needs during this difficult transition. ◀

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## Employment Training - What is CalCRG and what are we up to?

by **Melissa Furbee**, Employment Training Program Manager



► The California Community Reinvestment Grants Program (CalCRG)

was included in the Adult Use of Marijuana Act (Proposition 64), which was approved by California voters in 2016. The passage enabled granting opportunities to support job placement, mental health treatment, substance use disorder treatment, system navigation services, legal services to address barriers to reentry, and linkages to

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## Longtime office assistant retires



From left, Office Services Supervisor Andrew Felden, Program Manager II Eric Kanaga, Director Connie Beck, Office Assistant II Julie Fillman, Fifth District Supervisor Steve Madrone and Social Services Deputy Director Ryan Bishop celebrate Julie's retirement after more than 22 years with DHHS.



Humboldt County  
Department of  
Health & Human  
Services

## Help Wanted

► DHHS is currently recruiting qualified applicants for a variety of positions. For a list of job opportunities, visit [humboldt.gov.org/jobs](http://humboldt.gov.org/jobs) and click Job Opportunities, or contact Employee Services at 707-441-5510. ◀



## Employment, continued from page 4

medical care for communities disproportionately affected by past federal and state drug policies, also known as the War on Drugs.

DHHS's Employment Training Division was awarded a 3-year, \$450,000 CalCRG grant in the summer of 2022, to assist individuals who have been negatively impacted by the consequences of the War on Drugs. Employment Training's particular focus is to provide subsidized employment opportunities like Work Experiences, where employers can benefit from temporary labor while wages are 100% subsidized, in this case by CalCRG, as well as On-the-Job training opportunities, when employers permanently hire participants with the incentive of having half of their wages paid for during a participant's training period.

Employment Training also provides

job-readiness supports and workforce preparation skills, an example being our Helping Humboldt (HH) program.

Through HH, participants learn tangible skills from basic woodworking and groundskeeping, to soft skills like working as a team and time management. CalCRG participants work with our HH program to assess and establish workplace readiness and, when met, work toward developing subsidized employment opportunities with our vocational counselors which provides an additional level of employment support.

The eventual goal of the Employment Training Division's CalCRG program is employment, and through this program we begin to acknowledge that those affected by decades of federal and state policies which have had a targeted effort of imposing harsh pen-

alties for non-violent drug offenders have not had a level playing field. This has specifically prevented communities of color and socio-economically disadvantaged populations from advancing themselves in the workforce, accessing necessary resources for whole-person health, and creating undue burdens, limiting success opportunities. Employment Training's priority CalCRG population are individuals with substance use, involvement in the criminal justice system, or who are severely economically disadvantaged.

If you know someone who could benefit from employment assistance and has possible barriers that have prevented them from being successful, have them come to the Employment Resource Center, located at 537 W. Washington St. in Eureka. If you'd like more information about this great program, call us at 707-441-4600. ◀



### Public Health Director's Report by Sofia Pereira

▶ In February, DHHS's Public Health Branch published the [2022-2027 Community Health Improvement Plan \(CHIP\)](#). While the creation of a collaborative CHIP was launched and guided by Public Health, this document is a product of the collaborative efforts of Live Well Humboldt. Live Well Humboldt is a communitywide initiative guided by the partnership, expertise and passion of individuals and organizations from multiple sectors across our county working to increase equitable opportunities for health and well-being in our community.

This plan was informed by the most recent [Community Health Assessment \(CHA\)](#) and builds on the partnerships and progress made since the 2014 CHIP. The priorities were selected based on CHA data, several community engagement activities and input from the diverse organizations involved in Live Well Humboldt and the

CHIP. It is important to recognize that the work of partners across many sectors is necessary to make an impact on the complex issues shaping health and well-being in our community.

The priority areas for the 2022-2027 CHIP are:

- Behavioral Health (suicide and substance use)
- Housing Instability and Homelessness
- Healthy Beginnings and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

The choice of these priority areas is affirmed by the multiple organizations and collaborations already working to improve outcomes in these areas. We hope that the CHIP process will help coordinate the activities happening in each priority area and identify shared measurable health outcomes that community partners will use to track progress toward equity and improved health for all in Humboldt County. The CHIP also highlights the connections between these priority areas and reinforces working across sectors to address upstream inequities that impact multiple downstream health outcomes.

As a community, we recognize that

the conditions in which people are born, live, learn, work, play and age directly impact their health and well-being, and that no single organization or sector can improve the health of the community alone. This CHIP provides the framework for continued community action through partnerships to improve the health of all Humboldt County residents, particularly those most impacted by inequities.

The work we accomplished together in the last two years, despite the pandemic, gives us a strong starting place for the 2022-2027 CHIP and speaks to the commitment and resilience that exists throughout Humboldt County. Despite the barriers of working across virtual platforms, over 28 organizations participated in Live Well Humboldt meetings to brainstorm data, goals and strategies to make an impact on the three priority areas. This is remarkable, especially considering that the COVID-19 pandemic response has been ongoing for many community partners.

The pandemic also underscores Public Health's commitment to health and racial equity. We push to address, alongside our community partners, discriminatory policies and practices

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that result in significant and unfair health outcomes for some communities. We are committed to this effort, improving the way we provide backbone support, ensure transparency and share power.

We are deeply appreciative of the efforts of the Live Well Humboldt partners and many other community members who have supported the CHIP work so far. It is an honor to partner with so many passionate and

creative organizations and individuals. We look forward to the continued collaboration ahead. Thank you for your commitment to our community's health — these partnerships make change possible. ◀

## Behavioral Health Director's Report

by Emi Botzler-Rodgers, LMFT

► I am often in awe of the compassion, kindness and true commitment Behavioral Health staff have toward the clients we serve. There is so much suffering in this world and it can be challenging and painful to engage with individuals who are struggling on a daily basis. That is the job that Behavioral Health staff have signed on for and most do this work with a deep understanding of how heartbreaking it can be for individuals struggling with mental illness or substance use disorders. There is often underlying trauma, or behaviors and experiences that cause substantial pain, and care providers engage around this pain in efforts to help support healing and recovery.



What is sometimes forgotten or overlooked is that those individuals who tirelessly engage to help others heal, also are human and have their own challenges, pain and trauma. Care providers are not exempt from mental illness, substance use challenges or suffering, yet they do this work with others. Behavioral Health has made substantial efforts over the past years around changing the branch culture, addressing equity and practicing through a trauma informed lens. These efforts are meant to support clients and staff, and to strengthen the ways we engage one another and the community. Even with these efforts it is still hard work.

Self-care is a term often used related to the work of Behavioral Health. I would expand that to emphasize the importance of both self-care and self-compassion. And I would add that having care, compassion and under-

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## Humboldt County Youth spend day at the Capitol



Humboldt County youth representative Shontay Crane met with Sen. Mike McGuire at the end of February for the annual California Youth Connection (CYC) Day at the Capitol. CYC youth advocated for Senate Bill 1675 to expand access to enrichment activities for current and former foster youth. Pictured from left, CYC Community Advocacy Coordinator Keishanne Whitworth, Shontay, Sen. McGuire and former CYC member and long-time volunteer CYC adult supporter Rebbekka Williamson.

## National Public Health Week celebrated



The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors declared April 3-9, 2023, National Public Health Week. Pictured from left, DHHS Public Health staff including Senior Program Manager Briana Sherlock, Director Sofia Pereira, Health Officer Dr. Candy Stockton, Fifth District County Supervisor Steve Madrone, Administrative Analyst Jan Bramlett, Laboratory Director Pepper Stockton and Director of the Division of Environmental Health Mario Kalson.

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standing for others is likewise critical. These are all human qualities that we each have the opportunity to extend to ourselves and to others. Each of us in our lives has had opportunity to care for others and each of us has at one time or another needed care. Today I am reflecting on the importance of caring for the care providers, whether that is us or someone else. I have gratitude for all who do this work, all who care for others and for the strength and vulnerability it takes to recognize one's own challenges, pain and trauma, while extending compassion and the opportunity for healing and recovery to others. ◀

## DHHS Speaks in Support of AB 1057



AB 1057 Weber  
CALIFORNIA HOME VISITING PROGRAM  
California State Assembly

Public Health Director Sofia Pereira addresses the state Assembly Health Committee on behalf of DHHS and the Board of Supervisors in support of Assembly Bill 1057, the California Home Visiting Program. If signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom, the bill will expand evidence-based nurse home visiting programs starting next year.

# Take Action for Mental Health WALK

## Tuesday, May 16, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

We're meeting at the Hope Center garden, then walking down H Street to the Eureka Courthouse for a rally. Afterward, come join us back at the center for snacks and water.

Take action for your mental health!

Come walk and show your support.

Don't forget to wear your **lime green**.

Join us for **SIGN MAKING:**

- Wednesday, May 3 at the Hope Center, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Friday, May 5 at 433 M St. (TAY), 10 a.m. to noon

The Hope Center is located at 2933 H St. in Eureka. For more information, call 707-441-3783.



## Elder Abuse Reporting Hotline available 24/7

► Following the Humboldt County Grand Jury's recommendations to its report, "Silver Tsunami Warning: Safeguarding Our Seniors," DHHS launched a marketing campaign to educate community residents about the signs of elder abuse and how to report it.

If you suspect that you or someone you know is the victim of elder abuse, call Humboldt County Adult Protective Services 24/7 reporting hotline at 707-476-2100. ◀

**At least 1 in 10 Americans aged 60 and older have experienced some form of elder abuse.**

**Elder abuse comes in different forms:**

- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Abandonment
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Financial abuse
- Self-neglect.



**If you are worried that you or someone you know is experiencing elder abuse,**

**call the Humboldt County Adult Protective Services 24/7 reporting hotline at 707-476-2100.**

