

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

# Outlook

4TH QUARTER FY12

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# Governor Appoints Bennett, Perdue and Phillips to ADMH's Advisory Board of Trustees

Also Reappoints Wade Perry Jr.

David Bennett, Probate Judge Jim Perdue and Circuit Judge Laura Brown Phillips were recently appointed, effectively immediately, to the Alabama Department of Mental Health's Advisory Board of Trustees by Governor Robert Bentley. Wade Perry Jr., a current member of the board initially appointed in 2008, was also reappointed by Bentley.

Bennett represents the Seventh Congressional District and will serve until his term expires April 2015. He retired from ADMH as associate commissioner for the Division of Administration in 2008 after more than 17 years with the department. Prior to that position, Bennett was facility director at Bryce Hospital and served in a number of other positions at Bryce throughout his career with ADMH. He is a graduate of Stillman College with a bachelor's of sociology. He also holds a master's from the University of West Alabama in guidance and counseling. Bennett is currently serving as pastor of the First Missionary Baptist Church in Moundville and president of the Congress of Christian Education for the New Antioch Bethlehem District of Tuscaloosa and north Hale County. He has been involved in community service in the west Alabama area for many years, having served on a number of volunteer boards.

Perdue is representing the Second Congressional District and serving a term that will expire April 2014. He has served as probate judge for Crenshaw County since 2002. Prior to that, Perdue worked as the president & CEO of the Perdue-Folmar Company, Inc., since 1980. He holds a bachelor's in accounting from Auburn University. Perdue has been a fixture in

his community's volunteer efforts, having served as past president of the Luverne Rotary Club, Crenshaw County Chamber of Commerce, Crenshaw County Industrial Development Board and board member on

Longtime ADMH Advisory Board of Trustees member and respected newspaper executive Paul Davis passed away at his home in Auburn in late September. Davis served as a reporter and associate editor of *The Tuscaloosa News*, where he uncovered problems at Bryce Hospital and W.D. Partlow Developmental Center in the late 1960s and early 70s. Eventually, his coverage garnered national attention and led to the *Wyatt v. Stickney* case, which set new national standards for the care of persons with mental illnesses and developmental disabilities, requiring the state to provide adequate care. He also served as editor of *The Selma Times-Journal*, general manager of *The Natchez Democrat* in Mississippi, and publisher and editor of *The Auburn Bulletin*, *The Tuskegee News* and *Tallasse Tribune*.

ADMH Commissioner Jim Reddoch said, "Paul was a giant in his chosen field of journalism. I can think of no one in Alabama who had a greater positive impact on the rights and treatment of persons with mental illnesses over the past 45 years. He was an active member of ADMH's Advisory Board of Trustees, always keeping mental health consumers as the absolute first priority. He will be missed tremendously."

a number of other civic organizations.

Perry represents the First Congressional District and will serve a term expiring April 2015. He began his career as a federal prosecutor in Montgomery, and has been with the Mobile law firm of Johnstone, Adams, Bailey, Gordon & Harris, L.L.C., since 1975. Perry's practice has been

involved in extensive employment law litigation as well as regularly advising clients in all areas of health and hospital law, related statutes and regulations. He received an undergraduate degree from

Davidson College and a law degree from Vanderbilt University. The Eufaula native is a member of the American Academy of Healthcare Attorneys.

Phillips fills the remainder of the term of Paul Davis, who recently passed. She represents the Third Congressional District until the term expires in April 2013. Phillips has served as district court judge in the 7th Judicial Circuit since 2004. Prior to that position, she worked in several positions in the 7th Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office, including supervisor of the Family Violence Trial Division, assistant district attorney, felony intake officer/victim's service officer and clerk. Phillips holds a bachelor's in political science from Jacksonville State University and a law degree from the Birmingham School of Law.

Phillips is a current member of the Alabama Bar Association and Calhoun County Bar Association. She has been a member of numerous professional and community organizations including the National District Attorney's Association, Alabama District Attorney's Association, Alabama Supreme Court's Standing Committee on Juvenile Rules and Procedure,

Calhoun County Family Services Board of Directors, and Calhoun and Cleburne County Child Trauma Team. Phillips was a founding member of the Calhoun and Cleburne County Child Death Review Team, the Calhoun County Task Force Against Domestic Violence and LINC.

# Four ADMH Employees Receive Awards

## Professional Achievements of Crump, Darling, Davis and Stone Lauded

ADMH is pleased to announce the recent presentations of professional achievement awards to four employees. Charlene Crump and Wendy Darling, both in the department's Office of Deaf Services, received awards during the 2012 joint Alabama Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and Council on Organizations Serving Deaf Alabamians Annual Conference in August. In addition, ADMH Historian Steve Davis and Medical Director Dr. Timothy Stone received awards from the Alabama chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness at their 26th Annual Meeting, also held in August.

Crump, statewide mental health interpreter coordinator, received ALRID's 2012 Mary Lou Bingham Award. The award, presented biennially as a lifetime achievement award, is given in honor of Alabama's first professional interpreter and champion for the professionalism of interpreting. It recognizes significant contributions and achievements toward improving the profession of interpreting in the state. The award joins a long list of Crump's accolades, including Alabama's Executive Branch Employee of the Year in 2010, ADMH's Central Office Employee of the Year in 2009, AAD Citizen of the Year in 2007, SERID Interpreter of the Year in 2004 and COSDA Interpreter of the Year in 2002. As Steve Hamerdinger, director of the Office of Deaf Services noted in nominating Crump for this most recent honor, "She will modestly brush off these acclamations, but together, they attest to the esteem those who work with her and who are exposed to her

commitment and passion hold her."

Darling, a regional interpreter in ODS, was awarded the Interpreter of the Year Award from COSDA. In presenting the award to Darling, Hamerdinger said it was going, "To someone who has few peers in the interpreting world with regard to her energy, compassion and dedication to working with some of the most challenging consumers we have." Darling is the only person in the department holding a national certification to work with people who are both deaf and blind. She is admired by her peers for her untiring devotion to ensure consumers are receiving needed services, her ability to analyze and respond effectively and efficiently to requests and problems, and her positive energy. Hamerdinger also stated, "She exemplifies the very best of what civil service should be." Darling's Interpreter of the Year Award joins another recent recognition as ADMH's FY 12, 2nd quarter Central Office Employee of the Quarter.

NAMI Alabama presented Davis with the 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award for a career of promoting and preserving the history of the treatment of persons with mental illnesses. During the presentation, Wanda Laird, executive director of NAMI Alabama, stated, "Steve Davis has been dedicated to preserving the history of both Bryce Hospital and the Alabama Department of Mental Health. The breadth and quality of his work to preserve documents and other physical objects only begins to speak to his commitment to

ultimately preserve, honor and respect the memory of all persons, both known and unknown, who have been patients at Bryce over the past 150 years." Davis has been with ADMH for 37 years, becoming department historian in July 2008. This award joins other recognition from the national NAMI organization in 2009 for the best use of media for reducing the stigma of mental illness.

Stone was the recipient of NAMI Alabama's Mental Health Professional of the Year Award. Stone joined the department in September 2011, bringing with him extensive experience in community-based services as well as inpatient services for individuals with mental illnesses, substance use disorders and developmental disabilities. Laird noted when presenting the award to Stone, "He has shown a dedication to expanding the use of evidence-based practices throughout the state's mental health system, and fulfilling the department's goal of integrating services for persons with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. His multi-disciplinary background is invaluable in better serving the overall behavioral healthcare needs of Alabama's citizens." In addition to serving on a number of boards, councils and workgroups, Stone has served as a fellow of the American Psychiatric Association since 2007 and has been recognized by Best Doctors in America since 2005.



# ADMH Closes Greil & Searcy Hospitals

## Part of Plan to Enhance Network of Community-Based Care

In keeping with previously announced plans, ADMH recently closed Greil Hospital in Montgomery and Searcy Hospital in Mt. Vernon. The closures were announced in April by Governor Robert Bentley as part of the department's systems transformation plan to enhance a network of community-based care. The plan and closures were based on the continuation of nationwide trends including advances in treatments that allow for comprehensive care in community settings, as well as the principle that treatment in a person's community is far less isolating and more conducive to recovery. Along with providing enhanced community life for consumers, the facility closures will free up funds to be transferred to community providers so they may expand services and resources.

Greil opened in 1974 and traditionally served Alabamians from 11 counties in the south central part of the state. In July, the department expanded on the Governor's

original closure announcement by reporting an anticipated closure date of August 31 for Greil. Per those plans, the department did officially close Greil on August 31. In September, Commissioner Reddoch held a meeting with Searcy employees to announce its official target closure date of October 31. Again, initial projections were met as the department officially closed Searcy on October 31. Searcy opened in 1902 and served Alabamians from 16 counties in the southern part of the state.

As with other hospital closures, each patient at Greil and Searcy was assessed for individual needs, and individual plans were developed for their continued treatment in the community. Likewise, the small number of patients determined to have needs that may not be best met in community-based care were transferred to other state hospitals to continue receiving services.

ADMH also continued its commitment to assist staff in finding alternative

employment. Voluntary transfers were offered to ADMH hospitals in the Tuscaloosa and Decatur areas, as well as other positions statewide through the community mental health and state personnel systems. In addition, a number of job fairs were held, and ADECA's Rapid Response Team visited the facilities to provide information about unemployment compensation, pension benefits, job training, employment services, health insurance, credit counseling and many other services. The department utilized a team to finalize administrative and logistical procedures at each of the facilities following their closure.



Overhead shot of construction on new psychiatric hospital.

Construction progress continues on the new psychiatric hospital, located in Tuscaloosa.

# Sheila Raye Charles Shares Message of Hope and Recovery

Visit to Capital City part of Alabama's celebration of National Recovery Month

Many people know the story of Ray Charles. The entertainer overcame blindness, redefined rock and soul music, and won multiple Grammys along the way. Many also know the story of his drug and alcohol abuse thanks to Jamie Foxx's Oscar-winning performance in the hit movie, *Ray*. What many may not know is that his daughter, Sheila Raye Charles, shares not only her father's name, but also his story of drugs, music and, ultimately, recovery. Sheila came to Montgomery recently to tell that story at Freewill Missionary Baptist Church as part of Alabama's celebration of National Recovery Month.

Sheila recalled for the audience her early years and said she did not grow up living with her famous father, but with her mother in Minnesota. She stated her mother battled alcoholism and was a socialite who took Sheila to the many parties she attended. Her mother was unaware that some of the men at these parties were sexually abusing Sheila. She remarked, "Having a father like Ray Charles was both a blessing and a curse. I found myself not knowing how to cope with those issues or cope with people always wanting to be around me because I was his daughter. Because of my childhood and the sexual abuse, I felt very unworthy. By the time I was 16, I had tried everything except heroin. I think I never tried it because my mom always talked about my dad and his heroin use." However, Sheila did go on to abuse other substances such as acid, marijuana, alcohol and crack cocaine.

She said drugs seemed to solve her problems, "By the time I was 18, I had my first experience with crack cocaine. As soon as I took a puff of that stuff, the sun was brighter, and the grass was greener. I felt beautiful. I'd never felt beautiful due to the sexual abuse. All the hurt literally

disappeared." Sheila later decided to follow in her father's footsteps and became a professional singer. Unfortunately, she did not have the same success as her father, and the pain of touring and politics of the music business took a toll on her. The easy access to drugs would also take a toll, resulting in a downward spiral that found Sheila living out on the street. She was only 21 years old and knew her life was a mess. After falling in love and becoming pregnant, Sheila thought she would

third sentence at a federal prison in Bryan, Texas, she decided it was time to start over. She said, "I reached the end. There was nothing left I could work with and no future I could see. I had been told I would never see my children again. I was being called a menace to society and a detriment to my children. All of these things hit me on the prison floor." After much prayer and committing her life to God, Sheila knew her life was going to change. She felt that since she was sober in prison, she could be sober in society as well. Sheila felt like she was

called into the ministry to share her message in order to help others. After she was released from prison the final time, she had one relapse, but has been sober since 2005.

During the course of her addiction and recovery, Sheila's mother died of cancer, and her father was dying of liver failure. Over the years, she had grown away from him because of their struggles with substance abuse. Although, Sheila did get to say goodbye to her father. In 2004, when she was told he would die any day, Sheila called him on the phone and said, "I love you." She recalled, "He said he loved me back. I asked for his forgiveness, and he gave it to me." To this day, Sheila still gets teary eyed thinking of her parents because she feels she never got to fully share her story of recovery with them. But, Sheila also says she knows they are looking down at her and are proud.

Ray Charles made the world a better place through his music. When he toured the country, people listened and liked what they heard. Like her father, Sheila now tours the country, and when she shares her unique story, it's hard for people not to like her inspiring message of hope and recovery.

have a family and get the happy ending she always wanted.

However, after having a daughter, she began using again. The more she tried to escape her pain, the more pain she felt. Sheila went on to have four more children by four separate fathers and used drugs during her pregnancies. She thought she hit rock bottom when her son was born prematurely weighing 14 ounces and with a hole in his heart, but things got worse when she found out he was also addicted to crack cocaine. Her only way of dealing with this was using more. Sheila continued to take drugs while in the hospital with her son. Eventually, she lost custody of her children and went to prison three separate times.

In 2003, when Sheila was serving her



Charles visited with Associate Commissioner for Division of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services Dr. Beverly Bell-Shambley while in town for her appearance at a recent Recovery Month event.

# Agencies partner to offer innovative Project SEARCH program

Seeks to secure competitive employment for students with developmental disabilities

When 11 high school seniors in the Montgomery area leave for school each morning, they are actually going to Baptist Medical Center South in Montgomery to participate in a unique school-to-work program called Project SEARCH. This innovative program focuses on serving young adults with a variety of developmental disabilities by helping them secure competitive employment. Project SEARCH's High School Transition Program is a one-year, business-led program that takes place entirely at the workplace. Developed in 1996 at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Project SEARCH has since grown to over 200 sites across the U.S., Canada, England, Scotland and Australia.

In Alabama, Project SEARCH began just this past August. It is a collaboration between the Alabama Department of Mental Health, Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities, Alabama Department of Education, and Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services and its Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's community offices. Byron White, consumer employment specialist at ADMH, serves as the statewide Project SEARCH coordinator, overseeing progress at its two sites: Baptist Montgomery and Shelby Baptist Medical Center in Alabaster. White says first impressions of Project SEARCH are very favorable, "It gives students training in an exciting environment with more creative ways to learn

that the schools cannot offer." He adds that the goal is to expand Project SEARCH to two or three more sites next year and keep building the program throughout the state.

Through Project SEARCH, students learn relevant, marketable and transferable skills while immersed in an actual business. The program provides real-life work experience combined with training in employability and independent living skills to help ensure successful transitions from school to productive adult life. The Project SEARCH model involves an extensive period of training and career exploration, innovative adaptations, long-term job coaching, and continuous feedback from teachers, job coaches and employers. As a result, at the completion of the training program, students are employed in nontraditional, complex and rewarding jobs.

Typically, Project SEARCH serves students on an Individual Education Program and in their last year of high school eligibility. Students attend the program for a full school year (August – May) at the host business, which provides access to an on-site classroom for the students. Once the school year begins, the first few weeks of the program are focused on new employee orientation, hands-on skill assessment, and familiarization with a business environment. Students develop a career plan which guides the internship selection process and individualized job search. Sites are staffed by a special education teacher and one to three job coaches to meet the students' educational and training needs.

Valerie Johnson is the on-site coordinator of Project SEARCH at



Baptist Montgomery, and is also in charge of planning and teaching the program's Employment Skills curriculum. Johnson was formerly a special education teacher at Sidney Lanier High School before joining Project SEARCH. She states, "I saw so many students there who were not passing school and who were not going on to fulfill their potential. I knew there was a need for some kind of transitional program and told my principal that if he heard of any opportunities, I wanted to be involved. Once we learned about Project SEARCH, I knew it was my opportunity to truly make a difference."

Throughout the school year, students will spend approximately one hour of their day with Johnson working on employability and functional skills. Classroom activities are designed around the following focus areas: team building, getting around the workplace, workplace safety, technology, social skills, communication, presentation skills, interviewing skills, money management, health and wellness, job search skills and keeping a job. Johnson says, "The most rewarding thing about my work is teaching them new skills, knowing they are digesting and learning those skills, and seeing the skills applied outside of the classroom in their internships."

Those internships make up approximately



five hours of the student's school day. The students at Baptist Montgomery are currently working in the first of three targeted internships they will complete by the end of the school year. These internships will enable them to acquire skills to use in applying for related positions. Students are also building communication, teamwork and problem-solving skills important to their overall development as a young worker. The student internships were identified earlier this year through a collaborative process involving the teacher, job coach and business liaison.

Enter Scott Watson, job coach at Baptist Montgomery. As a job coach, Watson serves as a link between Baptist, the students' schools, their parents and staff at community vocational rehabilitation offices. He provides detailed job training to the students, which started with him working with Baptist to identify potential internship sites and duties, job accommodations and standard work procedures. Watson next learned and carried out the duties himself, and then taught the students how to fulfill those duties. The internship rotations began a few weeks after the start of the program. A department mentor is identified at each site, and interacts with the teacher, job coach and student as a consistent source of guidance and feedback. Working from a task list, students acquire core skills, and once those are mastered, additional skills are layered on to improve their marketability.

Currently at Baptist Montgomery, three students work in the Cafeteria, two in Central Sterilization, two in Volunteer Services, one in Human Relations, one in the Sleep Apnea Clinic, one in ER and one in Respiratory Stock. In Volunteer Services, Andrew announces that his favorite part of his job is visiting with all the volunteers as he delivers coffee to them each day. Tameka

prefers to stay behind the scenes filing paperwork and coordinating files for each of the volunteers. Their mentor Renea says, "These internships are really useful because you can see where their strengths lie, so you get a sense of what kind of jobs they'd enjoy most and where they will have the most impact. It has been a pleasure working with Tameka and Andrew. They are great students and are always smiling."

Over in Central Sterilization, Elizabeth and Maxie keep busy cleaning, packing pills and sterilizing equipment. Their mentor, Gloria, remarks about the excellent job they do and how conscientious they are. She also notes that Maxie has impressed everyone in her department with her memorization skills. Gloria laughs, "She had all the codes for the doors around this whole place memorized in one day!" In the Cafeteria, Tamarieo and Dominic help keep the food prep area clean, while Vinetta is swiftly becoming known for her infectious smile as she opens the door for diners and welcomes them in.

Marteena also enjoys the social aspect of her job in Human Relations. She declares her favorite part of the job as, "Sitting out front so I can see everyone and everything that is going on." She is also in charge of filing, making labels and answering the phone. Her mentor, Penny, says, "I enjoy my daily interaction with Marteena, seeing her develop social skills and maturity, and helping with that process." Overall, Watson says these internships are, "Key to the success of the program, and it's so rewarding to be a part of it all." He adds that the response from the leadership at Baptist has been overwhelmingly positive, "They are excited to be a part of this program and see the students grow."

During the last few months of the school year, Johnson and Watson's emphasis will be on refining skills, achieving goals and working with vocational rehab to carry out individualized job placement. Upon satisfactory completion of the program (95% or better attendance, good attitude, successful skill acquisition at each



Project SEARCH teacher Valerie Johnson and job coach Scott Watson oversee the program at Baptist in Montgomery.

job site) the students will receive a Career Portfolio that generally contains a resume, letters of recommendation, competency profile, and any awards or special recognition received while in the program. The team will take each student's skills and experience, and work to place them in full employment either at Baptist or in the community. ADMH's goal is to then place as many students as possible on the waiver for long-term support and follow-up.

According to White, currently Project SEARCH has sites in more than 40 states with a success rate of around 70 percent in terms of finding employment for students exiting school. Around 30 percent of students go on to be hired at their host site. To ensure that level of success continues, Project SEARCH requires sites to adhere to a fidelity model that encompasses best practices and core model components.

Project SEARCH considers the sole definition of a successful outcome as competitive employment in an integrated setting for each intern, with year-round work of 20 or more hours per week, making minimum wage or higher. In addition, the presence of a Project SEARCH site can bring about changes in business cultures that have positive effects on attitudes about hiring people with disabilities and the range of jobs in which they can be successful. Johnson agrees, "I enjoy seeing how everyone involved, especially the employers, get attached to the students so quickly. They can no longer see their disabilities, but just the abilities they had all along." The 11 students at Baptist Montgomery have made quite an impression with their abilities, as three students have already been offered jobs there when they finish school.



Job Coach Scott Watson poses with students working in the Cafeteria: (left to right) Vinetta, Tamarieo and Dominic.

# Update on the Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council

Council busy implementing structural changes and new initiatives

**A** 2012 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that one in every 88 children in the United States has an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis. The Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council has been continuing its efforts to meet the urgent need for a statewide comprehensive system of care for individuals with ASD and their families here in Alabama. According to Anna McConnell, state autism coordinator who oversees the AIACC, the council is working on recruiting new membership, and several committees and workgroups have been formed, restructured or have initiatives coming down the pike.

Created by legislation in 2009, the council is a collaborative effort of professionals, parents, elected officials and persons diagnosed with ASD. It is currently seeking to fill a newly created seat on the council. McConnell says, "Because of recent insurance reform efforts that have taken place across the state and the nation, the

AIACC feels an individual from a private insurance carrier would be an invaluable addition to the membership's knowledge base." Interested individuals should submit an application directly to McConnell by November 30.

The AIACC consists of five committees split into various workgroups. ADMH Commissioner Jim Reddoch, as head of AIACC's lead agency, chairs the Executive Committee, which recently had its first meeting. McConnell states the committee, "Aids in policy decision making and will meet annually to provide the council with assistance in this arena." The committee is also comprised of a representative from the Department of Education, Department of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Public Health, and Medicaid as well as two representatives from AIACC, one parent and one adult with ASD.

Dr. Fred Biasini, director of the Alabama University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities and associate

director of Civitan/Sparks Clinics, recently became the new committee chair of the Standards of Practice Committee. Split into six workgroups charged with developing recommendations for practice standards based on current evidence-based and best practices, the committee's work is central to AIACC's ultimate goal of a better system of care. It will ultimately present providers with standards they should be meeting and families with standards they should be receiving from providers.

The Diagnostic Clinics workgroup will soon become the first workgroup to submit its recommendations for a review process that seeks input from any interested parties. McConnell says, "I am excited to share the recommendations put forth by Dr. Hanes Swingle and the Diagnostic Clinics workgroup. They have devoted a considerable amount of time and effort into their development. Their review process

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# ADMH Employees Participating in State Combined Campaign

Charitable Fund raising Effort of State Employees Seeks to Raise \$825,000

**A** DMH is pleased to continue its support of the State Combined Campaign. The SCC is a once-a-year, on-the-job charitable solicitation of state employees enacted by the Alabama Legislature in 1991. It is unique because in addition to providing the opportunity for state employees to contribute through traditional means of cash and check donations, it is the only authorized payroll deduction charitable fund raising effort for state employees.

The SCC's goal is to raise \$825,000, and

the department's portion of that goal has been set at \$37,272. As of mid-October, ADMH employees had already donated more than \$15,000, up from last year's total of nearly \$13,000 at the same time. The Division of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services in Central Office has earned the distinction of being the first, and only to date, facility or division to surpass its monetary goal. Participation is also up, with more than 11 percent of employees participating, compared with less than eight percent at the same time last year.

Coordinators in each of the facilities and Central Office divisions are responsible for promoting the SCC and collecting donations until the end of the campaign on December 31. ADMH employees who donate can choose from thousands of charitable organizations throughout the state and help them continue to address issues such as substance use disorders, developmental disabilities, mental illnesses, literacy and teen pregnancy.

# Addiction Coalition crowned winner of first-ever Celebrate Recovery Challenge

More than 8,600 votes cast

ADMH once again led Alabama's annual celebration of National Recovery Month, which is observed each September. The department initiated a proclamation from Governor Bentley proclaiming September as Recovery Month in Alabama. In addition, raising awareness is a crucial component of Recovery Month, and organizations throughout Alabama traditionally host events to celebrate people in recovery, laud the contributions of treatment and service providers, and promote the message that recovery is possible. This year was no different as the department worked in partnership with many community providers and advocacy groups to coordinate rallies, runs, open houses and many other events that promoted the societal benefits of prevention, treatment, and recovery from mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

This year, the department was pleased to host a new component to Alabama's Recovery Month activities – the first-ever Celebrate Recovery Challenge. More than 8,600 votes were cast in the inaugural challenge, and The Addiction Coalition, an initiative of The Freedom Source, was recently announced as the winner! Its *Real People, Real Stories* online event was chosen by stakeholders and the general public as the event that best embodied the purpose of Recovery Month by increasing awareness and decreasing stigma.

*Real People, Real Stories* ran from September 1-September 30, with stories published on the Addiction Coalition's website at 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. each day. Stories were then shared via Facebook, Twitter and e-newsletters. A total of 60 individual written or video stories of recovery from

substance use disorders and/or mental illnesses featured people from all walks of life. Accompanying each person's story was a link to the provider that helped them in the event others reading or watching were moved to get help for themselves or others. In addition to the online campaign, The Addiction Coalition secured proclamations in their area, distributed a press release about Recovery Month, and shared information about Recovery Month at various meetings and other events throughout September.

Organizations that hosted Recovery Month events were encouraged to enter the Celebrate Recovery Challenge by submitting a narrative of no more than one page providing a description of the event and its results. They could also include up to three pictures in their submission. Submissions were accepted the week of October 1-5 to allow those hosting Recovery Month events late in the month the chance to host their event and get their submissions entered. Along with The Addiction Coalition, four other organizations entered submissions in the Celebrate Recovery Challenge: Aletheia House hosted a *Recovering Through Art & Poetry Expressions* event in Birmingham, Cahaba Mental Health Center & Cahaba CARES hosted their *3rd Annual Recovery Month Celebration* in Selma, The Drug Education Council, Faces & Voices of Recovery and NAMI-Mobile hosted a *6th Annual Recovery Month Celebration and Spirit of Recovery Awards Presentation* in Mobile, and SpectraCare Health Systems' traveling *Touchdown Recovery* display and informational

booth appeared in four different locations throughout southeast Alabama.

Voting took place October 9 through October 14 at ADMH's website. Announcements about voting were sent to a variety of mental health stakeholders and the general public via email and ADMH's website as well as its Facebook and Twitter pages. Organizations were encouraged to spread the word about voting to friends, family, churches, youth clubs, schools and other groups.

As the winner of the Celebrate Recovery Challenge, The Addiction Coalition was recognized in a press release distributed to media outlets throughout the state. They will also receive a page on the ADMH website for the next year under the Substance Abuse section highlighting their win and giving more detailed information about the organization. Finally, staff from The Addiction Coalition will soon receive a Certificate of Recognition from Governor Robert Bentley and have a commemorative picture taken with the Governor, ADMH Commissioner Jim Reddoch, and Associate Commissioner for the Division of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services Dr. Beverly Bell-Shambley. Bell-Shambley said, "We are proud to recognize The Addiction Coalition for winning the Celebrate Recovery Challenge. We also want to thank the other organizations who hosted events and entered, as well as everyone who voted, for making the contest a success."





ADMH encourages everyone to educate themselves and exercise their right to vote on Tuesday, November 6. The department’s Office of Advocacy & Rights Protection has been involved with numerous voting-related initiatives. Recently the office, along with NAMI Mobile and AltaPointe Health Systems, hosted a Voter Education & Registration Drive in Mobile. It has also developed voter guides for consumers and for families and staff that live/work with consumers. These guides can be found on the ADMH website at [www.mh.alabama.gov/COAS/](http://www.mh.alabama.gov/COAS/).

For information about how this year’s election will affect the future of mental health services, visit the National Alliance on Mental Illness’ website at [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org) and go to the “What’s at Stake in the 2012 Elections?” page.



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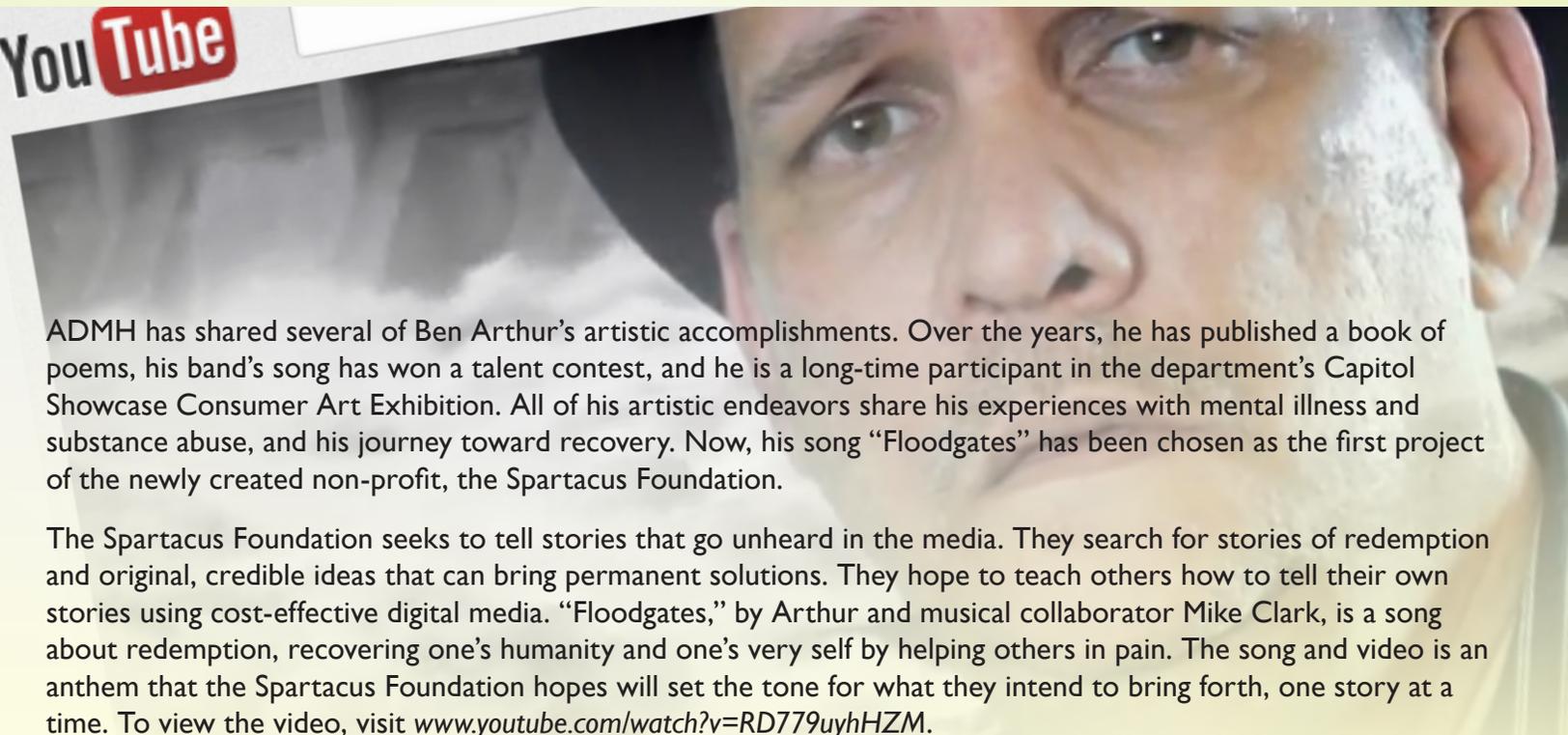
will serve as a pilot as we move forward with other workgroup recommendations in the new year.”

The Special Projects Committee has recently undergone a restructuring process that resulted in the formation of three workgroups. The Community Services & Supports workgroup recently held

its first meeting and hopes to develop respite opportunities, provide information on navigating the respite application process, compile a “how-to” portfolio for professionals and parents to share and access knowledge, and develop a community ASD awareness/education campaign for businesses. The workgroup

is looking for new members, and anyone interested in joining the workgroup can contact McConnell.

To stay abreast of all the latest news on AIACC’s work, visit their website at [www.autism.alabama.gov](http://www.autism.alabama.gov) or contact McConnell at [anna.mcconnell@mh.alabama.gov](mailto:anna.mcconnell@mh.alabama.gov).



ADMH has shared several of Ben Arthur’s artistic accomplishments. Over the years, he has published a book of poems, his band’s song has won a talent contest, and he is a long-time participant in the department’s Capitol Showcase Consumer Art Exhibition. All of his artistic endeavors share his experiences with mental illness and substance abuse, and his journey toward recovery. Now, his song “Floodgates” has been chosen as the first project of the newly created non-profit, the Spartacus Foundation.

The Spartacus Foundation seeks to tell stories that go unheard in the media. They search for stories of redemption and original, credible ideas that can bring permanent solutions. They hope to teach others how to tell their own stories using cost-effective digital media. “Floodgates,” by Arthur and musical collaborator Mike Clark, is a song about redemption, recovering one’s humanity and one’s very self by helping others in pain. The song and video is an anthem that the Spartacus Foundation hopes will set the tone for what they intend to bring forth, one story at a time. To view the video, visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=RD779uyhH2M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RD779uyhH2M).