

# DIRECTIONS

SPRING

2004

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A Publication of  
Philadelphia  
Health Management  
Corporation

## H.E.L.P. PHILADELPHIA HONORED FOR ITS VOLUNTEER WORK

On June 12, H.E.L.P. Philadelphia, a collaboration between PHMC, H.E.L.P. USA and Child Space West, celebrated the graduation of 22 women who found employment and permanent housing this year. H.E.L.P. Philadelphia has provided single parents and their children with temporary housing and services since 1999.

A large part of H.E.L.P. Philadelphia's success, according to Volunteer Coordinator Naomi Byrd, comes from hundreds of volunteers who have been an integral part of the program. Approximately 70 volunteers work at H.E.L.P. Philadelphia each month, running life skills workshops for mothers, providing arts & crafts events for children, planning holiday parties, sponsoring field trips, and making financial contributions.

This spring, H.E.L.P. Philadelphia received Philadelphia Cares' Project Partner Star Award, which honors a local organization for its use of volunteers to help the community.

"H.E.L.P. Philadelphia could not function without its volunteers," says Project Director Shirley Robinson. "We've been fortunate to work with so many committed organizations in the Philadelphia area."

Robinson mentioned that three organizations in particular—the Junior League of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Cares, and KPMG LLP—have played integral roles in helping clients break the cycle of homelessness.

In 1999, the Junior League started working with H.E.L.P. Philadelphia and PHMC substance abuse treatment program Interim House West as part of three-year "signature projects" that provided activities for children and life-skills workshops for mothers every week. Due to positive volunteer



H.E.L.P. Philadelphia graduate Bernice Cotton, recipient of H.E.L.P. USA's "Help Hero" award this May, addresses the crowd at H.E.L.P. Philadelphia's graduation ceremony.

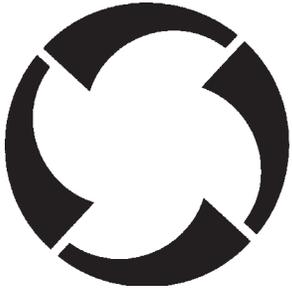
feedback, the Junior League extended both volunteer projects until May of this year.

"The kinds of experiences we've had with H.E.L.P. Philadelphia and Interim House West have been life changing," said Junior League president Georgiana Noll. "They strengthen the Junior League's resolve and commitment to make change in our community."

In 2002, Philadelphia Cares, a group that mobilizes volunteers to address critical social, educational, and environmental needs in greater Philadelphia, began working with the children of H.E.L.P. Philadelphia four times a month, providing child care so parents could attend life skills workshops. Last year, through the efforts of Philadelphia Cares, General Electric "adopted" H.E.L.P. Philadelphia for the holidays. GE employees held a party for clients and staff and donated money to buy gifts on residents' wish lists.

Philadelphia Cares brought KPMG LLP, an audit, tax and advisory firm, to H.E.L.P. Philadelphia in 2002,

*continued on page 3*



**PHMC and  
H.E.L.P. Philadelphia  
Would Like to Thank  
the Following Volunteers  
and Funders:**

- 25th Century Foundation
- Beth David Synagogue
- Bryn Athyn College
- Catholic Social Services
- Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds-Brown
- Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell
- Drexel University
- Family Support Services, Inc.
- General Electric Company
- Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition
- H.E.L.P. USA
- Homeless Advocacy Project
- Joseph J. Peters Institute
- Junior League of Philadelphia
- KPMG LLP
- Mayor's Office on Literacy Pathways
- Penn State University
- Penn Towne Links
- Philadelphia Frontiers
- Philadelphia Cares
- Philadelphia Housing Authority
- Philadelphia Office of Emergency Shelter/Services
- Rosemont College
- Salvation Army
- Senator Vincent Hughes
- Target Corp.
- Transition Strategies
- The Turnpike Commission
- University of Pennsylvania
- U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development
- Verizon
- Villanova University
- Women's Christian Alliance
- Women of Excellence, Inc.

## PHMC EXPLORES SOCIAL CAPITAL AND HEALTH

*A Message from Richard J. Cohen, Ph.D., FACHE*

Nearly four hundred years after poet John Donne penned the famous phrase, "No man is an island," health researchers are just beginning to quantify how social connectedness plays a role in a person's health.

In this issue of DIRECTIONS, we explore PHMC's role in creating and studying "social capital," a relatively new concept that deals with how people connect with one another. A growing number of health researchers theorize that social capital, a term that describes our connections to family, friends, neighbors and the democratic process, may indeed be an important contributor to a person's health, just as exercising or eating a well-balanced diet is.

Thanks to a grant from The Philadelphia Foundation, PHMC's Research and Evaluation component is one of only a handful of organizations across the country studying the link between social capital and health at a local level. This Spring, PHMC's social capital research was profiled in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and honored by the Public Health and Preventive Medicine Section of the Philadelphia College of Physicians (see page 3).

While PHMC researchers will continue to study social capital in the 2004 Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey, PHMC practitioners promote social capital in their programs every day. In this issue, we explore how H.E.L.P. Philadelphia fosters volunteerism in the city (cover story); how Philadelphia Allies Against Asthma, a program of the Health Promotion Council, brought together 60 volunteers to give Philadelphia school children with asthma a chance to celebrate World Asthma Day with the Philadelphia Eagles (page 3); and how Interim House residents became heavily involved in the democratic process while fighting for a law that would restore public benefits to people convicted of drug felonies (page 7).

This year, we look forward to increasing our social capital in the region through the following new PHMC programs and affiliations: PersonLink, a new PHMC program that provides supports coordination services to individuals with mental retardation (page 8); La Comunidad Hispana, a nonprofit health and social service agency in Chester County (page 6); and the Joseph J. Peters Institute, a nonprofit mental health agency that provides sexual abuse treatment (page 3).

We welcome these new programs and affiliates to PHMC, and look forward to working with them in the years ahead to improve the health of the community, one connection at a time.

*Richard J. Cohen, Ph.D., FACHE is President and CEO of the Philadelphia Health Management Corporation.*

### H.E.L.P. Philadelphia (continued from page 1)

and the company has "adopted" the program every year since then by having company volunteers sponsor holiday parties, provide hats and gloves when the weather turns cold, and chip in for school supplies and backpacks for the program's 50 children.

Volunteers stress that they get a lot out of their work with H.E.L.P. Philadelphia. "There are so many uplifting moments," said Renee Beebe Archawski, a volunteer with Philadelphia Cares. "I love playing with the kids. They just jump in your lap and start talking to you like you've known them forever."

KPMG volunteer Jean Bush agrees. "When you can give something back, it makes a difference in your life and I think many in the firm feel the same way."



**Mrs. Naomi Byrd, Volunteer Coordinator, accepts the Philadelphia Cares Project Star Award on behalf of H.E.L.P. Philadelphia.**

## PHMC RECOGNIZED FOR SOCIAL CAPITAL RESEARCH

PHMC's research into the social structures of neighborhoods and their relationship to healthy communities was recognized at the Philadelphia College of Physicians Public Health and Preventive Medicine Section's Annual Poster Session on May 4. *Social Capital and Health: Does a Relationship Really Exist?*, by Community Health Data Base staff in PHMC's Research and Evaluation component, received this year's "best professional poster" award.

"Social capital" is a term used by social scientists that attempts to measure the level of connection people feel to their neighborhood or community. Social capital researchers want to know how much people participate in neighborhood groups, if they trust their neighbors, feel they belong in their neighborhood, or think neighbors are willing to help each other. While preliminary research has found that communities with high social capital tend to be healthier, much more research is needed to explore the connection further.

Thanks to support from the Philadelphia Foundation, PHMC is one of only a handful of organizations across the country that has explored the link between social capital and health on a local level. In 2002, PHMC asked its Household Health Survey respondents questions that attempt to measure social capital. PHMC found that people in Southeastern Pennsylvania who reported high social capital were less likely to be under stress, experience poor health or be diagnosed with a mental health condition than people with low social capital.

PHMC will continue exploring the relationship between social capital and health in the 2004 Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey, to be fielded this summer. For more information on PHMC's social capital work, contact Francine Axler, Director of the Community Health Data Base Project, at 215.985.2521 or via email at [francine@phmc.org](mailto:francine@phmc.org). PHMC's Social Capital report is available through PHMC's web site at <http://www.phmc.org/pdf/APHAPresentation.pdf>.



Pictured above: the authors of *Social Capital and Health: Does a Relationship Really Exist?* From left to right, seated: Lynne Kotranski, Ph.D., Vice President of Research and Evaluation; and Francine Axler, M.P.H., Director of the Community Health Data Base Project. Standing: Ilisa Stalberg, M.S.S., Research Associate; Diana Levensgood, B.A., Research Assistant; and Siobhan Hawthorne, Marketing Associate. Not pictured are coauthors Gary Klein, Ph.D., Senior Systems Analyst, and Robin Wilcox, M.P.A.

### WELCOME!

On July 1, 2004 the Joseph J. Peters Institute (JJPI), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to reduce the causes and overall results of sexually abusive behaviors through research, training, prevention, and treatment, became a PHMC affiliate.

JJPI provides treatment for child and adolescent survivors of sexual abuse, adult survivors, sexually abusive youth, adult offenders, and impaired professionals.

JJPI also runs *Stop It Now! Philadelphia*, a social marketing campaign aimed at encouraging adults to learn about, confront, and stop child sexual abuse. Look for more news on JJPI in future issues of DIRECTIONS.

## PHILADELPHIA ALLIES AGAINST ASTHMA CELEBRATES WORLD ASTHMA DAY WITH PHILADELPHIA EAGLES



Rapper Sterlen Barr sings "I Can't Breathe."

On May 4, 60 volunteers from across the city came together as part of World Asthma Day, hosted by the Philadelphia Eagles and sponsored by the School District of Philadelphia, GlaxoSmithKline, and the Health Promotion Council's Philadelphia Allies Against Asthma coalition. At the Lincoln Financial Field event, two hundred school children from the School District of Philadelphia played games and attended sessions on how to manage their asthma.



"Swoop" the Eagles mascot entertains the crowd.



NEWS
FROM THE
COMMUNITY
HEALTH
DATA BASE

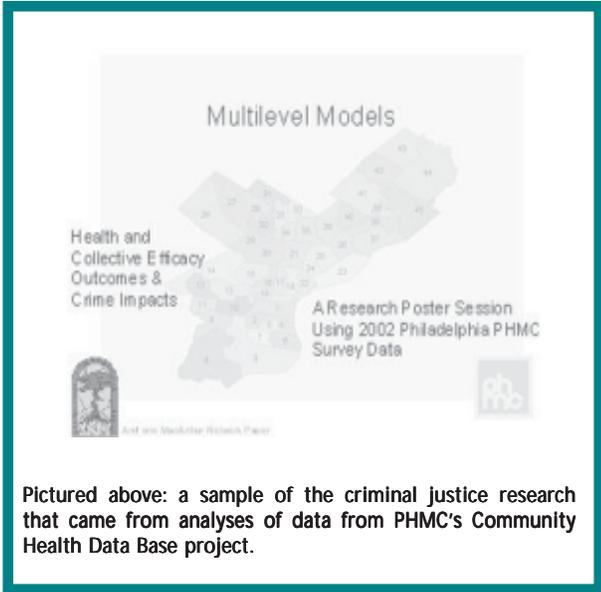
**WRITING A PROPOSAL OR EVALUATING A GRANT?**

If your agency is a community-based nonprofit, you may qualify for the Community Health Data Bases's Affiliate Program. Visit [www.phmc.org/chdb](http://www.phmc.org/chdb) for details and "Join Today!"

**MAKING THE CONNECTION: HEALTH AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

It didn't take faculty and students at Temple University long to find a myriad of new and interesting applications for PHMC's Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey. Graduate students in Professor Ralph B. Taylor's course, *Advanced Statistics for Criminal Justice*, can attest to that.

This spring, 14 out of 15 students in Taylor's class used the 2002 Household Health Survey to study neighborhood-level connections between health and crime. Among the health indicators examined, students looked at self-reported stress, number of days of poor mental health, and respondents' feelings of trust in their neighbors. Then students analyzed how these indicators related to police-based data on violent crime (murder, rape, robbery and violent assault), drug-related crime, and U.S. Census data.



**Pictured above: a sample of the criminal justice research that came from analyses of data from PHMC's Community Health Data Base project.**

"There really is a neighborhood effect and the PHMC data helped show it," Taylor noted. The Household Health Survey questions related to social capital are providing researchers with a source of information to study the connections between social stability, crime, and health, Taylor added.

At the end of the semester, students participated in a poster session to exhibit their "multilevel models," or maps illustrating the community-by-community variations in neighborhood status, crime rates, stability factors, and neighborhood trust. For a reading list and more photos of the poster sessions, visit [www.rbtaylor.net](http://www.rbtaylor.net).

Taylor, who has been at Temple for 20 years, has noticed an interesting convergence of health studies and criminal justice recently. "Some of the reading I assign to my students looks at neighborhood factors, like crime, and health outcomes, such as teen STD transmission and the prevalence of premature and low-birthweight babies."



**Pictured above: Rely Livescu, a judge in her native country of Romania, participated in Taylor's graduate-level criminal justice course. Livescu and two of her classmates, Marie Garcia and Sami Aldroubi, plan to submit their work to the American Society on Criminology.**

Temple's membership in the Community Health Data Base is sponsored by the Office of Research and Graduate Studies led by Vice President Kenneth Soprano. The Office's Director of Sponsored Research Programs, Robert Gage, M.P.H., has helped raise awareness of the resource. According to Gage, students and faculty from a variety of disciplines are applying PHMC's data in statistics, criminal justice, public health, physical therapy, dental informatics, and aging. Temple University faculty and staff may access the Community Health Data Base through the University's Social Science Data Library. For more information, please email [ssdl@temple.edu](mailto:ssdl@temple.edu).

For more information on how to join the Community Health Data Base, contact CHDB Marketing Associate Siobhan Hawthorne, M.B.A. at 215.985.2527 or [siobhan@phmc.org](mailto:siobhan@phmc.org)

## 2004 SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA HOUSEHOLD HEALTH SURVEY UNDERWAY

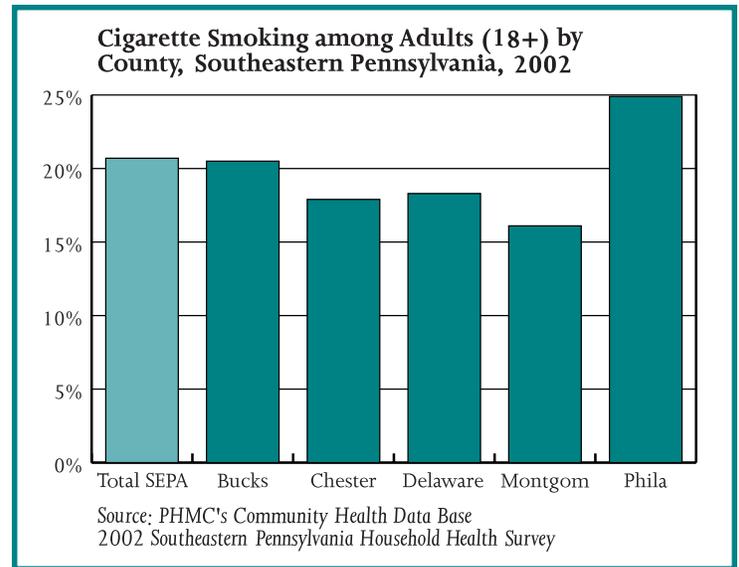
In June, the Philadelphia Health Management Corporation (PHMC) began conducting the 2004 Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey, a major telephone survey that examines the health and health care experiences of Southeastern Pennsylvania residents. The survey, the largest local health survey in the country, will continue through August. When the Survey is complete, over 10,000 households throughout Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties will be randomly contacted by telephone and asked questions about health status, health screenings, use of health services, health insurance, and personal health behaviors.

Francine Axler, M.P.H., Director of the Community Health Data Base Project, which manages the survey, says the role of area residents is crucial to the success of the survey. "By taking a few minutes to answer questions about your health and health care experiences, you play an important role in improving health care services throughout the region," Axler said.

Hundreds of health researchers, community groups, hospitals, government agencies, and foundations use survey results to plan interventions that aim to improve the health of Southeastern Pennsylvanians.

Previous household health surveys found that:

- The percentage of smokers varies across the five counties, with a low of 16.1% in Montgomery County, to a high of 24.9% in Philadelphia;
- Even though the percentage of teens diagnosed with a mental health condition is nearly twice that of younger children, younger children (ages 5-12) are more likely to receive treatment;



- Older adults in Southeastern Pennsylvania who live in a community in which neighbors have worked together on a community project are less likely to report signs of depression than those whose neighbors have not worked together (10.2% vs. 15.7%);
- Adults living below the Federal Poverty Level are more likely to have diabetes compared to non-poor adults.

The 2004 Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey is supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts, the William Penn Foundation, the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, and local health care providers, human service, and government agencies. The first Household Health Survey was conducted in 1983. For more information, go to <http://www.phmc.org/chdb/>.

### Community Focus

The COMMUNITY HEALTH DATA BASE provides population-based data to health and human services organizations interested in gaining a better understanding of the communities they serve and how to best meet their needs. The COMMUNITY HEALTH DATA BASE specializes in small-area analysis and contains information about health status, access to care, personal health behaviors, and topics such as social capital, for all segments of the population living in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties.

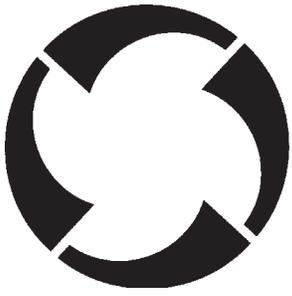
#### Geographic

- Neighborhoods
- Census tracts
- ZIP codes
- Planning Analysis Sections
- Health districts
- Suburban townships
- County
- SEPA region

#### Demographic

- Older adults
- Any age or age group
- Gender
- Children
- Ethnic and racial groups
- The poor/welfare recipients
- Uninsured
- And many others

**How can we help you?** Call: 215-985-2527; E-mail: [siobhan@phmc.org](mailto:siobhan@phmc.org); Visit: [www.phmc.org/chdb](http://www.phmc.org/chdb)



## WELCOME!

On July 1, 2004, La Comunidad Hispana (LCH), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the quality of life, health and well being of low-income Hispanics and other under-served people through advocacy and bilingual programs in health care, adult education and social services, became an affiliate of PHMC. LCH has been providing critical services in Chester County since 1973. PHMC would like to thank The Philadelphia Foundation and the Independence Foundation, who have generously supported PHMC's work with LCH in planning for the affiliation. Look for more news on LCH in future issues of DIRECTIONS.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Staff News

- **Yoshiko Hall**, PHMC's Coordinator for Shelter-based Nursing Centers, was honored at the annual award meeting of the 2004 National Health Care for the Homeless Conference with the Local Hero Award. The award honors clinicians who have given outstanding service to the homeless in their communities. Sadly, PHMC lost Yoshiko in June after a lengthy illness.

### New Programs and Grants

- In May, the National Nursing Centers Consortium (NNCC), a PHMC affiliate, opened its first Washington, DC office. The office serves as the headquarters for its Lead Safe DC program, funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. NNCC's new office will also serve as a launching point for new initiatives and programs.
- NNCC received \$1.2 million from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for *Students Run Philly Style*, a three-year physical activity intervention aimed at at-risk youth.
- The Health Promotion Council (HPC), a PHMC affiliate, has been awarded 2 major contracts with the Pennsylvania Department of Health. "SHAPE IT," a \$1.2 million, 2.5-year community education project that aims to prevent stroke and prostate cancer among Black males, will involve a close partnership with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Ambulatory Health Services and Thomas Jefferson University's Department of Family Medicine and Office to Advance Population Health. "Tomemos Control/We Take Control," a \$120,000, 3-year disease management and prevention education initiative targeting diabetes in the Latino community, will include a key

role for HPC's Latino Diabetes Alliance and a partnership with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health's Ambulatory Health Services.

- The Bridge, a PHMC substance abuse treatment center for adolescent males, would like to thank the W.W. Smith Charitable Trust for its grant of \$79,000 to support capital improvement efforts.
- Interim House, a PHMC substance abuse treatment center for women, would like to thank the L.W. Pearce Foundation for its generous award of \$20,000.
- CHANCES, a PHMC substance abuse treatment center for women with children, would like to thank the University of Pennsylvania Program for Stress Management for providing stress management and wellness education to its clients.
- Resources for Children's Health (RCH), a PHMC affiliate, was one of three agencies chosen by the Department of Public Health's Division of Maternal, Child and Family Health to run a home visiting program to young Philadelphia mothers.

### Events

- On May 20, the Philadelphia Fatherhood Practitioners' Network, a

coalition convened by Resources for Children's Health, held a conference designed to help the city's growing number of single, low-income fathers through policy initiatives.

- On May 28th, The Bridge, in collaboration with the Big Picture Alliance (BPA), presented its new music video, "The Game," at Prince Music Theater. In June, one of the Bridge residents responsible for creating the video started an internship with the BPA.
- On June 8, PHMC's Research and Evaluation component, which convenes the Philadelphia Women's Death Review Team, participated in *Sex Workers Health and Safety Summit: A Day of Dialogue*.

### Future Events

- The Pennsylvania Public Health Association (PPHA), in partnership with the Public Health Institute of the Pennsylvania Department of Health, will hold its annual conference at the Warwick Hotel in Philadelphia on October 13-15, 2004. PPHA invites professionals in the government, health, education and social service sectors to attend. PPHA has extended its call for abstracts to July 15, 2004. For more information, go to [www.ppha.org](http://www.ppha.org).

## HEALTH PROMOTION COUNCIL SPONSORS TWO CONFERENCES IN OCTOBER 2004

### Practical Approaches to Obesity In Youth

Friday, October 22, 2004 at the Union League of Philadelphia, 140 South Broad Street. This professional education conference will address obesity issues among youth, including medical complications. Emphasis will be on giving health practitioners simple strategies to share with their patients, clients and families in order to help them manage this growing epidemic. The conference is co-sponsored with the Childhood Origins of Diseases of Adults (CODA) Consortium.

### Nuestra Salud/Our Health

Saturday, October 2, 2004 at Julia de Burgos Elementary School, 401 West Lehigh Avenue, Philadelphia, PA. This **free** community education conference will focus on diabetes in the Latino community. It will include health screenings, an English workshop for health professionals, numerous workshops in Spanish for Latinos and their families, and information on how to access health & social resources within the region.

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

## INTERIM HOUSE RESIDENTS HELP LEAD CHANGE

When Congress banned public assistance to people with drug felony convictions as part of the 1996 Federal Welfare Reform Act, Amy Johnson was fifteen and hardly ever thought about the political process.

That changed when she came to Interim House in 2003 after spending 10 months in jail on drug charges. Her treatment plan stipulated she put all of her time into recovery, so she couldn't work. With a six-year old child to support, she also found out she couldn't receive food stamps because of her drug conviction.

At the same time Johnson was trying to get her life back on track, Interim House board member Amy Hirsch, Supervising Attorney at Community Legal Services, and Sue Frietsche, Senior Staff Attorney at the Women's Law Project, were working with public officials and groups across the state to reverse the Federal ban through state legislation.

For several years, representatives from Community Legal Services, Women's Law Project, Drug and Alcohol Service Providers of PA, the Pennsylvania District Attorneys' Association, social service agencies, food pantries, religious organizations and grassroots organizations across the state worked together to change the law to help people recovering from drug addiction become self-sufficient. They sponsored rallies, held hearings, and met with key public officials—District Attorney Lynne Abraham, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare Estelle Richman, State Representative Frank Oliver, and State Senators Shirley Kitchen and Jane Earl—who generated bipartisan support for the legislation at the statehouse.

Interim House residents and staff backed the effort along the way. In the past five years, clients made nearly 20 trips to Harrisburg to meet with state officials personally and tell them how the ban hurt their chances at recovery. For some residents, the trip was the first time they had ever left Philadelphia. They wrote letters to public officials in both parties to educate them on how the law made it harder for them to take care of their children as they tried to recover. Interim House program director Kathy Wellbank and two Interim House residents testified at a Philadelphia hearing in 2000 that helped inform local lawmakers.

"Many lawmakers had never met ex-offenders before, so it was important for them to meet these women and hear their stories," said Wellbank.

In December 2003, six years after Federal welfare reform, Pennsylvania passed Act 44 and became the 32<sup>nd</sup> state to reverse the ban on public assistance for people with drug felony convictions. The law went into effect in February 2004.

The women of Interim House were crucial to the law's passage. "PA Act 44 would never have happened without the tremendous courage and strength of the individual women who were willing to tell their stories," Hirsch said.

Wellbank said the experience empowered several residents. "It was very affirming to have these legislators listen. It taught the residents that their voices matter."

Amy Johnson, who has been sober for 18 months, said the experience changed her life. "I'm much more interested in politics now. I'm going to volunteer for someone's campaign this fall, and I'm thinking of majoring in political science."

A national effort is currently underway to reverse the ban at the Federal level. U.S. Senator Rick Santorum has toured Interim House to learn more about the ban by talking directly with women impacted by the law. For more information on Interim House, contact Kathy Wellbank, program director, at 215.849.4606.



Interim House program director Kathy Wellbank, District Attorney Lynne Abraham and State Representative Frank Oliver, pictured above, say a few words at a ceremony honoring the passage of Act 44, which restored public benefits to people with drug felony convictions.

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### FUTURE EVENTS

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#### Conference

On September 28, 2004, PHMC's Health Care for the Homeless Project will present "The Invisible Homeless: Meeting the Needs of Homeless Children and Adolescents" at Philadelphia Community College. For more information, contact Deborah McMillan at (215) 985-2559 or [deborah@phmc.org](mailto:deborah@phmc.org)

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#### Conference

From October 15-17, the National Nursing Centers Consortium (NNCC), a PHMC affiliate, will hold "Best Practices in Nurse-Managed Health Centers: How Research, Policy and Practice are Addressing Health Disparities." For more information, go to [www.nationalnursingcenters.org/](http://www.nationalnursingcenters.org/)

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#### Evening Event

On October 14, 2004, PHMC will hold an evening reception at the Constitution Center. Stay tuned for more information in future issues of DIRECTIONS.

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Spring 2004

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PHMC is a nonprofit, public health organization committed to improving the health of the community through outreach, education, research, planning, technical assistance and direct services.



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## NEW PHMC PROGRAM HELPS PEOPLE WITH MENTAL RETARDATION

This past winter, PHMC was selected through an RFP (Request for Proposal) process by Philadelphia's Office of Behavioral Health and Mental Retardation Services (MRS) as one of four agencies to provide supports coordination services for individuals with mental retardation in Philadelphia. PHMC's new program, PersonLink, will assist and support individuals with mental retardation and their families to access resources, services and supports available in neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia. As a consumer-driven program, PersonLink will use a person-centered approach that relies on natural community supports in conjunction with specialized mental retardation services and places a high priority on consumer and family satisfaction. The program began serving consumers and their families on July 1, 2004 and will coordinate services for approximately 2000 consumers and their families throughout Philadelphia.

PersonLink is part of a new initiative spearheaded by MRS that seeks to improve the way the mental retardation service system supports and assists people with mental retardation. In the past, individuals with mental retardation received supports coordination from organizations that also provided needed services. In order to comply with recently-issued State directives that require supports coordination and service provision be independent of each other, MRS has adopted this conflict-free approach that led to the creation of four supports coordination programs to serve persons with mental retardation and their families in Philadelphia. In addition to PHMC, supports coordination will be provided by three other agencies: Quality Progressions, The Consortium and Partnership for Community Supports.

PHMC has a proven track record in coordinating services for children. Since 1992, PHMC's ChildLink program has provided early intervention services to Philadelphia children birth to age three with developmental delays. In 2003, ChildLink also began providing services to children and their families in Delaware County, PA.

PersonLink Program Director Eileen Keenan believes PersonLink will benefit the consumers, their families, and the City. "I think this change is going to help us better identify the needs of people with mental retardation. Once the City knows the needs of the consumers, they are better positioned to request funding for specific programs from the State," Keenan said.

PHMC would like to congratulate Eileen, who became Program Director of PersonLink in May. She joined PHMC in 1995 and most recently served as ChildLink's Assistant Director for Support Services. For more information on PersonLink, contact Eileen Keenan at 215.985.6291 or [eileen@phmc.org](mailto:eileen@phmc.org).

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