

# Special Edition of *Hepatitis Health* World Hepatitis Day 2010

## Success and World Hepatitis Day

By Phil Reichert

There are several ways to measure success. Usually, you set goals and create objectives for achieving those goals.

This year's goal for World Hepatitis Day in Tallahassee was to partner with a hepatitis service agency and the Tallahassee Fire Department to bring attention about viral hepatitis prevention to the community. April Crowley (your newsletter editor and the Hepatitis Prevention Program education coordinator) began soon after the 2009 World Hepatitis Day (May 19<sup>th</sup>) to work with these partners and bring us all together where there would be displays with public health messages, a news conference, free hepatitis A and B vaccines, fire trucks and a helicopter. World Hepatitis Day in Tallahassee was a success because a lot of people participated in the event, and it was covered by several outlets of the news media.

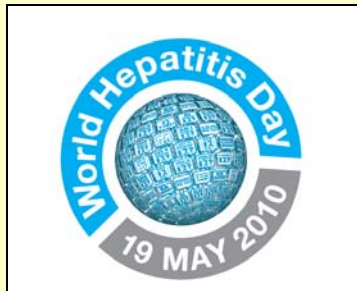
More on page 2



Louis Pierno being interviewed by the local media



Tom Liberti holds up the proclamation as Mayor John Marks declares May 19<sup>th</sup> World Hepatitis Day in Tallahassee.



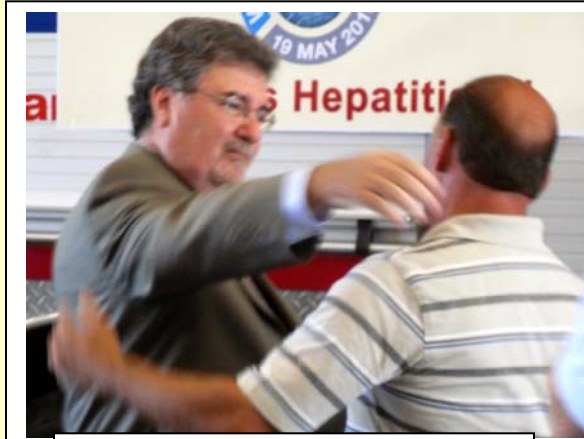
Deputy Fire Chief John Gatlin speaks at the news conference.

### World Hepatitis Day Continued...

The news conference included a proclamation of World Hepatitis Day presented by Tallahassee's Mayor John Marks. There were important hepatitis prevention messages, peppered with current statistics, by Dr. Julia Gill, Director of the Department of Health Division of Disease Control, and by Tom Liberti, Chief of the Bureau of HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis. Deputy Fire Chief John Gatlin made several remarks about the risks firefighters take every day while helping others. The most moving portion of the news conference was a testimony by Richard Roberts, veteran of a liver transplant and treatment due to hepatitis C. He was introduced by his son, Nathan, a firefighter for the Tallahassee Fire Department. Four generations of the Roberts family were present at the event, including Richard's father and infant grandson (probably a future firefighter). Finally, a plaque was presented to Louis Pierno commemorating his brother, Fred, who died as a result of hepatitis C he acquired on the job as a Martin County firefighter.

Why the partnership with the fire department and the Life Flight EMS helicopter? The week of May 19<sup>th</sup> is also National Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Week.

Take a look at the pictures and articles in this issue of *Hepatitis Health* and note that there were other highly successful events that took place around Florida in observance of World Hepatitis Day this May 19<sup>th</sup>.



Tom Liberti embraces Louis Pierno



L to R: Richard Roberts, Mayor Marks, Nathan and Nolan Roberts



Dr. Julia Gill



Phil Reichert, April Crowley, & Travis Oaks



Jeffrey Walker, Bureau of STD

## Richard Roberts

By April Crowley

Last September, Cherry Douglas, with Hepatitis Ready Care (a community based organization), and I met with Tallahassee Fire Chief Cindy Dick and Public Information Officer Travis Oaks to inquire about holding an event for World Hepatitis Day at one of the local fire stations. As we chatted about a health fair and press conference, Chief Dick said, "Nathan Roberts' father has hepatitis C and he's had a liver transplant." She went on to explain that Nathan was a firefighter and that his father worked in construction.

I got in touch with Nathan and his father, Richard. Both men agreed to participate in our press conference. Nathan would introduce his father, and Richard would tell his story. And what a story he had to tell.

Richard isn't quite sure how he contracted hepatitis C (HCV). Doctors estimate that he had the disease for over 30 years, because the virus had wrecked havoc on his liver. As a result, on November 17, 2006, Richard underwent a liver transplant at Shands Hospital in Gainesville. The virus immediately started attacking his new liver, and he got cholestatic hepatitis. Two weeks after the transplant, Richard got meningitis and needed brain surgery. Then he went into a coma. His prognosis was dim. Family members were told to come say "goodbye." One month later, a miracle occurred when Richard came out of the coma. He was given massive doses of interferon and antibiotics. He was still on the interferon eight months later when his viral load finally started going down.

Today, Richard is virus-free and works in construction full time. The week prior to World Hepatitis Day, he fell off a roof while working. Even though he was on crutches, that didn't stop Richard from participating in our event at the fire station, because as he describes it, "Life is full of adventures."

Once a year, Richard goes to Shands Hospital for what he calls his "protocol liver biopsy." He says he should be the poster boy for Shands "for surviving the impossible."

After meeting Richard, I thought of a quote from author Maya Angelou, "A joyful spirit is evidence of a grateful heart." He is so full of gratitude for his life today. I understand why Nathan got choked up when he introduced his father at the press conference and called him his "hero." After learning about his "life adventures," Richard is now one of my heroes.

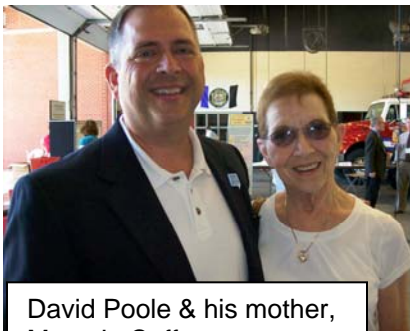


Richard Roberts speaking at the press conference



L to R: The Roberts family: Jann, Richard, Courtney, Grandpa Richard, and Nathan (holding Nolan)

## World Hepatitis Day Photos, Tallahassee



David Poole & his mother, Mary Jo Coffman.



Jan Kibler vaccinates Sharon Saulter



Air Methods Life Flight helicopter



Fire Station #3



Ed Golding, Environmental Health



Pete Simons carries the message



L to R: Clay Weiss & Steven Badura



Jamie Moore & Meredith Jagger, HIV Surveillance



Cherry Douglas (L) with Louis and JoAnn Pierno





Fred Pierno

### In Memory of Fred Pierno, Jr.

By April Crowley

I first heard about Fred Pierno, Jr., last year when I came across an article on-line about him being the 13th firefighter in the United States and the seventh in Florida to be classified as a Line of Duty death due to a hepatitis infection.

Fred Pierno Jr., died February 25, 2009, at his Port Saint Lucie home due to hepatitis C (HCV) he contracted on the job as a firefighter/ EMT with Martin County Fire Rescue in Stuart, Florida. Fred had been under medical treatment since October 2006 for his HCV infection.

Even though firefighters do their best to protect themselves, sometimes these things are unavoidable. When it's a matter of life and death, and blood is flying, any first responder will jump in and do whatever it takes to save the person. That's exactly what Fred Pierno did. He did what he had to do to save someone's life.

A navy veteran during the Vietnam War, Fred began his service as a combat firefighter/EMT in November 1991. He served on the Hazardous Materials Special Operations Response Team for the majority of his 18-year career, according to a Martin County Fire Rescue news release.

Cherry Douglas, with Hepatitis Ready Care, was able to locate Louis Pierno, Fred's brother. Louis lives in Port St. Lucie, and agreed to come to Tallahassee and accept a plaque honoring his late brother. Cherry suggested we hold an event at a local fire station to raise awareness about the often unconsidered risks that firefighters take. I thought this was a great idea since the week of May 17th is also National Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Week.

Louis has remained close to all of Fred's co-workers at the Martin County Fire Department. He says people have asked him if he has any animosity because Fred died from a disease that he contracted on the job. Louis' response is, "I may have lost a brother, but I've gained so many brothers and sisters as a result. And, for that, I am very grateful."



L to R: Nathan and Courtney Roberts (holding Nolan) with Louis and JoAnn Pierno



Louis Pierno (left) chats with Tallahassee Deputy Fire Chiefs Wes Roberts & John Gatlin



Mayor Marks & Louis Pierno

## World Hepatitis Day in Alachua County

By Isabel Anasco

In celebration of World Hepatitis Day, the Alachua County Health Department (CHD) increased awareness of viral hepatitis with educational displays in the CHD lobby. Visits were also made to the University of Florida and several urgent care facilities to hand out hepatitis screening information and brochures.



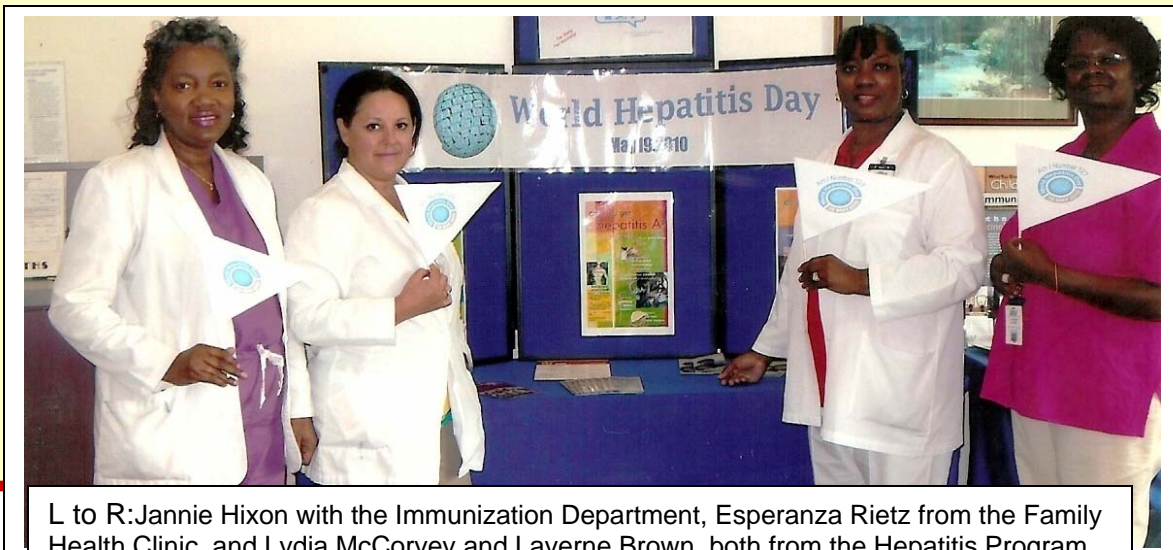
Left to right: Isabel Anasco, Sheila Griffis, Marilyn Mandell, and Siri Wilson in the ACHD lobby

## WHD in Escambia County

By Lydia McCorvey

The Escambia County Health Department honored World Hepatitis Day by setting up a display in the front entrance of the health department where we provided lots of information on the transmission of Hepatitis A, B, and C. A press release was sent to the media stating that more than 4,700 Escambia County residents are infected with hepatitis C. Regarding vaccinations: "In the past ten years, our hepatitis program has provided more than 8,500 vaccines for hepatitis A and B to the citizens of Escambia County," said health department director Dr. John Lanza.

Other highlights included a proclamation from the mayor's office and a radio interview with WUWF-FM.



L to R: Jannie Hixon with the Immunization Department, Esperanza Rietz from the Family Health Clinic, and Lydia McCorvey and Laverne Brown, both from the Hepatitis Program.

## WHD in Broward County

By Edith Garcia

Broward County Health Department acknowledged the month of May as Hepatitis Awareness Month and presented a Grand Rounds educational session with guest presenter Richard S. Phillips, M.D., Director of Hepatology, Division of Gastroenterology at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami. The Grand Rounds session took place from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm on Wednesday, May 19, 2010, in the Broward County Health Department's Administrative Center Auditorium in Fort Lauderdale.

Year round, the Broward County Health Department encourages all residents who are at-risk of infection to get the facts, get tested, and get vaccinated. As a result of our efforts, we received a proclamation from the Broward County Commission!

During the month of May, health department staff were available at the following locations to provide information, answer questions, conduct risk assessments and make referrals for screening: North Regional Health Center in Pompano Beach, Fort Lauderdale Health Center, South Broward WIC Office in Pembroke Pines, and Oakland Park WIC Office in Lauderdale Lakes.



Silvana Baner



Group shot at Broward CHD



William Patrick



Broward County Commissioner Diana Wasserman presents a proclamation to Dwayne Turner, Communicable Disease Director at Broward CHD.

## WHD in Hillsborough County

By Neekan Aeini

The Epidemiology Department honored World Hepatitis Day by sending an article to both internal employees and to the community through our newsletter notifying everyone that May 19th is World Hepatitis Day. It included information on hepatitis A, B and C, global, national and local statistics, prevention and screening information, and an explanation of the Perinatal Hepatitis B Prevention Program.

The article also provided additional resources for providers, and reminded everyone to visit our hepatitis informational booth in the waiting room of the Specialty Care Clinic. We had our medical school student, Jian Zheng, who has extensive hepatitis education experience, in the waiting room speaking with patients and providing them with information on prevention, screening and vaccination all month long.

In addition, we promoted the clinic's free HIV/Hepatitis testing day on June 24th. The department will be volunteering on this day to assist with blood draws. We have already brainstormed ideas for World Hepatitis Day 2011 and made a timeline to plan it out. Tallahassee events looked great, which has inspired us to plan a bigger event next year.

More about Jian Zheng: She is a medical student at the University of South Florida (USF) in Tampa, and has been a great help! At 7:30 am she was talking to patients in the waiting room even if they seemed uninterested or were still asleep. She had no hesitation approaching patients and was always successful at getting them interested in World Hepatitis Day and in getting tested.



## WHD in Lee County

By Komona McGriff

On May 19<sup>th</sup>, we partnered with Operation PAR, an organization that offers a full continuum of services for individuals with substance abuse and/or mental health disorders, to provide free vaccines. By the end of the day, we had vaccinated a total of 46 people.



L to R: Lloyd Wright, Reva Frank, Liz Smallwood, Komona McGriff, Chris Pickens, Jacquie Randolph, Patty Dantin, Maria Puig, and Alfreda Thomas.

## WHD in Pinellas County

By Dante Ross

We observed World Hepatitis Day on Saturday, May 22, in order to reach more people. See the flyer below advertising our event. In the photo to the right, I'm standing in front of our display.



# WHD in Monroe CHD

By Jean Barber

For World Hepatitis Day (and don't forget May was also Hepatitis Awareness Month), the Monroe CHD distributed our new Hepatitis Prevention Program pamphlets to organizations serving at-risk populations such as County Social Services and Florida Keys Outreach Coalition (our local group that works with the homeless). Distribution started in the Upper Keys.

We also published a Hepatitis Prevention Program message on the back page of the "May 2010 Locals Guide" (see below). This free publication is distributed throughout the Keys and reaches a wide range of the population.

**May is National Hepatitis Awareness Month**  
 For free testing and immunizations in Monroe County, call  
**(305) 809-5620**  
**One in 12 people worldwide is living with either chronic hepatitis B or C, yet the majority of those infected are unaware.**  
**Get tested!**



- Lower Keys (Key West)**
  - Administration, Gato Building, 1100 Simonton Street ..... (305) 293-7500
  - Health Care Center, 3134 Northside Drive Bldg. B ..... (305) 292-6885
  - Roosevelt Sands Center, 105 Olivia Street ..... (305) 809-5680
- Middle Keys (Marathon)**
  - Ruth Ivins Center, 3333 Overseas Highway ..... (305) 289-2708
- Upper Keys (Tavernier)**
  - MCHD Upper Keys, 50 Highpoint Road ..... (305) 853-3240
- Environmental Health**
  - Key West ....(305) 809-5670 Marathon.... (305) 289-2721 Key Largo.... (305) 453-8750

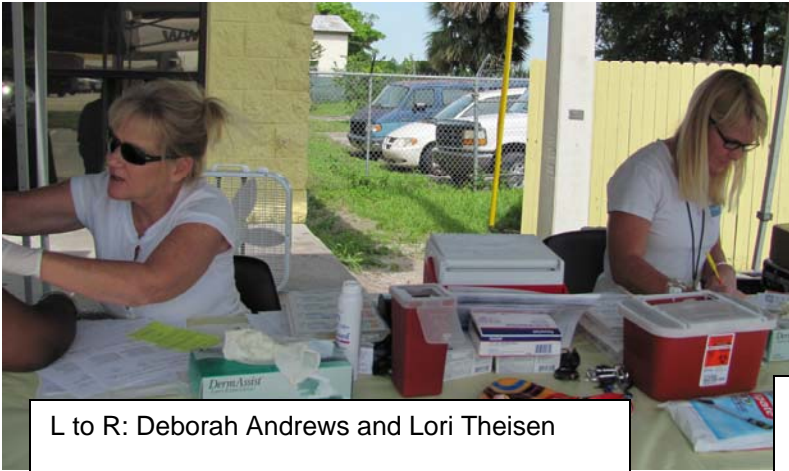
*Primary care • Flu shots • Travel inoculations • Immunizations to prevent measles, mumps, polio, HPV, rubella (German measles), pertussis (whooping cough), rotavirus, tetanus/diphtheria, meningitis, pneumococcal disease, chickenpox and other diseases • Healthy Start • WIC • Testing for hepatitis, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis • Bioterrorism surveillance • Food hygiene • Food-borne investigation • Indoor air quality • Lead surveillance • Sanitary nuisances • School health • Rabies prevention • Water quality • Tobacco prevention • Wellness program*

## WHD in Orange County

By Lori Theisen

For World Hepatitis Day we went to the Orange Blossom Family Health Center, one of our community partners. This clinic provides medical, dental, and mental health services for the uninsured.

We provided education and literature on hepatitis A, B, and C and provided hepatitis A and B vaccines. Deborah Andrews, LPN and Jessica Fung, EIS helped me with the event. Please see photos below. We provided vaccines to 37 clients and educated many more.



L to R: Deborah Andrews and Lori Theisen



L to R: Lori Theisen, Bakari Burns, CEO of the Orange Blossom Health Center, & Jessica Fung

## WHD in Polk County

By Lynn B. Simons

We had a wonderful turnout during our World Hepatitis Day at Bartow Courthouse. We tested 48 people and vaccinated 44. We had help from our STD, HIV, and TB departments, but by the end of the day we all were exhausted! Check out the photos below.

Also, on Saturday May 15, we were at the VA homeless outreach and tested 14 people and gave 12 vaccinations.



Pamela Richardson preparing to draw blood, client calling his friends to come out, Ester Huron in background, Lynn Simons doing paperwork.



June Blum giving a vaccination

**Hepatitis Health** is brought to you by the Hepatitis Prevention Program, Bureau of HIV/AIDS, Division of Disease Control, at the Florida Department of Health. Submit articles to: [April\\_Crowley@doh.state.fl.us](mailto:April_Crowley@doh.state.fl.us)