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HR

ON YOUR BEHALF

The Official Newsletter of the Jefferson County Commission HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

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The mission of the Jefferson County Commission Human Resources Department is to maintain a positive, productive, and progressive environment for all employees while providing professional human resources assistance and support to all county employees, departments and officials.



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BENEFITS - FMLA LEAVE OF ABSENCE

How important are your benefits to you and your family? Do you know the steps to ensure continuation of your benefits while out on FMLA paid or unpaid leave of absence? Information about this process is publicized in the Unpaid Leave Policy, AO 07-2. Many employees fail to take actions necessary to keep their benefits in tact while out on FMLA leave, thus leading to an unnecessary, and sometimes costly, interruption in coverage.

To avoid this happening to you, document your leave by applying for Family and Medical Leave (FMLA); complete the FMLA "Benefits Election" form and meet with a benefits representative to discuss your options. While FMLA dictates that employers must continue group health plan benefits during the period of leave, it is the employee's responsibility to report the absence and take action to continue or cancel benefits. Any portion of the health insurance premium paid by the employee prior to leave must continue to be paid by the employee during the FMLA period.

FMLA allows for the continuation of medical, dental, and vision insurance up to 12 work weeks. During **paid** FMLA or time off using Vacation Leave

Bank, Jefferson County continues to subsidize the monthly medical premium and your employee portion is deducted from your paycheck as if you are actively working.

During **unpaid** FMLA time off, Jefferson County continues to subsidize its portion of your benefits cost but you are not receiving a paycheck to allow for normal benefits deductions. So, in order for your benefits to continue, you must arrange in advance to pay the employee portion of your benefits cost by cashiers check or money order for each month that you will not receive a paycheck.

Should you terminate your employment while out on leave or at the end of the leave period, the Consolidated Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA) requires the county to offer continuation of medical, dental and vision insurance to qualified employees and family members enrolled in the plans at the time of certain qualifying events. You may continue coverage for the COBRA period by paying the **entire premium** plus 2% directly to the COBRA administrator.

You must maintain your coverage while out on leave to be eligible for continued coverage under COBRA at the time of termination.



Finally, should an employee fail to return to work due to a serious illness and subsequent disability, having provided HR the appropriate notice, will activate the "disability waiver of premium" process. This special feature of the county's paid life insurance plan allows an eligible, disabled employee to terminate his employment and keep the paid life insurance, providing peace of mind during a very stressful time. So, while filing the FMLA paperwork may not seem important, just remember, it is your lifeline to continuation of benefits.

If you have any questions about FMLA unpaid or paid leave status please contact Marilyn Johnson in the Human Resources Department at 205-325-5249.

Have a great



Thanksgiving

Health & Wellness – ALCOHOL & DRUG ABUSE

Jefferson County Commission promotes a safe, healthy and drug free workplace and believes that all employees should share in this responsibility. Some of us may know a family member, friend or co-worker who has been affected by alcohol or drug use. Signs may vary by the drug(s) used, but what you see the person doing and how you should interact with him or her is often the same. Behavioral Health Systems offers the following tips on recognizing signs and symptoms of alcohol or drug abuse.

Symptoms may be physical, emotional, or behavioral. **Physical** (chills, smell, sweating, weight loss, deterioration), **Emotional** (aggression, anxiety, burnout, denial, depression, paranoia), and **Behavioral** (excessive talking, impaired coordination, irritability, lack of energy, limited attention span and poor motivation). These symptoms do not necessarily mean he/she has a substance abuse problem but they should not be ignored.

Signs that substance abuse may be a workplace hazard: creating mishaps, being careless and repeatedly making mistakes, damaging equipment or property, being involved in numerous accidents, careless actions when operating hazardous materials or equipment, being unreliable, unwilling to follow directions, giving unbelievable excuses for not fulfilling responsibilities, not carrying one's load, taking unnecessary risks, disregarding safety for self and others.

If you suspect someone has a problem, tell the person you will not assist him or her in hiding the problem. Be willing and able to follow through. Explain how the person's behavior affects you and others at work. Reconfirm your concern, you do not have to get him or her to admit the problem. Any workplace safety concerns should be discussed with your supervisor.



If YOU have a problem, please seek help from Behavioral Health System's

Employee Assistance Program.

This program provides confidential assessment, counseling and referral services.

Contact BHS at 205-879-1150 or log on to www.bhs-inc.com

BLUE 365

ATTN: EMPLOYEES ENROLLED IN THE COUNTY'S BLUE CROSS & BLUE SHIELD HEALTH PLAN

BLUE 365 is a free program providing you the opportunity to receive discounts and savings from various companies on products and services in areas such as health and wellness, family care, health-focused financial services and travel. The following are selected companies that best represent BCBS's focus on leading a healthy lifestyle; Curves, LA Weightloss, Gold's Gym, eDiets, Edward Jones, and Canyon Ranch. More companies may be added in the future. For more information log on www.bcbsal.com. Sign in to **myBlueCross** and look for the link under "Manage My Health."

THANKS for 42 years of Service!!!!!!!



**ANDY STRICKLAND
COUNTY ATTORNEY**

A word from Attorney Strickland.....

When I started my law practice in 1967, upon return from three years active duty with the Army JAGC, my first client was Jefferson County. I assisted my law partner John Foster who represented the county. But, I did not begin work on the second floor of the courthouse. Instead, I was escorted to the Probate Records Room, otherwise known as the "basement". For the next several years, I spent several hours every day researching title to property that the Right of Way Department needed to acquire, this was "heavy lifting". Those old hand written record journals, going back over 70 years, weighed about 20 pounds each plus 10 pounds of dust! Thankfully, we shifted to title insurance and technology.

It has been my great honor and privilege to represent Jefferson County for almost 42 years. Our "county family" has grown from hundreds to thousands in that time and I have made many great friends here. I have always admired and respected the work and dedication and loyalty of county employees that powered this county through many storms, and I am just as confident those same attributes will see this county through the current storm. Thank you for your kind expressions and for allowing me to be a part of your family.

NEW & EXCITING - HUMAN RESOURCES TRAINING

In October, Human Resources hosted training for payroll coordinators to introduce procedural changes made regarding Performance Appraisals, Leave Charge Forms and New Hire Orientation. Training went very well. A summary of what was covered in training is below.

Performance Appraisals

An employee performance appraisal that is performed correctly improves communication between superiors and subordinates, can be used as a counseling tool, and ensures that performance is on record for use in future personnel actions and for EEO purposes.

Administrative Order 07-4 mandates performance appraisals to be done each year on all full time classified employees. An Employee Performance Management System was developed to ensure that appraisals are performed consistently and timely. Payroll coordinators were trained on the new performance management procedures and will play a huge role in making the procedures run smoothly. We would like to thank all of them for their help and support as we continue to make the county a more professional employer, which in turn enhances YOUR work environment. Special thanks to Diane Polito, Wanda Poore, Sharon Fairbanks, Heather Stephens, and Linda Lomax for assisting us with testing the new process.

Leave Charge Form

Many county departments are currently using "Leave Charge Forms". Leave Charge Forms are the yellow slips that employees complete and submit to their supervisor to request time off. The supervisor and department head must sign before time off is approved. The form lists several leave codes including vacation, sick, military and jury duty among others. The Leave Charge Form was recently updated to include FMLA codes such as Vacation FMLA, Sick FMLA (employee), Sick FMLA (family), Injury With Pay (FMLA), Vacation Leave Bank FMLA and Granted Leave Without Pay FMLA. HR discussed the new form with payroll coordinators. All employees must use the new form. Using Leave Charge Forms allow for accurate records on the type and time of leave. Payroll coordinators were asked to send all Leave Charge Forms received to Payroll each time payroll is submitted. Please check with your payroll coordinator regarding when the new forms will be available in your department.

New Hire Orientation

Jefferson County hires new employees weekly. Effectively orientating new employees to the county and to their position is critical to establishing successful, productive working relationships. To ensure that county new hires are properly oriented, Human Resources has developed a "New Hire Orientation Checklist" that includes key points to discuss with all new hires. The checklist was introduced to all departments via payroll coordinators. Orientation now requires informational sessions conducted by Human Resources as well as the hiring department supervisor.

We look forward to this uniform system helping new employees successfully adjust to their new jobs.

Personnelities....Inside the Personalities of our Personnel

Bridgete Smith is in the **PERSONNELITIES SPOTLIGHT** for the month of November! Bridgete is a Registered Dietician working at the Jefferson County Rehabilitation & Health Center. Ms. Smith has eighteen months of service with Jefferson County, all of which have been with Jefferson Rehab. Her duties consist of maintaining the needs of the residents and treating and preventing disease from a nutritional standpoint. She assists with menu development and often meets with residents to make sure they are satisfied.

Bridgete was born in the WEST INDIES on the island of Tobago. She comes from a very close knit family and most of her immediate family is here in the United States.

Bridgete loves to cook, curry and pepper are her favorite spices. Other hobbies include swimming (she prefers swimming in the ocean) and she also likes to entertain. If there was one person throughout the history of the world Bridgete could have dinner with, it would be her Savior.



*Bridgete Smith, Dietary Services
Jefferson Rehab & Health Center*

While the HR department attempts to review and monitor the contents of the submissions into the personal sections of its newsletter, the views expressed in the personal sections (which may include Your Voice, Personnelities and HR Corner) are the personal views of county employees and are not necessarily the views of the Jefferson County Commission, the Human Resources Department, its staff or employees. Concerns regarding material on these pages may be addressed to hrlistens@jccal.org

SAFETY & YOU - STRESS STRETCH

TIPS FOR AVOIDING INJURY AT YOUR WORKSTATION

Spending 8 to 10 hours per day at a desk can cause problems for your joints, muscles and bones. Ergonomics, the study of human movement capabilities in relation to work demands, may help in lessening the physical strain caused by workstation layout. The following stretches can give you **COMFORT in your CUBICLE!**

- Stand up and sit down without using your hands
- Stand, stretch your arms to the ceiling and breath deeply for five seconds.
- Inhale and shrug your shoulders to your ears. Hold for five seconds. Repeat
- Stretch your arms around the opposite shoulder and give yourself a hug.
- Hug your legs with your arms while sitting, allowing your chest to rest on your legs.
- Clinch your fists, stretch your hands parallel to the ground and do 10 wrist circles in each direction
- Grab the right side of your chair with your left hand as you twist your upper body to the right. Hold for 5 seconds then reverse.

Implement some of these stretches in your daily routine!



JOB Opportunities

CLASSIFIED POSITIONS

- Personal Property Appraiser
- Administrative Assistant I
- Facilities Manager
- Systems Analyst - Open Systems

The above positions opened on 11/09, please visit the website for closing dates and weekly employment updates.

Go to www.jobsquest.org for more information on Classified positions. Please visit the HR department or go to <http://courthouse.jcc.jccal.org> (click on Human Resource Dept) for information on Laborer positions.

HR Corner

HUMAN RESOURCES TRAINING ROOM

502

Human Resources is happy to introduce our state of the art training facility located in room 502 in the 2121 Building. The room features personal computer stations, a large projection screen, and surround sound. From this room, we have the capability to video conference, allowing us to present and train to satellite locations.

Room 502 will also be the future site for various trainings and new hire orientation.

BCBS ID CARDS

Be on the look out for your newly designed health plan ID card. In an effort to create a more consistent look for member ID cards, all Blue Cross and Blue Shield plans will now follow this new design. When you receive your new cards, please destroy the old and replace with your new card. Feel free to call Customer Service at the number printed on the back of your card or go to www.bcbsal.com and sign in at mybluecross.com. If you are not a member of mybluecross, sign up, membership is free to all employees enrolled in the county's Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama health plan.

GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT (GASO)



The Great American Smokeout is November 20, 2008. The Occupational Health Staff will have information and material available to assist those who want to kick the habit. Contact: Peggy - 849-2302 (Ketona); Dorthea - 325-5741 (Main Courthouse), Marcia - 916-5170 (Shades) or Janie -481-4238 (Bessemer).