



THE VAHHA VOICE

The Newsletter of the Vermont Assembly of Home Health Agencies

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Fall 2004

NAHC Database Shows Vermont Lowest Cost State

According to the latest figures from the National Association for Home Care & Hospice (NAHC), Vermont had the lowest home care cost per episode (60 days of care) than any of the other 49 states in 2002-2003. The report, based on findings from Medicare cost reports, shows that Vermont had the lowest cost since the inception of the Prospective Payment System in October 2000 (home care payment system). The NAHC database includes data from more than 14,000 cost reports.

According to the NAHC report, the cost for home care services in Vermont was \$557.85 less than the national average. Home care services in Vermont cost \$1,419.82 per episode compared to the national average of \$1,977.67. Only Puerto Rico, at \$1,129.77 per episode, was lower than Vermont. Other low cost states were North Dakota, \$1657.23; Arizona, \$1711.31; and South Dakota, \$1718.14.

In every year from 1990-2002, Vermont home care agencies served more people per thousand than the national, New England or northern New England averages and had the nation's highest service penetration in all but one year, when Vermont was second.

The data collected by NAHC is consisted with the data reported by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). A review of the CMS data for the thirteen years from 1990 to 2002 shows that Vermont does very well compared to the national average, the New England average, and the northern New England average in terms of

service penetration and costs. In every year for which VAHHA has data, Vermont served more people per thousand than the national, New England or northern New England averages and had the nation's highest service penetration in all but one year, when Vermont was second.

Vermont cost per visit in calendar year 2002 was the lowest in the New England and among the lowest in the nation. The Medicare payment per episode is lower in Vermont than in either Maine or New Hampshire.

See page 4 for more

VAHHA Awards Scholarships to Seven Students

The Vermont Assembly of Home Health Agencies, through the Elizabeth J. Davis Scholarship fund, has awarded seven scholarships for the 2004-2005 school year, totaling \$11,000. This is the third year VAHHA has provided scholarships to Vermont students. The total of the awards granted to date is \$26,000. The seven winners selected this year were from 34 applicants.

This year's winners are Charlene Baron of Swanton, Jessica Bolduc of Colchester, Monica Commo of Montpelier, Laura Davis of West Burke, Abigail Dodd of Franklin, Pamela Mintzer of Rutland, and Meghan Sperry of Williamstown.

Charlene Baron, 43, a mother of two, is the first repeat winner of the Davis Scholarship. Last year she won a \$1,000 scholarship from VAHHA. This year's award is for \$2,000. Charlene, a Speech, Language Aide for Franklin County Home Health, is seeking an Associates Degree as a Speech Language Assistant. She is just a few courses away from her goal.

"My journey to success is almost complete," she wrote in her winning essay. "My heart is with Home Health and I am looking forward to being able to serve the community." She is attending the Community College of Vermont.

Twenty-one-year-old Jessica Bolduc is seeking a degree as an Occupational Therapist. Her VAHHA award is for \$2,000. "I hope to be a very knowledgeable and resourceful Occupational Therapist and provide the best care to my patients as I can," she wrote in her winning essay. Jessica is attending the University of New England in Biddeford, Maine.

Monica Commo, a nursing student at the University of Vermont, was awarded \$1,000. She wrote: "Being involved in the nursing program is an amazing honor for me." She hopes eventually to earn a Masters in nursing. In the meantime, she is a student at the University of Vermont.

Laura Davis, a recent graduate from Lyndon Institute, was awarded \$1,000 toward the cost of her nursing

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Byock – The Four Things That Matter Most

Dr. Ira Byock, Director of Palliative Medicine at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center and acclaimed author of *Dying Well: The Prospect for Growth at the End of Life* and *The Four Things that Matter Most*, spoke at the Sheraton Hotel and Conference Center recently on “Saying The Four Things That Matter Most”. The event was organized by the Visiting Nurse Association of Chittenden, Grand Isle Counties.

Dr. Byock has been involved with hospice and palliative care since 1978, serving as a senior faculty member at Dartmouth Medical School, Director of The Palliative Care Service in Missoula, Montana, Director of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation national grant program, promoting excellence in End-of-Life Care, and founder and principal investigator of Life’s End Institute in Missoula, Montana. He has authored numerous articles on ethics and the practice of end-of-life care, and is a dynamic speaker. His most recent book, *The Four Things that Matter Most*, was released in March 2004.

This presentation was sponsored by the Madison-Deane Initiative (MDI), an end-of-life care program of the Visiting Nurse Association, in collaboration with the University of Vermont’s Forum on Aging, College of Medicine and College of Nursing and Health Sciences, and Fletcher Allen Health Care. The Madison-Deane Initiative focuses on educating the general public and medical professionals about palliative and hospice care. In addition to presentations such as Dr. Byock’s, MDI advocates for the strengthening and coordination of quality end-of-life care

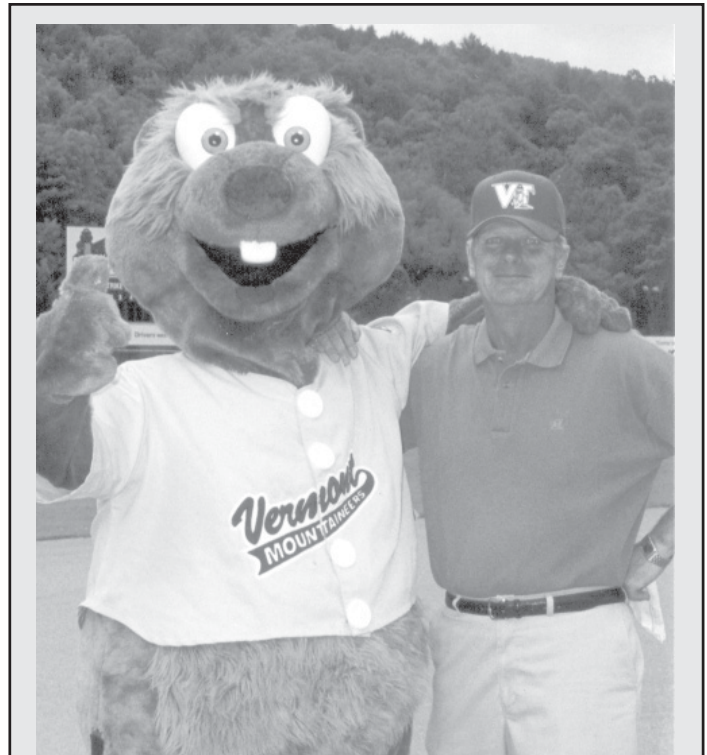
through communication among related organizations and has compiled a resource booklet, *Guide to Palliative Care Resource for Chittenden and Grand Isle Counties, Vermont*. MDI has also completed a unique documentary film of historic importance, *Pioneers of Hospice: Changing the Face of Dying*, which is available for purchase at: www.pioneersofhospice.org.

For a copy of the *Guide to Palliative Care Resources* or more information about future Madison-Deane Initiative events, call the Visiting Nurse Association at 802-860-4419.

Feds Fund Vermont Alzheimer’s Program

The federal Administration on Aging has awarded a three-year grant to Vermont’s Alzheimer’s Demonstration Project. Vermont will receive almost \$1 million (\$311,150 per year) over the next three years. The project has three main components:

1. Supporting caregivers and people with Alzheimer’s disease and related diseases through improved relationships with primary care practices, through placement of case management and/or Eldercare staff in doctors’ offices 2-4 days per month, in 4-5 locations in Vermont.
2. Training funds to support staff, families, guardians etc. who care for individuals with dual diagnosis of developmental disabilities and Alzheimer’s Disease.
3. Training funds for area agencies on aging, home health, eldercare staff, and others.



CVHHH is Celebrated At Vermont Mountaineers Game - Central Vermont

Home Health and Hospice was the selected charity at the June 30, 2004 Vermont Mountaineers game featuring Babe Ruth’s daughter, Julia Ruth Stevens, as their celebrity guest. The Mountaineers were selling copies of Ms. Stevens’ newly published book, “Major League Dad: A Daughter’s Cherished Memories”. She was at the game signing her book. Proceeds from book sales and that night’s 50/50 raffle were dedicated to CVHHH. Dick Huskes, CVHHH Board Chair, was on hand at the Mountaineers’ July 13th game to represent the agency and accept a check in the amount of \$2,325 from the Mountaineers’ mascot “Skip”.

VT Health Care Spending at \$2.8 Billion

According to the recently released *Vermont Health Care Analysis* from the Department of Banking, Insurance, Securities and Health Care Administration (BISHCA), health care spending on Vermont residents totaled \$2.8 billion in 2002, an increase of 10.2% from the year before. Total health care costs are expected to reach \$3 billion in 2004. By 2007, health care costs are projected to be close to \$4 billion. Home Care expenditures were either \$81 million or \$105 million, depending on which of the two charts is used.

The \$81 million is on the chart that includes data provided about the VAHHA members only. The \$105 million is from the chart with totals provided by the third party payers and includes revenues to VAHHA members and to non-certified home care agencies and payments to the Associates in Physical and Occupational Therapy (according to the provider matrix of the report). BISHCA provides a yearly update of this report.

The Ozer Foundation Supports RAVNAH Hospice

The Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice has announced that The Ozer Foundation in Needham, Massachusetts has donated \$2,000 to benefit RAVNAH's Hospice program. The donation will be used to establish a special fund that will directly benefit and improve the lives of children affected by a terminal illness including the hospice patient and his family members.

"We are honored that The Ozer Foundation has chosen to support this vital hospice initiative. Their generous gift will enable us to provide, on an as-needed basis, crucial support to ensure the physical, emotional and spiritual care of a child facing a death," said Julie Scott, MSN, Associate Director of Home Care for RAVNAH.

"The Ozer Foundation's primary focus is to uplift children and families in need of help," stated Marlene Mullins, Chair of The Ozer Foundation's Administrative Committee. "In line with The Ozer Foundation's mission, hospice provides essential support to children facing their own death or the loss of a family member."

Hospice provides support and care for terminally ill children and adults so that they may live as fully and as comfortably as possible. Using an interdisciplinary team of health care professionals, hospice promotes effective pain management, integrates the physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of patient care, and provides bereavement support to family members.

VNA Family Room On the Move

The Family Room of the VNA of Chittenden, Grand Isle Counties is on the move. Construction crews are busy renovating space at the St. Joseph School in Burlington. The new site will include an "instructional room," an infant-toddler room, a preschool room and a room dedicated for adult programming. The lease also provides for shared access to the school cafeteria, gym, and playground.

The Friends-of-Life Campaign helped cover the expenses for much of the renovation and equipment.

Scholarships - Continued from page 1

degree. The fact that she has already volunteered over 150 hours at her local hospital and that she has "no plans on leaving this state" helped secure her grant. Laura is attending Norwich University.

Abigail Dodd, a recent graduate of Bellows Free Academy in St. Albans and future nursing student at the University of New Hampshire, was awarded \$1,000. Her experience as a Licensed Nurses Assistant at Haven Healthcare in St. Albans was key to her award.

Pamela Mintzer, who is seeking a Physical Therapy degree, was awarded \$1,000. "I've been dancing since the age of 3 and would like to incorporate dance into my study of physical therapy." The VAHHA scholarship committee thought that is a good idea. Pamela is attending Russell Sage College in Troy, New York.

Kari Orost, a Licensed Practical Nurse, is the school nurse at the Johnson Elementary School. Her grant is for \$1,000. She is seeking a RN degree. Kari is attending Southern Vermont College.

Meghan Sperry, 21, who was granted \$1,000 wrote that when she decided to become a nurse, that she had found her "path in life."

"When I made the choice to become a nurse, I knew that it was the right choice for me," she wrote in her winning essay. She is attending Norwich University in Northfield.

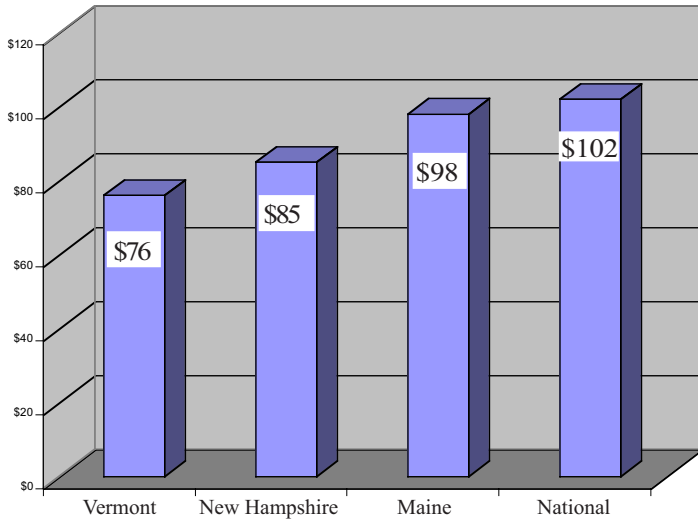
To apply for a VAHHA scholarship contact the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation.

Data Show VT Home Care High Penetration and Low Cost

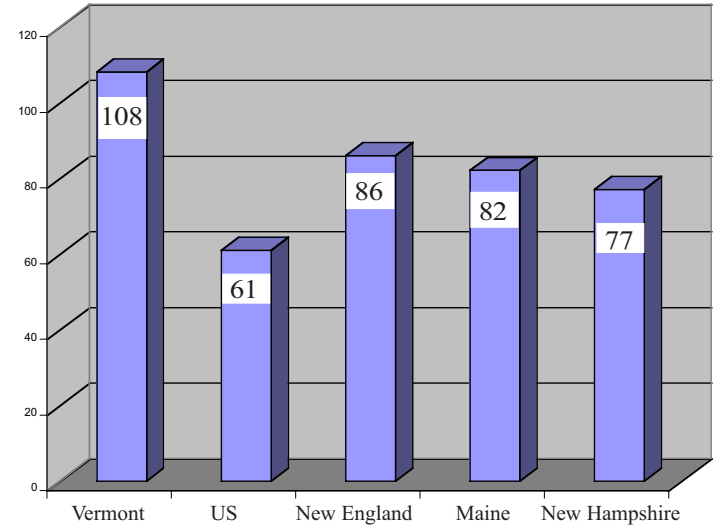
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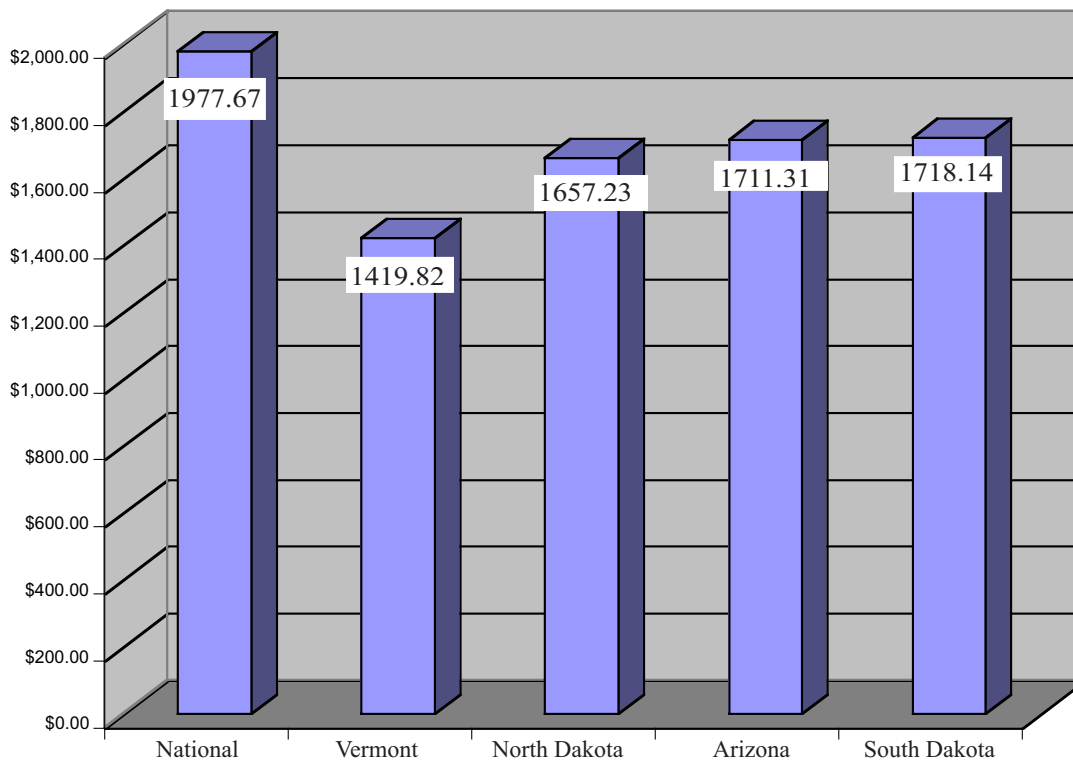
Cost per Visit - 2002



Access - Penetration - 2002



Average Cost per Medicare Episode - Four Lowest - 2002



Top 2 charts from CMS Data.

Bottom chart from The National Association for Home Care and Hospice.

State Launches Bright Futures Program

Vermont Governor James Douglas has signed an executive order forming a transitional governance board for the Bright Futures program. The 19-member board will include: the secretaries of AHS and Commerce and Community Development; the commissioners of the departments of Children and Families, Education, and Health; three business representatives; three parents, one representing a child with special needs; one representative from a children's advocacy organization; two representatives from Vermont's regional partnerships; two from the Early Childhood Council; and two legislators.

The goal of program is to eliminate duplication of services, streamline the system, and make child care services more customer friendly. The first task for the governing board is to set up a corporation that will evaluate the human services programs in the state and make recommendations on how these programs should be restructured. The private corporation is needed because the state wants to raise private

funds to help pay for this project. The not-for-profit corporation will be a self-funding organization that will work with government and business to support childcare services.

The group will meet at least twice a month starting in October and will send to the Governor, by January 1, recommendations for legislative changes.

MCH Program Change

The parameters for visits for the Healthy Babies, Kids and Families program changed September 13. Agencies will have three initial RN or Family Support Worker visits for eligible clients. Also, an additional six visits every six months can be provided but will require prior authorization. The program is currently shifting to the new Department of Children and Families.

VPQHC Publishes Diabetes Guide

The Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care has just published *Recommendation for Management of Diabetes in Vermont*. The report provides a summary of recommendations for hemoglobin, ophthalmic exams, foot exams, blood pressure measurements, renal disease, lipid management for adults, self-management education, medical nutrition therapy, self monitored blood glucose, tobacco counsel-

ing, diabetes mellitus and exercise, obesity treatment, immunization, screening for diabetes mellitus and gestational diabetes mellitus. Copies are available from VPQHC at 802-229-2152. The document eventually will be available on-line. When it is, there will be a direct link from the clinical pages of the VAHHA website.

Medical Malpractice Insurance Study Committee Begins Review

A seven-member panel studying what can be done to control the rising cost of medical malpractice insurance in Vermont met for the first time last month in Montpelier. The group is planning to meet monthly and report back to the

Legislature by January 2006. The panel will look at a number of cost containment options including placing caps on jury awards, limiting attorneys fees from settlements, and sanctioning attorneys who bring frivolous lawsuits.

Vermont Selected to Participate in NGA Project

The National Governors' Association's (NGA) Center for Best Practices has announced that Vermont has been selected as one of eight states to participate in the project "Rebalancing Long-Term Care Systems Toward Quality Community Living and Healthy Aging." NGA experts will work with state teams from Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Vermont, and Virginia to help build customized strategies to "increase community-living options and decrease the need for institutional care."

The goal of the project is to create more balanced health care delivery systems that will help states maximize consumer choice, improve access to home and community-based services and programs, and reduce long-term case bias and costs - all within the states' current fiscal constraints. Participating teams will also examine strategies to enhance community infrastructure by developing and organizing community care system services, addressing the mental health and substance abuse issues, and promoting healthy aging.

Who is Who and What is Where at AHS

On July 1, the Agency of Human Services was reorganized from eight departments to five. The new departments are the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Aging and Independent Living, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Health and the Office of Health Access. The Department of Health now runs mental health services.

Who's Where

AHS Secretary – Charles Smith

AHS Commissioners

Patrick Flood - Commissioner of the Department of Aging and Independent Living (DAIL)

Dr. Paul Jarris - Vermont Department of Health

Jim Morse - Department of Children and Family Services

Steven Gold - Department of Corrections

Josh Slen - Office of Health Access

The Department of Aging and Disabilities is now the Department of Aging and Independent Living. Joan Senecal is the Principal Assistant to the Commissioner. Bard Hill is the Director of the Division of Advocacy and Independent Living. Laine Lucenti is the Director of Licensing and Protection.

At the Department of Health, Sharon Moffat is the Deputy Commissioner. She also is helping with the AHS reorganization for Secretary Smith. Barbara Cimaglio is the Deputy Commissioner of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs and Dr. Susan Wehry is the Deputy Commissioner of Mental Health.

The Departments of SRS and PATH and the offices of Child Support and Economic Opportunities merged into the new Department for Children and Families (DCF). There are now four divisions and three offices within the Department of Children and Families.

Child Development Division. Kim Keiser is the Deputy Commissioner for Child Development. This division includes the Child Care Services Division, formerly housed within SRS and several programs that were in mental health, the Health Department and the Secretary's Office. The new Division consists of the following six units: Direct Services, Standards/Licensing, Fiscal, Workforce Development, Data Integration and Quality Assurance and Systems Development. Programs and/or funding coming into the Division that have existed in other departments include the Family Infant and Toddler Program, Healthy Babies, Kids and Families (from the Department of Health), and Healthy Child Care Vermont (a joint program with the Department of Health), the Children's Upstream Services Program (formerly from the Dept. of Developmental and Mental Health Services), Head Start Collaboration Services, and Parent Child Center and Success By Six program funding (formerly in the Secretary's Office). WIC services will stay with the Department of Health.

Child Welfare and Youth Justice Division. Cindy Walcott is the Deputy Commissioner of the Child Welfare and Youth Justice Division. This division consists of the Social Services Division formerly SRS, as well as the newly formed Youth Justice Unit, which includes elements formerly in the Social Services Division and the Juvenile Justice Commission of AHS. The new division consists of the following four units: Child Welfare Services, System of Care, Child Safety, and Youth Justice.

Economic Services Division. Betsy Forrest is the Deputy Commissioner for Economic Services. This new division includes the non-OVHA components of PATH. It will consist of the following four units: Welfare to Work, Regulatory & Planning, Economic Benefits and the Health Access Eligibility Unit (HAEU). OVHA is now an independent office under the Secretary's Office. Joshua Slen is the director of that office.

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Do you remember summer camp? More likely than not it involved swimming, hikes, crafts, campfires, and an acute shortage of sleep! For the 2004 MedQuest students, only the shortage of sleep applied. This program, initiated five years ago by the Northeastern Vermont Area Health Education Center, is designed to interest 9th, 10th and 11th graders in health care professions. Students lived at Johnson State College for a week and spent their days shadowing health care professionals in a variety of settings. Pictured is Lamoille Home Health Executive Director (center) Ann Mallett with the AHEC students.

Motorcyclists Ride for End-of-Life Care

On July 18, 2004, Franklin County Home Health Agency's (FCHHA) held its third annual fundraising motorcycle ride, The Freedom Ride for Hospice. All proceeds from this event directly support the FCHHA Hospice program. Each driver was asked to make a \$25 minimum donation and encouraged to raise additional support from family and friends. Together with contributions received prior to the event, participants helped raise over \$7,400.

The ride started at 10:00 a.m. at the branch office of FCHHA on Route 105 in Enosburg. It was a beautiful sunny Sunday for the ride which brought riders over 90 miles through Richford, Troy, Eden, Johnson, Jeffersonville, and Bakersfield before returning to the back entrance of the Home Health office.

Participants were given the opportunity to honor loved ones they have lost to terminal illnesses or other conditions. Each pledge form included a special space to include the name of a person the participants wished to honor. The names were read aloud following the ride. The closing ceremony also included a barbecue, 50/50 raffle and door prizes. All participants received a souvenir pin.

Sue O'Brien, Administrative Assistant at FCHHA, helped develop the event three years ago and has driven her own motorcycle in each ride. "We are eager to watch this ride grow," said Sue. "Our first ride attracted over 40 bikes from New York and Vermont. Last year's ride grew to 70 bikes from all over Vermont, New York and even Canada. This year we had 91 bikes and over 130 participants including passengers."

Riders have included Home Health staff, Hospice volunteers, patient's family members, community members and riders from other areas interested in supporting quality end-of-life care. Deb Peloubet, Hospice Certified nurse, rode alongside her husband in honor of the patients she has served through the Hospice Program.



Freedom Ride participant Deb Peloubet poses with her motorcycle for the Freedom Ride for Hospice. The ride raised over \$7,400 for Franklin County Home Health's Hospice program.

"Nurses like Deb work with patients and their families as they face the last days of their journey through life. The Freedom Ride is symbolic of that journey. The route will take us up and down a mountain side and around corners as we complete a circle, with friends, family and new acquaintances by our sides," said Sue.

FCHHA is grateful for the support of the major sponsors, said agency director Janet McCarthy. Major sponsors were the Lyndonville Savings Bank and Liberty Quest Financial. Also supporting the event were Brady & Levesque Funeral Home, Hayes-Rich Funeral Home, Heald Funeral Home, Kidder Memorial Home, Spears Funeral Home, OptionCare and Office Quarters, and many contributors who donated prizes and supplies for the barbecue.

Who's on First - Continued from page 6

Field Operations Division. Steve Dale is the Deputy Commissioner for Field Operations. This division includes department's twelve newly-merged field offices. Barre, Springfield, Bennington and Lamoille were selected as the first four districts to reorganize. The second set of districts will probably begin reorganization in September.

Offices of Child Support, Disability Determination and Economic Opportunity. The Offices of Child Support, Disability Determination Services and Economic Opportunity is now housed within DCF and will function more or less as it has in the past. Jeff Cohen and Trudy Lyon-Hart will continue on in their roles as directors of OCS and DDS. Tony Morgan will administer OEO.

The Commissioner's Office will manage several cross-department functions, including the Business Office, Information and Technology, and Human Resource Development (HRD). Les Birnbaum will serve as DCF's General Counsel.

Currently there are several focus groups working on the AHS transition to five departments from the previous eight. VAHHA is represented on the provider task force. The main focus of the various groups is to assure that the transition is customer friendly.

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