



# NURSE NETWORK

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## Congratulations to Pacera Awardee, Carmen Ramirez!



The Southern NJ Perinatal Cooperative has awarded the 2000 Joseph A. Pacera Award for Service to Maternal and Child Health to Carmen Ramirez, CSW, a social worker for Atlantic City Medical Center's City Division. This annual award is presented to "unsung heroes" who have had a significant impact on maternal and child health care services for underserved families in Southern NJ.

Ramirez was recognized for her work in ACMC's Maternal Newborn Services and Neonatal Intensive Care Units where she helps new mothers and their babies secure much needed social services and health care.

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## Folic Acid and Reducing Neural Tube Defects: Partnering to Increase Awareness

The March of Dimes is conducting a \$10 million, multi-year, national folic acid public health education program aimed at reducing the incidence of neural tube defects by 30% by the year 2001, using mass media campaigns, professional education and community action.

Neural tube defects are among the most serious and common birth defects in the United States. Each year an estimated 2,500 babies are born with these defects, including spina bifida, as well as pregnancies ending in miscarriage or stillbirth.

The South Jersey Chapter of the March of Dimes and the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalitions of Southern New Jersey and Southeastern Pennsylvania have come together to form a new collaborative initiative, the Delaware Valley Folic Acid Partnership. The main objective of this partnership is to increase public awareness through education about the use of folic acid to prevent neural tube defects. The goal is to increase the percentage of women who are aware of folic acid, who know that folic acid prevents neural tube defects, who know they should take it daily, and most importantly, who report taking a vitamin containing 400 micrograms of folic acid daily.

"It is exciting for the March of Dimes South Jersey Chapter to

have the opportunity to work closely with the March of Dimes Southeastern Pennsylvania Chapter, the Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative, the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalitions of South Jersey and Southeastern Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health on a project with the capacity to have a widespread regional impact," commented Sally Hinkle, RN, BSN, Director of Program Services for the March of Dimes South Jersey Chapter.

The Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalitions found the March of Dimes to be a good partner to collaborate with as New Jersey State now requires that the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalitions include folic acid awareness in their initiatives. The Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Camden City is planning a cooking demonstration with the Gamma House Early Head Start program this summer. They will focus on nutritional meals and foods that are high in folate (folic acid in its natural state).

For more information about the Delaware Valley Folic Acid Partnership, contact the March of Dimes, South Jersey Chapter at (856)667-2220.

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## New Phase of NJ KidCare 2000

The New Jersey Department of Human Services (NJDHS) has announced another expansion of New Jersey's Medicaid/NJ KidCare managed care program. This new phase of New Jersey Care 2000+ will transition members of the Aged, Blind and Disabled (ABD) populations who do not have Medicare into mandatory managed care.

The expansion of New Jersey Care 2000+ follows more than four years of collaborative efforts among consumers, advocates and community providers. A program has been developed that is strong in consumer protections for the State's most vulnerable populations.

"The continued growth of the NJ KidCare program is essential," commented Barbara May, BSN, RN, Director of Prevention Projects, Southern NJ Perinatal Cooperative. "Special populations have encountered many barriers when seeking health care services. The expansion of Medicaid managed care to high risk groups should improve their ability to find a medical home and regular preventive care."

Based on the successful enrollment of over 400,000 Medicaid and NJ KidCare beneficiaries, expansion of the program is expected to improve access and availability of health care services for people who typically have difficulty finding care in the regular fee-for-service Medicaid program. It is designed to ensure the provision of quality, preventive and cost effective care.

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## Parenting Guide Released Statewide

An informative child-rearing handbook, *Now What Do I Do? A Guide for Happy and Healthy Children, Parents, and Caregivers*, will now be distributed through hospital maternity departments and organizations across the state. New Jersey State law requires that all new parents receive information on child-rearing challenges.

The guide was developed with support and funding from the Health Care Foundation of NJ, the NJ Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, the DO-Right Foundation, the NJ State Department of Health and Senior Services, and the NJ Hospital Association.

For more information, contact HRET at (609)275-4145

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## Distance Learning Opportunities at the Camden County Department of Health & Senior Services

The Camden County Department of Health and Human Services (CCDHSS) has access to a wealth of information as well as education and training opportunities through the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) Distance Learning Network. Video conferencing downlinking has been arranged for CCDHSS staff and other health care partners at Camden County College in Blackwood, NJ.

Since 1999 eight satellite downlinks have been scheduled on a variety of topics including *Immunizations Through the Lifespan, Asthma and the Environment, Tuberculosis Frontline* and *Bioterrorism*. "All of these sessions have been extremely informative with presentation of the latest and most current best practices in the field," said Barbara Sosiak, Director of Nursing, CCDHSS. "There is also the opportunity for interaction with the presenters via phone or fax as part of the session. In addition, many of the sessions have offered continuing education credits for nursing and other disciplines."

Healthy People 2010 includes

an objective to increase the percentage of local health departments that satisfy staff expertise/competencies. "Access to distance learning opportunities greatly strengthens the competencies of our Public Health Nursing Staff in a timely and efficient manner," added Sosiak. For those nurses who are not able to participate in the sessions as they occur, the sessions are videotaped so that staff can view the material according to their schedules in a comfortable and convenient manner.

In order to enhance their training system capacity, CCDHSS has embarked upon a course that will bring a satellite dish on site at the Health Department in Blackwood, NJ. "By having our own satellite dish we can serve as the lead Camden County video-conferencing downlink site to be used not only by staff of CCDHSS but by our partners in the larger public health community," continued Sosiak. "Having so many distance learning opportunities available at the worksite is a pronounced advantage in assuring that we can offer the highest level of care to the community we serve."

For more information contact the CCDHSS at (856)374-6141.

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# Getting Your Money's Worth From Conventions

*NN saw this recent article and thought readers would gain a lot from its prudent advice.*

*Polly Gerber Zimmerman, RN,  
MSN, MBA*

Experienced nurses know that annual nursing conferences aren't just fun, they are also an important source of learning, offer exposure to new ideas, and help nurses interact with vendors and their products. Professional meetings also give energizing, eye-opening inspiration.

However, shrinking budgets, both personal and institutional, make it more critical than ever to justify the benefit from funds spent on professional activities. As a veteran attendee and believer that professional conventions are essential, I offer these tips to help extract the most value from your meetings:

1. Make the most of the opportunity to meet other people. It's a well-known "secret" that the most valuable information often comes not from the official presentations, but from the informal sharing before, in between and after the presentation. Don't allow attendees' organizational offices or reputations to intimidate you from picking their brains. Most people love to share information about what they are doing and consider it a compliment when they are asked for their input. Waiting in line or sitting next to someone before a program begins offers a chance to do this. Resist the temptation to talk only to people you know. If nothing else, ask someone from what community or institution they are

from, followed by, "So, what's happening in healthcare in \_\_\_\_\_?"

2. Decide in advance on two or three issues that you would like to learn more about. Use your brief encounters to ask about your areas of concern. However, listen carefully because hidden jewels of information can come from casual conversation. People are so familiar with the way they do things that they often do not recognize the unique or innovative nature of what they are sharing. I also put up notices on the community bulletin board for contact information for people interested in the same topics that I am. At one conference, I posted the question, "How do you handle language translation at your hospital?" I unearthed eight novel solutions during the three days at the conference.

3. Always exchange business cards or contact information for future networking. I write the topics of our discussions on the cards to jog my memory. I then tape all of the cards on a page inside my notebook to keep from losing them.

4. Enhance the knowledge you get from a speaker by standing with the group of people that gathers for questions after the speech. Hearing the answers to other people's questions will often further clarify and develop your understanding of the presenter's ideas. Also, ask your own questions of the speaker. Another benefit is that you are now aware of the other attendees who are interested in the same topic. Don't forget their business cards too.

5. Make the most of your

time in the product exhibit hall. When the exhibit hall opens, start at the back of the show floor and work your way forward. You'll avoid the initial crowds that follow the natural flow of front to back. Ask the recruiters from the represented hospitals about your issues. If they have dealt with that area but don't know the details, they'll be able to give you a contact person. Also, learn about the products. Ask vendors which of their wares are new. Most have a brief packaged presentation with information these items that they will often willingly share for your future in-services. Many also now offer teaching sessions.

Following these hints can help you get the most from formal and informal opportunities at conventions.

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Check out the Southern  
NJ Perinatal Cooperative's  
web site at [www.snjpc.org](http://www.snjpc.org)

*For information on  
conferences, meetings, events  
and programs.*

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