

# DDS EMPLOYEE NEWS

Governor M. Jodi Rell

Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara

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## Nurse of the Year



*Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara, Gail Goodenough, Sue Watkins, RN, Kelly Watkins and Robert Petrie at the State Nurse of the Year Ceremony sponsored by the Department of Administrative Services (DAS).*

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) recently honored the 2008 Nurses of the Year from the public and private sectors. **Susan Watkins, RN**, a Clinical Nurse Coordinator from the West Region was chosen as DDS Nurse of the Year and **Donna St. George, LPN** was named DDS Licensed Practical Nurse of the Year.

Three nurses from the Private Sector were recognized for their contributions to persons served by the department. They are **Peggy Lee Nelson, RN** (UCP of Eastern Connecticut), **Kelly Keaveney, RN** (FAVARH), and **Rose Jarvis, LPN** (ASI-CT).

Each year the department accepts nominations for the award and the DDS Nurse of Year is nominated for the State Nurse of Year Award sponsored by the Department of Administrative Services (DAS).

“In honor of National Nurses Week, the nurses are recognized for their dedication of service to others,” said Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara. “Nurses

who specialize in the field of developmental disabilities are especially commended for choosing such a challenging career.”

Ms. Watkins, joined the department in 1989 as a nurse in the Northwest Regional Center. She moved to the Individual Supports/Own Home Program in 1998 as a Clinical Nurse Coordinator.

Nominated for this award by Stuart Gero, Ms. Watkins is described as a paragon. Mr. Gero stated, “She is a strong team member, she advocates for independence and has creative ways to make people feel part of society, respects their privacy, and promotes sharing information with peers when there are successes.”

South Region's Ms. St. George received the DDS LPN Recognition Award. An employee since 1990, she is known for her dedication. According to Linna Ellis, RN, who nominated Ms. St. George, “Donna always stops what she is doing to respond to an individual's needs or special requests. She has excellent nursing skills and on a regular basis she takes time to search out information to share with her shift co-workers as well as the other nurses. She is very knowledgeable and entirely generous with sharing her knowledge.”

In addition to the DDS nurses, the private sector nurses were honored at the annual Health Services Conference. Held recently in Rocky Hill, the conference titled “Dealing With Grey” featured presentations by Carol Polifroni, EdD, RN; Rhea Sanford, PhD, RN; and Mary Ellen Hobson MS, RN from the UConn School of Nursing. The information offered to the audience, made up of nursing and clinical staff from public and private sector agencies, dealt with knowing oneself and the many roles a professional is called upon to assume, and using evidence based practice standards and clinical judgment as a guide in professional decision making.



*Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara is joined by Peggy Nelson, RN; Kelly Keaveney, RN; Rose Jarvis, LPN; Susan Watkins, RN; Donna St. George, LPN; and Dave Carlow, DDS Director of Health and Clinical Services at the Rocky Hill conference.*

## Legislative Update

The 2008 regular session of the Connecticut General Assembly adjourned “sine die” at midnight on Wednesday, May 7, 2008. The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) had two agency bills that passed and were signed by Governor M. Jodi Rell.

Public Act 08-7, An Act Concerning Changes to Statutes Affecting the Department of Developmental Services, was effective upon passage. This act changes the Council on Mental Retardation's name to the Council on Developmental Services to reflect the Department's 2007 name change and permits the DDS Commissioner to designate someone to fill his role as an ex-officio, nonvoting council member. In addition, it renames the department's “mental retardation” regions as “developmental services” regions and changes the name of one Camp Harkness Advisory Committee member group to reflect its name change from the Southeastern Connecticut Association for the Retarded to the Southeastern Connecticut Association for Developmental Disabilities. The act requires the DDS ombudsperson to have experience in the field of developmental services rather than mental retardation and also permits DDS to hire an additional self-advocate coordinator.

Public Act 08-42, An Act Promoting Consistency Among Peer Review Proceedings is effective October 1, 2008. This act applies confidentiality and immunity provisions of the medical peer review and public health record laws to the operations of the DDS mortality review teams and the Independent Mortality Review Board (IMRB).

Due to forecasts indicating declining revenues statewide, the legislature and the governor decided to maintain the original second year of the budget that passed both chambers last year. What this means for DDS and its service providers is that none of the recommended mid-year budget adjustments were adopted (including funding for 6 additional case managers; requested adjustments for age-outs, high school graduates, and Voluntary Services Program growth; a private provider cost of living adjustment (COLA); or additional dollars for the Best Buddies program). Governor Rell and the legislature have instead made a decision to hold the line on spending and live within the budget previously adopted last year. In addition, Governor Rell has directed state agencies to reduce fuel consumption, restrict the use of non-essential p-card purchases, and has issued an out-of-state travel ban and a statewide hiring freeze.

On a positive note, the department's FY09 appropriation supports the continuation of the waiting list initiative and funding for age-outs, voluntary services and school graduates at the level requested at the beginning of the 2-year biennium. Funding to hire additional staff for the newly created Autism Division is maintained, and the Autism Pilot will be expanded to include participants from a new region of the state, specifically Hartford County.

DDS will continue to assist the private provider communities in any way it can as they continue to face the challenges of the rising costs of goods, energy and insurance.

Additional information and a comprehensive session wrap-up will be available soon on the DDS Legislative Affairs webpage at [www.ct.gov/dds](http://www.ct.gov/dds). As always, please contact Christine Pollio or Rod O'Connor with any specific questions related to the 2008 legislative session.

### Department of Developmental Services

[www.ct.gov/dds](http://www.ct.gov/dds)

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### Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

[www.solutions-eap.com](http://www.solutions-eap.com) ♦ 24/7 Assistance ♦ 1-800-526-3485

Questions?

E-mail: Joan Barnish, Director of Communications ♦ [joan.barnish@ct.gov](mailto:joan.barnish@ct.gov) or call 860-418-6044

[WWW.CT.GOV/DDS](http://WWW.CT.GOV/DDS)