



# The Alabama Pediatrician

Third/Fourth Quarter 2019

## From the President

Over the next year, we are anticipating many exciting opportunities that will certainly affect the practice



**Wes Stubblefield, MD, FAAP**  
Chapter President

of pediatrics. As your advocates, we at the Alabama Chapter-AAP will continue to involve ourselves in every change that happens in our great state.

First, we have several new board members who started their term on October 1. Dr. Haidee Custodio, of USA Pediatrics, assumed

the role of CME Chair, Dr. Cassi Smola is our new UAB pediatric residency program representative, Dr. Elizabeth Dawson is our new Secretary/Treasurer, Dr. Melissa McNally is serving the remainder of Dr. Dawson's Area 5 representative term, and Dr. Katrina Skinner of Fairhope has taken over as Vice President/President-elect.

Secondly, as you know, the Medicaid Alabama Coordinated Health Networks began functioning October 1 and will start active case management November 1. We are meeting regularly with the Medicaid Commissioner and the agency's medical directors to ensure a smooth transition from the Health Homes. We are proud that almost all of the regional medical directors are pediatricians!

To attempt to improve our state's HPV vaccination rates, we are partnering with ADPH to implement a regional peer-to-peer mentoring project on immunization best practices. Although we understand the difficulties that surround this vaccine, we can all work together to vaccinate as many adolescents as possible.

Finally, ACHIA will be recruiting for its next QI project focusing on in-office screening. Practices may focus on developmental, autism, or maternal depression screening. The current project, which focused on adolescent confidentiality and depression screening, has been a huge success!

We are making a difference in Alabama! Let the Board and Chapter office know how we can help you.

## Annual Meeting attendees enjoy practice management pearls, ACEs-focused sessions & movie, special awards dinner

Pediatricians and other healthcare providers from across the state gathered for yet another successful Annual Meeting and Fall Pediatric Update at the Hyatt Regency Birmingham-The Wynfrey Hotel in late September, which featured practice management-focused sessions, a panel discussion on ACEs, a medical liability/risk management workshop by ProAssurance, a Chapter business meeting on Saturday, the annual awards dinner in association with Children's of Alabama and a special Friday night showing of the movie *Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope*.

"The speakers were terrific," was a comment heard many times throughout the weekend.

At the Children's of Alabama/UAB/Chapter Awards Dinner, Chapter President Wes Stubblefield, MD, FAAP, recognized several individuals for their outstanding work, including:

*AL-AAP 2019 Legislative Heroes, Alabama Representative Barbara Drummond, Alabama Senator David Sessions and Representative Shane Stringer (to be given award at a later date)*

In recognition of their leadership and tireless dedication in leading the legislative effort to pass legislation in 2019 that protects our children by prohibiting alternative nicotine product retailers and manufacturers from advertising or selling products near schools and other places where children learn and play;

*Cason Benton, MD, FAAP, Professor of General Pediatrics at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the Alabama Child Health Improvement Alliance Medical Director, as the 2019 recipient of the Marsha Raulerson Advocacy Award, for the following reasons:*

- Through her initiative and advocacy, the Chapter's vision of infusing quality improvement (QI) into pediatric practice has come to fruition, and she has fostered a culture of QI in primary care across the state.



**Alabama Representative Barbara Drummond and Senator David Sessions with their Legislative Hero awards**



**Cason Benton, MD, FAAP, with her Marsha Raulerson Advocacy Award**

### Chapter Office and Staff Alabama Chapter – AAP

- Linda P. Lee, APR  
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- Jill H. Powell  
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### Alabama Chapter – AAP

#### Mission:

The mission of the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics is to obtain optimal health and well-being for all children in Alabama, and to provide educational and practice support for its membership so the highest quality of medical care can be achieved.

#### Values:

Children must be highly valued by society.

Each child must develop to his/her highest potential.

Children must have strong advocates for they have no voice of their own.

Pediatricians are essential to achieving optimal child health. The work of pediatricians, and the profession of pediatrics, must endure and grow even stronger.

#### Vision:

Children in Alabama are happy and healthy; Alabama pediatricians are professionally fulfilled and financially secure.

### Annual Meeting attendees enjoy practice management pearls, ACEs-focused sessions & movie, special awards dinner continued from page 1

- Under her leadership, ACHIA has conducted seven QI collaboratives, raising the bar on consistent care in the areas of early screening, HPV, asthma, obesity, and adolescent care.
- She has taken the ACHIA story to a national level, and was an invited speaker at the American Board of Pediatrics, which also selected her as the 2018 Paul V. Miles Fellow. She also represents the Chapter in the National Improvement Partnership Network as well as with the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs.
- She has served as the medical director for her Medicaid Health Home and now the Alabama Coordinated Health Network, demonstrating a passion for the best care for our Medicaid children.
- She served with passion as the faculty representative for the UAB Pediatric Residency Program on the Executive Board for four years, raising awareness among residents about what the Chapter does and how it benefits them.

In addition, District X special achievement awards were presented to:

- *Eric Tyler, MD, FAAP* – for visionary and creative thinking to engage nurse practitioner professionals in the Chapter by fostering a new collaboration with NAPNAP.
- *Brian Gannon, MD, FAAP* – for exemplary pediatric leadership and vision in building a behavioral health/primary care pilot for Project LAUNCH.
- *Kathy Monroe, MD, FAAP* for energetic leadership of the Chapter Injury Prevention Committee to establish a bold, written vision for gun violence prevention advocacy.

The festivities concluded with Children's awarding of its Master Pediatrician and Wallace Clyde awards (see story on next page).



Chapter Executive Board Member Tonya Zbell, MD, FAAP, with practice management speaker Chip Hart.



Shradda Shrestha, MD, FAAP, and Carla Gayle, MD, enjoy the Saturday night reception.

## Drummond named Master Pediatrician, Colvin honored with Wallace Clyde award

Recognizing outstanding accomplishments and dedication to the practice of general pediatrics, the Children's of Alabama Master Pediatrician has been awarded since 1991. Many long-time Chapter members have earned this distinction, and this year, Chapter member Paula Drummond, MD, FAAP, a primary care pediatrician at Eastern Shore Children's Clinic, has joined her colleagues on the list.

Dr. Drummond has been an advocate for children and newborns through active involvement in her community hospital, and has served on the state Perinatal Advisory Committee since 2002. Additionally, she has been a medical director of pediatric hospice care, served as a volunteer pediatrician for the children of local migrant farm workers and been a preceptor for the pediatrics requirements for health care professional students.

*The Wallace Alexander Clyde, M.D. Distinguished Service Award* was established in 1984 by the UAB Department of Pediatrics and Children's as a means of recognizing outstanding physicians who have devoted a lifetime of service to children and their families. This year, Edward Colvin, MD, FAAP, the Lionel M. Barger Endowed Chair in Pediatric Cardiology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and former Division Director of Pediatric Cardiology, was honored with the award.

Colvin joined the faculty at UAB in the Division of Pediatric Cardiology in 1983, and served as Division Director from 1989 to 2012, during which UAB became the sole provider of pediatric and congenital interventional cardiology and surgery in the state; under his leadership, the division has developed to become a comprehensive state-of-the-art program with results that are among the best in the country.

Congratulations, Drs. Drummond and Colvin!



The year's Master Pediatrician recipient, Paula Drummond, MD, FAAP, (left) with colleague Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP, Incoming Chapter Vice President.



Edward Colvin, MD, FAAP, (right) accepts the Wallace Clyde award from Sergio Stagno, MD, FAAP.

### How to Contact Your Chapter Leaders

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## Event Calendar

October 25 – 29, 2019  
AAP National Conference &  
Exhibition  
New Orleans, LA

November 20, 2019  
Chapter/PMA Webinar: TBA  
12:15 p.m.

April 23 - 26, 2020  
2020 Spring Meeting &  
Pediatric Update  
The Lodge at Gulf State Park  
Gulf Shores, AL

September 25 – 27, 2020  
2020 Annual Meeting & Fall  
Pediatric Update  
Birmingham, AL

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Pediatric Nephrology of  
Alabama

## Chapter Executive Board welcomes new members

The Alabama Chapter-AAP is delighted to welcome three new members – Haidee Custodio, MD, FAAP, CME Chair; Melissa McNally, MD, FAAP, Area 5 Representative; and Cassi Smola, MD, FAAP, UAB Pediatric Residency Program representative – to the Alabama Chapter-AAP Executive Board! We are also happy to have several existing members re-elected or move to new positions: Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP, Vice President/President-Elect; Elizabeth Dawson, MD, FAAP, Secretary/Treasurer; Jennifer McCain, MD, FAAP, Area 3 Representative; and Norma Mobley, MD, FAAP, Area 6 Representative.

The new Executive Board, which took office on October 1, is listed on page 3.

“We also thank outgoing board members, Drs. Cason Benton, Kenneth Elmer, and Susan Walley, for their many years of service and faithful dedication to making the Chapter better than it was when they started. All three made wonderful contributions to pediatrics in Alabama,” said Wes Stubblefield, MD, FAAP, Chapter President.



Haidee Custodio, MD, FAAP



Melissa McNally, MD, FAAP



Cassi Smola, MD, FAAP



Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP



Elizabeth Dawson, MD, FAAP



Jennifer McCain, MD, FAAP



Norma Mobley, MD, FAAP

## Best Beginnings: screening collaborative to launch in 2020

*QI collaborative will focus on developmental, autism, social-emotional and maternal depression screening*

Alabama's children achieve better outcomes when challenges in infancy and toddlerhood related to development, autism, social-emotional concerns, and maternal depression are identified and addressed early on. *Best Beginnings*, an Alabama Child Health Improvement Alliance (ACHIA) Early Screening and Referral collaborative, will support primary care practices in 2020 to improve their current screening processes or to introduce new screenings into their workflow.

Participating practices will be encouraged to focus on one screening process during the collaborative. Online modules for all practice members will provide clinical education, and the one-hour monthly webinars, held from January through September, will allow practices to learn from one another and from Alabama-based content experts about screening processes, best practices, and quality improvement. Practices will track data over time to ensure interventions lead to improvements.



### Which practices should participate?

Any practice that wants to introduce a new screen and referral process for development, autism, social-emotional, or maternal depression should consider participating in the collaborative. Likewise, your practice may want to sign up if you are interested in improving a current process, such as the following:

- Improving workflow
- Identifying new partners or strengthening connections with current partners in order to support patients with positive screens

## Best Beginnings: an ACHIA Early Screening Collaborative to launch in 2020 continued from page 1

- Administering the correct age ASQ for patients with prematurity or who have preventive visits off schedule
- Reliably administering the screen in the preferred language
- Accurately scoring screens when answers are skipped
- Tracking referrals to close care gaps
- Training providers and staff to create a shared culture for screening
- Updating clinic policies/job descriptions to support screening process
- Switching from paper to electronic screening
- Learning from colleagues' experiences from around the state
- Reviewing coding practices

There is no charge to participate. Additional benefits of participation include MOC Part 4, CME, and meeting PCMH re/certification requirements. Look for recruitment information coming soon to your email box. For questions or to request a registration packet, contact Linda Champion at [ljchampion@alaap.org](mailto:ljchampion@alaap.org).

## Help us get the word to families about the 2020 Census

As you may know, the Alabama Chapter-AAP is part of a large, statewide push to promote complete counting of Alabamians, particularly young children, in the 2020 Census, which takes place in March/April 2020. Families of young children are being targeted due to previous undercounting of children from birth to 5 years of age in the 2010 Census. In addition, rural areas, particularly in west Alabama, had among the lowest response rates.

We are working with VOICES for Alabama's Children to increase participation among families of young children. Parents need to hear from trusted providers about the importance of participating in the Census and counting all of their children. To help you begin to spread the word among your own staff and colleagues as well as families, we are enclosing two "Whose Child is Missing?" posters – one in English and one in Spanish – for you to place prominently in your office/clinic/hospital.



Why does this matter so much?

- Many Alabamians directly benefit from the federal programs in which funding allocations are determined in part by census data – including Medicaid! Completing a census form will help ensure that our state receives its fair share of funding. The 2010 Census should have counted **17,318** additional Alabama children under age 5. Our undercount has cost us **\$13,075,090** every year in funding from just five of the federally funded programs for children and families, including Alabama Medicaid.
- The assistance programs tied to census data support children, education, hospitals, health care, rural development and community programs that are critical to all Alabamians. If dollars are reallocated to other states due to a poor census count, then funding for those services will have to be made up somehow at the local/state level. This affects everyone!
- Alabama is at risk of losing a Congressional seat in the 2020 Census due to projected slow growth. That means one less voice for Alabama at the federal level! We need full census participation to retain our current Congressional representation.

Look in your mailbox for the poster, which also includes information about ordering more (in five languages).

In addition, Reach Out and Read-Alabama is making application for a grant to support distribution of a children's book from the CDC, *Everyone Counts*, around which events will be held at Reach Out and Read sites in the Spring in preparation for the April 1 Census kick-off.

## Early Career Spotlight: Kym Middleton, MD, FAAP

By Nola Jean Ernest, MD, PhD,  
FAAP, Chapter Early Career  
Pediatrician Representative

Welcome to cold and flu season! Over the next few months, with the increase in hospital admissions and the shorter days, pediatricians may start to feel a little burned out. The remedy? Create space in your life to focus on the passions that keep you "burned in." For myself and this quarter's Early Career Spotlight physician, advocacy is one of those passions that help us to see the forest and keep us from getting lost in the trees. Here are a few ideas to consider this season: write an op-ed about the importance of influenza vaccine, create a video for your personal social media account about the importance of Medicaid for Alabama children, invite your state senators or representatives to observe at your office for a day, or sign up to run a 5K on behalf of your favorite organization!

Kym Middleton, MD, FAAP, a pediatric hospitalist from Huntsville Hospital for Women and Children and this quarter's Early Career Spotlight, states that her passion for advocacy comes from her mother, "an immigrant from Vietnam [who] worked hard to provide for us and taught us to help those less fortunate than us." A native of Huntsville, Dr. Middleton earned her undergraduate and medical degrees at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She briefly left Alabama to complete her pediatric residency with the Greenville Health System in South Carolina, where she earned several "Resident of the Year" awards and served

*Continued on page 11*



# PROTECT YOUR PATIENTS WITH HPV VACCINE

IN THE US...



Approximately  
**79  
MILLION**  
people have been  
infected with HPV




**14  
MILLION**  
new HPV infections  
occur every year



**80%**  
of sexually active  
people will contract  
HPV over their lifetime

HPV IS A  
COMMON  
DISEASE  
AND CAN  
LEAD TO:



CANCER  
HEAD AND NECK  
GENITAL  
THROAT  
ANOGENITAL

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT  
[ALABAMAPUBLICHEALTH.GOV/IMM](http://ALABAMAPUBLICHEALTH.GOV/IMM)

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## HPV Peer-to-Peer Mentor Project to assist 50 pediatric practices across state

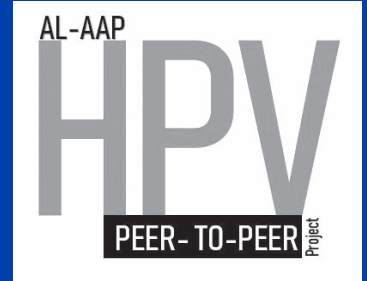
Over the next six to 12 months, the Chapter is partnering with the Alabama Department of Public Health Immunization Division to help pediatric practices in Alabama increase rates of up-to-date HPV immunization, thanks to funding from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

Through this initiative, entitled, “Increasing Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine Coverage by Strengthening Adolescent Immunization Quality Improvement for Providers (IQIP) Activities,” or more shortly, the AL-AAP HPV Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Project, the Chapter is deploying 10 pediatrician mentors to visit 50 practices over the course of the next few months.

This subset of VFC pediatric practices due for visits with ADPH compliance staff this year will receive a more robust look at their data, along with a mini-training for their physicians and staff. At this visit, goals will be set. Then, at two months and six months, they will receive a follow-up from their mentor and Chapter staff to evaluate progress. Those pediatricians who are American Board of Pediatrics diplomates will receive 25 Maintenance of Certification Part 4 for participation.

“As you know, the data are striking: Almost 34,000 U.S. men and women are diagnosed with HPV cancers annually and Alabama is #1 in cervical cancers. Yet many Alabamians are not fully vaccinated against HPV. The most recent ImmPRINT reports show rates ranging from 11 percent to 69 percent of VFC pediatric practices’ patients as fully immunized. We want to improve those numbers in the pediatric medical home--the best place for adolescents to get their immunizations,” said Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP, lead physician for the project and Chapter Vice President/President-Elect.

As part of the grant project, the Chapter has hired a contract HPV QI Project Manager, Barbara Schuler, MPH. Your practice may be one of the 50 contacted. If so, please reply to Barbara to get your practice visit scheduled. She can be reached at [bschuler@alaap.org](mailto:bschuler@alaap.org) or (205) 919-4329.



## Adolescent Health Center

[ChildrensAL.org/adolescentmedicineclinics](http://ChildrensAL.org/adolescentmedicineclinics)



Children's  
of Alabama

UAB MEDICINE

## Partnering for your patients' specialty care needs

**The Adolescent Health Center** is pleased to provide subspecialty consultation for adolescents ages 11–21.

All the attending physicians who lead our clinics are adolescent medicine trained.

- ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) Clinic
- Adolescent Nutrition Clinic
- SHINE Clinic for Pediatric Weight Management
- Eating Disorders Clinic
- Family Clinic
- LARC (Long-Acting Reversible Contraception) Clinic
- LEAH (Leadership and Education in Adolescent Health) Clinic
- FAB (Female Adolescent Bleeding) Clinic
- Substance Use Assessment Clinic

To refer a patient, please visit  
[ChildrensAL.org/patient-referral](http://ChildrensAL.org/patient-referral)  
Complete the  
Specialty Clinic Appointment form  
Fax form to 205.638.2071

Adolescent Health Center  
Children's Park Place  
1600 5th Avenue South  
Birmingham, AL 35233

## A public health crisis: Youth use of e-cigarettes, vape and JUUL

By Abigail Duemler, MPH and Susan Walley, MD, CTTS, FAAP, Professor of Pediatrics, Division of Hospital Medicine, University of Alabama at Birmingham

In a world abuzz with misinformation and misleading messages about e-cigarettes, pediatricians can play a critical role in providing accurate information about these products and addressing health concerns for patients and parents. Pediatricians and other healthcare providers should be concerned about e-cigarettes because of their popularity, high levels of nicotine, negative health effects, and threat to public health.

E-cigarettes, also known as vapes or by brand names such as JUUL, are the most commonly used tobacco product among youth. The National Youth Tobacco Survey reported that in 2018, 1 in 5 high school students used e-cigarettes in the last 30 days, a 78 percent increase in use from 2017. JUUL, the most popular e-cigarette brand, is a sleek, flash-drive-shaped e-cigarette that uses disposable pods (Figure). These pods contain nicotine, benzoic acid and come in a variety of flavors (mango and mint being the most popular among youth.) Youth who “JUUL” may not identify as e-cigarette users, because they believe that JUULING is different. When asking youth about their tobacco use, JUUL needs to be referenced by name.

JUUL pods contain very high concentrations of nicotine – 59 mg/mL or 41.3 mg of nicotine per pod. This is more than double the estimated amount of nicotine inhaled



when smoking a pack of cigarettes. Nicotine is known to harm the adolescent brain and prime it for addiction and studies demonstrate that nicotine addiction can occur quickly among youth. Another reason for concern with these products is that they are proven gateways to other substances: youth who use e-cigarettes are four times more likely to use traditional cigarettes one year later, and longitudinal studies also demonstrate that youth using e-cigarettes are more likely to binge drink alcohol, use marijuana and other illegal drugs.

Aside from the dangers of nicotine addiction, there are other components in e-cigarette products that have health harms that pose a danger to users. Carcinogens and toxicants,

including acrolein, formaldehyde, heavy metals, and ultrafine (aerosolized) particles, have been found in e-cigarette solution (e-liquid) and the aerosol or “vapor.” The short-term health effects of vaping in adolescents include increased coughing and wheezing and increased asthma attacks among those with asthma. Among adult e-cigarette users, there is a growing body of evidence of health harms that are similar to the health harms of traditional combusted tobacco (i.e. cigarettes) such as respiratory irritation and cardiovascular disease. E-cigarettes are not approved by the Food and Drug Administration as a smoking cessation treatment and a meta-analysis (Glantz & Bareham, *Annual Review of Public Health*, 2018) has shown that smokers using e-cigarettes are 23 percent less likely to quit traditional cigarettes.

In addition to the health effects on e-cigarette users, public health harms are a major concern. Secondhand vape is the aerosol that is exhaled by e-cigarette users, much like secondhand smoke. Second-hand vape health effects have been documented, making it unsafe to vape around others and e-cigarettes should be specifically included in all comprehensive smoking and tobacco-free ordinances. Another significant threat is that these products have begun to re-normalize tobacco use among this generation of teenagers and young adults. If youth adopt a glamorized concept of tobacco use or a perception that e-cigarettes are low-risk, it is more likely they will be more open to other tobacco use.

There are many resources for pediatricians and parents interested in additional information, including the AAP Julius B. Richmond Center for Excellence and CDC website. The Richmond Center resources include a “Vaping, JUUL and E-cigarette Toolkit” that includes a fact sheet on JUUL and a slide deck that can be used for youth presentations (<https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Richmond-Center/Pages/Electronic-Nicotine-Delivery-Systems.aspx>).

*The Chapter was delighted to have Dr. Walley, who is also Chair of the AAP Section on Tobacco Control, speak on this topic at the Annual Meeting in September. This information will also be pushed out to members and schools as part of the Chapter’s School Health/School Nurse Communication grant project in 2020.*



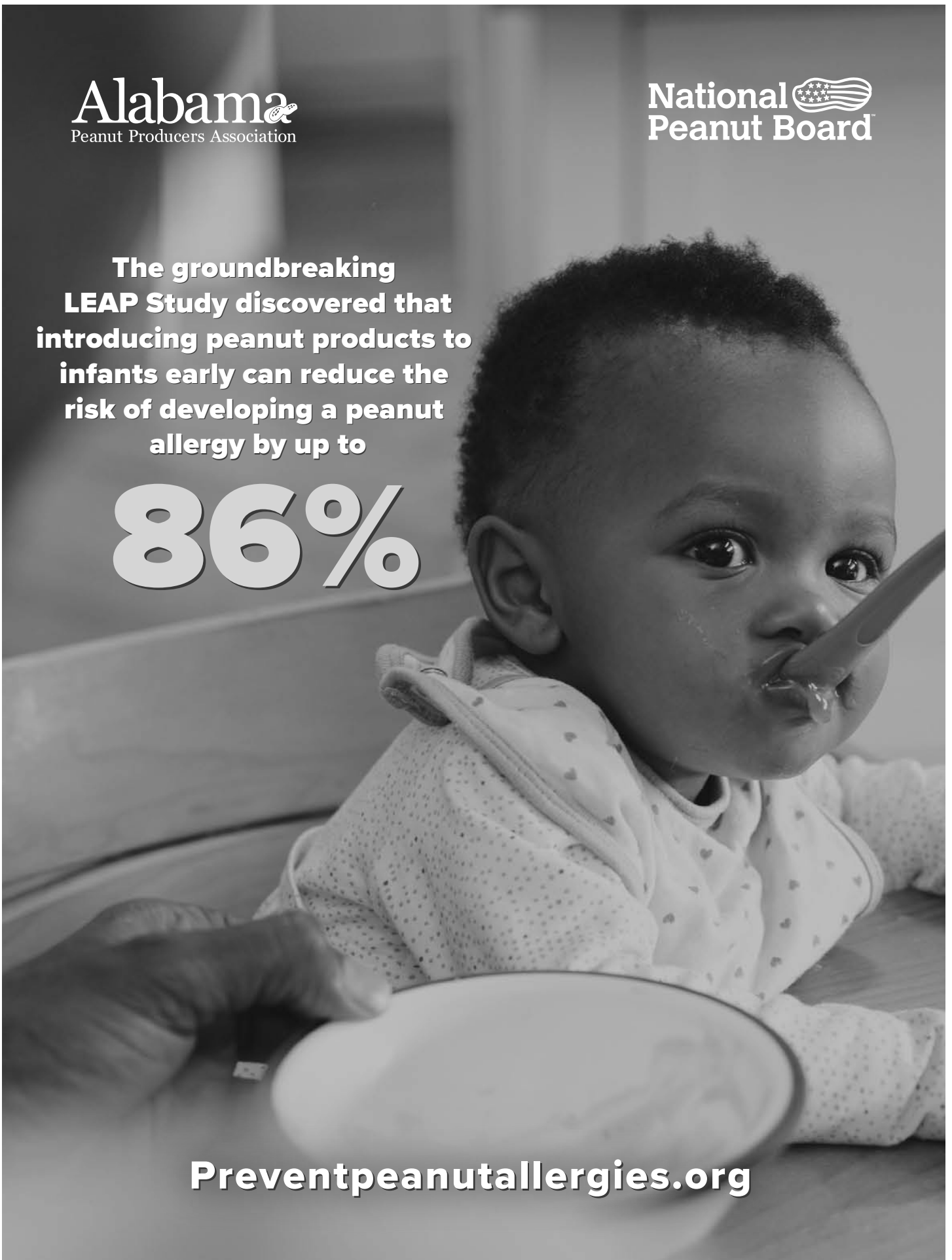
**Alabama**  
Peanut Producers Association

**National**   
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**The groundbreaking  
LEAP Study discovered that  
introducing peanut products to  
infants early can reduce the  
risk of developing a peanut  
allergy by up to**

**86%**

**[Preventpeanutallergies.org](http://Preventpeanutallergies.org)**



## Won't sleep and tantrums and picky, oh, my!

### Project LAUNCH: Integration of early childhood behavioral health in primary care pediatrics

By Brian Gannon, MD, FAAP, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, College of Community Health Sciences, University of Alabama



Brian Gannon, MD, FAAP

Behavioral issues are a common reason for parents to seek care with their pediatricians, but many of us struggle to find the time to discuss these important topics with our families at routine visits. What if we had behavioral specialists available in our offices, trained and ready to help clinicians guide families through the challenges of everyday toddler and infant parenting?

Through Project LAUNCH, we were able to embed an early childhood mental health consultant (ECMHC, an LCSW with specific training in early childhood) one day a week in our busy general pediatric clinic. The goal was to provide better education of the parents in our practice regarding common developmental and behavioral concerns, as well as help them with referrals for extra counseling and resources when appropriate. We were somewhat surprised at how this free service was received by families, prompting us to adjust our strategies as the program has matured.

Our initial plan was to offer the mental health consultation to every family arriving for a visit with a child up to age 8. We intended to track this with a consent form, so we could identify the issues discussed and the children served. We quickly abandoned this plan, because most parents were nervous about being involved in “research,” and did not want to share potentially sensitive parenting information. We have continued to schedule visits specifically for the consultant on the day she is in the office, mostly when families call with a chief complaint related to behaviors or self-regulation, including tantrums, possible ADHD, developmental delays, or sleep problems. Our providers also engage the consultant frequently when such issues arise during regular visits, and most families have been receptive when our ECMHC becomes involved at the recommendation of the pediatrician or nurse practitioner.

The main challenge has been the concept of universal behavioral screening, or offering such a consultation routinely to everyone who comes in for an encounter. We are actively tracking the perceived barriers parents report in this situation, such as potential time constraints, no

relevant concerns that day, and preferring to discuss with the trusted PCP first. We are excited about analyzing the data from the first year of this project to see how our clinic staff’s increased awareness of resources may be changing the completed referral rate for early intervention and other counseling resources, as well as any change in the baseline rate of such referrals and diagnoses.

Our primary successes so far seem to be among parents who are having difficulty navigating the developmental referral process and those children who are too young for traditional cognitive behavioral therapy, but whose parents believe may need some sort of mental health assessment, particularly for hyperactivity or aggressive behaviors. Anecdotally, these parents have been thrilled to have an advocate conveniently located in the primary care office. These parents with challenging children report more success with simple parenting interventions (recommended and explained in detail by the behavioral specialist) than we have typically been able to sustain through advice from the pediatricians alone on the same topics.

Please stay tuned for more news from AL-AAP about integrating behavioral specialists into primary care offices. We are actively working to increase screening rates for developmental challenges, but without resources available to help families, this will be an uphill battle. This program holds promise as a way to place advisors on these important issues right where families need them: in our offices.

This project is a key component of Project LAUNCH, a SAMHSA-funded project administered through the ALAAP. We hope to use our experience to train more Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants (ECMHCs) across the state, eventually building a statewide infrastructure for private practices with less access to these resources. We envision having ECMHCs scattered across the state and shared among several practices. This network of ECMHCs can act as child advocates and liaisons with other resources, thereby improving the mental health care for young children whose general pediatricians are overly burdened with other clinical priorities, and do not feel that they have the time, money, expertise, or resources to provide these services on their own.

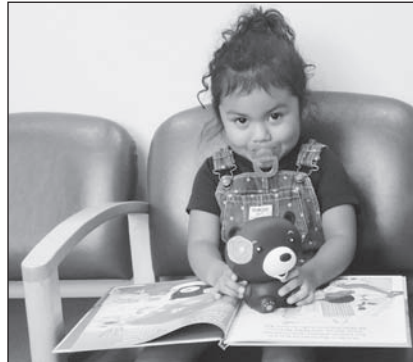
## Reach Out and Read All About It!

By Salina Sowell, Development and Communications Coordinator

The 10th annual Rx for Summer Reading campaign celebrated Alabama's bicentennial and prescribed over 2,000 books!

Did you follow the adventures of Camellia Bear this summer as she traveled through the state – from north to south and from east to west – celebrating Alabama's bicentennial at 21 Reach Out and Read-Alabama program sites?

Partnering with the Alabama Bicentennial Commission for the 10th annual *Rx for Summer Reading* campaign, Reach Out and Read-Alabama program sites hosted Alabama-themed activities based on the book *Alabama, My Home Sweet Home*, by Alabama children's author Charles Ghigna. Many sites had guest readers, including local mayors and even Hollywood actor Clayne Crawford reading the book to those in attendance. Each child also received a Camellia Bear squishy toy as well as a "prescription" to visit their local library.



Over the last 10 years, the campaign has prescribed more than 14,500 books during the summer. Children and their families have eaten with a caterpillar, gone to the doctor with Nicky, braved the storm with Clifford, celebrated a birthday with a dinosaur, become superheroes, practiced bedtime routines with Daniel Tiger and traveled the state with Camellia Bear!

### School readiness: pediatricians play important role

Too many U.S. children start kindergarten without adequate social-emotional and behavior skills critical to school success, according to an American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) report in the August 2019 issue of *Pediatrics*. "School Readiness," published online July 22, highlights rapidly expanding research that shows how these gaps can be eased or eliminated. <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/144/2/e20191766>

According to the Chapter's Early Childhood Champion, Madeleine Blancher, MD, FAAP, pediatricians see children frequently at well-child check-ups and it is during these encounters that they can help families understand child development, both physically and emotionally, so that they can parent better, which will help their children learn. One of Blancher's suggestions is to empower caregivers to increase the child's language by just talking to them. She points to Reach Out and Read-Alabama as an important program that uses the credibility and expertise of pediatricians to encourage daily reading and sharing of books, often to families who may not have the means to

purchase books.

School readiness is an important developmental achievement for all children. In addition to Reach Out and Read-Alabama, the Alabama State Department of Early Childhood Education has committed to reaching this goal by instituting First Class Pre-K, a quality early

childhood education program. Partners from across the state are also working hand in hand through the Young Child Wellness Council and Help Me Grow, a program that connects parents to services they need to help their children achieve optimal development. If children are ready to learn by kindergarten, the community benefits as well as the individual child.

For more information about implementing Reach Out and Read-Alabama in your practice, contact Polly McClure. Read more of Blancher's thoughts about School Readiness here:

<https://bit.ly/2qh1exJ>.

## Early Career Spotlight: Kym Middleton, MD, FAAP

Continued from page 5

an additional year as Chief Resident.

Though the spark for advocacy came from her mother, Dr. Middleton's advocacy flame has been fanned by her involvement with the AAP. She began as an active member in the advocacy-heavy Section on Pediatric Trainees while still a resident. When she moved to Alabama, she immediately reached out to the Chapter to see how she could stay involved. She is also an active member of the Section on Early Career Physicians, the Section on Hospital Medicine and the Provisional Section on Minority Health, Equity and Inclusion (PSOMHEI).

In addition to her passion for advocacy, she has many interests out of the office that help her stay passionate. Among her many pastimes are puzzles, trivia, art and figure skating. She is also a self-proclaimed Harry Potter nerd. If you see her at an upcoming Alabama Chapter-AAP Meeting, make sure to welcome her back to Alabama (and ask her what house she is in)!

If you know of an early career pediatrician that would be interested in being the focus of an upcoming "spotlight" article, please send his or her information to me at [nola.ernest@gmail.com](mailto:nola.ernest@gmail.com).

In the meantime, don't let flu season and lack of sunlight get you down. Get involved with the AAP and stay #BurnedIn!



## LET'S HEAR IT FROM OUR DEPARTMENTS OF PEDIATRICS!

### UAB and COA welcome three new division directors

By Mitch Cohen, MD, FAAP, Chair, Department of Pediatrics, University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine; Physician in Chief, Children's of Alabama



Mitch Cohen, MD, FAAP

We are pleased to welcome three new leaders at UAB and Children's of Alabama. *Laura McGuinn, MD, FAAP*, is director of the Division of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, as well as the inaugural Thomas H. Lowder Endowed Chair in Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics and the new clinical director of the Civitan-

Sparks Clinics.

She completed her medical degree and pediatric residency at the University of Texas Medical Branch, where she was also Ambulatory Chief Resident, and underwent her developmental and behavioral pediatrics fellowship at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. At UAB, Dr. McGuinn is working to enhance care processes for children with autism and related neurodevelopmental disabilities, as well as creating a medico-legal partnership to support families and children. Her clinical interests include diagnostic evaluation for children with developmental and behavioral concerns, such as autism and related neurodevelopmental concerns, ADHD, intellectual disabilities, language and learning disorders, sleep, eating and elimination issues, and parent-child interaction concerns.



Laura McGuinn, MD, FAAP



Ambika Ashraf, MD, FAAP

*Ambika Ashraf, MD, FAAP*, is the new director of the Division of Pediatric Endocrinology; she takes over for Dr. Ken McCormick who remains active on faculty. Dr. Ashraf also serves as director of the Pediatric Lipid Clinic, associate director of the Metabolic Bone Clinic at Children's, and as a scientist in the UAB Comprehensive Diabetes Center. During her distinguished career at UAB, Dr. Ashraf has been recognized as an international authority on lipid disorders.

Dr. Ashraf received her MBBS and medical degree from the University of Calicut in Kerala, India and completed her pediatric residency training at Bronx-Lebanon Hospital in New York and UAB, where she also completed her fellowship in pediatric endocrinology. She is the inaugural Ralph Frohsin Endowed Chair in Pediatric Endocrinology.

*Girish Dhall, MD*, is the new division director for Hematology-Oncology and the Pediatric Blood and Marrow Transplantation program. Dr. Dhall takes over from Dr. Kim Whelan, the interim director, who continues on faculty and serves as the Fellowship Program Director. Dr. Dhall is the inaugural Benjamin Russell Chair

in Pediatric Hematology-Oncology. Prior to joining UAB, he was an associate professor of pediatrics and director of the Neuro-oncology Program at Children's Hospital of Los Angeles.

He completed his fellowship in pediatric hematology-oncology at New York University Medical Center, his residency in pediatrics at New York Medical College, Valhalla, New York, and medical school at Grant Medical College, Mumbai, India. His clinical interests include caring for children and young adults with primary brain and spinal cord tumors. He is dedicated to improving the survival rate of young children with brain tumors without the use of high levels of radiation therapy.



Girish Dhall MD

### USA Pediatrics: X+Y Immersion Scheduling in Pediatric Residency Training

By David Gremse, MD, FAAP, Chair, Department of Pediatrics, University of South Alabama

The University of South Alabama was awarded a \$5.1 million dollar federal grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration for the creation of a Population Care Pathway program in collaboration with the departments of Family Medicine and Internal Medicine. Allen Perkins, MD, Chair of the USA Department of Family Medicine, is the Principal Investigator for the grant. Benjamin Estrada, MD, FAAP and Melody Petty, MD, FAAP are the key faculty in the Department of Pediatrics for the project.



David Gremse, MD, FAAP

The purpose of the project is to increase the number of primary care physicians and improve the health of the population in our referral area. This multi-disciplinary program is a public-private partnership in conjunction with local healthcare systems. USA College of Medicine students will participate in a specially created curriculum thread focusing on attaining the broad skills necessary for primary care practice in an underserved, tribal and/or rural setting.

Interested medical students who are selected will be enrolled into a Population Care Pathway Scholars program and will receive community-based instruction as part of their medical school training. A Population Care Pathway will be created to provide longitudinal community-based experiential training in rural, underserved, and tribal locations throughout the four years of medical school. USA will provide mentorship and guidance to provide support through a combination of telehealth, integrated behavioral health, and opioid and substance abuse screening in their community-based primary care site.

I am excited for our medical students who take advantage of this new opportunity to allow them an experience to care for patients in rural and underserved settings and to prepare them for possible medical careers in those areas.



## Coding

### Corner

#### How are your coding trends?

By Lynn Abernathy Brown, CPC

With the school year having begun, here are things to consider when coding for patient visits:

- **Coding trends:** Are you in the coding rut of only assigning level 3 (99213) to your office visits? It is easy to code everything one code, but does it help your bottom line by not giving yourself credit for the work effort involved. The average level 3 office visit could be rising as providers become busier, especially with school in session and the potential for school-related illnesses rising. Watching the trend in the bell curve for established patients' visits in your practice can be beneficial.
- **Language barrier:** Consider Time when interpretation services are involved in a visit. Time may become the key element when it takes longer to complete the visit due to a language barrier. When coding a visit as time-based, the recommended documented time for level 4 is closest to 25 minutes (21 to 32 minutes).
- **Documentation:** To meet the documentation requirements of a level 4 established patient (99214), you need two of three in the following categories: Detailed HPI, detailed exam, and moderate risk such as a new acute problem with mild exacerbation of a chronic condition plus an Rx. The chief complaint (not just F/U) supports the medical necessity for the code billed and services ordered. Resource: <https://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Medicare-Learning-Network-LN/MLNEdWebGuide/Downloads/95Docguidelines.pdf>
- **Scenarios for coding levels** (only examples with many variables possible):
  - Level 3: Patient presents with cough, congestion, runny nose. Otherwise healthy, school-aged patient with planned OTC and symptomatic treatment.
  - Level 4: Patient presents with cough, congestion, runny nose. Patient has a history of asthma but was controlled on meds until acute symptoms began. Now experiencing mild exacerbation. Diagnosis URI with asthma exacerbation (Chronic condition with mild exacerbation) and management of Rx.
  - Level 2: Patient presents for F/U after completion of RX for OM. Ears are normal and no other symptoms.
  - Level 3: Toddler presents with congestion and pulling ears. Otherwise healthy. Diagnosis OM. New Rx for two self-limited problems.
  - Level 4: Toddler presents with congestion and pulling ears. Has been diagnosed over past several months three times for AOM. Now diagnosed with Recurrent OM (chronic condition with mild exacerbation) and Rx given.
  - Patient presents with parents to discuss behavior issues in school and teacher recommendations:
    - Level 3: Documented summary of discussion and time spent for total visit of 20-25 minutes.
    - Level 4: Documented summary of discussion and time spent for total visit of 30 minutes.
    - Level 5: Documented summary of discussion and time spent for total visit of 35 minutes.
    - Most auditors will consider the lowest time if a range is entered and 20 minutes conservatively is closer to level 3.

*DISCLAIMER: Children's of Alabama does not accept responsibility or liability for any adverse outcome from the advice of Lynn A. Brown, CPC, for any reason, including inaccuracy, opinion and analysis that might prove erroneous, or the misunderstanding or misapplication of extremely complex topics. Any statement made by Lynn A. Brown, CPC, does not imply payment guarantee by any payor discussed.*

## NEWS FROM MEDICAID

Alabama Coordinated Health Networks implemented; common questions answered

As you know, on October 1, 2019, the Alabama Medicaid Agency (Medicaid) implemented the Alabama Coordinated Health Network (ACHN), which will provide comprehensive care coordination while ensuring appropriate utilization of services for approximately 750,000 Alabama Medicaid recipients. In this new program, Networks and providers are incentivized to achieve quality goals in the areas of childhood obesity, infant mortality rates and substance use disorders.

Over the past few weeks, the Agency has received questions from both recipients and providers, and the most common questions and their answers are listed below.

One area of confusion is related to the general Medicaid population (those on full Medicaid – formerly called the Patient 1st Program). These recipients can visit ANY primary care physician (PCP) who is enrolled with Medicaid. Recipients are no longer assigned to PCPs on panels.

Another area to emphasize is that maternity recipients MUST contact the ACHN in their region as soon as they find out they are pregnant, starting November 1, 2019. They may see any Medicaid-enrolled Delivering Healthcare Professional (DHCP) in the state, but they must work with a care coordinator from the ACHN in their region.

A third area of confusion is with referrals to specialists. Recipients still need a referral to see a specialist. Children must still get an EPSDT referral in order to receive extra visits and services to treat a complex or chronic health problem. The Agency did not alter the EPSDT Program or requirements when it implemented the ACHNs. An Alert was recently issued by the Agency regarding specialty referrals: [https://medicaid.alabama.gov/alert\\_detail.aspx?ID=13537](https://medicaid.alabama.gov/alert_detail.aspx?ID=13537). Providers may also refer to the Provider Billing Manual, Chapter 40 for details.

Medicaid has an ACHN Overview handout and other resources available on the website for physicians to learn more: <https://bit.ly/2BpkkEa>.

ACHN information and handouts for recipients are also available on the website: <https://bit.ly/33H7ahR>.

## CHAPTER BRIEFS



### Coleman selected to serve on SOPT Resolution Task Force

Aubrey Coleman, MD, a second-year pediatric resident at UAB, has been selected to serve on the 2019-2020 Resolution Task Force of the AAP Section on Pediatric Trainees (SOPT). “After

reviewing several outstanding applications for the Resolution Task Force, we feel that you are well-qualified to represent our Section in the resolution process this year,” wrote Jenni Kusma, MD, FAAP, SOPT Chair. Dr. Coleman’s appointment has already begun and concludes on March 31, 2020 following the Annual Leadership Forum (ALF). In her role, she will assist with the entire resolution process from the time a resolution is merely a trainee’s idea to the resolution’s adoption at ALF. Kudos, Dr. Coleman!

### Kimberlin receives Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society Distinguished Service Award

David Kimberlin, MD, FAAP, Pediatric Infectious Diseases Professor at UAB, received the 2019 Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society Distinguished Service Award at this year’s ID Week in Washington, DC in early October. Congratulations, Dr. Kimberlin!



### Gunnett receives clinical fellowship award

Mohini Gunnett, MD, First-Year Pediatric Pulmonology Fellow at UAB, was awarded the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation 1st/2nd year Clinical Fellowship Award, which began July 1, 2019 and runs through June 30, 2021.

This competitive award supports fellows who intend to make cystic fibrosis a priority in their academic careers. As part of this award, recipients benefit from salary support and travel funds to attend the North American Cystic Fibrosis Conference each year of the two-year award period. The award promotes the training of leaders in cystic fibrosis care and research.

Congratulations Dr. Gunnett!



### Atkinson elected as president of national mycoplasma organization

Prescott Atkinson, MD PhD, FAAP, UAB Pediatric Allergy and Immunology Professor, was elected as the new president of the United States Organization

for Mycoplasma at the 5th Biennial Meeting July. Congratulations, Dr. Atkinson!

### Whitley recipient of 2020 National Foundation for Infectious Diseases John P. Utz Leadership Award

Richard Whitley, MD, FAAP, Pediatric Infectious Diseases Professor at UAB, has been selected as the recipient of the 2020 National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) John P. Utz Leadership Award. Recognizing Dr. Whitley’s leadership in the field of clinical virology and infectious diseases, the award will be presented at a formal dinner in Spring 2020. Kudos for this great honor, Dr. Whitley!

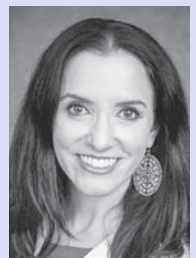


### Coyne-Beasley elected to Birmingham Civil Rights Institute Board of Directors

Tamara Coyne-Beasley, MD, FAAP, Adolescent Medicine Professor at UAB, has been elected to the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (BCRI) Board of Directors. The Board will assist the BCRI with its strategic plan and mission. Dr. Coyne-Beasley looks forward to assisting in the strategic mission of the BCRI, which is to “enlighten each generation about civil and human rights by exploring our common past and working together in the present to build a better future.” Kudos, Dr. Coyne-Beasley!

### Berger and UAB Department of Pediatrics win 2019 Argus Awards

Stephanie Berger, MD, FAAP, Pediatric Hospital Medicine Professor at UAB, was honored with the Caduceus Club Award for Excellence in Clinical Education at the UAB Argus Award Ceremony in September. In addition, for the second year in a row, the UAB Department of Pediatrics received the Argus Award



for Best Clinical Department on the Birmingham campus. The Argus Awards were created in 1996 to give medical students the chance to honor their mentors, professors, courses and course directors for outstanding service to medical education. Congratulations, all!



### Lee participates in Senator Doug Jones' Maternal Child Health roundtable

Linda Lee, APR, Chapter Executive Director, was invited to participate in a maternal child health roundtable conducted by Alabama Senator Doug Jones in Montgomery in August. The purpose of the roundtable was to help the senator learn more about maternal child health issues in Alabama. In early October, Senator Jones co-introduced bipartisan legislation to reduce the number of maternal deaths and improve the quality of care for moms during pregnancy and after childbirth. The Maternal Outcomes Matter (MOM) Act of 2019 establishes grant programs within the U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Department to support innovation in maternal health care and train health care providers to avoid discrimination in the provision of maternal health care services. The bill also holds HHS accountable for these grants programs by requiring the department to submit a report to Congress on outcomes and best practices.

### Alabama children's book author Charles Ghigna honors McClure with poem

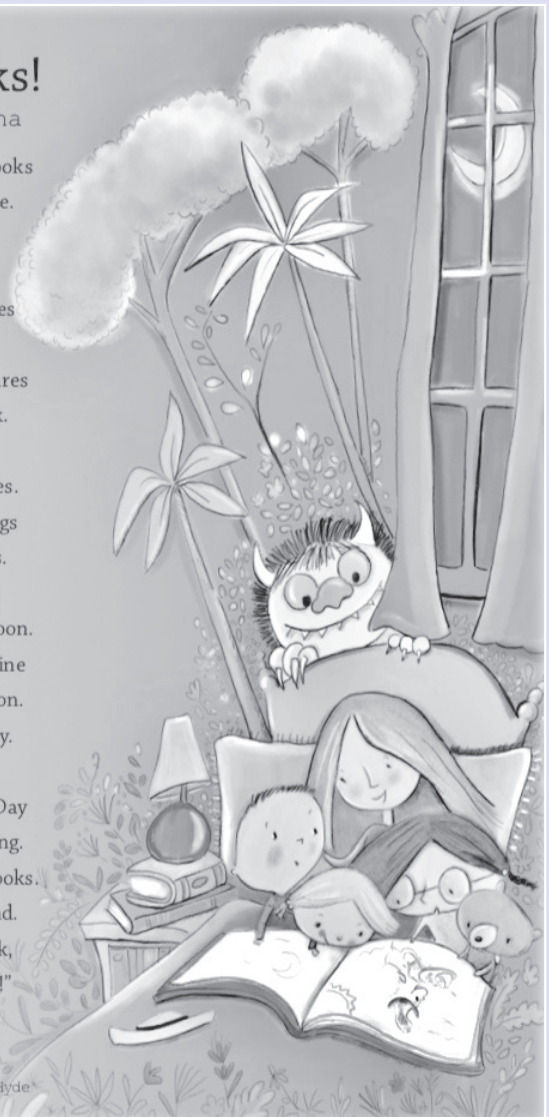
Charles Ghigna, the local author of *Alabama, My Home Sweet Home*, which was the children's book *Reach Out and Read-Alabama* distributed this summer, honored ROR-Alabama Statewide Coordinator Polly McClure with this poem, saying that her "enthusiasm, energy and inspiration are contagious" as she helps spread the love of reading throughout the state. Congratulations, Polly, and Salina Sowell as well, for all you did this summer to promote early literacy in ROR's successful reading campaign!

## Picture Books!

by Charles Ghigna

Mother reads me picture books  
 Each night at my bedtime.  
 I listen to each story.  
 I listen to each rhyme.  
 She slowly turns the pages  
 So I can take a look.  
 She shows me all the pictures  
 Inside each picture book.  
 I see a magic carpet  
 That takes me many places.  
 I visit with the Wild Things  
 And other friendly faces.  
 I runaway with Bunny  
 Beneath the Goodnight Moon.  
 I stand in line with Madeline  
 And eat Green Eggs at noon.  
 I tag along with Corduroy.  
 I follow after Ping.  
 I lose myself each Snowy Day  
 And find myself each spring.  
 Mother reads me picture books.  
 Each one becomes a friend.  
 When she finishes a book,  
 I beg, "Please read again!"

art by Michelle Hazelwood Hyde



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