



# The Alabama Pediatrician

First Quarter 2022

## From the President

Time to focus on practice vitality and the changing needs of our patients



**Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP**  
Chapter President

Hello, friend! I hope you, your practice, and your family are doing well. As the second full year of the COVID-19 pandemic comes to a close, I can't help but reflect on all that we've been through. We have survived so many challenges! And we have done so with great versatility and

grace. But I can't reflect for long because I am eager to look forward to the future and plan for the ongoing provision of pediatric care. I hope that you will take a moment to do the same.

If we have learned anything during the past two years, we have learned that to move forward we have to be adaptable. As we emerge from the weight of the omicron wave, I hope that you will find time and space to think about the future vitality of your practice and the changing needs of your patients *and yourself*. Will you find ways to incorporate telemedicine into your daily practice? Will you update your practice's messaging to make sure you attract patients who share your values? Will you find ways to do more of what you love every day and less of those things you don't?

As we continue to tread into uncharted territory, I encourage you to remain vigilant. Maintain touch-points with your patients by performing regular recalls to keep your patients up to date on their wellness care. Focus on your staff's satisfaction by asking them for solutions to problems and including them in decision-making. And most importantly, remember that you are your MVP and your well-being deserves to be protected!

## Don't delay! Register now for our 2022 Spring Meeting to be held at the beautiful Lodge at Gulf State Park, April 28 – May 1

The Chapter executive office and our CME Chair Haidee Custodio, MD, FAAP, have developed a fantastic agenda for the 2022 Spring Meeting, which will offer 10.5 hours of quality pediatric CME AND MOC Part 2. Spring is in the air now and with it, warmer months to lift our spirits. And what better way to enjoy warmer weather than at the beach—with colleagues! And better yet, we will gather at a new venue this year – The Lodge at Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores, Ala.!

Set for April 28 – May 1, this year's meeting will include the latest and most relevant clinical topics as well as a practice management emphasis. Here is the line-up: Your Dieting Patient: Managing the Spectrum of Disordered Eating; Peering into the Dark: Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children; A Healthy Beginnings Mini-Workshop: Applying ACHIA Obesity Prevention; Collaborative Lessons Learned in Your Practice; Finding, Hiring...and KEEPING Good Staff Lecture/Roundtable Discussion; Substance Use Disorders in Adolescents; Impact of Opioid Use Disorder in Pregnancy on the Maternal/Infant Dyad; Advancing Child Health Equity: Intersectionality, Community Engagement and the Path Forward; COVID Vaccine in Children: Where Have We Been, and Where Are We Going?; Pediatric Urinary Tract Infections and Vesicoureteral Reflux; and New Therapies for COVID Treatment and Prevention.

In addition, there will be two industry-sponsored symposia:

- *Classification and Treatment of Vascular Anomalies in Children*, sponsored by Children's of Alabama (Friday lunch)
- *Introduction to Rare Genetic Diseases of Obesity*, sponsored by Rhythm Pharmaceuticals (Saturday lunch)

Of course, the Lodge and Gulf State Park offer the perfect environment for your family to relax and enjoy the beautiful surroundings. In addition, Reach Out and Read-Alabama is preparing for its 9th annual Grand Pediatric Pentathlon, which will include virtual options for those who cannot attend in person.

Scan the QR code to get all of the information and register by April 8 to get the early bird rates!



### Chapter Office and Staff Alabama Chapter – AAP

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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:

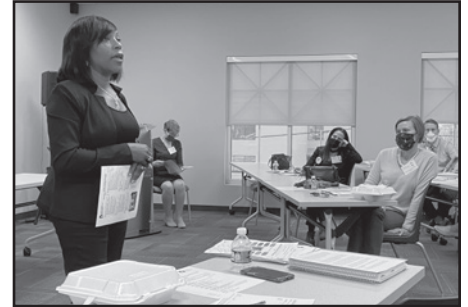
Children in Alabama are happy and healthy; Alabama pediatricians are professionally fulfilled and financially secure.

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

### 2022 Legislative Session has ups and downs for pediatrics/child health & safety

As most members know, the Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature kicked off in January, and since then it has been a rollercoaster ride of ups and downs in terms of policies related to child health. The Alabama Chapter-AAP is working steadily to promote legislation that positively affects children and to oppose those bills that do not. Here are a few of the highlights thus far from the Alabama Chapter-AAP's perspective:

- On January 12, the Chapter was able to conduct an educational session for the members of the House Health Committee on the importance of childhood immunizations. We thank Elizabeth Dawson, MD, FAAP, Shannon Ross, MD, FAAP, and Wes Stubblefield, MD, FAAP, for lending their expertise at this event, which was well received by the legislators.
- The Chapter held its 18th annual Pediatric Legislative Day on February 23; the timing was fortuitous, as seven pediatricians in white coats were able to attend the transgender treatment criminalization bill public hearing. Although this bill has passed the Senate floor and House Judiciary Committee, the Chapter is working with other partners to stop the bill, which interferes with the physician-patient-family relationship.
- The Chapter is also part of a multi-organizational effort through the Cover Alabama Coalition to extend Medicaid funding from 60 days postpartum to 12 months. Linda Lee,



Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education Secretary Barbara Cooper, PhD, addresses members at Legislative Day regarding the agency's budget request.



Pediatricians wore their white coats at the Chapter's 18th annual Pediatric Legislative Day, which made a visual impact at a committee hearing regarding the transgender treatment criminalization bill.



Nola Jean Ernest, MD, FAAP, testifies during the committee hearing regarding the transgender treatment criminalization bill.

## Legislative Update continued from page 2

Chapter Executive Director, and the Executive Committee were part of early discussions with the Commissioner on this issue. On March 9, the coalition held a news conference on the State House steps, after which the Ways and Means budget chair added this earmarked amount to the General Fund budget, which has now passed the House, representing a huge step to this becoming a reality, much like it has in other states.

- HB 402 and SB 307 were introduced and would allow pharmacists to “prescribe” and administer ALL vaccines, regardless of age, without any physician involvement. The AL-AAP is opposed to this and is pushing for an age floor along with other specialty societies and the Medical Association. In mid-March, despite our best efforts, SB 307 passed the Senate Health Committee and will now move to the Senate floor (at time of writing). Members are urged to contact their legislators throughout this process and ask them to vote NO on these bills.
- The Chapter is also supporting the Childhood Lead Reduction Act, which, if passed, would put penalties in place for licensed or unlicensed contractors who violate the 1997 Alabama Lead Reduction Act.



Morissa Ladinsky, MD, FAAP, Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP, Chapter President, and Nola Jean Ernest, MD, FAAP, Chapter Vice President and Legislative Chair, advocated for children with the Governor’s staff on Pediatric Legislative Day.



Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP, speaks to a crowd at a news conference in front of the Alabama State House on March 9 about the importance of extending Medicaid postpartum coverage to 12 months.

## Thanks to Chapter’s advocacy, BCBS raises rates for COVID vaccine administration

In the late Fall, it was brought to the attention of the Chapter leadership that Blue Cross Blue Shield’s (BCBS) reimbursement for COVID vaccine administration was woefully below that of Medicaid and the Medicare-recommended \$40 for this service.

As a result, the Chapter spearheaded a multi-specialty society letter to BCBS in January, citing the tremendous amount of time it takes for pediatricians and other healthcare providers to discuss the safety and importance of the vaccine with patients and families. We also outlined the costs to a practice (both human resources and otherwise) to provide the vaccine. Above all, we stressed that access to the vaccine is threatened by all of these factors, and adequate reimbursement would go a long way to incentivizing pediatricians and other physicians, who represent the patients’ medical homes, where vaccines should be given.

Earlier in March, we received a letter from Blue Cross stating the payor has indeed made the decision to increase rates by more than 100 percent to the CMS-recommended amount. The increase went into effect on February 25.

“We see this as a big win for our members and were happy to go to bat for this important service for our families,” said Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP, Chapter President.

## How to Contact Your Chapter Leaders

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**Nominate colleagues for Chapter awards - due June 15**

**Call for nominees: Carden Johnston Leadership, Marsha Raulerson Advocacy, Early Career Physician awards**

In 2011, the Chapter began a tradition of giving two prestigious awards, the Carden Johnston Leadership Award and the Marsha Raulerson Advocacy Award, named in honor of these two Chapter members who have given so much to pediatrics in Alabama.

This year, the Chapter Executive Board voted to add the Early Career Physician Award to its list of annual awards; we are very excited to have the opportunity to recognize an early career pediatrician who has gone above and beyond during this phase of his/her journey as a pediatrician! The Chapter Executive Board is currently calling for nominations for these awards, which will be given at the Annual Meeting in September.

Please read the criteria for each by clicking the links below; submission of materials is due to the Chapter office at [llee@alaap.org](mailto:llee@alaap.org) by June 15 at 5 p.m.

## Rural pediatric practices: join your 42 colleagues across the state involved in PATHS

The PATHS (Pediatric Access to Telemental Health Services) program at Children's of Alabama is dedicated to improving access to behavioral health services for children, particularly those in rural communities, by partnering with pediatricians and other primary care providers. PATHS offers training through the ECHO model to assist primary care providers and their clinical staff in the diagnosis and management of behavioral health concerns. Providers enrolled in PATHS also have access to provider-to-provider consultation with a member of the PATHS mental health team to discuss specific concerns they have regarding patients in their care. Lastly, for patients with more complex behavioral health needs, PATHS offers direct services to enrolled pediatric practices via telemedicine visits provided by members of the PATHS mental health team. PATHS currently has 42 rural practices engaged with the program and is looking to enroll additional providers in rural communities.

For more information or to enroll in PATHS, contact Susan Griffin, PATHS Director, at [Susan.Griffin@childrensal.org](mailto:Susan.Griffin@childrensal.org) or (205) 638-5673.



Here is a brief video highlighting the impacts PATHS has already had for children in pediatric practices in Alabama: <https://bit.ly/3IPiaho>

**Criteria for Carden Johnston Leadership Award** - <https://bit.ly/3NtBzId>  
**Criteria for Marsha Raulerson Advocacy Award** - <https://bit.ly/3tOBFIV>  
**Criteria for Early Career Physician Award** - <https://bit.ly/3qKCpXn>

# **ANNOUNCING THE 2022 AL-AAP ANNUAL MEETING: SEPTEMBER 9-11, 2022 AT ROSS BRIDGE RESORT, BIRMINGHAM!**



The Chapter Executive Board and staff are very excited to announce the dates and location of our 2022 Annual Meeting & Fall Pediatric Update: September 9-11, 2022 at the beautiful Ross Bridge Resort in Birmingham! CME topics and speakers are already being selected and this meeting will be a great addition to our list of educational and networking opportunities for our members. The meeting will include a Practice Management Workshop and more!

**Other details coming soon, but for now,  
SAVE THE DATES!**

## Join Chapter in taking a deeper dive into bridging the gap between pediatricians and domestic violence services in Alabama

By Elizabeth Dawson, MD, FAAP, pediatrician, Charles Henderson Child Health Center and physician lead, Chapter Domestic Violence Project

As a first step toward building capacity for Alabama pediatricians to systematically address adverse childhood experiences, the Chapter applied for and was awarded an AAP grant to carry out a short project to help pediatricians support children in families experiencing domestic violence.

Led by the Chapter in coordination with the Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the four-month initiative aims to help link Chapter members to local DV specialists so that referrals and services can be better provided for these families, thereby addressing one of the most prolific adverse childhood experiences.

With technical assistance from the AAP and its partner, Futures Without Violence, the Chapter is holding three monthly webinars between April and June. The first webinar, *Supporting Domestic Violence Adult Survivors and their Children: Bridging the Gap between Healthcare & Service Providers*, will provide an overview of domestic violence and will be open to pediatricians and all disciplines who interact with these families. The remaining two webinars will focus on referral processes and cultural considerations.

We are also looking for local pediatricians to sign up to be part of a local team consisting of at least one pediatrician, pediatric staff point person, DV specialists, child welfare workers, etc. The local teams will be asked to communicate between each webinar (a light lift) to develop a workflow and help us ultimately develop a blueprint for action for pediatricians and their DV counterparts throughout the state.

Sign up now to participate in this initiative by scanning the QR code and completing the short form there.

We hope you will take advantage of this important initiative!



## Comprehensive Rehabilitation for Children of Alabama.

Our board-certified Pediatric Rehabilitation physicians utilize an interdisciplinary approach to address the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and management of congenital and childhood onset physical impairments. Applying the most advanced robotics therapies, our team helps children and adolescents achieve the highest level of independent function possible.

### Advanced Treatment for Common Conditions:

- Cerebral Palsy
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Spinal Cord Injury
- Spina Bifida
- Neuromuscular Disorders
- Brachial Plexus Injury
- Stroke
- Other Physical Disabilities



Children's  
of Alabama®

**UAB** MEDICINE.

ChildrensAL.org/rehabilitation-medicine  
For patient referrals, call 205-638-9790.



## Healthy Active Living: Alabama pediatricians collaborate to prevent obesity--You can too!

Pediatricians are not surprised by the CDC's findings that the "COVID-19 pandemic school closures, disrupted routines, increased stress, and less opportunity for physical activity and proper nutrition led to weight gain among children and adolescents." The BMI rate of increase among two- to 19-year-olds almost doubled from the report three years earlier.

The alarming obesity trajectory highlights that prevention of obesity, as well as treatment, is a public health priority. Working in concert with public health efforts, primary care practices have an integral role to play in supporting the longitudinal development of healthy, active lifestyles.

### The Role of the Pediatrician in Primary Prevention of Obesity

The 2015 AAP Clinical Report provides practical strategies to implement prevention practice workflows. A through line is that efforts must be tailored to a child's developmental stage and family characteristics, a task well suited for the longitudinal relationship between families and pediatricians. Highlighted elements include the following:

- Identifying children at risk
- Understanding the role of education
- Utilizing motivational interviewing
- Focusing on family-based interventions
- Helping parents develop parenting and communication skills

Scan the QR code to access this article.

### Alabama Pediatricians Improve Obesity Prevention During Pandemic

In 2021, 13 practices participated in the ACHIA Healthy Beginnings Quality Improvement (QI) collaborative to address the complex and interlocking factors that lead to excessive weight gain in the first two years of life. Each practice utilized QI methodology to formulate aim statements and goals, conduct small tests of change, and track key driver data to assess if interventions were leading to measurable improvements.



Having the opportunity to review and learn new information as related to keeping our patients nutritionally healthy was very valuable. Also, conversing with other providers and health care partners was equally appreciative.

Thanks to this learning collaborative we have new tools to assist in providing the best care for our patients.

— Healthy Beginnings Participant

## AL-AAP Spring Obesity Prevention Workshop

The AL-AAP Spring meeting participants will benefit from lessons learned in the Healthy Beginnings collaborative. The workshop includes picking a change idea to improve and making an aim statement. Working with tablemates from across the state, practices will have the opportunities to trade tips and resources to bring back to their offices.

To learn more about the collaborative, please review the Final Report and 360 summary at [www.achia.org](http://www.achia.org).



# 22%

CDC - Obesity prevalence  
US children 2-19 years (2018-2020)

WIC - Alabama children  
ages 2-4 years (2018)

16%

WITH AN  
OVERWEIGHT  
CLASSIFICATION

16%

WITH AN  
OBESITY  
CLASSIFICATION

CDC Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity: Data, Trends and Maps. [www.nccd.cdc.gov](http://www.nccd.cdc.gov). DC MMWR Sept 17, 2021. Accessed March 11, 2021.

## Reach Out and Read All About It!

Reach Out and Read National Medical Leadership Survey

*Reach Out and Read (ROR) providers: keep your eyes on your inbox over the next few months for the Reach Out and Read National Medical Leadership Survey.*

There are two parts to the survey, the first of which is intended to give us a perspective of the diversity of our medical leadership. Gathering this data will give us insight into areas where we need to bring additional perspectives into our community.

The second portion of the survey is specifically designed for affiliate medical directors, asking how we might strengthen this particular team with opportunities to meet together, learn more about ROR developments, share ideas, and connect with and support one another.

Thank you in advance for completing this important survey!

### Campaign for Grade Level Reading Initiative Updates

In June 2021, Reach Out and Read-Alabama was awarded funding from a partnership between the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (DECE) and Medicaid to support the implementation of Reach Out and Read into practices in five pilot counties selected by DECE—Jefferson, Macon, Marshall, Monroe, and Randolph. Currently, we have 12 practices in Jefferson County, one practice in Macon County, two practices in Marshall County, two practices in Monroe County, and two sites in Calhoun County to serve the children of Randolph County, for a total of 19 practices participating in the program. Our goal is to increase the number of participating practices in this initiative and we are excited to be working with the Alabama Academy of Family Physicians to reach out to family physicians in these counties that do not have a dedicated pediatric clinic. If you would like to

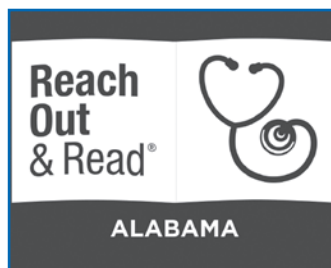
participate in this initiative, please contact Amy Crosby at [acrosby@roralabama.org](mailto:acrosby@roralabama.org) or make sure to visit the Reach Out and Read Roundtable session at the Spring Meeting in April!

### Reach Out and Read Roundtable at the Spring Meeting

We invite all Reach Out and Read-Alabama



David Gremse, MD, FAAP, Chair of Pediatrics at USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital, presents a certificate of recognition to Cindy Sheets, MD, FAAP, a long-time pediatrician at USA's primary care pediatric clinic, who retired this year. The presentation was made on behalf of Reach Out and Read-Alabama to recognize her commitment to early literacy. Dr. Sheets was one of the first pediatricians in Alabama to adopt the Reach Out and Read model, who helped expand the program to other parts of the state and served countless families in the Mobile area by providing them with books and literacy guidance for 17 years.



site coordinators, medical directors, or anyone with an interest in Reach Out and Read to stop by our Roundtable session on Friday, April 29 from 1 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. immediately following the Ice Cream and Cookies

Social in the Exhibits. Amy and Salina will be there to meet you, answer your questions, and discuss current topics affecting ROR sites. This is a great time to meet your ROR-Alabama staff as well as your ROR counterparts from other practices. We look forward to seeing you there!

### Gearing up for the 9<sup>th</sup> annual Grand Pediatric Pentathlon!

We are excited to be hosting the 9th annual Grand Pediatric Pentathlon at The Lodge at Gulf State Park for the first time during the Spring Meeting. All of the events that have always been part of the pentathlon will be completed in the beautiful setting of the Gulf of Mexico and Gulf State Park. An exciting new aspect of the pentathlon—a class taught by Sandcastle University—will take place after the group fun run/walk on Friday afternoon. Events can be completed by participants throughout the day on Friday and Saturday for eligibility to win great prizes!

The 2022 Grand Pediatric Pentathlon is also going virtual again this year to allow physicians who cannot attend the meeting, as well as the public in general, the opportunity to take part in the event with their family and friends throughout the month of April.

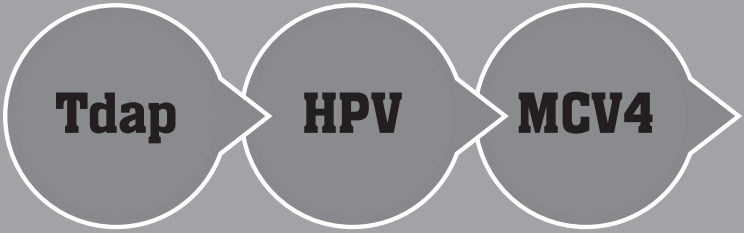
Scan the QR code for more information on how to register!







# You hold the key to protect with 3!



## Tips to Increase Vaccination Rates

- Your strong recommendation is proven to be the biggest indicator of vaccination.
- Send out recall/reminder messages via mail, email, or text to increase office visits.
- Schedule the next appointment before they leave the current visit.
- Recommend all ACIP vaccines.
- Assess each patient's vaccine status using ImmPRINT Forecaster.
- Educate all staff about your immunization goals for your patients.

As healthcare professionals, it is up to you to ensure your patients remain up to date with their vaccines.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) recommend the following vaccines for adolescents:

- Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis
- Human papillomavirus
- Meningococcal disease
- Influenza

Protect your patients against vaccine preventable diseases.

Vaccine:	7-10 Years	11-12 Years	13-18 Years
Tdap	Childhood Catch-up	Recommended	Catch-up
HPV	>9 Years	Recommended	Catch-up
MCV4	High Risk	Recommended	Recommended
Flu	Recommended		

For more information, please visit [alabamapublichealth.gov/imm](http://alabamapublichealth.gov/imm)



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

### Update from the UAB Division of Pediatric Rehabilitation Medicine

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



**Mitch Cohen, MD, FAAP**

I am excited to share updates about the UAB Division of Pediatric Rehabilitation Medicine at Children's of Alabama on behalf of Drew Davis, MD, FAAP, Division Director:

Currently we have three clinical faculty and one research faculty practicing throughout the Birmingham metro area. Our

physicians are board-certified in pediatrics, pediatric rehabilitation medicine, and brain injury medicine with a focus on the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and management of injuries and illnesses that affect the nervous and musculoskeletal systems of children

and adolescents. The most common conditions we manage are cerebral palsy and traumatic brain injury, though we care for patients with spinal cord injury, spina bifida, brachial plexus injury, limb deficiency, and Duchenne muscular dystrophy, among others. Our physicians also manage the only inpatient pediatric rehabilitation service in Alabama, serving children recovering from acute injury or illness and requiring more prolonged hospitalization to facilitate recovery. Additionally, we provide inpatient consultation at Children's of Alabama and UAB with a recent focus on the early identification of children at risk for cerebral palsy in the neonatal intensive care unit.

Our clinics take place at several locations, including Children's of Alabama main campus and Children's at Lakeshore. In our Lakeshore clinic, we focus on serving children who can benefit from the unique combination of a medically based model of care and the community-based model available through Lakeshore Foundation with a focus on sports, fitness, recreation, and healthy living. As well, we participate in partnership clinics with Children's Rehabilitation Service, including Teen Transition Clinic, and United Ability, serving in their Ability Clinic.

In 2021, we welcomed Dr. Byron Lai as our first research faculty member. He works integrally with the UAB/Lakeshore Research Collaborative whose mission

is to improve the quality of life of individuals with physical disabilities through comprehensive rehabilitation and sports science research. Last year, he published a high-impact position paper in the Lancet summarizing the current state of the science for physical activity participation of people living with disabilities across the globe. He is using an innovative virtual reality system to engage children in our pediatric intensive care unit in an early mobility program. We are very excited about the new knowledge we will gain through his work to provide evidence-based interventions to improve the health and wellness of children with disabilities in Alabama and around the world.

Lastly, we are excited to share that Dr. Kelli Chaviano will be joining our division in the summer of 2022. Dr. Chaviano currently serves as Program Director for Integrative Cancer Rehabilitation (I CAN Rehab) at UT Southwestern/Children's Health in Dallas, TX. We are thrilled that she will be bringing her innovative model of care for cancer rehabilitation to Children's of Alabama.

### USA pediatric residents and medical students volunteer in community outreach event

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



**David Gremse, MD, FAAP**

As pediatricians, we see the effects of healthcare disparities among children in our communities.

Striving to achieve a goal of healthy outcomes for all children includes removing barriers to access to care, eliminating language and cultural differences, and reducing transportation barriers. It is with these goals in mind that Renee Roca, MD, FAAP, helped organize a free pediatric health fair this past December with nearly 80 area children participating. The event was hosted by the USA Health Pediatric Residency Diversity Coalition in partnership with Ascension Providence Guadalupe Center and the USA Regional Autism Network.

USA Health pediatric residents and USA College of Medicine students, along with attendings and faculty members, provided health screenings that were aimed at the Spanish-speaking community in southwest Alabama. More than 30 pediatric residents and medical students volunteered their time during the event to

**continued on page 11**



**Drew Davis, MD, FAAP**

## Early Career Spotlight: Dr. Kristine Sawyer has a passion for serving her fellow pediatricians and community

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



Dr. Sawyer, MD, FAAP

This quarter's early career physician spotlight started her adventure as a pediatrician in the Wiregrass five years ago. After earning her medical degree from UABSOM, Dr. Sawyer completed pediatric residency in 2017 and has been a physician with the Dothan Pediatric Healthcare Network ever since. Her office manager describes Dr. Sawyer as "an expert pediatrician providing healthcare to the Wiregrass" and "an observant and open-minded pediatrician with a strong determination to provide excellent care to her patients and a genuine passion for her calling."

Now in the fifth year of her career, Dr. Sawyer has also demonstrated that she has a passion for serving fellow pediatricians as well as her community. She is a member of the Enterprise Sesame Study Club and the Enterprise Junior Women's Club. Dr. Sawyer also remains active in the Alabama

Chapter-AAP, an interest that started in residency as she served as the residency class representative to the Chapter. Most recently, she participated in the Chapter's highly successful Child Death Review project.

Dr. Sawyer and her husband share a love of adventure that they hope to pass on to their two boys – William (age 3 year) and Henry (age 4 months). They love to travel and explore new places, especially on foot! Among Dr. Sawyer's favorite destinations are the mountains of Patagonia, Chile, which she and her husband were blessed to hike during a month that she spent in Santiago as part of a medical shadowing program as a resident. In addition to hiking, when it is warm, you can find them on a more local Alabama lake, wakeboarding and skiing.

Dr. Sawyer's staff at Enterprise Pediatrics is "so thankful that Dr. Sawyer is part of our medical team!" And, we, at the Alabama Chapter, could not agree more. We look forward to many more adventures with Dr. Sawyer both in the clinic and beyond.

*If you know a pediatrician in Alabama who is in the first 10 years of his/her career, doing excellent work and should be "spotlighted," please contact me at nola.ernest@gmail.com so we can showcase them in an upcoming newsletter. Further, this year, the Chapter is please to announce that an Early Career Pediatrician of the Year award will be presented at the Annual Meeting in September. If you would like to find out more about the criteria for the award as well as how to nominate a pediatrician, please see page 4.*

### Let's Hear It From Our Departments of Pediatrics! continued from page 10

deliver services that included anthropometric screening, vision screening, and developmental screenings, along with health education on dental hygiene, car seat safety, water safety, safe sleep and vaccinations.

"The medical students were a key component of the community outreach," said Dr. Roca, who is an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the USA College of Medicine and a pediatric hospitalist at USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital.

The event identified many children who benefited from additional healthcare services and the residents and students who participated gained valuable experience in providing culturally competent care to children in our community.



Scan for AL-AAP  
COVID Vaccine  
Uptake Toolkit  
Updates

## Coding

**O** NEW  
**r** DIAGNOSIS  
**n** CODES Effective  
**e** April 1, 2022  
**r**

New diagnosis codes will be effective for ICD-10-CM on April 1, 2022 related to COVID-19. These codes are not intended to be used as primary diagnosis code.

### Z28.310

Unvaccinated for COVID-19

### Z28.311

Partially vaccinated for COVID-19

### Z28.39

Other underimmunization status

## Event Calendar

April 7, 2022  
AL-AAP Webinar:  
Supporting Domestic Violence  
Adult Survivors and their  
Children: Bridging the Gap  
between Healthcare & Service  
Providers  
12:15 p.m.

April 28 – May 1, 2022  
2022 Spring Meeting &  
Pediatric Update  
The Lodge at Gulf State Park  
Gulf Shores, AL

September 9-11, 2022  
2022 Annual Meeting & Fall  
Pediatric Update  
Ross Bridge Resort  
Birmingham, AL

October 7 - 11, 2022  
2022 AAP National  
Conference & Exhibition  
Anaheim, CA

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## NEWS FROM PUBLIC HEALTH

ADPH adding four new disorders to  
newborn screening panel by year end

*By Wes Stubblefield, MD, MPH, FAAP, District  
Medical Officer, Northern/Northeastern Districts,  
Alabama Department of Public Health, Morgan  
County Health Department*

On February 15, 2022, the Alabama  
Department of Public Health (ADPH)  
announced that plans were in place to  
add four new disorders to the newborn  
screening panel by the end of 2022. The  
first of these, spinal muscular atrophy, was  
successfully added February 14, 2022, with  
the remainder to be added in the third and  
fourth of this year. These include X-linked  
adrenoleukodystrophy, Pompe disease, and  
mucopolysaccharidosis type I (MPS-I).

Spinal muscular atrophy, rapidly progressive  
and often fatal in its most common forms,  
can be treated and/or prevented with newly  
developed medical therapies. As these therapies

are most effective if started prior to the onset  
of symptoms, early identification is crucial for  
these affected infants and their families.

The addition of these four conditions will  
bring Alabama's list of screened conditions  
in line with the Recommended Universal  
Screening Panel published by the Secretary of  
the Department of Health and Human Services  
(HHS). As future conditions are added to this  
list, ADPH's Bureau of Clinical Laboratories  
(BCL), Newborn Screening Follow-up Division  
and partnering physicians will continue to align  
with the recommendations from HHS.

The dried blood spot, along with the  
newborn hearing screening and congenital  
heart disease screening, make up the core of  
Alabama's Newborn Screening Program. The  
BCL, the sole provider for blood analysis for  
the program, currently screens for 32 core  
conditions and over 50 secondary disorders.

## Practice Management Association update

*By Gena Allen, PMA Chair*

This year, the Alabama Chapter-AAP's Practice Management Association has kicked off its  
educational webinars by offering two sessions for both PMA and Chapter members: "The  
Business of Vaccines" and "Providing Vaccines: Clinical & Workflow Considerations," which  
were both recorded (scan the QR code to access the recordings). In addition, we are gearing  
up for our Practice Management Workshop on Friday, September 9 at  
Ross Bridge Resort. Please mark your calendars, and also let us know of  
any topic ideas you have!

Is your practice manager not involved in the PMA? He or she can sign  
up on the Chapter website and begin networking with managers across  
the state! Visit <https://www.alaap.org/practice-management-association-who-we-are>.



### 2020-2021 AAP PMA Executive Committee

**Chair:** Gena Allen, South Baldwin Pediatrics

**1st Vice Chair:** VACANT

**Membership Chair:** Rosalyn Rowley, Fairhope Pediatrics

**Communications Chair:** Lynn Brown, CPC, Children's of Alabama

**Immediate Past Chair:** Lori Coletta, Over the Mountain Pediatrics



## The Resource Every Parent Needs

The Parenting Assistance Line (PAL) is a free service available to anyone who wants information and support in becoming a more confident parent or caregiver. If you have a parenting question or just need a sympathetic ear, give us a call, text or visit our website to chat online.

866-962-3030

PAL.UA.EDU



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## CHAPTER BRIEFS

## Raulerson honored with prestigious Paul Burleson Award



Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP

Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP, long-time pediatrician from Brewton, past president of the Alabama Chapter-AAP (2003-2005), and a long-time advocate for children in Alabama, is being honored with the 2022 Paul W. Burleson Award by the Medical Association of the State of Alabama.

Named in honor of Paul W. Burleson, MD, an Alabama physician and renowned benefactor, the Burleson award is presented in recognition of a medical career that encompasses not only high ethical and professional standards in patient care, but includes extraordinary service to physician organizations at the county, state and national levels. The award has been given annually by the Medical Association since 2000. Dr. Raulerson will be presented with the award at the MASA Annual Session on April 8.

Dr. Raulerson's list of accomplishments is lengthy, as she has been involved in numerous efforts to improve the health and safety of children, including work on Medicaid and ALL Kids coverage, child passenger safety restraint policy work, mental health, telepsychiatry, healthy eating, early literacy and many others. She was one of the first pediatricians to provide Reach Out and Read in her practice, and remains passionate about the program as its Medical Director for the Chapter's statewide coalition as well as in her community.

She also served at the national level as a member and then chair of the AAP Federal Government Affairs Committee, leading delegations in visits to our Congressmen in Washington.

She continues to advocate for children at the state level with the Chapter and as a board member of Alabama Children First. Congratulations, Dr. Raulerson!



David Kimberlin, MD, FAAP

Kimberlin named as one of 21 Alabamians who made a difference in 2021

David Kimberlin, MD, FAAP, professor in the UAB Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, has been named one of Al.com's "21 Alabamians Who Made a Difference in 2021" for his work fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

See the al.com piece here, in which Dr. Kimberlin is quoted as saying, "Vaccines are the lifeboats that God is sending us.": <https://bit.ly/3NhxxTL>.

Kudos, Dr. Kimberlin!

## Schwartz receives CARES Award



Justin Schwartz, MD, FAAP

Justin Schwartz, MD, FAAP, associate professor in the UAB Division of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, was announced as this year's recipient of the CARES (Commitment to Autism Research, Education, and Service) Award at the 21st Annual Alabama Autism Conference during the event on February 25.

Each year, the Alabama Autism Conference honors an individual who shows dedication and commitment to autism research, education, or service with the CARES Award.

Congratulations Dr. Schwartz!

## In Memoriam: William "Bill" Lies, MD, FAAP

By Michael J. Ramsey, MD, FAAP, AL-AAP Past President, AAP District X Vice Chair and Pediatrician, Dothan Pediatric Clinic



William "Bill" Lies, MD, FAAP

Dr. William "Bill" Lies, the Alabama Chapter's oldest living member, died on February 17, 2022 at the age of 96. He established Dothan Pediatric Clinic in 1953 and practiced there for more than 50 years, retiring having cared for more than 40,000 Wiregrass children.

When I came to Dothan Pediatric Clinic in 1997, I entered his practice whose culture had been cultivated for decades. Bill engrained the mindset of providing excellent healthcare for all children, regardless of socioeconomic status. He welcomed new physicians as equals, listening to ideas while providing history and experience in their implementation. He cared for his partners and staff deeply, and helped establish the workplace as a "professional family." We strive to continue these ideals to this day.

Bill leaves a legacy of a life well-lived in service to his family, friends, and patients. I am profoundly grateful to have known him.

## Youth perspective: the importance of the adolescent well check-up

By Sydnee Cantley, Fairhope, Ala.

*Editor's note: Sydnee is a patient of our Chapter President Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP, and she contacted us to ask if she could help us spread the word about the importance of the adolescent well check-up. Of course, we said yes! She will be helping us with social media and teen/parent teen outreach. This is her story.*

When I was in the 9th grade, I went to my yearly wellness checkup. Little did I know that at the age of 14, that visit was going to change my life forever!

I was a healthy kid, but my grandma always took me to my yearly wellness checkups. During the wellness checkup, my doctor noticed that one side of my neck was larger than the other side. I was sent to have blood work, ultrasounds, and a biopsy to be done. After many days of waiting on the results, on September 23, 2019, I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer and Hashimoto's disease.

As pediatricians know, thyroid cancer is very rare in children, with fewer than one in 100,000 children developing thyroid cancer each year. My biopsy showed my thyroid had four cancerous nodules on the left lobe, and it was going to have to be removed. I would struggle with a lot of symptoms, including fluctuating weight, inability to get warm, being extremely sensitive to the cold, irregular menstrual cycles, dry skin, and brittle hair.

Essentially, I had a double whammy!

My family and I struggled finding a surgeon who would perform the surgery because none of them had ever removed a child's thyroid before. After lots of searching, we found Dr. Herbert Chen at The University of Alabama in Birmingham, and he was willing to remove my thyroid. We ultimately decided to keep the right side of my thyroid due to my age and my body still going through puberty.

On November 15, 2019, I had my surgery to remove the left side of my thyroid. I lost one of my parathyroid glands because it was buried deep in my thyroid, but I still had three glands left. Everything went great, and I recovered pretty swiftly and I was cancer free! Throughout 2020, I was always getting blood work done to check on my thyroglobulin levels, which is a cancer detector. During this time, I was still dealing with symptoms of Hashimoto's disease. Over time, my levels started fluctuating more and more and my thyroglobulin levels came back higher and higher.

In March 2021, we went back to Dr. Chen at UAB and he agreed that removing the right lobe of my thyroid would be very beneficial because I would no longer have to deal with Hashimoto's disease or the chances of cancer coming back. On April 19, 2021, I had my second surgery to remove the rest of my thyroid.

Overall, we felt pretty good about my surgery. I lost another one

of my parathyroid glands because it was also buried deep in my thyroid. Again, you only need one gland, so we thought just having two glands would be sufficient. But, 24 hours after my surgery, I started having symptoms of low calcium. My hands and feet had a very painful tingly feeling, I had muscle spasms in my legs, face, and hands, and I was experiencing the Chvostek's sign, where the facial muscles would twitch when I would tap over my facial nerve. I ended up in the ICU to receive calcium infusions, and that is when I learned I only had one parathyroid gland that barely worked; the other gland on the left side was dormant. To this day, I take lots of calcium supplements every day to ensure that my body has the correct amount of calcium it needs.

I am absolutely blessed to be cancer-free, and I know that being on medication for the rest of my life will be the norm for me. I get blood work done often to check on my calcium levels and throughout this whole experience, I have become more in tune with my body and how I am feeling daily. After experiencing everything, I wanted to share my story with others and hopefully inspire them to go to their yearly wellness check-up.

When I started competing in the Miss America Organization, I won the title of Miss Mobile Bay's Outstanding Teen 2022. I chose adolescent wellness check-ups as my Social Impact Initiative, where I share my story and promote the benefits of wellness check-ups to parents and teens. I competed at Miss Alabama's Outstanding Teen 2022 in March and I won the Non-Finalist Interview Award and Top 6 for Community Service for my Social Impact Initiative. I have been able to share my Social Impact Initiative by speaking at my local county commissioners' meetings, speaking and sharing my story at my school with my peers and teachers, and I recorded a radio PSA that is played on all clear FM stations in my area! One of the biggest benefits I have gained from sharing the importance of wellness check-ups is knowing that my loved ones and peers are making their health one of their top priorities and spreading the word about wellness check-ups to people they know as well!

I want to thank Dr. Katie Erdlitz, who was the one who found the nodules on my thyroid, and my pediatrician Dr. Katrina Skinner. If it wasn't for that wellness check-up in 2019, I would be telling a completely different story right now!

# Alabama Chapter

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The Alabama Rural Medical Service Award (**ARMSA**) awards primary care physicians (family medicine, internist, general pediatrics) **\$50,000** per year stipend for up to three years once they begin practice in a rural area of need. These communities include Bay Minette, Oneonta, Troy and Wetumpka, along with dozens of others.

Physicians interested in making a difference in the health of rural Alabama are invited to explore this program. Contact [ARMSA@uabmc.edu](mailto:ARMSA@uabmc.edu) for information.

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ARMSA is administered by the Alabama Department of Public Health and supported by the Office for Family Health Education & Research of the UAB School of Medicine.