



DHS News Flash



United Way Names Alba Martinez Next President and CEO

On Friday, April 30, 2004, DHS Commissioner Alba Martinez was named as the next President and CEO of the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania.

Alba will continue to serve in her role as Commissioner through May, and will work with DHS leadership to ensure a smooth transition.

In a memorandum notifying staff of her appointment, Commissioner Martinez offered thanks and praise to the members of the department.

“While I am proud of the accomplishments during my tenure as the Commissioner, I am clear that the key

to DHS’ present and future success lies in the commitment and effort of the more than 1,900 staff members of this department, and our many partners.”

Martinez went on to say “My time and experiences at DHS have been the most rewarding of my career, and I look forward to continuing the work of producing better outcomes for the children of this city and region in my new leadership role.”

To date a successor to Martinez has not been named, but a Transition Team has been assembled and is working closely with Alba Martinez and the City’s administration to ensure a smooth and effective transition.

Excerpt From Mayor Street’s Statement on the Appointment of Alba Martinez

“Alba Martinez has been an effective and passionate advocate for children and a strong supporter of collectively redesigning Philadelphia’s child welfare system through strategic partnerships.”

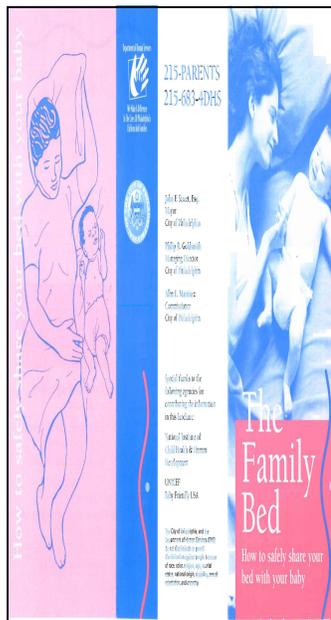
“We are proud that the United Way has chosen one of our own for the important position of President and CEO. Alba will be missed, and the systemic reform efforts she initiated focused on protecting Philadelphia’s children, ensuring permanency in their lives and providing supports for Philadelphia’s families, will continue.”

DHS to Highlight Dangers of Bed Sharing

Taking an infant to bed with you at night is a common practice among many families, but few are aware of the possible dangers.

Referred to as the “Family Bed,” sharing a bed with an infant is a practice that is done for many valid reasons—comfort, warmth, closeness, and economics.

There are risks however that can result in serious injury and death as a result of smothering or suffocation. DHS is working to ensure Philadelphia parents are made aware of these risks so proper



precautions are taken.

To prevent these injuries and deaths, the American Academy of Pediatrics states that the safest way to put your baby to sleep is to place him on his back in his own crib.

However if a

parent chooses to share a bed with a baby, DHS wants to make sure they know how to best protect their children.

A brochure outlining the proper use of the family bed has been created and will be distributed to all Philadelphia hospitals, provider agencies, health centers, and other organizations where parents congregate.

To order DHS’ Family Bed brochure, please call 215-683-4DHS or go online to www.phila.gov/dhs and click on Outreach and Public Awareness.

Members Offer Their Thoughts on the AI Center

During a recent focus group at the Achieving Independence Center (AI Center) conducted to address concerns and gather feedback from members about the Supervised Independent Living (SIL) program, the facilitators of the conversation were treated to some candid, and very positive remarks.

“This is the only place I can come that makes me feel okay to admit that I am in foster care,” stated one member. “Before I would hide the fact that my mother didn’t want me. Here I can tell people and they have the same experience.”

Another member talked about life before the Center.

“You have to realize that some of the other kids at the AI Center have really struggled. Many of the older ones were on street corners selling drugs before the AI Center was here.”

Originally scheduled as a one hour meeting, the conversation lasted more than two and a half hours.

Now in its second year of operation, the AI Center’s membership is well over 500 with computer training, lifeskills, and university scholastic

achievement programs having served more than 250 youth each.

A joint effort between DHS and the Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation, the AI Center is designed to enable young men and women aging out of the foster care system to acquire basic life skills, employment training, job opportunities, and even a place to live.

For information, call 215-571-9194.



Bernard Hopkins and HBO Sports Visit Youth Study Center

HBO Sports made a visit to Philadelphia recently as part of their Real Sports documentary on Bernard “The Executioner” Hopkins.

Hopkins, a Philadelphia native, and one time resident of the Youth Study Center (YSC) regularly speaks to the residents about the decisions he made that landed him in the YSC, and later in jail.

“While many of the children want to hear about his riches and all of the famous people he knows, Hopkins has a way of connecting with the youth,” commented DHS Deputy Commissioner, Anne Marie Ambrose.

“I’m not here to talk about my money, partying with Jay Z or having dinner with AI,” Hopkins commented during the taping.

“I’m here to talk about decisions and how what you do today can change the rest of your life. It’s not about money, and it’s not about me. It’s about you all.”



DHS Deputy Commissioner of Juvenile Justice Services , Anne Marie Ambrose and Bernard “The Executioner” Hopkins” pose during the HBO Sports taping of Hopkins Documentary

Hopkins was accompanied by his trainers—also from Philadelphia—and together they discussed the types of issues and challenges facing youth today, and how to make good decisions.

“We are here to protect these children,” continued Ambrose. “Bernard is such a powerful boxer, but when he talks to these kids, you really see where his power is. Having come from the same neighborhood, and having dealt with the same issues and violence that these youth see, Bernard’s power lies in his ability to reach these children.”

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