Arizona health department awarded for new infant blood screening process

PHOENIX -- The Arizona Department of Health Services was given its first-ever Newborn Screening Quality Award by the March of Dimes on Thursday.

The department was awarded because of its efforts to reduce the amount of time it takes newborn baby blood samples to the state lab, where they can be screened for any potentially deadly conditions.

Normally, it takes about three days to transport a newborn's blood sample from a hospital to the state lab.

"In January 2014, 67 percent of the blood spot samples were getting from the hospital to our state laboratory in three days," said ADHS Director Will Humble. "Some were taking more than five days to get to our lab, and that's not acceptable."

Humble said much of the problem involved babies who are born on a Friday. Though the samples were taken on-time, a lack of staff on the weekends meant the process of delivering them to the lab didn't begin until Monday. Humble said ADHS resolved the issue by staffing courier services on Saturday and worked with hospitals to improve their shipping and receiving areas.

"Through the changes that we've put together, we are now at 99 percent (of the samples getting from the hospital to the state lab) within three days, and we have average transit time of only 1.3 days," Humble said.
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The March of Dimes said because of the changes, Arizona’s Newborn Screening Program is one other states should follow.

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About the Author

Bob McClay

Years with the company: I started on January 2, 2006.

Education: I was born in San Antonio, Texas, but we moved to Phoenix when I was one-year-old in 1957. I grew up here and attended Alhambra High School and attended Phoenix College.

I am married to my wife Reneé, who is a librarian in the Washington school district. During free time, I may be found...
Family:
playing basketball in the driveway with my son, Devin. He’s also keeping me busy with school, Little League, and playing in chess tournaments around the Valley.

Favorite food: Lots of favorite food, but our favorite restaurant is Fajitas.

Favorite spot in Arizona: The Little America Hotel in Flagstaff.

Favorite news memory: We have to go back to October 15, 1979. I was a country music air personality at KROP Radio in Brawley, California, when we had a 6.7 earthquake. Thankfully, there were no deaths and only minor injuries, but the entire community was pretty freaked out and listening to the station on their transistor radios. I would not want to go through an earthquake again, but it sure was a great night to work in radio and see how it can make a difference in people’s lives.

First job: Working as a stringer for ‘The Arizona Republic’ at high school football games. My first real job was flipping burgers at the old Sandy’s Hamburgers at 51st Avenue and Indian School Road. My first radio job was as announcer at KALJ radio in Yuma in 1977.

First concert: Doug Oldham gospel concert in the 1970s at the old East High School in Phoenix.

Favorite sports team: Phoenix Roadrunners minor league hockey. My dad took me to a game when I was in grade school, and I was hooked. I wanted to be a radio hockey play-by-play man. I used to take my cassette recorder and sit up in the rafters of the Coliseum and do play-by-play. It was great later in life to also take my son to Roadrunners games. Too bad the team just folded, I’ll miss them. (Going to the Coyotes is fun, but they’re not “my” team.)

Outside interests: My family and I are active in our church - Northern Hills Community Church in Phoenix. We enjoy going to movies, sporting events, and like to vacation at the Beach Cottages in the Pacific Beach area of San Diego. And I love to play catch, basketball, football with my son.
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