

Connections

Volume 8, Issue 4

Winner of the National Public Health Information Coalition's Gold Award

April 2008

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together



How did LeAnn Laurent, Resource Developer in the DHHS Bridgeport office, come by this breathtaking quilt? See back cover for details.
Photo: Barb Miller

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DHHS in the News Update...

A small sample of news releases recently issued by Communications & Legislative Services about DHHS programs. A full text of all releases is available under "Newsroom" on the DHHS Web site listed below.

Energy assistance! Substance abuse! Tax credits! Just a few of the 54 media releases (some statewide, some localized) about DHHS programs issued in February 2008. Here are a few headlines of news releases DHHS sent to media in March 2008:

- **All Three Regional Centers Have Successful Surveys: DHHS Reorganization Credited** March 7
- **DHHS Promotes Nebraska Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day** March 6
- **DHHS Taking Next Steps at BSDC** March 6

Check recent DHHS releases by going to www.dhhs.ne.gov/, clicking on the "Newsroom" link and then on "News Releases." Listen to "sound bites" issued with releases by going to www.dhhs.ne.gov/audio/.

Have a story idea you think DHHS should be sharing with media? Contact Communications & Legislative Services at (402) 471-9108! ☺



Wellness Words: Myth-Information

Many ideas about health have been repeated so often that we accept them as so ... even when they're not. Here's a widely believed myth you need to know the truth about!

"Eating carrots improves eyesight."

One theory holds that this myth might have started during World War II, when intelligence officials spread word that British pilots had remarkable night vision because they ate lots of carrots. British military sources "leaked" this false information because they didn't want the Nazis to know that they were using a new technology—radar.

Many vegetables high in vitamin A (including carrots, sweet potatoes, spinach and avocado) definitely help maintain healthy eyesight, but eating more than the recommended daily allowance of any particular veggie won't improve vision.

Watch for more "MYTH-information" installments as part of "Wellness Words" in upcoming issues! ☺

make the connection . . .

DHHS Public Web site: <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov>

DHHS Employee Web site: <http://www2.dhhs.ne.gov>

DHHS System Advocate: 1-800-254-4202, (402) 471-6035 in Lincoln, or via e-mail at diana.duran@dhhs.ne.gov

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From the CEO

As a new Department, we are focusing on being transparent and keeping the public informed about the work we do. We want Nebraska residents to understand our policies and the decisions we make in any of our services or program areas.

Historically, information about abuse and neglect involving children who were in the state's custody was



By Christine Peterson
Chief Executive Officer,
Nebraska Department
of Health and Human
Services

confidential. Any time a reporter asked for details about a specific case, for example, the answer had to be "no, we're sorry."

If staff or the public read or heard incorrect information in news reports, there was no way to correct it.

That's changed because of a bill **Governor Heineman** signed into law on March 10. LB 782 expands information DHHS can give out about cases of abuse and neglect involving children who are state wards. Senator **Gwen Howard** of Omaha introduced the bill on behalf of the Governor and DHHS, and it was one of the Governor's priorities for the 2008 legislative session.

The best interests of the child are always considered before any specific information is released, and public disclosure is not allowed if it impedes a criminal investigation by a law enforcement agency.

However, now it's possible to give out a name and physical description when a child is missing from his or her own home, a foster home or



Governor **Dave Heineman** signs LB782, as Senator **Gwen Howard** and Children & Family Services Division Director **Todd Landry** look on. *Photo courtesy of the Governor's office.*

another placement. We can provide information about suspected abuse or neglect if something serious happens to a child in the state's care, or when someone is charged with a crime connected to the case.

We have a new ability to confirm, clarify or correct information about alleged or actual instances of child abuse or neglect disclosed by sources outside DHHS.

Some of the other information that can now be made public is whether children are living in their own home or some other place like a foster home, why they were removed from their parents, the number and type of placements, court-ordered or division services being provided, and the results of criminal history record checks completed by the Division of Children and Family Services.

There is still information that can't be released without a court order, including date of birth, social security number, protected health information, the name of the person reporting

abuse or neglect, and the name of a foster parent unless that person is the alleged perpetrator.

LB 792 authorizes only two people to release case-specific information: **Todd Landry**, as director of the Division of Children and Family Services, and me, as CEO. If other employees are asked for case specific information from media or anyone else, they should contact Communications and Legislative Services at (402) 471-9108. They will contact me or Todd Landry and we can coordinate gathering the needed information.

I welcome this new ability to have greater disclosure in the very challenging area of child welfare. This new flexibility and transparency is an important step in increasing public confidence in DHHS and our accountability as we work to protect the children of Nebraska.

ABCD Employee Recognition!

The following employees are recognized for contributions above and beyond simply doing their job well in support of the DHHS mission: Helping people live better lives. Twice each year, directors, administrators, supervisors, and managers are invited to nominate employees who have so distinguished themselves. The following individuals put forth effort that went Above and Beyond the Call of Duty.

Protection & Safety Unit in the Gering, Alliance, Chadron, Bridgeport, and Sidney Offices
(Nominated by **Kathy Carter**, Protection & Safety Administrator, Division of Children & Family Services)

On April 1, 2007, the Protection & Safety (P&S) staff in Gering, Alliance, Chadron, Bridgeport, and Sidney offices in the Western Service Area began implementing a new Safety Assessment model, the Nebraska Safety Intervention System (NSIS). This model changes from an assessment of maltreatment only to a comprehensive look at the family dynamics and possible underlying causes of the maltreatment.

Staff members in these offices were the first in the state to be trained to implement complete use of this model. This process began without policy and technical support and limited community resources.

Supervisors invested a lot of time to support the P&S workers, as they practice the NSIS in the field. P&S Case Aides/Client Intake Clerks have also spent many hours making adjustments to the ways they support P&S workers.

All staff members involved in this implementation were positive and committed to applying the NSIS to the best of their ability. This commitment was shown by their suggested improvements and accolades for the NSIS.

As a result of all this, substantial improvements were made to applying the model in the field that assisted the rest of the state, as they began implementing NSIS. Nebraska's kids are now safer and families will be stronger, as we work with them in a more comprehensive way.

Jeff Mauler, Recreation Aide, Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center — Kearney
(Nominated by **Tim O'Dea**, Facility Administrator)

Jeff Mauler is a half-time FTE YRTC-K Recreation Aide, who over the past year has gone above and beyond the usual job responsibilities.

The YRTC-K laundry supervisor has been on extended medical leave this past year. Various YRTC-K staff filled in on short term basis, but Recreation Aide Jeff Mauler volunteered to provide consistent service and man the laundry post. He has worked to ensure the over 190 youth were kept supplied with clean clothing, linens and towels. He also made sure the dining room, medical and other support areas are kept supplied with clean linens and other materials they need.

Just think of washing and drying 500 sheets, 250 pillowcases, 500 pairs of jeans, 500 sets of underwear, 2,000 bath towels a week and keeping them sorted and routed to the various youth living units. Jeff also maintained an orderly and well functioning laundry area.

Thanks to Jeff Mauler for stepping up to make sure that YRTC-K youth and staff needs are met.

Direct care providers at the Beatrice State Developmental Center

(Nominated by **John Wyvill**, Director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities)

In the face of tremendous adversity, direct care providers at the Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC) did not waiver, falter or fail in their devotion and dedication to their duty to the clients. Instead, they made personal sacrifices in time spent away from their own families to work both voluntary and involuntary overtime.

During this time, not a single client family member of guardian requested to have their loved one removed from campus. This is a testimonial to the care and commitment that front line staff demonstrate day in and day out.

BSDC direct care providers are unsung heroes who earn the recognition, respect and accolades for work well done. It is a privilege to work with them in the ongoing effort to help BSDC clients live better lives.

Becky Houck, Administrative Assistant, Office of Public Health Emergency Response, Division of Public Health

(Nominated by **Christine Newlon, RN, Administrator, Office of Public Health Emergency Response, Division of Public Health**)

During the time that Becky Houck has been a member of the Public Health Emergency Response team, she has consistently embraced the operating themes and principles of the DHHS. Her communication and customer service skills, particularly those related to the many phone calls she receives each day, are professional, respectful, and helpful.

Becky's past experiences as a Specialized Office Services employee have enhanced her ability to refer callers to the people who can address their needs. She has consistently demonstrated a cooperative spirit, collaborating to achieve the goals of not only the Public Health Emergency Response team but also of DHHS and other Departments. Her resourcefulness, experience, and conceptual thinking have inspired confidence in her co-workers that she is a valuable asset in developing solutions and improving processes.

Becky's exceptional work ethic and dedication to the Department's operational themes were most recently demonstrated during an audit of grant contracts. Despite several changes in organizational structure, administrative personnel, and the contracting process, Becky diligently researched the history of the contracts, located both electronic and hard-copy documents, and became readily accessible to the audit team for several weeks.

Early in the audit process, she was able to anticipate the auditors' needs, identify potential process deficiencies, and offer suggestions for remedies. Documents were organized, complete, and ready for review when the audit team arrived. Her action-oriented attitude and willingness to be accountable for implementing the auditors' recommendations undoubtedly contributed to the results of the audit report and will improve compliance for all contracts managed by Public Health Emergency Response.

Sandie Caldwell, Human Resource Officer, Human Resources & Development Section

(Nominated by **Dan Cillessen, Administrator, Division of Public Health**)

Sandie Caldwell is the Human Resource officer assigned to support the Health Promotion unit, as it selects replacement staff. In the past two months, we have had three new staff selected, and she has been very active in supporting our area.

Regardless of the task that she faces, she always does so with a smile and a very supportive attitude. Many of our staff perform in a similar manner, but Sandie has had to cover two jobs within the Human Resource area and still maintain a very positive, supportive approach to her tasks. This is greatly appreciated by those who are so dependent upon Human Resources in filling vacant staff positions.

Joan DeVries, Safety Officer, Lincoln Regional Center

(Nominated by **Stacey Werth-Sweeney, Director of Risk Management, Lincoln Regional Center**)

Joan DeVries has taken the initiative to ensure that the Lincoln Regional Center (LRC) is meeting all expectations involving the facility's work with the community on disaster planning. She has been instrumental in facilitating and planning training in the proper way to facilitate a disaster drill that is crucial for the hospital's success in meeting those standards.

Joan has participated in meetings with State and County public health officials and been instrumental in ensuring that LRC is a part of the community-wide disaster planning. LRC patients and staff will be safer and more prepared to handle a crisis or disaster, due to the initiative that Joan has taken to help our facility plan and be prepared.

Joan is an excellent employee, who goes above and beyond the duties that fall within her job description. She is an asset to this agency and a pleasure to work with.

Omaha Intake Teams

(Nominated by the Omaha Economic Assistance Administrative Team)

The Omaha Economic Assistance Administrative Team would like to recognize the Omaha Intake Teams for their accomplishment of 100% accuracy in Quality Control reviews during the 2007 fiscal Year.

The Intake teams had a total of 35 Food Stamp records pulled for a Quality Control audit. This meant that \$5,934 in Food Stamp benefits were reviewed during the fiscal year. Of those cases, all were found to be correct!

The Omaha Office Intake team is a dedicated group of Workers, Case Aides, Client Intake Clerks, and supervisors, all playing a vital role in providing excellent customer service and accurate benefits to our customers. The Intake Teams are led by **Marian Angelo, Martha Fountain, Vickey Kobza, Linda Miner, Jerry Skovgaard, and Marianne Triplett.**

The Omaha Economic Assistance Administrative Team would like to commend all the Omaha Intake staff for their work and recognize each team for a job well done.

continued on page 6

Mark Miller, Health Data Coordinator, Division of Public Health

(Nominated by **Kurt Weiss**, Administrator, Division of Public Health)

Some people are consistently good workers, while some shine more on certain projects. Both of these qualities apply to Mark Miller, who always goes beyond what is expected of him. This is based on his personal and professional desire to always do his best.

Mark is an exceptional person, as well as a hard working and dedicated professional. His willingness to take on projects, work hard and find workable solutions to problems that arise is greatly appreciated.

His programming skills have grown with the challenges of the statewide Electronic Registration System (ERS) project, a Web-based method for recording and distributing vital statistics to authorized officials and issuing certificates for birth, marriage and the like. He has demonstrated the willingness to risk learning new functions of ERS to make the system work, fix problems or find solutions to how the system needs to function.

Employees don't always get recognition because good performance just becomes expected by others. However, it's important to recognize Mark's professional accomplishments with the ERS II project and share them with his peers.

The next Above & Beyond the Call of Duty Employee Recognition will be featured in *Connections'* October 2008 issue. Directors, administrators, supervisors, and managers are invited to e-mail nominations for ABCD Employee Recognition to **Richard Mettler** by July 15, 2008. The ABCD nomination form is available on the DHHS Intranet at <http://www2.dhhs.ne.gov/policies/abcd-form.doc>. ☞



Licensure Unit offers electronic address updating

The DHHS Licensure Unit continues to provide additional online options. If you hold a license to practice as a nurse, doctor, medical radiographer, or asbestos remover, you now can update your address to ensure that any license information can reach you in a timely manner.

Check out this new option by going to the Web site at www.dhhs.ne.gov/crl/crlindex.htm.

Customer Service Tip



Instead of automatically considering customer complaints as unreasonable, consider each complaint as an opportunity to make a new friend for our organization. Even if the customer is mistaken or makes an unreasonable demand, a positive approach is more likely to lead toward resolution than “attitude” and might even point out a gap in service that could or should be plugged.

HIPAA reminder: *When in doubt, don't give it out!*

April 14, 2008, will mark five years since the DHHS HIPAA Steering Committee and technical advisory groups completed their policies, procedures, training and necessary compliance memorandums to ensure that DHHS met the Privacy Rule deadline.

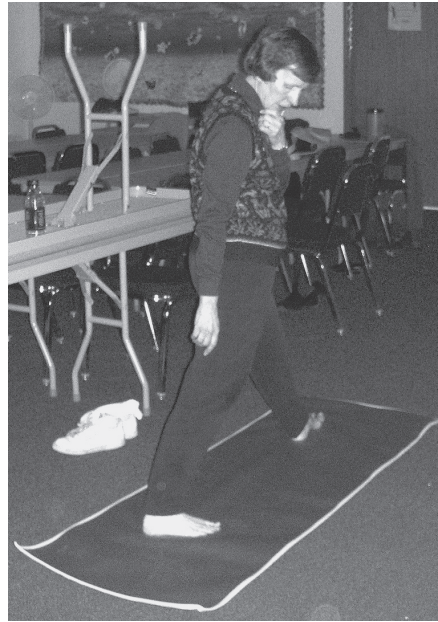
The Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act passed in 1996 is lengthy, with over 14,000 pages of standards to follow! We have learned much in the past five years, and staff is to be commended for their diligence.

During this time, DHHS staff has gained a greater understanding of HIPAA and have incorporated the key elements of releasing minimum information necessary, individual rights, and disclosures for treatment, payment, and operations into their daily routine.

A key reminder to help you follow the HIPAA Privacy Rule would be that authorization is needed to release protected health information. There are some exceptions, so when in doubt don't give it out! These few words can save you from releasing information that is protected.

To be safe, call your supervisor, check the HIPAA training manual, or call the HIPAA Privacy/Security Office (402) 471-1076, where **Jon Grubb** and **Allan Albers** will be happy to help you.

Remember, *it's easy to release information, but difficult to get it back!*



Amy Lutt (left) does a Yoga stretch *Photo: Carol Schmid*, and **Carol Schmid** (right) demonstrates the next. *Photo: Amy Lutt*

Relaxation helps Omaha workers combat stress

By Jerry Crisp

No one has to tell DHHS employees that things can often be stressful, but workers in the Omaha Blondo Street office have found a coping method that seems to work.

Services Coordination Supervisor **Carol Schmid** recently initiated relaxation sessions designed to help interested employees cope with the daily pressures of their work. A 15-minute weekly session during employee break times invites participants to sit or lie on the floor and focus on deep breathing.

Since shallow breathing is one of the first symptoms of stress, experts say that deep breathing helps to combat stress and deal better with whatever challenge is causing it.

“Our relaxation time is really very simple,” Carol explains. “Focusing on breathing helps relax both mind and

body. We darken the room and give some sparse verbal prompts. In our busy, noisy world, it always amazes me how just focusing on breathing can help produce a quiet simplicity.”

A while later, Carol also launched a Tuesday lunchtime yoga session.

“I had taken yoga classes for a number of years and attended two meditation retreats in Colorado led by an internationally known Buddhist monk,” Carol explains. “This experience proved valuable to me, and I wanted to share those benefits with others.”

Yoga involves stretches and “postures” that facilitate flexibility and relaxation and prepare the mind for enhanced self-awareness and meditation.

“These postures range from simple forward bends to more advanced forms like head stands, which we probably won’t be doing,” Carol quickly adds,

“but we all have to start somewhere.”

Ten or so employees in the Omaha office participate in the relaxation and Yoga sessions, and experience significant results.

“It’s a way to let everything go for a short time,” explains Services Coordinator **Amy Lutt**. “Carol is a great teacher, who facilitates this relaxation process and reminds us to apply it anytime we feel stressed.”

“Carol is such an inspiration to all of us and generously offers her expertise,” says **Linda Aadland**, another Services Coordinator. “Although she is dealing with staff at all ages and various levels of fitness, she patiently works at a pace we’re all comfortable with.”

“I recently had knee surgery and wasn’t able to do several everyday things like getting up and down from the floor, but Carol allowed me to join the class, sit on a chair and still participate in the exercises,” says Client Intake Clerk **Gayline Brill**. “Now I am able not only to get up and down from the floor but also feel reinvigorated. You feel so good after exercising, and that continues the rest of the day.”

“Carol has been very giving of her time and talents to teach us yoga and relaxation,” says Services Coordinator **Fylis Falk**. “I look forward to doing something positive for myself in the sessions that help improve my body, mind and spirit.”

Relaxation or yoga techniques can never eliminate stress nor should they because stress can mobilize, motivate and move us toward better ways of doing things. But as the Omaha group has shown, these techniques can reduce negative forces that break down rather than build.

When that happens, it promises more success for us, both in the workplace and our daily lives. ☺

Front Liners

There are thousands of stories to be told about DHHS employees who deliver direct customer services that *help people live better lives*. This is only one of them.

By Jerry Crisp

As Human Resource Officer for the Western Service Area in the Gering office, **Karen Keller** has her hands full recruiting, coordinating compensation, administering benefits and retirement activities.

“Recruitment doesn’t just mean hiring but advertising, interviewing, and running background checks,” Karen explains. “DHHS reorganization involved many changes, of course, and more recently, the process of converting 225 employees from monthly to a bi-monthly payroll has required considerable effort.”

Karen’s challenges have been increased due to vacancies in the Personnel Assistant slot. In addition to her regular duties, Karen has continued to be responsible for payroll duties for an area from Lexington to the Panhandle, including the Western Nebraska Veterans’ Home at Scottsbluff. She was also very involved in leave auditing and reconciliation, which can involve several years of review.

“These are just a couple examples of how Karen is willing to go above and beyond to serve customers,” says **Darren Duncan**, Karen’s supervisor.

“I often think of myself as a ‘Special Projects Engineer’ working in a small office of three people for a very big area,” says Karen.

“While helping to meet stringent deadlines for nearly 370 FTEs, she also provides service to customers walking into the office, as well as answering telephones,” says Duncan. “It’s simply amazing how she accomplishes all of this.”

Another example of Karen going above and beyond is seen in the way she remembers staff birthdays, decorates the office for holidays, and organizes the office.



Front Liner **Karen Keller** Photo: Vicki Blome

“This goes a long way toward providing a more relaxed atmosphere and pleasant workplace,” Duncan adds.

“All of the neat people I serve” are Karen’s reward for going the extra mile. “When I see the problems they contend with every day, mine seem pretty small. I enjoy meeting their needs and don’t want to let them down.”

We owe a debt of gratitude to Human Resource and Development workers like Karen Keller throughout DHHS, who always put their customers first. ♪

Affirmative Action/Diversity awards nomination deadline

Nomination deadline for the Governor’s annual Affirmative Action/Diversity Awards is June 15, 2008. Any state employee may nominate individual co-workers or groups for outstanding achievements in affirmative action and diversity.

“Successful Affirmative Action and diversity activities don’t just happen but result from the creativity and hard work of many of your co-workers,” says DAS Affirmative Action Officer **Charles Roberson**. “Here’s your chance to thank and help recognize their contributions.”

Nomination forms can be accessed on the DAS-State Personnel-Affirmative Action Web site at <http://www.das.state.ne.us/personnel/aa/>. Honorees will be recognized at a ceremony at the Governor’s Residence on August 13.

See that your co-workers are recognized by sending in your nomination(s) today!

May Observations

Women's Health Week

In conjunction with National Women's Health Week (May 11–17), the Nebraska Women's Health Symposium will be held on May 16 at the Embassy Suites Conference Center in Lincoln. The event focuses on leadership and will include State Senator **DiAnna Schimek**, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health **Dr. Wanda Jones**, writer **Dr. Carmen Tafolla**, holistic health specialist **Kimberly Beyer-Nelson**, and the Director of Native American Cancer Initiatives, **Dr. Linda Burhansstipanov**.

Sponsored by the National Office on Women's Health in partnership with other organizations, Women's Health Week encourages women to make their health a top priority. During the week, many groups work together to educate women about steps they can take to improve their physical and mental health and prevent disease that includes regular physical activity, healthy food choices, regular check-ups and preventive screenings, and avoiding risky behaviors like smoking and not wearing a seatbelt.

For more information, or if you would like to sponsor an event for National Women's Health Week, contact **Andrea Wenke** at (402) 471-2772 or andrea.wenke@dhhs.ne.gov.

Foster Care Month

Many Nebraska families open their hearts and homes to children who need loving, temporary care, but more are needed. Foster parents can be single, married, working couples, retirees, military personnel, renters, home owners, and from all ages and income brackets.

The Division of Children and Family Services is focusing on reaching better outcomes for children who are in foster care. For example:

- In 2006 2,326 children needing foster care were placed with relatives, a 48.9% increase between 2003 and 2006.
- Nebraska is #1 in the nation for achieving permanency through reunification, guardianship or adoption for children who've been in foster care for long periods of time.
- Nebraska meets the national standard for safety for children in foster care, meaning there's an absence of maltreatment. Last September, Nebraska was at 99.8% and the national standard is 99.68%.

In January 2008, more than 3,300 children in Nebraska had been removed from their homes because their families were in crisis and they couldn't safely stay at home. If you're interested in becoming a foster parent and helping children, call 1-800-7-PARENT (1-800-772-7368) to get more information.



Adult Abuse Awareness Month

Neglect of the elderly and people with disabilities comes in many forms. It's taking money an elderly person needs to live. It's pushing, shoving or hurting a person with mental disabilities. It's leaving a person unattended when they cannot care for themselves. Unfortunately, many vulnerable adults are taken advantage of by the people who are supposed to care for them, and often the adult victims are ashamed to talk about this secret abuse.

What does abuse look like?

- Repeated and unexplained injuries
- Misuse of personal property by others
- Unpaid bills, lack of necessities that a person's income should cover
- Unusual bank account activity
- Items missing from the home
- Lack of personal or medical care

Adult Protective Services can help. Report suspected abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult by contacting your local DHHS office, your local law enforcement agency, or calling the 24-hour, toll-free abuse and neglect hotline at 1-800-652-1999. To learn more, go to www.dhhs.ne.gov/hcs/programs/aps.htm.

Good Things Are Happening!

After DHHS emergency preparedness efforts earned a perfect 10 score in a recent national report, an *Omaha World-Herald* editorial said this recognition "provides a chance to note the state agency's sterling leadership ... The state partners with the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, and the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency in such efforts ... That willingness to reach across bureaucratic lines and cooperate is a large reason why Nebraska's efforts succeed in stockpiling vaccines for distributing medicines, in testing for and responding to biological threats with expertise."

"Of this," the World-Herald editorial concluded, "Nebraskans can be justifiably proud."

In their own words...

Letters to HHSS employees who are helping people live better lives

Dear **Marlene Pabian**
[Social Service Worker, DHHS Fremont office]:

Once again, I wish to express my deep appreciation for all assistance you have given me in the past.

I feel I have made a wise decision in choosing to enter an assisted living facility...I am happy with me acceptance there...It is returning home for me.

My best wishes to you.

A grateful service recipient

Dear **Pam Mann** [Long-Term Care Administrator, DHHS North Platte office]:

I had a wonderful phone visit today with Charla Ricciardi (DHHS Gering office), my daughter's Developmental Disabilities Service Coordinator! She makes and takes the time to listen to me. It brings tears to my eyes that we have a Service Coordinator who has such a caring heart!

A Gering area service recipient

Dear **Bob Sparby** [Service Coordinator, DHHS Grand Island office] and **Yolanda Nuncio** [Administrator, Central Service Area]:

So often supervisors are only notified when there are problems involving workers. My husband and I have been fostering for several years, and we would like to say that **Nichole Eilenstine** (Protection & Safety Worker, DHHS Grand Island office) is one of the best caseworkers we have been privileged to work with. She is great about returning phone calls, she has contact with both the youth and foster parents, and she genuinely cares about the youth she serves.

Pam Allen
Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association
Lincoln, Nebraska

Dear **Staff and Members of the Western Nebraska Veterans' Home at Scottsbluff:**

Please excuse the lateness in writing to express my sincere appreciation to the staff of the Western Nebraska Veteran's Home for the care, friendship and love bestowed upon my brother, Jack Anderson, during his residency. The understanding of his medical, physical and everyday needs resulted in Jack having a good life. He thought a lot of all of you. After many visits, I observed and appreciate your devotion and dedication to your work. I could always leave with a secure feeling that Jack was being well care for.

I also wish to thank you all for the kindness and understanding shown to me and the professionalism in the handling of the formalities of Jack's death.

Having the opportunity and pleasure of spending time with many wonderful members who were Jack's friends was also a source of great strength. Their thoughts, stories and memories were most important, for what you remember from the heart will last forever. Jack was blessed with many friends.

Jack was cremated at Sunset Memorial Park in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. He will be buried in Bancroft, Nebraska, with his parents, where he will rest in peace, for this is where he belongs. May peace, love and the grace of God be with you all.

Larry D. Anderson
Lincoln, Nebraska

While *Connections* receives more letters from satisfied customers than we can ever publish, please send letters via any method listed in our editorial box on page 2, and we'll print as many as space allows.

Happenings!

Photos spotlighting DHHS activities around the state



WEARING RED FOR HEART HEALTH! Employees at the Grand Island Veterans' Home (GIVH) donned crimson on February 1st to raise awareness about the Number One killer of American women — cardiovascular disease. Some ways to reduce this threat are regular physical checkups; physical exercise; a heart-healthy diet; limiting intake of salt and saturated fats; quitting smoking and drinking in moderation. GIVH employees shown (left to right) are **Vicki Brooks, Kathy Jensen, Shirley Wilson, Vicky Lierman, Waunita Dimmitt, Shelly Malmstrom** and **Rose Dixon**. *Photo: Carrie Urwiller*

Other DHHS groups observing Wear Red Day include the Hastings Regional Center, the Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home at Bellevue, and the Office of Women's & Men's Health and Nebraska Cardiovascular Health Program in Lincoln. A Wear Red Walk also took place on February 1st at the State Capitol building.

(At left) The Office of Women's & Men's Health and Nebraska Cardiovascular Health Program gave away red dress pins and heart health handbooks in Lincoln's State Office Building to approximately 150 people on Wear Red Day, with other activities planned throughout the month. *Photo: Andrea Wenke*

If you have a photo of a DHHS activity you'd like to share with co-workers across the state, contact *Connections* by any method listed in the editorial box on page 2, and we'll print as many as space allows.

Giving Bees, Giving Hearts:

The photo on this issue's front cover shows **LeAnn Laurent**, Resource Developer in the DHHS Bridgeport office, displaying one of hundreds of quilts created by "The Giving Bee." The Giving Bee is a group from Lewellen, Oshkosh and North Platte who make quilts and bags for children in foster care in the DHHS Western Service Area.

This giving group also makes colorful, sturdy cotton bags for children to carry their belongings. Each child receives a quilt, new socks, underwear and a toothbrush, and schoolbags are furnished in the fall. Since 2003 when The Giving Bee began, 401 quilts, 322 bags, and 111 schoolbags have been made and about 82 sets of socks and underwear distributed.

To donate funds for purchase of fabric, shoes, socks and underwear or make a memorial gift, contact Giving Bee members **Barb Miller** at (308) 778-5514, **Cynthia Miller** at (308) 778-5595 or cynden@embarqmail.com,



(Above, left to right) "Giving Bee" members **Ruby Rittenhouse**, **LaVonne Noetzelmann**, **Barb Miller** and **Sue Read**
Photo: Barb Miller

or **Barbara Rittenhouse** at (308) 778-5604. If interested in starting a similar group in your area, let these folks know so a statewide network could benefit all foster children in Nebraska.

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services mission:
Helping people live better lives.



**Nebraska Department of Health
and Human Services**

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