

# CONNECTIONS

August 2016 VOLUME 16, ISSUE 8

*Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services' employees closer together*

## New state brand unveiled

Nebraska... The Good Life. For many Nebraska residents, that's one of the first things that comes to mind when you talk about the state. Even when you drive into Nebraska, you are greeted by signs proclaiming that you've arrived in the Good Life. So it was a wonderful surprise last month when Governor Pete Ricketts unveiled the new State of Nebraska brand:



“Good Life. Great Opportunity,” which reflects Nebraska’s strengths and projects a vision for the future.

“It’s a phrase Nebraskans can embrace. From Sandhills ranches to Omaha high rises, this brand is inspired by the men and women who grew Nebraska for our first 150 years,” Governor Ricketts said. “Growing Nebraska is the mission of my administration, and opportunity is the first step towards achievement. You can see opportunity everywhere in our state from the farms and ranches

that are the backbone of our number one industry to the innovative startups in Silicon Prairie and Fortune 500 company headquarters.”

With the Department of Economic Development taking the lead and working with the marketing firm Firespring, the road to get to the Good Life was filled with input from thousands of Nebraskans.

Through surveys, public meetings, and conversations with current and former Nebraskans, from business leaders to millennials, researchers found the one major theme that people kept coming back to – the Good Life.

Currently, State of Nebraska agencies use a myriad of logos and designs rather than one that creates a unified image. The project grew to include all state agencies, and the tagline is flexible and able to be customized to fit each agency. State agencies may customize the “Good Life. Great...” by changing

the word “Opportunity” to fit them, and by adding the name of the agency below it.

Each state agency will choose its word and work with Firespring on specific ways to use the new brand.

### DHHS: Mission-driven

DHHS has chosen “mission” as our word: Good Life. Great Mission.

“We believe passionately in our mission, *helping people live better lives,*” said CEO Courtney Phillips. “This word embodies what we do as an agency. Our mission motivates us and guides our work. Across the state, DHHS employees work tirelessly each and every day to contribute to the lives and health of Nebraskans. I’m looking forward to rolling out our new brand in the coming months.”

Like many agencies, DHHS has a wide variety of materials that utilize our current logo. That logo will eventually go away, but first we will use the inventory of print materials with the current DHHS logo – we will not throw away materials that can still be used.

The initial transition will focus on digital and social media, such as our website, Facebook and Twitter pages – those things that can change quickly. We will transition as materials are updated or as new items are designed. Communications and Legislative Services is taking the lead and will share more information after working with Firespring.

The new brand takes the time-tested slogan of “The Good Life” and brings it up a notch. As we all work to make DHHS and the State of Nebraska more customer-focused and growing, this will provide a more unified image for all of state government.

The new logo allows DHHS to create a cohesive image specific to our entire agency – one that projects to Nebraskans that each and every thing we do is #Team DHHS. We are one agency, driven by a singular mission, with a singular brand. We are: Good Life. Great Mission.

To learn more about the statewide brand, you can visit:

<http://goodlifegreatopportunity.com/>.

## Stay Connected on



### make the connection . . .

**DHHS Public Website:** [www.dhhs.ne.gov](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov)  
**DHHS Employee Website:** <http://dhhsemployees/>  
**DHHS Helpline:** 1-800-254-4202, (402) 471-6035 in Lincoln, or via email at [dhhs.helpline@nebraska.gov](mailto:dhhs.helpline@nebraska.gov)

Chief Executive Officer:  
**Courtney Phillips**

Behavioral Health  
Division Director:  
**Sheri Dawson**

Children and Family Services  
Division Director:  
**Doug Weinberg**

Developmental Disabilities  
Division Director:  
**Courtney Miller**

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CLS Administrator:  
**Kathie Osterman**

Editor:  
**Melissa Lindell**

**Readers are invited to submit news, photos and story ideas to the editor via:**

**Phone:** (402) 471-4047

**Fax:** (402) 471-3996

**E-mail:** [melissa.lindell@nebraska.gov](mailto:melissa.lindell@nebraska.gov)

**Interagency mail:** NE State Office Bldg. 3rd Floor  
 U.S. mail: P.O. Box 95026  
 301 Centennial Mall South  
 Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-5026

Medicaid and Long-Term Care  
Division Director:  
**Calder Lynch**

Public Health Division Acting  
Director:  
**Courtney Phillips**

Veterans' Homes Division  
Director:  
**John Hilgert**

Graphics and Layout:  
**Judy Barker**

## Nebraska Young Adult Alcohol Opinion Survey to help guide DHHS' work

By Julie Naughton

DHHS, the Nebraska Department of Roads' Office of Highway Safety and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Bureau of Sociological Research are teaming up to administer the 4th Nebraska Young Adult Alcohol Opinion Survey (NYAAOS), which polls 19- to 25-year-olds and offers data intended to help these organizations most effectively combat alcohol misuse.

Alcohol is the most commonly used substance in Nebraska, said Sheri Dawson, director of the Division of Behavioral Health. "The rates of underage drinking, binge drinking, and alcohol-impaired driving continue to be higher in Nebraska than the U.S average," she said. "Alcohol misuse within Nebraska places an enormous strain on the health care system, the criminal justice system, and the substance abuse treatment system. While alcohol misuse is a cause for concern among people of all ages in Nebraska, it is particularly an issue among young adults, who tend to be the age group most likely to use alcohol and suffer from the negative consequences associated with alcohol misuse."

Data gathered from the last implementation of NYAAOS, in 2013, found that binge drinking was on the rise, with 47 percent of urban young adults reporting binge drinking episodes (defined as five or more drinks for men and four or more drinks for women in a two-hour time frame), within the past month. About 41 percent of rural respondents reported binge drinking in the same



time frame.

This information helps DHHS plan proactive strategies to combat the problem, said Dawson.

"We hope that those who receive the survey will respond," said Dawson. "Data collected in through the survey provides more insight into the opinions, behavior, and experiences of young adults in Nebraska.

Ultimately, it helps inform prevention professionals in our efforts help young adults make positive changes and to reduce crashes, injuries, deaths, and other consequences that result from substance use and impaired driving."

DHHS sponsorship of the study includes the Division of Behavioral Health's Partnership for Success and Youth Suicide Prevention grants, along with the Division of Public Health. Results are expected to be released by the end of 2016.

"Underage drinking is a serious public health problem," said Judy Martin, deputy director of the Division of Public Health. "Alcohol is the most widely used substance of abuse among our youth, and drinking by young people poses enormous health and safety risks. These risks include injuries and violence, even death."

4th Nebraska Young Adult Alcohol Opinion Survey (NYAAOS)



Courtney Phillips, CEO

## Message from Courtney Phillips, CEO

There are a couple of ways now that you can find out about DHHS news and information.

- Did you know you can subscribe to receive notices of all the DHHS news releases, when they are issued, by email? To subscribe, just click [this link](#) on our public website and then click on “subscribe to this page.”
- Every day, news articles about DHHS are monitored and posted on our Employee Intranet home page under the “News” tab, in “DHHS in the News”. You can check those out now by going to the webpage and click on [this link](#).

I'd also like to share information about our social media communication efforts. I encourage everyone who uses Facebook and/or Twitter to follow #TeamDHHS. Our pages are [www.facebook.com/NEDHHS](http://www.facebook.com/NEDHHS) and [www.twitter.com/NEDHHS](http://www.twitter.com/NEDHHS). We also have a YouTube channel [www.youtube.com/NebraskaDHHS](http://www.youtube.com/NebraskaDHHS) with DHHS-specific videos and more recently, we launched our [LinkedIn page](#).

You may have noticed over the past year I've been using hashtag #TeamDHHS. This serves several purposes. One is that it's designed to unite us and emphasize that we are better together as one team. We also use it on social media sites to mark all of the great work that #TeamDHHS is doing. If you click on the tag, it takes you to all of the other posts that we and our partners have tagged.

We've recently increased our presence on Facebook and Twitter. Our team is posting more photos, stories, and links about the good things happening in our agency. If you have ideas or good news stories please send them my way or to the Communications team.

We also incorporate other hashtags to tag our partners and things like DHHS-related monthly observances; for example, the recent #EMSWeek, or #FarmersMarkets where SNAP recipients can use their EBT cards to buy fresh vegetables here in #Nebraska.

Our latest venture, starting in earnest this past spring, is the DHHS LinkedIn page. That's where you can find positive information from Human Resources including listings for the latest DHHS jobs and job fairs, as well as other DHHS-related news.

Please share our LinkedIn page with any recent grads who are looking to start their careers, as well as any others who would make a great #TeamDHHS member. Y'all are the best examples of what hardworking, dedicated, and caring employees are like. We need more people just like you to work for the agency that has the most impact on the health and well-being of the citizens of Nebraska. You truly help everyone live better lives each day through the work you do.

If you don't already follow us on our social media pages, do that now to keep up with the latest that is happening and share it with your friends and followers! Some of the information shared on our

social media sites is also shared on our Employee Homepage in Neat to Know and In the Box.

I look forward to continuing visits to more offices as time allows and in the meantime, I hope these efforts will give you all a better picture of DHHS happenings beyond your individual areas. If you have more ideas about how we can improve communication, please email me.

Editor's note: Read more about Courtney's visits to DHHS offices in the [Lincoln Journal Star](#).

### Greetings #TeamDHHS:

Thanks for the hospitality during my summer visits!

I was fortunate to meet and talk with hundreds of our teams members in 31 DHHS offices (in addition to those I visited last summer) and felt so welcomed by everyone.

While I shared information about DHHS accomplishments and our new Business Plan initiatives, it was also great to hear employee comments, ideas and questions. I was thrilled that Governor Ricketts joined us at a few locations after we launched the Business Plan.

Communication is one theme that came up quite often, and how to meet the challenges of sharing information about the Department's activities with over 5,700 employees in communities across the state. I heard consistently that you would like to know more about what's going on across DHHS.

#### A note from your Communications Team on how to access DHHS Social Media

The best way to access DHHS social media is to follow it through your personal social media profiles. That way you can see the latest DHHS posts when you check your news feeds on breaks, evenings or weekends.

You can also access the DHHS social media pages by clicking the icons on our Employee and Public websites. Remember that per the [DHHS IT Acceptable Use Policy](#), use of DHHS resources is limited to activity directly related to state business.

We hope this is helpful.

# Testing for West Nile

By: *Melissa Lindell*

A buzz of activity is in the air in the basement of the Nebraska State Laboratory as several lab assistants are hard at work, separating and counting mosquitoes sent in from traps across the state. It all started after Memorial Day and won't stop until the end of September. That's because it's prime mosquito season here in Nebraska. DHHS lab staff are looking for any of the *Culex* genus of mosquitoes. These are the ones that are most likely to carry West Nile virus.

Have you ever wondered how DHHS tests mosquitos for West Nile? How they trap them and even count

them all? We were curious, so we decided to ask the experts! Jeff Hamik, Arboviral Epidemiologist for DHHS, explained it all.

Jeff says the State has a mosquito trap network in 29 counties across the Nebraska. There are 145 sites where local health department officials set up the traps. Most of those were established in 2003 when West Nile first hit Nebraska. The bugs are attracted to dry ice that is inside the trap. A fan then sucks them into the collection area. After 12-14 hours of collecting the mosquitos, the traps are then gather. The bugs are frozen and sent on dry ice to the State lab in

Lincoln. Jeff says that the freezing process helps to keep the genetic material from breaking down.

"If there is West Nile in that mosquito, then we can find it once we sort them and test them if the mosquito is still

fairly intact," Jeff said. "It gets hard to identify what species they are when they come to us in pieces."

Once the lab receives those mosquitoes, they are separated out by county and put into the ultra-low freezer to keep them intact. It is set at -73 degrees Celsius, or -99.4 degrees Fahrenheit. Now it's time for the lab assistants to do their job; they take the bottles of mosquitoes and put them under the microscope to sort them out by species, as well as take out any other bugs that may have been trapped.

Lab assistant Tessa Blair sorted and counted at least three bottles in the hour we were there. She let us look at the mosquitoes from the trap under the microscope and to our layman eyes, we thought they all looked the same! Tessa explained there were some stripes on one that made it easy for her to identify the species so quickly.



Lab Assistant Tessa Blair separates mosquitoes

"It can be pretty overwhelming when they first start. It can take several weeks to learn to be able to identify a mosquito by sight," Jeff said.

After they are counted and sorted, they are sent off to the Nebraska Public Health Lab in Omaha where chemicals are added to the bottles of bugs and tests are run. If they find West Nile virus, DHHS officials notify the local health department in the area where the virus was found, and the DHHS [West Nile virus website](#) is updated.

(article continued page 5)



Mosquitoes are separated and counted

(Continued from page 4)

So far this year, the network of traps have caught more than 110,000 mosquitoes. That may seem like a high number, but compared to 2015, that's nothing! By this time last year, 231,000 mosquitoes were caught.

Some of the test sites aren't getting any mosquitoes in their traps at all this summer. Despite a wet start, 2016 has actually been fairly dry, Jeff said. "2012 and 2013 were high West Nile years, and those were drier years. 2016 is trending to be the same way. The really bad years are the drier years. Hot weather means faster infections for birds and mosquitoes. They interact more because the pools of water are much smaller, and farmers are irrigating more too, potentially leading

to more water runoff from fields. When people go outside, they aren't bothered as much by the nuisance mosquitos so they aren't putting on repellent, thus upping their chances of getting bit by an infected mosquito. In 2012 we only trapped 60,000 mosquitoes, but many of those were the ones that can infect people with West Nile," Jeff said.

But what about the Zika virus? Nebraska has had four travel-related human cases of the virus so far. Zika virus is spread to people primarily through the bite of a mosquito. Although the virus usually causes mild illness according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there have also been reports of birth defects and other severe health consequences.

Are mosquitoes that could carry the virus here in Nebraska? The primary mosquito (*Aedes aegypti*) that transmits Zika virus is found in tropical areas and the southern U.S., but is not established in our state. The *Aedes albopictus* or Asian tiger mosquito can also be a transmitter of

Zika virus. This type of mosquito has been found in very limited numbers in eastern Nebraska previously. Right now, Jeff and his crew are also looking for this mosquito in our traps to get an idea of how prevalent the *Aedes albopictus* is locally.

So far, he tells us that we've only seen minimal amounts of those *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes, and they've only been in Richardson County in Southeast Nebraska, and no Zika virus has been detected. Jeff and his crew will keep monitoring the state's mosquito population, working to keep us safe.

If people are traveling to an area with Zika, it's important to prevent mosquito bites.

Preventive tips for Zika and West Nile include:

- Using an EPA-registered insect repellent properly
- Wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants



Lab Assistants Tessa Blair and Daniel Jabor separate and count mosquitoes

- Staying in places with air conditioning or that have screens on doors and windows

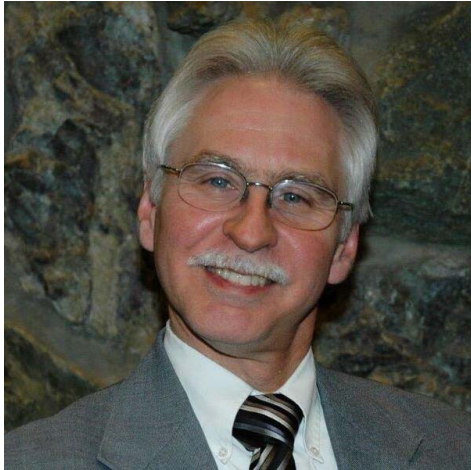
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that pregnant women in any trimester avoid travel to any area where Zika virus is spreading. The latest travel health notices and information - <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information>



Mosquitoes in the Nebraska State Lab



## New Public Health Director/Chief Medical Officer Appointed



Governor Pete Ricketts and DHHS CEO Courtney Phillips recently announced the appointment of **Thomas L. Williams, M.D.** as the next Chief Medical Officer and Director of the Division of Public Health for the State of Nebraska.

“Courtney and I are excited to welcome Dr. Williams to the team,” said Governor Ricketts. “Williams stood out during an extensive search for the next Chief Medical Officer because of his wide-ranging experience and heart for public service. His background will support the efforts of the team at Health and Human Services as they continue to transform the department into a more customer-focused agency.”

Dr. Williams is from Omaha and holds a Bachelor of Science in

Chemistry from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and an M.D. from the University of Nebraska College of Medicine. He is licensed to practice medicine in Nebraska and Iowa, and has been certified in Anatomic and Clinical Pathology as well as Special Competence in Chemical Pathology by the American Board of Pathology. He is widely published and has earned numerous awards from national associations including the Lifetime Achievement Award from the College of American Pathologists.

“I look forward to working with Dr. Williams. His insight and expertise will be a valuable asset to the agency and our work to help people live better lives,” said DHHS CEO Courtney Phillips.

“It is a tremendous honor to join the team at the Department of Health and Human Services,” said Dr. Williams. “I look forward to working with Governor Ricketts and Courtney Phillips to help strategically lead the nationally accredited Division of Public Health, as we continue to work to improve the health and well-being of Nebraskans.”

Dr. Williams starts November 1, 2016.

## New Medicaid Medical Director Announced



**Lisa White, M.D.** has recently been named the new Medicaid Medical Director for DHHS. MLTC Director Calder Lynch made the announcement last month. White will join the Department in September.

“We look forward to welcoming Lisa to our team,” said Lynch. “As an integral member of the Medicaid management team, Lisa will be the senior clinical leader for Nebraska Medicaid and provide key oversight of the medical management of our delivery system.”

As medical director, Dr. White will guide clinical staff, provide clinical decision making for the program and play a leading role in developing and leading the program’s quality improvement agenda. She will also function as an essential liaison to

the Nebraska provider community by leading key Medicaid provider collaborations.

Dr. White is joining MLTC during an important period of transformation with the implementation of Heritage Health, the state’s new managed integrated delivery system that begins January 1, 2017. Dr. White will provide important quality and clinical oversight for the implementation and ongoing operation of the program and its three contracted health plans. One of the committees formed in conjunction with Heritage Health is the Quality Management.

Dr. White will serve as its chair.

“I am excited to bring my clinical experience to Nebraska Medicaid and help lead efforts to improve outcomes and advance the delivery of health care for Nebraska Medicaid clients,” said White.

White obtained her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and her M.D. from Wayne State University School of Medicine in Detroit. Her areas of scholarly interest include patient safety; medical education, with an emphasis on bedside teaching; healthcare financing; access to care; and health literacy.

# Way to Go!

## Statewide and National Recognitions, Honors and Awards



Renee Faber

The National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Authority Directors (NASADAD) Board of Directors is composed of Single State Authorities (SSAs) for their States. There is a National Prevention Network (NPN) within NASADAD. **Renee Faber** (Behavioral Health Program Manager) has been elected by her NPN peers to serve a 2 year term (June 2016 to June 2018) as the Vice President for Internal Affairs. She will:

- Be responsible for the development of NPN positions and statements that advocate for prevention.

- Serve on the NASADAD Public Policy Committee
- Serve on the NPN Executive Committee
- Promote the communication, coordination and implementation of alcohol, tobacco and other drug prevention efforts at the national level with appropriate Federal agencies and national organizations.

Congratulations to Renee!! Also at the NPN/Directors session at the NASADAD Conference, Renee provided an excellent example of prevention for underage and binge drinking in Nebraska. The Kearney Cruise Night story was a fabulous demonstration of local coalition activities that make a measurable difference. The work of Nebraska was impressive to federal staff with the Substance Abuse, Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).



## 2016 Charitable Giving Campaign

The theme for the 2016 Charitable Giving Campaign is “Pulling Together to Give the Good Life.” From August 1st-26th, our DHHS team will figuratively race a boat across Nebraska’s Platte River. The Platte River is about 500 miles long. For every \$240.00 given, our boat will travel one mile. Some quick math for you,  $240 \times 500 \text{ miles} = \$120,000 / 4,000 \text{ employees} = \$30$  each. So if each person were to give \$30 we would finish the race!! Some will give less, some will give more, but think of it this way; \$30 divided by each pay period is one dollar. We need all hands on deck to ensure we reach the finish! I know with our DHHS creativity, fun and giving spirit, and a little friendly competition, our team will accomplish great things again this year.

As I included in an email to all staff, I am serving as Co-Captain along with Calder Lynch for this year’s race. We would love to see Team 1 move full speed ahead. You can track our boat and find online pledge forms. It also has an activity calendar so our team will know very important things like where is the

best meal activity for the day! Mark your calendar now for Saltdog Night on August 26, 2016 to close the campaign.

### #bettertogetherTeam1

Sheri Dawson  
Director of The Division of Behavioral Health



The Norfolk Regional Center has already gotten started. This is the NRC Tide Racing Boat, their team is the NRC Sparkplugs. They kicked off the campaign starting with penny wars and they’ve also had their annual Charitable Giving Picnic.

## Vacation Adventures

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What does a vacation mean to you? Relaxing with a good book, sampling restaurant fare, and sunbathing on the beach are all enjoyable. But why not try something new on your next road trip by incorporating fitness into your itinerary:

**Walking tours.** Most cities have walking tours through historic districts or other points of interest; examples include the Archi-Trek tour in Illinois, highlighting the revolutionary architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, and Missouri's Chain of Rocks, the world's longest walking/biking bridge.

**Water adventures.** From wild, roller-coaster waves to sedate drifts

— California, Arizona, and Missouri are among the many states that offer whitewater rafting, kayaking, or canoeing.

**Caving.** Go beneath the surface to explore magnificent rock formations. Missouri's Fantastic Caverns, New Mexico's Ice Caves, or Oklahoma's Alabaster Caverns State Park are examples.

**Working ranches.** Cowboy up and experience the rugged life at one of the many visitor-friendly ranches in Arizona or Texas.

**Fitness-based vacations** are fun and adventurous — all while giving your health a boost.



## Push Pause

©Health Enhancement Systems

Are you overdoing it? While summer is the time to regroup and rejuvenate, often it's the vacations and activities meant to recharge your battery that actually drain it. Find ways to insert daily and weekly moments of peace and quiet so you don't overdraw from your energy bank:

Try using household chores as an excuse to have some all-important me time. While your dishwasher may be more convenient, returning to the old-fashioned hand-washing approach can actually be relaxing. Or put on your favorite CD and dust or sweep — you'll stress less about taking time to chill if you're being simultaneously productive.

Schedule 5–15 minutes on your calendar to stop and just breathe. Snag the time during the day when you'd otherwise be surfing the Internet, checking email, or updating your status on social networking sites. While days are packed with appointments, errands, and activities, there are always buffer spots that could be specifically applied to personal tranquility, whether you



choose to meditate, pray, stretch, or just close your eyes and relax.

Give yourself at least 1 hour a week to enjoy a longer decompression period — like a yoga class, massage, or morning walk.



# In Gratitude

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



Here are some letters & notes DHHS employees have received thanking us for the work we do every day to help people live better lives.

**Ms. Pettigrew** (Social Services Supervisor),

We would like to inform you about the work of caseworker **Genene Minnick**. Her assistance in filing for Medicaid for our mother was fantastic. She returned all phone calls quickly, explained the process very well, and answered all questions in a timely manner. Her courtesy and attention were very helpful at a very stressful time in our lives.

The process went smoothly and we want you to know how much we appreciate Genene's work with us.

**-A grateful family**

**Hastings Regional Center**

I wanted to thank you for the on-going support **Hastings Juvenile Chemical Dependency Program (HJCDP)** has demonstrated towards the Nebraska Juvenile Justice Association Annual Conference. Your support not only allows us to continue a great conference, but it also demonstrates the collaboration of stakeholders in Nebraska. Thank you!

**Tom McBride, M.S.**  
NJJA Executive Director

Dear **Supervisor**,

We have sent thank you notes to **Cara Seger** (Social Service Worker) and (Receptionist) **Nancy Schmitz**. Both have been help beyond the norm. We cannot begin to tell you of our level of respect for these two. They have been our guides and hold on reality for the last many months.

As both of these ladies think they are only doing their "job," we want you to know—they are. We have both been dealing with the public for over thirty years. The level of caring and service from Nancy and Cara set the bar very high.

Respectfully,  
**Grateful Clients**

**Hastings Regional Center staff**

I wanted to thank all the staff here. You guys really helped me push myself and get motivated. And out of all the programs I've been to, this one helped the most. I respect you guys to the fullest. I really am going to miss this place, and you guys, yes, even you **Bryce**. I learned a lot about myself and was able to control my anger to a certain point, which is still a work in progress. It has gotten better though, that's for sure. I'm not sure if I'm ready to be out on my own yet, but I'm for sure going to try. I want to give a big thanks to my therapist **Taylor**. She helped me a lot and pushed me. At first, I thought she was bor-ing, but that changed, ha ha. And the worlds nicest doctor's award goes to **Dr. Zoucha** and Dr. **Buchta**, you guys are special to me, and will always have a place in my heart.

Love you guys.  
**A thankful Hastings Regional Center Client**