

# Connections

WINNER OF THE NATIONAL  
PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION  
COALITION'S GOLD AWARD

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

**August 2008**  
VOLUME 8, ISSUE 8



*Photo: Wendy Walgrave*

Bi-lingual workers like Social Service Workers **Carmen Barnes** (at left) and **Leticia Chavez** had a lot to smile about with the success of the Food Stamp Disaster Relief efforts and families helped as a result. See the dramatic story on page 4!

## INSIDE

From the CEO	3	\$ Follows the Person	11
Food Stamp Disaster Relief	4	YRTC-Geneva	12
DOJ applauds efforts at BSDC	6	Front Liner Don Severance	14
Behavioral Health Reform	7	Way to Go!	15
EMS/Health Stats Recognition	9	MS Outlook	16
Satisfaction Surveys	12	In their own words...	17
		Happenings!	18

# DHHS in the News Update...

Here are a few headlines 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. Go to [www.dhhs.ne.gov](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov), clicking on the "Newsroom" link and then on "New Releases." Listen to sound bites issued with releases.

**DHHS Issues Heat Alert** July 28

**DHHS Follows Up on TB case** July 23

**First Case of West Nile Reported** July 23

**Healthy Mothers/Health Babies Helpline Available** July 15

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

## Make preparedness a priority!

Severe storms and flooding left many Nebraskans without food and shelter this summer. These hardships continue to remind us to prepare now, before an emergency strikes.

Only 7% of Americans have taken the three recommended actions to prepare for disasters, according to the American Red Cross. Those three action steps are:

- 1) Get a kit,
- 2) Make a plan, and
- 3) Be informed.

That's why in September we promote and support National Preparedness Month.

"September is a great time for people to get prepared... as they head back to school and work," said Dennis Fowler, Citizen Crops Program Officer for ServeNebraska. "Being ready when disaster strikes gives people confidence and peace of mind should the unexpected happen."

Staff and volunteers of ServeNebraska, the Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission, work with Lt. Governor Rick Sheehy and many state agencies to coordinate activities for National Preparedness Month. ServeNebraska's Web site is [www.serve.nebraska.gov](http://www.serve.nebraska.gov).

To learn more about emergency planning, visit our Web site at [www.dhhs.ne.gov/emergency\\_preparedness](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/emergency_preparedness), the Department of Homeland Security's personal readiness Web site at [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

## 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](mailto:diana.duran@dhhs.ne.gov)

*Connections* is published monthly for employees of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services by Communications and Legislative Services (CLS).

Governor:  
**Dave Heineman**

DHHS Chief  
Executive Officer:  
**Christine Peterson**

Behavioral Health  
Division Director  
**Scot Adams, Ph.D.**

Children and Family  
Services Division Director:  
**Todd Landry**

Developmental Disabilities  
Division Director:  
**John Wyvill**

Medicaid and Long-Term  
Care Division Director:  
**Vivianne Chaumont**

Public Health Division  
Director/Chief Medical  
Officer:  
**Dr. Joann Schaefer**

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

Director of Operations:  
**Bob Zagozda**

CLS Administrator:  
**Kathie Osterman**

Editor:  
**Jerry Crisp**

Graphics and Layout,  
Support Services:  
**Maisun Allahiq**  
**Judy Barker**  
**Nathan Putens**

► Readers are invited to submit news, photos & story ideas to the editor via:

**Phone:** (402) 471-3995 **Fax:** (402) 471-3996 **E-mail:** [jerry.crisp@dhhs.ne.gov](mailto:jerry.crisp@dhhs.ne.gov)

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

*Connections* can be made available in an alternative format for those with disabilities. Requests will be filled within 15 working days. Prior consent has been obtained for this publication to identify and publish photos of all individuals receiving DHHS services.

EOE/AA/ADA

## From the CEO

Have you heard about our latest challenge? It's not about the budget or the latest from the Feds.

It's about the State's Charitable Giving Campaign and a friendly competition for a good cause.

Last year, DHHS's participation rate was 13.8% and involved about 800 employees. Our goal this year is to surpass last year's involvement and have 20% of our employees from across the state contribute. This year's campaign runs from August 4 through August 29.

Now for the fun part: **Bob Zagozda**, the Department's Chief Operating Officer and head of Operations, has challenged the six Division Directors. The goal: To have the highest percentage of employees participate in the Campaign.

The Department has been an agency leader in past campaigns, and I know we can make the campaign a huge success again this year, especially with the six Divisions and Operations vying to "out do" each other!

I've often said that DHHS employees are some of the most caring around. That isn't surprising because we live our mission, helping people live better lives, every day. Taking part in the campaign is one more way to do that.

Did you know that:

### **...your contributions stay in Nebraska!**

You can designate to programs or organizations that are of special interest to you or are in your own community. In fact, the federations (United Way, Community Health Charities, and Community Services Fund) together list over 430 programs and organizations from across the state in the campaign booklet.



CEO Christine Peterson with Administrative Assistant Bonnie Engel

Photo: Bill Wiley

---

"I've often said that DHHS employees are some of the most caring around. That isn't surprising because we live our mission, *helping people live better lives, every day.*"

---

### **...you can use payroll deduction!**

Sometimes it's hard to give all at once and giving something each pay period is easier.

**...your contribution may help your fellow workers!** If you watch the State's campaign video this year, you'll see that all three of the state employees the federations chose to highlight

are from DHHS. And in an even broader sense, it's likely that you, or someone you know, has also benefited from one or more of those 430 programs. In addition to seeing the video at campaign meetings, you can view it at <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/video/staff/>

Here's your opportunity to help Nebraskans and "out do" the other divisions at the same time. Make the competition fun and, as Bob said, "May the most imaginative and energetic division win!"



# Food Stamp Disaster Relief aids thousands in need

By Jerry Crisp

When the power goes out during a natural disaster, one of the victims is a family's food supply. As refrigerators and freezers stopped keeping food fresh during the recent severe storms and flooding that hit Nebraska, many families could only wonder where their next meal was coming from.

It all started with May storms in Western Nebraska. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) sites were opened in June in Lexington, Kearney, Schuyler, Ceresco and Millard. DHHS employees staffed the Food Stamp Disaster Relief program, which was also set up at these sites and served over 500 families with approximately \$250,000 in benefits. Recipients were eligible for one month's worth of food stamps.

Storms moved across the state and were followed with June storms in the eastern part. The Division of Children & Family Services geared up quickly to meet the need. Four sites were opened in Omaha on July 7, and three sites lasted through July 21 (Monday through Saturday). Division staff worked with more than an estimated 23,000 families whose food supply had been compromised.

"This was an historic event and truly one of our finest moments," said **Barry DeJong**, Eastern Service Area administrator. "The phenomenal effort and dedication our staff displayed shows the commitment we have to serving those in need within our community."

Omaha sites providing assistance included the Salvation Army gym



Social Service Worker Jim Jorn helps a client at the Family Resource Center complete an application. (Below) Eastern Service Area Administrator Barry DeJong (at left) confers with Social Service Supervisor Joe Manley about food stamp applications coming in by mail to the Center Street Mall office in Omaha.

Photos: Wendy Walgrave

at 24th and Pratt, the DHHS office at 12001 Q, Our Lady of Guadalupe Hall at 5005 South 23rd, the Family Resource Center at 3040 Lake and the Paralyzed Veterans of America site.

A short-term help line was set up to meet the demand, fielding more than 5,300 calls within two weeks. Calls also came in to a toll-free Electronic Balance Transfer (EBT) help line and the 800 number at Lincoln's Gold's Building.

"DHHS employees staffed four offices on a day's notice. This was an example of our focus on client service delivery, both on a daily and an emergency basis," added ESA Administrator **Bob Kubat**.

A major role was also played by the DHHS Issuance and Collections Center (ICC) in Lincoln, which issues EBT cards. During the disaster, staff loaded emergency benefits, issued cards and problem-



solved. And the work is not over. In early August, the ICC took over the 800 helpline that Omaha had been handling for two weeks.

"Our 800 number hasn't stopped ringing and probably won't for the next few weeks," says **Suzi Skinner**, Administrative Assistant in DHHS

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



Staff processing food stamp applications in the DHHS Lincoln office came from across the Southeast Service Area. (Front row l-r) Lesli Hopeman, Social Service Supervisor in the Lincoln office; Mike Baumfalk, Resource Developer Supervisor in the DHHS Beatrice office; and Margie Hoffman, Social Service Worker in the DHHS York office. *Photo: Trish Bergman*

**RELIEF:** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Financial Services. “Sixteen staff in our office worked very hard on this project, and ICC will continue to assist disaster victims until all concerns have been resolved.”

“Many outside of the sites contributed as well,” says **Trish Bergman**, Food Stamp/TANF Program Administrator. “Staff from the Eastern and Southeast Service Areas, Central Office, Issuance and Collections, EBT staff, volunteers, and community partners, to name a few.”

As a result of disaster relief efforts, more than 23,500 Nebraska families were helped by this special USDA program, and more than \$11 million in federal benefits found their way into local stores to put food on family tables.

“Thanks to everyone involved,” said **Todd Landry**, Director of the Division of Children and Family Services, “thousands of families received assistance.”



**A JOB WELL DONE!** Several DHHS staff pose for a photo after long hours of helping people. (l-r) Mail/Materiel Specialist Don Koenig, Case Aides Vicki Parsons and Sonia Diaz, Administrator Kathee Sanchez, Social Service Supervisor Sue Schunk and Victor Saucedo of Our Lady of Guadalupe. *Photo: Hortencia Lopez*



# Department of Justice applauds efforts at BSDC

By Jeanne Atkinson

A settlement reached with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) on June 30 affirms that steps taken to improve care for people served at the Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC) are on the right track.

The DOJ Civil Rights Division visited BSDC in October 2007 and alleged there were violations of the constitutional or federal statutory rights of people with developmental disabilities being served at BSDC.

“This collaborative agreement affirms the future of BSDC and protects the rights of people with developmental disabilities,” said **John Wyvill**, director of the DHHS Division of Developmental Disabilities. “DOJ recognized the genuine commitment BSDC staff have to making positive improvements and now we can focus resources on improving the safety and quality of life of BSDC residents.”

**Grace Chung Becker**, Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights at DOJ, said, “We applaud the state of Nebraska for its innovative efforts to more effectively serve BSDC residents and ensure their health, safety and welfare.”

Numbers tell part of the story. Reducing the number of people served so that staffing is consistent with providing quality care is having a tremendous impact, Wyvill said. For example, in December 2007 the census was 329 individuals, on March 15 it was 305, and on July 24 it was 264. Mandatory overtime dropped



Ron Stegemann *Photo: Jerry Crisp*



DD Director John Wyvill *Photo: Bill Wiley*

from 650 hours for the February 4–17 pay period to 49 hours for the July 2–20 pay period.

“Staff at BSDC have continued to step up to meet the challenges of improving services, and our success in reducing census and mandatory overtime hours are due in large part to their efforts and those of our co-workers across the Division of Developmental Disabilities,” said Center CEO **Ron Stegemann**.

“We appreciate DOJ’s efforts in Nebraska and think this settlement provides real solutions at BSDC,” Wyvill said.

In the settlement, DHHS agrees to:

- Develop a zero-tolerance policy for abuse and ensure adequate staffing.
- Hire additional professional and medical staff.

- Provide information about community options and place residents in the least-restrictive environment.
- Improve transition plans for residents of the center.
- Improve the Health Care Service and monitor the use of psychotropic medications.
- Keep residents free from unreasonable restraints.
- Create community capacity, monitor community placements, and expand BSDC’s Outpatient and Intensive Treatment Services (OAITs).
- Hire an independent expert to monitor implementation of the settlement agreement.

# LB 1083 Behavioral Health Reform successfully completed

By Jeanne Atkinson

Four years of efforts to create more community-based behavioral health services, so people can be served closer to their homes and families, are paying off.

Reform or change of Nebraska's behavioral health system was created by LB 1083, passed in 2004. LB 1083 reform focused on increasing access to community-based care, moving people from Regional Centers to local care, and preventing people from being institutionalized whenever appropriate. It also promised to move \$25.8 million from the Hastings and Norfolk Regional Centers to community services.

"We've made good on our promise and actually delivered \$30.1 million for community services," said **Scot Adams**, Director of the Division of Behavioral Health. "The '1083' phase of reform is now completed. We're moving forward to develop a strategic plan for the future of behavioral health care in our state."

LB 1083 made these successes possible for people needing mental

health or substance abuse services between July 2004 and June 2007:

- Greater consumer participation than ever before, with an Office of Consumer Affairs within DHHS and a consumer specialist in each local region
- 9,000 new consumers served closer to home (from 33,124 people served in FY 04 to 42,915 served in FY 07)
- More people served in community hospitals and fewer served in Regional Centers
- Fewer mental health board commitments (from 741 in FY 04 to 273 in FY 07)
- Fewer emergency protective custody holds (from 2,601 in FY 04 to 2,336 in FY 07)

In addition, the six local Behavioral Health Regions received an additional \$17.1 million for community-based services for FY 07-08. This funding



Director of the Division of Behavioral Health  
Scot Adams  
*Photo: Bill Wiley*

will be used to enhance consumer involvement, provide crisis/emergency care, develop services for special populations, expand the number of providers of services, and continue to reduce the number of people served at a Regional Center.

---

## Connections' reader eval results

Employees were again asked to rate their employee newsletter on a scale from "Excellent" to "Poor," with a positive rating deemed anything between "Adequate" and "Excellent." With a lowest rating of 90%, the highest ratings were shared by "Front Liners" and "Way To Go" with 100% approval.

One reader commented, "Connections has useful information and keeps us updated on what others are doing" and "Good coverage across the state." Another said, "Well done, readable, enjoyable." Another said, "I'm glad it's going on-line so paper isn't wasted."

## Wellness Words: Think Health!

Want to live longer?

Then wear your seat belt. Statistics show that seat belts add to longevity and reduce injuries in motor vehicle crashes.

Knuckle down, buckle down, do it, do it, do it!

**Dr. Joann Schaefer**  
Chief Medical Officer

# Behavioral Health Division honored



From left, Brigadier General Timothy Kadavy, Adjutant General Nebraska National Guard; Arlo Bower, State Chairman for Nebraska Committee, ESGR; Vicki Maca, Administrator of the DHHS Children's Behavioral Health section; Eric Hunsberger, and Dr. L. Gordon Sumner, Executive Director, National Committee ESGR. *Photo: Peggy Brown*

The Division of Behavioral Health was one of 10 Nebraska employers honored in June for supporting employees on military duty. The awards recognize employers who've gone above and beyond the legal requirements. Gamblers Assistance Program Manager **Eric Hunsberger** works in the Division of Behavioral Health and lives in Nebraska but is a Major in the California Army National Guard.

"Most Guardsman don't travel 2,000 miles to participate," Hunsberger said. "My Division's flexibility makes it possible to balance my day-to-day work with meeting expectations of being an Army National Guard member."

The awards came from the Nebraska Committee of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). The Department of Defense volunteer organization works with employers, guardsman and reservists to help minimize conflicts between military duties and civilian career responsibilities. About 46% of the total available U.S. military service men and women is made up of military reserve components.

In mid-July, Hunsberger reported to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to attend the Army Command and General Staff School. This 11-month course prepares people to operate as field grade commanders and staff officers.

## Customer Service Tip

Always practice the ever-applicable "Golden Rule" by treating customers in precisely the same way we would want, expect and demand to be treated. That familiar rule is golden precisely because it prevents us from ever adopting an "us versus them" approach that invariably ends in failure and points us toward a mutual problem-solving approach that more often than not ends in success.



# EMS Program/Health Stats recognized

By Jerry Crisp

Nebraska is once again in the forefront by becoming one of the first ten states to submit EMS data to the national EMS database. For this reason, the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Program and Office of Health Statistics within the Division of Public Health was cited by the National Emergency Medical Services Information System (NEMSIS).

“Before a national standard was released, there was different coding, little standardization and much confusion about EMS data,” says EMS Specialist **Doug Fuller**. “Now first responders, hospital staff, firefighters and others are agreeing on common coding definitions.”

“A broken leg might mean anything from a hairline fracture to a separated bone in one area, but only a separated bone in another,” Health Data Manager **Carla Becker** explains. “As a result of common coding, EMS data is now consistent and compatible and can be accurate, timely and complete. That makes it more useable.”

“More useable” means that ambulance crews, hospital staff and others will speak a common language. When first responders deliver a patient injured in an auto accident, for example, they can communicate more clearly about the nature of the injury and the patient’s status.

“More useable” also means that EMS performance evaluations and public health policies based on more reliable statistics will be on firmer footing.

The ultimate beneficiaries of these efforts are those who will receive better patient care during the “Golden Hour.” The Golden Hour refers to the time immediately following an injury or heart attack when proper treatment can mean the difference between a full or



From left, Doug Fuller, Carla Becker and Lei Zhang with a granite plaque and certificate testifying to their help in making Nebraska one of the first ten states to send EMS data to a new national database.

*Photo: Jerry Crisp*

---

## “Way to GLOW, you bright stars!”

**Dr. Jackie Miller, DDS**

*Chief Administrator, Community Health Section*

---

partial recovery, or even the difference between life and death.

“**Ming Qu**, Acting Administrator of the Public Health Support Unit, and Trauma Registrar **Lei Zhang** were first to alert DHHS to the need for standardized definitions,” says Fuller. “That way, statistics could be compared in a meaningful way.”

“It has taken many of us many years to accomplish this feat but it’s well worth it,” said Becker.

“This recognition helps us reach goals established by the Governor and

the Division of Public Health to become the source for reliable data on health information in Nebraska,” said Fuller. “It also helps validate the fact that EMS is part of the national health care system, and that all parts of that system work best when synchronized rather than separate.”

“Carla, Doug and Lei worked very hard to make this happen,” said **Dean Cole**, EMS Program Administrator.

“Way to GLOW, you bright stars,” exclaimed **Dr. Jackie Miller, DDS**, Chief Administrator of the Community Health Section.

# 92% of members rate Vets' Homes highly



Director John Hilgert (at right) with Veterans' Home administrators. From left to right: Howard Googins, Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home at Bellevue; Lewis Mashburn, Norfolk Veterans' Home; Lonnie Starke, Western Nebraska Veterans' Home at Scottsbluff; and Ginada Hostetler, Grand Island Veterans' Home.

*Photo: Lydia Boyd*

*By Dianna Seiffert*

Good or excellent. That's how 96.2% of Nebraska Veterans' Home members rated the Homes they live in overall, according to a recent survey. This rating improved slightly over last year's number of 94.7%, which was higher than the year before. In fact, the rating has been over 91% for the past four years in a row.

"These high ratings show how much the employees care about the members and their dedication to making the facilities as homelike as possible," said **John Hilgert**, Director of the Division of Veterans' Homes. "We will continue to provide quality care worthy of our nation's heroes."

Other notable responses included a whopping 97% of the surveys showing that members feel the staff at the Veterans' Homes are 'good,' and 98.7% rating the Homes overall as "clean."

Both members and their families are surveyed separately each year regarding quality of life at the four Veterans' Homes, and all the ratings have remained consistently high throughout the years.

To see the complete survey results from all veterans' homes, visit <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/vets/surveys.htm>.

DHHS operates the state's four veterans' homes which are located in Scottsbluff, Grand Island, Norfolk and Bellevue.

## *Good Things Are Happening!*

Nebraska ranks 9th best overall in the nation in a state-by-state study of the well-being of children, according to the national 2008 Kids Count Data Book. Nebraska is also in the top 10 in the nation for the rate of securely employed parents, the infant mortality rate, and the high school dropout rate (ages 16-19).

"It's good to see this validation of work around the safety, well-being and permanency of children," says CEO **Christine Peterson**. "I want to thank DHHS staff for their dedication to the well-being of children and families."



# “\$ Follows the Person” project will enable people to live independent lives

By Marla Augustine

**Bill Roby** is busy getting a new demonstration project off the ground. The project is called Nebraska Money Follows the Person (NMFP). Nebraska is lucky to be one of 31 states selected by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to host the five-year project.

“For NMFP, we’ll be identifying individuals who may want to consider moving from a facility setting to a home and community-based setting,” grant manager Roby said. “We want to reach members of the public and the medical community with information about services that are available and how these services can assist consumers once they return to their own home, apartment, family home or other residence.”

Up to 900 people could be served through this project. To qualify, a person must be currently receiving Medicaid services, meet the criteria for a specific home and community-based waiver program, have resided in a nursing home or intermediate care facility for people with mental retardation for at least six months, and move into a qualified residence (own home, apartment, family home or adult family home). Approval is being sought to include assisted living facilities. Roby’s job is to work with stakeholders (consumers, advocacy organizations, providers and others) to increase the public’s awareness of home and community-based services as well as to seek solutions to barriers for consumers wanting to access them.

“The least restrictive living arrangements are often the most desirable, where most individuals would be happiest,” said **Vivianne Chaumont**,



Bill Roby with supervisor Cindy Kadavy

Photo: Bill Wiley

Director of the Division of Medicaid and Long Term Care. “The goal is a better array of services allowing people to live where they want. Many individuals can be served in their homes and communities, preserving their independence and ties to family and friends.”

The project will help DHHS rebalance Medicaid long-term care spending, decreasing the percentage that would normally be spent on care in nursing homes and intermediate care facilities for individuals with mental retardation and increasing the percentage spent on home and community-based services.

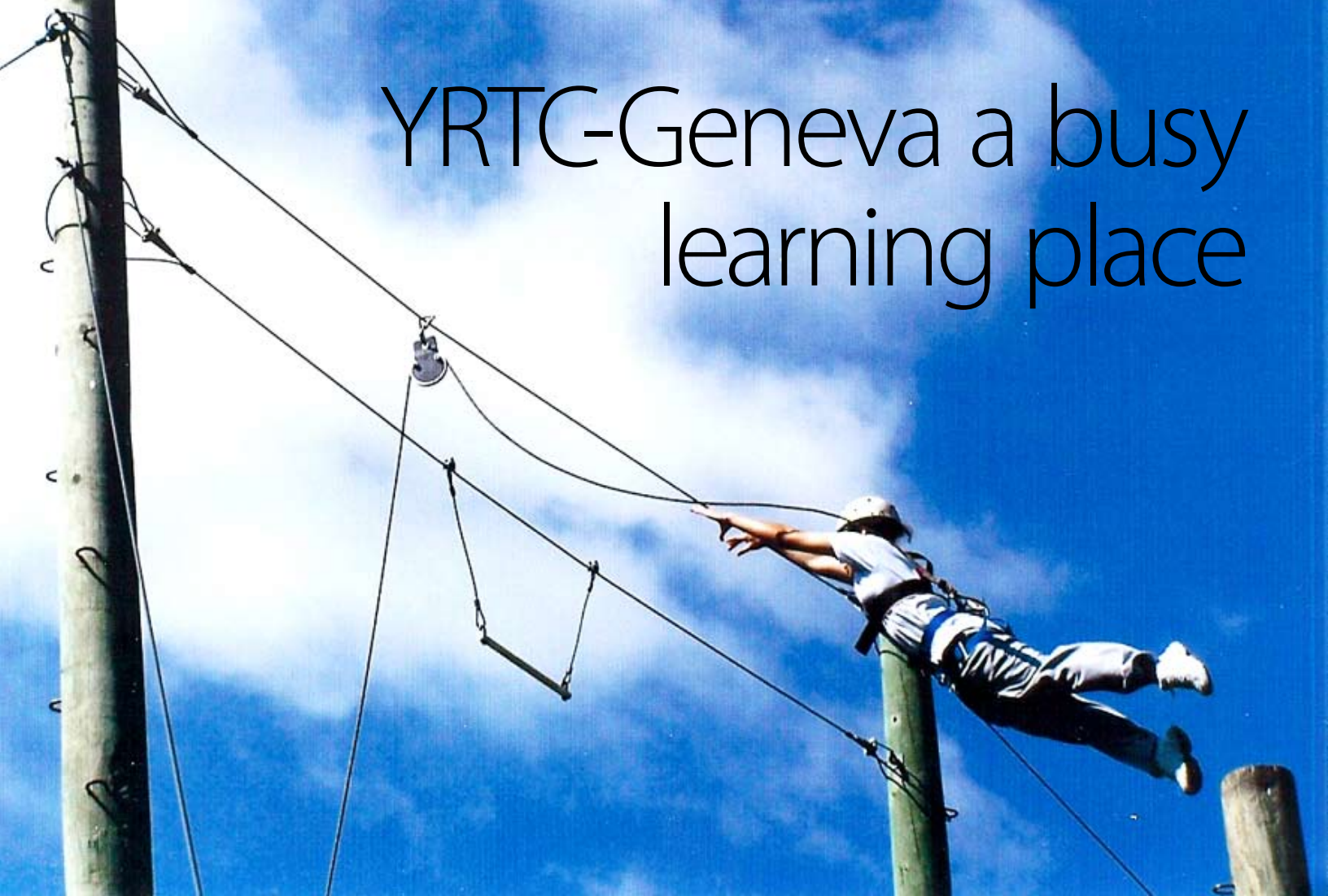
The Money Follows the Person project offers the state an enhanced federal share

for the Medicaid funds Nebraska expends in supporting people transitioned from facilities to home and community-based settings, for up to a one-year period. Approximately 80% of the funding is provided by CMS and approximately 20% by the state. Administrative expenses are shared equally by CMS and the state. Medicaid funding is usually around 60% federal and 40% state.

While housing alternatives to 24-hour care can be more cost effective, Roby says the project isn’t really about the money. “It’s about helping people live better lives in home-like environments, close to their families and friends.”



# YRTC-Geneva a busy learning place



By Jerry Crisp

The Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center (YRTC) at Geneva is a place where young women can learn, develop a sense of self, and return to their homes as good, law-abiding citizens. One way it does this is to involve the girls in enjoyable activities that help them realize those goals.

In addition to those shown here, other activities that help YRTC-Geneva girls include volunteering at the Geneva recycling center, working at a downtown movie theatre, and participating in a University of Nebraska-Lincoln language project.

According to Facility Administrator **Dan Scarborough**, "Activities like these help fulfill the facility's mission and help the girls *live better lives.*"

(Above) A YRTC-Geneva girl on a safety tether takes a "leap of faith" from a telephone pole in hopes of grabbing the cross bar. Held at the annual Timberlake Wilderness Camp event near Central City, the activity builds self-confidence and conquers fear. Other Timberlake activities include horseback riding and swimming. (Below) A YRTC-Geneva girl ascends a scaling wall to prove to herself what she can accomplish.

Photos: Anita Haumont







## YRTC-G: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

(Above) A record number of over 1,600 young trap shooters gather at Doniphan for the 39th annual high school Cornhusker Trapshoot — the largest shooting event of its type in the world. YRTC-Geneva girls keep the rock throwing machines full during competition — roughly 20,000 clay pigeons! YRTC girls are paid for their work, with proceeds going to a facility fund for recreation equipment, pizza parties and other benefits for the youth. (Right) Several YRTC girls struggle to get everyone on a small blanket in a team-building exercise. *Photo: Anita Haumont*

(Below) Taking time off to celebrate the Fourth of July, YRTC girls, staff and volunteers and their families enjoyed a day of activities arranged by Recreation Coordinator Connie Reinsch and her staff. Assistant Administrator Shawn Maloley did the grilling for a noon barbecue, followed by build-your-own sundaes. Most of the girls topped off the day by enjoying a fireworks display held on the neighboring fairgrounds. During the day, more than a dozen youth assisted with community recreational activities on the Geneva Court House lawn, demonstrating once again their desire to be contributing members of the community. *Photo: Connie Reinsch*



# 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.

## A delicate balance

By Jerry Crisp

**Don Severance** seeks to strike a delicate balance between ensuring the highest quality of developmental disabilities (DD) services and staying within the budget. Striking that balance directly impacts persons served and those who serve their needs in communities across Nebraska.

Don has been in the field for 30 years. He began as a direct care provider at the Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC) in 1978. Don later served there as a training specialist, psychologist and chairperson of the Quality Improvement Committee. In 2004, he transferred to the Developmental Disabilities Division in Lincoln, where he is Disability Services Coordinator for community-based services.

“Since real rehabilitation services for persons with intellectual disabilities began with a presidential commission in 1962,” Don says, “you could say that I’ve been in the field for about two-thirds of its modern history.”

Don oversees quality control for community-based services across the state. To do this, he meets monthly with two committees whose members include community-based managers and representatives from the DHHS Medicaid & Long-Term Care Division, Service Areas, Licensure Unit, BSDC, Service Coordination, and DD program specialists. The aim of both groups is to help ensure the highest possible quality of services to persons with intellectual disabilities in Nebraska.

Don’s duties also include providing oversight of the Developmental Disability Aid budget. To do this, he meets monthly with representatives from DHHS Operations to review expenditures of funds allocated by the Legislature. The aim of this group is to ensure that quality DD services remain affordable.



Don Severance

Photo: Jerry Crisp

To determine individual budget accounts for service recipients, Don evaluated methods used in other states and helped develop funding methods for Nebraska. His research skills are often called on to provide statistical data, analysis and consulting services.

“There are two primary stakeholder groups — people who receive services and taxpayers who pay for those services,” Don explains. “While my colleagues and I want to please both, we must try to meet legitimate needs with as equitable a distribution of available resources as possible.”

In spite of the challenge of trying to provide quality services as cost-effectively as possible, Don knows that his behind-the-scenes efforts benefit people at the service delivery level.

“The Division of Developmental Disabilities works closely with others to serve approximately 4,500 clients in communities across the state,” says Don. “When individuals find they can be more productive, integrated members of the community, we know we are making a meaningful difference.”

“It’s a pleasure to work with Don,” says **John Wyvill**, Director of the DHHS Division of Developmental Disabilities. “He has a tremendous wealth of knowledge about the DD program and our clients. In addition, his commitment, passion, enthusiasm and his contributions enable all of us to better serve our clients and carry out our mission of helping people live better lives.”

When government employees like Don Severance and his colleagues in the DD Division succeed in ensuring quality services as effectively and efficiently as possible, they are striking the same delicate balance that employees throughout DHHS and government in general strive for each and every day.



# Way to Go!

Statewide or national recognitions, awards, honors

## Wyvill named United States Access Board Officer



John Wyvill, Photo courtesy U.S. Access Board

**John Wyvill**, Director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities, became Vice Chair of the U.S. Access Board in July. The Access Board is an independent federal agency devoted to accessibility for people with disabilities.

Created in 1973 to ensure access to federally funded facilities, the Board is now a leading source of information on accessible design. The Board develops and maintains design criteria for the built environment, transit vehicles, telecommunications equipment, and for electronic and information technology. It also

provides technical assistance and training on these requirements.

The Board is structured to function as a coordinating body among federal agencies and to directly represent the public, particularly people with disabilities. Half of its members are representatives from federal agencies. The other half is comprised of members of the public appointed by the President, a majority of whom must have a disability.

Wyvill has a 95% hearing loss.

“It’s truly a great honor to serve on a Board that works so hard to help people with disabilities live better lives.”

DHHS employees should be proud of themselves and each other. If you earn statewide or national honors or know a co-worker who does, make sure that *Connections* knows, and we’ll proclaim it here!

## Palm earns UNMC public health honor

**Dave Palm**, an Administrator within the Division of Public Health, has received the Chancellor Robert D. Sparks Award in Public Health and Preventive Medicine. The award was conferred at the college’s second annual spring awards dinner on May 1 at the W.H. Thompson Alumni Center at the University of Nebraska at Omaha campus.

Those recognized were described as “true champions of public health in Nebraska who have made significant efforts in improving the health for all Nebraskans” by **Jay Noren**, M.D., dean of the College of Public Health. Palm has more than 30 years of experience in working on various health planning and policy issues for DHHS, including

serving as administrator of Community Health Development in the Division of Public Health.

Palm’s office provides technical assistance to local public health departments in areas such as needs assessment, priority setting, intervention strategies and evaluation. The office also manages several contracts with local health agencies and oversees the Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant, the Small Rural Hospital Improvement Grant and several substance abuse prevention programs. Palm currently serves on the board of the Public Health Association of Nebraska and is the co-leader of the Nebraska Educational Alliance for Public Health Impact.



Dave Palm

Photo: Alice Henneman

# Microsoft Outlook to replace Lotus Notes e-mail



By Keith Larsen

LOTUS NOTES DATABASE SUPPORT

Early this fall, DHHS will begin migration from Lotus Notes E-mail to the new Nebraska.gov e-mail system called Microsoft Exchange.

During the transition, most DHHS staff will begin accessing their mail using a software program called Microsoft Outlook 2003. During the changeover, our Internet addresses will change. The address will end with @nebraska.gov in place of @dhhs.ne.gov. The old e-mail address will continue to work for quite some time, but all e-mail will be accessed through Microsoft Outlook.

**The Goal** This project is a part of the unified e-mail strategy outlined by the Governor's Office, the Chief Information Officer, and the Nebraska Information Technology Committee. One of the primary goals is to reduce multiple e-mail systems run by state agencies to a single statewide system.

**The Project** Most agencies have already made the transition to Outlook. DHHS, with 5,500 e-mail users, will be one of the last to make the move. Our project plan calls for completing the transition within four weeks of our kick-off date probably this Fall. This means that every night during the project, 200-300 staff will have their incoming memos, address book data, and calendar entries moved from Lotus Notes to their new Outlook e-mail account.

**Mail** The new inbox should have all memos from the previous day, and the entire Notes folder structure should be moved to Outlook. Because most of the folders will be empty, it will be a good time to eliminate all old and unneeded folders. Cleaning up folders is easy to accomplish in Outlook.

**Old Lotus Notes Mail** Most people will continue to log on to Lotus Notes to access their most recent and archived e-mail. We will still be able to send memos from Lotus Notes. However, when people reply or send a memo to a Lotus Notes address, the memo will be forwarded to the Microsoft Outlook inbox.

**Contacts and Mailing Lists** We expect that all your contacts and personal group lists will be moved to Microsoft. However, your group list members and

contacts with the Lotus Notes @dhhs.ne.gov addresses will need to be updated.

System-wide mailing lists currently used in Lotus Notes will be copied and used as mailing lists by Outlook users. They will be updated automatically every night from the e-mail addresses that are stored in the existing Lotus Notes group lists.

**Calendar** All calendar items should migrate, but we understand that repeat meetings will be split into multiple individual meetings. We recommend that calendar users begin cutting back on the number of meetings recorded for repeat meetings. Also, room and vehicle reservations tied to personal meetings should be verified.

**Lotus Notes Databases** All Lotus Notes Pegboards, Document Libraries, Mail-in Database, and Shared Address books will remain as they are. In fact, over 600 Lotus Notes databases will remain unchanged during the project and for some time after that.

Staff will log into Outlook for mail and Lotus Notes for Applications.

Training will be provided in the best manner that we can, given the aggressive timeline. Many people feel that the basic functions of Microsoft Outlook will be easy for most people to learn. We will offer training via e-mail, short Web sessions that demonstrate simple functions, and the Standard Help system built into Outlook software. We will provide an Outlook 2003 summary card that can be printed or viewed online. Eventually DHHS Human Resources & Development staff will offer full classes for training new staff.

**Browser Access** Some staff will access their mail using the browser, the Internet, and the Outlook Web Access (OWA) system. Please make sure you have permission from your supervisor before you access your e-mail outside of normal work hours.

During the project, staff can communicate with the team by sending e-mail to "Outlook Migration Project/DHHS/NEBRLN." However, when a problem is identified, please contact DHHS Help/DHHS/NEBRLN.

We also have a Outlook Frequently Asked Questions database on the Yellow Pages under the Reference Collection category. We will try to post all training material, schedules and updates in this location.



# In their own words...

Letters to HHSS employees who are *helping people live better lives*

Dear **Joan Cornish**

(Social Service Worker, DHHS Alliance office):

I want to tell you thank you for all the help that you have been to me in the process of getting my mom into the Medicaid system. Our first meeting was great, and you were so helpful in explaining what needed to be done. It was rather overwhelming to me, and you answered my questions. I appreciate how you made it possible for mom to be eligible concerning the bill at the hospital. It might be your job, but you do it very well!

**A Medicaid client's family member**

Dear **Judy Pfeifer**

(Protection & Safety Worker,  
DHHS Grand Island office):

I just wanted to say thanks for all of the things you have done for me: car, gas, clothes — and best of all, a family. I am very thankful for all this and just wanted to let you know.

**A state ward**

Dear **Dean Cole**

(DHHS Emergency Medical Services Program Administrator):

On November 5th, 2007, Nebraska witnessed first-hand how dangerous the job of firefighting is when Jeremy Wach was killed while fighting a house fire in Wymore, Nebraska. Immediately after the incident, the Wymore Fire Department requested the Nebraska Serious Injury & Line of Duty Death Response Team to be activated to assist the department and family of Jeremy.

The Response Team was on scene within two hours after the collapse occurred on Monday morning and stayed until well after the funeral on Friday evening.

Thank you for your support by allowing EMS Specialists Debbie Kuhn and Doug Fuller to assist the team with the funeral. Their work was instrumental in the success of providing Jeremy with the honor he deserved and providing comfort to the family and department.

**Kyle L. Ienn**, Vice President  
Nebraska Serious Injury & Line of  
Duty Death Response Team

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Dr. Jackie Miller, DDS, Chief Community Health Administrator with the DHHS Division of Public Health, also honored Debbie Kuhn and Doug Fuller privately for their contributions in assisting with the Jeremy Wach incident, sharing the following thought:

*The acrobatic, high-energy dolphin must spend most of its time hunting to survive. But when a pod member is sick or injured, others will set aside their own needs to come to its rescue. A pair of dolphins, one on each side, will stay beside it, lifting it to the surface to breathe, sometimes for days at a time, until it recovers the strength to swim for itself.*

*Your commitment makes the difference!*

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



A May 22nd ribbon cutting kicked off Youth Links, an innovative 18-bed triage center for juveniles in Douglas and Sarpy Counties. DHHS selected Heartland Family Service and Boys Town to operate Youth Links, which also serves youth coming back from the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers in Kearney and Geneva. From left: **Karla Dush**, Youth Links Program Coordinator; **Todd Landry**, Director of the DHHS Division of Children & Family Services; **Pete Tulipana**, Heartland Family Service; **Governor Dave Heineman**; and **Father Steven Boes** and **Dr. Dan Daly**, Boys Town.

*Photo: Jennifer Teas*

## HAPPENINGS:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

### CARNIVAL TIME!

Pony rides and cuddly kittens were just two of many highlights of the 2008 "Family Picnic & Carnival" this spring at the Norfolk Veterans' Home (NVH). The annual event is for the young of heart of all ages, as NVH members, their families, employees and the public come together to enjoy food, fun and fellowship.

This year's event was attended by 500 people who enjoyed new and old tractor displays, a large toy tractor display, hayrack rides, and live music. The day ended with Ray Charles' rendition of "America, the Beautiful" and a launching of red, white and blue balloons.

According to Activity Supervisor **Kate Reiners** and Volunteer Services Coordinator **Jenny Last**, who coordinate the planning, "The Carnival's success is due to total teamwork of the entire facility and many wonderful community volunteers and businesses."

(At top) **Kaley Johnson**, 2-year-old daughter of Nursing Administration Staff Assistant **Amy Johnson**, cuddles a kitten at a petting zoo. *Photo: Jenny Last* (At bottom) **Ryan Uhing**, 5-year-old son of Human Resource Assistant **Denise Uhing**, rides high in the saddle. *Photo: Kate Reiners*

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.







### PANHANDLE PATRIOTS

In June, DHHS Gering office staff members accepted the challenge of raising funds for a flag raising in front of their office. They did it with food.

Starting on June 14 — Flag Day — employees volunteered to bring food to the office at least once a week to reward those making donations. By the first week in October, more than \$1,400 had been collected, and the flagpole was purchased. The flagpole soon arrived and was erected with the help of the American Legion Sons of the Legion, DHHS staff and spouses. The American Legion Auxiliary will donate two flags a year for the next three years.

(Above left) Flagpole fundraisers (seated l-r) **Joanie Frahm, Josie Carlson** and **Vicki Blome**; (standing l-r) **Kelly Case, Mary Stockwell, Carie Sterkel, Angie Palomo, Thresa Cary, Lori Hartman, Karen Keller** and **Denise Prohs** (not shown, **Charlotte Gaspers** and **Dave Michaels**) *Photo: Teresa Bloodgood*

(Above right) A flagpole dedication was held on December 7, 2007 — Pearl Harbor Day. The flag was presented and raised by Iraq veterans of the local Army National Guard. State senators **LeRoy Loudon** of Ellsworth and **John Harms** of Scottsbluff participated. *Photo: Joanie Frahm*



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

## Bill Expands Family and Medical Leave Act

In January 2008, President Bush signed the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2008, which expands the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Employees caring for an injured service member will now be eligible, as will those who have a family member called to active duty.

Anyone caring for an injured service member is eligible for 26 weeks of FMLA during a single 12 month period if they are a spouse, son, daughter, parent, or nearest blood relative of the injured service member. The service member must be suffering from an injury or illness incurred in the line of duty while on active duty that may render the member medically unfit to perform duties of the member's office, grade, rank, or rating.

Those who have a spouse, son, daughter, or parent called to active duty (or have been notified of an impending call to active duty) will be eligible for 12 weeks of FMLA leave for any "qualifying exigency" arising out of the service member's call or order to active duty. This change does not go into effect until the Secretary of Labor defines "any qualifying exigency." The Department of Labor is in the process of approving these regulations. The Department of Labor encourages employees to provide this type of leave to those who would be eligible when regulations are passed.

For more information, contact your local Human Resource office.