

# Connections

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

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

**August 2009**  
VOLUME 9, ISSUE 8



**STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN:** Dan Scarborough, Administrator of the Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center at Geneva, takes a look at and listens to an introductory video segment he just completed shooting with a DHHS production crew, as Administrative Assistant Mary Sofer holds a small viewing screen. *More inside. Photo: Jerry Crisp*

# DHHS in the News Update...

Here are a few headlines of news releases recently issued by Communications & Legislative Services about DHHS programs. You can read and subscribe to all DHHS news releases from the DHHS [Newsroom](#). You can also listen to [sound bites](#) issued with releases.

[New Leadership Announced for Division of Developmental Disabilities and the Beatrice State Developmental Center](#) July 27

[Nebraska Has First Safe Haven Case Under New Law](#) July 21

[Nebraska WISEWOMAN Program](#) July 15

[Nebraska Experience First H1N1 Death](#) July 15

[Chief Medical Officer: Camps Should Take H1N1 Precautions](#) July 2

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

## About the Cover:



DHHS produces numerous videos to promote its programs, spearheaded by a production team in Communications and Legislative Services. See article inside involving a recent “shoot” at the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers at Geneva and Kearney.

## 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@nebraska.gov](mailto:diana.duran@nebraska.gov)

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Governor: <b>Dave Heineman</b>	Developmental Disabilities Division Director: <b>Jodi Fenner</b>	Director of Operations: <b>Bob Zagozda</b>
DHHS Chief Executive Officer: <b>Kerry Winterer</b>	Medicaid and Long-Term Care Division Director: <b>Vivianne Chaumont</b>	CLS Administrator: <b>Kathie Osterman</b>
Behavioral Health Division Director: <b>Scot Adams, Ph.D.</b>	Public Health Division Director/Chief Medical Officer: <b>Dr. Joann Schaefer</b>	Editor: <b>Jerry Crisp</b>
Children and Family Services Division Director: <b>Todd Reckling</b>	Veterans' Homes Division Director: <b>John Hilgert</b>	Graphics and Layout, Support Services: <b>Maisun Allahiq Judy Barker Robert DeFrain</b>

### ► 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@nebraska.gov](mailto:jerry.crisp@nebraska.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

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# The Good Life

“The Good Life” title of this column is a reminder of what we all share and what we hope to provide to all of our fellow Nebraskans we serve.

By Kerry Winterer

When I started as CEO on July 13, I knew that I’d need to hit the ground running. I was right, and it’s been both exhilarating and challenging at the same time. I quickly learned that “the routine work of the day” means there is rarely a routine day.

The Department of Health and Human Services does some of the most important work in state government. There are over 900 state laws that guide our work and ours is the largest single-agency budget. That probably isn’t news to you, but I think it needs to be said because it is a huge part of who we are.

My job in leading an agency of this size, with such diverse responsibilities, is to focus on the big picture, to provide a vision to move us forward as one agency and yet be able to take on specific issues when necessary.

To do that, I rely on the six division directors and chief operating officer to handle the agency’s day-to-day business. They and their division employees know the work, and sometimes the best thing I can do is to get out of their way and let them do it. We meet regularly and work together closely when issues have an impact across the agency.

There is also another side to this job. We touch thousands of lives every day. Sometimes we don’t meet people’s expectations, and sometimes people are unhappy with our decisions.

Sometimes our programs and services fall short, even though we may have the best of intentions. When that happens, we need to fess up, be accountable and make changes if change is warranted.

Those “falling short” stories are the ones that often make the news. That

is what the public knows most about us and, because of our size, that is also often what our employees know about other areas within the agency.

I believe an important part of my job is to improve the image of the department for the public and for our employees.

Some of my plans to accomplish this include:

- Requesting one-on-one meetings with reporters and news editors. Those have been going well and I’ve been able to begin building important relationships with them.
- Meeting with and learning more about our employees, for example why employees choose to work for the department, why they leave, and what factors affect employee morale.
- Meeting with service organizations and other community groups, building on relationships that may already exist on the local level through our offices and facilities.

When I’m traveling within the state, I hope to incorporate meetings with employees, community groups and/or media whenever possible.

On August 26 and 27, I’ll be in Grand Island and will visit the local office, the Veterans’ Home and the editorial board of the Grand Island Independent. On August 27, I’ll be in Scottsbluff and Gering and plan to do the same. I hope to visit Norfolk in September.

I’ll continue to share this kind of information with you. It’s through our continued work with each other and the public that we will continue our mission to “help people live better lives.”



Kerry Winterer Photo Bill Wiley

## Employee Satisfaction

Within the next few weeks, I plan to survey employees to measure employee satisfaction. We want employees to be satisfied with their jobs and their employment with DHHS. This is a value I believe is important, and a baseline measurement is needed so that we can build this into our culture.

The Department of Roads, for example, has formally measured employee satisfaction since 1997, surveying all employees every two years. I agree with former Roads director **John Craig** when he said that the measurement of employee satisfaction provides the “pulse” of the agency. Employee satisfaction is paramount to being able to track the progress and attainment of the department’s mission, vision and values. I will share more with you about this process as it’s developed.

# H1N1 Update

By Marla Augustine

Cases of novel influenza A (H1N1) have been circulating throughout the state this summer. All health officials are expecting more cases when school starts and kids begin to congregate, share viruses and take them home. Cold weather is also a factor in the spread of viruses, which seem to thrive in winter.

There is currently no vaccine for H1N1, although officials expect one to be generally available in mid-October.

In the absence of a vaccine, it's important that we take precautions to avoid getting the virus," said **Dr. Joann Schaefer**, Chief Medical Officer.

The precautions include:

- Avoid close contact with people who are coughing or otherwise appear ill.
- Avoid touching our eyes, nose, and mouth.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve.
- Wash your hands frequently.

The symptoms of H1N1 include a fever over 100 degrees, sore throat, cough, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. H1N1 can also cause vomiting and diarrhea.

If you do become ill, call your physician, who can prescribe an antiviral to ease your symptoms and possibly shorten the duration of your illness. Stay home until you have been without fever for 24 hours.

Go to the DHHS Web site for more information:  
<http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/H1N1Flu/> .



# Consumer Affairs Administrator brings “been there, done that” perspective to new job

By Jerry Crisp

**Carol Cousons de Reyes** has first-hand experience that helps prepare her for her new job as Administrator of Consumer Affairs within the Division of Behavioral Health. She has faced the challenge of mental health issues in her own life.

“In some previous work experiences, I felt I had to hide my depression,” Carol says. “It’s wonderful to know that my personal experience is now valued.”

Carol’s depression began early in life, but it wasn’t until college that she sought professional counseling and was later prescribed medication.

With a physician’s assistance, Carol stopped her medications so she could safely conceive her nearly one year old son. While stopping medication can cause problems for some people with depression, she found she could manage without them.

“Depression is still an occasional struggle for me, but my husband, son and friends have been a kind of therapy that helps me cope,” she says. “I would advise anyone experiencing mental health issues to turn to family and friends and not be afraid to seek professional help. We don’t need to suffer alone.”

Carol didn’t let depression stop her from getting an education and pursuing a career, either. She received a Bachelor’s degree in



**Carol Cousons de Reyes**

*Photo: Jerry Crisp*

Psychology from Georgia State University and a Masters of Psychology from Augusta State University, in Augusta, Georgia.

Her work experience includes psychology technician for the Medical College of Georgia, counselor for South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation, research specialist at Emory University, Certified Peer Specialist, research coordinator for the Georgia Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and director of the Consumer Relations and Recovery Section in the Georgia Department of Human Services.

The DHHS Office Carol now heads strives to provide peer support, strengthen consumer involvement, and assist customers in finding the best resources available. The Office earlier facilitated creation of a Consumer Specialist position in each of six Behavioral Health Regions across the state to provide peer support.

“I’m excited about helping advancing the role peers play,” Carol says. “Working together, we can assist people with mental health challenges live happier, more productive lives.”

One of Carol Cousons de Reyes’ favorite quotes comes from famed anthropologist **Margaret Mead**: “*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.*”

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## Facts about Depression

- It’s estimated that depression affects about 14 million Americans in a given year or approximately 1 out of 6 adults over a lifetime.
- While no single cause of depression has been identified, interaction among genetic, biochemical, environmental and psychological factors seems to play a role.
- Depression is not a personal weakness but a condition that can be successfully treated.

## Symptoms of Depression

- Significant weight loss or weight gain
  - Insomnia or excessive sleeping
  - Feeling restless or sluggish
  - Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Less ability to think or concentrate

For more information about depression, go to [www.dhhs.ne.gov/NetworkofCare/](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/NetworkofCare/).

# Way to Go!

Statewide or national recognitions, awards, honors

## Exstrom earns meritorious service award

**Sheila Exstrom**, Phd, R.N., has received the National Council of State Boards of Nursing's (NCSBN) Meritorious Service Award for her "positive impact and significant contributions to the purposes" of NCSBN. Presentation took place at the NCSBN national meeting on August 13 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Exstrom is a Nursing Education Consultant in the Licensure Unit of the Division of Public Health.

Serving as a member of the examination committee from 1995 to 2005 and as chairperson from 2005 to the present, Exstrom was selected for helping ensure public protection by assuring competent licensed nurses, for aiding NCSBN in establishing a global presence through developing policies and procedures for international testing centers, and for helping maintain the integrity and currency of examinations. She was also recognized for converting from paper and pencil exams to computer testing, thereby enabling nurses to enter the workforce without waiting several months for test results.

"For the past 20 years, Sheila Exstrom's contributions to the NCSBN include personal integrity, thoughtful deliberation, and knowledgeable guidance," said a nominator. "Her wisdom, tempered with compassionate leadership, have been invaluable."

"This individual has worked tirelessly to ensure that the examination...continues to be the international 'Gold Standard' for examinations that lead to licensing," said another nominator. "Through her service and leadership, this nominee has kept the examination firmly rooted in its well established and respected research base while helping the examination committee explore, develop and implement innovations in licensing examinations."

The NCSBN is a not-for-profit organization whose members include the boards of nursing in the 50 states, the District of Columbia and four U.S. territories. Its mission is to provide leadership to advance regulatory excellence for public protection.



Sheila Exstrom

DHHS employees should be proud of themselves and each other. If you earn statewide or national recognition or know a co-worker who does, let *Connections* know, and we'll proclaim it here!

# DHHS goes Hollywood at the YRTC's

*Connections'* May issue offered an overview of how DHHS produces quality videos to promote its programs. Here's a follow-up that carries that process through to completion.

The process the Communications & Legislative Services Section (CLS) uses to produce videos for DHHS programs has three major parts: pre-production, production and post-production—just like Hollywood.

Planning (read as meetings and phone calls) results in the crucial decisions that drive everything that follows and includes such things as who the target audience is, how long the production should be, and how it will be distributed.

Scripting involves putting those decisions into words that determine the video's content and determines the scenes and various shots set up for each scene.

All the editing, making copies of the finished video and distribution take place in post-production.

A production team headed up by Public Information Officer **Mike Wight** traveled to Geneva and Kearney this summer to produce videos spotlighting services at the Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Centers. A first cut of the Geneva video has been reviewed by appropriate personnel at that facility, offering the following initial reactions:

"Well done, Mike," Administrator **Dan Scarborough** later said. "This video has a very professional tone to it and gives a nice snapshot of who we are here in Geneva. Again, well done!"

"Looks great, Mike," added Administrative Assistant **Mary Stofer**. "Thanks for all of your work, and that includes **Dianna Seiffert** and **Jerry Crisp**."

The production team is now editing the YRTC-Kearney video and expects to complete an initial version for that facility to review.



CLS staff members made up a DHHS production team that traveled to Geneva and Kearney this summer to produce videos featuring the Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Centers. (At left) Director **Mike Wight** captures some basketball action at Kearney. (Below) Mike videos Geneva girls at lunch with lighting assistance from **Dianna Seiffert**. The videos will help orient parents whose children are at the YRTC's and be available on the DHHS Web site. *Photos: Jerry Crisp*

# Front Liners

By Jerry Crisp

**Tammy Henery**, Children and Family Services (CFS) Specialist in the DHHS Center office for a decade, does a seemingly impossible job successfully.

“Sometimes I feel like a tightrope walker without a net,” she says, “but Nebraska kids need people to do this work, and I don’t want to fall off or fail them.”

Tammy conducts investigations into alleged child abuse or neglect in five northeast Nebraska counties: Knox, Cedar, Antelope, Boyd and Holt. Her job means 1,000 miles a month on the road.

“I used to think child abuse happened only in inner cities, but now I know that it also happens in small town America,” says Tammy. “These are folks I sometimes even know personally.”

CFS Specialists look into allegations of child abuse or neglect, help determine what’s best for the child, and offer services to help families resolve their problems and, if possible, stay together.

“It’s never easy to find a child who’s bruised, burned or bloody, but that’s part of helping to protect children,” she says. “One can’t help but feel deeply about such things, but you also have to keep from getting too emotionally involved, which clouds your judgment and ability to make the situation better.”

As Tammy says, like walking on a tightrope without a net.

“It’s a daily struggle to discipline yourself to be an objective investigator without becoming insensitive or unfeeling,” Tammy explains.

Caseloads can be another challenge Tammy has learned to cope with.

“The biggest challenge I ever faced was 17 assessments in a single month, and my job seemed like one that couldn’t be done but had to be done anyway,” Tammy says. “Thank heavens, it’s not always like that.”

One thing that helps Tammy do her job is helping raise her own merged family of six children, age 9 to 28.

“They helped me to learn that children should be seen, heard and listened to,” says Tammy.

Another aid in her work is her husband, **Don**, who’s a Chief Deputy in the Knox County sheriff’s office.

“We approach cases from different perspectives, but that can help us both to see things more clearly than we might otherwise,” Tammy says.

Another contributor to Tammy’s success is **Tami Hilfiker**, CFS Supervisor in the DHHS O’Neill office.

“Tami doesn’t herd or drive us but directs, understands, supports and encourages,” says Tammy.

The respect and admiration Tammy feels for her supervisor is mutual.

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.



**Tammy Henery**

Photo: Tina White

“Tammy challenges your thinking to ensure you look at all options and do what’s best for the children and families and never gives up,” says Hilfiker. “She advocates for them and their communities, even after the work day ends. I’m proud to have her as a member of my team.”

Tammy’s efforts earned recognition last year from the Northeast Nebraska Child Advocacy Center for “exemplary service” to children who are victims of abuse and neglect. Using a joint-investigation team approach, the Center provides services such as forensic interviews, medical exams, advocacy and community education.

Because she must move from one case to the next, Tammy doesn’t always know the outcome, successful or otherwise, of cases she works.

“Now and then I run into a former client and ask how they’re doing, but I do manage to stay in touch with one boy, now 16 years old, who I first met when he was eleven,” Tammy explains. “His current caseworker updates me, but I don’t wish to interfere. But I told him that when he graduates high school and college, I’d like to be in the front row.”

Although when she first met him he was “like a plant without water or sunshine,” Tammy would like to have raised him as her own and watched him grow up. But knowing she played some small part in his success is enough for her.



# Recent radiation study helps enhance DHHS emergency communication response

By Mike Wight

If there was an accident at a nuclear power plant or during transportation of nuclear waste through our state, DHHS stands ready to protect the public...and you. One key to protecting people is to get accurate, useable information to the public and public health workers such as first responders and local health department staff. These workers will be on the front line during any public health emergency.

But what information should be put out? When? To whom? How? All critical questions to answer before an emergency occurs.

A new survey of 2,700 public health workers in six states about radiological events like a “dirty bomb” attack will help DHHS answer those questions. The survey was coordinated earlier this year by the National Public Health Information Coalition (NPHIC) and funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) National Center for Environmental Health Radiation Studies Program.

The survey found that most feel confident they could take actions needed to protect the public but want clear, detailed information to help them do so. Survey participants made the following recommendations for messages that would be disseminated immediately following a radiological incident:

- Identify the CDC as originator of information in each message.
- Include a Web site or phone number to call for more information in each message.

- Review each sentence for clarity.
- Give as many details as possible.
- Give instructions on what actions to take in each message.
- Make instructions specific and sequential.
- Use terminology easily understood by all employees.
- Explain any technical terms that must be used.
- Cite the geographic areas for which the instructions are needed.

The survey showed that key factors affecting public health workers’ trust in information included:

1. Authority and trustworthiness of the source
2. Perceived accuracy
3. Level of detail
4. Use of commonly understood terminology.

According to the survey, job classification, department, rural or urban location, length of service and proximity to a nuclear power plant had little or no impact on answers provided. Survey participants living in an urban or mixed urban and rural area had a tendency to be more skeptical about information than rural employees.

“Our next step will be to take what we’ve learned from this study and fine-tune messages for the DHHS Web site and other communication tools used to ensure people receive useable messages during a radiation emergency,” said **Kathie Osterman**, Administrator of the Communications and Legislative Services Section. “Our staff members work constantly to fine tune our emergency response plans, including emergency communications. Also, we regularly participate in the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency’s response plans involving our two nuclear power plants.”

CLS also works hand-in-hand with the DHHS Office of Radiological Health. This office is trained to respond to accidents or incidents involving radioactive materials. Emergency response, decontamination procedures and dose assessments are included in their training.



# Wellness Words:

## Personal Preparedness at Work

While many work behind the scenes to help citizens of Nebraska and our nation be better prepared for emergencies, here's something you can do to be better prepared yourself!

Emergencies can happen to any of us at any time. Since many of us spend a good portion of our waking hours at work, it makes sense to prepare for emergencies that may happen there. The Ready Campaign encourages all Americans to have an emergency supply kit, an emergency plan, and to be informed about different emergencies that can happen and the appropriate responses. Here are some things to think about that are specific to emergency planning in the workplace.

**On Building an Emergency Supply Kit:** It's a good idea to keep a smaller, specific version of an emergency supply kit at work or anywhere you spend a lot of time and could become stranded. These kits contain a lot of the same items as your household emergency supply kit and have items specific to the office. Download a checklist from the American Red Cross for personal workplace disaster supply kit items at

<http://www.redcross.org/www-files/Documents/pdf/Preparedness/WorkplaceDisasterKit.pdf>.

**On Having a Plan:** If you're at work when an emergency happens, you will obviously be separated from your family, so it is important to plan in advance how you will contact one another and how you will get back together. You can download a family emergency plan template at [http://www.ready.gov/america/\\_downloads/familyemergencyplan.pdf](http://www.ready.gov/america/_downloads/familyemergencyplan.pdf).

**On Being Informed:** Staying involved means staying safe. Different locations and offices have different ways they inform employees when an emergency strikes. It could be a speaker, siren, telephone alert, web site e-mail, or some other system or procedure. Remember that during and after an emergency, you need to stay in contact with co-workers.

For more information on emergency preparedness at work, visit the Department of Homeland Security's Web site at [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov), or visit the American Red Cross's Web site at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) and follow the steps recommended for preparedness at work.

*For additional information about personal preparedness, contact Public Information Officer Dianna Seiffert at (402) 471-1695 or [dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov](mailto:dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov).*

## Time to check for head lice!

With the start of school, parents should check their young children for head lice at least weekly, according to **Dr. Annette Bredthauer**, DHHS public health veterinarian.

"Head lice are common among elementary school students because they have a lot of physical contact with their classmates," she said.

Lice are reddish-brown wingless insects. Lice eggs, or "nits," are grayish-white, always oval-shaped and are attached at an angle to the side of the hair shaft.

The most-used insecticidal louse shampoos or cream rinse products contain pyrethrins or permethrin and are available as over-the-counter products.

A prescription product that contains malathion can also address head lice, Dr. Bredthauer said. This product is useful



for families who have tried other products but had difficulty in controlling lice. No matter what product is used, label instructions should be carefully followed to maximize effectiveness.

- Dr. Bredthauer offers these tips to combat head lice:
- Check children and watch for signs of head lice, such as frequent head scratching;
  - Use a medicated shampoo or cream rinse, but remember that all lice-killing products are pesticides, and label instructions should be followed;
  - After shampooing or conditioning with a treatment product, remove all nits with a comb or fingernails to assure complete removal;
  - Check with your physician before using lice treatment pesticides if the child has allergies, asthma or epilepsy; and
  - Wash bedding and clothing in hot water and dry in a hot dryer.

*For more information, contact Dr. Bredthauer at (402) 471-1374.*

# Online application reaches Germany

By Jerry Crisp

Facilitating the process of applying for benefits online reaches farther than some might suppose.

**Mari Becker**, an administrator for the Division of Children and Family Services in the Eastern Service Area, got a call from a woman in Germany whose father was in an Omaha nursing home and needed an immediate alternative placement. Becker says the woman was frustrated about needing to deal with a situation from so far away, so she encouraged and helped the woman get started on the application process.

“She was thrilled when I told her we would have the application within the hour of her hitting the submit button,” says Becker.

Becker checked the next morning to find that the woman had completed the application, including helpful information like her email address that allowed easy contact. Social Service Worker **Anita Hagerty** had benefits determined within a week so that placement could proceed.

“It’s quite a success story about our ability to reach out even to other countries,” Becker says, “to help someone here in Omaha get the benefits they need.”

# Thank you for giving to the Charitable Giving Campaign!



DHHS employees support the Charitable Giving Campaign because they know it is another way to put the DHHS motto - helping people live better lives - into action. The Campaign supports programs that offer needed assistance to families who are hungry, need medical care or need help to solve problems too large for them to deal with alone.

DHHS employees are generous, caring people who want to make life better for everyone, who want to make a difference in the lives of others. Because we care, let’s all help to make this year the best year ever for the Charitable Giving Campaign! THANKS FOR GIVING!

## *Good Things Are Happening!*

Nebraska collected \$196.6 million in child support in calendar year 2008, almost \$10 million more than in 2007, including the largest amount ever - \$52,000 - from one non-custodial parent.

*These amounts reflect the efforts of DHHS Child Support staff who help children get the court-ordered support they deserve!*



# September observances

September 2009						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

## National Preparedness month all about making preparedness a priority

Are you ready? Only 7% of Americans have taken the three recommended steps to prepare for disasters, according to the American Red Cross. Those 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 (NPM).

NPM 2009 gives Americans a chance to understand what it truly means to be "ready." Nationally, people are working to create a culture of preparedness and to show how preparedness goes beyond having fire alarms, smoke detectors, and extra food in the pantry.

The first step, making a kit, is easy and it should be done today to prepare for what may come tomorrow. Emergency supply kits can be assembled from items already found at home. Getting the whole family involved is a great way to educate children about being prepared for the unexpected.

During a typical emergency, two things might happen; you might be confined to your home for a long period of time, such as during a winter storm, or you might be asked to leave your home or evacuate on short notice. In either situation, you'll need supplies on hand to help you cope and respond.

In addition to the supplies we need every day, like food and water (at least three day's worth) and clothing, a good disaster supplies kit is unique to every individual or family. Customize your kit to meet your personal needs such as pet supplies, maps or personal documents. And, make sure you have either a battery operated or hand-cranked radio, so, in the event of an emergency, you'll be able to keep up with weather and emergency reports. Remember to take inventory of all your

kits every six months, and update as needed.

How do you get started?

Try committing a weekend to updating telephone numbers, buying emergency supplies and reviewing your emergency plan with everyone.

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).

## 20th Anniversary of Alcohol & Drug Recovery Month

States across the nation are celebrating Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month. Recovery Month helps people recognize that addiction is a treatable disease, and that recovery is possible. It shares the message of renewed hope that long-term recovery can make a difference in helping more families get healthy.

It's estimated that 90,000 Nebraskans (7.5% of the adult population) abuse or are addicted to alcohol or other drugs. Recovery Month helps educate the public about treatment, how it works, for whom, and why. Treatment for substance use disorders is effective and necessary. Substance abuse treatment providers have transformed the lives of untold thousands of Americans.

The Network of Care Web site has vital information about treatment resources, diagnoses, insurance and other pertinent behavioral health Web sites. For drug or alcohol information for you or someone you know, go to [www.dhhs.ne.gov/networkofcare](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/networkofcare).

## *Good Things Are Happening!*

Beating the heat is always a challenge this time of year, but an even bigger challenge for those who are also economically challenged, disabled or elderly. That's why the Low Income Energy Assistance Program purchases fans to cool things off a bit for these folks and their families. To be eligible for the cooling program, someone in the household must be age 70 or older or have some specific medical condition that makes the person susceptible to heat, as well as meet certain household and annual income limits.

*Just another example of DHHS helping people live better lives!*

# In their own words

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

Dear **Cortney Lichti** (Counselor, Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center, Geneva):

I am writing to congratulate you on being selected by the American Correctional Association for its "Best in the Business" award. This recognition is well deserved.

The Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Geneva is fortunate to have a counselor who is dedicated to improving the lives of young mothers and their children. The Mothers and Babies program has provided so many young women with the opportunity to live as successful parents when they return to their communities. Your love for children and your unwavering commitment to helping the young women in your program to become knowledgeable and confident mothers is commendable. On behalf of our state, I thank you for your countless contributions to bettering the lives of young Nebraskans.

Again, congratulations on receiving this distinguished award.  
Very truly yours,

**Mike Johanns**  
United States Senator

EDITOR'S NOTE: Cortney also received a letter of congratulations from State Senator **Colby Coash**, published in *Connections*' July issue, as well as another from Nebraska Attorney General **John Bruning**.

Dear **Mary Guier** (Social Service Worker, DHHS Omaha Pacific St. Office Building):

You're truly a blessing. Thank you so much for your kindness and help.

**An Omaha Area Client**

Dear **Glenda Horst** (Social Service Supervisor, DHHS Pierce office):

I am writing to you about **Kristine Silhacek** (Social Service Worker, DHHS Pierce office). I have dealt with a few Social Service Workers in my time, and I need to let you know Kristine needs a promotion or raise, and if that's not feasible, a raise. She has been so helpful to me by answering all my questions and my many calls. It's nice to know that the bitter taste in my mouth about DHHS is gone.

I usually do not write letters, and when I do, they are usually not to say something good, but in this case, I need you to know some good news since I'm sure you do not get many compliments on the work your Department does. Thank you, and please pass the same thought to Kristine for me.

**A Satisfied Client**

Dear **Jerry Crisp** (*Connections* Editor, Communications & Legislative Services, Lincoln):

Thank you, thank you, thank you for the wonderful presentation of my column in the July issue of *Connections* ("I've Met Angels in Tennis Shoes"). I love the photos, and I'm thrilled to think the column will now circulate more widely among the people it is meant to thank, although I know a good number of the Grand Island Veterans' Home (GIVH) staffers got hold of the Hastings Tribune edition in which it originally appeared (May 1, 2009).

Instead of going to GIVH, we now "visit" my father-in-law at the cemetery in Minden. After a couple of months away from GIVH, re-reading these words today, so beautifully played and presented by you, brings a lot of thoughts and feelings back with a rush. My family and I will always be grateful for the gift of time Walt had at the end of his life in the company of the "angels in tennis shoes."

Sincerely  
**Andy Raun**  
Regional & Farm New Editor  
Hastings Tribune

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 publish as many as space allows.

# Happenings!

Photos spotlighting DHHS activities around the state

## Kids connect at Camp Catch Up

By Jeanne Atkinson

This summer, about 100 children ages 8 to 19 attended Camp Catch Up for a weekend.

More important than the games, fun and food was the chance for these siblings, who've been separated by foster care or adoption, to reconnect again.

"This may be the only time all year when siblings can be together and really talk to each other," said **Todd Reckling**, Director of the Division of Children and Family Services. "Campers can do fun activities with their brothers and sisters like canoeing and swimming and also strengthen their relationships."

The children are so happy to have this chance to be together, he said, and he's interested in seeing the numbers of siblings who attend camp get bigger every year.

Starting in January, both DHHS staff and foster parents can help youth register for the 2010 Camp Catch Up. Any youth who's recently attended the camp will also get registration information. Information is also published in the Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association newsletter.

This year the camps were held at Halsey in June and at Hordville in July. This is the seventh year for Camp Catch Up.

The camp is free to the youth and is sponsored by DHHS, the Sherwood Foundation and the William and Ruth Scott Family Foundation.



**PHOTO CAPTION: Todd Reckling, Director of the Division of Children and Family Services, drove to Hordville to participate in this year's Camp Catch Up. Front Row: Jessica Hilderbrand, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, and campers Cheyenne, Isaiah, and Joseph. Back Row: Todd Reckling, Alana Pearson, NCF, and Katherine Reckling. Photo taken by Nebraska Children and Families Foundation staff**

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

# Defenders of Our Freedom Parade

Previous issues of this publication featured the first five paintings in the “Defenders of Our Freedom” collection by artist **Teri Rosario** that found a home at the Eastern Nebraska Veterans’ Home (ENVH) at Bellevue. Here’s the sixth and final painting, “Precious Cargo.”



© Teri Rosario

In wartime, the Merchant Marines is an auxiliary to the U.S. Navy and can be called on to deliver troops and military supplies. During the Korean War, the Merchant Marines brought 75% of the personnel to the war zone and about 90% of supplies, including ammunition, food and mail.

In December 1950, 64 Merchant ships participated in the evacuation of Hungnam during the Chosin Reservoir campaign. Approximately 350,000 tons of cargo, 17,500 vehicles and more than 100,000 military personnel were removed. Also escaping North Korea and the oncoming Communist Chinese were more than 90,000 Korean refugees. On December 22, the SS Meredith, a 455-foot Victory class freighter of the Moore-McCormack Lines carrying supplies to American Servicemen on behalf of the Navy, arrived in Hungnam. Refugees boarded the ship throughout the night.

As dawn approached, there were 14,000 men, women and children aboard a ship designed to hold 60 people at most. With little food or water and in frigid temperatures with no sanitary facilities, the ship’s captain, crew and passengers set sail for South Korea. The ship sailed through waters heavily mined and patrolled by enemy submarines. After a 500 mile journey, they arrived in Pusan. Turned away at the port, they traveled another 50 miles where they finally arrived at the island of Koje Do on Christmas day. The next day with the assistance of the U.S. Navy, all of the refugees were safely taken ashore with five babies born on the ship.

The Meredith became known as “The Ship of Miracles” and is one of the few Gallant Award-winning ships. The Department of Transportation and the Guinness Book of Records declared the voyage as the greatest single rescue in history.

*We hope you have not only enjoyed learning about the six paintings in the collection now housed at the Eastern Nebraska Veterans’ Home at Bellevue but also experienced a deep and abiding sense of gratitude for the sacrifices American service men and women that make them “Defenders of Our Freedom.”*