

Connections

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

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

August 2010
VOLUME 10, ISSUE 8



Children and Family Services Division director **Todd Reckling** presents a signed soccer ball to **Saw Kaw Khu** (Rocky) at the Karen National Martyr's Day celebration held August 14-15. The event paid tribute to their fallen soldiers and featured speakers, music, food and a soccer tournament. The balls were signed by Omaha's Mayor, the soccer coaches, Reckling and Refugee Program Coordinator Karen Parde. Look inside to learn more about DHHS' refugee program.

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About the Cover:

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.

[Nebraska 7th Graders Need Proof of Whooping Cough Booster Shot This School Year](#) July 20, 2010

[Regional Center Discharge Follow-Up Study Completed](#) July 15, 2010

[Jeffrey Smith is New Administrator of Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home in Bellevue](#) July 1, 2010

Go to [DHHS In The News](#) on the Employee Home Page for links to *Omaha World-Herald* and *Lincoln Journal Star* articles involving DHHS programs and services.

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



Many of us don't know much about the DHHS Refugee Resettlement Program or even what a 'refugee' is. Refugees are legal immigrants who are outside their country of nationality and unable or unwilling to return because of fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion.

Refugee Resettlement Coordinator Karen Parde said that the focus is on helping refugees establish a new life in this country. Many refugees were forced to leave their homes without warning, unable to bring even basic necessities with them. They may have been in a refugee camp for years until being allowed to resettle in another country. Less than one percent of refugees are ever resettled, she said.

Available services range from cultural orientation, housing, and groceries to job readiness training and employment searches, ESL classes, schooling, and supportive services. Cash and medical assistance is provided to refugees who aren't eligible for other programs for their first eight months in this country.

Parde collaborates with Nebraska's three refugee resettlement agencies: Catholic Social Services; Lutheran Refugee Services; and the Southern Sudan Community Association.

make the connection . . .

DHHS Public Website: www.dhhs.ne.gov

DHHS Employee Website: www2.dhhs.ne.gov

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HHS's Winterer Wants to Continue to Help



Kerry Winterer

Photo: Bill Wiley

Editor's Note: The following article, written by community health editor **David Penner** and titled "HHS's Winterer Wants to Continue to Help," was printed in the Lexington Clipper-Herald on August 24th.

LEXINGTON – **Kerry Winterer**, Chief Executive Officer of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, jumps at the chance to tell people about the workers he has in his department.

"Every chance I get I try to tell people how great our case workers are," Winterer said. "I never take them for granted. They are mission driven."

For Winterer, his own mission according to him is to tell people about the good his case workers and the

department's services as whole can be for the general population.

He has retained his position for a little more than a year and has focused all of his energies on customer service.

"We are continuing to increase customer service," Winterer said. "We want to focus on better increasing all of the things we do for the ones we serve."

Those increases in service can be seen in HHS' efforts with the ACCESSNebraska initiative program.

Sites in Lexington, along with Scottsbluff, Lincoln and Fremont, allow Nebraskans to access more help through online services. According to Winterer ACCESSNebraska is a more interactive experience for customers, which helps streamline and centralize the services HHS provides to its customers.

"Within the year these sites will be up and running and will allow people from every region of Nebraska to pick up a phone and get the assistance they need," Winterer said. "They won't have to drive to a location to get the help they need."

HHS offers the people of Nebraska a wide array of assistance ranging from behavioral health issues and Medicaid to veterans issues.

On the issue of Medicaid, Winterer said the new reform will add a new population to the program. Studies released last week show that costs to the state's Medicaid program will increase between \$526 million to \$766 million.

"This was passed in December and now it is August and it's still too early to sort this thing out," Winterer said. "It's a significant cost to the state."

Still, Winterer, for now, wants to focus on how HHS can help Nebraskans.

"When I go to places I like to talk about the options people have with HHS, because most do not know what we have to offer," he said. "We owe that to the people of the state."

For more information about what HHS offers to Nebraskans visit its Web site at: <http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/>.

Kerry Winterer's regular column, "The Good Life," will return in September.

DHHS DIRECTIONS

A new series devoted to a quick-read of the nitty-gritty work of Department staff...



The world is changing. It's fast-paced and people get their news in bits and pieces, so we're adding an easy-to-read column for employees to get a quick feel for the hands-on

work of co-workers. We'll try to cover more than one Division in each issue, with occasional appearances by other key areas like Operations.

DHHS Directions starts with CEO Kerry Winterer and a look at his key priority areas:

- Developing a Department focus on customer service.
- Using tax dollars as effectively as possible.
- Being as accountable and transparent as possible.
- Improving employee morale.
- Improving the public perception of the Department; sharing information about agency programs/services and the commitment of employees.

Examples in action include: The System Advocate is now the DHHS Helpline, which is more understandable to the public. The new homepage for our Employee Website includes the bulletin board and other updates for staff and the Talk2Kerry email address is available. A new logo better reflects the professionalism and actions of the agency. Kerry has accepted speaking requests from across the state, talking with thousands of Nebraskans about the Department.

What's up in the Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care? A quick visit with Director Vivianne Chaumont gives us a look at employee activities in MLTC:

- Applying for Aged and Disabled Resource Center grants. ADRC is a one-stop place where people can get information on long term care options allowing them to make informed decisions about services.
- Developing a Medicaid Medical Home project to provide access to medical homes for patients, improving health care access and outcomes. Includes development of provider reimbursement policies and incentives.
- Developing PACE, a Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly, to provide comprehensive health care services within a defined geographic area for voluntarily enrolled clients age 55 and over. Includes looking at possible organizations to serve one

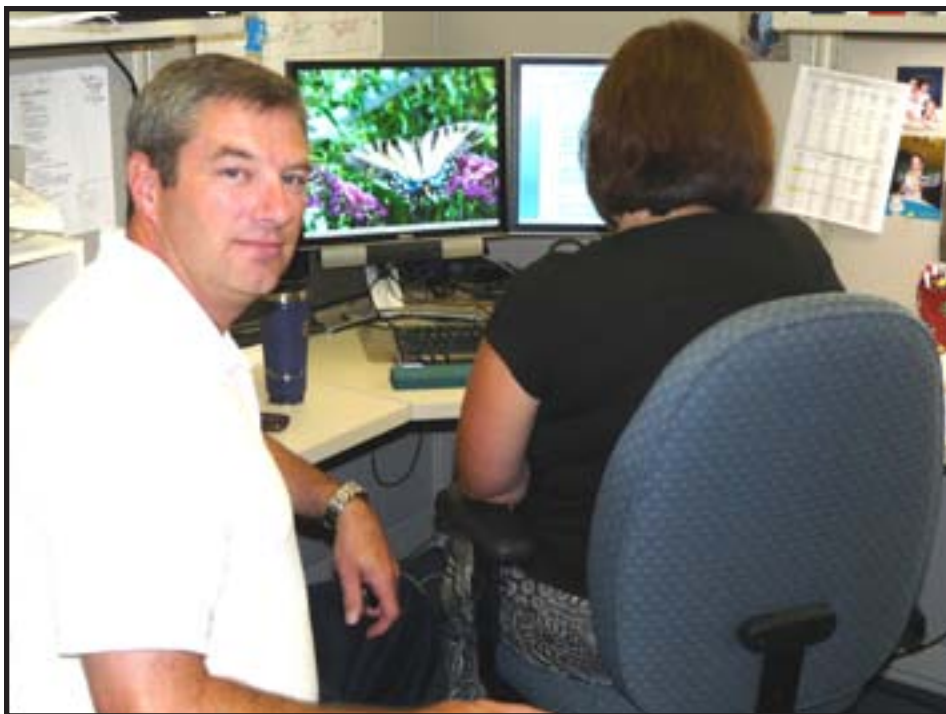


or more target areas in Lincoln and Omaha.

- Notified this month that the SMP program in the State Unit on Aging received three National Outstanding Performance Awards for 2009: an award for the highest dollar amount referred for further action, an award for highest total savings, and the Special Achievement award.
- Renegotiating the contract for behavioral health services with Magellan for Medicaid clients.

- Wrote and received the Medicaid Autism grant and have drafted regulations. Now waiting for private donor funds, as required in the legislation, before implementation can begin.
- Contracting with a vendor to help us draft the state medical Health Information Technology (HIT) plan in order to implement provider incentives for electronic health records (EHR).
- Moving to a Medicaid managed care model with two vendors, adding seven counties (for a total of 10) and enrolling 90,000 clients to managed care.
- Identifying and working with providers to simplify administrative processes and gain cost efficiencies in the Durable Medical Equipment (DME) program.
- Medicaid claims processing continues to exceed federal standards resulting in enhanced federal dollars.

“Shadowing” proves enlightening for Eastern Service Area Administrator



ESA Administrator Barry DeJong “shadows” a staff member to gain insights into their daily work.

Photo: Karen Marquez

By Jerry Crisp

Call it “shadowing” or walking in someone else’s shoes, it’s when an administrator or manager looks over employees’ shoulders to gain first-hand insight into their work. For three July Fridays in a row, Eastern Service Area (ESA) Administrator **Barry DeJong** observed Economic Assistance staff in action at numerous locations in the Omaha area.

“I’m grateful to these employees who allowed me a glimpse into their daily routines,” says DeJong. “It was 30 hours of education in about four hours’ time.”

DeJong’s first stop was at the 42nd Street office in Omaha, where he thought Social Service Worker **Kristen Kennedy** needed three arms to respond to non-stop phone calls from clients, some of them in crisis mode.

“Kristen handled nine cases in one half-hour period,” DeJong reports, “and dealt with each in a professional, kindly

manner. Her multi-tasking abilities truly amazed me.”

DeJong then dropped in on the Lake Street office, where he watched Social Service Worker **Cramer Sudduth** communicate through an interpreter with a new-to-America refugee family from Asia. The family had lived in a resettlement camp for 17 years, due to religious turmoil in their native land. Ailing, the mother had been in the hospital three times within her first week in Omaha.

Says DeJong, “I will carry this experience with me for the rest of my life—the way she held her hands together in a prayerful pose, respectful and so dependent on listening to every word from the interpreter.”

DeJong’s next stop was Omaha’s State Office Building, where Children & Family Services Specialist **Meghan Herek** and a Service Coordinator visited with a mother hoping to reunite with her children, now in foster care.

“I saw teamwork and problem-solving at its best, as they urged the mother to make changes that would facilitate reunification,” says DeJong.

“Whether that family will be reunited or not remains to be seen, but the situation brought tears to my eyes.”

Later that month, DeJong visited Project Harmony, where Children & Family Services Specialist **Matt Aksamit** interviewed three refugee children in foster care.

“Watching Matt work with these kids to make sure they felt safe and comfortable and help meet their needs was inspiring,” says DeJong.

His next stop was a home visit, where Adult Protective Services Worker **Susan Larson** worked with an elderly woman in a wheelchair torn between living independently and moving to an assisted living facility.

“What impressed me most,” DeJong says, “was Susan’s ability to put the client at ease and help her toward a solution.”

Later on, DeJong visited Children & Family Services Specialist **Angela Schilmoeller** in the Papillion Office of Juvenile Services, after which he attended a court hearing with her. Schilmoeller is leaving DHHS to stay home and take care of her children.

“And after the hearing, the Juvenile County Court Judge told me from the bench what a loss Angela’s leaving the Department would be,” DeJong explains. “Her co-workers and clients will miss her, and I invited her back whenever she’s ready.”

“I always knew the job of ESA employees and their counterparts throughout the state is important work, but I can’t tell you how impressed I was with each employee and how professional and dedicated they truly are,” says DeJong. “Shadowing helped me gain a more profound appreciation of how vital the DHHS mission is to our clients and our communities.”

Risky Situation? Why perception is reality for people during the flu season



Dr. Joann Schaefer with Administrative Assistant **Karen Berry**.

Photo: Bill Wiley

Diseases at Creighton University Medical Center, who shares the clinical side.

“Perception determines how people behave - panic and chaos versus order,” said Dr. Schaefer.

When vaccine was scarce in October and thousands of Nebraskans were sick, people were scared. There wasn’t enough vaccine for everyone and demand was high. Later on when the H1N1 virus turned out not to be as severe as previously thought, there was plenty of vaccine, but people’s interest had

By Leah Bucco-White

It starts with two life or death scenarios. Imagine a deadly flu is spreading through your town. Six hundred lives are at stake. There are two vaccines.

Vaccine #1 will definitely save 200 lives. Vaccine #2 is experimental. There’s a 33% chance that all 600 people would be saved but a 67% chance that no one will be. Which would you choose?

Once again, same scenario, two vaccines. Vaccine #1 – if you choose this one, 400 people will die. Vaccine #2 is experimental. Using it means there’s a 33% chance no one will die but a 67% chance everyone will die. Which would you choose?

You may have already noticed the two situations are exactly the same but

framed differently. Scenario number one is framed as saving 200 lives. Scenario two is framed as letting 400 people die. People’s perception of risk plays a big role in their behavior during an outbreak, and behavior can change significantly depending on how they read the words “save” and “die.” During our recent experience with H1N1 flu, it was that perception of risk that either had hundreds of people lined up to get vaccine or just a dozen stragglers.

The risk perception exercise is something the audience goes through as part of a recent presentation called “H1N1 Lessons Learned” by **Dr. Joann Schaefer**, DHHS Director of the Division of Public Health and the state’s Chief Medical Officer. Dr. Schaefer shares lessons learned from a state perspective. She’s joined by **Dr. Gary Gorby**, Chief of the Division Infectious

waned because many no longer saw the virus as risky.

Another example of perception changing behaviors was what people thought about the safety of the H1N1 vaccine.

“The H1N1 vaccine is safe and effective, yet some Nebraskans were so concerned about its safety that they chose to risk getting sick versus getting vaccinated. We did a lot of education about vaccine safety to dispel that myth,” Dr. Schaefer said.

The H1N1 vaccination campaign was one of the fastest and largest campaigns in recent history and when it was all said and done, more than 475,000 Nebraskans received vaccine.

“Accuracy and information provided can really affect what happens, and that’s why we did our best to inform Nebraskans from the get-go,” she said.

Immunization Registry rolling out

By Marla Augustine

Free, available 24/7 and with the potential to reduce disease outbreaks among children and help parents and health care providers—what is it? It's called NESIIS.

The Nebraska State Immunization Information System is a web-based, password secure system that connects and shares immunization information among parents, public clinics, private provider offices, local health departments, schools, hospitals, and other health care facilities.

[NESIIS](#) helps prevent the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases because it eliminates the difficulty of keeping immunization records accurate and up-to-date. It's difficult for providers and parents to know the immunization status of their patients and children when records are scattered between medical provider offices and parent records.

"NESIIS helps ensure that children get only the vaccines they need," said **Dr. Joann Schaefer**, Chief Medical Officer and Director of the [Division of Public Health](#). "It can help eliminate missed opportunities and over-immunization by providing one secure location to store complete immunization records."

The information needed to look up records: first and last names, date of birth, Social Security number. The system looks for a record that matches all the data entered.



- *Benefits for children:* NESIIS prevents unnecessary immunizations and helps identify their missing immunizations so that they can get up to date.
- *Benefits for schools:* NESIIS provides schools with quick and easy access to records. They have the ability to instantly print a child's official immunization record for school enrollment.
- *Benefits for parents:* No scrambling to find immunization records for enrollment. Parents can access a copy of their child's immunization records at any time, along with reminders about vaccines that the child currently needs.

- *Benefits for providers:* NESIIS provides immediate access to a patient's immunization history and improves efficiency by reducing the time needed to review records for completeness and documentation of immunization status. It reduces paperwork and staff time in obtaining records and responding to record requests. It helps them keep up with current vaccine recommendations. It also tracks and manages the providers' vaccine inventory so that they know when they are running low or that the vaccine they have is about to expire. NESIIS provides a reminder for due or overdue immunizations.

NESIIS interfaces with the DHHS Vital Records office to keep updated with information on newborns. Infants' immunization histories become part of NESIIS.

Michelle Hood in the Immunization Program has been busy training schools, clinics and providers on how to use the system.

"Schools and providers are very happy with NESIIS," Michelle said. "Although they were skeptical at first, when I show them how it can help them do their work faster and better, they're impressed."

For more information on NESIIS see <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/NESIIS/>.

Good Things Are Happening!

Thanks to federal stimulus funding, the DHHS Immunization Program was able to give 6,660 mothers of newborns a combo shot of tetanus, diphtheria and whooping cough vaccine before they left the hospital. Babies have little lung capacity,

so getting whooping cough can be serious, even fatal. Immunization will help protect the new babies from exposure to whooping cough until they develop their own immunity through vaccination by their first birthday.

A good example of how public health efforts helps people live better lives!

Front Liners



Steve McNulty

Photo: Jerry Crisp

By Jerry Crisp

Steve McNulty, an Environmental Engineer with the drinking water program within the [Division of Public Health](#), coordinates the [Drinking Water State Revolving Fund](#) (DWSRF). McNulty has served nearly four years in his present position and as a review engineer with DHHS since 2003. Prior to that, he spent over a decade in consulting, mainly working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Army Corps of Engineers.

The DWSRF provides lower-cost financing to communities across the state for infrastructure projects such as drilling new water wells, building treatment plants and replacing water mains and towers. Partnering with the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) and the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority, the DWSRF develops an

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.

annual Intended Use Plan (IUP) for each fiscal year that directs management of the fund. Major activities include the grant process that awards funding and completing loan agreements with communities across the state.

“Our job is to help communities find the best funding source to achieve their goals, whether through our programs or through another government or private funding source,” McNulty says. “We listen to what communities and their engineers think is best and try to provide options to achieve their goals,” says McNulty.

The biggest challenge for McNulty and his colleagues

is building a consensus through compromise to produce the greatest good across the state.

“A good compromise makes everyone walk away only a little unhappy, and a great day is making everyone walk away happy,” says McNulty. “I strive for good compromises and great days.”

McNulty says the best path to success is building trust.

“I want the people to know that I don’t make choices for them but rather do the research that produces funding options that enable them to make the right choices,” says McNulty. “I’m a bit like the throat in an hourglass that brings together many varying interests in an effort to benefit all, but I couldn’t do what I do without the active assistance of my colleagues, community representatives and engineers who care about public health.”

McNulty and his colleagues were put to the test when the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was enacted in 2009. Commonly referred to as “Stimulus” or the “Economic Recovery Act,” ARRA aimed at creating jobs and promoting consumer investment and spending to help the nation recover from the worst economic challenge since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

“A usual grant period might include \$20 million in funding within a 5-year deadline, but ARRA was nearly \$50 million mostly with a 1-year deadline,” McNulty explains. “That offered a higher level of funding than we had ever seen. Through ARRA and the regular base program, we provided assistance to 30 projects over the past year that helped communities across Nebraska meet their drinking water needs in spite of a nationwide economic crisis.”

McNulty and his colleagues are obviously doing something right because they recently shared an award with NDEQ from the EPA for innovative and effective use of financing mechanisms. The honor was conferred for innovative partnerships, creative use of set-aside funds, best management practices, exceeding ARRA requirements and effective outreach.

“While his primary focus is DWSRF, Steve makes time to help out in the review of plans and specifications for construction projects, especially during crunch times,” says supervisor **Chin Chew**. “He is a significant asset to the Engineering Services Section.

According to **Jack Daniel**, Administrator of the [Office of Drinking Water & Environmental Health](#), “Steve’s ability to see the big picture and his abundance of patience is critical in the successful administration of Nebraska’s Drinking Water State Revolving Fund.”

Division of Behavioral Health honored for supporting National Guard, Reserve employees



(L-R) Major General (Ret) **Walt Zink**, Chair, Nebraska ESGR; **Jim Harvey**, Division of Behavioral Health; Scot Adams, Director, Division of Behavioral Health; Lt General (Ret) **Roger Lempke**, NE ESGR; Brig Gen (Ret) **Michael McCrory**, State Personnel Director and NE ESGR Committee member.

Photo: Mike Wight

By Mike Wight

On July 29, the Division of Behavioral Health received the “Pro Patria” award as outstanding public sector employer for 2009, the highest recognition given by the Nebraska Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). This made the Division one of 130 semi-finalists nationwide for the Secretary of Defense Freedom Award.

ESGR is a Department of Defense volunteer organization that helps minimize conflicts between

military duties and civilian career responsibilities. Approximately 46% of the total available U.S. military manpower is made up of military reserve components.

Division Director **Scot Adams** accepted on behalf of the Division, but stated the award was for DHHS.

“It’s an honor to receive this award, but I know that this Department and other state agencies have fostered a sense of caring for our military service members, and we’re proud to support that effort,” he said. “If these employees are willing to sacrifice

their time in support of their country, we should respect that sacrifice and support them and their families in the work place.”

The Division has supported employees’ professional military and civilian growth, and has been very supportive of their families, providing gifts to families during times of out-processing, training and/or deployment.

The Pro Patria (for {one’s} country) award recognizes Nebraska employers who provide the most exceptional support to our national defense through leadership practices and personnel policies that support employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve.

Good Things Are Happening!

Two recent reviews suggest that the Beatrice State Developmental Center is back on track.

A consulting team from California, H&W Independent Solutions, and an independent expert both cite significant progress that renews hopes for recertification within the next year.

These reviews testify to ongoing efforts by those who plan and put into action enhanced services that help people live better lives.

Way to Go!

Statewide and national recognitions, honors and awards

CDC LAUDS NEBRASKA AS ERROR FREE ON FLUORIDATION QUALITY



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta has recognized Nebraska among 14 states that was “error free” in reporting data management and surveillance of water fluoridation throughout the nation. CDC’s water fluoridation reporting system includes 54,000 public water systems.

“I commend you for the outstanding effort by Nebraska,” said **Kip Duchon**, National Fluoridation Engineer for the CDC in a letter to DHHS Drinking Water Program Specialist **Andy Kahle**. “This demonstrates an exceptional achievement.”

(Left) Andy Kahle (R) with Health Section Administrator **Jack Daniel**.
Photo: Jerry Crisp

DHHS PHARMACIST CITED FOR PREPAREDNESS



Gary Cheloha (L) with Lisa Keathley.

Photo courtesy NPA

Gary Cheloha accepts the 2010 Public Relations Award given by the Nebraska Pharmacists Association (NPA) from last year’s winner, **Lisa Keathley**. Cheloha, H1N1 Preparedness Pharmacist in the Division of Public Health, was honored at the NPA’s annual convention in Lincoln in June.

The NPA recognized Cheloha for ensuring pharmacist involvement in the H1N1 vaccination program in Nebraska. Long involved in public health preparedness, Cheloha provided expertise and oversight in receipt, storage and distribution of antiviral medications during the recent potential H1N1 influenza pandemic.

Cheloha was instrumental in developing the system used by Nebraska to distribute vaccine to local health departments and provided guidance on use of those vaccines. He also worked closely with Nebraska’s regional centers, veterans’ homes and the Department of Corrections to prioritize vaccine for target groups in those facilities.

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!

Elder abuse awareness no longer in shadow but sunlight



Kristi Holmes, Staff Assistant in the Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care, welcomes guests to a reception in the State Office Building in Lincoln enhancing elder abuse awareness.

Photo: Madhavi Bhadbhade

According to the DHHS Units on Aging & Adult Protective Services, awareness of elder abuse is no longer in the shadows but seeing sunlight across the state and nation. Some activities promoting awareness include

presentations at senior centers in Aurora, Beatrice, Laurel, and Wakefield. A public service announcement on statewide NET Public Radio and an informational video was shown in Omaha theaters on June 15. The

Crawford Senior Center in the Panhandle collected paper products that were donated to the DOVES Center in Scottsbluff to assist people of all ages. In Lincoln, a reception was held for employees in the State Office Building.

What can you do to prevent elder abuse?

- Keep in contact with older friends, neighbors and relatives.
- Look for signs of elder abuse that include individuals being withdrawn, fearful, anxious or sad.
- Contact your local Area Agency on Aging office to identify sources of support, such as Meals on Wheels that help elders maintain health, wellbeing and independence—good defenses against abuse.
- Learn more about this issue by visiting the [National Center on Elder Abuse website](#).
- If you suspect abuse or neglect of an elderly adult, call the DHHS Hotline at 1-800-652-1999 or your local law enforcement agency.

Saying it with peach-colored roses

By Linda Sparr and Jerry Crisp

Plagued by deteriorating dementia, a veteran living at the Norfolk Veterans' Home (NVH) told a staff member that he wanted to get his wife of many years some nice flowers on her birthday.

"What kind of flowers would you like to get her?" the caring staff person inquired.

"Do I look like a flower kind of guy?" came a quick retort. "Just make sure they're something nice!"

The staff member purchased 25 peach-colored roses out of pocket, arranged them in a vase from her home, and helped the vet sign a card.

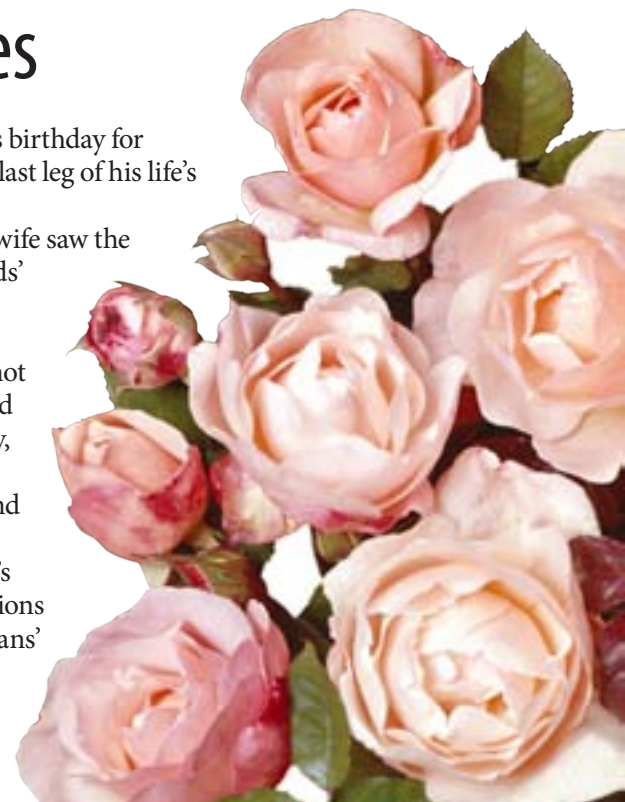
The next day, the veteran entered hospice care at the Norfolk Veterans'

Home. Having remembered his wife's birthday for possibly the final time, he was on the last leg of his life's journey.

That same day when the veteran's wife saw the flowers waiting for her in her husband's room, she was overcome with tears.

Some days are good, some bad, for the veteran, but that special day was not one of his better ones because he failed to recognize her. What she saw clearly, however, is that her husband used a lucid moment to express his strong and abiding devotion for her.

This bitter-sweet story of a veteran's undying love reminds us of contributions of staff members at the Norfolk Veterans' Home and all of the other DHHS 24-hour facilities, whose loving care makes such stories possible.



September Observances

ALCOHOL/DRUG ABUSE RECOVERY MONTH

Join the Voices for Recovery in September!

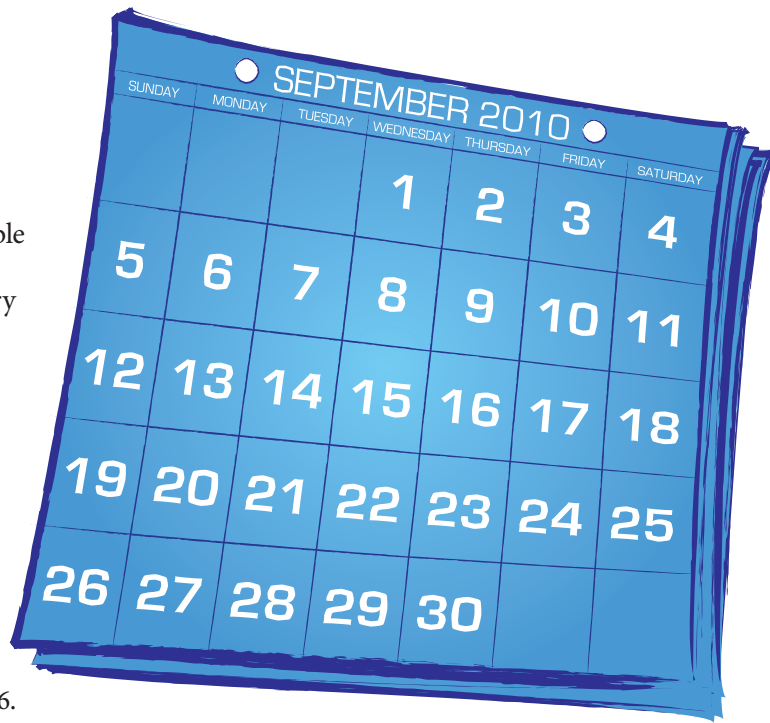
Thousands of Nebraskans are living happy, healthy and productive lives in recovery from substance use disorders. Drug and alcohol abuse and addiction is a public health problem that affects approximately 45,000 adults in Nebraska.

Each September, Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month highlights the gains made by individuals in recovery and helps educate the public about the effectiveness of treatment.

If you or someone you know is struggling with a drug or alcohol

problem, remember that recovery is possible through treatment resources and recovery support programs.

To access vital information about treatment resources or other related information, go to www.dhhs.ne.gov/networkofcare/. The State's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) may also be of help at (800) 666-8606.



TAKE A LOVED ONE FOR A CHECKUP DAY

Take a Loved One for a Check Up day is a national initiative that stresses the importance of getting regular checkups from healthcare professionals to aid in the elimination of healthcare disparities. Minorities suffer disproportionately from cancer, stroke, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, and higher maternal and infant mortality rates.

This day highlights the importance of working together to protect our loved ones from these and other disparities in healthcare. The third Tuesday of September (September 17, 2010) has been designated to observe the day. You are encouraged to attend a community health event, visit your healthcare provider or make an appointment to see a health practitioner on or around the 17th.

NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS



Make Preparedness a Priority!

The terrible flooding in much of Nebraska this summer reminds us that disaster can strike at any time, at any place, and we can never be too prepared for it when it happens.

September is National Preparedness Month—a perfect time to take a few simple steps to help make you and your family more self sufficient and better prepared. Organizers of National Preparedness Month are encouraging all Americans to join the readiness team and truly help themselves, their neighbors, and their communities to be ready.

Some of the things you can do to prepare—like assembling an emergency supply kit and developing a family communication plan—are useful for all kinds of emergencies, including natural disasters and terrorism.

For free emergency preparedness information, visit the Department of Homeland Security's personal readiness website at www.ready.gov, the American Red Cross' site at www.redcross.org, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's web site at www.fema.gov, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.

In their own words

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

Dear **Sheryl McCright** (Service Coordinator, DHHS Intake Center, Omaha):

Thanks for spending 18 years making my life better. You will always mean the world to me.

A Former Service Recipient

EDITOR'S NOTE: **Todd Reckling**, Director of the Division of Children & Family Services, received the following note about Nebraska ranking first in the nation for appropriately denying or terminating SNAP (food stamp) benefits, and fifth in the nation for correctly approving applications and level of benefits.

Dear Todd:

Congratulations to you and your staff for another year of outstanding performance. Keep up the good work!

State Senator Tim Gay

Dear **Ann Wood** (Children & Family Services Specialist, DHHS Grand Island office):

I got a 3.93 grade point average and made the Dean's list. WOOHOO!

I just wanted you to know that I have a lot of respect for you for doing what you do. I know I wasn't the best person in the world when I knew you, but I believe that by sticking with me and not giving up on me, you gave me the chance I needed to succeed and excel in life. Keep up the good work, and I hope you give more kids like me the chance to get where I am today.

A Former Ward of the Court

In their own words

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

Dear **Karen Wegner** (Social Service Worker, DHHS Chadron office):

Over the years you have been an amazing inspiration toward hope. Because of the work you do, people struggling like me to live have hope and a future.

I can't thank you enough. May God bless you for all your efforts.

A Satisfied Customer

Dear **Doug Raney** (Developmental Disabilities Service Coordinator, DHHS Omaha North 73rd St. office):

You are indeed a gift of grace in my life! Thank you for taking the time to provide me with this information, as it's exactly what I needed!"

A Parent/Guardian

Dear **Irene Eckman** (Health Licensing Specialist, Division of Public Health, Lincoln):

I just want to thank you for how considerate you have been to me and my fellow Physical Therapy classmates as we've been taking our board exams. I know you're not required to inform us of results right away, but you've gotten back to us with amazing speed just to ease our worries. It's much appreciated!

A Licensed Physical Therapist

Dear **Lisa Fox** (Social Service Worker, DHHS Broken Bow office):

Thank you for always going above and beyond! You're amazing at your job. It's refreshing to know that some people actually do still care. You're awesome!

Another Satisfied Customer

Please send letters from satisfied customers 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



WINGS OF FREEDOM

Several members from the Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home (ENVH) at Bellevue enjoyed a special event at Epply Airport in Omaha in July—the “Wings of Freedom Tour.” Sponsored by the Collings Foundation out of Stow, Massachusetts, the tour offers an opportunity to see WWII aircraft.

(Left) ENVH veterans were able to get into the aircraft for a close-up look. Shown here by a Boeing B-17 “Flying Fortress” are (L-R) **Richard Ahrends, Dale Murphy, Herman “Stan” Stanislav, Dennis Moon** and **Charlie Baker**. Stanislav is a WWII vet, and the others veterans of later wars.

(Below Left) WWII veteran **Ken Todd** stands beside a B-24 Liberator.

(Below) Dale Murphy, member of the Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home at Bellevue, draws a bead with a machine gun in a Consolidated B-24 Liberator during a “Wings of Freedom” exhibit. *Photos: Sue Sheely*



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.