

# CONNECTIONS

December 2016 VOLUME 16, ISSUE 12

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

## Administration Changes at DHHS Regional Centers

By: Julie Naughton

**Myles Jones** has been named facility administrator for the Department of Health and Human Services' regional centers in Lincoln, Hastings and Norfolk. He starts his new position on Dec.19 and will report to Sheri Dawson, director of the Division of Behavioral Health.

"Myles' vast experience working with federal, state, tribal and local entities and diverse patient bases makes him a great fit for DHHS and this role," said Dawson. "He will be an asset to our behavioral health system as we move toward physical and behavioral health integration."

Jones has spent a career drawing people together. From his work as a grant writer to a teacher in the Omaha Public Schools to his current job as chief executive officer for the Woodrow Wilson Keeble Memorial Health Care Center in Sisseton, S.D., he strives to improve the communities in which he lives.

His duties have included developing, establishing and

directing the implementation and execution of overall policies and procedures for the administration and operations, managing a budget in excess of \$34 million and developing a comprehensive health program annually with tribal councils and the service unit staff.

Born at Offutt A.F.B. in Bellevue, he was raised in Niobrara and attended Santee Public School. He graduated from Wayne State College and later received a master's degree from the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

He is also a proud veteran who spent 15 years in the U.S. Army and the Nebraska National Guard. While on active duty, he was stationed in Missouri, Virginia, Alabama, Oklahoma, Panama, and California.

Philanthropy and his family are two additional sources of pride for Jones. He has six children, three grandchildren, and "a lovely best friend who I call my wife," he said. Jones has volunteered with Rotary Club International, Boy Scouts of America, USDA and Seven Days of Service.

Prior to taking his current role, Jones was health services administrator for the Colorado River Service Unit in Peach Springs, Ariz., where he coordinated Indian Health Service activities with agencies such as the Tribal Councils, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Veterans Administration and the Arizona Department of Health.

**Stacey Werth-Sweeney** who had stepped into this role in an interim basis, will continue to serve as the facility operating officer for LRC and has added the new role of hospital integration officer.

Werth-Sweeney will represent the regional centers in central office planning and will provide consultation and oversight to the NRC accreditation process. The NRC team is excited to begin the accreditation journey and working hard on next steps.



Myles Jones and his family

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

Chief Executive Officer: <b>Courtney Phillips</b>	Medicaid and Long-Term Care Division Director: <b>Calder Lynch</b>
Behavioral Health Division Director: <b>Sheri Dawson</b>	Public Health Division Director: <b>Tom Williams, M.D.</b>
Children and Family Services Division Director: <b>Doug Weinberg</b>	Veterans' Homes Division Director: <b>John Hilgert</b>
Developmental Disabilities Division Director: <b>Courtney Miller</b>	

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CLS Administrator: <b>Kathie Osterman</b>	Graphics and Layout: <b>Judy Barker</b>
Editor: <b>Melissa Lindell</b>	

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

**Phone:** (402) 471-4047  
**Fax:** (402) 471-3996  
**E-mail:** [melissa.lindell@nebraska.gov](mailto:melissa.lindell@nebraska.gov)  
**Interagency mail:** NE State Office Bldg. 3rd Floor  
 U.S. mail: P.O. Box 95026  
 301 Centennial Mall South  
 Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-5026



## Preparing for Heritage Health Implementation

Heritage Health, Nebraska's new health care delivery system, which combines physical health, behavioral health and pharmacy programs into a single comprehensive and coordinated system for Medicaid and CHIP clients, is set to go live on January 1.

Consumers can choose from three plans: Nebraska Total Care, UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Nebraska and WellCare of Nebraska. Those who didn't choose a plan before the first week in December will have one selected for them. However, members can change their health plans at any time within the first 90 days after the start date, and then again each fall during open enrollment. Medicaid members will not have the option to opt out of this program.

"Integration of services means better communication among primary care and behavioral health providers, more opportunities for preventive care, and more consistent, all-inclusive coverage for individuals," said Calder Lynch, director of the Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

"Heritage Health will improve health outcomes and the financial sustainability of Medicaid."

Some individuals will be choosing a health plan who have never selected one before, Lynch noted. The populations that are new to managed care include individuals in the home and community-based waiver programs and individuals receiving long-term care services.

Information about Heritage Health, including frequently asked questions, fact sheets, public events and additional resources are available on the Heritage Health webpage at [www.dhhs.ne.gov/HeritageHealth](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/HeritageHealth).

## Exciting news from HR!

Some exciting news from HR! We're making it easier for you to get your questions answered.

You can now send an email with any questions about payroll, benefits, leaves of absence, employee classification, worker's comp, leave time, paycheck issues, recruitment and selection, learning and development or other questions or concerns to [DHHS.myHR@nebraska.gov](mailto:DHHS.myHR@nebraska.gov).

The goal is to have your questions answered within 24 hours.

This change is part of HR's efforts to be more efficient, consistent, and to provide a high level of customer service, which are all part of Governor Ricketts' priorities for the State of Nebraska.





Courtney Phillips, CEO

## Message from Courtney Phillips, CEO

Each year we see stories of our staff giving back during the holidays. We've already seen several of those on our employee homepage. From food donations, to items for local shelters, to people donating their time, it is easy to see that the spirit of giving is alive and well at DHHS.

If you see your coworkers performing random acts of kindness please share those for the employee homepage or Connections by sending them to Melissa Lindell. You can always give your teammates a shout out on the employee bulletin board as well.

Each holiday always seems more special than the last, and this year is no exception.

My wish for y'all this year is that you can spend quality time with your loved ones and friends this season. Blessings to you all in the New Year, and I hope you enjoy a happy and healthy holiday season.

### Greetings #TeamDHHS:

The close of any year gives us all the opportunity to reflect and plan. We reflect on all the things we've achieved in 2016 as well as the challenges that we faced, and we plan to make the next year an even better one as we strive to reach the goals that we have set for ourselves.

This agency is filled with dedicated and passionate employees who are wonderful examples of what a public servant should be. You are committed to your jobs and being a part of #TeamDHHS, and I'm proud to serve alongside you as we all work to help the people of this great state live better lives.

### Giving Back During the Holidays

**MLTC Program Integrity Unit** donates blankets to People's City Mission

For the past several years, instead of doing an internal gift exchange, the Program Integrity Unit takes up a collection and buys fabric to make several fleece tie blankets to donate to the Mission's Christmas party.

**Melissa Haecker** coordinates the drop-off with the Mission, while **Erica Brooks** shops for and buys all the fabric. **Anne Harvey** also helps coordinate the efforts to make the blankets.

This year the group made 22 blankets to donate to the party. Mission residents get to shop for gifts like the blankets during the party. The group made blankets for kids and adults, with a variety of patterns.

Melissa says to get all the blankets done they just reserve conference rooms and take their lunch hours to tie blankets. They can do anywhere from 2-4 in an hour. They started making the blankets in late September. Melissa says the Mission staff is always grateful for their donation.

Send your photos of volunteer efforts to Connections editor Melissa Lindell for inclusion on the Employee Intranet Homepage.





# Take Care of Yourself This Holiday Season

By: *Melissa Lindell*

The holiday season is one of love, connecting, and giving. We all hope that we can spend time with our loved ones, enjoy a party or two, cook all our favorite holiday foods, and give everyone that perfect gift.

Too often, our best intentions just dissolve into a period of stress and anxiety, leaving us just waiting for the holidays to be over. And then, when they are, we are hit with the post-holiday blues. The days are short, the skies are gray, and many of us find it tough to get out and exercise.

## Challenges

- Many holidays occur during the winter months, when people are already more susceptible to the common cold, flu, and depressed mood.
- Some holidays involve the obligation of spending money on gifts or food.
- Alcohol is typically served during holiday functions which can be a trigger for some.
- Holiday travel can be a major source of contention and stress. Dealing with traffic and the short-temper of other travelers also can be quite challenging.
- Social anxiety may be heightened when we attend parties or functions with large gatherings of people.

## Some Common Stressors in Holidays/Winter

The diagram below shows the interplay of common stress factors on our health during the winter.

### Physical

- Diet and nutrition, physical activity, sleep can all be affected.

### Emotional

- Losses may affect us harder during the winter time.

### Social

- Too much stimulation or a lack of a support network can create an overwhelming sense of loneliness.

- Drinking can be a trigger for some people.

### Financial

- Spending can get out of control.

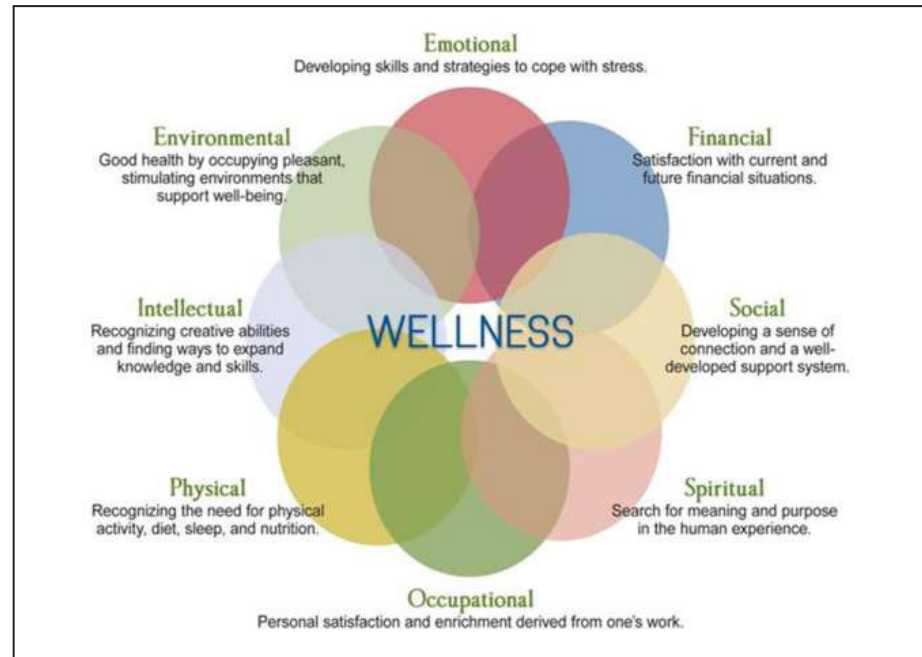
### Spiritual

- Sense of purpose and meaning can be affected.

### Occupational

- Work routines are altered at holidays and some people fear workload pile-up.

Activities like staying close with supporters, exercise, spiritual connection, social contact, and reading can all be tools that help us to stay well during the winter season.



So that we can avoid those feelings of stress and doubt this year, the Division of Behavioral Health has provided some tips for us to start winter well.

There are ways you can practice self-care this winter/holiday season:

- Think about happy winter/holiday memories
- Find a way to incorporate some sort of wellness activity into each day
- Identify people in your life that can provide you with support for the challenges that may come up during the season
- Attend events that you truly enjoy
- Identify potential challenges that may come up and other triggers so you can plan for them
- Plan ahead when shopping and know your limits so you don't blow your budget
- Try to get enough rest each night and avoid oversleeping during the dark winter months
- Find ways to express gratitude each day
- Practice good prevention for colds and flu, such as frequent hand washing

If you use these tips and practice a little self-care this winter, those long, cold nights will be over before you know it and spring will be back with longer days and more sunshine.

Source: Collaborative Support Program of New Jersey Wellness Institute --December 2016  
[www.cspnj.org](http://www.cspnj.org)

# There's Still Time to Get Your Flu Shot

By Judi Yorges

Have you gotten your flu shot yet? It's not too late. Currently, Nebraska is at the sporadic activity level, which means there's still time to get vaccinated, build immunity and stay one step ahead of the flu.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that estimates show that few people get vaccinated after the end of November. But as long as flu viruses are still spreading and causing illness, vaccination should continue throughout the flu season in order to protect as many people as possible against the flu.

Flu vaccine is safe, effective and rigorously tested. Only injectable flu vaccine is recommended this season. The nasal spray flu vaccine should not be used due to concerns about its

effectiveness according to the CDC. The most common reaction people may experience from a flu shot is soreness and redness at the injection site. After vaccination, it takes about two weeks for the body to build immunity.

The CDC recommends flu vaccine for everyone 6 months and older. Vaccination plays a critical role in the fight against the flu. It can reduce flu-related illnesses, visits to the doctor, missed work and school and flu-related hospitalizations.

You can also protect yourself from the flu by:

- Washing your hands often
- Avoiding contact with people who are sick
- Staying home from work, family gatherings and social functions if you're sick
- Covering your mouth and nose when you cough with a tissue or sleeve, not your hands
- Eating healthy and get plenty of rest
- Don't smoke

"There is only one direction for flu activity to go and that's up. Getting your flu vaccine is about more than protecting yourself," said Dr. Tom Safranek, State Epidemiologist for DHHS. "It protects friends and family members with certain health conditions who can't afford to get the flu."

While flu can make anyone sick, certain people are at greater risk for serious complications, and it's extremely important they receive vaccine:

- Young children
- Adults 65 years of age or older
- Pregnant women
- People with chronic lung disease (like asthma and COPD), diabetes (type 1 and 2), heart disease, neurologic conditions and certain other long-term health conditions
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities

Even if you haven't yet been vaccinated and already gotten sick

with flu, you can still benefit from getting the flu shot since it protects against three or four different flu viruses.

For more flu information, visit the DHHS website at:

[www.dhhs.ne.gov/flu](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/flu)

or the CDC website at

[www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu).

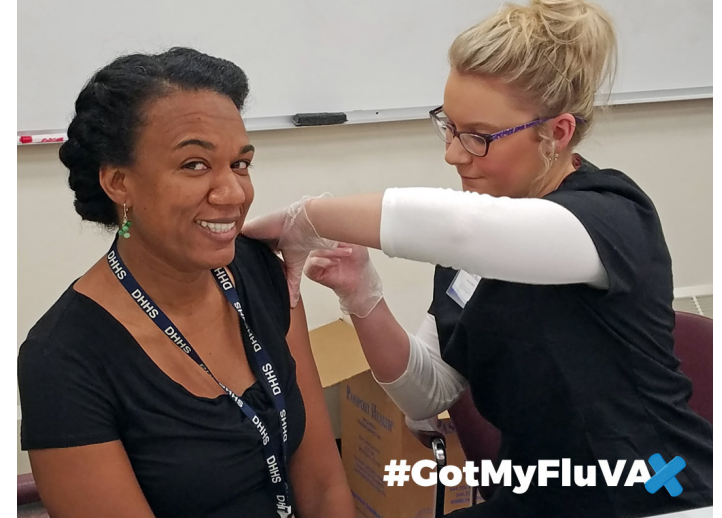
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[www.facebook.com/NeDHHS](https://www.facebook.com/NeDHHS).

If you've got your flu shot, let us know. Post or tweet a photo with the [#GotMyFluVax](https://twitter.com/hashtag/GotMyFluVax) hashtag.



DHHS CEO Courtney Phillips gets her flu shot



Governor Pete Ricketts gets his flu shot

# December 31 is a milestone day for Lean Six Sigma - White Belt Training

By Linsey Sousek, C.L.S.S.Y.B.  
DHHS-Operations

Time is running out for you to take the Lean Six Sigma White Belt training. As we told you in last month's [Connections](#). **All employees must take the basic White Belt training by December 31, 2016.**

The training is part of a structured process improvement model that Governor Ricketts is bringing to state government called the Lean Six Sigma Model. It is being coordinated through the Center for Operational Excellence, located in the Department of Administrative Services, and will provide the state government-wide/enterprise guidance and training needed for agencies to fully engage in process improvement activities.

The Lean Six Sigma model includes five levels (belts) of training and expertise, known as White, Yellow, Green, Black and Master Black Belts.

Again, ALL state employees will take the basic White Belt training by December 31, 2016. While not every area in DHHS will work on specific in-depth projects, Lean Six Sigma will be part of the Nebraska state government culture and it is important for everyone to understand the basic concepts and terminology.

Employees working on specific projects will receive advanced levels of training, working through the five belts, as necessary. Several DHHS workgroups have received Yellow Belt training and our DHHS Operational Excellence team is working on their Green Belt training.

The White Belt training is available through the Employee Development Center (EDC) or classroom training at no cost. At the end of the training you'll have a basic understanding of the Lean Six Sigma methodologies and tools we'll be using to improve our processes. Again, please take the training by December 31, 2016.

As of December 12, 2016, #TeamDHHS has certified:

- 5,095 white belts
- 31 yellow belts
- 4 green belts



To complete the training:

1. Go to <http://link.nebraska.gov> and click on the "Employee Development Center (EDC)" button.
2. Enter your username and password to sign in. If you do not know your username, or need assistance signing in please contact the LINK Help Desk at 402-471-6234 or at [as.linkhelp@nebraska.gov](mailto:as.linkhelp@nebraska.gov).
3. Once signed into the Employee Development Center, type "Lean Six Sigma White Belt" in the search field in the upper right hand corner and press Enter on your keyboard.
4. Once the search results come up, click the title of the "Certification Lean Six Sigma - White Belt" online course, and then click "Request".
5. You will be taken to your transcript. Click "Register" for the course, and then "Launch" to begin the course.

Lean Six Sigma

White Belt Training

Click Here



# Way to Go!

## Veterans' Homes CNA classes produce ENVH Employee of the Quarter

**Becca Lusch** is a Staff Care Tech at Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home. She is Employee of the 3rd Quarter, 2016.

We are highlighting Becca because she is a product of the CNA classes that DHHS started at the Veterans' Homes.

The classes first started in 2013 at the Veterans' Homes and began at the ENVH in 2016. This is a great example of DHHS and the Division of Veterans' Homes growing our own.

This is what was written about Becca in her nomination form:

*Becca is a shining example of the success of the CNA classes that were started at ENVH. Becca took the class and was hired in February of 2016. Her enthusiasm, dedication to quality care and passion for caring for our Veterans is inspiring. Becca has gladly taken on the new challenge of being a staff care tech and she has blossomed in her role. She cares for her members and about her members. Becca has a positive "can do" attitude that is noticed by all. She has been recognized for her dedication to the members, willingness to help, and friendliness to new staff. Becca is energetic and has a great work ethic. She is committed to providing the best member care and works well with others to make sure the members*



*get what they need. In addition, Becca has already taken the medication administration course and passed her test. Becca accepts challenges willingly and succeeds! Becca has demonstrated that she is willing to learn, has a desire to increase her knowledge and strives to do the job better and demonstrates a DHHS Core Competency: Demonstrates self-improvement. Becca's positivity creates a pleasant environment for the members and her coworkers. She is compassionate, and it is evident that she is truly called to work with others. She is a great role model for staff. The entire Motivation unit and facility benefit from having Becca around. Becca embodies the DHHS Core Values and Competencies, and excels in the areas of: Constant Commitment to Excellence, Positive and Constructive Attitudes and Actions, and Support of the Team.*

Congrats Becca!

## Health and Fitness Tips



### Rustle Up a Partner

Source *HealthFitness*

Pairing up for a walk can increase your motivation and make the distance fly by. You don't need to find a formal walking group or post a notice at the gym. Potential partners are all around you. Use a creative approach to entice newbies:

- A buddy. Take your pal to a sprawling car show or large flea market where you'll hardly notice how many steps you're racking up.
- A coworker. Meet for a cup of joe. The catch? You're not going to the office break room but to the café a couple blocks away.
- A loved one. Give your spouse a pedometer and compare your steps each day. Or mail one to your far-away sibling and check in weekly. A little friendly rivalry can become an excellent motivator.
- A neighbor. Go on a local decor or color tour together. Stroll a nearby neighborhood to see spooky decorations or landscaping ideas. Or just take in all the spectacular fall hues.

### Sweet Urge to Splurge

Does ice cream summon you at night or vending machine candy bars call you during the day? Succumbing to your sweet tooth can become your nutrition or weight control downfall. Wean yourself from the urge to splurge by minding these ground rules for knowing when to give in... and when to slap your own hand.

- While going cold turkey is sometimes effective, it could put you on a fast track to failure. Consider gradual cutbacks. Drop from 3 sodas/day to 1 or stash half the candy bar before biting in.
- If the desire to indulge strikes, evaluate emotional triggers — boredom, anxiety, or depression often activate longings. If you recognize why that chocolate cake is soliciting your affections, you might be more apt to shun it.
- Note vulnerable times of day. Caving in to the rich coffee drink before 9 AM is dangerous if you know you'll want another by mid-afternoon. Take a different way to work to avoid that favorite coffee stop. And if late-night munchies antagonize you, say yes to your sweet tooth with a piece of fruit.

# In Gratitude

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



Source: ThinkStock

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

### YRTC-K team

Thank you so much for your help in loading 225 boxes on Honey Sunday. Your crew were very well mannered and energetic! We appreciate your support of the Buffalo County Arc.

**The Arc of Buffalo County**

**Jessica Frank** (Social Services Worker) transferred [the client] to my phone and she wanted to speak to a supervisor. [The client] said that Jessica was absolutely wonderful to talk to and helped her with all the questions she had. She also stated that Jessica put her at ease regarding her case and on-going issues. She said that, recently, when she calls in she is getting workers who will go above and beyond for her and wanted to praise the changes ACCESSNebraska has gone through. She wanted to pass along how great of a job Jessica did with her case today.

**Eric Pettis**  
**Supervisor**

Dear **Courtney Phillips**:

On behalf of the **East Baton Rouge Council on Aging**, I am writing to express my sincere thanks for your (Agency) donation of gift cards in the amount of \$1,170.00 to aid in this time of recovery. Your gift and generosity exemplifies the commitment that we at the East Baton Rouge Council on Aging strive to demonstrate each and every day. Your support and commitment to the Council on Aging is very much appreciated.

Our agency is appreciative of the support we have received from individuals like you during this critical time. With your donation we will provide support to seniors displaced during this disaster.

We, and those we serve, deeply appreciate your generosity and your involvement.

With Appreciation,

**Tasha Clark-Amar, CEO**  
**East Baton Rouge Council on Aging**

### The Omaha CFS Intake Center Team

A resident manager of the **Salvation Army** treatment center stated that he is amazed at how quickly applications are processed and the new and improved services of DHHS.