

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

Changes to the Public-Facing DHHS Website will Improve User Experience

Big changes are coming for the public-facing DHHS website.

According to IT Project Leader **Jen Wolf**, users of the employee website would have noticed a small, preliminary change after the Thanksgiving weekend, when the internal website was moved to the software program SharePoint 2016. They had been on SharePoint 2010.

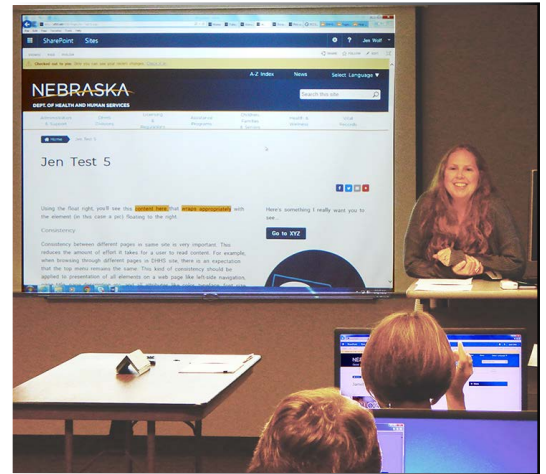
“Both the internal and external websites run on the same platform. Getting the SharePoint upgrade accomplished was one of the hurdles we had before the public

site rollout can happen,” Wolf said.

She said five website developers worked through the holiday to make the change.

“The updated software is more current with technology, specifically with being responsive with mobile technology,” she added.

The public-facing redesign adapts to the reality that mobile devices are growing more common than desktop computers for interacting [\(Article continued on page 2\)](#)



DHHS Web Applications Team Lead Jen Wolf conducts training as the build phase of the new public DHHS Website begins.

Ming Qu Traveled to China to Meet with Universities, Family

Several different stories could be written about **Ming Qu's** month-long travels in China:

The trip was a return to his home town of Yinchuan, in northwest China. It was an adventure with a friend. It was a business trip. It was a gastronomical marathon.

Qu, Division of Public Health, epidemiology and informatics administrator, flew into Shanghai Sept. 14 and departed from the same city -- China's largest -- Oct. 15. For two weeks he was joined by the Dean of the University of Nebraska Medical Center's College of Public Health Dr. Ali Khan, whom he considers a friend, and the Associate Director of UNMC's Asia Pacific Rim Development Program Dr. Zenghan (Hannah) Tong.

The three travelers visited seven different universities in several cities, including Shanghai, X'ian, Yinchuan, and Beijing. Because of the size of the country, they flew from site to site. The whole trip was an exercise in split second timing.

A few days after his return he was still recovering, he said.

“The purpose was to try to build connections with UNMC,” he continued, “to set up a ‘dual program’ of collaboration.” Qu added that could be through splitting time studying in China and the United States, a combination of on campus with online study with Chinese and United States instructors, or through faculty exchange. [\(Article continued on page 3\)](#)

Changes to Public Facing Website (article continued from page 1)

with the web. That means the site automatically scales down to fit hand-held devices or spreads out if viewed on a desktop machine.

Content Project Lead and DHHS Webmaster, **Greg Votava** said further goals for the redesign are to make the site look consistent as well as adhere to state branding. In the past, some pages were outliers, with little visual connection to the rest of the site. The new site will be simple and clear, with information presented in a way that serves the need of users. Navigating the site will follow a clear and consistent path.

“Users almost always need to have a question answered or perform a specific task,” he said. “We are removing the fluff and getting users directly to the content they need.”

“Websites tend to get bloated over time because staff want to add but rarely remove information, and then the most important information gets lost,” Votava added. “That forces people to make a phone call.”

And with handheld screens, it’s even more critical that the important information is front and center.

The process started three years ago with initial designs that took shape in 48 different iterations until designers settled on the final version. Card sorting exercises were sent to approximately 40,000 current website subscribers to get their input on arranging the content. Navigation decisions were based on the highest percentage of agreement, as well as current website analytics.

Content review began two years ago. Web content providers



A sample of what the new public-facing website will look like, courtesy of Greg Votava.

were trained on the new platform in October 2018 and building the pages began immediately after.

Another hurdle was staffing. There were about 130 web content providers who created content that was sent to the webmaster for approval. This team has been reduced to about 50. Each division team will be led by a primary content manager who will oversee division content from a macro level. This primary person will submit directly to the webmaster for final approvals. The goal of this change is to create a more efficient process and more accurate content review.

The site may go live later in the first quarter. Votava is targeting February. Much of the content is set to go, but the site must rollout as a unit.

Wolf said that thousands of web pages and tens of thousands of documents needed to be reviewed and edited, and then those pages/sites built. Public information officers and members of each division are charged with capturing the pages and reviewing them closely. Some divisions are further behind than anticipated.

“The divisions that make up the agency have their day-to-day role to perform,” so little criticism can be made concerning the speed at which the review and build is progressing, she said. “Those folks are just busy with other stuff.”

Jen Wolf has worked for the state of Nebraska for 19 ½ years, Votava for over 21. He also served as chair of the State Webmasters Group from 2004-2006.

Ming Qu's Trip to China [\(article continued from page 1\)](#)

"We had some very intense meetings."

In addition to speaking about the state of public health in the United States (focusing on competencies, curriculum and the challenges that are being faced), they learned what was being done in China.

Qu said that in trips to China about five years ago, he felt that the U.S. was leading in most respects, but that now China has several things to teach the western world.

Qu said Chinese health care has benefited from the fact that the country is heavily centralized. Public health is handled very similarly in each of its provinces. There are 14 "National Basic Public Health Services" that are made available, he said, translating from his computer screen. He added that China is doing particularly well in the category of Chronic Disease Management.

Speaking of translation, only when the group was speaking with officials did Dr. Tong or Qu serve as translator for Dr. Khan. Most of the academics they met with spoke and understood English well.

While there were purely personal and purely academic aspects to the trip, one that lay somewhere in the middle was speaking at the 90th anniversary of the founding of his high school in the city of Yinchuan. He was one of four to speak before 4,000 to 5,000 people. Qu, a 1981 graduate, was the sole representative of the 60,000 to have graduated from the school in nine decades.

The event was held to coincide with the Chinese mid-autumn festival, which is known under several



Ming Qu, with his mother

names in various dialects of China. In addition, similar days are celebrated in other parts of Asia.

"It was quite beautiful," he said.

The group had also visited Fudan University, Qu's college alma mater.

Qu said he was responsible for traveling to China but thereafter didn't need to spend much. Room and board were provided by his hosts.

Of the board, he said, "Too much. Too much. I gained 10 pounds."

Once the UNMC officials had departed for home, the trip became more strictly personal. He saw old friends and his mother, now 92 years old and still in good health.

Qu said he plans to return to China next year.



While the travelers were there, they met with government officials and universities, colleges of public health to discuss the successes and challenges each country has experienced.

BSDC's Solar Cottages Judged Deficiency-free

Call it a big victory for those who care for and support the residents of the Beatrice State Development Center's (BSDC) Solar Cottages. The results of a recent federally mandated inspection showed the facilities were not only in compliance with the required standards, but that the homes earned a deficiency-free report.

"This outcome boosts the morale of the direct support staff and validates the job everyone is doing," said Greg Penner, Solar Cottage Administrator, upon learning of the perfect report. "This is a good validation that the individuals receiving care are receiving high quality service from team members. They're doing a very hard job and they're doing it phenomenally."

Representatives of DHHS' Division of Public Health conducted the recertification survey and complaint investigation on behalf of the Center for Medicaid and Medicare to determine compliance with Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF/IID) regulations. The survey also measured emergency preparedness requirements.

Diana Meyer, Public Health Licensure Unit Program Manager notified BSDC officials of the results of the survey in a letter. "Solar Cottages did not have any standard level deficiencies, much less condition level deficiencies. There are no issues of concern, at all," said Meyer.

The annual unannounced survey includes facility inspections, observations of individuals and checks on programming, plans, documentation and medicine tracking. It measures the entire staff, from direct support, nursing and QDD professionals to managers, physical, occupational and speech therapists and dietitians.

When deficiencies are identified they are corrected through an established plan of correction.

"The goal is to ensure clients are free from abuse, mistreatment and neglect and to ensure the facility

promotes greater independence, choice, integration and productivity for the clients while meeting client health needs," said Meyer.

There have been other discrepancy free surveys at BSDC in the past, but only a handful in the last 20 years.

"Many of the same team members were here when this type of report led to the Feds pulling funding for BSDC," said Penner. "To have this type of survey report now shows how hard everyone has worked to do the right thing and get things turned around."

There were 32 individuals living in Solar Cottages at the time the survey was conducted.



The Solar Cottages had 32 residents at the time of the inspection that found the intermediate living complex deficiency free.

Process Improvement is Making a Splash; Swimming Pool Certification Simplified

In the old process, the year would start with scheduling Pool Operator Clinics, reserving facilities and posting exam dates. Copies of exam dates were made and sent out with pool permit renewals.

Applications were received by mail, reviewed for accuracy and checked for the appropriate fees. Assuming no corrections were needed, the information was entered into an Excel spreadsheet and the applications and fees forwarded to the Licensure Unit, which sent the fees onward to Accounting. Once processed, the applications were filed for storage. An individual from Environmental Health then created an exam packet, obtained a list of examinees and traveled to the exam site.

The DHHS employee would return to the Nebraska State Office Building with the completed exams. The answer forms were reviewed for completeness, sorted, and sent to UNL for scoring. When the results were delivered to the Licensure Unit, they were entered into the Licensure Information System. If an applicant failed the exam, a denial letter was issued, signed, and

sent to the applicant. If the applicant passed, the information was checked off a list, entered onto the form, and was issued a two-year license.

The process involved more than eight employees.

One thousand Pool Operator Certifications were issued in 2016, with 867 issued in 2017.

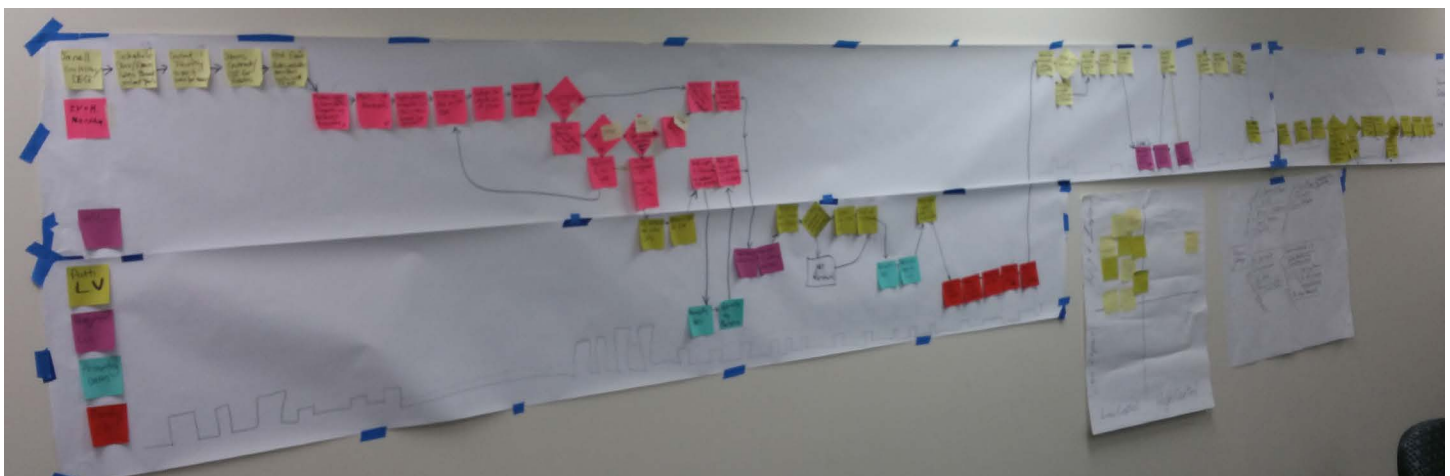
The average lead time for operator certifications could be as long as 68 hours.

A review of the steps, which began in April, transformed the flow of activity. The applicant now registers for the course and submits payment to the Licensure unit. One individual in Licensure has replaced the previous work flow (eliminating 12 hand-offs). This individual enters application data into the Licensure Information System, sends the application fee to accounting, and

provides the applicant with a link to training materials and the online exam.

Once the applicant has taken the exam, Licensure enters the applicant's exam score and the applicant is notified if he or she has passed or failed the exam.

The processing of certifying swimming pool operators was streamlined by cutting 12 hand-offs and making other changes, reducing lead time by 74 percent, processing time by 20 percent and the number of process steps were reduced by 86 percent.



Part of the process of finding efficiencies involves carefully mapping out the current process that was being used. That mapping often uses post-it notes and butcher paper.

North Platte's Water is the Best Tasting



By Mary Poe

Nebraska DHHS Drinking Water Program

For the second year in a row North Platte's water has been voted the Best-Tasting Drinking Water in Nebraska. The 10th annual contest was held November 8th during the Nebraska Section's American Water Works Association (AWWA) annual conference in Kearney. The City of North Platte, that does not add chlorine or any other chemical treatment to the water, is now invited to submit a sample in the "Best of the Best" taste test competition at the AWWA Annual Conference and Exposition (ACE) in Denver in June. Fremont's water, a four-time past winner, was ranked as the second-best this year.

Twelve samples were evaluated on their appearance, scent, taste, and aftertaste. Besides North Platte



Samples of drinking water at the American Water Works Association (AWWA) annual conference in Kearney.

and Fremont, the other samples submitted were from Auburn, Beatrice, Blair, Columbus, Lincoln, MUD, Norfolk, Papillion, Plymouth, and Schuyler.

The judges included Sue Dempsey of Nebraska DHHS;

Marian Feltes of MUD; Dan Freese of Layne and Granite Co.; Eric Melcher of Aurora; Larry Wennekamp of Schuyler; and AWWA's National President, David Rager.

[\(Article continued on page 8\)](#)



Mary Poe presents Chris Holley of North Platte the Best Tasting Drinking Water award.



Mary Poe presents Keith Kontor of Fremont the runner up award in the Best Tasting Water contest.

In Gratitude

The Nebraska Department
of Health and Human Services' mission:

Helping people live better lives.

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

Kudos received in November about the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program, which stages workshops to help families with children who are deaf and hard of hearing:

I thought today's workshop was very successful!

Lynn- you did such a wonderful job and the feedback forms are truly reflective of the information that you shared. You could not have prepared and presented any better. We are blessed to have people like you to make our program successful!

Brenda and MeLissa- I hope it is rewarding to know that you are where it all starts! Thanks for the collaboration and for your passion!

Jennifer- As always thanks for your support, you do so much for our program.

I definitely think this workshop could be presented every year. Jennifer- your son may have the best Deaf Educator in the world!

I hope you all know how amazing you are!

Shelli Janning
Nebraska Hands & Voices
Guide by Your Side
Program Coordinator

A compliment concerning Julie Booze, a Family Focus Coach:

Thank you for everything. I'm so glad that I have you to help me get through all of this. You have been so amazing to me & my family I hope you know how amazing of a person you are!!! Have a good day 😊

An email compliment regarding staff and services at BSDC:

Dear Alecia,

Thank you so much for all of your assistance with the National Core Indicator Survey. As always, BSDC is one of our favorite places to survey. Your team does such a phenomenal job with the residents and programming, and we appreciate them welcoming us to campus.

As a parent of an adult child with I/DD, as well as high medical and behavioral needs, I especially appreciate the care, compassion, and dedication of your staff. It always fills my heart to be on campus and speak with the residents, guardians, and staff. Again, we truly are thankful for all you and your team do and for your support with the NCI survey.

Sincerely,

Rachel H. Ray, M.A.
Munroe-Meyer Institute
University of Nebraska Medical Center

Best-Tasting Water [\(article continued from page 6\)](#)

The contest, organized by the Nebraska AWWA Section's Public Information Committee, is in its 10th year. In those 10 years, there has only been four separate winners, and each of them has won multiple times. The first contest, held in 2009, was won by the City of Lincoln, that went on to tie for third at the national competition.

Lincoln also was named the best-tasting in Nebraska five years later.

Fremont's water reigned supreme for four straight years, from 2010 to 2013, and in 2011 it won the national tasting competition. The other past Nebraska winners are Cortland

(two straight years), and of course North Platte the past two years. In the runner-up category, which was added in 2013, samples have come from Aurora (twice), Auburn, Blair, and MUD, in addition to Fremont this year. One thing is clear – overall, Nebraska has some great-tasting water!



Judges taste samples in the 10th annual Best Tasting Drinking Water contest.

Make the Connection...

DHHS Public Website: www.dhhs.ne.gov

DHHS Employee Website: <http://dhhsemployees/>

DHHS Helpline: 1-800-254-4202, (402) 471-6035 in Lincoln, or via e-mail at dhhs.helpline@nebraska.gov

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Telephone: (402) 471-6585 **Fax:** (402) 471-3996 **E-mail:** dhhs.pio@nebraska.gov

Interagency mail: Nebraska State Office Building, 3rd Floor

U.S. mail: P.O. Box 95026, 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, NE 68509-5026

Communications Director:
Matt Litt

Editor:
Dave Hudson

Graphics and Layout:
Judy Barker

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