

Connections

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

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

December 2010
VOLUME 10, ISSUE 12



Photo: Laura Forker, an adoptive mom

"I'm especially proud of the role we play to find permanent, safe homes for the state's foster children. The success of these efforts shows in the faces of the children and youth who were adopted."

-Todd Reckling

Six-year-old **Julia Redwing**, adopted daughter of Keith and Julia Redwing, celebrates her adoption in Norfolk with some feline face painting and a big grin. See inside for coverage of Adoption Day activities across the state!

INSIDE (Click on headline to jump to story)

The Good Life	3	YRTC-K Rock Garden	10
DHHS Directions	4	Veterans' Home Volunteers	11
Adoption	5	LRC Vigil	12
Front Liner Kareem Sears	7	"In Their Own Words"	13
DD Honor	8	Happenings!	15
Bed Bugs!	9	Holiday Happenings!	17

You can follow DHHS at <http://twitter.com/NebraskaDHHS>

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.

- [Renewed Medicaid Waivers Give Individuals With Developmental Disabilities More Choices](#) December 21, 2010
- [Hello Clean Hands. Goodbye Germs](#) December 3, 2010
- [DHHS Seeks Additional Input on Behavioral Health Plan](#) November 22, 2010
- [YRTCs Help Youth Live Better Lives](#) November 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!



Adoption Day activities were held across the state on or around November 20 last month to celebrate the “Greatest Gift”—a permanent home for every child who needs one.

“All children deserve to grow up in good, safe homes,” says **Todd Reckling**, Director of the Division of Children & Family Services. “When a child cannot be returned to his or her original birth family, adoption becomes the goal to give those children families and homes that are theirs forever.”

About 250 children in foster care are now waiting and looking forward to adoption.

In 2009, DHHS and its partners helped 494 foster care children find permanent homes through adoption.

“Adoption is a joyous event for children and parents alike,” adds Reckling. “It adds vast purpose and happiness to a family’s life.”

Earlier this year, DHHS received a \$637,726 bonus from the federal Administration for Children & Family Services for finding permanent adoptive families for children in foster care.

make the connection . . .

DHHS Public Website: www.dhhs.ne.gov

DHHS Employee Website: www2.dhhs.ne.gov

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Department of Health & Human Services



The Good Life: A reminder of what we all share and hope to provide to our fellow Nebraskans



From left, **Matt Clough**, Chief Operating Officer; **Scot Adams**, Director of the Division of Behavioral Health; **Dr. Joann Schaefer**, Director of the Division of Public Health; **Todd Reckling**, Director of the Division of Children & Family Services; **Governor Dave Heineman**; **John Hilgert**, Director of the Division of Veterans' Homes; **Kerry Winterer**, DHHS Chief Executive Officer; **Vivianne Chaumont**, Director of the Division of Medicaid & Long-Term Care; **Jodi Fenner**, Director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities.

Photo: Bill Wiley

Throughout the year we wear many hats - leader, mentor, director, governor, COO, CEO - but at this time of year the hat we enjoy wearing the most is the one that conveys our sincere wish that you have a wonderful holiday season and a fabulous New Year.

Kerry Winterer, CEO

The world is changing. It's fast-paced and people get their news in bits and pieces. DHHS *Directions* provides quick info about the current work of a Division in each issue.



Todd Reckling, Director

Photo: Bill Wiley

DIVISION OF CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

- Families, DHHS staff, advocates and judges celebrated the joy of adoption with food and fun around National Adoption Day on November 20. Adoptions were finalized in Lincoln, Grand Island, Hastings and Omaha.
- We've completed the move to the new location at 120th and Q for Project Harmony, which uses a child-focused approach so abused children only have to tell their story one time in this safe place. Co-located agencies include DHHS, Project Harmony, law enforcement and the medical community.
- The Division is moving forward with "Families Matter," which is the reform of child welfare/juvenile services. Families Matter evokes our belief that kids grow best in their own homes; if they have to be out of the home, they should be placed with family; children should be reunified or moved to permanency through adoption or guardianship in a timely manner; and that safety for all children is one of our priorities.
- Child support enforcement staff continue to pursue child support to which children are entitled. Recent

- collections include a payment of \$25,454 for one custodial parent and \$5,726 to another through administrative attachment of bank accounts.
- The Douglas County Housing Authority and the Division collaborated to receive Housing Choice Vouchers for families whose lack of adequate housing was a factor in placing children in out-of-home care, or delayed return of children to their family. Youths 18 and 21 years old who weren't wards after age 16 without adequate housing were also eligible for vouchers. The Housing Authority is working with the Division, Nebraska Families Collaborative and KVC to get additional vouchers.
- ACCESSNebraska reached an important milestone on November 15, when the Universal Caseload Management Pilot went live in several supervisory teams in the Southeast Service Area. Over 11,600 cases moved to the new environment that day and as many as 33 Lincoln Customer Service Center workers were logged in at a time to receive calls, with minimal wait times.
- Youth leaving Geneva's Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center said positive things on Exit Surveys when they left on parole: 96% knew their treatment goals while there; 93% said they achieved all or most of their goals; 95% felt prepared to leave; and 91% said they didn't fear for their safety while at the YRTC.



Nebraska Child Welfare and Juvenile Services Reform
Safety • Permanency • Well-being

Celebrating Adoption — The Greatest Gift



(Above) Even a charming little princess can celebrate finding a forever family, as **Kenna Phillips** could happily testify. *Photo: Christine Jones*

“Thirty-one adoptions were finalized in the Lancaster County Courthouse, but it’s always been more about the kids than the number,” says **Deanna Brakhage**, a Children & Family Services Supervisor in the Gold’s Building office, “so we put together a program that highlighted each child being adopted.”

Also on the program were balloon artists, a magician and face-painting.

(Right) Four-year-old adoptee **Mikey Hoss** shakes hands with **Judge Philip Martin**.

Thirty-two adoptions were finalized this year through the DHHS Grand Island office. Last year, 24 children were adopted by 18 families.

Photo: Marge Creason



(Below) For its first annual Adoption Day, northeast Nebraska sent invitations to everyone who finalized adoptions in the past three years to celebrate. Shown are **Tim and Shelly Oltjenbruns** of Norfolk with adopted sons, **Landon**, age 4, and **Payton**, 1½. *Photo: Laura Forker*

Cindy Williams, Children & Family Services Administrator in the Norfolk office, and her adoptive son, 8-year-old **Cole**, were among those celebrating.

“I would also love to adopt a little girl,” Williams says, “but haven’t...yet!”



(continued on page 6)

Adoption: (continued from page 5)



(Above) “Now let me take YOUR picture,” 2 1/2-year-old **Americas Kennedy** seems to say. She’s shown with her adoptive mom, **Amber**. Americas’ adoption was one of 11 finalized in Hastings. *Photo: Lisa Jurrens*

(Right) It all starts with a child, and ends with the greatest gift of all — a forever family. Shown are 4-year-old **Kyla**, who found a new home with **Kelly Cleays** and her husband **Rod** (not shown). Twenty-nine adoptions were finalized at the Scotts Bluff County Courthouse in Gering so far this year. *Photo courtesy of the Scottsbluff Star-Herald*



(Above) **Siara**, who was adopted by her grandparents, **Margaret and John Cramer**—one of 29 adoptions finalized in the Douglas County Courthouse on Adoption Day. *Photo: Machaela Favara*



Adoptive families are needed now more than ever, especially for siblings, older children, or children with special needs. If you want to make a difference in the life of a child, call 1-800-PARENT (1-800-772-7368) to learn more. Pictures and information about some of the children looking for adoptive homes can be found at <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/adoption/children.htm> .

Front Liners

There are thousands of stories to be told about DHHS employees who deliver direct customer services that *help people live better lives*. This is only one of them.



Kareem Sears helps **Donny Valenti**, who lives at 108 Kennedy on campus, get the most out of a video game.

Photo: Barbara McPherson

By Jerry Crisp

Kareem Sears traded in football jerseys for work as a Developmental Technician Shift Supervisor at 106 Kennedy Drive on campus of the Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC). Having played as a defensive end for both the UN-L Huskers from 1995 to 2000 and briefly for the Oakland Raiders, he feels his current job is a comfortable fit.

“Having been coached and mentored as a football player,” he says, “I now coach and mentor staff members.”

Kareem is following a family tradition of service.

“My dad’s retired now, but both he and my mother used to work at the Enid State School back in Oklahoma, and two aunts and a cousin work at a group home in Texas,” he says. “I figure BSDC is my place to be.”

Kareem worked as a direct care provider at BSDC for eight years before moving to his present supervisory job a couple of years ago.

“Although I miss working more directly with individuals served at the facility, I make every effort to interact with both the individuals and staff as much as possible every day,” he says. “It’s important to stay in close touch so that I can do a better job of helping them achieve their goals.”

A daily challenge he faces is remembering everything he needs to do.

“I talk with dozens of people all day long, and when they express their needs and I promise to get back to them, I need to take lots of notes to help me follow through.”

But doing more coaching and mentoring also has its upside.

“Calling on my experience as a direct care provider allows me to help newer staff members feel more comfortable and at ease,” says Kareem.

Kareem recalls many memorable moments from his decade of serving individuals at BSDC, but one individual he worked with in the facility’s Intensive Treatment Services stands out. That individual was a 13-year-old whose aggressive behavior made it impossible for his parents to visit without a staff member present.

“What made the difference was intensive treatment and personal attention that gradually replaced negative behaviors with more positive ones,” Kareem explains. “I can’t tell you how much it meant to me to watch him grow, and how happy his parents were to see the change and be able to visit privately with their son.”

As he was getting ready to go to work one day, someone phoned to say that the individual was leaving to be served in the community sooner than expected. Kareem jumped in the shower, threw on some clothes and maybe bent a speed limit just a bit to get there before his “little partner” left.

“I just had to be there to say goodbye and tell him how much I would miss him,” says Kareem. “I always ask how he’s doing, and reports are that he’s doing fine. That kind of news is the best reward I get from my job.”

Way to Go!

Statewide and national recognitions, honors and awards

Mary Gordon earns
Robert L. Schalock honor



Mary Gordon

Photo: Bill Wiley

The Association of Community Professionals (ACP) awarded **Mary Gordon**, Director of the Nebraska Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities within the Division of Public Health, with the 2010 Robert L. Schalock Award at their October 27th annual conference. This award recognizes an individual whose work and actions have produced a significant positive impact on the lives of persons with developmental disabilities.

The ACP is a statewide organization of professionals in the field of developmental disabilities, whose purpose is to promote development of quality opportunities for all persons with intellectual and other developmental disabilities in the least restrictive community alternative. Its emphasis is on training and information sharing in the field.

Paying it forward



Photo: Cary Udell

Individuals served at the Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC) who were in Lincoln to attend a Stars hockey game in November got a pleasant surprise. Before the game, the BSDC group went to a restaurant, where a young woman and her daughter in the next booth eyeing them intently.

“They seemed to have questions they wanted to ask but never did,” says Recreation Assistant **Cary Udell**.

The young mother and daughter soon left. When the BSDC group finished eating, their waitress approached with some surprising news.

“No bill for you this time,” explained the waitress. “The mother and daughter at the next table paid your bill.”

“This was the best outing I’ve ever been on,” says Udell, “and one I won’t soon forget.”

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!

“Good night, sleep tight, and don’t let. . .”



By Dr. Annette Bredthauer
Public Health Veterinarian, Division of Public Health

“Good Night, Sleep tight. . .” We have all heard this nursery rhyme and can fill in the blank. Another variation sometimes heard is as follows:

Good night, sleep tight,
Don’t let the bedbugs bite.
And if they do
Then take your shoe
And knock ‘em ‘til
They’re black and blue

This sentiment reflects our response to being bitten by the nasty little insects. . . if we can find them.

Bed bugs are reddish-brown, flattened insects, roughly oval in shape. The adults are about half the size of an apple seed. After feeding, they appear more cigar-shaped, and darker. Young bed bugs who haven’t fed yet may be light tan to clear colored.

They prefer to feed on human blood, coming out mainly at night to suck a meal from us while we sleep. Bed bugs usually hide in the area where they can readily come out and take a meal. Their favorite spots are the crevices and seams of mattresses, bed frames, side tables, under loose wall paper, baseboards, anywhere that they can hide.

Once bitten, a person may go several days before the tell-tale itchy red rashes appear. Scratching these bites may lead to more serious skin infections.

Bed bugs have not been linked to carrying any disease; however the mental anguish of being bitten can cause severe psychological distress. In efforts to rid themselves of bed bugs, people have inadvertently set fire to or blown up their houses! To get uninterrupted sleep, others resort to sleeping in their bath tubs.

Bed bug infestations are on the rise. This is attributed to increased numbers of travelers and a more mobile society. Unfortunately, bed bugs are easily transported in luggage, used furniture, and any article with spaces for bed bugs to hide. In multiple unit buildings (dorms, hotels and apartments), they travel through the walls on plumbing and wiring to infest other units.

Bed bugs can go long periods of time without taking a blood meal. They are also resistant to many chemicals with which homeowners attempt to treat them.

Rooms with small numbers of bed bugs may pose a challenge because of their hiding ability. Special bed bug detecting dogs may be brought in to sniff out the bugs’ location before treatment starts. A pest control professional will use specific chemicals, heat treatments, sanitizing, and repeated inspections to ensure that the pests are indeed gone. For more information, go to <http://lancaster.unl.edu/pest/resources/bedbugbrochure.pdf>.

YRTC-K rock garden creates campus centerpiece



Derek Rusher (second from right) and YRTC-Kearney youth work on the campus rock garden.

Photo: A YRTC-K Youth

By Jerry Crisp

When a limestone barrier wall from one of the original buildings on the campus of the Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center at Kearney (YRTC-K) needed to be removed, Facility Operating Officer

Rey Rodriguez

and Teacher

Derek Rusher

offered an idea to Administrator **Jana Peterson**.

Instead of paying to have the limestone taken to a local landfill, how about using it to build a rock garden in the center of the campus square?

“I drew up the design and then Rey Rodriguez and I made a few adjustments,” says Rusher.

Peterson soon approved the plan.

One group of youth supervised by Rusher cleared grass from the area, loaded limestone onto a truck that transported it to the site, and broke up the larger rocks to form the rock garden’s perimeter. Another group put down gravel and planted foliage.



A view of the rock garden with a pondless waterfall in the center that now graces the YRTC-Kearney campus.

“A few local businesses donated plants, shrubs and wild grass, and another business donated pea gravel to fill the perimeter,” Rodriguez explains. “Nearly \$600 from staff paid for the rest. If it wasn’t for the generosity of employees and support from Ms. Peterson, this project couldn’t have been accomplished.”

A water feature was also included in the rock garden.

“A few of the youth and I constructed the basic form of the pondless waterfall with dirt, and then we put a layer of sand over the top of the form to better level the layers made with our shovels. After that, we put down liner, and youth brought rocks for me to lay out.”

Youth served at the facility are pretty proud of their contributions.

“We worked our hardest to help build a magical place where people can sit and read or just relax,” said one. “The rock garden will bring enjoyment and happiness to the community on campus for years to come.”

The youth are also hoping for bird feeders and more seating to be added later on.

“The youth, Mr. Rusher and Mr. Rodriguez did an outstanding job of creating a quiet, soothing place for individuals to go to reflect, share a conversation or just relax,” says Peterson.

Photo: Derek Rusher

Volunteers a vital part of quality of life at DHHS Veterans' Homes



From left, **Charlene Waters**, ALA president, and Jessie Kiser, ALA representative to the Grand Island Veterans' Home, at a local ceremony honoring volunteers.

Photo: Nancy Klimek

By Jerry Crisp

Services provided to the nation's veterans at the four DHHS Veterans' Homes are greatly enhanced by contributions of selfless volunteers. One of those volunteer groups at the Grand Island Veterans' Home (GIVH) recently earned national recognition.

Jessie Kiser, the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) representative for GIVH, accepted the Volunteer of the Year distinction on behalf of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Nebraska from the American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living at its annual convention this fall in Long Beach, California. GIVH nominated Kiser at the state level, and she was selected from among state nominees for the national award.

"The American Legion Auxiliary State of Nebraska group has provided strong support to GIVH members for many years," says GIVH Administrator **Alex Willford**. "In her role as ALA representative, Jessie Kiser plays a vital role in helping identify ways that her

organization can enhance lives of our veterans."

The ALA was also a large contributor to vans donated to the four Veterans' Homes at Scottsbluff, Norfolk and Bellevue, with two vehicles going to Grand Island because it's the largest. Veteran organizations covered 20% of the total cost, with 80% coming from a federal grant helping private, non-profit entities purchase vehicles to aid in transporting persons with disabilities and the elderly.

"The vans are a gift that just keeps on giving," says Willford.

During the past year, 72 ALA representatives completed 1,590 hours of volunteer work at GIVH. Volunteer efforts are also an integral part of services provided at the other three Veterans' Homes.

Other Veterans' Homes have active volunteer programs, too

Last year, the Western Nebraska Veterans' Home at Scottsbluff accumulated 446 volunteer hours serving

such activities as bingo, ice cream socials, special parties and programs, according to Activity Director **Laura Singleton**.

"Through our volunteers and community, we have donations of more than \$17,000," says Singleton.

Last year, the Norfolk Veterans' Home recognized 135 organizations and 285 individuals for their services, according to Volunteer Services Coordinator **Jenny Last**.

"The facility also honored 11 of those individuals for having more than 1,000 hours of service," says Last.

The Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home at Bellevue receives volunteer support from 450 individuals in 55 organizations, which includes many active and retired military personnel affiliated with Offutt Air Force Base.

"Approximately 4,200 volunteer hours have been donated so far this year," says Volunteer Services Coordinator **Patti Howe**, "and we appreciate every one of them!"

We all appreciate the sacrifices our nation's veterans have made on our behalf, and volunteers step forward to express that appreciation in action. If you'd like to do the same, here's who to contact at the four DHHS Veterans' Homes in Nebraska:

Grand Island

Joanne Badura

(308) 385-6252 (ext. 452)

joanne.badura@nebraska.gov

Scottsbluff

Laura Singleton

(308) 632-0321

laura.singleton@nebraska.gov

Norfolk

Jenny Last

(402) 370-3102

jenny.last@nebraska.gov

Bellevue

Patti Howe

(402) 591-4852

patti.howe@nebraska.gov

Remembering with a candlelight vigil



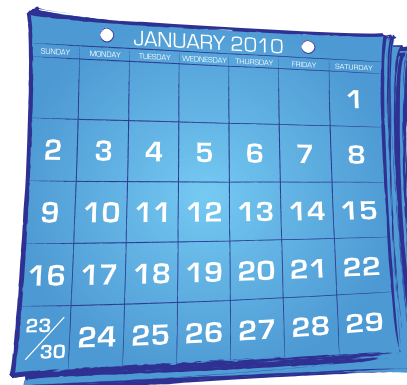
On November 9, a candlelight vigil was held to memorialize 712 souls who lived and died at the Lincoln Regional Center (LRC) since 1880. Haines Cemetery, where the vigil was held, located about one mile from LRC, was the burial site for 252 people whose graves are marked only by numbered stones. During the vigil, the names of those buried at the site were read.

From left, **Carol Coussens de Reyes**, DHHS Office of Community Affairs, Region 3 Consumer Specialist **Tammy Fiala**, and **Sandy O'Meara**, LRC Patient Advocate and Peer Specialist. *Photo: Marla Augustine*

January Observance: Radon Action Month

Most people know that smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer. However, nonsmokers are also susceptible to the disease. Exposure to radon can lead to lung cancer, and is the primary cause for nonsmokers.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that approximately 21,000 lung cancer deaths per year are due to radon exposure. Radon is a colorless, odorless, naturally occurring gas that originates in the soil and builds to dangerous levels in homes. In Nebraska, one out of two radon tests conducted yield elevated levels of radon. This high incidence rate drives the communication efforts of the Radon Program within DHHS.



For nonsmokers, the best way to reduce risk of lung cancer is to test for radon, and if levels are high, to correct the problem. The Nebraska Radon Program offers low-cost radon test kits in an effort to encourage people to test their homes and provides technical assistance to those who need a mitigation system installed.

To purchase a short-term radon test kit for \$5, send a check or money order with your name and mailing address to: Nebraska Radon Program, 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, NE 68509. Or, call

the Nebraska Radon Program office at (402) 471-1005. To learn more about radon and the Nebraska Radon Program, visit their website at <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/radon>.

Good Things Are Happening!

In 2009, the national readmission rate to state psychiatric hospitals was more than 20%.

In 2010, the readmission rate for civil

commitments to the Lincoln Regional Center and all hospitals under contract with the behavioral health regions was 2.6%.

Another indication that behavioral health reform is working with more services available in community settings!

In their own words

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

Dear DHHS North Platte Office:

I would like to thank **Katie Rosenthal** (Social Service Worker, DHHS North Platte office) and all of the employees at DHHS for all their help in previous years. I appreciate the services that were provided and would like to thank you all for the help which in turn helped me get on my feet and find a good job that will provide for me and my daughter.

At this time, I would like to request that my case be closed since your help is no longer needed.

A Satisfied Customer

Dear **Irene Eckman** (Health Licensing Specialist, Nebraska State Office Building, Lincoln):

I just wanted to send a quick email to thank you for everything. You went above and beyond the call of duty. From your patience in explaining that whole process on how to reapply, your compassion on the phone when I did not pass the exam, to your phone call to tell me I passed it.

Your phone calls meant so much to me, as I was pretty anxious to find out the result after having to take the exam a second time. I greatly appreciate it!

A Satisfied License Applicant

Dear **Connections**:

I work out of the DHHS Fremont office, but I have clients in six counties and travel to all of them. Many times I have to ask my clients to go to the local office for help, and every time I tell them to go to the Dakota City office and I call ahead, Case Aide **Danita Owens** and the people at the front desk are so nice and welcoming. My clients are always very satisfied with the help they receive, and that makes me feel better about not being the one there.

When I have needed to go there and use office space, they are always kind and welcoming, and it's greatly appreciated when you walk into an office and know no one. The front office staff rarely get recognized for everything they do, and they are usually the ones to take any abuse when an unhappy client is up front, so I wanted to say thank you to all of them and especially the Dakota City workers!

Amy Wolf

Children & Family Services Specialist
DHHS Fremont office

Dear **Jana Peterson** (Administrator, Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center-Kearney):

On behalf of the Centennial Neighborhood Association, I wish to express our appreciation to you and your staff for allowing the young men of Cottage A3 to assist at the fall clean-up at Centennial Park and to commend you for the quality of the help provided. They were energetic and enthusiastic and carried out the work efficiently and effectively. They were courteous in their dealings with us and the workers from the Kearney Utilities Department and with folks who brought materials in to be disposed of.

In past years, it often happened that the morning of the clean-up there would be a line of cars or pickups five or six deep waiting to unload. Not so this time. Those young men were unloading those vehicles so fast that there was never a waiting line. They had the big blue dumpsters filled up almost faster than the city could haul them away.

We do our clean-up twice a year in the fall and spring and would be more than happy if you would allow some of your young men to assist us in future clean-up activities.

Lonnie Kvasnicka

President, Centennial Neighborhood Association
Kearney, Nebraska

In Their Own Words: (continued from page 13)

Dear Amy Langan (Forensic Scientist, State Lab, Division of Public Health):

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to present at the annual Police Officers' Association of Nebraska (POAN). Your presentation provided good information that was pertinent to our membership. I heard many good comments from attendees about it.

Unfortunately, not everyone who would have liked to attend your presentation was able to because of other breakout sessions that were going on. However, many attendees visited with some of those who did not attend in order to become more informed on your topic, so your information wasn't entirely restricted to those who sat in on your presentation.

Jim Peschong
Past President, POAN

Dear **Alvin Zimmerman** (Social Service Supervisor, DHHS Lexington office):

I wanted to let you know about a very positive experience I had with your worker, **Marnie Carr** (Social Service Worker, DHHS Lexington office). I had called her a while back for some assistance with a Medicaid case, and she was very nice on the phone and willing to work with me and the family. When I spoke with her today, she was again very nice and remembered talking about the case. She has excellent customer service and has the family's best interest in mind.

It is so nice to work with caseworkers like Marnie. I don't know if you do any sort of recognition or kudos, but I just wanted to let you know about my experience with Marnie.

Meghan Kissel
Promotora/Community Outreach Worker
OneWorld Community Health Center, Inc.
Omaha, Nebraska

Dear **Scott Hodgen** (Child Support Enforcement Worker, 220 Building, Lincoln):

Thank you for helping me by taking that call that was referred to us by Troy Reiners (Program Director, Nebraska Child Support Payment Center) through the Nebraska Attorney General's office. I figured if anyone would be able to help me, it would be you.

Tanya E.S. Rhodes
Accountant, CSE Finance

Dear **DHHS Webmaster** (Communications & Legislative Services):

I have to commend the programmer who designed the ACCESSNebraska application to automatically insert a dash after the first three digits of the social security number were entered and after the next two numbers were entered. This is a very small point, but it's the small things in life that count. You can sit on a mountain, but you can't sit on a tack. That shows attention to detail and precision on the programmer's behalf.

A Satisfied DHHS Web User

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

2010 YRTC-Kearney “Nohtaram”



“Nighthawk” band members include two YRTC-Kearney employees. From left, **Terry Nelson**, **Irv Nelson**, who works in the YRTC Maintenance Department, and **John Ross**, YRTC Basic Education Teacher.

Photo: Richard Wetjen

Youth and staff at the Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center-Kearney walked or ran a total of 388 miles during October’s “Nohtaram” (“marathon” spelled backward)—the equivalent of walking to Omaha and back or hiking to Denver!

According to Recreation Manager **Richard Wetjen**, “If a conservative average of eight group members per group and two staff members walked, one could easily reason that a total of 3,880 miles were covered.” Out of the 14 youth

groups that participated, 11 completed the 26.2 mile marathon. A total of 108 youth and six staff members received “Marathon YRTC” shirts for their efforts.

The band “Nighthawk” and a barbecue topped off the event. According to Administrator Jana Peterson, the event was attended by the youth, three advisory board members, 45 staff and several former employees.

Happenings:
(continued from page 15)

YRTC-Kearney hosts chili cook-off



(Above) Judges at the Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center-Kearney deliberate on which chili brew earns which honor in special categories. From left, **Justin Henne**, **Dan Nichols** and **Rey Rodriguez** (not shown, **LaDene Madsen**).

(Below) Claiming victories in the chili competition are (left to right): Most Original: 1st place **Bob Dworak** (not shown), 2nd place **Tracy Carpenter** and West Kearney High School Principal **Tony Kleidosty**; Most Creative: 1st place **Angel Casillas** (foreground), 2nd place **Drew Zutavern** (behind); Best Overall: 1st place **Bob Dworak**, 2nd place **Angel Casillas** and **Aaron Adams**; Hot N Spicy: 1st place **Aaron Adams**, 2nd place **Dr. Mindy Abel**; Sweet: 1st place **Brad Stolcpart**.



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.

Holiday Happenings!

Photos spotlighting DHHS activities around the state



SWEATERS GONE WILD!

DHHS employees had a little fun with their wardrobes on December 10 and celebrated the first “Funky Sweater Friday” in style. We received photos of employees from across the state sporting some pretty outrageous sweaters and ties. Some people we could identify, but many, like the ones pictured here, preferred to remain anonymous. Thanks to all of you who made our first “Funky Sweater Friday” a success! Have an idea for something fun we could do in the future? Let us know through the bulletin board.

Photo: Leah Bucco-White

SPIRIT OF GIVING

DHHS employees (left to right) **Jennifer Kleewein**, **Laura Davis** and **Amy Redden** are boxed up for a good cause. These and four other DHHS employees in the North Platte area recently braved 24 degree weather to walk/run in the eighth annual 5K Jingle Bell run. Proceeds from the run went to the American Red Cross-Mid-Plains Chapter.

There was another special tie in to DHHS as well. This year the run was dedicated to DHHS employee **Annette Shafer’s** brother-in-law, **Christopher Jarvis**, who died this year.

The holiday spirit remained strong this year at DHHS. We featured many stories on the



Employee Homepage about you and your co-workers spreading holiday cheer. Just in case you missed one, we put them

all together in one place and included a link under “DHHS in the News.”