

# Connections

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

December 2011  
VOLUME 11, ISSUE 12



"Keep Beatrice Beautiful" donated this new (well... recycled) park bench to BSDC. BSDC was recognized for efforts in recycling, energy efficiency and litter pick up. May 2011, page 11. ▼

2011 was a year to remember at DHHS. This special issue features photographs found in *Connections* and on the employee website throughout the year.



James, a member of the ENVH, is seen here with Jeanie, an RN. Their purple "friend" was a Valentine's Day surprise from the Papillion-LaVista Kids Club. March 2011, page 2. ▼



Julia Redwing, Norfolk, was the face of adoption day 2010 and one of our favorite photos last year. See pages 4-5 for coverage of 2011 Adoption Day activities across the state. December 2010. ▼

Click on arrow on photo caption to go to each issue -  
or click here to go to *Connections* website. ▼

## Stay Connected:

DHHS now on [twitter](#), [facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) .

## 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 soundbites issued with releases.

[Happy Holiday Tips](#) *December 15, 2011*

[Gov. Heineman & Dir. Fenner Announce BSDC's Fourth Federal Certification](#) *December 15, 2011*

[Stay One Step Ahead of the Flu](#) *December 5, 2011*

Go to DHHS in the News on the Employee Homepage for links to Omaha World-Herald and Lincoln Journal Star articles involving DHHS program and services.

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

### **make the connection . . .**

**DHHS Public Website:** [www.dhhs.ne.gov](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov)

**DHHS Employee Website:** [www2.dhhs.ne.gov](http://www2.dhhs.ne.gov)

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

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Division Director:  
**Scot Adams, Ph.D.**

Children and Family Services  
Interim Division Director:  
**Scot Adams, Ph.D.**

Developmental Disabilities  
Division Director:  
**Jodi Fenner**

Medicaid and Long-Term Care  
Division Director:  
**Vivianne Chaumont**

Public Health Division  
Director/Chief Medical Officer:  
**Dr. Joann Schaefer**

Veterans' Homes Division  
Director:  
**John Hilgert**

Chief Operating Officer:  
**Matt Clough**

*Connections* is published monthly for employees of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services by Communications & Legislative Services (CLS) in collaboration with the Graphics & Layout Unit in Support Services:

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## About the Cover:

### Year in Review - 2011

This special issue of *Connections* features photographs from past issues and from the DHHS employee website.

When possible, we've linked the photos to the issue of *Connections* where they first appeared. That way, if you missed the story the first time, you've got a chance to read it now.

#### **Get in on the *Connections* conversation!**

Let me know what you think about this issue and what you'd like to read about in the future. We're always looking for stories and photos to use in *Connections* and on the employee homepage. Send them my way when you get a chance. ([Dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov](mailto:Dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov)) It's a good opportunity to share stories and photos with your coworkers across the state.

#### ***Connections* really is a team effort.**

Thanks so much to all of the many DHHS coworkers who sent photos and wrote articles throughout the year. It's one way we can begin to cover some of the great work DHHS employees are doing around the state.

Special thanks, also, to graphic artists **Judy Barker** and **Robby DeFrain** for their creative ideas and layouts for *Connections*.

### HIGHLIGHTS

(Click on headline to jump to story)

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

## Editor's Note:

In keeping with our "Year in Review" theme, CEO Kerry Winterer shared the following message in a recent email to DHHS employees.

By Kerry T. Winterer, CEO

This is the time of year people normally reflect on the past year (think holiday letters) and look forward to the New Year (think resolutions). I'd like to share some work-related thoughts about this.

Thanks to you, the Department has realized many successes this past year but unfortunately, what we tend to remember are the unflattering headlines. In reflecting on 2011, I'd like you to focus on the quality of the human connections you've made and the people who have been helped.

These stories don't make the front page of the newspaper but the people you help and interact with tell an important story. These excerpts are from real people and represent contacts within every DHHS division:

- "We want to take this time to thank you for all you did for mom."
- "The training you presented last week was very well done... Thank you for sharing your expertise."
- "Wow! What a great experience we had touring YRTC. Such a great life and career exploration experience for these kids."



Photo: Bill Wiley

- "Thank you for your assistance getting my license. I appreciate your professionalism and the manner in which you interacted with me."
- "Your efficiency and advice yesterday and today are much appreciated. You are awesome to work with and I look forward to seeing you again."
- "I trust her with everything that I say because she understands exactly what I'm going through."
- "Thank you so much for your assistance recently with several of my hospice clients."
- "Thank you for listening, understanding and helping me."

- "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 personally wanted to take time to thank the wonderful people who helped me."
- "I thank you not only for your time, caring and work this year but for what you do with all of the youth you encounter and their families. It's amazing really, you change people's lives every day and give them hope, encouragement and guidance."
- "You are indeed a gift of grace in my life!"
- "We would like to thank you for the exceptional care you gave our father and compliment you all for the beautiful and extremely well-run facility."

You can tell these come straight from the heart and seem appropriate to share at this time of year. Please remember these as you think about New Year resolutions and your work life, and the incredible difference you can make in people's lives, whether as a one-time connection or a longer-term life-changing event.

Thank you for everything you've done this past year and for what you do every day; I wish you the very best this Holiday Season and warm wishes for the New Year.

# Adoption Day Celebrations Across the State

## 100 Adoptions Finalized, Many More Celebrated during Special Festivities

Adoption Day reminds us that there is always a need for loving, supportive, safe and permanent homes for children. There were 264 state wards adopted in Nebraska between Jan. 1 and Sept. 30, 2011. An additional 100 children were adopted during Nebraska Adoption Day celebrations in November and December of this year: 59 in Lincoln, 32 in Omaha, three in Hastings, and six in Scottsbluff.

The following communities sponsored adoption celebrations this year and in year's past: Grand Island, Hastings, Kearney, Lincoln, Norfolk, Omaha, and Scottsbluff/Gering.



Two new Nebraska communities held Adoption Day celebrations this year: Fremont, with Judge Ken Vampola and North Platte, with Judge Michael Piccolo. In an interview with the *North Platte Telegraph*, Judge Piccolo said participating in the adoption day celebration was one of the best parts of his job.



In Fremont, Judge Ken Vampola took an opportunity to raise awareness of the needs of older children. He told a story about one state ward, now 16, who is still longing for a permanent family. Judge Vampola also thanked the parents in the room and expressed his great appreciation for all of the local Health and Human Services workers who contribute positively to the lives of the children being celebrated.



Adoption day has become a celebration of every child who has gained the permanency that all children deserve. It is the celebration of the creation of a new family and of all of those individuals within a community who work hard every day to ensure that Nebraska children have safe, permanent homes.

Judges also use the celebration as an opportunity to thank adoption specialists, caseworkers, CASA volunteers, court employees, attorneys and others who become a part of these families during the adoption process.



Haley, Cierra and Aaron Brown , Hastings

In the end, Adoption Day is bigger than just the balloons, cakes, and games. It is a time for highlighting the joys of forever families, the need for foster parents, and the good work of caring people within and related to the court system. Additional children have been placed in adoptive homes, but there are still more than 250 Nebraska children who are waiting for adoptive families.

The Judicial Branch website hosts an Adoption Day webpage with links to public information on the celebrations: <http://www.supremecourt.ne.gov/administrative-offices/adoption-day/adoption-day.shtml>

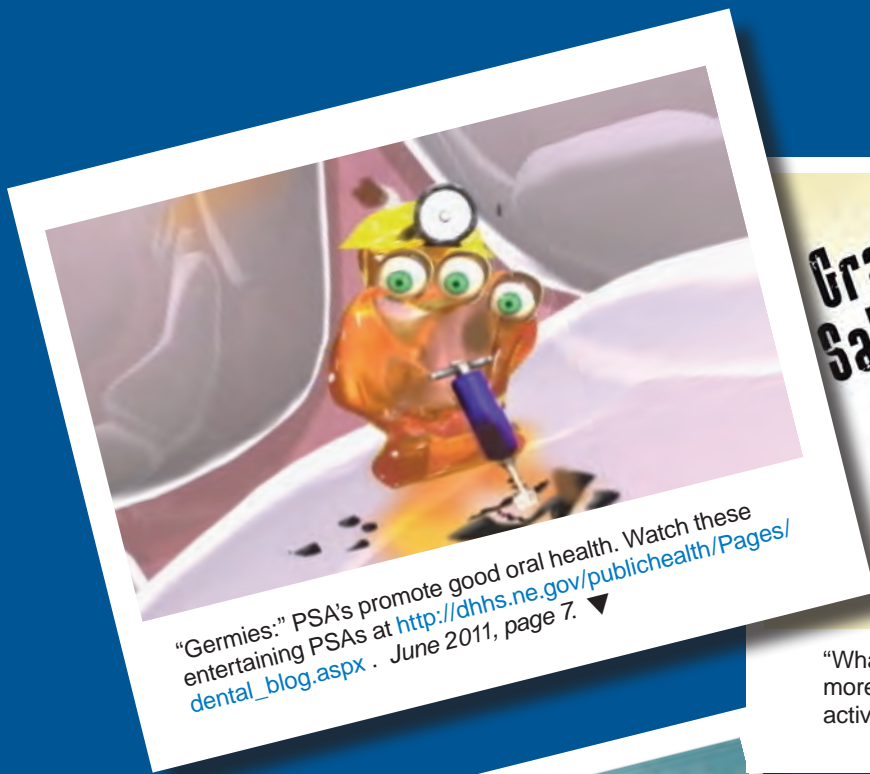
Our thanks to Janet Bancraft, Nebraska Supreme Court, for her help in coordinating and promoting these special adoption events across the state and for providing the information above through the Nebraska Judicial News. Special thanks, also, to Lisa Jurrens and Kari Kraenow for sending us photos.



Norfolk Adoption Day  
Nov. 19, 2011

# The Year in Review

DHHS employees promoted a variety of health and wellness campaigns across the state. Here are some we featured in past issues of *Connections*.



"Germies:" PSAs promote good oral health. Watch these entertaining PSAs at [http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Pages/dental\\_blog.aspx](http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Pages/dental_blog.aspx). June 2011, page 7. ▼



"Whatcha Doin" campaign encourages teens to eat more fruits and veggies and to get more physical activity in fun and unique ways. May 2011, page 5. ▼



Tobacco Free Nebraska launched new campaigns throughout the year. This is one of the billboards promoting the Nebraska Tobacco Quitline to help Nebraskans quit tobacco for good. **Nebraska Tobacco Quitline: 1-800-784-8669.** August 2011, page 7. ▼



DHHS' "Defend Against Diabetes" campaign raises awareness about diabetes and ways to prevent it. The website promoted on this billboard is interactive with practical, easy-to-use strategies for diabetes prevention. ▼

Click on arrow on photo caption to go to each issue - or click here to go to *Connections* website. ▼

# The Year in Review

Improving services to children and families through Families Matter and ACCESSNebraska continue to be top priorities for Children and Family Services.



New Families Matter team focuses on child welfare and juvenile services efforts. *August 2011, page 8.* ▼



DHHS celebrates the opening of the Fremont Customer Service Center. By 2012 DHHS will have four Customer Service Centers: one in Lincoln, Fremont, Lexington and Scottsbluff. *May 2011, page 10.* ▼



The Families Matter website was updated in 2011 so it's easier for people to use and navigate. *August 2011.* ▼



Staff began moving into the new Fremont Customer Services Center in March 2011. Read more in the *May Issue of Connections, page 5.* ▼

Click on arrow on photo caption to go to each issue - or click here to go to *Connections* website . ▼

# New Employee Orientation: New Look, New Spirit

By Carol Ertl and Mary Osborne

Every year we bring approximately 1,200 new employees into our organization. Recruiting, developing and retaining excellent employees are critical steps to achieving our mission.

An important part of developing and retaining quality employees is to start them out in a way that sets them up for success. Research shows that how new employees are welcomed and orientated contributes to a sense of belonging, purpose and value. All of this contributes to an employee's willingness to stay with an organization.

Starting Jan. 1, every new employee will be welcomed to the Department by attending "New Employee Recognition & Orientation." Our goal is that every new employee:

- feels welcome;
- sees himself or herself as a part of a great organization with six diverse divisions in service to all Nebraskans;

- understands his or her place in the organization; and
- is set up for a successful career here.

In their half-day training, every new employee will receive a welcome, a review of DHHS and each of the Divisions, orientation to DHHS' Values and Core Competencies, career opportunities, and tips on how to be a successful employee. Following this, an entire half day will be devoted to "Serving People with Excellence" customer service training.

New employees will continue, as always, to receive orientation and training to their specific job assignment through their supervisor, facility & area orientation.

Setting new employees up for success in their new jobs can make a difference in how they serve others and how satisfied they are with their work. Satisfied, successful employees are our best recruiters and are much more likely to stay.

## Leave Balance Tracking Tool Available



By Emily Walter, Human Resources and Development

This is just a reminder that the HR15 leave tracking spreadsheet is available on the HR&D website at [http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/hur\\_yearly\\_leave\\_records.aspx](http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/hur_yearly_leave_records.aspx) for employees who wish to use it. The HR15 spreadsheet is a tool to help employees keep track of their vacation and sick leave usage during the year.

Please keep in mind that NIS/EnterpriseOne is still the official record of your leave. That means you need to reconcile your spreadsheet against your pay stub periodically. Now is a great time to do that! Your beginning balance for 2012 for vacation and sick leave should match the balances showing on your December 28th, 2011 pay stub.

If you have any questions about your leave balances, please contact your Human Resources Representative. [http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/hur\\_pb\\_contacts.aspx](http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/hur_pb_contacts.aspx)

Thanks!



# Way to Go!

## Employee Recognition - Years of Service



The October issue of *Connections* featured DHHS' employees and supervisors of the year along with the many, many DHHS employees who celebrated special years of services - *October 2011* ▼



In Beatrice, Debra Heist (center) of BSDC, received her 40-year service award. *October 2011*. ▼



Loetta Raatz (right) retired in 2011 with an amazing 65 years of service to DHHS. Reead her story in the February issue of *Connections*, pages 4-5. ▼



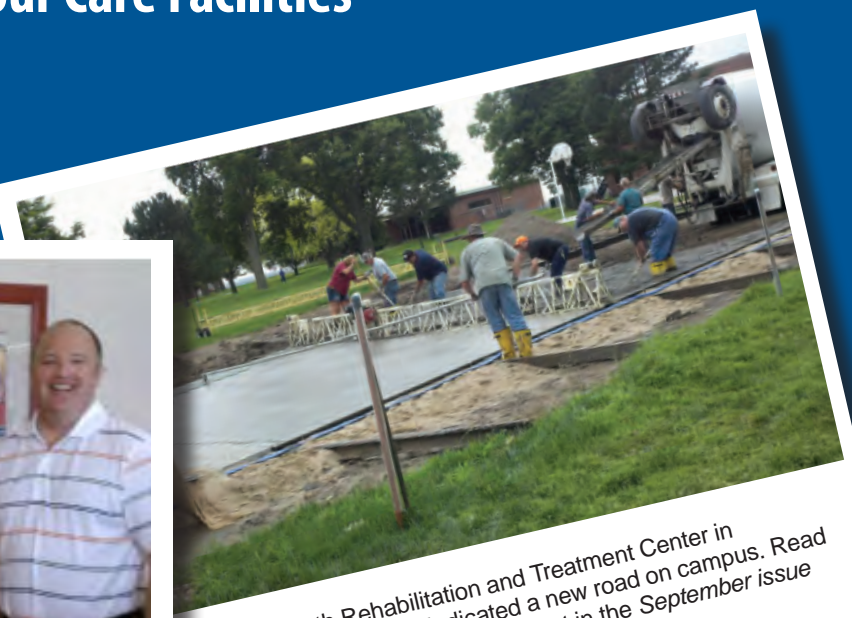
There were so many statewide and national recognitions, honors and awards that went to DHHS employees throughout the year. This award was presented to Suzi Skinner for Outstanding Performance in Claims Collections. *September 2011, Page 8*. ▼

Click on arrow on photo caption to go to each issue - or click here to go to *Connections* website. ▼

# Representing DHHS" 24 Hour Care Facilities



BSDC friends and families celebrated progress toward regaining federal certification. *April 2011, page 6.* Progress continues as the fourth of five parts of the center was recently certified. ▼



The Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Kearney built and dedicated a new road on campus. Read more about this amazing project in the September issue of *Connections*, page 5. ▼



Eastern Nebraska Veterans Home celebrated the ground breaking of the Legacy Veterans Memorial Garden. *July 2011, page 2.* ▼



Congratulations to the Nebraska Youth Academy at the Hastings Regional Center for its 100th General Educational Development (GED) graduate. *May 2011, page 11.* ▼

Click on arrow on photo caption to go to each issue - or click here to go to *Connections* website. ▼

# From Around the State



The power of paws: Bob Schnuelle and pal Bella at the Grand Island Veterans Home. *August 2011, page 2.* ▼



Recognizing the contributions of the many people who volunteer, Dan Scarborough, Administrator, YRTC in Geneva, presents an award to Marilyn Christiany (at the podium) who has volunteered there for 43 years. *May 2011, page 10.* ▼



Volunteers painted an incredible mural of a peaceful farm scene at the Norfolk Veterans Home. *July 2011, page 5.* ▼



DHHS employees from Behavioral Health and other divisions walked toward wellness at the Capitol to promote wellness for people with mental and substance use disorders. ▼

Click on arrow on photo caption to go to each issue - or click here to go to *Connections* website. ▼

# Performance Evaluations Add Values, Core Competencies Component

Some of you may have already been evaluated on DHHS Values and Core Competencies. However, for those of you who haven't, beginning in 2012, everyone's performance evaluations will include an assessment of how you demonstrate these behaviors. If you have any questions about these expectations, please talk with your supervisor.

## DHHS Values and Core Competencies

### Values

#### **Constant Commitment to Excellence:**

Takes timely action in regard to tasks or information; works to eliminate mistakes; looks for, and embraces, opportunities for organizational improvements; actively seeks to provide prompt, efficient, and courteous service; shows initiative.

#### **High Personal Standard of Integrity:**

Avoids any impropriety, bias, or conflict of interest; follows through on commitments; is truthful; shows good judgment in decisions made.

#### **Positive and Constructive Attitude and Actions:**

Maintains constructive communication with others; supports co-workers, customers, and clients; expresses appreciation for the efforts and work of others; is constructive and helpful.

#### **Openness to New Learning:**

Open to new ideas and trying new ways of doing things; open to the idea that a given view or opinion is often made better by the input of others; open to the challenge of unfamiliar tasks and problems.

#### **Dedication to the Success of Others:**

Aids in the growth and success of colleagues; treats all people with respect and dignity; views the success of the whole as a personal success; gives the assumption of good intent to others.

### Core Competencies:

#### **Demonstrates...**

#### **Responsibility & Accountability:**

Cares for and maintains equipment/facilities; conserves supplies and funds; takes responsibility and is reliable for completing assigned tasks; acknowledges and corrects mistakes; adheres to the expectations of his or her supervisor.

#### **Professional Composure:**

Demonstrates calm, dignity and self control under pressure; defuses situations with empathy and respect.

#### **Effective Interpersonal Relationships:**

Works to gain the trust of others; demonstrates courtesy, and civility; is open and transparent with tact; is sensitive and attentive while doing active listening; promptly and effectively deals with conflict; shares opinions while respecting the differing opinions of others.

#### **Productive Communication:**

Demonstrates good oral, written, and listening skills; contributes to effective meetings; clearly and accurately shares information.

#### **Support of His or Her Team:**

Shows respect for team leadership; promotes a friendly climate, good morale, and cooperative team relationships; values all team members.

#### **Self-Improvement:**

Participates in training and development opportunities; welcomes new learning and the challenge of unfamiliar tasks; seeks to do the job better.

#### **\*Motivating Others:**

Inspires, motivates, and guides others toward accomplishing their work; gives recognition for contributions.

#### **\*Developing Others:**

Clearly defines expectations; invests time and effort to improve performance; knows all direct reports and recognizes unique skills and temperament of each; uses an array of development tools; links individual performance to organizational goals.

*\* for Supervisors*

# In their own words

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

**Corinne Jensen**, Administrative Assistant, Hastings Regional Center, sent the following message from a Youth Security Supervisor about a former HRC client.

A client that was with HRC earlier this year and left after a couple of months because he turned 19, called saying that he promised to call if he was doing good. He reports that he has a job driving a truck for a company in Omaha, is making a good salary and has two kids. He says that he is "through with the gang life" and will not go back to it. He plans to finish his GED and contacted Mr. Baisinger, Principal, Nebraska Youth Academy, for direction.

**A Former Client Grateful for the Services He Received at HRC**

**Donna Brakenhoff** (Staff Assistant, Medicaid & Long-Term Care),

Thanks Donna. It has been a great experience to work with you. I appreciate your speedy response and willingness to assist. You have a great 'take care of it attitude.' Thanks for all that you do.

**A Thankful Colleague from One of DHHS' Partner Agencies**

**Jeanette Hastings** (Social Services Worker, Norfolk),

Thank you for your sympathetic card and words at the loss of our son. Thanks even more for all of your help in the last few years and for having a "hearing" ear. It was always appreciated.

**Grateful Parents**

**Derek Rusher**, teacher, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center – Kearney, **David White**, Youth Security Supervisor, YRTC-K and YRTC young men.

Thank you for helping with the rock removed at Cambridge Court. We appreciate your hard work and dedication to completing the project. I hope the plants we gave you are thriving on your campus. I will not hesitate to seek your assistance with other projects in the future. Good luck to each of you with your future endeavors.

**Executive Director,  
Cambridge Court, Assisted  
Living Community**

**Cindy Dorcey** (Child Support Enforcement Worker, Lincoln) received the following phone message:

Cindy is my CSE contact, and she was able to do something that others have not been able to do. I was able to remove my son from the Medicaid program because Cindy got me a copy of my son's proof of insurance from his father located in another state. His father never provided me with the proof I needed, and Cindy was able to get the insurance card from the CSE office in the state where he lives within a matter of weeks.

**A Grateful Client**

**Steve Huffman**, (Youth Counselor Supervisor, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center – Kearney) staffed a booth at a recent Career fair at the University of Nebraska in Kearney. Here's a thank you from a person who visited the booth.

It was a pleasure being able to speak with you at the Career Fair at UNK. Thank you for your time and for answering the questions that I had. It was helpful.

**From a Student of Psychology and Social Work**

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.

Dear **Linda Aadland** (Services Coordination Supervisor, Omaha),

I am writing you upon the death of my brother, who, born with developmental disabilities, had the good fortune to be born and live in the State of Nebraska.

His social worker for a number of years and up until he died, was **Pyper Lowery** (Service Coordinator, Omaha). I cannot say enough about what an asset she is to your office. We always knew if there were questions about anything that an email to Pyper would be answered within a day. She was there for us every step of the way with good advice and suggestions and support. I never doubted she would move us in the right direction. We will always remember her with great affections. You do not find dedicated people like Pyper every day.

Like many with developmental disabilities, my brother was determined to make the most of what he had, and he was able to do that with the help of the State of Nebraska. Thank you for that.

**A Grateful Sister**

The same client had these nice things to say about **Kellie Boury**, (Service Coordination Supervisor, Omaha):

It is hard to put into words what a wonderful resource Kellie was for my brother. Not always knowing how things worked, we frequently relied on Kellie to help. She was always very knowledgeable and was able to help us navigate when there were problems. Our entire family grew to respect and care very much for her. My brother was always treated with respect and dignity, and he counted her as one of his best friends. She never let us down or made us feel marginalized. She was warm and reassuring during this journey with my brother and especially in his last few months of life. We will be forever grateful to this wonderful lady.

In closing I would like to thank the State of Nebraska and the Developmental Disabilities department for everything they did for him to make his quality of life as good as it could be. He was not dealt the best hand at the table, but he made the most of what he had and Kelly and the State had a big part in giving him a good life.