

Connections

Volume 8, Issue 1

Winner of the National Public Health Information Coalition's Gold Award

January 2008

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together



A NEW BEGINNING! With face painted to help celebrate the occasion, Octavia Fulton (at right), age six, shares the joy of her adoption with Judge Elizabeth Crnkovich at the Douglas County Courthouse in Omaha on National Adoption Day. Octavia's cousin, four-year-old Jeremiah Spears, helped her celebrate. Octavia was one of 80 state wards to find a permanent family on November 17th when courthouses opened on Saturday to finalize adoptions at several sites in Nebraska and across the nation. (See more on Adoption Day inside.) *Photo: Nancy Cole*

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DHHS in the News Update...

A small sample of news releases recently issued by Communications & Legislative Services about DHHS programs. A full text of all releases is available under "Newsroom" on the DHHS Web site listed below.

Holiday Stress Busters! Adoption Day! Vets' Day Celebration!! Just a few of the 56 media releases (some statewide, some localized) about DHHS programs issued in November 2007. Here are some headlines from releases DHHS sent to media in December 2007:

- ♦ **DHHS Offers Heating Help to Eligible Families** Dec. 12
- ♦ **State Employee Wellness Program Produces Results** Dec. 6
- ♦ **DHHS Tips on Coping with Aftermath of Tragic Mall Shootings** Dec. 7
- ♦ **Flag Will Fly High Because of Employee Fundraising** Dec. 6

You can check recent releases by going to the DHHS Website at www.dhhs.ne.gov/, clicking on the "Newsroom" link and then on "News Releases." You can also listen to "sound bites" issued with releases by going to www.dhhs.ne.gov/audio/.

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



About the cover photo

Information and photos of some of the children who are available for adoption in Nebraska can be viewed at www.dhhs.ne.gov/adoption. More information on becoming foster or adoptive parents is available by calling 800-7-PARENT or 800-772-7368. [More Adoption Day photos on page 11.] ☎

FYI: Sign language interpreters must be licensed

As of September 2007, state agencies and law enforcement personnel using sign language interpreters are required to use only those interpreters holding a license issued by the State of Nebraska through the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. State agencies include any state entity that receives appropriations from the Legislature and includes the legislature, legislative committees, executive agencies, courts and probation officials but does not include political subdivisions.

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing must maintain a roster of licensed interpreters who work in Nebraska. The Commission is conducting a quarterly review to assist agencies and entities by providing written notice to confirm the licensing status of interpreters hired since September 1st, 2007.

For more information, contact the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Lincoln at (402) 471-3593. ☎

make the connection . . .

DHHS External Web site: <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov>

DHHS Intranet (Internal): <http://www2.dhhs.ne.gov>

DHHS System Advocate: 1-800-254-4202, (402) 471-6035 in Lincoln, or via e-mail at diana.duran@dhhs.ne.gov

Connections is published monthly for employees of the Nebraska Health and Human Services System by Communications and Legislative Services (CLS).

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Children and Families Division Director:

Developmental Disabilities Division Director:

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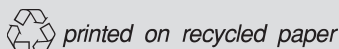
Annie Wood

► Readers are invited to submit news, photos & story ideas to the editor via:

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Connections can be made available in an alternative format for those with disabilities. Requests will be filled within 15 working days. Prior consent has been obtained for this publication to identify and publish photos of all individuals receiving DHHS services.



From the CEO

January is a busy month, full of New Year resolutions and a bevy of Legislative activities.

This year is no exception. In addition, it's the 6-month anniversary of the DHHS reorganization and media reporters and many others are interested in our progress and changes made since last July.

I believe the Department has made great strides in meeting our short-term goals to be more accountable, accessible and action-oriented, but we truly have a ways to go in creating long-term change.

Key six-month accomplishments include:

- Discussions with **Governor Heineman** resulted in his ten top priorities for DHHS for 2007-2008. These priorities touch on each of the department's six divisions, and guide our work throughout the year.

- Five new Divisions Directors were appointed and joined **Dr. Joann Schaefer** in top leadership roles. They are **Scot Adams, John Hilgert, Vivianne Chaumont, Todd Landry** and **John Wyvill**.

- Chief Operating Officer **Bob Zagozda** was hired and is in charge of the seven sections in Operations.

- Most of the divisions have made organizational changes in order to be more accountable and better able to address priorities and goals in the new organization.

- Five of the administrators of the Department's ten 24-hour facilities are new. These include administrators of the four Veterans'

Homes and the Beatrice State Developmental Center.

- Three of the administrators of the Department's five Service Areas have been hired in the past six months.

- Advanced behavioral health reform by closing I80 adult mental health beds at Regional Center hospitals.

- Successfully opened the Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home with a deficiency-free inspection.

- Established the Office of Children's Behavioral Health and hired its first administrator.

- Began integrating all public health data sources to become the trusted source of state data on health.

- Decreased the number of state wards to 6,994 in November and 6,983 in December 2007. This is the first they are under 7,000 since July 2004.

These accomplishments are significant and instrumental in our efforts to help people, and taxpayers need to know how we do our work. This is true even when we don't do it right. Sometimes that's hard, but being accountable and open about change means that we are finding problems and fixing them. There is a ripple effect in doing this – the more attention we give to finding problems, the more we're bound to find.

This kind of long-term change will take several years to accomplish, as new procedures are put in place, we will slowly rebuild public confidence in the Department and our work.

For example, when the State Auditor uncovered problems with payment for services received at the Regional Centers and the Beatrice State Developmental Center, we worked with him and his staff to learn the extent of the problems and identify solutions. We've hired an outside accounting firm to dig even



Chris Peterson,
DHHS Chief Executive Officer

deeper and help us correct our procedures for the long haul. The result will be more accountable processes resulting in more collections for services received.

We must be willing to uncover inefficiencies, even if we garner negative press in the process.

Even though it's difficult, I urge you not to lose sight of the fact that finding these problems and correcting them was a key expectation of the reorganization.

We're doing what the Governor, state senators, and the public said we should do. It will take time and we must accept that.

As I mentioned, we are making strides and I feel staff are committed to positive change. By the end of 2008, we'll be a better organization for our efforts, and by the end of 2009, we'll be even better.

Thank you for your daily commitment and dedication to helping people live better lives. ♪

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Chris Peterson".

Readiness is all!

How Nebraska is preparing to meet emergencies

If it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all.

Hamlet, Act V, Scene 2

By Mike Wight and Dianna Seiffert

Several DHHS employees spent a November day away from their offices exercising with other state agency staff at several locations in and around Lincoln. No, not a new physical fitness program but an emergency training exercise to help state agencies prepare for a public health emergency. In this case, the exercise scenario was pandemic flu — how agencies would respond to an outbreak and how they would continue with their regular work when short staffed.

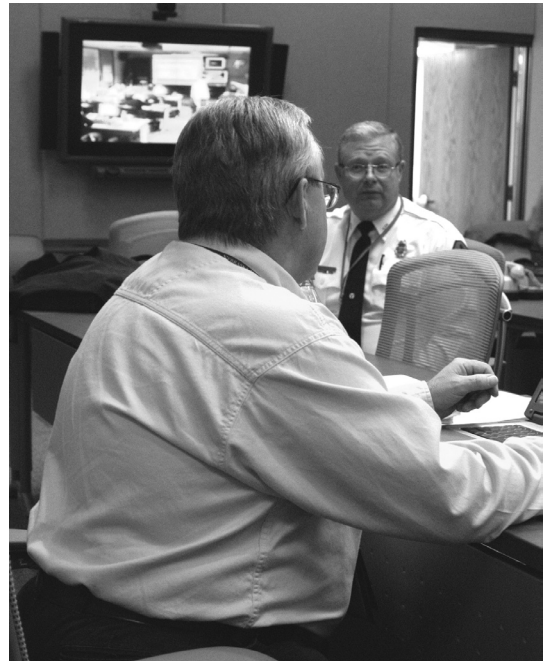
“This exercise was a great opportunity to examine our continuity of operations plans and our response to a pandemic flu outbreak, and I’m really pleased with how well it went,” says **Dr. Joann Schaefer**, Chief Medical Officer and Director of the Division of Public Health. “We learned much, found things that we need to work on and identified things that were successful.”

“For example,” Dr. Schaefer explained, “our Public Health Informatics coordinator was in Atlanta, Georgia, at the time of the exercise. While there, he was still able to send out a test Health Alert Network (HAN) to health care providers and lab

technicians across our state. It was amazing!”

Several DHHS staff were located in a building on the Whitehall Campus in northeast Lincoln. A few more were at the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency’s (NEMA) offices in northwest Lincoln, and a few were at the Nebraska Educational Television’s (NET) building in north central Lincoln. These locations house critical components of the state’s emergency response system.

The Emergency Operations Center or “EOC” is housed in the underground offices of



(Above left to right) NEMA Public Information Officer Jim Bunstock confers with Ray Nance of the State Fire Marshall’s Office at Terrex 2007 exercise. (Below) Joint Information Center (JIC) at Nebraska Educational Television site. Photos: Mike Wight. 📷



NEMA across from the State Fair Grounds. This center acts as the central hub of the emergency operations when activated by the Governor.

The **Joint Information Center** or “JIC” is housed in a specially prepared room at NET’s offices on North 33rd Street. A special arrangement between NEMA and NET allows this room to change from a top-of-the-line distance learning room to a technology-enhanced media coordination room during any state emergency. Here DHHS Public Information Officers were joined by public information staff from NEMA and several other state agencies to blend into a highly efficient media information center.

Another aspect of the Terrex 2007 exercise—DHHS’ **Emergency Coordination Center** or “ECC”—is housed on Whitehall Campus in Lincoln. The ECC serves as a hub for emergency efforts for DHHS. If you were to visit the site, you would find computers, workspace, video screens and high tech communication devices. Along with standard telephones, communications are backed up with radios and satellite phones.



For lunch, DHHS Health Management Systems Administrator Sue Medinger tries an “MRE” (Meals Ready to Eat), a compact military meal often used by others. MREs are stored at the Emergency Coordination Center as part of the emergency food supply and would be provided, if needed, to DHHS staff stationed at the ECC during an emergency. *Photo: Greg Votava*

The video screens display e-mail and activity logs that instantly update everyone in the room as events unfold. There’s even video conferencing available to tie all locations together.

The value of practicing for an

emergency that hasn’t happened yet is a quicker, more effective response to the real thing than when lives are at stake. Readiness is all, and knowing that we are better prepared to respond in an emergency makes us all feel safer. ☺

Good Things Are Happening!

Nebraska was among seven states that received a perfect 10 score in preparing for pandemic flu and other health emergencies, according to a national report released in December by the Trust for American Health.

"We just had an unprecedented network of people coming together to make this happen," said **Dr. Joann Schaefer**, Chief Medical Officer and Director of the DHHS Division of Public Health.

Being prepared for emergencies is just one more way DHHS helps Nebraskans live better lives!

"StairWELL" project encourages better health, longer life through beautification!

By Jerry Crisp

The Nebraska Employee Wellness (NEW for Life) Program has a beautiful idea that just might lead to better health and longer life.

To brighten the workplace and enhance employees' physical activity, NEW for Life is piloting photo art in walking routes in the Nebraska State Office Building and in the Department of Labor building in Lincoln. These include stairwells and a tunnel leading to a parking garage.

"If our route is more visually interesting, we're more likely to follow that path to better health," says **Bruce Rowe**, Wellness Administrator within the Division of Public Health who spearheads the "StairWELL" pilot program. "If people choose an elevator because stairwells aren't very attractive, they might walk more if stairwells offer more than blank walls."

The photos feature Nebraska wildlife not everyone gets a chance to see up close, and breathtaking landscapes many might not believe were taken in Nebraska. Most were provided by the *NebraskaLand* magazine and some from **Bill Wiley**, a professional photographer and Public Information Officer with DHHS Communications & Legislative Services.

"It's amazing what many people working together can do to get things done that help others take healthy steps," says **Dr. Joann Schaefer**, Director of the Division of Public Health and Nebraska's Chief Medical Officer.

Why is taking stairs better than a cozy chat with co-workers during an effortless elevator ride?

"Taking the stairs burns five times more calories than riding an elevator and takes little more time, if any," Rowe explains.

Taking the stairs doesn't mean climbing several stories either. Rowe advises people not in the walking habit to start with one flight and increase that number gradually. Those with physical conditions that make stair-climbing difficult or impossible can find other ways to exercise.

"For this reason, we've also put photo art in a tunnel leading to the parking garage in Lincoln's State Office Building," says Rowe. "But those who are able to take stairs and don't should start today!"

The StairWELL project is funded by a grant Nebraska received from the National Governors' Association and made possible by a partnership among DHHS and several other state agencies.

"While only limited funding was available, we hope this pilot will catch on and spread across the state," says Rowe. "After all, if something enhances the workplace and helps people get exercise they need to live a healthier, longer life, that's a beautiful idea we can all get behind and participate in."

To learn more about starting a StairWELL project in your area, contact Bruce Rowe at (402) 471-6439 or bruce.rowe@dhhs.ne.gov ✉



(Above) A wily fox studies the viewer as intently as the viewer studies it. Photo: Bill Wiley

(Below) Sails in the sunset on Lake McConaughey Photo: NebraskaLand magazine (Just two of the photo options StairWELL" judges chose from that invite DHHS staff to get healthier by getting more physical exercise).



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.

When a light comes on

By Jerry Crisp

Those like Developmental Technician **Ray Reckley**, who provide direct care services at the Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC), know there are easier, higher-paying jobs, yet they continue to do the difficult and demanding work they do. A convenient reason might be, “Well, somebody has to do it,” but that wouldn’t explain why Ray or anyone else would necessarily have to be that “somebody.”

If you ask Ray, he’ll tell you that he continues to do the job because it offers an opportunity “to see when a light comes on that makes a difference in someone else’s life.”

Ray has worked at the facility for nearly a dozen years, worked all three shifts, and often works three double shifts a week. There’s a daily routine that begins with waking clients, assisting them, if needed, in straightening their rooms, preparing breakfast, doing personal hygiene, and then it’s off to school or work.

But most of Ray’s days are anything but routine. That’s because he works in the Center’s Intensive Treatment Services, which serves clients from community-based programs that are brought to the facility for short-term stints to treat severe behavioral problems in a structured setting.

“We deal with clients representing all levels of ability and with every kind of behavioral challenge you can imagine,” Ray explains. “And when they return to the community with problems resolved or significantly reduced, we meet new clients coming in who need help just as much.”

While most would be intimidated or overwhelmed by the challenge of

behavioral problems, that’s precisely what keeps Ray on the job.

“If I try one strategy that doesn’t seem to work, that makes me want to figure out why it isn’t working and



Ray Reckley,
Photo: Jerry Crisp

what might work better,” says Ray. “And since every client is a unique individual, this process keeps you sharp and makes it impossible to ever become bored.”

But the greatest reward Ray experiences is when a light comes on.

“You work with a client for days, weeks or even months without much progress, and then you see a light come on, and you know that client gets it, he understands and is heading in the right direction,” Ray says.

He recalls one client who was intensely combative, barely able to sit within arm’s reach in any group without lashing out at those around

him.

“I tried several strategies, but what seemed to work was when I made a special effort to find out his likes and dislikes and began asking him to do things rather than telling him what to do,” Ray explains. “That’s when he began to learn what to do instead of just following directions.”

That client has been back in the community for about seven years without negative reports on his behavior and without returning to Intensive Treatment Services at BSDC. A strong indicator of this program’s success is the low rate of recidivism.

Asked about his reaction to recent difficulties the facility has encountered in meeting federal standards, Ray says, “Dealing with developmental disabilities is challenging even without staff shortages, but there are a lot of employees trying to do the very best they can with available resources.”

“Ray believes in thinking outside the box by trying different approaches and encouraging clients to do the same,” says **Pam Spier-Edmond**, Neighborhood Services Assistant Administrator within the Center’s Outreach & Intensive Treatment Services. “He seems to have a special sense that lets him know when something isn’t working or someone isn’t feeling their best, and he’s always willing to see if there is anything he can do about it.”

Those who tell you that providing direct care services at BSDC or any other DHHS 24-hour facility takes a special kind of person are right, and one example of that special kind of person is BSDC’s Ray Reckley. Those who appreciate the vital contribution direct care providers like Ray make also know what it’s like when a light comes on. ☺

Way to Go!

Statewide or national recognitions, awards, honors

Divan earns recognition



Sue Divan

Photo provided

Sue Divan was given the Distinguished Media Service award at the 2007 Nebraska Library Association/Nebraska Educational Media Association Conference. Divan is Media Specialist at Kearney West High School on the Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center-Kearney (YRTC-K) campus.

The award was presented for her contributions as a media specialist with over 20 years of YRTC-K service. Divan ensures that needs of youth at Kearney West High are met, while also meeting media standards as a school accredited by the Nebraska Dept. of Education and meeting standards of the American Correctional Association for a juvenile

correctional facility library. During her tenure, the school and facility have been accredited continuously by both organizations.

In addition, Divan has coordinated the GED prep and testing program for youth. Under her leadership, well over 1,000 youth have earned GEDs while in the YRTC-K program. ☺

Email and the spies among us!

By Allan Albers, Security Administrator

Email, instant messaging and the Internet are valuable tools used by DHHS to quickly and effectively provide services to our clients/customers. When you send email messages, use instant messaging, or use the Internet, there is always someone using electronic tools spying on you and trying to steal your personal information. With identity theft the fastest growing crime in America today, it is essential to be aware of the spies among us!

At last count in 2005, there were 500 million email accounts world wide sending 50 billion messages every day. The State of Nebraska email filter blocks an astronomical 99% of all messages sent to state inboxes. That's more than 100 million email messages per month containing a computer virus, spyware software, or plain old SPAM.

With spies among us always watching, it's critical that that we take necessary precautions. Here are three basic rules to help keep you secure:

- Only use DHHS approved methods to send private and confidential information.
- Never reply to an email message containing private or confidential information from an external email system.
- Never open email attachments from a sender you don't know.

More information on email security can be found on the DHHS bulletin board in the Lotus Notes folder. If you have questions or concerns, contact me at (402) 471-6437 or **Jon Grubb** at (402) 471-1076 in the HIPAA Privacy/Security office. ☺

Why don't we do it in our sleeves?

When you cough or sneeze millions of germs can be spread into the air. These germs contaminate the surfaces they land on. They can come into contact with people either via the air or when the germs contaminate surfaces. Touch a contaminated surface and then eat a sandwich without washing your hands, you're likely to come down with something. Touch a contaminated door knob and then rub your eye, same thing.

"Many diseases are spread by poor coughing and sneezing techniques," said **Dr. Joann Schaefer**, Chief Medical Officer.

In the past it was customary for people to cover their cough or sneeze with their hands, as per their mothers' advice. However, that is no longer considered the proper way to deal with coughs and sneezes.

"It's better for you and those around you if you cough into your sleeve," Dr. Schaefer said.



"That way you are not putting germs into the air and also not putting them on your hands where you can spread them to whatever you touch. When germs are coughed into the fabric of your sleeve, they dry up and die there."

"Why Don't We Do It In Our Sleeves?" is a fun video on the proper way to cough and sneeze into your sleeves: www.coughsafe.com/media.html. ☺ ☐

February Observance

Heart Awareness Month



Two public education campaigns are helping decrease the number of women dying from heart disease by increasing women's awareness of the signs and symptoms of a heart attack and the importance of dialing 9-1-1. The Heart Truth and Go Red for Women campaigns help women address heart disease risk factors like smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, physical inactivity, being overweight and a family history of the disease.

In Nebraska, 1,854 women died from heart disease in 2005, down from 1,920 women in 2004 and 2050 in 2003. The most common symptom for heart disease for both men and women is chest pain or discomfort. However, women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea or vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

For more information, contact **Kari Majors**, Community Health Educator in the DHHS Cardiovascular Health Program, at (402) 471-1823.

Think HEALTH

Forget "5 a day"! According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, adults need anywhere from 7 to 13 cups of produce daily to get all the health benefits of fruits and veggies, including possible protection from Alzheimer's, heart disease, diabetes and cancer. ☺

"More Matters!"

Dr. Joann Schaefer
Chief Medical Officer

Top Doc says, Wash your hands



Dirty hands put everyone at risk of catching the flu, colds and other viruses, according to **Dr. Joann Schaefer**, Chief Medical Officer.

"If you don't wash your hands, viruses could be transmitted every time you touch your eyes, nose or mouth," she said. "Hand washing doesn't take much time or effort, but it offers great rewards in terms of preventing illness. Adopting this simple habit can play a major role in protecting your health."

Viruses and bacteria may be on everything you touch—door knobs,

keyboards, toilet handles, food, dishes, etc.

The very young, the very old, and those with compromised immune systems are most susceptible to viruses and bacteria. Getting the flu can lead to pneumonia—a frequent cause of death among the elderly.

Proper hand washing:

- Wet your hands with warm, running water and lather with soap well.
- Rub your hands vigorously together for 20 seconds.
- Scrub all surfaces, including the backs of your hands, wrists, between your fingers and under your fingernails.
- Rinse well.
- Dry your hands with a clean or disposable towel.
- Use a towel to turn off the faucet.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are an alternative to hand washing when soap and water aren't available, Dr. Schaefer said.

To use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, apply about ½ teaspoon of the product to the palms of your hands; rub your hands together, covering all surfaces of your hands until dry.

For a funny video on the need for hand washing and another video on proper hand washing, go to <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/newsroom/features/hand-washing.htm>. ☺

Good Things Are Happening!

During fiscal year 2007, System Advocate **Diana Duran** experienced a 30% increase over the previous year in contacts (phone, mail and email) from clients/customers, the public and employees seeking information or help with a problem. Those contacts jumped from 2,954 contacts to 3,847 contacts in fiscal year 2007, increasing from an average of 246 contacts to 321 per month.

Thanks to the System Advocate, DHHS is more accessible to more people!

In their own words . . .

Letters to HHSS employees who are helping people live better lives

Dear **DHHS**:

I would like to thank Employment First for helping me. I worked for a nonprofit agency for 13 years, was laid off...never thought it would happen to me...When I received the letter stating that I had to work with Employment First, I was not happy with that at all! I had worked with the same clientele for years who had the same attitude.

Later, I realized how important it is to have a program to help families maintain their self-sufficiency...Once I started working at the Omaha Housing Authority, my car had problems -- the timing for breakdown was horrible...Employment First helped me fix the brakes, along with other repairs that were a safety emergency. What a blessing!

Gloria Kern
Omaha, Nebraska

Dear **Emily Walter** (Human Resources Officer, Nebraska State Office Building, Lincoln):

I would like to commend you on the work of **Cindy Strufling** (Human Resources Assistant). Late August of 2006, I was diagnosed with stage three colon cancer and started a truly difficult journey. I was in the hospital for 17 days and had chemo for a year ending in late September. Needless to say, I often have felt overwhelmed by everything. How was I going to be able to keep my job? My health insurance? My paycheck? Cindy has provided an immense amount of support. She has guided me through the web of Family Medical Leave, the Catastrophic Leave Program and managed to get me my pay in a timely manner, thus ensuring my continued health care insurance coverage. She also took the time to get to know my daughter, who is my caretaker.

Cindy has always been kind and supportive this past year. I feel that DHHS and the state of Nebraska are blessed to have someone like her working for them. I know that I feel blessed in having her "on my side."

Becky Houck
Administrative Assistant
Office of Preparedness & Emergency Response

Dear **Tracy Huxoll** (Social Service Worker, DHHS McCook office):

Just a note to say thank you for all your help. Thanks for seeing me as soon as I came to you for assistance. Thank you for helping me with my asthma. I really appreciate your help. Keep up the great work. The McCook office needs you!

A McCook area service recipient

While *Connections* receives more letters from satisfied customers than we can ever publish, please send letters via any method listed in our editorial box on page 2, and we'll print as many as space allows.

Happenings!

Photos spotlighting DHHS activities around the state



MORE ADOPTION DAY INFORMATION: (Above left) **Judge Michael Offner**, who got Adoption Day started in the Hastings area, was on hand to celebrate adoptions with gift bags for each child, including 13-year-old **Jake Tilden Sloan**. Jake was adopted by **Lawrence and Judith Sloan** from Juniata. *Photo: Jennifer Pohlson*

(Above right) **Christopher and Rebekah Hoyt** are shown at the November 17 Adoption Day ceremony at Lincoln with newly adopted daughter, **Latysha Ables**, on mom's lap, and **Daevey Hoyt** on dad's. *Photo: Crispin Mayers*

(Below) While courthouses in Grand Island did not open to hold hearings as in other sites, that community observed an "Adoption Month" celebration on November 17 with seven families representing 13 adoptions finalized in 2007 (in all, 27 adoptions were finalized in the Grand Island area last year). Festivities included gifts and limo rides for adoptive families, donated by local businesses and individuals. Before the limos returned home, rides were also offered to employee and their families. Shown offering a protective hand is Protection & Safety Worker **Judy Pfeifer** with her grandchildren, **Savanna Pfeifer**, age 8, and **Isabella Ortiz** (foreground), age 3, who were on hand to help celebrate. Also exiting the vehicle is Protection & Safety Worker **Marge Creason**. *Photo: Jean Seely*



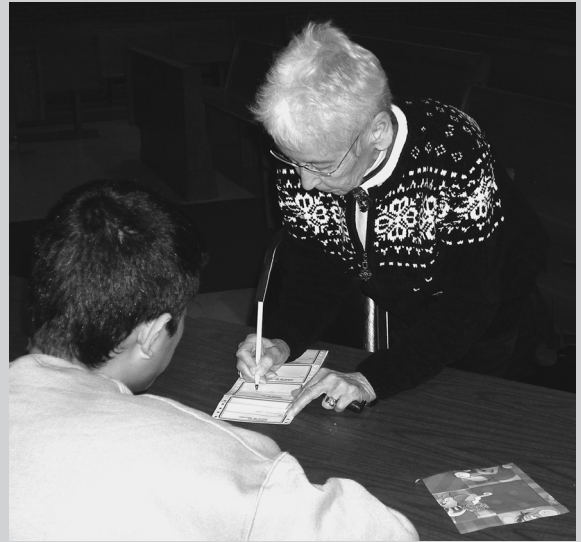
If you have a photo of a DHHS activity you'd like to share with co-workers across the state, contact *Connections* by any method listed in the editorial box on page 2, and we'll print as many as space allows.

Another Happening!

A 33-YEAR TRADITION: For the 33rd year, Salvation Army staff and volunteers helped Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center-Kearney (YRTC-K) youth send holiday gifts home. This year, 180 youth chose two gifts from a selection including tool kits, clocks, necklaces and scented candles to be sent to members of their immediate families. Then they wrapped and gave the gift to a volunteer, who addressed it. Shown here is **Donna Bamford**, long-time Salvation Army volunteer, long-term member of the YRTC-K Community Advisory Board, and close neighbor to the YRTC campus. The Salvation Army provides the gifts and pays for the mailing.

“Primary benefits of this long tradition include strengthening family bonds and encouraging giving,” says **Dick Wetjen**, YRTC-K Recreation Manager who has been involved in this effort for the past 33 years. “Other benefits include encouraging appreciation for volunteerism and giving back to the community, which the Salvation Army and its volunteers provide.” □

Photo: Jolene Jarecki. ♪



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



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