

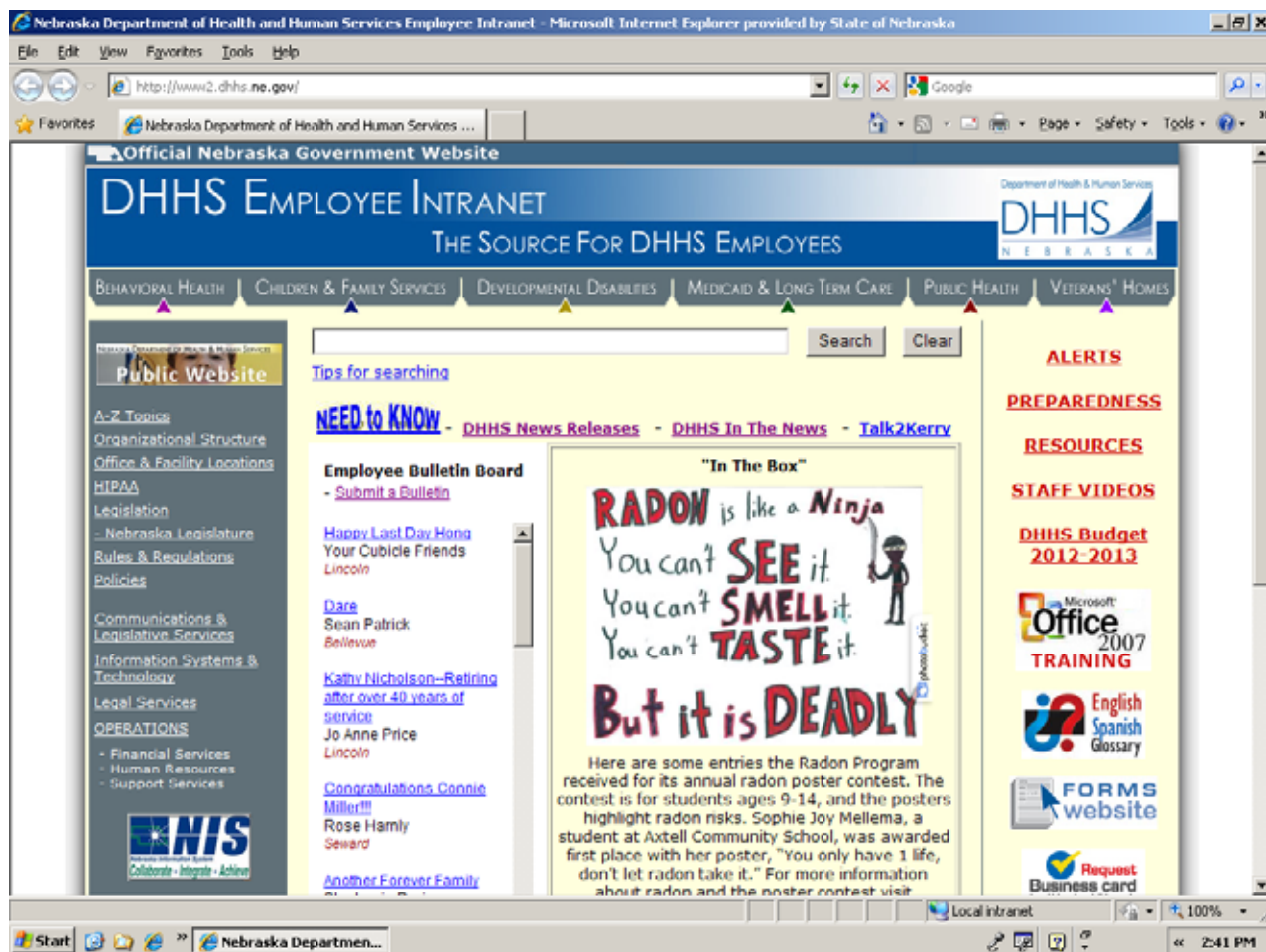
Connections

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

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

January 2011
VOLUME 11, ISSUE 1

Familiar with the Employee Homepage on the DHHS Intranet? If not, see what you've been missing.



Click here on address to link to Home Page Website.
<http://www2.dhhs.ne.gov/>

HIGHLIGHTS INSIDE (Click on headline to jump to story)

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About the Cover

**DHHS Homepage –
Check it out. Every day.**

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.

[DHHS Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers Use New Resource for Youth](#)

Jan. 7, 2011

[DHHS Offers Suggestions in Wake of Shooting](#)

Jan. 6, 2011

[Families Matter Shows Promising Results](#)

Jan. 5, 2011

[Nebraska Has High Levels of Radon in Homes](#)

Jan. 4, 2011

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!

Only DHHS employees can access the DHHS Homepage, <http://www2.dhhs.ne.gov>. That's why it's designed exclusively for you. The information changes every day, and it's relevant to you and the work you do here at DHHS. There are employee updates and links to web pages you frequently use. Daily "Neat to Know" updates contain interesting information about DHHS and information about everyday living like health and wellness tips. "The Box" features interesting photos and videos. The images change frequently, so you'll want to connect to the Homepage every day.

Bulletin Board – Another part of the Homepage

Have you seen all of the fantastic bulletin board posts from your co-workers across the state? Or maybe you've used the board yourself to congratulate a co-worker or welcome a new employee. We want to hear from you! Bulletins are a great way to recognize your fellow co-workers for all of the good work they do or to highlight a DHHS program or service activity. Submit a bulletin—yours could be the next one we post!

We're also looking for inspirational quotes and interesting story ideas for our "Neat to Know" section, and great photos, graphics and videos to showcase "In the Box." Send in your story ideas, quotes, etc. through the bulletin board. If you've got photos or other graphics you can e-mail them to Dianna.Seiffert@nebraska.gov

make the connection . . .

DHHS Public Website: www.dhhs.ne.gov

DHHS Employee Website: www2.dhhs.ne.gov

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

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Scot Adams

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Todd Reckling

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Jodi Fenner

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Vivianne Chaumont

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Officer:
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Veterans' Homes Division
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Department of Health & Human Services

DHHS

N E B R A S K A

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

By Kerry Winterer, CEO



Kerry Winterer

Photo: Bill Wiley

It's been a year since so many of you responded to the Five Star Metric Employee Survey. The results were clear that you care about co-workers, have pride in what you do, and believe the work you do makes a difference. These are all qualities that underscore

customer service and our mission to help people live better lives.

You also said that communication wasn't as good as you would like. Many felt out of the information loop and said that caring, genuine feedback and thanks for a job well done don't happen as often as you'd like.

During 2010, we took steps to improve communication. I've sent emails to employees statewide and have been pleased with how many have responded. I continue to get questions and ideas through Talk2Kerry@nebraska.gov. Changes to the Employee Website homepage have made sharing information easier and more frequent through the Bulletin Board, "In the Box," and other new features. The Division Directors have also taken steps to communicate more frequently.

As 2011 begins, we have an opportunity that I believe will make positive changes in our organizational culture, help establish feedback and improve two-way communication, and build on improving our customer service.

Our Human Resources and Development (HRD) staff development team and **Matt Clough**, Chief Operating Officer, have created a new performance evaluation tool – one that is comprehensive and forward-thinking because it includes Organizational Values and Core Competencies in addition to the usual Essential Job Duties.

This tool has the ability to transform our organization. It focuses on what we value as an organization and how a person demonstrates, on a day-to-day basis, the values and core competencies that set us apart as an organization and further strengthens our delivery of outstanding customer service.

It includes these DHHS Values that are the foundation of leadership and service:

- Constant commitment to excellence,
- High personal standard of integrity,
- Positive and constructive attitude and actions,
- Openness to new learning, and
- Dedication to the success of others.

These DHHS Core Competencies are the attributes, qualities, skills and ability to influence, operate and take action to serve. Employees in all positions throughout DHHS will be required to demonstrate:

- Responsibility and accountability,
- Professional composure,
- Effective interpersonal relationships,
- Productive communication,
- Support of their team, and
- Self-improvement;

Additionally, for supervisors:

- Motivating others, and
- Developing others.

Detailed descriptions of these values and core competencies can be found at <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/hur/PerformanceEvaluation>. 2011 will be a transition year for the new tool. During 2011, employees will be introduced to the Values and Core Competencies and evaluated on the Essential Job Duties.

This tool has the flexibility to apply across DHHS to include all areas and responsibilities. It also has the flexibility to encourage employees and supervisors to grow and become more effective with the help of an employee development plan that can include short-, mid-, and long-range plans.

A great deal of thought has gone into this, and **Matt** and **Mary Osborne**, HRD staff development administrator, have already met with over three dozen groups of supervisors across the state about the process. I want to recognize both of them for their efforts and leadership in accomplishing this change.

I'm excited about the opportunities this tool offers to develop employees and position DHHS as a leader in customer service. It provides a shared direction for us to do our best as we help people live better lives.

"This (performance evaluation) tool has the ability to transform our organization...and further strengthens our delivery of outstanding customer service."

DIVISION OF MEDICAID & LONG-TERM CARE

- Did you know that Medicaid provides health care for more than one in every 10 Nebraskans? Or that Medicaid paid for 42.5% of all births in Nebraska in FY 10?
- Medicaid serves almost 224,000 adults and children each month, over 7,000 people in nursing facilities, and over 1,700 people in assisted living facilities.
- We've enrolled over 90,000 clients in two managed care companies, Coventry and United ShareAdvantage.
- We've selected the Kearney Clinic, P.C. and Plum Creek Medical Group, P.C. in Lexington as pilot sites for the new Medical Home project. A 'medical home' transforms the traditional doctor's office into a central location to organize and coordinate a patient's health care needs. We're expecting approval from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid in the next few months.
- PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) provides comprehensive health care services within a defined geographic area for voluntarily enrolled people over age 55 who qualify for nursing facility level of care. Immanuel Health Systems (IHS) responded to our Request for Information and is developing a PACE program in Sarpy, Douglas and Washington Counties. After going through a rigorous federal application process, IHS will begin in early 2011.
- We've submitted the Medicaid Reform Annual Report which provides an annual summary and analysis of the Medicaid Program, a summary of current and recent projects and recommendations for program changes.



Vivianne Chaumont
Director, Medicaid and Long-term Care

Photo: Bill Wiley

The report can be found on the website at <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/med/reform/reports.htm>

Stay connected. You can access your email and *Connections* from home!

Couldn't make it into the office because of the snow? Did you know that you can access your email from home? All you have to do is go to <https://mail.nebraska.gov>. For "Username," type in your DHHS email address. For "Password," type in the password you currently use for Outlook.

You can also access *Connections* through your home computer. Here's how: Go to the DHHS' main website, www.dhhs.ne.gov. Look for the link to the Newsroom (about halfway down the page). Click on that link, then click on the *Connections* icon on the right hand side of the page. You can be the first to find out when a new issue of *Connections* is available. All you have to do is click on the link at the top of the *Connections* page that says "Subscribe to *Connections*."

Defend against diabetes with Husker coach Carl Pelini



By Bill Wiley

The DHHS Nebraska Diabetes and Prevention Program recently implemented a new campaign called [“Defend Against Diabetes - Get a Game Plan”](#) to promote diabetes awareness and prevention. The campaign is a partnership with the Nebraska Heart Institute, Husker Sports Marketing and diabetes educators and health industry representatives throughout the state.

Spokesperson for the media campaign, **Carl Pelini**, Husker Football Defensive Coordinator and Coach, urges Nebraskans to find out whether they are at risk for diabetes.

“As defensive coordinator for the Husker football team, I know how important it is to know your opponent. That’s why I learned the risk factors for diabetes, like being overweight, not eating right, not getting enough physical activity, or having high blood pressure and high cholesterol. We all need a game plan to defend against diabetes and part of that plan is to know your risk.”

Dr. Joann Schaefer, Director of Public Health and the states’ Chief Medical Officer, reminds us that, “Taking the diabetes risk test is free, takes less than a minute and could be the ‘wake-up

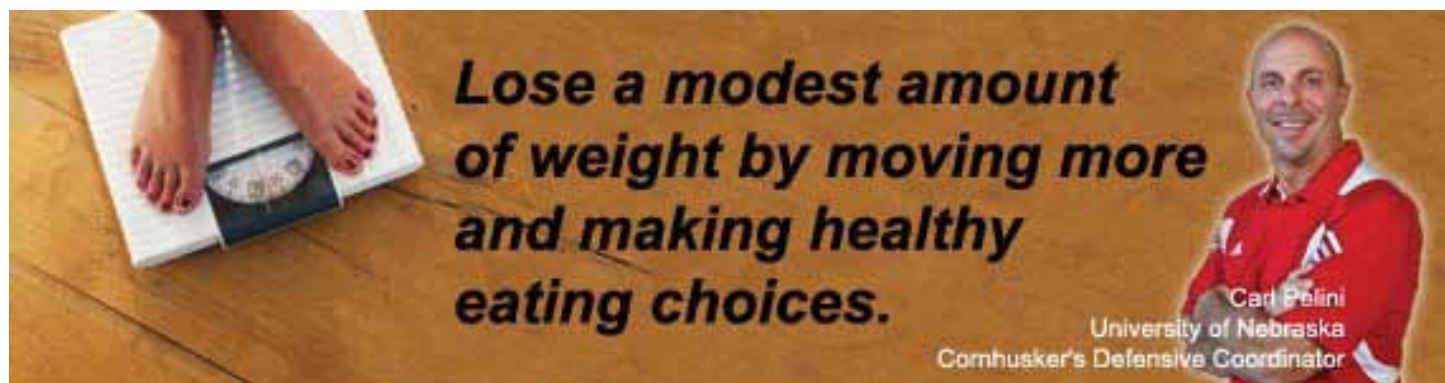
call’ to people unaware that they already have diabetes or pre-diabetes.”

The message being promoted by the campaign, says Dr. Schaefer, is for “Nebraskans to make leading a healthy lifestyle part of their Game Plan for defending against diabetes!”

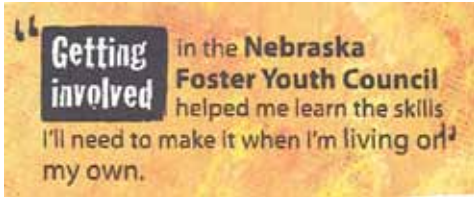
Diabetes can be prevented or delayed by eating healthy, maintaining a healthy weight, and staying active or increasing physical activity.

Last fall, the campaign promoted awareness and prevention messages with a new webpage, 30-second radio spots and pregame radio interviews broadcast during Nebraska football games. A diabetes risk screening event for the public was held prior to the Nebraska/Kansas football game, and radio broadcasts and signage will promote the message throughout UNL winter and spring sports programs.

Diabetes Program Manager **Kathy Goddard** says promoting the campaign through University of Nebraska sports activities is a great way to help us all better understand diabetes as a significant health concern.



Foster Youth Councils help YRTC youth



By Jeanne Atkinson

Anyone between the ages of 14 and 24 who is or was in foster care can learn the skills they need to successfully transition to adulthood by joining a Nebraska Foster Youth Council.

Now the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers (YRTCs) in Kearney and Geneva have Foster Youth Councils, too.

Last September, **Anita Haumont**, Volunteer Coordinator for YRTC in Geneva, and **Mike Pearson**, Pastor for the YRTC in Kearney, worked with each Facility Administrator to create on-campus chapters of Nebraska Foster Youth Councils. These Councils help youth at the YRTCs transition into independent living, recognize their strengths and provide input on program and policy issues. Council members also get support from other youth with similar experiences when they reintegrate into their communities.

"The Councils are an amazing resource," said **Todd Reckling**, director of the Division of Children and Family Services. "There's an entire network of young people who know exactly what it's like being in the foster care system. Having our youth actively participate in the program while they're at a YRTC is a great step in positively impacting their lives."

Benefits to being involved in Nebraska Foster Youth Councils include access to:

- Educational resources and scholarships;
- A savings program, where \$1,000 saved by youth is matched with \$1,000;
- A program where \$1,000 saved by youth is matched with \$4,000 to help purchase a car;
- Camp Catch-Up, which each summer gives youth in foster care and away from their siblings a chance to reconnect with them; and
- Community service activities.

"We want to ensure that every youth at a YRTC knows about the Council and has the opportunity to participate, if they want, while in the facility," said **Terri Nutzman**, administrator of the Office of Juvenile Services in the Division. "Once they're ready to reintegrate back to their community, we want to make sure they can connect with the community local chapter."

The Nebraska Foster Youth Councils create many positive results that last over time. Youth at the YRTC in Kearney were visited by members of the Youth Council from Omaha that had a member who'd been committed to the YRTC several years back. He spoke of what a change he's made in his life with the assistance and support of a Youth Council. He's currently enrolled in school and is entering military service.

Council members at the YRTC in Geneva helped collect and assemble care packages to send to local troop members and helped the local Rotary Club wrap over 100 coats for low-income families in need in November.



Renewed Medicaid waivers give people more choices

By Jeanne Atkinson

Individuals with developmental disabilities who receive services from the Division of Developmental Disabilities now have more flexibility and more options when choosing community services.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services approved five-year renewals of Nebraska's two Home and Community Based Services Medicaid Waivers effective on Jan. 1 with a gradual implementation over the next year.

"These comprehensive changes give the people we serve more choices to achieve outcomes that are important to them," says **Jodi Fenner**, Director of the Division.

The approval doesn't provide additional funding but does let Nebraska use resources more efficiently so more people can be served. There could be long-term cost savings because many individuals prefer the less-expensive, non-specialized services that stretch their dollars farther and allow more self-direction and independence. Examples of those services are community living and day supports, home and vehicle modification, assistive technology, and respite services.

Individuals who are happy with their current services can keep them. Others who want to explore new services can make changes at their next scheduled Individual Program Plan meeting, or ask for a team meeting sooner to discuss their options.

Service coordinators are already hearing positive comments at family team meetings. One person was excited about new services so the young woman she's guardian for can live in her own apartment. A mother was excited about all the options now available for her daughter. She was so happy, she was in tears.

"We're developing a DVD that will help our service coordinators highlight the new options" Fenner says.

Service coordinators are already hearing positive comments at family team meetings. One person was excited about new services so the young woman she's guardian for can live in her own apartment. A mother was excited about all the options now available for her daughter. She was so happy, she was in tears.

About 4,300 individuals receive community-based services and service coordination through the Division.



Jodi Fenner

Photo: Bill Wiley

February Observance: Heart Health Month

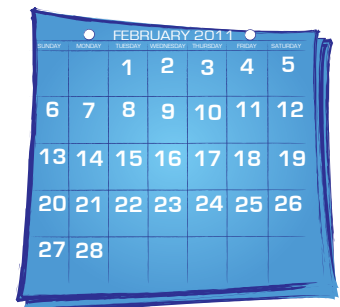
Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States and in Nebraska, taking the lives of more men and women each year than all cancer deaths combined. The most common type in the U.S. is coronary artery disease, which can cause heart attack, angina (chest pain), heart failure, and arrhythmias (irregular heart beat). Risk factors for heart disease include elevated cholesterol, high blood pressure, obesity, physical inactivity, diabetes and tobacco use.

The Every Woman Matters Program offers screening and education for the early detection and prevention of breast cancer, cervical cancer, and heart disease. Federal funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) allows income-eligible women between 40 and 64 to benefit from WISEWOMAN (Well-Integrated Screening and Evaluation for Women Across the Nation) services as a fully integrated part of the Every Woman Matters Program. As one of the first 12 programs to receive WISEWOMAN funding in 2001, Nebraska has since helped more than 19,000 women receive important screening and education to help reduce their risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Federal funding from the CDC supports Nebraska's Cardiovascular Health Program (CVH). The CVH mission is to promote cardiovascular disease prevention and control by focusing on high blood pressure, elevated blood cholesterol, heart attack and stroke.

With the offering of WISEWOMAN services, the efforts of the Cardiovascular Health program and partners throughout the state, Nebraskans are living heart healthier lives.

For more information about the Nebraska WISEWOMAN Program, visit www.dhhs.ne.gov/womenshealth/ewm . For more information about the Nebraska Cardiovascular Health Program, visit www.dhhs.ne.gov/hew/hpe/cvh/ .



Grant helps low-income families protect their homes from radon

By Sara Morgan, Health Program Manager,
Division of Public Health

Thanks to the passion and extra effort of Radon Program Inspector **Mark Versch**, a non-profit grant program now helps low-income families needing a radon mitigation system installed. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that radon—the colorless, odorless, radioactive gas that originates in the soil and builds to dangerous levels in homes—causes about 21,000 lung cancer deaths nationwide each year.

During a routine inspection of a recently installed mitigation system, Mark connected with a wealthy homeowner. While discussing the problem of radon gas in the homes of low-income families, the homeowner indicated a desire to help.



Mark Versch

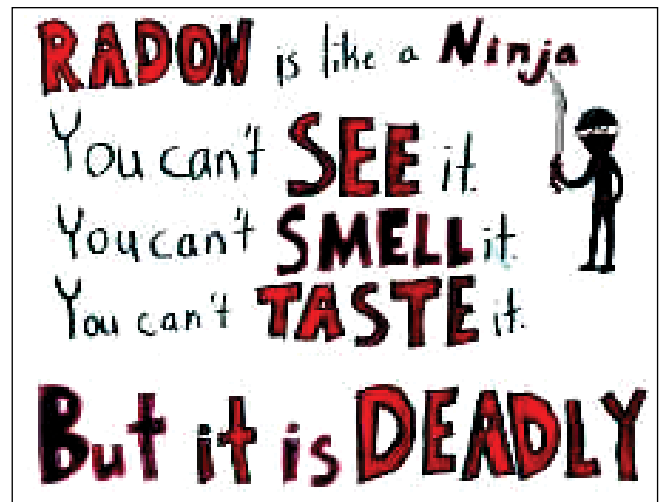
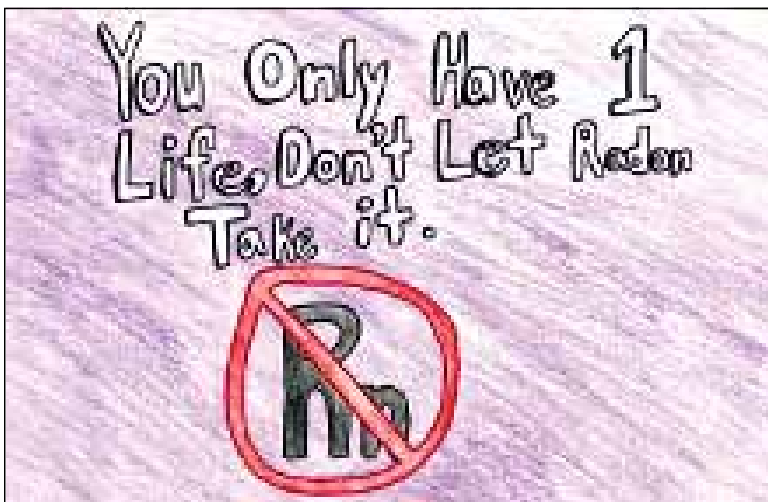
Photo: Jerry Crisp

After considering several charitable, non-profit organizations and visiting with social services providers in Omaha, Versch worked with the donor to create the grant program and to transfer funds to the non-profit organization, “Rebuilding Together.” To assist the program, the Department will have a role in providing technical assistance to potential recipients and conducting follow-up inspections on installed systems.

“This donation won’t last forever, but even helping a handful of families lower their risk from radon exposure will directly impact their health in a positive way,” Versch noted.

Lung cancer is a horrible disease, and the work of dedicated staff like Mark Versch continues to help people reduce their risk. Test, fix, and save a life!

Radon program announces annual poster contest winners



The DHHS Radon Program announced winners of its annual radon poster contest for students ages 9 to 14. 1st-place winner was **Sophie Joy Mellema**, a student at Axtell Community School...(above left), and runner-up **Abby Allen**, a student at Columbus Scotus Central Catholic Junior High School (above right).

For more information about the annual radon poster contest or more information about radon, visit www.dhhs.ne.gov/radon or contact the Radon Program at (402) 471-6354.

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.

By Jerry Crisp

Patty Pierson, the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman within the Division of Medicaid & Long-Term Care (MLTC), loves her work.

"It's demanding but a feel-good job," says Patty. "Every day I know I made a difference in someone's life or helped shape a policy that will help people I've never met."

As Ombudsman, Patty investigates and resolves complaints made by or on behalf of residents of long-term care facilities, provides training to local ombudsmen, and coordinates an annual conference for volunteers.

In addition, she also monitors laws, regulations and policies pertaining to long-term care facilities, recommends changes and oversees a statewide reporting system to collect and analyze data with an aim to resolving significant problems.

Patty also provides public forums to discuss decisions impacting the health, safety, welfare and rights of residents of long-term care facilities.

Every work day for Patty starts with a to-do list, often scribbled down at home the night before or on the way to work in the morning.

"I hate to admit it, but I've even woken in the middle of the night and jotted down a to-do."

Often interrupted by phone calls and emails, that to-do list is re-prioritized regularly.

"The program fields thousands of calls each year from facility staff and residents, as well as families and friends of residents," says Patty. "I personally handle hundreds of those calls. That's one way I stay in touch with the people I serve."

Knowing I'm making progress, even if short of total completion, helps keep me going," she says, "and besides, I always have help."

Some of that help came three years ago during the first few weeks of coming to her present position.

"I was getting something from a vending machine when (MLTC Director) **Vivianne Chaumont** walked up to introduce herself," Patty explains. "She was so friendly and helpful that I went from 'Patty Who' to 'Patty Somebody' as quick as that. I know I can count on her to provide feedback if need be. Since day one in my position as Ombudsman, I've felt like part of a close-knit team. I feel very comfortable with the leadership and feel appreciated for what I do."

More help comes from co-workers both within MLTC and other Divisions she works with closely, as well as many community partners.

Additional help also comes from six local Ombudsman offices across the state with whom Patty contracts to deliver services, staff she supervises in Scottsbluff and close to 100 volunteer ombudsman advocates across the state.

"I couldn't do it alone," says Patty, "and thankfully I don't have to."

Naturally, the main rewards Patty finds in her work are the residents in long-term care facilities she and her fellow ombudsmen serve.

"Most people access our services at a crisis point in their lives, and while we can't turn back the hands of time or restore one's health, we can advocate for them, show them that they still have rights and work to enhance the quality of their lives," Patty explains. "Life doesn't end when one moves to a long-term facility. It just changes from what once was."

"Everything we do is resident-driven," says Patty. "If a son or daughter wants me to persuade mom or dad into one more chemotherapy and the resident doesn't want that, I try to help the family understand that they can either spend the final days debating or enjoying each other's company and making more memories."

"Patty brings energy and optimism to her efforts on behalf of long-term care residents," says **Sarah Briggs**, Patty's supervisor. "Questions and concerns brought to her are often complicated, and she works hard to problem-solve and connect people with appropriate resources and contacts."

We all are aging and face life-changing events that might result in our placement in a long-term care facility. It's good to know that people like Patty Pierson and her fellow ombudsmen across the state will be there to support us as residents in exercising our rights.



Patty Pierson

Photo: Jerry Crisp

Norfolk Veterans' Home members and school children communicate across generations

By Jerry Crisp

It's never too late to go back to school, especially when one is going back to read to eager school children. If you don't believe it, just ask several of the veterans living at the Norfolk Veterans' Home (NVH).

"**Rose Brunsing**, a veteran who served in Iraq, called me one day wanting to start a reading with veterans program," says **Jenny Last**, NVH Volunteer Services Coordinator. "She thought reading to vets at the Home would make reading more interesting for her two children, 9-year-old **Shelby** and 7-year-old **Dalton**, and they've come to the Home for two summers now."

If kids read to veterans at the Home, they figured, why couldn't veterans read to the kids at school, too?

"We met with the principal at Sacred Heart Elementary, and now plan trips for veterans to read to children at school once or twice each month," Last explains. "Several of the veterans participate, and it's awesome to see how much the vets and kids look forward to seeing each other."

"This program allows our veterans another opportunity to participate in the community and shows youngsters how important it is to continue their reading skills at any age," adds Activity Supervisor **Deb Becker**. "The children also form a bond with the veterans and make them feel needed and appreciated."

Asked about the best part of reading to school children, NVH veteran Lynn Cox said, "The interest youngsters take in what we did in WWII. They always say thank you, and I'm pleasantly surprised at how well behaved they all are."



(L-R) NVH veterans **Lynn Cox** and **Marvin Jones** read to one of three kindergarten classes they visited one morning at Sacred Heart Elementary. Photo: Mary Swensen.

When you'd like to learn more about a particular topic, you could either...
wait to see if Connections happens to cover it someday,

or...

share your idea with the new Editor, and read about it in the next issue!
Contact [Dianna Seiffert](mailto:dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov) at (402) 471-1695 or dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov.

Families Matter: CFS is changing the way Nebraska serves children and families in need

By Jeanne Atkinson

Did you know that Nebraska is fundamentally changing delivery of services to children and families? Why? Because Nebraska has historically had one of the highest rates of children in state custody, with too many children removed from their homes and served away from their families.

The Division of Children and Family Services (CFS) is leading the “reform” of child welfare and juvenile services. The vision is that Nebraska will be a national leader in serving children and families in need, based on the beliefs that:

- Children grow best in their own homes;
- Children should be reunified or moved to permanency through adoption or guardianship in a timely manner; and
- Families should get services earlier and be offered services after they leave DHHS.

Now there’s a name and logo that better reflects the intent of child welfare and juvenile services reform: **“Families Matter.”** Families matter, whether children are with their families, foster families, adoptive families or guardianship families.

Families Matter is changing the way CFS staff work, beginning in the Southeast and two-thirds of the Eastern Service Areas (southeast Nebraska and Omaha areas). Most case management functions dealing with day-to-day interactions with families transferred to two contractors, KVC Behavioral Healthcare Inc and the Nebraska Families Collaborative (NFC), on Jan. 3.

CFS staff in these two Service Areas will continue to be responsible for intakes and initial assessments/investigations of allegations of abuse or neglect.

CFS staff who formerly performed case management functions will now use the working title of “Children and Family Outcome Monitor.” This reflects their key new role and the strong emphasis on contract oversight, case monitoring and quality assurance, all critical to ensuring accountability from KVC and NFC and to evaluate and measure progress to ensure outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being are being met.

You can find weekly email updates going back to mid-October to CFS employees from Division Director Todd Reckling at http://www2.dhhs.ne.gov/Children_Family_Services/CWJSReform/ and much more about Families Matter at http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/Children_Family_Services/OHReform/index.htm



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

In their own words

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

Dear **Dan Scarborough** (Administrator, Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center-Geneva):

I really just want to thank you. I'm thanking you for everything that you do. Someday, I want to help people like you and the staff here at the Center do. My goal is to be a therapist or a guidance counselor in a school so I can teach English as well. If I ever become a best-selling writer for the novels I write, I want to help people in a place like this.

I'm determined to achieve my goals, and with thanks to you and this facility, I now have the confidence that I can achieve these goals. I decided to keep this short because I know you're busy, so thank you and every staff member who makes this place work.

A Grateful YRTC-Geneva Youth

Dear **Katie Rosenthal** (Social Service Worker, DHHS North Platte office):

My family and I are requesting to be taken off of financial assistance, as we are no longer in need of help. Thank you very much for everything. We are very blessed to have you in our lives.

A Thankful Service Recipient

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following note was sent after a DHHS Health Licensing Specialist received a request to process an application for licensure mailed from Wyoming that had been returned for lack of sufficient postage. The Health Licensing Specialist suggested that the applicant could request the Athletic Training Board examination verification be delivered electronically in ten minutes. This was an additional item required for the application and would speed up the process.

Dear **Michelle Humlicek** (Health Licensing Specialist, State Office Building, Lincoln):

Thank you for your prompt handling of this licensure. We appreciate the processes you are required to perform and take confidence in your office in the licensing of a professional.

Pat Pennisi
Human Resources Coordinator
Faith Regional Health Services
Norfolk, Nebraska


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

On behalf of the Kearney Visitors Bureau, we want to express our sincere appreciation for your assistance with the set-up for the 2010 Amerikids State Gymnastics Competition. The event was a huge success, with around 700 gymnasts from Nebraska, South Dakota and Kansas. We couldn't have pulled off such a great event for our community without your help.

Kristi Urick
Kearney Visitors Bureau

In their own words

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



Dear **Deb Steidley** (Field Operations Manager, DHHS Child Support Enforcement, 220 Bldg., Lincoln):

On behalf of the state of Washington Division of Child Support (DCS) Leadership Team, I personally want to express my appreciation for your help with our DCS of the Future project. The project has a vision of developing a contemporary business model that is fluid, accessible and responsive to customer and staff needs. The project is a huge endeavor and consists of many workgroups studying different aspects of the vision.

As part of the research done by our project members, you were asked to provide information about your local child support program. Your assistance helped our staff compile enough data to develop a comprehensive set of potential solutions.

Our workgroup's products are much better because of your willingness to share your state's best practices and experiences. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to assist our staff members. Your cooperation and assistance are greatly appreciated.

David Stillman, Director
State of Washington
Department of Social and Health Services
Division of Child Support

Dear **Vivianne Chaumont** (Director, Division of Medicaid & Long-Term Care, Lincoln):

Recently I started working with the credentialing of physicians for our hospital and have spoken with **Marla Scheer** (Medicaid Staff Assistant) quite often in the past few months. I just want you to know that she is always so pleasant and helpful. While I am on the phone, she answers my questions and works through the problem I might be having. When I hang up, I know that I have the right answer. Marla represents the State of Nebraska very well. I am comforted in knowing that, when I call, she will be on the other end. Thank you.

Another Satisfied Customer

Dear **Mary Jane Austin** (Social Service Supervisor, DHHS Intake Center, Omaha):

I was so impressed with **Mary E. Craig's** response to a need we had for a client to pick up an interim report form for reporting food stamp expense and income changes, complete it and return it to us via fax. You have good staff!

Diane Pavel
Social Service Supervisor
Buffalo County Courthouse
Kearney, Nebraska

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.

In their own words

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Hi **Emily Walter** (Human Resources Manager, Lincoln),
I would like to take a few seconds to tell you how much
I enjoy working with **Cynthia Hendel**. I need help
sometimes, and she is always right there answering my
emails or phone calls quickly. She is never too busy to
help me. She is a very nice person and she really has a
lot of knowledge. Thanks to Cynthia for all she does.

Suzi Skinner, DHHS, Financial Services,
Issuance and Collections Center

Editor's Note: *Connections* editor **Jerry Crisp** recently retired from a 35-year career here at DHHS. Jerry was the editor of *Connections* for more than a decade and always strived to make our newsletter the best that it could be. We wish Jerry all the best on his retirement and already miss him greatly. Before Jerry retired, he talked about how much he enjoyed editing *Connections* and how grateful he was to be able to meet and write about DHHS employees and the important work we do. Jerry's co-workers had a lot of good things to say about Jerry, too, upon learning about his retirement. Here are some of those comments:

"You made me famous in 2003 for about a month or so, and it was a lot of fun. My wife had the article framed, and it's hanging in my office. The article will forever remind me of those days, and I have you to thank for it. Again, good luck, and thanks for your contributions to all of us."

a former "Front Liner"

"I have really enjoyed working with you! You are such a wonderful writer!"

a co-worker and fan

"Thank you Jerry. You have been an inspiration, champion, teacher, sounding board, editor and so much more. Thank you so much for allowing me to partner with you. It's been so rewarding to share the stories of the people I've worked with, the services we provide, and the recipients of our services."

a *Connections* contributor at one of our 24-hour facilities

"You have done an amazing job supporting us, and we greatly appreciate it!"

another *Connections* contributor at one of our 24-hour facilities

"I've so enjoyed your sense of humor and admired your dedication to *Connections*. Your seemingly endless enthusiasm to make the publication the best it could be, about people and of interest to employees cannot be duplicated."

a co-worker and fan