

# CONNECTIONS

July 2, 2015 VOLUME 15, ISSUE 6

*Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services' employees closer together*

*Three Cheers for Our Red, White & Blue!*

## **Congratulations to the DHHS Employees, Supervisors of the Year for 2015**

There were many nominations received across DHHS and these winners were among the 90 finalists forwarded to Division Directors for their selection.

### **DHHS Employees of the Year for 2015**

**Jamie Andersen**, Children and Family Services, Eastern Service Area, Omaha

**Vonda Apking**, Public Health, Lincoln

**Tammie Brackett**, Veterans' Homes, Scottsbluff

**Julie Docter**, Medicaid and Long-Term Care, Lincoln

**Brittnay Hart**, Operations, Fremont

**Diane Hill**, Children and Family Services, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center, Geneva

**Tate Hurlburt**, IS&T, Lincoln

**Steven Hurt**, Children and Family Services, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center, Kearney

**Angela Janssen**, Veterans' Homes, Norfolk

**Paula Jones**, Children and Family Services, Southeast Service Area, Lincoln

**Susan Kelly**, Developmental Disabilities, Lincoln

**Paula Markuson**, Medicaid and Long-Term Care, Omaha

**Michael Powell**, Developmental Disabilities, Beatrice State Developmental Center

**John Sweazy**, Behavioral Health, Lincoln Regional Center

**Kenneth Zoucha**, Behavioral Health, Hastings Regional Center



### **DHHS Supervisors of the Year for 2015**

**Cynthia Brammeier**, Medicaid and Long-Term Care, Lincoln

**Brenda Coufal**, Public Health, Lincoln

**Levi Hadley**, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center, Kearney

**Richard Kreifels**, Developmental Disabilities, Lincoln

**Molly Krolikowski**, Children and Family Services, Southeast Service Area, Lincoln

**Lois Little**, IS&T, Lincoln

**Shelly Malmstrom**, Veterans' Homes, Grand Island

**Dianna Mastny**, Behavioral Health, Norfolk Regional Center

**Kyle McConnell**, Operations, Lincoln

**Kevin Merrigan**, Veterans' Homes, Bellevue

**David Nicklas**, Behavioral Health, Lincoln Regional Center

**Amanda Sawtelle**, Children and Family Services, Fremont Customer Service Center

**Melanie Standifer**, Medicaid and Long-Term Care, Lincoln

**April Wagar**, Developmental Disabilities, Beatrice State Developmental Center

See page 4 for the list of finalists for Employee & Supervisor of the Year. These positive people strive for excellence every day in their mission of helping people live better lives.

# Stay Connected on



## make the connection . . .

**DHHS Public Website:** [www.dhhs.ne.gov](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov)  
**DHHS Employee Website:** <http://dhhsemployees/>  
**DHHS Helpline:** 1-800-254-4202, (402) 471-6035 in Lincoln, or via email at [dhhs.helpline@nebraska.gov](mailto:dhhs.helpline@nebraska.gov)

Chief Executive Officer: <b>Courtney Phillips</b>	Medicaid and Long-Term Care Division Director: <b>Calder Lynch</b>
Behavioral Health Division Acting Director: <b>Sheri Dawson</b>	Public Health Division Acting Director: <b>Courtney Phillips</b>
Children and Family Services Division Acting Director: <b>Tony Green</b>	Veterans' Homes Division Director: <b>John Hilgert</b>
Developmental Disabilities Division Acting Director: <b>Courtney Phillips</b>	Chief Operating Officer: <b>Matt Clough</b>

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CLS Administrator: <b>Kathie Osterman</b>	Graphics and Layout: <b>Judy Barker</b>
Editor: <b>Dianna Seiffert</b>	

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

**Phone:** (402) 471-1695  
**Fax:** (402) 471-3996

**E-mail:** [dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov](mailto:dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov)

**Interagency mail:** NE State Office Bldg. 3rd Floor  
 U.S. mail: P.O. Box 95026  
 301 Centennial Mall South  
 Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-5026

## [DHHS' Employee Website....](#)

New information and photos are added daily to the employee website. Here are some recent posts and the dates they appeared. Like what you're seeing and reading? Then check out the employee homepage every day! Got an idea or a photo you'd like to share for the employee homepage or *Connections*? Send it to [Dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov](mailto:Dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov).

## Homepage Homeruns .....

### [DHRC Employees Show Their Patriotic Spirit, May 26](#)

DHHS employees at the Hastings Regional Center celebrated Military Appreciation Month, Memorial Day and Barbecue Month recently with a carry-in lunch featuring grilled hamburgers as the main course...all thanks to Grill Chief Steve Fielder, Facility Maintenance Specialist.

HRC staff members dressed in patriotic-themed and/or patriotic-colored clothes for the day.

Corinne Jensen, Administrative Assistant writes...HRC appreciates all members of the Armed Forces who have served or are serving our country! God bless the USA!



Hastings Regional Centers Patriots *Photo: Corinne Jensen*

### [Columbus High Key Club Donates Backpacks to DHHS for Area Children in Need, May 27](#)

Key Club members from Columbus High School received a \$1000 grant to provide backpacks to area children. The Key Club added age-appropriate items to the backpacks for children ages 3-14 who have to be placed out of their home due to abuse or neglect.

Key Club is the oldest and largest service program for high school students. Key Club is a student-led organization that teaches leadership through serving others. The Key Club motto is: "Caring – Our Way of Life" because these words clearly convey member reasons for helping others.



Columbus High School Key Club mentors and Advisor, as well as DHHS Protection & Safety staff in the Columbus office. *Photo: Janet Mulligan*

### [Innovative Recruiting Efforts in Fremont, Scottsbluff, June 9](#)

Recruiting new employees to DHHS is an exciting and impactful job with its own set of challenges. Even though the work we do here is very meaningful, it's still a challenge to get qualified people in the door. That's why DHHS recruiters use innovative ways to catch people's attention and get them to think about pursuing a career here.

[Apply for a job with DHHS](#)



Courtney Phillips, CEO

## Message from Courtney Phillips, CEO

I was at the Capitol with Sheri Dawson, acting director of DHHS' Division of Behavioral Health, (photo, bottom left) at the end of that long ride, to accept letters written by kids from across the state about children's mental health awareness. The letters are so special and heartwarming. A few excerpts are featured on page 5.

- I was asked to speak to a few youth-oriented groups, too, since I last wrote. I met with Cornhusker Girls State students on June 4 in Lincoln, and also shared a short speech with the North Omaha Area Health-YCHW clinic and their youth program at a luncheon in Omaha on June 18th.

Meeting with students gives me a chance to reflect upon my education and career choices. When I talk about my experiences I remember my first real job in Louisiana and how I absolutely love working in government. Each day I wake up, I am on a mission to serve others and to make a positive difference in their health and welfare. This is definitely the work for me.

Since DHHS touches the lives of every Nebraskan in one way or another, I asked both groups of students to consider a career with

us. What we do affects people and there is nothing greater than working toward something much greater than yourself.

- I keep learning more and more about the programs and services we provide here at DHHS, and, on Saturday, June 20, I found out more about our refugee program at a World Refugee Day celebration in Omaha.



I was asked to say a few words and was honored to be part of such an important celebration, a special naturalization ceremony where 29 people were sworn in as citizens. I told them that through our Refugee Resettlement Program, we see the hope and promise of new arrivals and the impact of what they are contributing to our state.

I like sharing all of the great work y'all do here with others in the community.

- The 104th Nebraska Legislature adjourned, too, since I last wrote, and I learned a lot about the nation's only Unicameral Legislature. While DHHS employees have added duties throughout the session, work doesn't stop there. Our work continues throughout the year as many bills affect DHHS programs and services and the work we do. In between legislative sessions, among other duties, employees provide impact summaries and various reports for committee members who request information.
- Lastly, but most importantly, I've met more of you! I traveled to Nebraska City and Kearney, and have more visits scheduled so I can continue to get out and about as much as possible. Everyone continues to be so welcoming, and I really appreciate that.

A lot of the things I'm writing about were featured on our [employee website](#) and also on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). I can't say that I enjoy getting my picture taken, but I do like seeing y'all and all of the people we work with shine. Keep up the good work!

Hello, all! So much happens in just one month around here! Here are a few things I've been involved with since my last column in *Connections*.

- The Pony Express bikers, children, families and organizations like ours, brought awareness in May to children's mental health issues.



## A Change to the Labor Contract Means Internal Reassignment Opportunities for You

By Kari Foote,  
*Human Resources and Development*

As a long-time State Employee, I have found my professional life sometimes revolves around July 1. We experience a lot of change on that date including a new budget year for those in financial roles, wage increases and benefit plan changes.

Every two years we also renegotiate a Labor Contract, and this year marks the start of a new contract. As a result there are some changes to the Nebraska Association of Public Employees (NAPE)/AFSCME Labor Agreement that may impact you.

One of those changes is a new provision in the DHHS Appendix which could offer you a great opportunity to move within the agency. Appendix C is the section of the labor agreement that applies specifically to DHHS employees. Section C.3 describes a new process called an 'Internal Employee Transfer Option.' You may remember section C.3 as the section that covered a 'Work Reassignment Opportunity' or 'WRO.' This new section expands some of the provisions of the previous WRO process.

In this new "Internal Reassignment Opportunity" process, hiring managers now have the option of working with their HR recruiters to post vacancies within the agency, and not require current employees to complete applications through the normal posting process on the state jobs' website. These opportunities are limited to positions within a particular classification and division, but are open statewide to interested employees.

For example, if a hiring manager in the Division of Public Health has a Staff

Assistant II vacancy in Grand Island, he or she has an option of posting an Internal Reassignment Opportunity for other Staff Assistant IIs in the Division of Public Health across the state. Current employees who are interested in applying will be able to submit their interest without having to apply through the state jobs' website.

To make it even simpler, Human Resources is working with Information Systems and Technology (IS&T) to have this process automated and available on the DHHS Employee Intranet. More communication will be available when testing is complete and the process is live.

There are situations when the needs of the agency are best met by posting positions through the traditional process. In those situations, the Internal Reassignment Opportunity process will not be used. However, it is important to remember that as a DHHS employee, you can always apply for any posted position. HR is available to assist in answering any questions you may have about the application process.

DHHS employees are our most valuable asset in living out our mission of helping people live better lives. We hope that providing flexible opportunities for employees to change positions within their division, helps support your career goals. You'll see more information in the coming weeks as this new process is implemented. Until then, please contact your local your [HR support staff](#) for more information.

Want to know more about the Labor Contract for 2015-2017? A summary of changes to the Labor Contract is available on the [Department of Administrative Services' Employee Relations website](#).

## Finalists for Employee, Supervisor of Year Awards

New this year! We're including the list of finalists\* to the Employee and Supervisor of the Year awards. This long list includes people you work with and know. Positive people who strive for excellence every day in their mission of helping people live better lives. Congratulations! With this group of talented coworkers, it truly is an honor to be nominated.

**Behavioral Health** - Employee of Year: John Sweazy and Kenneth Zoucha - Supervisor of Year: John Kroll, Dianna Mastny and Dave Nicklas

**Children and Family Services** - Employee of Year: Jamie Andersen, Bev Goodwin, Diane Hill, Steve Hurt, Paula Jones, Luann McQueen, Sam Musquiz, Susan Ward, Brenda Wickersheim and Claire Wollenburg - Supervisor of Year: Bryan Allen, Tammy Allison, Rex Bavousett, Susan Campos, April Christensen, Robert Dworak, Michelle Eby, Tina Gastineau, Levi Hadley, Molly Krolkowski, Deb Moravec, Amanda Sawtelle, Kelly Tillotson and Betty Toelle

**Developmental Disabilities** - Employee of Year: Kristi, Acklie, Tiah Berkness, Teresa Bubbert, Nina Christen, Connie Cohen-Nelson, Tabitha Day, Yvette Diaz, Susan Kelly, Pam Koziel Thomas, Kevin Kruger, Glenda Naaf, Josh Parde, Lesa Hauptman, Barb Peterson, Stacie Portwood, Mike Powell, Nichole Spilker Reckley, Kellie Thompson, Marj Weichel and Kendra Woodhams - Supervisor of Year: Cheryl Bates, Deneta Hahn, Richard Kreifels, Angie Ludemann, Melissa Snyder and April Wagar

**Medicaid and Long-Term Care** - Employee of Year: Claire Covert-ByBee, Theresa Deckert, Julie Docter and Paula Markuson - Supervisor of Year: Cynthia Brammeier and Melanie Standifer

**Public Health** - Employee of Year: Vonda Apking, Rayma Delaney, Karen Eveans, Pat Infield and Becki Timm - Supervisor of Year: Brenda Coufal and Shannon Grotrian

**Veterans' Homes** - Employee of Year: Tammie Brackett, Virginia Burgess, Roger Fisher, Angela Janssen, Linda Lewis and Deanna Lofton - Supervisor of Year: Rod Halm, Shelly Malmstrom, Kevin Merrigan and Becky Peterson

**Operations** (which includes Financial Services, Human Resources and Development, Internal Audit, Operations Consulting and Support Services) - Employee of Year: Dan Albrecht, Lindsey Eads, Brittney Hart, Ellen Hill and Karen Homes - Supervisor of Year: Rod Halm, Kyle McConnell, Jennifer Monroe and Kim Mostek

**CEO/Director's Office** (which includes Communications and Legislative Services, Information Systems and Technology and Legal Services) - Employee of Year: Tracey Doeden, Pam Hagaman, Tate Hurlburt, Mike McCormick and Andy Scherer - Supervisor of Year: Lois Little and Claire Speedlin

\*These finalists were selected from all employees nominated.

# Pony Express Motorcycle Ride Raises Awareness of Children's Mental Health Issues



By Jan (Loretta) Goracke,  
Program (Network) Specialist,  
Behavioral Health

According to letters delivered to DHHS CEO **Courtney Phillips** and **Sheri Dawson**, Acting Director of DHHS' Division of Behavioral Health, Nebraska youth are very appreciative of the state's focus on mental health awareness and they have a deep understanding for the need for good mental health. Collected during the May 28-30 Pony Express motorcycle ride across Nebraska, the letters were delivered in Lincoln on Saturday, May 30, 2015, at the conclusion of this year's event.

Inspired by this year's theme of "Coming Together is Fundamental,"

one youth expressed appreciation of the state's efforts in helping families by saying that "Mom helps me and the people that need help can be helped by their Moms, too."

A young lady cited a brother with issues with mental health who needs a lot of help, and because of supports in place, she is thankful that he is able to get the help he needs.

Josh appreciated the help available for kids and other people, because its tuff (sic) for people with mental health problems and it's hard for the families to deal with stress and problems they have. He finished his letter with the recommendation that the federal government needs to be pushed to use more money to research more medications.

When families, behavioral health organizations and policy makers work together in the best interests of children's mental health, many good things can happen. Letters from youth who use these services can be good barometers of our work.

Occurring annually in May, the Pony Express motorcycle ride is organized by the Nebraska Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health. To participate in next year's ride, or ask about other activities that occur throughout the year, contact Sara S. Nicholson, Chief Operating Officer, Nebraska Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, at (877)239-8880, or access their [website](#).

"The Pony Express ride is a good reminder of the importance of children's behavioral health services," said DHHS CEO Courtney Phillips. "To ensure Nebraskan children have the behavioral

health supports they need when they need it, we must work together on various levels. With treatment, we can help them toward recovery and give them a better shot at healthier futures."

DHHS' Division of Behavioral Health offers several resources for families with behavioral health needs, including the [Nebraska Family Helpline](#) (1-888-866-8660), a free and confidential resource for parents who have questions or concerns about their child's behaviors, and [Nebraska's Network of Care](#) website which connects people with information about behavioral health services in their geographical

areas as well as across the state.

The Division of Behavioral Health has begun the important work of developing and implementing a statewide system of care that will improve the availability and delivery of children's mental and behavioral health services and supports, including resources for families. Division leaders, partners from other child-serving agencies and youth and family members from across the state have joined together to develop a system of care plan and are enthusiastically supporting the plan's implementation.



Pony Express bikers, kids and families, and organizations like DHHS gathered at the Capitol building in Lincoln recently to bring attention to the need for children's mental health services. *Photos: Blane Osterman*

# Reframing Negativity

*“If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.” Wayne Dyer*

By Richard Mettler,  
Human Resources

It's important that we maintain a positive, solution-focused attitude at work, especially when confronting challenges. However, this does not always come easily.



People are meaning-driven. When confronted with the unknown or unwelcomed events and experiences we feel compelled to find an answer to, “What does this mean for me?” We do this even in the face of incomplete or minimal information—the facts.

Events and experiences do not come to us with inherent meaning. We attach meaning to what happens to and around us through the assumptions, beliefs, and expectations that we contribute. We put our own, sometimes negative, ‘spin’ on things that happen.

## Principles about Reframing Negativity

- The meaning or ‘frame’ that we place on something governs how we respond to it.
- Sometimes we get stuck in a negative pattern of perceiving events and experiences. We convince ourselves that we are describing the one true reality, when we are actually just choosing one of many equally valid interpretations of reality.
- When we reframe, we re-examine the known facts from a different perspective, which allows an equally valid alternative meaning of an event or experience. It’s as though we are looking at the same thing through a different lens.
- Reframing is not denying challenges and disappointments by viewing the world through ‘rose colored glasses.’ When reframing we describe events and experiences honestly, but in terms that point toward a more positive future—a future we can influence through our actions.

## Following are Examples of Positive Reframing:

**From:**  
*“I really botched that up. I’ll never be good at this.”*

**Reframed to:**  
*“Let me look at what I learned during this first try. Experience is a powerful teacher. There must be some things I can do differently next time.”*

**From:**  
*“She’s impossible to work with.”*

**Reframed to:**  
*“All I want is for her to turn in her reports on time. What can I do to help make this happen?”*

**From:**  
*“There’s no way I’ll make this move to the new facility location work for me.”*

**Reframed to:**  
*“I’ve successfully managed change before. Maybe there are some positives in this move that I’m overlooking.”*

**From:**  
*“He’s lazy and just doesn’t care about his job.”*

**Reframed to:**  
*“I would like him to interact with the patients more frequently. There must be ways to encourage this.”*

.....  
Please email your thoughts, concerns, or suggestions about workplace courtesy and workplace relationships to [Richard.Mettler@nebraska.gov](mailto:Richard.Mettler@nebraska.gov) I will email you a response, and perhaps anonymously feature your ideas in a future column.

*“My life has been filled with terrible misfortunes, most of which have never happened.” Mark Twain*

# Way to Go!

## Statewide and National Recognitions, Honors and Awards

### Recognizing Nurses and the Good Work They Do

DHHS has more than 350 nurses working here in facilities and offices across the state. During National Nurse Week in May the DHHS bulletin board was active with notes recognizing the importance of nurses and acknowledging the strong commitment, compassion and care nurses show each and every day.



Many DHHS facilities and offices held unique and special recognitions for their nurses.

The nurse leadership team at the Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home, for example, gave out plants and certificates (pictured above) to the nurses thanking them for "Planting the seeds of success."

Nursing is a proud, honored and trusted vocation.

Thanks, nurses, for everything that you do to help Nebraskans live better lives!

### Provider Magazine Recognizes Dawnette Bredberg's Expertise

Congratulations to **Dawnette Bredberg**, BSN, RN-BC, Director of Nursing at the Eastern Nebraska Veterans Home in Bellevue. She is featured in an article called "Certified Nurses Improve Facility Quality" in the national monthly magazine published by the American Health Care Association, National Center for Assisted Living.

The article emphasizes how registered nurses that become board

certified are in a unique position to affect quality in long-term care settings at the bedside and to influence the care delivered by both individual staff members and the team as a whole. Cited as a clinical expert and nursing leader, Dawnette stated that specialized training in an environment like ENVH that serves residents requiring assisted living, intermediate, skilled and Alzheimer's care definitely benefits the care delivered to all the residents.



Another interesting twist to recognizing and celebrating the true calling of "nursing" comes from the Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home. ENVH nurses recognized their retired colleagues, members living at ENVH.

Here's just one of the stories...

Pictured left with **Taryn Struthers** is Mary Martin a 93-year-old retired RN who served overseas during World War II in the Army. Mary was also chosen to be a Nurse Ambassador while in the service to work with other countries' medical units.  
*Photo: Dawnette Bredberg*

### Advancing Health Equity in NE 2015 Minority Health Conference July 14 at the Holiday Inn - Kearney

Learn more about advancing health equity in Nebraska at the 2015 Minority Health Conference in Kearney. The conference tracks include Health Disparities, Evidence-based Strategies, and Community Health Workers. Participants will increase their knowledge related to these tracks and also build collaborative partnerships that will help advance health equity in Nebraska and help Nebraskans live better lives.

Keynote speakers include:

- Courtney Phillips, DHHS CEO
- Dr. Ali Khan, Dean, College of Public Health, UNMC
- Dr. Leandris Liburd, Associate Director, Minority Health & Health Equity, CDC

Topics include health literacy, cultural intelligence/cultural competency, data roadmap, motivational interviewing, concentrated disadvantage, social determinants of health.

Register at [www.cn-ahec.org/minorityhealth.html](http://www.cn-ahec.org/minorityhealth.html). Scholarships are available for Community Health Workers.

For additional information, contact the Nebraska Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity at [dhhs.minorityhealth@nebraska.gov](mailto:dhhs.minorityhealth@nebraska.gov) or Judy Ritta at [judy@cn-ahec.org](mailto:judy@cn-ahec.org).

# In Gratitude

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services' mission:

**Helping people live better lives.**



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

**Jason Kerkman** (Injury Prevention Program/Safe Kids Coordinator, Lincoln),

Thank you for sponsoring Nebraska Child Passenger Safety Update. Please let State officials know that we appreciate the State of Nebraska for their support.

I know that a lot of this support would not happen without you going to "BAT" for the safety of the children and families in Nebraska!

The update was an awesome event and informative even for us old timers who have been around awhile!

**Good Beginnings - Car Seat Fitting Station at Brodstone Memorial Hospital, Superior**

Dear **Susan Lyness** (Program Specialist, Medicaid and Long-Term Care, Lincoln),

I spoke to you in regard to my father and the Estate for Recovery letter I received from **Jon Sterns** (Program Specialist, Medicaid and Long-Term Care, Lincoln). Thank you for the very kind manner in which you helped me with finalizing this with Dad. I don't know what our family would have done without DHHS. Through the past few years those of you that we have worked with have always been so kind and considerate.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for all you have done for Dad and our family.

**Editor's Note:** **Jack and Sharon Jacobs** have volunteered at DHHS' Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Geneva for more than 15 years mentoring girls (among other duties) who otherwise have no visitors. They received this letter from a YRTC-G youth. As you can see, it means so very much to have adult mentors in these young ladies' lives.

Dear Jack and Sharon,

I'm going to miss you guys soooo much. I'm so glad you were my volunteers. I've never met people as nice as you. You taught me a lot. You made me feel like I was part of your family. I'm never going to forget you two wonderful people. I'm going to keep in touch. You took me in with open hearts and minds. You treated me lavishly. When I get time, I'm going to travel to Geneva to come see you.

Sharon, I love and appreciate you so much. You're like my mom and grandma rolled into one. The scrapbook you and I made together will always be cherished. I hope you and Jack like this blanket I made. I loved cooking and baking with you. Stay beautiful and positive! I'll miss you!

Jack, You're a great person, there is no doubt about that. You're a funny guy. You're like the grandpa I never had. I will never forget you. Stay friendly forever!

## To my Coworkers at DHHS—Past, Present and Future:

I turned 50 this June. I will be proudly celebrating my 24th year of service with DHHS in September. 24 years of service is very close to 50,000 work hours...naturally, I am taking stock.

When I started with the Department, I needed a job. I had never worked with people with Intellectual Disabilities. Now, I have a career that I consider to be a calling to be part of ensuring that all people have access to similar opportunities as I have had.

When I started with the Department, I was a newlywed. Now, my husband and I are looking forward to our 25th wedding anniversary and celebrating with our two children. I am confident that skills I have gained through my work as a Service Coordinator and my journey as a wife and mother have complemented each other and made me better at both.

So, for the opportunity to: spend time with colleagues who brighten my day; support individuals who open my heart and challenge my mind; and go home with a continued sense of purpose and energy...I want to say thank you!

**Wanting to remain anonymous**