

# Connections

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

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

July 2011  
VOLUME 11, ISSUE 7



Staff, members and guests from the Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home were on hand to celebrate the ground breaking of the Legacy Veterans Memorial Garden. From left: Jeff Smith, ENVH Administrator; Bruce Husted, American Legion; Aimee Middleton, Legacy Veterans Group; Courtney Kucirek, Legacy Veterans Group; Julie Bruning, Director, Legacy Veterans Group; Don Preister, Bellevue City Council; Bill Bowes, Legacy Veterans Group; and Tom Blacketer, ENVH Maintenance Supervisor.

*Photo: Audrey Hester*

## HIGHLIGHTS (Click on headline to jump to story)

<a href="#">Good Life</a>	3	<a href="#">YRTC-K: Horses Help Heal</a>	7
<a href="#">New Employee Website</a>	4	<a href="#">Fitness Challenge</a>	8
<a href="#">Summit on Youth</a>	4	<a href="#">Wellness Champions</a>	9
<a href="#">NVH Mural Showcases Farm Life</a>	5	<a href="#">In Their Own Words</a>	11

# DHHS now on **twitter** and **facebook**

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

## DHHS in the News Update. . .

Here are a few headlines of news releases recently issued by Communications & Legislative Services about DHHS programs. You can read and subscribe to all DHHS news releases from the DHHS [Newsroom](#). You can also listen to [sound bites](#) issued with releases.

[Free Water Testing Offered at Scotts Bluff County Fair](#) July 7, 2011

[Western Nebraska Veterans' Home Receives Perfect Score](#) July 1, 2011

[Mosquito Pools Test Positive for West Nile](#) July 1, 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!

### make the connection . . .

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

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

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

Chief Executive Officer:

**Kerry Winterer**

Behavioral Health

Division Director:

**Scot Adams, Ph.D.**

Children and Family Services

Division Director:

**Todd Reckling**

Developmental Disabilities

Division Director:

**Jodi Fenner**

Medicaid and Long-Term Care

Division Director:

**Vivianne Chaumont**

Public Health Division

Director/Chief Medical Officer:

**Dr. Joann Schaefer**

Veterans' Homes Division

Director:

**John Hilgert**

Chief Operating Officer:

**Matt Clough**

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

CLS Administrator:

**Kathie Osterman**

Editor:

**Dianna Seiffert**

Graphics and Layout:

**Maisun Allahi**

**Judy Barker**

**Robby DeFrain**

► **Readers are invited to submit news, photos & 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:** Nebraska State Office Bldg. 3rd Floor **U.S. mail:** P.O. Box 95026, 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-5026

## About the Cover:

### Ground-breaking Ceremony Held for New Memorial Gardens at ENVH

July 14, 2011, was a special day at the Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home (ENVH). The date marked the four-year anniversary of ENVH's official opening, but there was also a dedication of newly-installed bioretention gardens and a ground-breaking event for the Legacy Veterans Memorial Garden.

"We are honored to be the recipient of a lot of hard work and support from the Legacy Veterans Group, Green Bellevue and the community to make the grounds of the home more beautiful for the veterans we serve," said **Jeff Smith**, Administrator, ENVH.

The garden will encompass a five-acre space behind the Veterans' Home. The Legacy Veterans Group continues an on-going fundraising effort to construct and maintain the memorial garden at the veterans' home. Anybody can purchase a brick for \$100, with proceeds going to the garden.

ENVH is one of four veterans' homes operated by DHHS. The other veterans' homes are located in Grand Island, Norfolk, and Scottsbluff. Visit [www.lvgnebraska.com](http://www.lvgnebraska.com) for more information about ENVH's garden project.

DHHS is working closely with the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to bring up-to-date information concerning flooding in Nebraska. DHHS provides information daily for news release updates from the Joint Information Center in NEMA and provides updates through Twitter and Facebook.

Did you know that DHHS employees write columns that are sent to media across the state? Topics include: Families Matter, ACCESSNebraska, and Preventing Medicare Fraud. Here's a link to recent columns:

<http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/newsroom/columns/>



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



Kerry Winterer

Photo: Bill Wiley

By Kerry T. Winterer, CEO

During August, state employees will be able to participate in the State's Charitable Giving Campaign and ultimately help thousands of Nebraskans. It's a way for all of us – employees from all agencies and from across the state – to work together and share our generosity.

I hope you'll give serious consideration to taking part in the Campaign this year. Last year, 3,415 state employees gave \$424,087, and our goal is to increase participation this year. If you haven't given in the past, pledging even \$1.00 per pay period can make a difference.

Many organizations are affiliated with one of the three federations (United Way, Community Health Charities, and Community Services Fund) and through them, the

dollars that are contributed by state employees reach diverse needs in every part of the state.

Nebraskans, young and old, benefit from your generosity.

This year's Charitable Giving Campaign runs August 1 – 26, and you can contribute to specific organizations. Payroll deductions for the Campaign will begin in January 2012, and can make giving almost effortless.

In addition to individual pledge cards, giving can be a group activity and fun, too.

Consider some friendly challenges within and between DHHS offices, program areas, etc. It's been good to hear about past efforts, both within DHHS and from other agencies, to raise funds.

Some work groups have "sold" jean days or food (food days are always a hit!) with proceeds going to the Campaign. Some brave people have offered to be part of "buy a try" for dunk tanks, and others have challenged colleagues to penny wars. If you're involved in a fun way to raise funds for the Campaign, think about sharing your ideas and successes on the Employee Bulletin Board! What you're doing could motivate others to try something new.

Who's up for a "virtual" baseball game between state agencies?

More information will come from Campaign coordinators about the game, where each state agency is assigned to one of five "virtual" baseball teams as a way to increase participation and donations. DHHS divisions are represented on four of the five state teams.

And lastly, if you watch the State Campaign video this year, you'll see our own Darrin Wyatt, Social Services

Lead Worker in Grand Island, talking about his personal involvement with the Nebraska Children's Home Society Foundation. The video, shot and produced for the

Campaign by DHHS public information officers, shows how organizations benefit from the Campaign and how they might make connections with our own families, neighbors, and co-workers.

Thanks, in advance, for considering giving to the State's Charitable Giving Campaign this year and I hope to hear about some fun group activities, too!

## Nebraskans, young and old, benefit from your generosity.

# New Site Launching August 15 - Employee Test Group Helps Guide Development of the New Employee Intranet



Captured in a rare, Zen-like moment, Webmaster Greg Votava (left) and John Canfield, DHHS – OCIO, continue work on the SharePoint conversion project.

By Greg L. Votava

During the week of May 31–June 3, 30 DHHS employees were given first view of the new DHHS employee intranet. The group was invited to provide input on what they liked, what they didn't like and how things could be improved.

Since that time, adjustments have been made and continue to be made based on the comments of the group.

Some of the comments included:

- “The site is easy to navigate.” – **Karen Parde**
- “The drop down menu is great.” – **Derry Stover**
- “The new ‘modern’ layout of this site makes me actually want to use and explore our intranet.” – **Shelley Ball**
- “Looks like a good start – the new format is more inviting and fairly easy to navigate.” – **Iliana Martin**
- “I think it is going to be great for our field workers.” – **Lisa Maddock**

Additionally, on June 14th and 16th, 75 web content providers from various areas of the agency and public information officers were given initial training on how to make website edits using SharePoint.

Once the training was complete, they were provided a “sandbox” where they are now allowed to practice with the software and learn more using a hands-on approach in a safe environment.

We're planning to launch the new employee site August 15. The public website is planned to be released in the new SharePoint platform at the end of August.

## Summit for Youth Permanency is a Call to Action

By Jeanne Atkinson

The June 22 Summit on Youth Permanency was all about the youth. Approximately 50 youth joined almost 200 other people in Lincoln to focus on youth “aging out” of Nebraska’s foster care system. The goal is for all young people leaving foster care to make successful transitions to adulthood.

“Having youth actively participate in break-out groups and discussions was absolutely necessary as we come to better understand what’s needed to help kids transition to adulthood and independence,” said **Todd Reckling**, Director of the Division of Children and Family Services.

In fiscal year 2010, 224 youth left Nebraska’s foster care system when they turned 19. That’s up from 183 youth in fiscal year 2006.



(L-R): Janteice, Haley and Oscar brought their ideas and their life experiences to the Summit on Youth Permanency.

Photo: Jeanne Atkinson

The Summit focused on: raising awareness about older youths’ experiences in foster care; identifying barriers and solutions to achieving permanency and stability for Nebraska youth; and in developing action steps to create a State Permanency Plan for older youth.

“Our private and public partners can and must work together to get the best possible outcomes for our young people,” said Reckling.

“We all want to make sure youth are connected to caring adults and have the tools they need to lead productive lives. We can’t do it alone, but we can do it –

together.”

The Summit was co-sponsored by DHHS, the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, the Sherwood Foundation, and the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative.



# NVH Mural Showcases Peaceful Farm Scene



(L-R): Kathleen, Aloysius, and Alice. That's a real steering wheel from an International Harvester tractor mounted on the wall of this mural. It's like you're seated on the tractor yourself!

*Photos by Linda Sparr*

**Editor's Note:** A couple of things... Alice Pracht is not only a talented artist, but a talented writer as well, as demonstrated in the following article. Unit E is a Secured Special Needs Unit for NVH members with various stages of dementia.

*By Alice Pracht*

**Donna Crist**, Associate Nursing Director, had a vision for the residents of Unit E in the Norfolk Veterans' Home. She wanted to make the meeting room fun for the members. Puzzles and games were brought in, craft items were stocked and an interactive board was put on one wall. A steering wheel was mounted on the wall at the room's end. And then her idea was born.

"I want to have a mural," Donna said to Alice Pracht, the daughter of a member in Unit E. "A mural of a farm scene. And this tractor steering wheel would have a crop in front of it. Members could sit right here and remember cultivating with their own tractors."

Alice asked her sister, Kathleen, if she would like to tackle the project when she came to visit from Virginia. They

decided to paint the mural in honor of **Aloysius Cerny**, their father. His career after the Army was that of an Art Educator, and they knew this project would be fun to do for all the members of Unit E.

The sisters decided to make this farm be a snapshot of the late 1950s. They began to look at rural pictures, and do research about old tractors, vintage vehicles, and ways of life on the farm. Members offered their expertise in farming ways of the past. The men discussed what kind of cattle should be in the fields. There is a '57 Chevy and a '53 Ford pickup in the yard. Alice's father-in-law still has a truck like the Ford in the mural.

"We went to a farm and took pictures from behind

the steering wheel of an old H series International Harvester tractor. We just wanted to get all the details right," said Kathleen. "These guys remember their tractors, and we wanted to make it as correct as possible."

Aloysius came in frequently to see the progress of the scene. At times he would comment by pointing to areas of the mural. "Yes, dad, you're right. That shadow should be longer, cast by the morning sunrise." As he watched his daughters paint, he said, "You're doing a good job," and then he commented while watching his girls paint the tiny details, "You need to know when to quit."

So the view from across this room in Unit E is of a tranquil morning on the farm – but if you get close you will see many fun, small items and creatures. You'll find a lot of little details like: a rabbit, two cats, a dog, a hen and her five chicks, a robin in a nest with two blue eggs, a cardinal singing in a tree, a meadowlark on the fence, a squirrel, a flock of geese, three flying birds, an American flag, a clump of sunflowers, the name of the ranch, and the brands on the cattle.

If you're in Norfolk, stop by the Veterans' Home and see the mural for yourself.

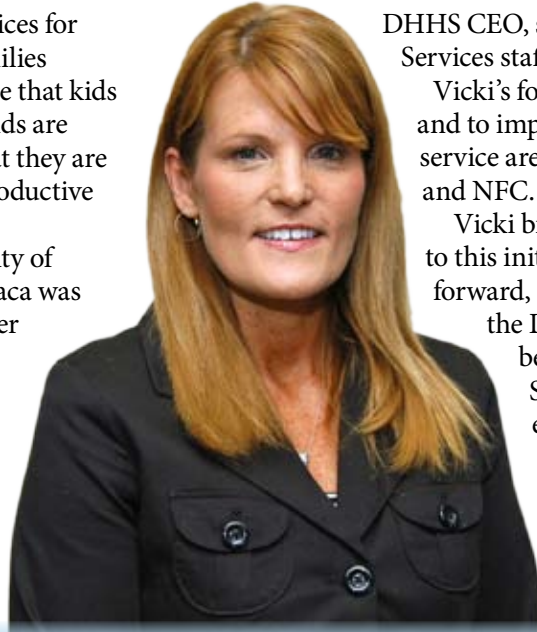


# Vicki Maca is New Families Matter Administrator

At DHHS, we're improving services for children and families through Families Matter. Families Matter makes sure that kids and neighborhoods are safe, that kids are connected to caring adults, and that they are given the tools they need to lead productive lives.

Families Matter is a major priority of the Department. Recently Vicki Maca was asked to serve as the Families Matter administrator in the Eastern and Southeast Service areas.

"I believe we can benefit from having someone devoted to Families Matter full-time and Vicki's experience lends itself to this role," Kerry Winterer,



DHHS CEO, said in an e-mail to Children and Family Services staff.

Vicki's focus will be to bring uniform management and to implement Families Matter across the two service areas currently working very closely with KVC and NFC.

Vicki brings energy, knowledge and great ideas to this initiative and she has our full support going forward, Kerry said. Vicki was an administrator for the Department's Division of Behavioral Health before serving as the interim Southeast Service Area administrator, and also has experience as a Protection and Safety administrator in Omaha, working with Project Harmony and the Child Abuse and Neglect hotline.

# Jenifer Roberts-Johnson Joins Public Health

A familiar face with DHHS is now the newest addition to our public health leadership team. Jenifer Roberts-Johnson, J.D., was recently announced as the new Chief Administrator for the Division.

"Jenifer is an outstanding leader," Dr. Joann Schaefer said in an e-mail to staff. "Her excellent management skills coupled with her strengths as a communicator, mediator, and negotiator have earned her a high-level of respect among her co-workers."

Jenifer knows DHHS through her work in other areas of the Department. Most recently, she was the Administrator of the Operations Section for Medicaid & Long-Term Care. There she was responsible for a broad range of duties including oversight of a number of information technology



initiatives for the Division. Prior to that, Jenifer was a supervising attorney with DHHS Legal Services. Because of Jenifer's diverse background, she is already familiar with our agency, how we do business, and the people we serve, including vulnerable populations. Her experience and leadership will play a critical role in advancing our public health priorities.

"Working in the Division of Public Health gives me an opportunity to continue to broaden my knowledge of DHHS programs," Jenifer said.

"I'm excited to join the Public Health team."

"I know that you will enjoy working with her as we all move forward together and continue our commitment to public health and helping Nebraskans live healthier lives," said Schaefer.



# Laughs and Belly-laughs at the YRTC in Kearney



**(L-R):** Associate Pastor Erickson, Grace Fellowship; comedians Michael Jr. and Jason Earls; and Pastor Michael Pearson, YRTC-K Religious Coordinator. *Photo: Jolene Jareck*

By Jeanne Atkinson

California comedian Michael Jr. entertained youth and staff at the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in

Kearney on June 23. He used humor to deliver his message, which is that it's up to each person to make choices and to have a plan for his or her life at all times.

Michael Jr. used real-life examples of how he overcame difficulties. For example, his plan to help him overcome his difficulty with reading involved looking at each sentence seven different ways, using color, and creating a picture to go with each word. He also spoke about reading peoples' faces and then figuring out how best to approach them and talk with them.

"It was a really neat experience for the youth, and they enjoyed it," said **Jana Peterson**, YRTC-K Administrator. "We're always grateful when someone can entertain the youth and also deliver a good message."

Michael Jr. works on the philosophy that, "If I'm in a club, my material has to be clean enough to work in a church. If I'm in a pulpit, it has to be funny enough to work in a club."

Grace Fellowship and Impact Kearney brought Michael Jr. to the Kearney community, and he then agreed to do a show at the YRTC-K.

# Horses Help Heal at a Kearney Riding Center



Carter Siebke (right) is director of the center. *Photo: Steve Huffman*

By Jeanne Atkinson

A great new volunteer opportunity brings together horses and boys at the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Kearney (YRTC-K).

Youth will go to the Kearney Therapeutic Riding Center once a week until the weather turns colder.

"The youth do a great job, and learned how to put halters on the horses and groom them," said Youth Counselor Supervisor **Steven Huffman**. "They also helped clean the pens and exercised the horses."

The riding center provides horse-related activities called "therapeutic riding" to people with special needs. The movement of a horse can be used

to improve balance, coordination and posture, increase flexibility, and build muscle and core strength.

This is a good example of how the YRTC-K partners with a wide variety of community organizations. It lets youth pay back to the community and learn new and different skills. Any youth who's interested in riding the horses will get the opportunity to do so.

"All of them were very excited and want to volunteer again," said Huffman. "They couldn't stop talking about it on the way back."

Huffman and Counselor **Trevor Spiegel** helped organize this opportunity with support from Facility Operating Officer **Rey Rodriguez** and Facility Administrator **Jana Peterson**.

# Are You Up to the Challenge? Join State Leadership and Set a Healthy Example



Dr. Joann Schaefer gives Gov. Dave Heineman a healthy snack before one of many Wellness walks in the Capital Building.

Photo: Bill Wiley

From the *WellnessOptions* website:

Gov. **Dave Heineman** and other state leaders are challenging others to follow in their footsteps –literally!

After participating in the state's WellnessOptions programs, many are now reaping the benefits of having changed their old habits and behaviors, and adopting new and healthy physical activities and nutritional lifestyles.

The Governor doubled his steps from 2010 to 2011, from 2 million to 4 million. "Honestly, it was not difficult after I made up my mind," said Gov. Heineman. "The key for me was making small changes, starting with simply standing up and walking while talking on my cell and eating healthier. Now, it's a habit for me."

As a result of these small lifestyle changes, the Governor experienced many health improvements in his biometric screening measurements. Specifically, his improvements include the following:

- Loss of over 10 pounds
- Decrease in total cholesterol
- Increase in HDL (good cholesterol)

- Decrease in LDL (bad cholesterol)
- Decrease in triglycerides
- Decrease in both systolic and diastolic blood pressure

Upon seeing his 2011 results, the Governor said, "After learning the progress I have made with a few small changes, I want to encourage all state employees to make time for wellness."

First Lady **Sally Ganem** also experienced several improvements with her screening measurements. Both the First Lady and the Governor attended the screening at the same time this year and upon comparing their results, they were excited and ready for a little family competition. The challenge is on! The First Lady indicated, "It's now a family effort in which we will challenge each other and compare results again next year!"

In addition to the Governor, other senior leaders have experienced success with their biometric screening results and have provided permission to share their experience and outcomes.

- **Dr. Joann Schaefer** (Nebraska's Chief Medical Officer and Director of Public Health) was excited to

have all her biometric results within normal range, which she credits to fruits and vegetables and running with her husband.

- **Carlos Castillo** (Director, DAS) had significant improvements in his cholesterol levels due to increasing his level of physical activity and whole grains.
- **Bob Houston** (Director, Correctional Services) keeps his biometrics "in-check" and exercises as much for his mental well-being as he does for his physical health by enjoying long bike rides, kayaking and long runs. These wellness efforts are now a family effort, in which Bob is joined by his wife.

Making small changes in your activity levels and eating habits can have many health benefits. Over time, these changes become a lifestyle, a healthy lifestyle of wellness. Join Gov. Heineman and other senior leaders to make some healthy changes for the benefit of your health and wellness. Help us to create a culture of wellness across the state of Nebraska!



# Meet Two DHHS Wellness Champions

Congratulations to two DHHS employees who were recently recognized as “Wellness Wall of Famers.” **Larry Molczyk** and **Craig Connolly** have seen some pretty amazing results from changing their lifestyles for the better. Here are their stories:



Larry's first parachute jump taken this past fall. "It's all a part of just feeling better about myself and the challenges I am willing to face, given my greater emphasis on wellness."

**Larry Molczyk**, Activity Assistant, Grand Island Veterans' Home

In 2003, I was 50 pounds overweight and wanted to shed some weight. I wasn't into changing my lifestyle so I took the easy way out and got diet pills from my doctor.

Eventually, I began experiencing side effects from the diet pills, and I realized this wasn't a sustainable option for the long run. I began looking at my diet from a nutritional standpoint

**Craig Connolly**, IT Help Desk Coordinator, Lincoln

I think that the Wellness Program offered by the State of Nebraska is a proactive approach to managing one's health. It encourages activities that will reduce the incidences of preventable health issues and helps you to take more responsibility for your own health, as well as helping to control the spiraling costs of health care.

Since I enrolled in the WellnessOptions plan, particularly the "Walk This Way" program, exercise has become a regular part of my daily routine. I have religiously worn my pedometer, and have managed to walk a minimum of 10,000 steps daily. The longer I have been in the program, the higher my step counts have gotten. It truly is an important part of my daily regimen! It isn't always easy to fit a good walk into the schedule, but if

you make it a priority you can do it. I'm at the point where I would truly miss it if I were unable to walk on a given day.

I am a diabetic and walking has really helped me control my glucose levels. Naturally, making smarter dietary choices is a major element in diabetes management, but for me, regular walking has been a big piece of the puzzle. The exercise has also kept my blood pressure in check and is a great way to unwind after work or gear up for a new day. It helps reduce stress and provides an opportunity to think about everything or nothing depending on the day.

My best recommendation for managing your health is to be proactive about your health. Don't wait until something happens before you consider a lifestyle change, like I did. Getting on board with Walk This Way is one of the best choices I have made and has had the biggest impact on my health.

and changed my way of eating. I started a walking program to fulfill the wellness PPO program requirements and reaped the rewards of feeling ever more able to do the things I wanted.

I have been able to maintain a 35-pound weight loss now over several years. It makes it easier to buy clothes. It's easier to move around and I feel better about myself. Medically, I've been diagnosed as being pre-diabetic, but have been able to avoid taking drugs because I have maintained my A1C level through the increased activity of my walking program.

My wake-up call came when my 10-year-old son was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. I realized that the lifestyle and eating habits that he was forced to adopt made sense for us all. I believe that making small, manageable changes rather than drastic changes allow these changes to become long term. I also believe we should try to avoid highly processed foods and environmental and chemical contaminants.

The State of Nebraska WellnessOptions program, focuses on keeping well, not waiting to treat emerging diseases. I like that this is available for the State of Nebraska employees. Offering screenings for PSA levels and colonoscopies keeps on top of emerging conditions, while the annual screenings and health surveys give focus to things that are easy to forget along the way.

I also like being "rewarded" through financial incentives (lower premiums) for taking some responsibility for my own health and well-being.



Craig and his wife on their "longest walk of the summer." "We did the Crazy Horse Volkswalk in the Black Hills last month."

# Exploring Different Cultures to Help Understand Health Disparities



The Cultural Competency training class makes a stop at the Southern Sudan Community Association.

*By Diane Lowe, Health Program Manager*

Exploring different cultures and related health disparities is a priority for the Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity. Staff recently provided Cultural Competency training to a group of college students from across the state at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC). Students competed for the opportunity to participate in the 2.5-day training, which was coordinated by the Rural Health Education Network (RHEN) at UNMC.

The training included explorations of stereotypes and generalizations, historical events and perspectives, and current

and historical populations and related health disparities. One key discussion addressed the dangers inherent to cultural competency trainings that focus on lists of traits, beliefs, or other facts about cultural groups, which leads to stereotyping and tends to devalue individuals. There were discussions on hidden and obvious aspects and effects of culture such as locus of control, time orientation, generation, gender, socioeconomic status, and beliefs and values.

Cultural beliefs and norms about things as simple as time or control can have a profound impact on individuals and groups. For example, differing time orientations – either in a focus on past, present, or future or on the importance

of time – can impact whether people are on time for work or appointments or finish assignments on deadline. Similarly, differences in beliefs about control can affect how people handle change or react to news of an illness.

Staff used interactive discussion, quizzes, case studies, and other activities to generate reflection and reconsideration of personal beliefs and opinions. Role plays with interpreters and limited English proficient (LEP) clients were also part of the experience for students. The students learned from the formal instruction and from interacting with individuals and groups to whom they had not had much prior access.

The training was followed by a meal of African food at the International Café in Omaha and visits to three community centers and the homes of Sudanese, Somali, and Karen/Burmese families.

The training was so successful that RHEN has asked the Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity to repeat it annually.

**Liliana Bronner**, who organized the training for UNMC, stated, “I learned just as much as (the students) did, if not more... It was a complete success.”

This cultural competency training is available, in whole or in part, to DHHS staff, as well. Please contact the Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity for more information, (402) 471-0881.



# In their own words

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

**Dawn Anderson** (Social Services Supervisor, North Platte):

I had the pleasure of working with one of your workers, **Susan Kubart** (Social Services Worker) on two separate cases. While I only exchanged e-mails regarding a children's Medicaid application I was pleased with her attentiveness to the case. She was very polite and willing to help the family we were working with together. The family was very grateful that they were able to get everything straightened out without a huge headache. Susan even let me know when she had processed the case. I was most impressed that she was open to all the questions I had regarding the case and promptly and kindly responded to my questions. I don't know if there is a way to give her kudos, but she definitely deserves a pat on the back.

**OneWorld Community Health Centers, Inc.**

Dear **Pam Nelson** (Children and Family Services Specialist, Dakota City),

We just wanted to tell you thank you for being there for us. We were very lucky to have you to help us in this time of trouble. Thank you for being understanding, compassionate, comforting and concerned for our well being! We've met a few really great people throughout our ordeal, and we thank you very much for all your support.

**Grateful clients**

Dear **YRTC (Kearney)**,

Thanks for all the time and effort to help me. You changed my life. Thanks for the times of fun. Hope to see you all when I come to visit. I appreciate all the staff do. Everybody taught me well.

**A thankful client**

**Dan Scarborough** (Administrator, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Geneva),

I really enjoyed the tour of your facility Tuesday. I had never been on your campus. I was impressed by the quality of the surroundings and of your staff. We should all be proud to have such important work going on in our county.

**Fillmore County Hospital,**  
as part of an area Leadership Group sponsored  
by the Fillmore County Development  
Corporation

# In their own words

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

**Marvene Smith** (Service Coordinator, Aged and Disabled Waiver Program, Omaha),

I know that my job as an advocate is to do this work so he can have the things he needs to reach his full potential, but I also know I could not do it without the help of many people who are willing to offer us assistance and guidance along the way. Thanks for all your help, Marvene - it really means a lot to our family!

**Thankful advocate**

**Lindsay Braddock** (Service Coordinator, Lincoln):

I want you to know how much we appreciated everything you have done for Linda and for me. You were always the professional yet you still have the "heart" to be more than that. You are kind and thoughtful and you understand when family members (me) get a little crazy and you know how to deal with us too. I have such admiration for you as I can only imagine what a stressful job yours can be at times. Thank you.

**Family member of person receiving DD services**

Dear **Jana Peterson** (Administrator, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Kearney),

I am writing to express my sincerest appreciation for the time and expertise that you shared with my Human Service Ethics and Experience class. Your contribution to the academic and professional preparation of our students is invaluable as it provides a window for their future in the profession.

**Social Work Department**  
University of Nebraska – Kearney

Dear **Beverly Enderle** (Social Services Worker, Grand Island):

We want to take this time to thank you for all you did for mom. You helped when we didn't have a clue to her care. You made everything possible for when she went to the different care centers. We just want you to know we appreciated everything you did. Thanks a bunch!

**Grateful clients**

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.