

CONNECTIONS

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

BSDC Scouts Achieve High Honor in Order of the Arrow

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for many years. These men recently received one of Boy Scouts' highest honors.



[read more >](#)

LRC's Memorial Garden



Then...and Now...A July 13 ceremony marked the dedication of the Memorial Garden at the Calvert Street Cemetery of the grounds of the Lincoln Region Center.

[read more >](#)

ENVH Celebrates 5th Anniversary

The Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home (ENVH) recently celebrated its 5th anniversary with food, festivities and fun.



[read more >](#)

Summertime and the Living is Easy

Remember, the vacation carryover cap is 280 hours. So, use up any extra vacation days while you still can!

*by Emily Walter,
Human Resource Manager*

As we near the end of the calendar year, please take a moment to review your vacation balance through [LINK in the Payroll and Financial Center](#) (formerly NIS/Enterprise One). Only 280 hours (35 days) of vacation leave can be carried over from Dec. 31 to Jan. 1. If you have a high vacation balance, please work with your supervisor to use enough hours to bring your balance down to 280 hours by Dec. 31. Any hours accrued and not used beyond 280 hours by Dec. 31 will be forfeited.

If you can't use all of the vacation leave you need to use, consider donating some hours to a fellow DHHS employee in need of catastrophic leave donations. Your Human Resources Representative can help you find an employee in

need of donations, or, watch for agency-wide emails asking for donations. Don't wait until the very end of December to donate hours as there may not be anyone in need of hours at that time.

To calculate how many hours you will need to use, use your vacation balance on your Aug. 8 paycheck stub and add your expected leave earnings for the remaining pay dates this year. If that number is above 280 hours, subtract 280 hours to determine how many hours you must use before the end of the year.

Example: Jane Doe has a balance of 297.22 hours of vacation leave showing on her Aug. 8th paycheck stub. She earns 5.54 hours per pay period and there are 10 pay periods remaining in the 2012 calendar year (08/22/12, 09/05/12, 09/19/12, 10/03/12, 10/17/12, 10/31/12, 11/14/12, 11/28/12, 12/12/12 and 12/26/12) so she will be earning an additional 55.40 hours of vacation leave. $297.22 + 55.40 = 352.62$ hours of



vacation leave. That means that Jane will need to use 72.62 hours (352.62 – 280) of vacation leave by Dec. 31st.

Many employees use separate tracking tools, such as the HR15 spreadsheet, to keep track of their vacation and sick leave. This tool can be very helpful to employees in tracking leave usage. However, your carryover calculation is based on the balances listed on your pay stubs in LINK in the Payroll and Financial Center and these balances will be used by Human Resources to calculate any corrections to your vacation balance at the end of the year.

If you need assistance with your calculations, please contact your [Human Resources Representative](#).

Stay Connected on



make the connection . . .

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

Chief Executive Officer: Kerry Winterer	Medicaid and Long-Term Care Division Director: Vivianne Chaumont
Behavioral Health Division Director: Scot Adams, Ph.D.	Public Health Division Director/ Chief Medical Officer: Dr. Joann Schaefer
Children and Family Services Division Director: Thomas Pristow	Veterans' Homes Division Director: John Hilgert
Developmental Disabilities Division Director: Jodi Fenner	Chief Operating Officer: Matt Clough

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Homepage Homeruns

DHHS Employee Website . . . A DHHS Employee Exclusive

Looking for information that only DHHS employees can see? Try the DHHS employee website. We add new information and photos every day, things that are relevant to you and the work you do.

Here are some recent posts on the DHHS [employee website](#) 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.

Going to the Lake this Weekend? Check for Health Alerts First! *June 14, 2012*

The state has issued health alerts for toxic blue-green algae at area lakes. These are the first health alerts issued for the 2012 season. Weekly samplings have been conducted at 49 public lakes in Nebraska since the beginning of May.

When a health alert is issued, designated swimming beaches are closed and signs are posted to advise people to use caution. Recreational boating and fishing are

permitted, but people should use caution and avoid prolonged exposure to the water, particularly avoiding any activity that could lead to swallowing water. People can still use the public areas for camping, picnics and other outdoor activities.

The lakes will continue to be monitored weekly throughout the 2012 recreational season. Sampling results for toxic algae and bacteria will be updated every Friday and posted on the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality's website at www.deq.ne.gov.

Adult Protection Service Workers & World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, *June 21, 2012*

Adult Protection Service workers in the Eastern Service Area and the Southeast Service Area got together for a training, followed by a potluck on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, June 15. Later in the afternoon, the employees dispersed to local grocery stores in Lincoln and Omaha with handouts on elder abuse awareness.

They all wore commemorative purple t-shirts for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Here's a link to DHHS employee homepage information about



SPEAKing UP and stopping elder abuse. <http://dhhsemployees/NeatToKnow/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=588>

Pets, Pets and More Pets! Thanks So Much for Sharing!, *June 25-26, 2012*

We received an overwhelming response to our request for pet photos! Thank you so much for sharing! More than 65 employees sent in pics of their pet family members. Many sent in more than one photo because they have more than one pet in their family. All in all, there were way too many photos to feature in the Box. A happy problem to have, right? So, we thought we would develop a slide show to showcase ALL of the great pictures we received.

[Here's a link](#) to a SharePoint slide show that showcases ALL of the great pictures we received for Bring Your Pet to Work Day.



Pat Infield's dog Dutchey

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

July 13 this year was significant for me. It was Friday the 13th, but not being superstitious that was not the significance for me. It was in fact the third anniversary of my first day as CEO of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Anniversaries of any kind are occasions for reflection, and this anniversary for me was no different.

The first question for me is what have I learned?

As you probably know, I came into this job from outside state government but thinking that I had a basic and good

understanding of how government works. I can tell you looking back, that in all honesty, half of what I thought I knew wasn't right and the other half was only half right. For me, these would be the fundamental "learnings" of which you may have heard me speak in the past:

- Our Mission – Helping People Live Better Lives – is the most important function of state government. We provide all the services that the state can provide for the health and well-being of our citizens. Without what we do, our people's health would be at risk, and children and those who because of age or disability cannot provide for themselves would be living in deplorable and/or abusive conditions. We provide the means for tens of thousands of our fellow Nebraskans not only to live in acceptable conditions but to survive.
- What we do every day is tough and complicated and, because what we do is so important, we have many people who are watching us and are quick to be critical. We cannot let whatever is being said about the Department in the media or by the legislature or the State Auditor's Office deter or discourage us from pursuing our mission.
- I continue to have great respect for the employees of the Department in all Divisions and Operations and at all levels. I have stated this publicly many times, and it continues to be

Our Mission is the most important function of state government.

true. I would describe you as "mission driven." You are the true professionals when it comes to knowing our business and services we deliver.

The second question is what has changed and what have we accomplished? This is just a partial list:

- Full Medicaid re-certification of BSDC and realignment from a large institution into much smaller, homelike residential units;
- In Veterans Homes, moved from homes with several deficiencies to three homes with "perfect" surveys;
- Developed a set of DHHS Values and Competencies as a foundation for our service to the state and for evaluating performance;
- Transitioned HR records statewide to electronic format;
- Success by Public Health in promoting a culture of wellness among state employees and among residents statewide;
- Restructured CFS and began implementation of outcome-based contracts for all providers;
- Implemented significant and effective cost-control measures in Medicaid, including managed care contracts, without denying access to services; and
- Renewed focus on customer service, including designing and implementing our own customer service training ("Serving People with Excellence")

which will be provided to every DHHS employee.

The third question is where do we go from here?

I will leave that for a later date. Suffice it to say now that I am working on revising our priorities for the coming year and the process I'm going through will include answers to that question. One thing I will say here is that we've been through several years of what I call "doing more with less." In that regard the employee survey provided me some interesting insights, including that this may be accepted as our new normal. The two highest overall scores on the recent employee survey were 1) I have pride in what I do, rating 90, and 2) I think about ways to do my job better, rating 89. It's rewarding, as the CEO, to see that kind of commitment from our employee base.

Each of us has significant anniversaries in our personal and work lives. I would encourage each of you to take these occasions, particularly the anniversary of your beginning work with the Department, to look back and consider what you have learned, how things have changed, and what you have accomplished. I hope you will find that to be affirming and energizing.

BSDC Scouts Achieve High Rank in Order of the Arrow



Rob Fitzwater, Lodge Chief of the Golden Sun chapter, shakes hands with three new members of Boy Scouts' Order of the Arrow. (from Left: John Hoelsing, Bill Lux, and Carl Vacanti)

By Sonja Horst, Human Services Treatment Specialist I

Through the years, the scouting programs at the Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC), like scouting programs across the country, have provided people with opportunities to learn useful skills, provide community service, and experience nature and the outdoors through trips and annual scout camps.

Scouting helps people gain confidence and become better citizens, so it has been a BSDC tradition for a long time. BSDC's Boy Scout Troop #216 was chartered on Jan. 1, 1960. Since that time, hundreds of

residents and staff have been part of Troop #216. Of the Scouts still living on campus, three men in particular have been outstanding Scouts for many years. These men have recently received the recognition they so richly deserve by being inducted into one of Boy Scouts' highest honors, the Order of the Arrow.

The Order of the Arrow, founded at a Scout camp near the Delaware river, uses these words from the Delaware Indians as their motto: "Wimachtendienk Wingolauchsik Witahemui." The words mean Brotherhood of Cheerful Service, which says a lot of what the Order of the Arrow is all about.

In 2006, BSDC Boy Scouts John Hoelsing, Bill Lux, and Carl Vacanti were

invited to be initiated into the Golden Sun Chapter Order of the Arrow, a National Honorary service organization for Scouts who exemplify the values of the "Scout Oath" and the "Scout Law."

At the time, these men weren't able to complete the Order of the Arrow's traditional initiation process, called the "Ordeal," because of medical and safety issues and special needs, so their induction was put on hold.

In August of 2011, Rob Fitzwater, Beatrice, was elected as the new Lodge Chief for the local chapter of the Order of the Arrow. Fitzwater, a 2010 graduate of Beatrice High School, says he has known the guys from Troop #216 since he was a Cub Scout. He said that any Scout who has camped regularly at Camp Cornhusker, near Humboldt, knows the Scouts and leaders from Troop #216 as almost an institution there.

For Fitzwater, the thought of these three Scouts earning the Order of the Arrow honor, and then not being allowed to enter the organization was hard to take. So, getting these three initiated was one of Fitzwater's first priorities when he became Lodge Chief. Fitzwater met with the Order of the Arrow Leadership Executive Committee and they talked about ways to adjust some of the activities around these Scouts' special needs so that they could meet the requirements in a different way. Fitzwater got permission to use a special ceremony so these men could finally be initiated into the Order.

When the Order of the Arrow held its annual Spring event at Camp Cornhusker,

there was a special ceremony to induct new members John, Bill and Carl from BSDC's Troop #216.

"We tried to make it a great weekend for them, and I think it turned out to be fun for everyone involved," said Fitzwater.

"It was fantastic to see the guys come down and complete their Ordeal," said Lodge Advisor Dave Miller. "They finished their service project in about half the time we expected, so our service committee was scrambling to keep up with them. They completed their project, and the other tests, and I was honored to be able to see them as they got their sashes. They were the tallest ones in the ceremony circle, if you measured by pride, and they are most deserving."

The extraordinary efforts made to include them was both a poignant culmination to the years of Scouting traditions at BSDC, and a testament to the quality of young men the Scouting program can produce.

"I felt we had valuable members in our council who were deserving of the honor of being in Scouting's national honor society," said Fitzwater. "These three guys have fully completed the requirements and have gone above and beyond. They are an example to live by. The Order of the Arrow is a brotherhood of cheerful service, and no matter what the task is, these guys do it with a great big smile on their faces. Saying no is not in their vocabulary when it comes to helping someone else. I'm honored to have them in the Order of the Arrow as my brothers in the Order."

ENVH Celebrates 5th Anniversary



ENVH employee Simone Armstead's daughter enjoys the celebration.

Photo: Audrey Hester



ENVH member Jack Schneider and his wife, Phyllis enjoy touring the grounds with their great-grandchildren Maddy and Trevor.

Photo: Audrey Hester



Photo: Esther Smith

By Audrey Hester

Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home recently celebrated its 5th anniversary with food, festivities and a whole lot of fun. Approximately 350 people came to the celebration/open house which was held July 12th. (ENVH's actual anniversary date is July 14.) Festivities included:

- Barbecue meal
- Fun and games for the kids including a bounce castle and slide, horseshoes, lollipop tree, bubbles, crafts, duck pond, balloon animals, disc drop, wall art, hoola hoops
- Musical performances by Rick Tomasso (karaoke) and the Crown's Folly band

- Facility tours
- Vintage cars
- Fireworks

The group celebrated new additions to the Veterans' Memorial Garden, as well. The celebration was a thank you for five great years and successful partnerships with friends, families and the community.

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The **Beatrice State Developmental Center** recently celebrated a host of good news including a federal recertification of the fifth and final living unit. Look for photos in next month's issue of *Connections*.

Dedication of Memorial Garden at the Lincoln Regional Center

LRC Memorial Garden – THEN...

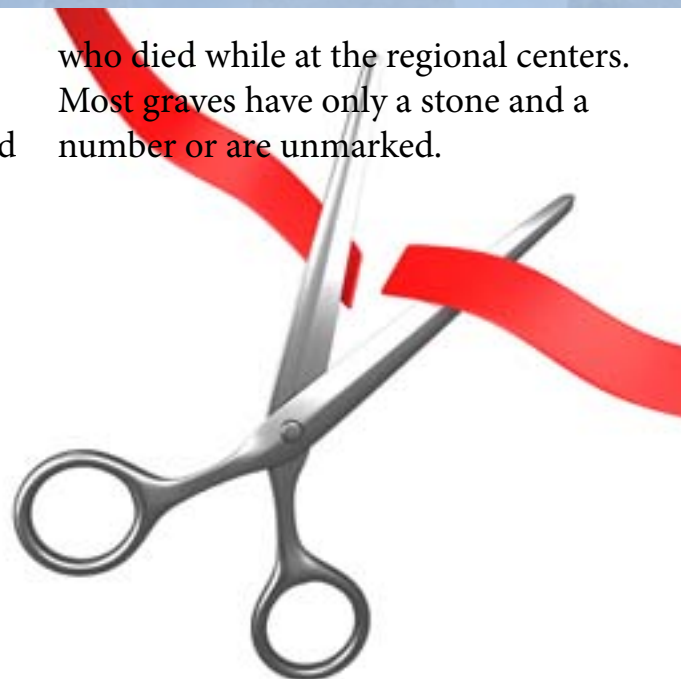


THEN...from left: Craig Thelen, State Building Division operations manager, DAS; Carol Coussons de Reyes, administrator, Office of Consumer Affairs; Scot Adams, director, Division of Behavioral Health; and Stacey Werth-Sweeney, LRC facility operating officer.

THEN: A groundbreaking for a new cemetery beautification park on the Lincoln Regional Center campus was held March 29. Staff in hard hats with shovels turned the sod to mark the occasion.

New beautification parks, which will include plants, flagstones, markers of remembrance and benches, are being established at the cemeteries of each regional center in Nebraska—Norfolk, Hastings, as well as Lincoln. The reason for creating the parks is to honor people

who died while at the regional centers. Most graves have only a stone and a number or are unmarked.



...and NOW with Carol Coussons de Reyes, Office of Consumer Affairs

A July 13 ceremony marked the dedication of the Memorial Garden at the Calvert Street Cemetery on the grounds of the Lincoln Regional Center.

There has been a nationwide movement to recognize those buried at state mental hospitals. **Scot Adams**, Director of DHHS' Division of Behavioral Health said, "For a long time, the identities of people buried at the cemeteries of mental hospitals were kept secret, even from their families. Most graves were just marked with a number.

Now information about those who are buried there is openly available. I would like to see more families locate the burial sites of their loved ones."

"This garden is about returning dignity and respect to a group of people who died without ceremony and were historically disregarded," said **Carol Coussons de Reyes** of the DHHS Office of Consumer Affairs. "They should be accorded the dignity and respect they deserve."

Way to Go!

Statewide and national recognitions, honors and awards

Congrats Tricia Mason

Congratulations to DHHS' Tricia Mason for being selected as one of "Lincoln's 20 Under 40!" Lincoln's 20 under 40...is a Lincoln Journal Star publication that honors young professionals who are making a difference in their vocations.

When asked "What do you like best about what you do?," Tricia responded...

"While it can be extremely challenging, the reward is ten-fold. Since coming to Nebraska, the Division has experienced many great successes; we've been attempting to shift the system to a person-centered environment that focuses on the hopes and goals of the individuals we serve. We've been able to make many enhancements to our systems to make services more flexible for

individuals. We aren't 100% there yet, but we are definitely going down the right track. I also tend to thrive in chaos and some days there is plenty of that to go around!"

Read more about Tricia here. Her story is featured on page 18. <http://www2.journalstar.com/splashes/multispace/061112%2020under40/index.php>

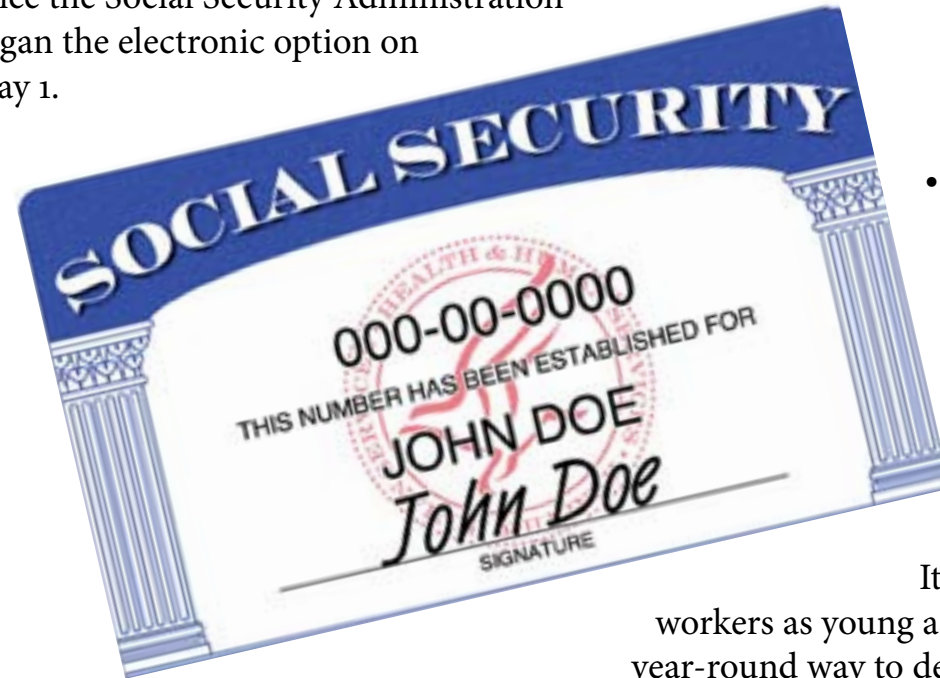


DHHS employees should be proud of themselves and each other. If you earn statewide or national recognition or know a co-worker who does, let *Connections* know, and we'll proclaim it here!

One Million People Access Social Security Statement Online

One million people have gone online, created a My Social Security account and viewed their Social Security Statement since the Social Security Administration began the electronic option on May 1.

- Things to consider for those age 55 and older who are thinking of retiring;
- General information about Social Security for everyone;
- The opportunity to apply online for retirement and disability benefits;
- A printable version of your Social Security Statement.



The online Social Security Statement provides:

- Estimates of the retirement and disability benefits you may receive;
- Estimates of benefits your family may get when you receive Social Security or die;
- A list of your lifetime earnings according to Social Security's records;
- The estimated Social Security and Medicare taxes you've paid;
- Information about qualifying and signing up for Medicare;

It also provides workers as young as 18 a convenient year-round way to determine whether their earnings are accurately posted to their Social Security records, which was not possible when the agency mailed paper statements only to those 25 and older.

People can access their Social Security earnings and benefit information securely and conveniently through www.socialsecurity.gov/mystatement. To access your online statement, you must be at least 18 years old, have a Social Security number, have a valid email address and have a U.S. mailing address.

In Gratitude

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

Editor's Note: This letter came into the ACCESSNebraska Questions box. (Thanks, **Karen Heng**, Administrator, Lincoln, for passing it along!) The client, from Arkansas, is dealing with issues for a family member who lives in Nebraska.

ACCESSNebraska:

I want you to know that each time I have contacted this department, I have been given the most complete and helpful information I could hope for!

Each of the representatives has been professional and knowledgeable and taken into consideration that I barely know what I am doing with this application process.

So, thank you, thank you, for making this process and my life, a little easier and less frustrating! It means a lot!

A Grateful Client

Jerrilyn Crankshaw (Administrator, North Platte),

Over the past two months, I have had the opportunity and privilege to work with **Bethany Monnahan** (Children and Family Services Specialist, McCook) and **Nicole Peterson** (Children and Family Services Specialist Supervisor, McCook). They have been outstanding in their roles to protect and advocate for the needs of two Children's Hospital patients who are wards of the State of Nebraska.

Despite some challenges and frustrations, Bethany and Nicole have always responded with good humor, patience, consistency, and a solid rationale for decisions. In short, you can be very proud to call these women DHHS employees, and be assured that they represent the department in a very professional and impressive manner.

Children's Hospital and Medical Center

Mark Darby (Youth Counselor, Youth Rehabilitation Treatment Center, Kearney)

I wanted to take some time to really thank you! Honestly, you are helping young men to become better people and helping bring families together again. I know in my heart there is no way for me to really express to you all the help you have given me and my family. I will always be grateful that my prayers were answered and life led my son and us to you.

Working in an Assisted Living facility there is the saying that "the people make the place what it is" and that is the same here. You and your co-workers (whom I personally haven't spoke with much but my son has), deserve to be told how wonderful you are and how much you are appreciated. You have given us the tools to be a better family.

I have been able to put the fears of "Kearney" at ease and have a better understanding of how wonderful it can be for those that allow "it" to help them. I would recommend YRTC-Kearney. And I am grateful to the Judge and everyone else involved that helped place my son in this opportunity to better himself. My son is amazing! Being apart from him for so long has shown me how much I love him, miss him and helped us learn to express our feelings with one another.

You are a great blessing to all the lives you touch. Thank you!

A Grateful Parent

Robert Semerena (Administrator, Lincoln):

I was in Nebraska recently to provide training. I really want to express how much I appreciate what **Shannon Grotrian** (Quality Control unit manager) has done with the Quality Control team. I had such a positive experience in Nebraska and I appreciate it. In addition, I want you to know that both Shannon and **Melissa Weyer** (Payment Accuracy Specialist) are very responsive, professional and pleasant to work with. Your QC team was also wonderful to work with during my visit.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Quality Control Program Specialist