

Connections

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

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

June 2009
VOLUME 9, ISSUE 6



AS EASY AS PUSHING A BUTTON... Turn to page 2 for more information on the first anniversary of the electronic *Connections*.

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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.

[You Can Help Vulnerable Adults: May is Vulnerable Adult Awareness Week](#)
May 1, 2009

[Time to Celebrate EMS Week](#) May 5, 2009

[Behavioral Health Consumers, Families, Advocates Invited to Presentations About Network of Care](#) May 7, 2009

[Know How to Prevent Injuries from Swimming Pool Chemicals](#) May 15, 2009

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

About the Cover:



It's the first anniversary of your DHHS employee newsletter being published electronically, offering:

- more color
- quicker coverage, and
- cost savings

To share your responses on the first annual electronic evaluation and shape this publication's future, use the following link and please respond no later than July 17th.

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make the connection . . .

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

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

EOE/AA/ADA

“Disease detectives” help solve mysteries to save lives

By Marla Augustine

DHHS has its disease investigators—its epidemiologists and surveillance specialists. Without them, outbreaks of illness, food-borne or otherwise, would go untracked or even undetected.

A recent outbreak of salmonella is a successful example of a disease investigation.

Late in February, **Dr. Tom Safranek**, state epidemiologist, was notified that six specimens from ill Nebraskans were positive for a certain kind of salmonella that is relatively rare. More positive lab results soon came in.

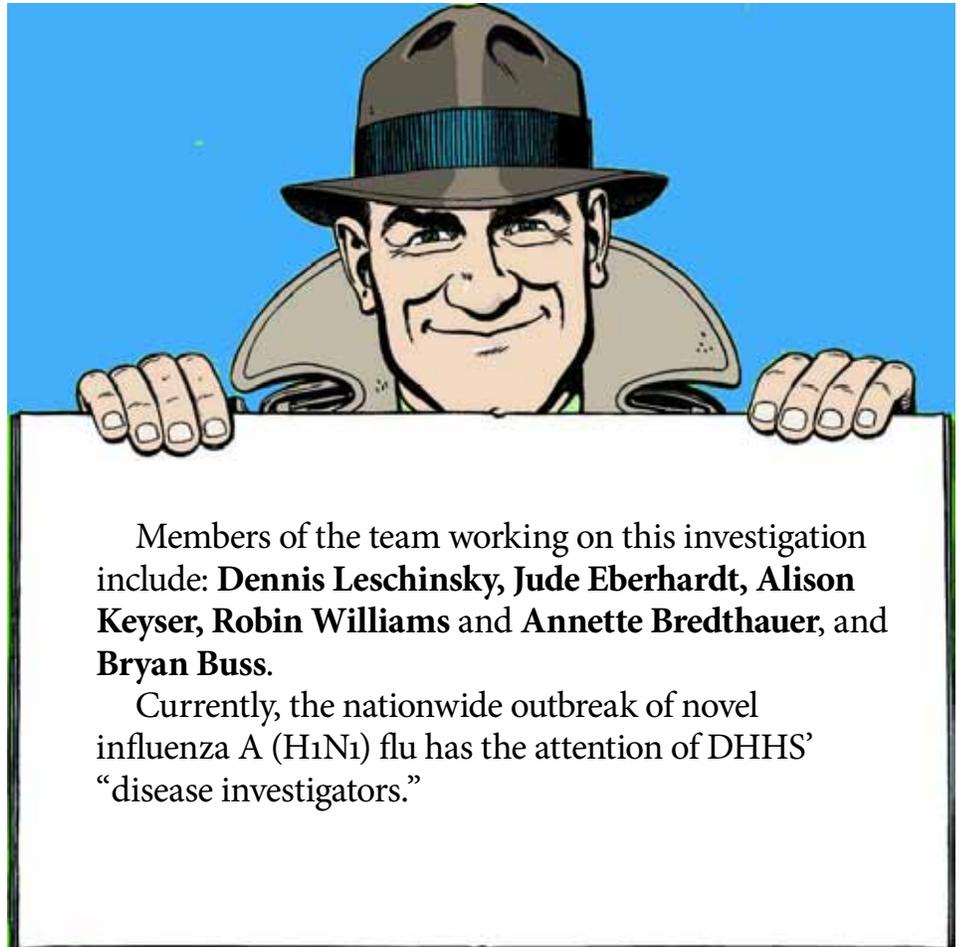
A nationwide notice was sent February 26 to state public health officials about this cluster of cases among Nebraska residents. The message: Be on the look-out for more cases.

By mid March, cases had been identified in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota and South Dakota. Ultimately, 228 cases were identified in 13 states.

DHHS staff interviewed ill individuals in Nebraska to see what food sources they might have had in common. These interviews indicated that a high percentage of them had eaten alfalfa sprouts at a certain restaurant chain.

The source of the sprouts served at the implicated Nebraska restaurants was a single sprouting facility in Omaha. That facility voluntarily agreed to recall their product in early March.

Further investigation determined that the national cases were all linked by sprouting facilities using the same source of seed. The seed company voluntarily recalled from the market all seed lots bearing a certain prefix.



Members of the team working on this investigation include: **Dennis Leschinsky, Jude Eberhardt, Alison Keyser, Robin Williams and Annette Bredthauer, and Bryan Buss.**

Currently, the nationwide outbreak of novel influenza A (H1N1) flu has the attention of DHHS’ “disease investigators.”

“The voluntary recalls issued as a result of this investigation likely prevented more cases of salmonella poisoning,” Dr. Safranek said. “Without the national network of epidemiologists that exists and the sharing of laboratory data by the states, an outbreak like this might have gone undetected in previous years.”

As a result of this investigation, at the end of April, the Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended that consumers not eat raw sprouts until further notice.

“This recommendation was made based on the health and safety of consumers,” said **Dr. Joann Schaefer**, Chief Medical Officer. “Without the hard work of Dr. Safranek and the team, this recommendation might not have been possible. The CDC recognized their work and called Nebraska’s investigation ‘excellent.’”

An article on the investigation and its conclusions appeared in the CDC’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

YRTC-Geneva counselor earns national honor as “Best in the Business” of correctional services

By Jerry Crisp

Cortney Lichti, a Youth Counselor at the Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center at Geneva (YRTC-G), has received national recognition from the American Correctional Association (ACA). Each year, ACA recognizes individuals and groups from state and federal correctional facilities in both the U.S. and Canada for “Best in the Business” contributions in the field.

Lichti was recognized for her work with the “Mothers and Babies” program she developed at YRTC-Geneva three years ago. Because many of the girls at the facility have children or are pregnant, the program offers educational and hands-on experience they need to practice good parenting skills. This includes such topics as caring for a new baby, caring for a sick child, providing good nutrition, recognizing and preventing physical and emotional abuse, and using positive discipline rather than punishment.

“This program developed at an accelerated rate because of Cortney’s belief in the program and her abiding commitment to the youth and their children,” says YRTC-G Administrator **Dan Scarborough**. “Not only is a program like hers rare in comparable facilities across the country, but to get it operating at the level it does in so short a time is truly remarkable.”

Being designated “Best in the Business” is both heavy praise and a hard reputation to live up to, but Cortney Lichti is up to that challenge.

“There was a need and we had to fill it,” she says. “Our gender-responsive program includes all areas of a female’s life, including her role as a mother. It’s not uncommon for a girl here not to have a father or a mother in her own life, and negative things learned in childhood can be repeated unless someone shows them a better way.”

Recently YRTC-G had 75 girls on campus, and 12% of them were in the “Mothers and Babies” program. Participation is optional, but every pregnant or teen mother at the facility has joined.

One of the best ways to prevent child abuse or neglect is if teen parents have a strong bond with their child, and Lichti’s commitment to achieving that goal is clear.

“The best part of my job is when I see a young mother bonding with her baby or toddler,” she says. “When I see progress in the way they love and care for their child. When someone who didn’t even hug or kiss their baby during initial visits progresses into someone who won’t put them down. When they use what they learn here to make positive changes in their lives after they return to the community.”

The Mothers & Babies program isn’t limited to the YRTC-Geneva campus but involves surrounding communities as well. For one thing, Lichti communicates with the youths’ families, Juvenile Service Officers and Guardians ad litem. For another, she arranges for YRTC girls to be involved in off-campus activities such as educational workshops and educational shopping trips.

“I also take pregnant girls to a Lamaze class downtown at the hospital,” says Lichti, “and a representative from the Visiting Nurses Association comes to campus monthly.”

After girls are paroled to the community, Lichti also puts them in touch with community supports that will help them succeed, such as enrolling in parenting groups, getting a mentor or contacting a local Women, Infants and Children (WIC) office.

Lichti comes to this commitment quite naturally, saying that her “most favorite job” is being a mother.

“You just can’t imagine how much love you have inside you until you have a child,” she says.

And YRTC moms aren’t the only ones to form bonds with their children.

“I feel close to the children of teen moms and form a bond with them, too,” she says. “When they come for visits, they run in with big smiles and give me huge hugs. Sometimes I feel like I’m a very young grandmother!”



Cortney Lichti

(Continued on next page)

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But there are downsides to every job, and the Mothers & Babies program is no different.

“The children become so close to me, and it’s hard to see them go after their mothers are released,” she says.

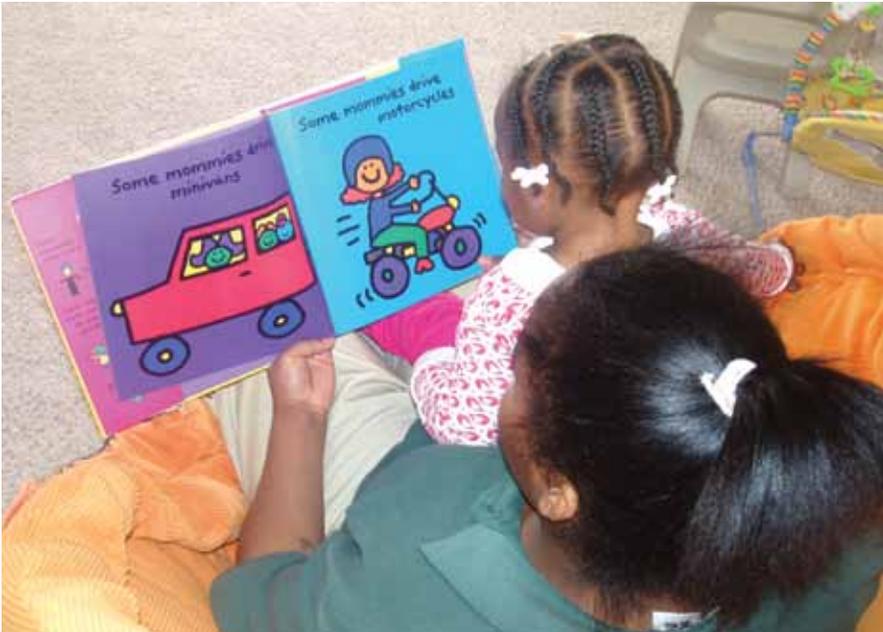
One of the keys to the success of the Mothers & Babies program is strong administrative support.

“When co-worker **Jane Beethe** and I first proposed the program to Mr. Scarborough, he was very open and interested. We provided a lot of research, and the idea was approved.”

Perhaps the major key to the success of the Mothers & Babies program are successful outcomes that fulfill its mission and make it an inspiration to others.

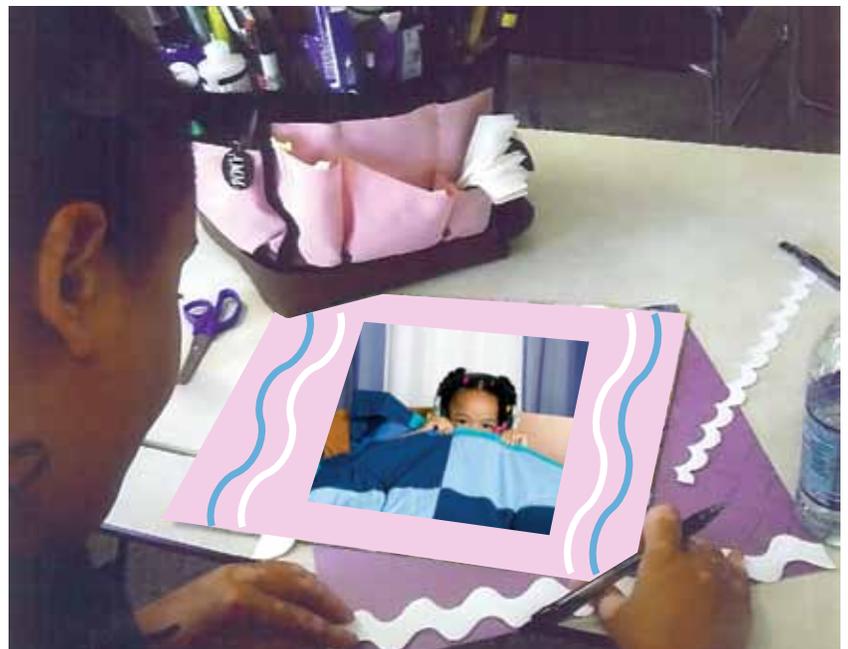
“I love getting phone calls, photos and letters from girls who have left the facility, and some even come back to visit me at the facility with their child,” Lichti says. I recently heard from the first person to enroll in my Mothers & Babies program three years ago,” says Lichti. “She’s married now with two children and will soon graduate from college.”

“Both Cortney and the Mothers & Babies program are worthy of national recognition,” says Scarborough. “She is truly one of the best in the business.”



(At left) A YRTC youth reads to her child in the nursery area at the Geneva facility. Maintenance men and Cortney Lichti knocked out a wall and converted two small apartments into the area where moms can bond with their children and sharpen parenting skills. Previously, teen moms had to use a lobby that afforded less comfort and privacy.

(At right) Another aspect of the “Mothers and Babies” program is scrapbooking, a process that allows teen moms to keep photos and notes about key moments in their children’s lives as another way to encourage bonding. *Photos: Cortney Lichti*



Director of Behavioral Health Scot Adams recognized by alma mater

Scot Adams, PhD, Director of the Division of Behavioral Health, has been named recipient of a 2009 Alumni Award for Excellence in Public Service. The recognition was given by the College of Public Affairs and Community Service at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Each year, UNO identifies alumni who have made a difference in the lives of others. Adams was selected due to his understanding of aging issues and his commitment to serving others within the community.

At the UNO Alumni Awards luncheon on April 13th, **Dr. B. J. Reed**, Dean of the College of Public Affairs and Community Service, said, "The 11 people we honor today have distinguished themselves through their professional service and community stewardship. In their daily deeds and life-long accomplishments, each of these individuals define the very best of public service...Our world is a better place because of these individuals."



Adams is shown with **Dr. Chris Kelly**, Assistant Professor of Gerontology, and **Julie L. Masters**, chairperson of the UNO Department of Gerontology. Since Adams was unable to attend the presentation ceremony in April, Masters came to his office on May 7th to make the presentation. *Photo: Bill Wiley*

A Standard
OF EXCELLENCE

Legislative Update



By Bryson Bartels
Legislative Liaison

This year's legislative session has come to an end. Originally scheduled for 90 days, the longer of the two year biennium, it adjourned on May 29 (four days early). We monitored more than 170 bills, and I would like to provide an update on a number of them..

The following bills introduced on behalf of the Governor or DHHS have been passed into law:

LB 346 was introduced on behalf of the Governor and the Department by **Senator Gay**. This bill creates a children's behavioral health hotline, establishes a Family Navigator Program to respond to children's behavioral health needs and requires the Department to provide post-adoption and post-guardianship management services for families of former state wards. LB 346 has been amended into LB 603. In addition to the children's behavioral health services provided by LB 346, LB 603 adopts the Behavioral Health Workforce Act (original form of LB 603), requires the Department to apply for a state plan amendment to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to provide Medicaid coverage for behavioral health services (LB 601), changes the Medicaid eligibility of the State Children's Health Insurance Program from 185% to 200% (LB 136), and intends to appropriate \$1.5 million over the next two years for behavioral health services (LB 356). LB 603 passed and was signed into law by **Governor Dave Heineman**.

LB 288 is the Department's "Clean-up bill" and was introduced by the Health and Human Services Committee. This bill includes technical changes in the areas of developmental disabilities, food stamp program, water operators, Medicaid and pharmacy technicians. LB 199 was introduced by **Senator Stuthman** and was amended into LB 288. LB 199 changes child support provisions relating to the New Hiring Act, spousal interest, public assistance,

medical support and reporting of child support amounts. LB 199, regarding the areas of medical support and public assistance, respond to federal mandates. LB 288 passed and was signed by the Governor.

In the area of children and family services, **LB 290**, introduced by **Senator Stuthman**, requires fingerprints and criminal history record information checks of individuals who transport children and also vulnerable adults. LB 290 has been amended into LB 97 and LB 97 has been approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor. Also, LB 91, introduced by **Senator Howard**, provides for a subsidized adoption of a child who was under a subsidized guardianship. LB 91 has been approved by the Governor. In addition, LB 122, introduced by **Senator Coash**, changes terminology regarding the child abuse register, changing "inconclusive" to "agency substantiated" which more clearly describes the action. LB 122 has been approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.

In the area of public health, **LB 341** introduced by **Senator Cook** changes provisions relating to tuberculosis and prevention. Portions of this bill were amended into LB 195. LB 195 has been approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.

Other DHHS bills are at various stages of legislative action. These include **LB 319** (Governor's bill as well), **LB 38**, **LB 150** and **LB 345**. LB 319, introduced by **Senator Flood**, changes provisions relating to child care reimbursement and is in the Health and Human Services Committee. LB 38, also introduced by Senator Flood, changes provisions for assaults against certain DHHS employees and is in Judiciary Committee. LB 150, introduced by **Senator Heidemann**, repeals the Prostitution Intervention and Treatment Act. LB 345, introduced by Senator Gay, changes juvenile court jurisdiction involving truancy. LB 150 and LB 345 have been indefinitely postponed (killed).

Further, I would like to provide information on other bills that were not introduced on behalf of the Department, but do impact the Department.

In the areas of public health and veterans homes, **LB 195**, introduced by Senator Gay, changes provisions relating to hearing aids, emergency medical services, prescriptions, automated medication systems (veterans homes), the trauma system, physician assistants, controlled substances, tuberculosis (LB 341) and certificate of need. This bill has been signed by the Governor.

In the areas of Medicaid, **LB 27**, introduced by **Senator Pahls**, changes the Autism Treatment Program Act. **LB 342**,

introduced by Senator Gay, changes provisions relating to pediatric feeding disorder treatment. **LB 342** and **LB 27** have been signed by the Governor. Also, **LB 396**, introduced by **Senator Gloor**, creates the Medical Home Act and has been approved by the Governor.

In the areas of behavioral health, please refer to the **LB 346** summary (see previous page) involving LB 601, LB 603 and LB 356.

In the area of children and families services, **LB 237** was introduced by **Senator Lathrop**. This bill adopts compacts relating to juveniles and children and was signed by the Governor.

In the area of developmental disabilities, **LB 390** was introduced by Senator Coash. LB 390 provides changes to reimbursement rates for assisted persons with developmental disabilities. LB 390 has been amended into LB 288 and LB 288 (the Department's Clean Up bill) was signed by the Governor. Also, **LB 315**, the budget bill approved by the Governor, appropriates funds to those persons on the developmental disabilities waiting list, the Beatrice State Developmental Center and a developmental disabilities rate methodology study.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (402) 471-0541 or bryson.bartels@nebraska.gov.

BSDC remembers on Memorial Day

By Jeanne Atkinson

A long-standing Memorial Day tradition is for clients and staff at the Beatrice State Developmental Center to decorate more than 800 graves of former clients in Evergreen Community Cemetery, located one-half mile from campus. The oldest graves date back to the early 1900s.

Linda Hyberger, Supply Manager at BSDC's Warehouse, has overseen this decorating for more than three decades. Clients in the Vocational Department make new crosses to replace any that are damaged or worn out.

"I'm proud to be part of this show of respect for clients served at our facility in the past," says Hyberger.

This year, eight Vocational staff and clients and six warehouse staff placed the decorations on graves. Quality Improvement Director **Angela Server** tagged along with her husband, **Chris**, a member of the Warehouse crew, and pitched right in.

"I like to get out of the office away from paperwork and meetings and doing more hands-on work whenever I can," Angela says. "It's powerful to see how many people are buried there and makes you think."



The BSDC Family and Friends Association erected this monument marking the BSDC section in Evergreen Cemetery.

Photo: Linda Hyberger

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.

It's all about teamwork

By Jerry Crisp

Members of an Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) serving individuals living at 106 Kennedy Boulevard on the BSDC campus illustrate how an IDT approach benefits all persons served at that facility.

Like other certified social workers, **Nancy Mayfield**, a BSDC employee for 36 years, is involved with clients and their families from initial placement at BSDC through their facility stay to a client's return to the community. Social workers work directly with clients by counseling, corresponding, and arranging home visits and vacations.

Nancy is a member of the IDT for every client on her case load. She also supervises other social workers and serves as liaison with legal services on guardianships. She attends team meetings for everyone on her caseload, including annual evaluations, psychological clinics, quarterly reviews, leadership meetings, as well as chairing staff meetings for social workers.

"I often take clients to tour placement sites and sometimes to their new homes," she explains. "I arrange transportation, mail letters regarding trips, obtain consents, and make phone calls to ensure that placements go well."

"For clients with severe medical challenges, Nurse **Julie Weyer** provides me with daily information in language I can easily understand," Nancy says. "That's important when it comes to relaying that information to parents or guardians."

As Nancy is the first to insist, she and Julie Weyer aren't the only ones to think about the client's needs constantly, even when not on duty.

"Through their coverage on evenings and weekends, the 106 Kennedy support staff and the entire nursing staff at BSDC have contributed. Employees care deeply about clients and are dedicated to ensure their well-being and enriching their lives."

While focusing on contributions of others, Nancy facilitates almost daily communication with the client's guardian and family.

"Good communication is essential in building trust that the very best care is being provided to every person who lives

at the facility," Nancy says, "I do my best to make sure the guardian and family are fully involved as team members and try to address all of their questions and concerns, and team meetings, either in person or by telephone conference, are scheduled for their convenience. Team Leader **Cheryl Trimm** is also excellent in flexing her busy schedule to accommodate any additional meetings."

Keeping team members advised via phone calls, e-mail and correspondence is no small task, and Nancy sometimes e-mails guardians and families three or four times in a single day.

"I sometimes come to campus through long weekends to ensure that information is shared promptly rather than waiting until I return to work, and I'm more than happy to do that."

"Nancy doesn't give herself enough credit for what she does," according to Julie Weyer. "She goes above and beyond what is expected to keep everyone updated."

Like other BSDC nurses, Julie Weyer, a 20-year employee, approaches a client's needs from a health care perspective.

"The 106 Kennedy team served an individual who had five major surgeries in one year," Julie says. "His condition was critical on more than one occasion, but staff did a fantastic job with him. They provided a lot of one-to-one staffing at hospitals at the former BSDC hospital and at Beatrice Community Hospital in Beatrice, before he was taken to a Lincoln hospital."

But that wasn't the end of the 106 Kennedy team approach.

"Due to a necessary focus on this individual's health issues, his behaviors and self-help skills had begun to deteriorate," Julie explains. "But the 106 Kennedy team worked diligently to return his behaviors and skills to their previous level before he went out on placement into the community."

Health concerns aren't always about other people, as Julie discovered. One of her most memorable moments on the job involves a medical situation that applied to both a client and herself.

One day Julie's pager went off indicating that someone at another campus address was having a heart attack.

"I was close so I ran to the scene, and as I approached that campus address, I slipped on the ice and broke both

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kneecaps,” Julie explains. “Just to make it worse, I slipped on gravel that had been put over the ice so it wouldn’t be so slick!”

Julie ended up in the emergency room of Beatrice Community Hospital with the client whose medical emergency she had been responding to in the first place! She recovered after bilateral leg splints, physical therapy for several weeks, and surgery a year later on both knees.

“Dr. Hal Thaut, the Center’s Medical Director at the time, sent me a ‘purple heart’ certificate for being injured in the line of duty,” Julie says. “I was overwhelmed by phone calls, get-well baskets, flowers and more than 40 get-well cards—more than half of these from BSDC staff and clients.”

A special challenge for Team Leader Cheryl Trimm is coordinating efforts of the entire team to produce the best possible outcome for the client.

“In addition to terrific direct care professionals, I really count on Julie Weyer and Nancy Mayfield and other members of the team,” says Cheryl.

The list of Interdisciplinary Team members is long, and includes a psychologist, physician, nurse, social worker, dentist, direct care provider, dietician, chaplain, audiologist, speech pathologist, special education teacher, recreation therapist, and any others needed to provide diagnostic or therapeutic input. Also members of every IDT, of course, are the clients themselves and their family or guardian.

“Maximizing opportunities for everyone’s input is a challenge all by itself,” Cheryl says, “not to mention helping distill all of that input into a manageable and effective treatment plan.”



Left to right: Nancy Mayfield, Julie Weyer and Cheryl Trimm, Interdisciplinary Team members who help Center citizens meet challenges. Photo: Jerry Crisp

When everything comes together and client progress results, that’s reward enough for Cheryl and the other team members.

“Thanks to all these team members,” she says, “I am proud to be part of the 106 Kennedy team.”

An IDT approach is at the heart of progress made by any BSDC client, and credit for that progress is rightly shared by clients and all members of their team. Together, team members aim to serve the whole person in a common effort to help each Center citizen live a more independent, productive and happier life.

FDA warns consumers

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has announced that Clarcon Biological Chemistry Laboratory, Inc., of Roy, Utah, is voluntarily recalling some skin sanitizers and skin protectants marketed under several different brand names because of high levels of disease-causing bacteria found in the product during a recent inspection. The FDA is warning consumers to not use any Clarcon products.

Some of the bacteria found in the products can cause infections of the skin and underlying tissues. Examples of products that should be discarded include:

- Citrushield Lotion
- Dermasentials DermaBarrier
- Dermasentials by Clarcon Antimicrobial Hand Sanitizer
- Iron Fist Barrier Hand Treatment
- Skin Shield Restaurant
- Skin Shield Industrial
- Skin Shield Beauty Salon Lotion
- Total Skin Care Beauty
- Total Skin Care Work

Findings from the FDA’s recent inspection of the Clarcon facility are particularly concerning because the products are promoted as antimicrobial agents that claim to treat open wounds, damaged skin, and protect against various infectious diseases.

Old pond gets new life at Western Nebraska Veterans' Home

By Jerry Crisp

We all age, and so do ponds. That was true for the pond at the Western Nebraska Veterans' Home (WNVH) in Scottsbluff. A source of recreation and enjoyment for the members living at WNVH and a draw for wildlife, the pond began to lose water and turn stagnant, inhabited only by the mosquitoes that made it their home.

All that changed when the decision was made to restore the pond to its former glory and purpose, but that threatened to cost a bundle.

Nebraska has a reputation for caring about its veterans who gave so much for the rest of us. Thanks to donations from service organizations, banks and private donors across the state, \$70,000 was raised for the pond project. In addition, Home Depot donated much of the cost for a new vinyl fence around the pond.

But who would restore the pond and install the liner? The answer to that question came from volunteers. Several of those volunteers came from the community and some from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad, operated some of their own equipment as well as more than \$1.5 million in equipment provided by the Nebraska Machinery Company (NMC). This civic-minded team started sloping the sides of the tired, old pond, digging trenches and installing lining.

Veterans living at WNVH served as "sidewalk superintendents," observing from inside a warm shelter in March. They eagerly anticipated the time when the pond was returned to life, again becoming a home for wildlife and fish and a source of peace and pleasure for WNVH members.



A pay loader loads a telehandler so that it can lay out the liner, part of the process of giving an old pond new life. Photo: Laura Singleton

"This was the missing link to this project," said **Lonnie Starke**, WNVH Administrator. "The volunteers and the equipment saved the veterans' home a significant amount of money. We just could not have done this without the support of these folks and from across the state."

The project began last November with dredging and waited for spring to do the rest. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission will stock the lake with catfish, bass and perch.

"The veterans have really missed the pond," said Starke. "Some are already buying lures so they can start fishing."

If giving an old pond at the WNVH in Scottsbluff new life enhances life for veterans living there, then it will have been well worth it. As soon as photos of WNVH members pulling big ones out of the pond are available, you'll find them in *Connections*.

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

In their own words

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

Dear **Judi Pedersen** (Resource Developer, DHHS Fremont office):

We don't know what words to start this letter with that will enable you to get a true sense of our feelings of appreciation for you and all you've done for us...You will always be part of our lives eternally.

Recently I underwent surgery. During this time, we received your message about our foster parent licensing being up for renewal and knew we were not going to be able to foster parent any time in the near future or possibly ever again. We wanted so much to be an open home for children in need, to comfort them through trials and tribulations they faced through no fault of their own, and prayed hard we could somehow find a way to make it work. Unfortunately...our only answer had to be no.

We admire and love you. We respect you so much that we didn't know the words to express how sorry we were for not being able to continue foster parenting. We've had so much love in our home because of foster parenting and adored every child who ever came through our home. We're fortunate to be able to still see some of them in public from afar, and it's great knowing that even for a short time, we were there to hold them. We enjoyed working with HHS staff, always talk about how well we were treated, and still to this day encourage friends to open their homes to foster children.

The experience has been a blessing, and now we have the best son anyone could ever ask for. We thank God daily for our little boy and pray he will continue to give us the strength and guidance we will need to ensure that he becomes the best man he could ever be.

We pray that God will continue to grant you good health so that your work with his children will continue. Our home is always open to you, and please feel free to come by any time. We appreciate and love you for all that you've done.

An Adoptive Family

Dear **Chris Hanus** (Child Welfare Unit Administrator) and **Todd Reckling** (Director, DHHS Division of Children and Family Services):

I want to commend **Sherri Eveleth** (Program Specialist, DHHS Norfolk office) for her participation and presentation at the Child Welfare League of America Conference in Washington, D.C. Thank you so much for making her available for this. She represented Nebraska very well.

Sherri presented on our developing practice standards, which she was instrumental in helping to produce, regarding the Qualified Expert Witness requirements in the Indian Child Welfare Act. She also participated actively in an open forum on Indian Child Welfare Practice and had many conversations with people from other states about this important area.

Sherri has been active with our network of State Indian Child Welfare Managers about a year now and is steadily emerging as a strong contributor and leader within that group.

And thanks for supporting Sherri in this work in Nebraska. As you know, it can be a lonely and not-well-understood area of child welfare practice. You have a strong leader in Sherri.

John R. George

Senior Consultant and Manager of Indian Child Welfare Initiatives
Child Welfare League of America

Dear **Margaret Hinrichs-Shaw** (Social Service Worker, DHHS Hastings office):

Thank you very much for your prompt action. I now can put my food in my own house.

I know in the papers and on TV all you hear are complaints about HHS, but I have nothing but good to say about the services I have received!

A Hastings Area Client

In their own words

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

Dear **Cindy Kadavy** (Unit Manager, Medicaid and Long-Term Care Services):

Thank you so much for providing presenters **Joyce Schneider** (Program Specialist), **Rosemary Stubbendeck** (Program Specialist R.N.) and **Jodie Gibson** (Aging Program Coordinator) for the Nebraska Health Care Association's (NHCA) education program "Director of Nursing Training" at the NHCA office in Lincoln. I heard many positive comments about the program.

I hope we can collaborate on future educational opportunities. Thanks again. I appreciate the time of the HHS staff.

Connie Wagner
Director of Educational and Health Services
Nebraska Health Care Association

Dear **Ann Kawata** (Children and Family Services Administrator, DHHS Broken Bow office):

I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate **Cindy Janulewicz** (Social Service Worker, DHHS Broken Bow office). She is always willing to help me, answer any of my questions, and send/fax any information that I request. I know I can always count on Cindy for her help and efficiency. I enjoy working with her, and she is definitely an asset to DHHS.

Chris McCauley, CSW
Therapeutic Foster Care Supervisor
OMNI Behavioral Health
Kearney, Nebraska

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

Confirming our telephone conversation yesterday, we are withdrawing the application for health benefits through the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. We appreciate the information and assistance in completing the application, as well as all the time and effort spent on processing it. Thank you. Your professionalism is a credit to your organization.

A North Platte Area Guardian

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

Defenders of Our Freedom Parade

Previous issues of this publication featured the first three paintings in the “Defenders of Our Freedom” collection by artist Teri Rosario that found a home at the Eastern Nebraska Veterans’ Home (ENVH) at Bellevue. Here’s the fourth, “Storm Over the Desert.”



© Teri Rosario

Artist **Teri Rosario** calls ©“Storm Over the Desert” the “most nerve wracking of all the paintings’ in the Defenders of Our Freedom collection—intensely nerve wracking because the person who would approve the proposed concept was none other than **Howard Googins**, ENVH Administrator and a retired United States Air Force Colonel! The initial sketch of the painting depicted only the array of aircraft used in Desert Storm but no people other than the pilot shown in the foreground.

At Googin’s request, the artist added the personnel that now appear in the center of the piece to show that the Air Force, like all service branches, is not just about equipment but the people who operate that equipment. Needless to say, plans for the final version were approved.

“Howard Googins was right about the needed change,” says the artist. “The painting is much better now and better represents the USAF as a whole.....But don’t tell him I said that!”

For more information about the painting and painter, go to www.terirosario.com , and watch for the other two paintings in this collection that will appear in upcoming issues of *Connections*!