

CONNECTIONS

March 2016 VOLUME 16, ISSUE 2

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

Meet Caryn Vincent, Special Assistant to the CEO



When **Caryn Vincent** started college at the University of Nebraska-Kearney, she wanted to go to medical school. So the York, Nebraska native majored in psychobiology. She studied how the brain functions, and the anatomy of why things like strokes, tumors, and Alzheimer's happen.

Then things changed when Caryn was introduced to the world of public health. "I realized that was where my passion

was," Caryn said. So she decided to further her education and pursued her Master's Degree in Public Health from the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha. She received her Masters of Public Health and began her career with the Four Corners Health Department back in her hometown of York.

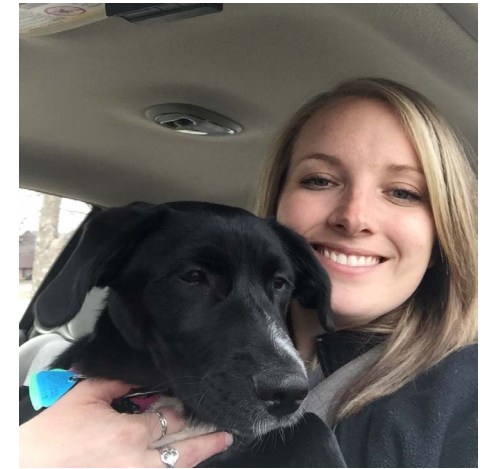
As their Special Projects Coordinator, Caryn learned a lot about Public Health as a whole. She did a lot of quality improvement projects, program evaluations, and worked on public health accreditation. She also worked on securing grants for the department. After about a year-and-one-half there, Caryn met DHHS CEO Courtney Phillips at a conference and started down the road that would bring her to DHHS.

Caryn joined Courtney's staff in January as Special Assistant. She does a lot of fact-finding and background research for Courtney before meetings and speaking events. She will work with Communications and the new Chief of

Staff, Matt Wallen, to develop talking points for speaking engagements. "Ultimately my job is to do whatever I can to make sure that Courtney is successful," Caryn said.

She says her public health background is the perfect fit for her new role because, "Public health is about helping people and communities be healthier. That aligns with the DHHS mission of helping people live better lives across Nebraska," Caryn said.

In her free time, Caryn coaches the York High School speech team. Last year they won 3rd place at State, and they have won several of their tournaments so far this year. She also loves to run. In February she ran her 3rd half marathon--The Disney Princess half marathon at Disney World. She's also run in the Market to Market relay. Caryn says her dream is to run the New York City Full Marathon in a few years.



Caryn lives in York with her one-year-old Golden Retriever-Border Collie Mix named Olive.



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 email at dhhs.helpline@nebraska.gov

Chief Executive Officer: Courtney Phillips	Medicaid and Long-Term Care Division Director: Calder Lynch
Behavioral Health Division Director: Sheri Dawson	Public Health Division Acting Director: Courtney Phillips
Children and Family Services Division Director: Doug Weinberg	Veterans' Homes Division Director: John Hilgert
Developmental Disabilities Division Director: Courtney Miller	

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DHHS' Employee Website....

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

Homepage Homeruns

NFOCUS IS&T Red Dress Dash

Members of the N-FOCUS IS&T team got together for the American Heart Association Red Dress Dash to help raise awareness of heart disease. 80% of cardiac events can be prevented by education and lifestyle changes and this is a fun way to show support for all the AHA does to combat this disease.

Mark your calendar for next year and get a team together. It's fun and everyone should have at least one Red Dress in their closet.



Back row: Kim Navratil, George Orbin, Bill Bartling, Vicki Bartling, Lori Davison, Jan Hicks-Hunt. Front row: Diane Koza, Barb Whitehead, Cindy Johnson, Russ. Davison *Thanks to Diane Koza for the photo and information!*

DHHS Staff in Lexington help out Social Services Worker's Family

Staff at the Lexington CSC donated items to be included in a silent auction

benefit for Dick Herbert, father to Shelby Herbert, SSW at Lexington CSC. Dick has been diagnosed with stage IV colon cancer.

Regardless of the situation, when they put out a request at the center in regards to someone in need, the ENTIRE center gets behind the request and they have a wonderful response.

We appreciate all that the workers do above and beyond their work day. Thanks to all of you for helping out each and every time.



Staff persons in picture, Deb Svoboda, Melissa BeDunnah, Olivia Aguilar, Shelby Herbert, Carol Sheldon, Crystal Fielder, Sandra Reyes, Deysy Zamora, and Marnie Carr. *Thanks to Marnie Carr for the photos and information.*

Eastern Service Area rewarded for helping out Fremont CSC

Two weeks ago, the Fremont Customer Service Center was down most of the day on February 4th. The Eastern Service Area pitched in and helped pick up 120 phone calls while Fremont was down.

The Fremont CSC showed their appreciation by sending the ESA staff a card

and goodies to recognize them for helping out. Just another way that #TeamDHHS works together across the state!



Pictured are: Aimee Fletcher, Zach Flott, Tim Herr, Travis Carey, Kelci Cordes, Kara Piveral, Loretta Welch, Nancy Habron, Jessye Johnson, Lisa Olser, Kelli Schroeder, Jacob Ruwe, Pat Gordon and Sue Pluta. *Thanks to Cindy Sullivan for the photos and information.*

YRTC Geneva Helps Girls

Recently, 10/11 News did a story about the YRTC Geneva Facility and how it helps troubled girls across the state.

Below is an excerpt from the story. Click on the link to watch it in its entirety.

Our Town Geneva: YTRC Helps Girls

By Lance Schwartz

The Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center is commonly referred to as the YRTC by the people Fillmore County.

One might think that having a treatment facility located in their town would be a nuisance... but in Geneva, the YRTC is widely appreciated...and it has been for a long, long time. [Click here for the rest of the story.](#)



Courtney Phillips, CEO

Message from Courtney Phillips, CEO

This year's Social Work Month theme is "forging solutions out of challenges," and that fits our work well. Whether you're helping individuals and families find ways to face and address their challenges, or working through ways to better do our work internally with each other and our partners, finding solutions is the name of the game.

As a part of #TeamDHHS, you work with some of Nebraska's most vulnerable citizens. Maybe people who have basic needs for food and shelter, or are in dangerous living situations, or are confronting substance use issues. They may need services to live a fuller life.

Social work and its many related activities touch every division in the Department in a variety of ways. Some examples of this work include:

- Our employees in Behavioral Health work in the Regional Centers and with community providers to help people with mental illness, substance use and other disorders work toward recovery and a transition to lead more fulfilling lives;

- In Children and Family Services, we provide assistance to protect children from abuse and neglect and improve the lives of children and their families, rehabilitate those in our care, and provide important services to families facing economic uncertainty;
- Employees in Developmental Disabilities help individuals at the Beatrice State Developmental Center as well as individuals living in the community and their families, making sure people have access to the services and supports that allow them to lead full lives;
- In Public Health, our employees improve the lives of people through our prevention programs and step forward in our response to natural disasters, such as tornadoes and floods, helping survivors access basic services, health care and mental health care to address stress and anxiety;

- Our employees in Medicaid and Long-Term Care help people in need of basic health care and mental health care, and work directly with individuals receiving waiver services to provide the supports necessary for them to stay in their homes; and
- Employees in our Veterans' Homes support our nation's heroes, through assisted living and nursing home services, and providing activities to keep them young at heart.

A BIG thank you to all the hard work that social workers do for us each day! Thank you for doing your part to help us all live better lives. If you know someone that has a passion for social work, encourage them to apply today to become a part of #TeamDHHS!

Greetings #TeamDHHS!

This month I'm going to use this space to give a shout out to those on our team who touch the world via social work. This is important work every day, week and month – but especially right now because March is recognized nationally as Social Work Month.

As an agency, DHHS has social workers across our divisions who do their best every day to help Nebraskans live better lives. Whether you're trained in social work or have gravitated to this work, it's a special field because it touches people who are in need, oftentimes helping people meet their basic needs.

Where Are All the Nurses?

By Cheryl McMurry
Nursing Director, Lincoln Regional Center

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, nurses make up the single largest health profession in the United States. Between now and 2022, not only will there be an expected half-million nursing jobs from growing demand but also another half-million nurses will retire and need to be replaced. The demand for nurses will continue to grow as the “baby-boomers” enter into Medicare at a rate of 2-3 million each year! The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a 19 percent growth in employment for nurses from 2012 to 2022.

To illustrate how Nebraska is faring with the nurse shortage, here are some interesting “Fast Facts” provided by the Nebraska Center for Nursing:

- In 2009, the average age of a Nebraska nurse was 46 years old.

- About half of all Nebraska nurses will retire in the next 10 years.
- By 2020, Nebraska will have a shortage of nearly 4,000 RNs.
- Of Nebraska’s 93 counties, 73 have a lower than national average ratio of registered nurses to patients, and more than one-third of Nebraska’s counties have no nurse practitioners.
- Nine counties in Nebraska have no registered nurses.
- Four counties in Nebraska have just one registered nurse!

All of this information provides some explanation as to why DHHS facilities, including the Lincoln Regional Center, our Veterans’ Homes and BSDC, and most other healthcare organizations, are experiencing a nurse shortage and higher vacancy rates.

Take a look at nearly every newspaper or job posting site and invariably you will find openings for nurses and nursing

services staff. DHHS facilities certainly are not unique in the struggle to recruit and retain nurses. Being a state of small population, and perhaps in the opinion of some, a state with little appeal (who needs mountains or oceans???), recruitment and retention efforts can be very challenging.

Meanwhile, it is imperative that we continue to provide patient and member care as safely and effectively as possible. Currently we are working on many different interventions to help us fill our vacancies. At LRC, we are offering flexible scheduling options, aggressive recruitment of nurses through various advertising efforts and job fairs; offering clinical experiences for students; encouraging utilization of tuition assistance and other options for educational growth; and providing paid certification opportunities.

In spite of all of our challenges, we feel very optimistic about the future of nursing at LRC. Through the adversity, we have continued to provide the very best care for our patients.

If you have friends or family members that are CNAs, LPN’s, or RN’s, encourage them to apply for jobs with DHHS at <http://statejobs.nebraska.gov/>



Notes From



Human Resources

The start of a new year is always a good time to review your beneficiaries on your retirement and life insurance. It’s easy to do and only takes a few minutes.

It is income tax season and your 2015 W-2 is now available for printing. DHHS Operations sent out an email in February with instructions to print your electronic W-2.

If you were unable to print, or did not receive this email Operations urges you to contact your payroll representative or Deanna Schuldeis (402) 471-9348 or Robin Nolte (402) 471-9531 or Melanie Kuenning (402) 471-0306

[Here are instructions on how to view and print your W-2.](#)

Children's Dental Day at UNMC College of Dentistry



Children's Dental Day was recently held at the UNMC College of Dentistry. Now in its 15th year, the program devotes its entire Lincoln facility, students, staff, and faculty for a full day to provide a full range of dental care to underserved Nebraska children.

DHHS CEO **Courtney Phillips** toured the facilities and met with some of the faculty, staff and dental students and Nebraska children benefitting from this program. About 200 kids are bussed in from as far west as Lexington, and as far east as Omaha.

"Some of the teenagers who come have never been to see the dentist ever in their lives, and will have some of their teeth pulled due to heavy decay," Dr. David Brown, the Executive Associate Dean for Academic Affairs said.

The experience was a fun one for Courtney, as her 4-year-old son wants to be a dentist right now! "We're having fun playing 'dentist' at home together," she said. She also noted how important the Children's Dental Day is to the underserved population in the state. "This is just another way for us to help Nebraskans live better lives."

Some of the first year students dressed as the Tooth Fairy and Ortho-Man to help make the experience a little easier for the kids. The college also has interactive games for the kids to play while they wait. They can even take photos and sing a special version of "Let it Go" with the Tooth Fairy!

The program was started by Dr. Brown. About 300 dental students, residents, hygienist students, nursing, and dental assistant students volunteer their time each Dental Day to make the event possible. A Children's Dental Day is also held in the Nebraska Panhandle on the first weekend in June. Since the inception of the Dental Day in 2001, more than 4,500 Nebraska children have been treated by College of Dentistry Doctors and staff.



Way to Go!

Statewide and National Recognitions, Honors and Awards

A young woman from Cozad who receives Developmental Disabilities services took the time to give back to one of the staff members who helps on a daily basis. When Alicia found out about the very real need that the a provider's staff member was facing, she took it upon herself to do something about it. Here's her story:

Alicia planned and organized a fundraising effort for a staff member at South Central Developmental Services, whose young daughter has cystic fibrosis. This staff member's daughter is often hospitalized in Denver and the costs of those trips in addition to the lost wages due to time off work, were creating a financial hardship for the family. Alicia spearheaded efforts to raise funds for the family and she accomplished this by approaching community businesses in Cozad, Lexington, and Gothenburg and asking for donations of items to auction off at a silent auction. Businesses donated gift baskets, gift certificates, gas cards, and individual people donated items they crafted or baked. This included Alicia baking her own baked goods for the auction. Through Alicia's efforts, \$1,865 was raised and given to the family to help in deferring costs associated with the trips to Denver. Alicia has a heart of gold and this is seen in the actions towards others and the work she put into raising money to help this young girl and her family.

-Kylie Joyce, DHHS DD Service Coordinator



Casey Family Programs Leadership Academy

This photo is from the Casey Family Programs Leadership Academy session...their first ever. Former President and First Lady **Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter** hosted the event at the Carter Center in Atlanta. CFS Director **Doug Weinberg** attended the event.

The purpose of the meeting was for relatively new Child Welfare Directors to meet, interact with and learn from more experienced Child Welfare Directors. Participants were selected by Casey. Between new and longtime directors and limited Casey staff, there were slightly more than 20 people in attendance.



National Minority Health Month

By Josie Rodriguez

To celebrate April being National Minority Health Month and help accelerate health equity for our state and the nation, the Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity is hosting its 2016 Minority Health Conference on April 20, 2016 at the Younes Convention Center in Kearney Nebraska. **“Practice, Research, and Partnerships: Treading it All Together to Achieve Health Equity”** is the theme of this year's conference. This year's conference provides a forum for public health professionals and other stakeholders to explore and gain practical knowledge in the areas of public health practice, minority health research in Nebraska, social determinants of health, and partnerships for collaborative impact. This conference provides an opportunity to network with public health professionals, researchers, community health workers, and other individuals interested in advancing health equity in Nebraska.

As our Nebraska population becomes more diverse, it is important that we are aware of the diversity of the consumers we serve. The 2016 Minority Health Conference will provide you with the opportunity to foster alliances with minority populations in Nebraska and organizations who serve minority populations throughout our state, and learn about projects and programs that are advancing health equity in Nebraska.



**Practice, Research and Partnerships:
Treading it All Together to Achieve Health Equity**

April 20, 2016, Younes Convention Center, Kearney NE

REGISTER HERE <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/healthdisparities>

Keynote speakers for this year's conference include:

- Captain Carmen Clelland, PharmD, MPA, CDC Associate Director of Tribal Support, Atlanta, GA;
- Sudah Shaheb, MD, Endocrinologist, Macy, NE;
- Dr. Paul Estabrooks, PhD, Chair of UNMC Department of Chair of UNMC Department of Health Promotion, Social and Behavioral Health, Omaha, NE

Please join us in celebrating National Minority Health Month by attending the 2016 Minority Health Conference to help raise awareness of the health disparities that continue to affect racial and ethnic minorities in Nebraska and accelerate health equity in our state and in the nation.

We invite offices or programs to our conference to promote your services, by registering as an exhibitor at the conference.

For more information about the 2016 Minority Health Conference, or to register as a participant or vendor, please go to the [Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity Website](#).

What to do about Persistent Complaining from Co-Workers

“Some people see the glass half full. Others see it half empty. I see a glass that’s twice as big as it needs to be.” George Carlin

By Richard Mettler,
Human Resources



While it is natural to feel discouraged from time to time, some people persistently complain about one thing or another as they create a cloud of negativity.

Persistent complaining wears on everyone else—draining energy, morale, and productivity.

Persistent complaining as understood here is complaining just to complain with contagious unhappiness, as complainers seek out others to play the game of “Ain’t it Awful”.

Don’t minimize or avoid this problem by thinking, “Oh, that’s just Bob being Bob.” or “Alice can always find a dark cloud in a silver lining.” It’s not your responsibility to listen to co-workers complain.

Interventions to avoid with persistent complainers

The first thing to do is recognize that someone else’s persistent complaints are not a problem that you’re supposed to solve.

- Don’t try to talk the person out of complaining by saying, for example, “Cheer up. Things are OK.” This can be seen as a challenge to the complainer who will often complain even harder to convince you how bad things are.

- Don’t suggest a solution to the complainer; for example, “Why don’t you...?” or “Have you tried...?” This sets in

motion a game of “Yes, but...” where every proposed solution you offer will be met with something along the line of, “That won’t work because...” or “I already tried that, and it didn’t work.” The persistent complainer is not motivated by solutions but by the very act of complaining.

Suggestions for addressing persistent complaining

- Deflect the problem back to the complainer without offering a solution. Ask, “What constructive advice would you offer a close friend who had this happen?”

- Assert your personal boundaries. You might say, “I understand that you’re unhappy, but I don’t want to hear complaints. Let’s talk about something else.”

- Advocate for what you want—more positive engagement in your day. For example, “I’ve noticed that when we talk, the conversation tends to focus on problems. I’d like to hear about something that’s going well for you?”

- Shrug and say, “I can’t help you with that one. Sorry.” Then move on to a more upbeat topic. Your message, ‘I’m not interested,’ will eventually be received, because of our deep inner need to complain.”



Please email your thoughts, concerns, or suggestions about workplace courtesies and workplace relationships to Richard.Mettler@nebraska.gov I will e-mail you a response, and perhaps anonymously feature your thoughts, concerns, or questions in a future column.

Nebraska couple honored for advocating for adopted daughter

A Nebraska couple who adopted a foster child are the winners of the national Casey Family Programs’ Excellence for Children Awards.

Tracy and Douglas Christensen adopted their older foster daughter, Joy, in 2014 after Tracy met her while serving as a mentor at a camp for foster youth. The couple advocated for improvements in her medical treatment and helped her make family connections that she didn’t even know existed.

Tracy felt that medications prescribed for Joy were not necessary and she worked with doctors to end their use.

They agreed, and she stopped the medication. They also worked with officials at Joy’s school to create a plan if she had troubles. She made honor roll in 2014 and remains there this school year.

Department of Health and Human Services Case Manager Katy Rawhouser searched for Joy’s biological mother, which took considerable effort, but Rawhouser located her in an assisted living facility in Texas and the Christensens took her for a visit.

“The positive results of the Christensens’ advocacy for Joy have made a huge difference in her life,” said Doug Weinberg, director of Children and Family Services at DHHS.

Last July the Christensens adopted Joy.

The Casey Excellence for Children Awards recognize outstanding individuals and leaders in child welfare who have demonstrated distinguished work, exceptional leadership, and relentless dedication in improving child welfare in America. To see their whole story [click here](#). For more information check out the [DHHS News Release](#) .



Foster or Adoptive Parent award winners **Tracy and Douglas Christensen** of Nebraska, with their daughter, **Joy** (pictured middle), receive their award from Casey Trustee David Mills.

“I personally believe we developed language because of our deep inner need to complain.” Jane Wagner, The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe

In Gratitude

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services' mission:

Helping people live better lives.



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

"Dear **Mr. Rodriguez**,

Thank you for allowing me to introduce you to the YLK group. I really enjoyed learning about YRTC-[Kearney.] The interaction with the kids was my favorite part of the day."

Brandon Merz

"I just wanted to take a moment to thank and praise Vonda Apking (Health Licensing Coordinator) for her help in our non-resident licensing applications. We recently submitted two applications for non-resident pharmacy licensure in Nebraska. One of our pharmacies had some disciplinary history in the past prior to our acquisition of the pharmacy which made the application process a bit drawn out. Vonda had been extremely helpful and responsive every step of the way and worked with us to figure out exactly what the Board needed for a proper review. The licenses were finally approved today. I just wanted to say thank you and make sure the NE Board knows how good of a job Vonda is doing for pharmacies like us."

Brad Bingham, Imprimis Pharmaceuticals

"Thank you to all the young men and staff [of **YRTC-Kearney**] for helping at our Children's Mental Health Celebration. We appreciate all the hard work you did and your willingness to help us."

Families CARE Staff

Judy Barker (CLS) is really great to work with. She contacted me about the forms website and took time out of her day to go through a bunch of questions with me and provide me resources for future orders. I really appreciated the time she took to help me out..."

Linda Barna