

Connections

Volume 8, Issue 5

Winner of the National Public Health Information Coalition's Gold Award

May 2008

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together



WHAT'S IN ALL THE BOXES? Turn the page to find out. *Photo: Ross Tomjack*

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DHHS in the News Update...

A small sample of news releases recently issued by Communications & Legislative Services about DHHS programs. A full text of all releases is available under "Newsroom" on the DHHS Web site listed below.

Dangers to infants of bed-sharing! Tuberculosis cases decreasing! Youth gambling increasing! Just a few of the 54 media releases about DHHS programs issued in March 2008. Here are a few headlines of news releases DHHS sent to media in April 2008:

- **May is Vulnerable Adult Abuse Prevention Month** April 17
- **Nebraskans warned to be on alert for Medicare scams** April 16
- **Innovative direct care recruitment/retention plan in place at BSDC** April 16

Check recent DHHS releases by going to www.dhhs.ne.gov/, clicking on the "Newsroom" link and then on "News Releases." Listen to "sound bites" issued with releases.

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



About the Cover

Standing by some of 16 boxes of "stuff" is **Tami Hilfiker** (at left), Protection & Safety (P&S) Supervisor in DHHS O'Neill office, and (at right) P&S Worker **Sally Davis**. What's in the boxes are "My Stuff Bags." What's in the bags are toiletries, a blanket or quilt, a small stuffed animal, crayons and coloring books, clothing and other items—all for children from infant to 16 years of age who are removed from their home by authorities and need DHHS to find them temporary lodging.

"My Stuff Bags" are stuffed by volunteers with new items donated by supporters of the My Stuff Bags Foundation across the country. A tenant of the program is that "My Stuff Bags give children separated from all they know...something to hold on to." Since abused or neglected kids must often be rescued suddenly, they have few if any personal belongings with them. Because My Stuff Bags help children get settled and are filled with gifts, children learn that they are not only protected but cared about by many people.

This windfall came about because Tami took the initiative to apply to the My Stuff Bags Foundation. She will share the boxes with other offices throughout the Northern Service Area. *Photo: Ross Tomjack.*

For more information on My Stuff Bags, go to <http://www.mystuffbags.org>. ☞

make the connection . . .

DHHS Public Web site: <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov>

DHHS Employee Web site: <http://www2.dhhs.ne.gov>

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

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EOE/AA/ADA



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From the CEO

Spring is finally here!

If you're like me, the change to warmer weather beckons me to work in the yard, take walks, and spend time outdoors with family and friends – things that reenergize my body and soul.

Sometimes we need reenergizing at work, too.

Jobs in the health and human services field are about giving of ourselves to make a difference for others. We help people live better lives.

In addition, the demands on our services are steady, our agency's reorganization continues, and we're involved in a record number of major initiatives that pull us in many directions.

While all of this can be tremendously rewarding, it can also be overwhelming if we aren't careful. In our efforts to respond to all of

these competing interests, we all too frequently forget to take care of ourselves and make time for our co-workers, whether they sit next to us or are a hundred miles away.

Keep Spring in mind...make an effort to "smell the roses" during your workday. Take a few minutes, every day, to reenergize yourself and your colleagues.

Have a potluck lunch, maybe outdoors in picnic style. Take a break with co-workers; catch up on their lives. Ask someone how their day is going. Take time for a quick walk at lunch or break.

Problem solve as a group. Take the time to smile and acknowledge others.

Sit back in your chair and stretch your arms, your neck...and breathe deeply.

Provide words of encouragement to someone who's having a difficult day. Say "thanks."

These small things can have a huge impact on our well-being. Thank you for the work you do each and every day.



By Christine Peterson
Chief Executive Officer,
Nebraska Department of
Health and Human Services



*It's what each
of us sows,
and how,
that gives to us
character and prestige,
seeds of kindness,
good will, and
human understanding,
planted in
fertile soil,
spring up into
deathless friendships,
big deeds of worth,
and a memory that
will not soon fade out.*

*We are all
sowers of seeds--
and let us never
forget it!*

(George Matthew Adams)

EMS Program Helped Cope with Von Maur Shootings

By Marla Augustine

When the tragedy occurred at the Von Maur department store in Omaha in December 2007, police, fire and emergency medical services personnel responded to the scene. What responders found at the shopping mall was shocking in its scope and intensity. It had the potential to haunt them for months to come, if not for the rest of their lives.

Enter the Critical Incident Stress Management Program (CISM). Critical incidents are traumatic events that cause powerful emotional reactions. CISM helps emergency responders cope with the highly stressful situations they encounter as part of their jobs by providing emotional support after the events.

“Every firefighter, police officer and emergency medical technician who is involved in an incident like the one at Von Maur is at risk of suffering from critical incident stress,” says **Dean Cole**, administrator of the EMS Program. “Even a routine event can cause an adverse reaction because stress can build up if nothing is done.”

Led by a mental health professional and trained peers, Von Maur responders met to talk about what they saw and how they felt about it. The result was some emotional relief from feelings of horror and sorrow. By sharing with others in a nonjudgmental, confidential setting, responders were better able to handle their stress.

Established in Nebraska in 1988, CISM was developed nationally as a peer-delivered, frontline help for EMS personnel to help them cope with the trauma they experience as part of their duties. CISM enables individuals to return to their daily routines quicker and with a lessened risk of experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder.

“A debriefing may be called together whenever there is a need,” says **Debbie Kuhn**, EMS coordinator. “It often happens as the result of the death of a child, accidents involving multiple victims or any mass casualty event.”

DHHS is the lead agency and provides training, coordination and technical assistance. In addition to the EMS Program, the Division of Behavioral Health is involved, along with other state agencies, like the State Patrol, the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and the Fire Marshal’s Office.

There are over 400 CISM volunteers across the state, including mental health professionals, emergency responders, 911 communication dispatchers and hospital personnel. Approximately 125 debriefings occur yearly.

“An incident like Von Maur can never be forgotten,” Kuhn said. “But CISM can help emergency responders continue doing their jobs.”



Wellness Words:



Want to be a lean, mean machine?

Then cut the fat. Avoid the fats in fried foods and fatty meats. Eat low-fat dairy products. Nuts, mayonnaise, margarine and butter should be eaten only in limited quantities.

The result will be lower cholesterol, reducing your risk of heart attacks and stroke!

Dr. Joann Schaefer
Chief Medical Officer



Six year-old **Kevin Peterson** of Omaha is ready to start his journey into the Super Colon to learn more about how to prevent colon cancer. The biggie-sized inflatable replica was on display at the Black Family Health and Wellness Fair in Omaha in March. *Photo: Janelle Jacobson*

“Super Colon” promotes colon cancer screening

The Super Colon—a giant, inflatable replica of a human colon on display at the Black Family Health and Wellness Fair in Omaha on March 29—is an unusual and dramatic reminder of the importance of colorectal cancer screening. Standing eight feet tall and 20 feet long, visitors walked through the Super Colon display and learned colorectal cancer prevention tips, risks, symptoms and treatment options.

“Nebraska has the 11th highest colorectal cancer incidence rate in the United States,” said **Dr. Jackie Miller**, Chief Administrator for Community Health, with the Division of Public Health. “With regular colorectal cancer screening, Nebraskans can dramatically reverse this statistic.”

The Super Colon is an interactive display that gives people the chance to learn about colorectal cancer and how it’s preventable, treatable and beatable. The display gives visitors a close-up look at healthy tissue, tissue with non-malignant colorectal diseases, and tissue with various stages of colorectal cancer.

National guidelines recommend everyone over age 50 be screened for colorectal cancer, earlier if there is a family history of colon cancer or a medical history of bowel disease.

For information about colorectal screening in Nebraska, call the DHHS Colon Cancer Program at 800-532-2227. 📞

Colon Cancer Program (800) 532-2227



DHHS Public Website makes it easier to stay informed

When **Patricia Darnell** from the Medicaid & Long-Term Care Division approached Webmaster **Greg Votava** looking for a solution to help cut the costs of mailing information to providers, Greg responded enthusiastically, "I've got just the ticket!"

As a result, and as part of the focus on services that make government more accessible and responsive, DHHS has added an e-mail subscription service to its public Web site. Members of the

public can subscribe to topics of interest and receive instant, automated e-mail or wireless notification whenever DHHS publishes new information to the site.

The notices include links that take subscribers directly to the updated content for more detail.

"It's easy to use," said Votava. "Within a few clicks people can sign up for updates on 174 different topics such as Medicaid provider bulletins, emergency announcements, news releases, job openings or information about children available for adoption."

Subscribers can also tailor the frequency at which they receive notices: immediately upon posting, daily, weekly or monthly.

In the event of an emergency, DHHS can send out a 'blast' e-mail and wireless alerts to subscribers, providing them important information immediately. By sending emergency alerts via e-mail to subscribers' cell phones, DHHS can contact more people faster.

"DHHS can also tailor short questions to users at the time they are signing up, which helps us better understand our audience," said Votava. "This lets us target

messages when necessary such as if there is an emergency that only affects a limited number of counties."

The new service will benefit both residents of Nebraska and DHHS itself. Residents stay better informed about subjects that are important to them, get information immediately and save time looking for information on the Website. DHHS improves responsiveness to the public, interacts more effectively through proactive communication, and plans to reduce paper use and delivery costs by sending information digitally.

DHHS employees have commented that the new service has helped them stay better informed not only about their own area of work but about other areas of the agency as well.

Signing up is free, easy, and risk-free. Visitors to the DHHS Web site can click on the "Alerts" icon at the top right side of the homepage to see a list of pages that are available for subscription and sign up. The only information that's required is an e-mail address, and subscribers can change their subscription details or cancel the service at any time.

Web users can sign up at www.dhhs.ne.gov.

Good Things Are Happening!

Nebraska continues to work hard to meet and exceed immunization goals. To this end, DHHS recently recognized 12 public and private clinics having at least 90% of children seen at the clinics completely immunized at two years of age. Three of them even achieved 100%: Blaine County Immunization Clinic, Garden County Immunization Clinic, and Park Street Medical Clinic in Genoa, Nebraska.

The DHHS Immunization Program is happy to recognize those who help children live better lives!

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.

By Jerry Crisp

On the job for fewer than two years, Program Specialist **Renee Faber** is a “field representative” assigned to one of six Behavioral Health Regions across the state. Assigned to 22 counties in northern Nebraska, her job is to liaison between DHHS and the region to help bring mental health, substance abuse and gambling services to those who need them.

A typical day for Renee means advising people about DHHS policies and dealing with such issues as funding, reviewing service plans and service contract monitoring.

“What all that boils down to is bringing together government and community service providers to benefit consumers,” Renee explains. “To do this, I work with other DHHS Divisions like Medicaid & Long-Term Care and the Service Areas, as well as members of the community throughout the region, to help consumers live better lives.”

In her work, Renee has had to sharpen her multi-tasking skills.

“You plan to get certain goals



Front Liner Renee Faber

Photo: Jerry Crisp

accomplished on any given day but often need to adjust plans as special situations arise,” says Renee. “Being ready to reset priorities on a moment’s notice is just part of the job.”

In spite of challenges, what keeps Renee at it is the opportunity to network with others who are also committed to help bring about behavioral health reform for Nebraskans. Behavioral health reform, simply put, is the ongoing effort to provide appropriate services as

close to home in the community as possible.

“Teamwork is the key,” she says, “and making it all work for consumers is what it’s all about.”

Renee’s most memorable experience so far was an opportunity for field reps to accompany **Scot Adams**, Director of the Behavioral Health Division, on a recent visit to western Nebraska. There they met with community health care providers, law enforcement and others, who were also working to achieve behavioral health reform.

“Just to see all that commitment, enthusiasm and passion to bring behavioral health care services to those who need them was invigorating,” says Renee. “It helped me realize just how diverse, yet unified, Nebraskans really are.”

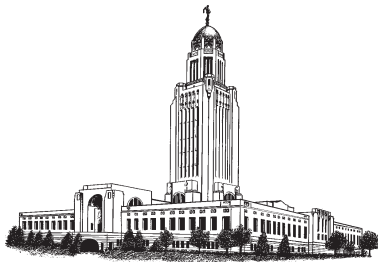
Both Renee and her husband, **Mark**, recently returned from serving their nation in Iraq, she with the National Guard and he as a Marine. Back on the home front, Renee is serving consumers of behavioral health services. Like a lot of other DHHS employees, serving others is what Renee is all about. ☺

Good Things Are Happening!

The 2007 Behavioral Health Consumer Survey shows that most people are satisfied with their mental health or substance abuse services. Over 5,000 adults received written surveys or phone calls, and 1,173 participated, a 48% increase over 2006. The survey focused on accessibility, satisfaction, quality and appropriateness, treatment participation, and outcomes. Eighty-five percent responded positively about quality and appropriateness of services, 81% thought services accessible, 81% were satisfied with general services, 78% were satisfied with involvement in treatment planning, and 72% were satisfied with outcomes.

The DHHS Division of Behavioral Health takes pride in helping consumers live better lives!

Legislative Update



By Bryson Bartels,
Legislative Coordinator

PASSED INTO LAW

LB 782 (Senator **Gwen Howard**, at Request of the Governor, 2008) Allow disclosure of child abuse and neglect information.

LB 749 (Senator **Arnie Stuthman**, 2008) Provide for electronic application submission and a civil penalty for manufactured homes. LB 749 was amended into LB 797 and passed into law.

LB 797 (Health and Human Services Committee, 2008) This is the DHHS Cleanup bill that makes technical changes in the mammography program, advanced

practice registered nurses, health data registries, rural health, organization of DHHS, modular homes and manufactured homes (LB 749).

LB 280 (Senator **Stuthman**, 2007) Provide for jurisdiction over custody proceedings of juveniles as prescribed.

LB 796 (Senator **Joel Johnson**, 2008) Change radiography and Radiation Control Act provisions. LB 796 has been amended into LB 928 and passed into law.

LB 847 (Senator **Philip Erdman**, 2008) Provide for notice of appointment of personal representative to DHHS. LB 847 has been amended into LB 928 and passed into law.

LB 906 (Senator **Dave Pankonin**, 2008) Change provisions relating to laboratories regulated by DHHS. LB 906 has been amended into LB 928 and passed into law.

LB 1120 (Senator **Johnson**, 2008) Change exempt provisions under the Nebraska Health Care Certificate of Need Act. LB 1120 has been amended into LB 928 passed into law.

NOT PASSED INTO LAW :

LB 29 (Senator **Mike Friend**, 2007) Provide for court orders to direct financially able parents to pay for cost of care for state wards.

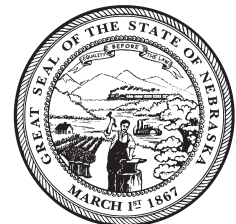
LB 327 (Speaker, at Request of **Governor Dave Heineman**, 2007) Change provisions relating to child care reimbursement.

LB 599 (Senator **Ray Aguilar**, 2007) Provide for process for DHHS Vital Statistics involving gestational surrogates.

LB 882 (Senator **Johnson**, 2008) Change provisions relating to prescription medication of indigent persons.

LB 1084 (Senator **Mike Flood**, 2008) Change provisions relating to assaults of staff in regional centers.

If you have any questions, please call me at (402) 471-0541 or e-mail me at bryson.bartels@dhhs.ne.gov.



Worth considering...

Example is not the main thing in influencing others.
It is the only thing.



Albert Schweitzer

June Observations

Skin Cancer Awareness Month

Melanoma is the most serious of all skin cancers. Nationally, melanoma is on the rise, and Nebraska is no exception. An estimated 380 Nebraska residents will be diagnosed with melanoma in 2008.

If found early and treated, the chances of recovery from melanoma are very good. Existing moles or an appearance of a new mole should raise caution.

The ABCDE approach can help identify suspicious moles:

Asymmetry –irregular shape

Border – ragged edge

Color – different shades of brown and black

Diameter – greater than 6mm (pencil eraser)

Evolution – mole has changed over time

If you have questions regarding your moles, schedule an appointment with a dermatologist. And remember that sunscreen, hats, sunglasses, and seeking shade can do much to prevent melanoma!

For more information about skin cancer, contact **Jennifer Dunavan**, Community Health Educator with the Division of Public Health, at (402) 471-0505 or at jennifer.dunavan@dhhs.ne.gov.

HIV Testing Week

More than 86 sites across Nebraska will be participating in HIV Testing Week (June 27-July 3rd). The awareness campaign is aimed at testing Nebraskans for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Confidential and anonymous rapid testing along with counseling and referral services will be offered at most sites. The campaign will inform people about the virus, using radio and TV public service announcements, advertising on buses in Lincoln and Omaha and electronic media mailings.

In Nebraska, the number of HIV cases diagnosed each year continues to increase. There were 55 cases of HIV diagnosed in 2005, and 75 HIV cases diagnosed in 2006. The trend continues with 74 new HIV/AIDS cases diagnosed through October of 2007. Currently there are more than 2,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in Nebraska with 1,379 of these diagnosed at Nebraska testing sites.

HIV Testing Week encourages people to take control of their health and their life by taking the test. Remarkable new medications make knowing your HIV status early all the more important to ensure long-term health and decrease HIV transmission. Many test sites have both free testing and counseling services. Each site has its own testing plan, some of which even include a mobile testing station.

For additional information, go to www.dhhs.ne.gov/dpc/HIV.htm, call the Nebraska AIDS Hotline 1-800-782-2437, or visit the nebraskaHIVtesting.org Website.

Customer Service Tip



Instead of thinking of a complaint as “ a familiar story we’ve heard before,” listen closely to what the complaining customer is actually saying and make sure why it’s a problem for this particular individual. Only when we’re fully aware of exact details can we tailor a solution and convert that person into a satisfied customer.



For What It’s Worth

An anonymous tip from a DHHS co-worker you might be able to use:

Best way to admit a mistake?

Many strategies have been put forward for admitting a mistake, but no one has ever come up with a better one than simply saying, “I made a mistake, I regret any consequences, and I learned from it.” No matter how anguished the apology or how earnest the breast-beating or forgiveness-begging, nothing surpasses admission of error, apology for any consequences, and application to future behavior.

Lacking any one of these parts, the whole will be less effective.

To share your tip (anonymously if you like), contact Jerry Crisp by phone at (402) 471-3995, by fax at (402) 471-3996, or by e-mail at jerry.crisp@dhhs.ne.gov.

In their own words...

Letters to HHSS employees who are helping people live better lives

Dear **Mike Zgud** (Social Worker, DHHS Kearney office):

My family wanted to thank you and the rest of the office for everything. As of February, we are no longer on any programs. We are so thankful that in our time of need there were programs and people there to help us through.

We are truly appreciative of all the help we received and pray we continue to get back on our feet again. Please know that your work is appreciated and so important to families like ours.

A former services recipient

Dear **Greg Votava** (DHHS Webmaster, Communications & Legislative Services, Lincoln):

I wanted to let you know how pleased I am with the verification portion of the Nebraska DHHS Website for medical licenses. As a person who must verify all past licenses for practitioners applying to work at New Hampshire Hospital, I frequently find verifications difficult to obtain.

However, Nebraska is the exception. What a wonderful, easy-to-use Website with immediate results. Thank you!

Susan J. Searah, CPS
Medical Staff Coordinator
New Hampshire Hospital
Concord, New Hampshire

Dear **Melissa Smith** (Protection & Safety Supervisor, DHHS North Platte office):

On behalf of the Youth Residential Program, I am writing to inform you of the outstanding teamwork and client-oriented focus **Phyllis Carney** (Protection & Safety Worker, DHHS North Platte office) has demonstrated. Reports from counselors have reflected positively on the relationship Phyllis has established, and she continually goes above the call of duty. She has made communication successful and easy to accomplish. Moreover, she consistently has the best interest of the adolescents she works with in mind.

It is cooperation such as this that makes it possible to make a difference in the lives of the adolescents we work with. We feel her flexibility and hard work are noteworthy and greatly appreciated.

From a private provider

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 print as many as space allows.

Happenings!

Photos spotlighting DHHS activities around the state

EATING MINDLESSLY?

A recent presentation on “Mindless Eating” by **Alice Henneman**, MS, RD (inset) attracted 113 people in the State Office Building in Lincoln. The presentation centered around “Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think,” a work by **Brian Wansink**. The thrust of the presentation was to make people more aware of why and what we eat.

Topics included how we can distinguish between “emotional” and “physical” hunger, and how can we use the “mindless margin” to lose, instead of gain, 10 to 20 pounds in the coming year.

Recognized nationally, Alice Henneman is an Extension Educator with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension, who received the Cooperative Extension Distinguished Educator Award in 2004. The presentation was sponsored by the Office of Women’s and Men’s Health and the Nebraska Cardiovascular Health Program in the Division of Public Health. *Photos: Mike Wight*



BSDC “COMMUNITY FAIR”: The Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC) invited the public to its first “Community Fair” on campus in March. Twenty local businesses showcased services and products in the BSDC gym so that people on campus and in the community could learn more about the resources and services each offers. Among those local groups participating were the Bank of the West, YMCA, Homestead National Monument and the Beatrice Chamber of Commerce. More than 120 community members, BSDC clients and employees attended.

Shown is State Senator **Norm Wallman**, who stopped by a BSDC booth promoting “Balloons-4-U,” a BSDC business offering balloons for all occasions, staffed by Center citizen **Randy Stalnak**.

“BSDC needs to remain open, and actions it’s now taking to meet federal standards will help do that,” said Senator Wallman. “The criterion must always remain what’s best for clients.”

Photo: Jerry Crisp



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

What's all the buzz about?

Dr. Joann Schaefer (at right) never misses an opportunity to spread the nutrition message. As Nebraska's Chief Medical Officer and Director of the DHHS Public Health Division, she highlighted the new "Watcha doin'?" campaign at a March news conference. Developed by a University of Nebraska-Lincoln advertising class to promote physical activity and proper nutrition among young people, this campaign is being implemented in four Lincoln high schools. She is shown with three of many Lincoln students who will serve as "Buzz Agents" by spreading the word at their high schools (from left to right are **Rachel Pickrel** from Lincoln East, **Krysta Sackett** and **Julie Kempkes**, both of Lincoln High). Each of the four Capitol City high schools has eight to 15 Buzz Agents, peer-to-peer marketers persuading their fellow classmates that eating fruits and veggies and staying physically active should be a permanent part of teen life. For more information on Buzz Agents, check out www.watchadoin.org. Photo: Bill Wiley



The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services mission:
Helping people live better lives.



**Nebraska Department of Health
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