

CONNECTIONS

May 2013

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Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

PACE Provides Another Option for Elderly People to Live at Home

*By Julie Docter, Program Specialist,
Medicaid and Long-Term Care*

Perhaps you've heard the acronym PACE floating around the Department lately, and you've wondered what it means. PACE stands for "Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly," and it is a new program in Medicaid and Long-Term Care.

PACE provides comprehensive, coordinated health care and long-term services and support for voluntarily enrolled people. To enroll in PACE you must be 55 and older and:

- meet Nebraska Medicaid's nursing facility level of care criteria;
- live within the service area of an approved PACE provider; and
- be able to safely live in a community setting, with PACE services, at the time of enrollment.

The benefits package for PACE includes all Medicare- and Medicaid-covered items and services and other services as determined necessary by the PACE provider's interdisciplinary team. The focal point for coordination and provision of most PACE services is a facility called a PACE center. The center is similar to an Adult Day Health Care facility and meets state and federal safety requirements. It includes a primary care clinic and areas for therapeutic recreation,

restorative therapies, personal care, socialization and dining. In Nebraska, a PACE center must be licensed as a health clinic.

Before becoming a PACE provider, an interested organization must submit an extensive application to Nebraska Medicaid and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and enter into a three-way agreement with them. Currently there is one organization in Nebraska that has been approved as a PACE provider, Immanuel Pathways on Sorensen Parkway in Omaha. Their service area includes all of Douglas and Sarpy Counties and portions of Cass, Dodge, Saunders and Washington Counties. Immanuel Pathways became operational May 1, 2013, and is marketing to potential participants in their service area and performing enrollment activities.

Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly have been in existence in the United States since the 1970s. Nebraska Medicaid is excited to offer, by virtue of PACE, another alternative along the continuum of available long-term care services and supports to enable more citizens of the State to continue to live in their homes and communities.

For more information about PACE, visit DHHS' website at <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/PACE.aspx> or [email DHHS.PACE@nebraska.gov](mailto:DHHS.PACE@nebraska.gov).



Immanuel Pathways, an approved provider for the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), began serving participants in the Omaha area on May 1 and celebrated with a ribbon cutting ceremony May 7. Dignitaries in attendance for the ribbon cutting included Gov. Dave Heineman and Omaha Mayor Jim Suttle.
Photo: Julie Docter



From left: **Vivianne Chaumont**, Director of Medicaid and Long-Term Care, CEO **Kerry Winterer** and a representative with Immanuel Pathways.

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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 Dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov.

Homepage Homeruns

[HRC Employees Show Spirit and Commitment. Treatment is a Solution!](#) *April 30, 2013*

In recognition of Addiction Awareness Month, some employees at DHHS' Hastings Regional Center/Hastings Juvenile Chemical Dependency Program are pictured here displaying new t-shirts. Employees purchased these special t-shirts as a show of their commitment to treatment as a solution. The sleeve of the t-shirt is inscribed with Hastings Juvenile Chemical Dependency Program, Hastings, Nebraska.

The Hastings Juvenile Chemical Dependency Program provides residential substance abuse treatment for young men paroled from the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Kearney.

The program is licensed for 40 beds and has an average length of stay of approximately 4-6 months. Drug and alcohol abuse and addiction affects more than 75,000 adults in Nebraska.



Photo: Corinne Jensen

[LRC's Annual Arbor Day Ceremony](#) *April 29, 2013*

On Thursday, April 25, 2013, the Lincoln Regional Center (LRC) held its 35th annual Arbor Day ceremony. The guest speaker was George Edgar, former Clinical Chaplain at LRC, and Master Gardener who writes a gardening feature for the Lincoln Journal Star's Neighborhood Extra.

Each year, LRC remembers DHHS employees who have passed away. Three LRC coworkers passed away this year in February and March, as well as several retired employees. Ten trees were planted this year to remember and honor the lives of these people. Family members of those being remembered with a tree were invited and participated in the tree plantings. LRC's Arbor Day ceremony is a great way to celebrate LRC's beautiful campus and the lives of the coworkers and family members lost.

Trees were planted in memory of the following people: Jim Allison, PhD, Psychologist; Reid E. Devoe, former LRC Personnel Director; Caryn Gekas, RN; James Haase, Dietary; Robert Osborne, MD, former LRC Superintendent; Tu Van Nam, ADON; Charlie Sams, SSII; Terri Schnirl, Activity Assistant; Pete Troy, Maintenance; and Damon Wiegert (Stan Wiegert's son).

In addition, each Arbor Day, LRC patients participate in an art and poetry contest, and winners are announced during the ceremony. This year, in each patient building, groups of patients also painted nature scenes on barrels to be placed around the campus.



Photo: Linda Henslee

The Good Life:

A reminder of what we all share and hope to provide to our fellow Nebraskans



Photo: Bill Wiley

By Kerry T. Winterer, CEO

This month I want to touch on three topics that are timely and that I believe you will be interested in: the federal sequester; the legislative session; and the DHHS employee survey.

The **federal sequester**, as you probably know, is a set of automatic federal

spending cuts put into law by the Budget Control Act of 2011. It is effective beginning now, which is the third quarter of the 2013 federal fiscal year, but there has been some uncertainty in how it will affect us.

I've heard concerns that these cuts will result in employee layoffs or furloughs. Our objective in dealing with any budget reduction is to minimize these kinds of effects on our work force wherever possible. We've determined that these cuts will not result in furloughs or layoffs this federal fiscal year. The cuts will mean reductions in services and/or contracts for services, and savings through attrition, meaning that positions in affected programs that are vacated will not be refilled.

It remains to be seen what will happen in the next federal fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, 2013, although it is reasonable to expect reductions will continue. Once we know more about the amounts and programs that will be cut, we will go through the same review process in deciding how they affect the Department.

The 90-day **legislative session** is scheduled to end on June 5. There are many bills expected to pass

which will bring significant change to our programs, particularly those in Children and Family Services and Medicaid and Long-Term Care. This includes a bill (LB561) which over the course of the next year moves responsibility for juvenile offenders (except those at a Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center) from DHHS to the Office of Probation.

The budget passed by the legislature has few differences compared with the Governor's proposed budget, so there are few surprises for us. It does include funding for our proposed replacement of the Grand Island Veterans Home which is good news for us and for veterans in Nebraska.

Getting through any legislative session, especially this one, takes much work on the part of our legislative review team and program people in each division, and I want to thank all of our employees who provided important reviews and analysis of bills and budget items during this session.

Once this session is over, all of the bills affecting DHHS will be reviewed and summaries will be placed on the DHHS public website at http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/newsroom_legislation.aspx.

This website currently includes summaries of bills that passed from 2007-2012 and affected DHHS.

The results of the **Employee Survey** that many of you completed earlier this year are still being analyzed, but early information is encouraging. This year, 60 percent of the surveys sent were completed, which is a good rate of return and represents an 18 percent increase over last year. A preliminary review indicates an uptick in employee morale and attitudes toward work. I'll share the results of the Employee Survey with you when the analysis is complete.

I want to take this opportunity, again, to thank you for the work you do every day. I don't think you can hear enough that your work is important and valued. Each one of you, through your work, helps accomplish our mission of *helping people live better lives*.



What a Difference Foster Families Can Make

“I talked and you listened and it gave me hope that life can be better and it’s not too late to start over..”

May in Nebraska is more than flowers and celebrations of Spring. Special events were held throughout the state to showcase the need for more foster parents and to recognize and support families who open their homes to foster kids. May is national foster care month.

There were so many stories featured in the news throughout May highlighting the wonderful experiences of foster children and foster parents. Here’s a summary of some of those heart-warming stories.

Want to find out more about foster parenting? Call 1-800-7PARENT.

Foster Care Recruitment and Appreciation Event in Gering

Pictured, right: Children and Family Services Specialist **Breanna Bird**, Gering, and Jakob Golden at a foster care recruitment/appreciation event in Gering. Jakob is the son of Rob and Joann Golden. Through the years Rob and Joann have adopted nine children, have two bio-children, and have fostered more than 30 children. The youngest child they adopted was one, and the oldest was 17. The Goldenes spoke at the May 1 foster care recruitment/appreciation event in Gering. Even the snow, ice and some very cold temperatures didn’t keep the crowds away!

Foster Homes Offer Shelter from Life’s Storm

From the North Platte Telegraph, By Diane Wetzel

Susan Tomkins (Children and Family Services Specialist Supervisor, Sidney) knows first hand the difference a foster family can make.

“In 1968, when I was 12 years old, I was placed in foster care,” the children and family services specialist said. “We all know that kids pick up the tab for the parents’ misery. When I was 12, I didn’t know my family was abnormal. I know that whatever normal was, it wasn’t us.”



Photo: Rickie Wynne

Tomkins said foster family taught her what normal was.

“They showed me that normal people think of someone other than themselves,” she said.

“I stand here today to pay homage to my foster parents and to all foster parents. You can literally change the world one child at a time.”

[Read more.](#)

Nebraska in Need of Foster Parents (video)

From KMTV, By Jackie Mora

More foster parents are needed here in Nebraska, and pinwheels are helping the public see the need.

At Memorial Park (Omaha) this week, each pinwheel represents a child placed outside of his or her home.

Every day in Nebraska, eight children are removed from homes and entered into the foster care system.

For detailed information on Nebraska Foster Care Licensing requirements, visit <http://dhhs.ne.gov>

[Read more.](#)

Foster Parents Recognized

From KLKN TV, By Brittany Paris

Local foster families were recognized recently for the impact they make on children’s lives.

Jude Dean (Community Health Nurse, Public Health) has been a foster parent for almost two years. And with four of her own kids, plus three foster children, she’s pretty busy. She was one of a few local foster parents recognized for changing the lives of her foster kids.

“It means a lot,” Dean said. “I’ve actually learned a lot more from them than they’ve learned from me.”

One of Dean’s daughters was recognized at the event for an essay she wrote about her foster mother. It’s called “Angel Shining Bright,” published in the book “Heroes Among Us.”

While Lincoln Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Steve Joel thanked parents for their hard work with LPS foster kids, he read the essay that Dean’s daughter wrote. It centered around the first day she met her foster mom.

“I talked and you listened and it gave me hope that life can be better and it’s not too late to start over,” Joel read.

That daughter graduated from LPS this year. [Read more.](#)

Mutual Gift Exchange Between People in Conflict

“Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you will ever regret.” - Ambrose Bierce

By Richard Mettler,
Human Resources and Development

Whenever you find yourself in conflict with another person there is something that you can do on your own without assistance from a third party to reduce tension and help get your relationship back on track.

You can initiate a ‘mutual gift exchange.’ A gift exchange is an expression of good will between two people, and it starts with one person—you.

A ‘gift’ is a peace gesture which signals to the other person that you do not wish to be in conflict, including:

- **An Apology**—“I’m sorry for neglecting to copy you on that email. I understand that this was upsetting for you. I won’t let it happen again.”
- **Acknowledge a Complaint**—“I have been slow in getting this information to you lately.”
- **Positive Regard**—“I want any solution we find to be fair to you, as well”
- **A Compliment**—“I appreciate your sense of humor.”
- **Concede a Point**—“I understand what you’re saying, and I think you’re right.”
- **Recognition**—“I respect your years of experience and insights in this.”
- **Agree to a Suggestion**—“Sure thing. Let’s move our weekly meetings to Thursday.”



- **Offer a Compromise**—“Why don’t we take turns inventorying cleaning supplies?”

This unexpected ‘gift’ will often trigger a peace gesture from the other person, signaling that this person, too, does not wish to be in conflict.

When a sincere gift exchange occurs, both individuals naturally calm down, mutual trust is restored and productive communication resumes. People are reminded of their shared understanding and common ground.

A mutual gift exchange is also an effective way to keep a good working relationship heading in the right direction to prevent conflict in the first place.

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Please email me your thoughts, concerns, or suggestions about workplace courtesy and workplace relationships. I will email you a response, and perhaps anonymously feature your ideas in a future column.

New Website Shows Business Owners How Tobacco Use Hurts a Business’ Bottom Line

DHHS’ Tobacco Free Nebraska program has launched a new website for business owners who employ tobacco users. The website is all about the many ways that tobacco use hurts a business’ bottom line.

The TobaccoHurtsBusiness.ne.gov website provides information on employee tobacco use and how it can affect business, as well as the steps that can be taken to minimize the impact.

Promoting and supporting a tobacco-free workplace makes good business sense. It says a lot about an employer’s commitment to his or her employees and customers. Here are three steps business owners can take now to make their workplaces tobacco-free.

1. Use their company’s health plan to help employees and their families quit using tobacco.
2. Promote the Nebraska Tobacco Quitline, **1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)**, and QuitNow.ne.gov.
3. Implement and maintain tobacco-free workplace policies and initiatives.



Make a Difference and Stand Against Elder Abuse

By Julie Hippen, Program Specialist, Children and Family Services

“What is elder abuse? Why do people do it? Well, it all comes down to how we can help, and prevent it.” That was Paige Silverberg’s message to her middle school classmates as part of her 6th grade classes’ “Make a Difference Fair.” Paige, a student at Scott Middle School in Lincoln, raised \$220 to distribute information to help stop elder abuse. While she was raising money she was increasing awareness among youth of elder abuse.

Students who participated in Scott Middle school’s “Make a Difference Fair” raised money for various organizations selected by the students themselves.

Paige used a national theme, “Stand Against Elder Abuse,” in a report explaining why she selected this cause. “I was thinking about my great grandma who had passed away a couple years ago,” she wrote. “It is also a topic that not many people had heard about so I wanted to work on something different than what others were choosing.”

She further stated, “Ever heard of elder abuse? Well it has become worse in the last few years. Just think from 1980 it had increased 21 percent. Now, just imagine elders sitting there hopelessly looking at the ceiling with their droopy eyes. Then think if that was you, would you like to

be depressed and sad? Now all we have to do is start standing against it, and I’m going to be the first to do it. What is elder abuse? How can we help? Why do people do it? Well, it all comes down to how we can help, and prevent it.”

June 15th is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is held annually in recognition that elder abuse is a public health and human rights issue. The day promotes a better understanding of abuse and neglect

of older persons through activities to raise awareness of the cultural, social, economic and demographic processes affecting elder abuse and neglect. Throughout the year, DHHS promotes elder abuse awareness. DHHS’ Adult Protective Services program investigated 2,740 of allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation in 2012.

Financial exploitation is on the rise with 1,320 reports in 2012 to the Adult Abuse Hotline alleging abuse and exploitation. MetLife® Mature Market Institute released “Elder Financial Abuse: Crimes

of Occasion, Desperation, and Predation against America’s Elder” in 2011. The report estimated that elders throughout the United States lose a minimum of \$2.9 billion annually due to elder financial abuse and exploitation.

Elder abuse can happen to anyone—a loved one, a neighbor, and when we are old enough, it can even happen to us. Signs of financial exploitation include:

- sudden changes in a bank account or banking practice, such as unexplained withdrawals of large amounts of money;
- additional names on an older person’s bank card;
- abrupt changes in a will or other financial document;
- disappearance of funds or valuable possessions;
- unpaid bills or substandard care despite the availability of funds;
- evidence of the older person’s signature being forged;
- the sudden appearance of previously uninvolved relatives;
- payment for unnecessary services; and
- reports from the older person of financial exploitation.

It’s important that we all be on the lookout for these activities affecting the elderly. If you or someone you know suspects elder abuse and/or neglect, call 1-800-652-1999.



Lindy Bryceson, Southeast Service Area Administrator, Lincoln, and **Deb Strudl**, Adult Protective Service Worker, Lincoln, accept donations for Elder Abuse Awareness. Sixth-grader Paige Silverberg presented the check at Scott Middle School in Lincoln on March 26th.

Way to Go!

Statewide and national recognitions, honors and awards

The Northeast Nebraska Child Advocacy Center (NENCAC) honored DHHS employee **Ashley Starostka** with this year's In the Spirit of Children award. Ashley is a Children and Families Services Specialist in the Columbus office. The NENCAC gives this award annually to an LB1184 team member who has contributed to the welfare of our children by providing exemplary service to children in the investigation and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

"Ashley constantly goes above and beyond for the children and families served by the State of Nebraska," her nomination stated.

"She is often assigned stagnant cases, to which she commits all of her compassion, time and energy to meet the children's needs and motivate the parents to make progress. She always strives to make the best decisions for children and truly cares about her families' outcomes. Ashley was also praised for her

fantastic attention to detail and knowledge of her current cases."

At the awards banquet, Ashley said that she feels "very humbled by the whole experience and hope that all the workers within this field understand how they are making a difference in families' lives and with children. I have been working with children and families for seven years and I continue to love every chance I get to make a positive impact on the families and children."

Way to Go, Ashley for your commitment to the children and families of Nebraska!



Ashley was nominated by Denise Kracl, Colfax County Attorney, and **Kristin Dewispelare**, CFS Supervisor, Columbus. Pictured, from left: Denise Kracl, Ashley Starostka and Kristin Dewispelare at an April 29 awards banquet.

YRTC-Geneva's "Barnyard Bash" Celebrates Volunteers

By Russ Reno

Thirty local residents who volunteer at the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Geneva were recognized for their service at a recent banquet. The theme for the evening was Barnyard Bash, but the focus was on the volunteers.

Attending the annual banquet were 134 volunteers, staff, family members, youth and guests, including DHHS Deputy Director of the Office of Juvenile Services **Tony Green**.

Marilyn Christiancy was recognized for her long service of volunteering. Marilyn began volunteering at the YRTC 45 years ago. She and her late husband, Clair, welcomed young women to their home for dinner and to attend church together, said **Anita Haumont**,

volunteer coordinator. In addition, Marilyn currently serves on the YRTC's Community Advisory Board.

Four volunteers were recognized for 10 years of service, and 25 people were thanked for beginning their volunteer work at the YRTC this past year.

Facility Administrator **Dan Scarborough** expressed his appreciation to the Community Advisory Board for giving their time to the youth and leadership for the benefit of the facility.

"Your commitment of time to this facility has been instrumental in educating, promoting and advocating for the YRTC-Geneva," Scarborough said. "You've also been instrumental in encouraging others to better understand the treatment programs and services we offer. Thank you."



The YRTC-G crowd was entertained with a petting zoo featuring a variety of farm animals. Pictured here is **Steve Kramer**, YRTC-G Maintenance Technician.

Photo: JoDeen Swartz

In Gratitude

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

Hi **Eric Henrichsen** (Chief Information Officer, Information Systems & Technology),

I really want to complement **Chris Arnold** (Infrastructure Support Analyst, Lincoln), of your Help Desk Level II support group. Without his help, we would not have had the webinar capabilities for our CMS Design Consult.

While Chris insists he was "just doing his job" and helped with loading and testing some needed plug-ins, he went well beyond that. He even volunteered to assist me when I did live testing with CMS during the lunch hour earlier in the week. He worked with us via remote access just in case we needed any tweaks on our end to make it all work.

While this type of excellent customer service may be "normal" here in Nebraska, I can tell you after working with another state's Medicaid department for the past five years, Chris' service level is so far beyond anything that I am used to.

Nice job by Chris and nice job by your team.

A Thankful CIO Contractor

To the Crew in the **Vital Records Department**,

I was born in Omaha and now live in Connecticut and ran into a huge and time sensitive issue with the Department of Motor Vehicles. I called and wrote your office asking to help me. These great employees were very professional and customer service oriented. They were polite on the phone and understanding, and, upon receiving my request, turned it around in one day which saved me much stress and expense.

I moved from Nebraska before I was a year old, but I will tell you that I am going to order a t-shirt to wear that says, "I Love Nebraska"... and I really mean it!

I run into many employees of state or federal government offices where the employees are rude and uncaring. This is truly a shame, but I did not have that experience with your employees. My compliments to you all.

A Thankful Client

Phil Todd (Social Services Worker, Norfolk),

Thank you for all of your work, your patience with new tribal workers and your willingness to provide explanations. You truly make a difference in the lives of tribal wards, their families and the tribal workers!

Sherri Eveleth, Indian Child Welfare Program Specialist, Norfolk

Bob Furr (Resource Developer Supervisor and Phil's supervisor, Fremont) writes...Phil does a great job working with the tribes on some very difficult tribal ward eligibility issues.

Vonda Apking (Credentialing Coordinator, Public Health, Lincoln),

I wanted to thank you today for answering my questions and sending the necessary form in a timely fashion. It was pleasing to have a welcoming voice available during a very difficult 15 months for my family. Also I felt no prejudice during our conversation which again was reassuring that with my self-reporting and serious pursuit of wellness in all aspects of my life, I will be able to resume a very promising career.

A Grateful Licensee

Becky Wisell (Program Manager, Licensure Unit, Lincoln) writes...Vonda, thank you for the outstanding customer service that you provided to this licensee. You have a way of communicating with callers in a calm, non-judgmental way, and this person definitely appreciated your approach. This is a great example of the excellent customer service that you provide every day, and it is especially rewarding when the recipient takes the time to applaud you for your work. Great job, Vonda!

Thanks! 

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

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