

# CONNECTIONS

Nov/Dec 2014 VOLUME 14, ISSUE 11

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

## A Tribute to CEO Kerry Winterer: A Tear Falls as a Good Man Leaves the Building

**Editor's Note:** When [Kerry Winterer announced he was leaving DHHS](#), Eric Henrichsen wrote about it in his blog. We are reprinting Eric's blog post here in case you missed it. It's such a heart-felt tribute to Kerry's announcement. Very well said, Eric!

By Eric Henrichsen,  
IS&T Administrator

About five years ago I made my first visit to the Nebraska State Office Building. I had a job interview there. As I sat in the waiting room a very polite gentleman stepped in and let me know a meeting was running long so my interview would be slightly delayed and apologized for the inconvenience. A few minutes later that gentleman reappeared and escorted me to the interview. He was **Kerry Winterer**. I never forgot that the CEO of an organization of over 5,000 people was caring and polite enough to personally tell me things were running late as opposed to just sending out someone else. I was sold on the job and working for this man immediately.

A couple months later I started in my current position at DHHS and a few weeks after that, I had my first meeting with Kerry. During that meeting Kerry listened patiently and I realized immediately that he knew a lot, picked up on new ideas very quickly, and asked very thoughtful questions. These traits never changed in the last five years I have worked with Kerry.

Kerry Winterer is the calmest, most



Directors Acernio, Pristow, and Adams serve rootbeer floats along side CEO Kerry Winterer and COO Matt Clough for this year's State Charitable Giving Campaign.

grounded and centered individual I have ever met. He has incredible patience, which is very helpful in dealing with folks that have energetic, slightly different thought processes such as, well, me! Kerry always listened to all my thoughts and ideas. He gently helped me see the folly in some of my more extreme ideas (I tell you we still should fund the time machine and cloning projects, think how much more work we could do and the errors we could correct before they happen). Some ideas needed refinement and as opposed to pointing out flaws, Kerry helped me see areas for improvement and helped polish the rough edges. He did support innovative ideas, even though some of them didn't quite work out (but others did).

Kerry is smart but doesn't have to display it. His position has great power and authority but it doesn't go to his

head and he doesn't abuse that. Every person is important. No matter how stupid or ill-informed a thought I might have had, he never made me feel stupid or ill-informed. When I was a little loose on my details or was kind of trying to wing something by him he quietly caught it every time and allowed me to get what information was needed for us to have a proper conversation. Kerry tolerated my quirky sense of humor (he has a great sense of humor as well that not everyone gets to see) and my odd little utopia of a world that is my mind. He let me be me and I felt appreciated.

Kerry and I didn't agree on everything. We are different people with different backgrounds and experiences. While both our job goals are trying to help people live better lives, they have different outside influences and we have to consider different aspects of an action. Usually Kerry was simply right and I was wrong, but he never made me feel wrong. We just talked and he explained his views and sometimes I

*Continued on page 3*

# Stay Connected on



## make the connection . . .

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

Chief Executive Officer: <b>Kerry Winterer</b>	Medicaid and Long-Term Care Division Director: position is currently vacant
Behavioral Health Division Director: <b>Scot Adams, Ph.D.</b>	Public Health Division Director/Chief Medical Officer: <b>Dr. Joseph Acierno</b>
Children and Family Services Division Director: <b>Thomas Pristow</b>	Veterans' Homes Division Director: <b>John Hilgert</b>
Developmental Disabilities Division Director: <b>Jodi Fenner</b>	Chief Operating Officer: <b>Matt Clough</b>

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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](mailto:Dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov).

## Homepage Homeruns

### [LRC Holds 5th Annual Awareness Walk, Oct 8, 2014](#)

LRC's Wellness and Diversity Committees held their 5th annual Mental Health Awareness Walk on Oct. 3, 2014. This year, the event was extra special as LRC celebrated the introduction of new therapy dog, Envy.

Envy was certified by Domesti-Pup to be a licensed therapy dog for LRC patients. LRC therapists spent three days in training with Domesti-Pup staff to learn how to be Envy's handlers and use her skills to help our patients in their recovery. **Ann Kastl** from Domesti-Pup spoke at the LRC event and discussed how their certified dogs can help people in a variety of ways. Ann said that Envy can change lives and that she is excited to start on her journey. Envy is a "precious princess" who offers "unconditional love with a non-judgmental attitude."

Read more about Envy in [LRC's Reality Check newsletter](#), page 3.



This year's Walk was another successful event, with several people from the community attending to help kick off Mental Health Awareness Week. Each year, LRC commemorates this week and

its connection to the mission of Helping People Rebuild their Lives.

### [Ahoy Matey? ENVH Gets in the Halloween Spirit, Oct 31, 2014](#)



Arrrrrrg! Pirate **Donald Monnier** (ENVH member) with his swashbucklin' crew: daughter, son-in-law and grandson.

Getting in the Halloween spirit early, the Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home held its fifth annual 'Family Trick or Treat Night' on Oct. 23. Families and staff brought their children and grandchildren to the event to treat the members at the home to some good, old fashioned Halloween fun.

Audrey Hester, writes... "We had nearly 100 visitors (family, staff, children) who came by ENVH to go trick or treating. The members just loved it."

### [Mittens, Hats to Warm Up Little Hands, Heads and Hearts, Nov 5, 2014](#)

One hundred and thirty sets of colorful handmade mittens and hats are waiting and ready to give to children when they

come into foster care in Gering. The Resource Developers are planning to hand out these cheerful and warm winter necessities during their monthly visits with the children. If the Resource Developers can't accomplish this on their own, they will team up with Children and Family Service workers.

**Laralee Sukup**, Resource Developer, Gering, said this is her first year making and distributing mittens and hats, but her family members have been doing this for 10 years now. Laralee said they donate to a different area each year.

A big thank you to the following for creating these warm and wonderful mittens and hats: Laralee Sukup; Jesslyn Weiner, Laralee's mother from North Loup and a former foster parent; and Eleanor Andrysek, Laralee's aunt "Ellie" from Omaha. They couldn't have done it without Karol Garduno, Field Training Specialist for the Center on Children, Families, and the Law, at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, and her family, as they donated yarn for this special project.



# The Good Life:

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



This will be my last “Good Life” as CEO of the Department. Over the years I have written about various topics including Department and individual accomplishments, events, and recognition of employees. This will be a bit different.

Today I have two messages: First, it has been a real privilege to serve as the head of this organization. Our mission is important, indeed critical, to many, many of our fellow citizens, and to be able to help them in the ways we have

power to do is a privilege and honor. I hope that you feel the same. In spite of critical comments by some, please do not lose sight of the importance of what you do every day for so many people.

Your work for the Department regardless of your particular job matters more than you probably will know.

Second, I continue to have respect and admiration for the work our employees do every day. I came into this department knowing very little about the organization, but I have learned and continue to learn from our employees every day not only the details of how the Department works but also what commitment means and what it means to be “mission driven.” We have tried to provide new tools for you to be even more effective and successful including “Serving People with Excellence” and “I-Count-Ability” training.

My wish for you in the future is that you continue to find satisfaction and growth opportunities at DHHS and that you strive every day to be everything you can be.

Good luck!

## A Tribute to Kerry Winterer...continued from page 1

realized his point was more valid. Sometimes we still didn't agree on a topic, but he always could articulately explain why he had his views and demonstrated an interest, understanding and respect for mine.

Everything was about the idea and the impact on our citizens and our ability to serve them. It was never about Kerry or that he was the CEO. I greatly enjoyed our discussions.

Kerry was fairly private about his personal life as I am about mine. However when I had personal challenges he would listen empathetically and provide support.

I felt like a person, not an employee, during these times and Kerry was there and I was able to get through some tough times.

Kerry has announced he is leaving. I could have written about all the great things he has done as CEO and how he has served the citizens, but I wanted to write about the man I know and worked with. I knew intellectually this was going to happen at some point but I am still crying as I write this. There may be no crying in baseball but it is okay to cry about something that you feel is very sad. Kerry noted he is looking forward to spending time with his family and I'm sure over the holidays he will enjoy the opportunity to travel to his beloved Jackson, Wyoming, and enjoy the Tetons.

Kerry has shown grace and dignity through the challenges of his impossible job, and will leave in that same manner. And I will miss him.



**Clockwise:** Kerry Winterer with Bryson Bartels at this year's Employee/Supervisor of Year event; Kerry addresses participants at a supervisors conference in May; and Kerry with radio talk show host Tom Becka during a 2011 interview.

**Kerry's last day with DHHS is Dec. 19. Be sure to wish him well!**

## Adoption Day Made Extra Special for this DHHS Family

Families who opened their hearts and homes by way of adoption celebrated their happiness and good fortune with [special adoption day activities held in November and December across the state.](#)

Activities like games, family photos, face painting, snacks and gifts helped make the adoption party celebrations bright. And parents and other family members seemed thankful for the opportunity to network and talk to one another about their shared experiences.

Nebraska courts have sponsored adoption celebrations since 1999. It takes a lot of people—judges, attorneys, advocates, and our own caseworkers, to name a few—to finalize adoptions and encourage permanent, loving homes for children in foster care.

Two DHHS employees in particular were involved this year in a very personal way as they officially welcomed their own adopted children to their home. **Jenny Phelps**, Social Services trainee, Fremont, and her husband **Patrick Phelps**, Social Services Worker, Wahoo, were on hand in Lincoln, Nov. 15, for adoption ceremonies. There were so many adoptions in Lincoln that day, (more than 30 children!), that the party was on multiple floors of the courthouse!

Since a picture is worth a thousand words, here are a few photos from the adoption day activities in Lincoln. The smiles on Noah's and Jeramiah's little faces really say it all.

Foster parenting and adoption is a great way to grow a beautiful family. If it's something you are considering, call 1-800-7PARENT (1-800-772-7368), for more information.



**Photos, clockwise from top:** Welcoming sign; Stuffed animals and backpacks wait for the children; The red cape says... “Superman was adopted too;” Facepainting fun; and the Phelps family in the courtroom. From left, Noah, Jeramiah, Jenny and Patrick. *Photos: Russ Reno*

## Thoughts On Being Grateful, Not Hateful

By Tary Paris,  
Person-Centered Care Coordinator,  
Lincoln Regional Center

What can you keep after giving it to someone else? That's right. I've asked you a riddle and the answer will be imbedded somewhere in this article. What, you say? A gimmick to get you to read this all the way through? Yep, I'm not above trickery to keep you engaged long enough to read one more piece about being thankful as we continue into the holiday season.

For the *Connections* newsletter, Dianna asked me to share with you some thoughts about gratitude. I think Oprah has covered this topic so well that I seriously wondered how I could top her "Attitude of Gratitude" slogan. So I flipped through the collection of pictures I have taken as I have enjoyed walking across our beautiful Lincoln Regional Center campus and arboretum.

When I saw this photo, it jumped right out at me. When I see something beautiful, I always want to take a picture of it. When something else comes through in the photo that I didn't originally see, it is of particular delight to me.

Whenever I see photos like this, I think of my son. He passed away four and a half years ago. I am grateful for his life. While many of us have mourned losing a very well loved and charismatic member

of our family, and think of what could have been, or what we lost, I think of what we gained.

In his nearly 20 years here, he gave us so much. He taught us so much. I am grateful every time I think of him, and do even more so when I see beautiful things in nature that make me feel like he's right here. Sometimes when a single leaf falls close to me, or a squirrel nearly drops an acorn (or walnut!) on my head, I think, "Thanks Max, I know you are here."

When we are grateful instead of hateful, I think it fills our hearts enough to have more to give. In health care, particularly regarding mental illness, we are faced with a lot of "What if's." What if my son didn't choose to ride a motorcycle on such a windy day? What if I choose to hug my surviving children a little harder, to listen a little closer to their myriad silly questions that I've heard three times before? What if I give more patience to the world than take from it?

Recently I read about the Positive Post-It Project. A student chose to do something positive instead of being



defined by a negative experience she'd had. She and her friends decided to share "put-ups" around school instead of put-downs. She asked "What if" I shared encouragement with others. What if I posted a sticky note on everyone's locker with random inspirational messages? What could happen? Check it out on Google or Tumblr and you too can see the power of gracious words.

True to my word, here's the answer to my opening riddle: "your word." You can both keep it and give it. As you think about giving this upcoming holiday season, consider giving something that isn't necessarily monetary, yet has tremendous value. Give part of yourself, your word, your gracious, encouraging, inspirational word(s).

## Share Your Spirit of Giving Stories

Food donations...Clothing drives... Hand knit mittens and hats...The Spirit of Giving is alive and well at DHHS and continues to live in the hearts of our coworkers.

Touching Spirit of Giving stories happen all through the year, but especially around the holidays. These stories and special acts of kindness show how we continue to give of ourselves even after we're "off the clock."

We want to feature as many stories as we can in Neat to Know and in *Connections*.

Send your stories, photos and ideas to [Dianna Seiffert](#). Or, include a note and/or photos on the employee Bulletin Board for all to see.



## Positively Influencing and Inspiring Others by Your Example

*“What you do speaks so loud I cannot hear what you say.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson*

By Richard Mettler,  
Human Resources and Development

Every one of us in DHHS influences others throughout the day by our example. Our example to others can be positive and inspire people to new heights in the workplace.

Think about people to whom other folks naturally gravitate and admire. You might be one of these people.

Listed below are some things we can each do to become people who positively influence and inspire others by our example.

### Be Results Driven:

- ◆ Be clear about the results we are striving to achieve.
- ◆ Keep workplace results center stage in your thinking and in conversations with coworkers and others.



- ◆ Remember and supportively remind others of “the work we are here to do, the people we are here to serve.”



### Be Aware:

- ◆ Be mindful of how the work is moving forward, where things are going well, and where improvement is needed.
- ◆ Tune into clues that indicate improvement is needed. For example, when we or others start pointing fingers and blaming others for bad results, or deny responsibility for bad results. These are clues that we need to take some action to get a better result.
- ◆ Learn from the past and prepare for the future, but be centered in the present.

### Accept Responsibility and Seek New Answers:

- ◆ Be invested in getting a good result for anything you have a part in.
- ◆ Focus on finding solutions to problems in the here and now,

rather than finding people to blame.

- ◆ Publicly acknowledge and learn from mistakes, without excuse.
- ◆ Do not deflect personal responsibility by blaming other people or circumstances.
- ◆ Engage coworkers in discussions of how the work can be done better.
- ◆ When things don’t go well, ask yourself and others, “What could I have done differently to get a better result?”
- ◆ Acknowledge good work and encourage coworkers to be at their best.
- ◆ Ask coworkers for their ideas on what they could have done differently to achieve a better result.
- ◆ Be quick to ask, “What can I do to help you with this?”

### Take Action:

Each of us can be a powerfully positive and inspirational influence in actions we take every day.

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Please email your thoughts, concerns and suggestions about workplace courtesy and workplace relationships to [Richard Mettler](#). I will email you a response, and perhaps anonymously feature your ideas in a future column.

## DHHS FY2014 Annual Report Now Available Online

[DHHS FY 2014 Annual Report](#) is all about the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and how we help people live better lives. This interactive booklet briefly highlights DHHS’ major accomplishments for fiscal year 2014 (July 1, 2013– June 30, 2014).

We developed this report to introduce people to DHHS and to provide a brief overview of the programs and services unique to the department. Readers can get more detailed information by simply clicking on any of the many interactive weblinks found within the copy.

Thank you for taking a few minutes to review this booklet. We hope it will be a good resource for you now and in the future.



*“Each day you are leading by example. Whether you realize it or not or whether it’s positive or negative, you are influencing those around you” – Rob Liano*

# Way to Go!

## Julie Luedtke Honored as a Newborn Screening Leader

The Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) presented awards to leaders in the field of newborn screening during a ceremony held Oct. 29 at the 2014 Newborn Screening and Genetic Testing Symposium in California.

**Julie Luedtke**, program manager for DHHS' Newborn Screening Program, Lincoln, received the Judi Tuerck Newborn Screening Follow-Up and Education Award. Julie is also Nebraska's State Genetics coordinator.

An APHL news release announcing the award recipients said that Julie co-authored several newborn screening Clinical and Laboratory Standards



## Statewide and national recognitions, honors and awards

Institute (CLSI) guidelines, including the specimen collection standard and the follow-up guidelines, among others. Additionally, Julie has been instrumental in developing, completing and facilitating the NewSTEPS Newborn Screening Follow-up Workshop. Her passion for newborn screening and genetics has been conveyed during multiple conferences, meetings, workshops and other forums where she has been able to clearly articulate complex subjects and the critical value of newborn screening.

## Immunization Program Staff Recognized for High Coverage Rates



Congratulations to the Nebraska DHHS Immunization Program staff on the receipt of three Healthy People 2020 Target Awards presented by the CDC at the 2014 National Immunization Conference! Awards received were:

- **Childhood Influenza Immunization Coverage Award:** This award was presented in recognition of outstanding accomplishment in achieving 62.7 percent influenza vaccination during the 2013-2014 season among children age 6 months to 17 years.
- **Toddler Vaccination Coverage Award:** This award was presented in recognition of extraordinary accomplishment in achieving outstanding coverage for 9 vaccinations among children age 19-35 months. These vaccines constitute the main childhood series, including MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella combined), Polio, and DTaP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis combined) among others.
- **Adolescent Vaccination Coverage Award:** This award was presented in recognition of extraordinary accomplishment in achieving outstanding coverage for 3 vaccinations among 13-17 year olds. These vaccines are TDaP (Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis combined), Meningococcal, and HPV (Human Papillomavirus).

High coverage rates help to ensure that children and adolescents are protected from serious diseases and their side effects; and also demonstrate that the hard work and dedication of the Program staff really pay off. Way to Go!

Special thanks to **Sara Morgan**, DHHS Program Manager, Immunizations, for sending us this great news.

## Pam Mann Receives Award for Work in DD



**Pam Mann**, administrator of training with DHHS' Division of Developmental Disabilities, North Platte, was recently honored for her work.

The Association of Community Professionals, an organization that promotes opportunities for people with developmental disabilities, presented Mann with the Robert L. Schalock Award on Oct. 15 at their annual meeting and awards luncheon in Grand Island.

The award recognizes individuals who have had a significant positive impact on Nebraskans with developmental disabilities.

**Jodi Fenner**, director of DHHS' Developmental Disabilities, said Mann was chosen because of her efforts to help people with developmental disabilities achieve their goals and become more involved in their communities.

"Pam's vision and direction ensure that staff have the philosophical foundation and information and resources they need to provide services that influence positive change in the lives of persons with developmental disabilities," Fenner said. "Her personal standard of excellence inspires others to go above and beyond in supporting people with developmental disabilities to achieve their personal outcomes."

# In Gratitude

Letters to DHHS employees helping people live better lives

Sometimes we paraphrase letters and/or shorten them slightly in order for us to include as many as possible.

**Lonnie Starke**, Administrator of the **Western Nebraska Veterans Home in Scottsbluff**, writes, "We often receive letters from families expressing appreciation of the staff. Here's part of a letter about a father who moved to the WNVH that a family member shared."

Dad made an appointment to visit the home on Scottsbluff to become familiar with what is offered. We were greeted with great warmth and happiness. As we completed our tour, I was astonished at how happy the residents were. The staff was professional and friendly. As we walked through the facility I found myself wanting to be friends with everyone here, staff and residents. The staff was eager to meet new residents and visitors. Everybody spoke to everybody, and people were happy.

Dad moved to the WNVH about a year ago. After a few visits and joining Dad for occasional meals, I thought it would be appropriate to compliment the director of the facility. Complimenting the person in charge would be the right thing to do, wouldn't it? The more I thought about it the more I realized that the people I have met on my routine visits are the ones that make the home so special. You greet my Dad as he walks down the halls and take the time to have a brief heartfelt conversation. Your commitment to give the residents your best is apparent by your actions. Best in care, meals, but above all else, respect. Both the residents and the staff are happy here and it has become a favorite place of mine.

**Janet Mulligan** (Staff Assistant, Columbus),

I wanted to make certain you knew how helpful **Kim Kohl** (Economic Assistance Case Aide, Columbus), was today. Having never applied for assistance, she made the process painless.

**A Grateful Client**

**Colleen Fiegner** (Social Service Supervisor, Medicaid and Long-Term Care, Falls City),

I just want to let you know how helpful **Deb Scholl** (Social Services Worker, Medicaid and Long-Term Care, Falls City) has been with questions I had on one of my individuals, explaining things to me and just updating me on what she found out. I really appreciated her assistance. Thank you.

**Karen Poindexter**,  
DD Service Coordinator, Columbus

**Erica Lieber** (Child Support Enforcement Worker, North Platte),

I wanted to thank you for your kind, courteous and fast service. I often need information quickly to respond to requests from our clerks and judges but I rarely can get it as quickly as the Judge wants it. Working with you was a breath of fresh air and the folks in Nebraska are fortunate to have you working for the interests of their children.

**State Attorney**,  
South Carolina  
Dept. of Social Services

**Andrea Rodriguez** (Child/Family Services Specialist Supervisor, Kearney),

Recently **Tara Walker, Amanda Roth, Judy Tomczak, Justen Lusk, Sarah Stanger (Zajicek)**, and **Christina Ledesma** (all Child/Family Services Specialists in Kearney) were involved with an Intake and ICPC case involving the removal of four children and assisting in returning the children to Kansas personnel. I want to thank Tara for the handling of this case and maintaining constant communication with this office and Kansas on the status of the children. I want to thank Tara and her coworkers for going above and beyond in providing supervision, comfort, and support to the children and their mother during this difficult situation.

**Deanna Brakhage** (Program Specialist, Lincoln) and I would like to share the following with you:

Remember this...you have made many families smile as they have passed through, you have made life easier for the ones you have met, you have been generous with your teachings, guidance and strength. So in case you haven't been told lately - you have made a difference, you have mattered.

Thank you so very much for all that you do!

**Peggy Barner**, Program Specialist,  
Juvenile Services Administration, Lincoln

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



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