

Connections

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

November 2011
VOLUME 11, ISSUE 11



YRTC-K updates campus with new landscaping. See story on page 2.

Photos courtesy Rey Rodriguez

Stay Connected on



About the Cover:

YRTC-K Updates Campus with New Landscaping Look

DHHS in the News Update. . .

Here are a few headlines of news releases recently issued by Communications & Legislative Services about DHHS programs. You can read and subscribe to all DHHS news releases from the DHHS [Newsroom](#). You can also listen to [sound bites](#) issued with releases.

[Child Death Review Team Releases Report](#)

November 4, 2011

[DHHS Kicks Off Diabetes Awareness Campaign](#)

November 1, 2011

Go to [DHHS In The News](#) on the Employee Home Page for links to *Omaha World-Herald* and *Lincoln Journal Star* articles involving DHHS programs and services.

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

The cover of this month's *Connections* features before, during and after photos of the campus at the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Kearney. Youth and staff recently completed work on the new landscaping design at the facility.

"It gives the whole facility a new, refreshed look," said **Jana Peterson**, Facility Administrator.

The pictures show the front of the administration building. Art teacher **Derek Rusher** and Facility Operating Officer **Rey Rodriguez** designed the front, and youth, staff and YRTC's maintenance department worked together to turn this project into a reality.

"Everyone worked together as a team," Peterson said, "and, as you can tell by the photos, it looks very nice."

Special thanks to Rey Rodriguez for the photos.

make the connection . . .

DHHS Public Website: www.dhhs.ne.gov

DHHS Employee Website: www2.dhhs.ne.gov

DHHS Helpline: 1-800-254-4202, (402) 471-6035 in Lincoln, or via e-mail at dhhs.helpline@nebraska.gov

Chief Executive Officer:
Kerry Winterer

Behavioral Health
Division Director:
Scot Adams, Ph.D.

Children and Family Services
Interim Division Director:
Scot Adams, Ph.D.

Developmental Disabilities
Division Director:
Jodi Fenner

Medicaid and Long-Term Care
Division Director:
Vivianne Chaumont

Public Health Division
Director/Chief Medical Officer:
Dr. Joann Schaefer

Veterans' Homes Division
Director:
John Hilgert

Chief Operating Officer:
Matt Clough

Connections is published monthly for employees of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services by Communications & Legislative Services (CLS) in collaboration with the Graphics & Layout Unit in Support Services:

CLS Administrator:
Kathie Osterman

Editor:
Dianna Seiffert

Graphics and Layout:
Judy Barker
Robby DeFrain

► Readers are invited to submit news, photos & story ideas to the editor via:

Phone: (402) 471-1695 Fax: (402) 471-3996 E-mail: dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov

Interagency mail: Nebraska State Office Bldg. 3rd Floor U.S. mail: P.O. Box 95026, 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-5026

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The Good Life: A reminder of what we all share and hope to provide to our fellow Nebraskans



Kerry Winterer

Photo: Bill Wiley

By Kerry T. Winterer, CEO

The unofficial “season of giving” has started.

That time after Thanksgiving through New Year’s Day seems to be

filled with ideas of the perfect gifts for family, friends and party hosts. Stores are open longer and more sale circulars are in the mail every day.

Fittingly, it’s also a time when people focus more on the less fortunate and consider sharing with them, too. Maybe there’s a

personal connection, like giving to a neighbor with challenging health issues or being part of something

larger, like taking a name from a “giving tree.”

The good thing is that thousands of people benefit from these generous acts of kindness. Studies show that however and wherever this happens, it’s not just the person on the receiving end who benefits, but the giver, as well.

Working together as a whole, our impact is felt by people from one end of the state to the other.

It’s easy for me to make a connection, then, to DHHS employees who help people live better lives every day. DHHS employees have a great commitment and dedication to this work. You are on the front lines in so many ways, from helping the elderly, the poor and those with disabilities; to educating and protecting people through public health programs; to providing safety and services to abused and/or neglected children and adults; to working with patients, members and residents in our 24-hour facilities, and much more.

It isn’t only those employees on the front lines who live our mission statement. Those of you who work with our operations and infrastructure areas are critical to the mission and overall work of the agency.

Working together as a whole, our impact is felt by people from one end of the state to the other. It may not be as personal as taking a meal to a neighbor or buying slippers for someone in need, but the results

are the same: You are making a difference; you are making someone’s life better.

Thank you for all you do every day.

YRTC-K Boot Camp Kicks Exercise Up a Notch



Boot camp, a tough physical training program that tests and challenges its members, isn't easy, but it can still be rewarding. It's designed to push people a little bit further than they would normally push themselves with the added benefits of promoting camaraderie and combating stress.

The Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Kearney (YRTC-K) held its first Boot Camp in August. Eight "Lincoln" cottage group members started the eight-session camp with warm-up and pre-test activities at the Kearney High School track and field/football practice complex. Participants ran 200 meters around the track, pushed a wheelbarrow filled with 100 lb. weights across and back the width of the football field, carried two five-gallon buckets filled with 25 lb weights 50 meters, and finished by running and jumping into the long jump pit. And that was just the pre-test!

Boot Campers met at 6:30 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays on campus to participate in workouts varying from aerobic (running stairs and jogging the hiking biking trail), to strength training activities (moving oversized tires over a course), to agility drills. Boot Camp members were rewarded for perfect attendance with a special t-shirt and were also treated to a restaurant buffet meal in Kearney.

YRTC's Boot Camp was led by **Travis Lindhorst**, Recreation Aide and recently-certified strength and conditioning coach; **Jesse Riens**, Lincoln 1 Youth Counselor; **Rich Morse**, Recreation Assistant; **Luke Estes**, Recreation Aide; and **Rey Rodriguez**, YRTC-K Facility Operating Officer. **Jana Peterson**, Facility Administrator, participates, as well, to encourage the boys. Future Boot Camps will include members from the "Lincoln" cottage group serving as mentors.

Travis Lindhorst shares his thoughts concerning his experience in leading Boot Camp:

"I was a little skeptical of how well Boot Camp was going to work. However, I was

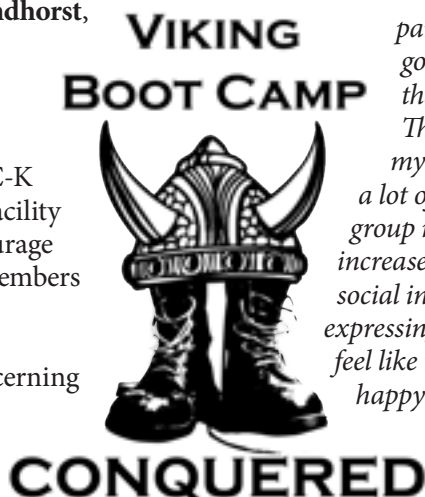
pleasantly surprised after day one in which no one complained, attitudes were upbeat, and effort was above and beyond anything I had imagined. The attitudes of the Lincoln group members are what kept getting me out of bed at 6 a.m., and I applauded their effort and enthusiasm. I'm glad I volunteered to facilitate Boot Camp as it has developed a better rapport between the youth and me.

I tried to design a Boot Camp that was challenging both physically and mentally but at the same time enjoyable. I have found from personal experience it is easier to get people to exercise if the activity is something that they enjoy.

Since we only trained two days a week for four weeks, the improvements in physical abilities were minimal; however, it was the youths' effort that improved the most significantly. This proved the youth have the drive to be successful and better themselves. I just hope they realize that themselves and make the same attitude adjustments to improve their everyday lives."

How did the participants feel about the exercise program? Here are some thoughts from a Boot Camp participant himself:

"The boot camp exercise plan that I participated in this past month was a blast! I got to experience a tough exercise technique that has helped me to become more athletic. This plan has opened doors for me as far as my abilities and dreams to play sports. I had a lot of fun this past month, and it has drawn my group members together. This exercise has not only increased our physical abilities, it has caused our social interaction to shoot through the roof! I feel safer expressing my thoughts to my group members, and I feel like they listen and relate more. I am extremely happy that I participated in this program, and if I was given a second chance to do this I would!"



Adoption Makes a Positive Difference

November is National Adoption Month



The Mueting Family

Photo courtesy Crystal L'Heureux

Right now in Nebraska, there are 266 children who are state wards and available for adoption and needing adoptive homes.

“Each of these children deserves and wants to have a loving family to call their own,” said **Scot Adams**, interim director for the Division of Children and Family Services in the Department of Health and Human Services. “Could this be the right time for your family to consider adopting a child?”

Many of the youth who are free for adoption and looking for a loving family are older, siblings who want to

stay together, or have special needs. To learn more about adopting a child with special needs, call 1-800-7PARENT (1-800-772-7368).

The DHHS website includes pictures and personal information about some of the children who are state wards and want adoptive families [here](#). For example:

- Sara is a very imaginative, energetic little girl.
- Kimberlee is caring, friendly, and has a great sense of humor.

- Jacquelynn is a sweet girl and fun to be around.
- Cody is a sweet, loveable and intelligent child.
- Jeremy is a good-hearted kid who likes meeting new people.
- Preston has a very adventurous personality and enjoys participating in many different activities.

“Adoptive families can come in all forms. You don’t have to be perfect to be the perfect parent for a child who wants a forever family,” Adams said.

Paul and Mandy Mueting of Kearney were recently named 2011 Angels in Adoption award recipients by U.S. Sen. Mike Johanns of Nebraska.

The Muetings have one biological daughter, Lydia, and three adopted sons, Steven, Eddie and Evan. Steven and Eddie’s mother, Jasmine, said she knew that Paul and Mandy could give the boys more than she could. The Muetings continue to have a positive relationship with Jasmine, and the family visits with her often.

In addition, the Muetings were asked by another mother to adopt her soon-to-be-born son, Evan. All three adoptions were finalized in 2010.

Angels in Adoption is a program that honors those who have enriched the lives of foster and adopted children in the United States. The Muetings were honored in October at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., along with other Adoption Angels from across the country.

Read more in [this article in the Kearney Hub](#).

Thanks to Crystal L’Heureux, DHHS - Resource Development, Kearney, for providing information and the photo.

One Strong Password Stands Between You and Cybercrime

On the Wild Wild Web, there are lots of ways for cyber bad guys to get your password, but you don't have to make it easy for them.

One of the best ways to fight cybercrime and enhance security is to use strong passwords. According to Microsoft's Safety and Security Center, a strong password is long and complex (i.e. it has letters – both uppercase and lowercase, punctuation, symbols, and numbers).

- Whenever possible, use eight characters or more.
- Don't use the same password for everything. Cybercriminals steal passwords on websites with very little security, and then they try to use that same password and user name in more secure environments, such as banking websites.
- Change your passwords often. Set an automatic reminder for yourself to change your passwords on your email, banking, and credit card websites about every three months.
- The greater the variety of characters in your password, the better. However, password hacking software automatically

checks for common letter-to-symbol conversions, such as changing “and” to “&” or “to” to “2.”

- Use the entire keyboard, not just the letters and characters you use or see most often.



Mark Burnett, author of *Perfect Passwords*, says one of the worst passwords you can create is the word ‘password.’ It doesn't make it any better to attach 123456. It actually makes it worse because ‘password123456’ is the single most common password in existence, used about 5 percent of the time. In fact, Burnett says there are about 1,000 common passwords and they are used 91 percent of the time.

Most people don't realize how vulnerable they are. It only takes one person with a fast PC and evil intentions to break into your computer. Once there, your personal information can be stolen, and the computer can be used as a “zombie” to send out spam or make illegal downloads.

Remember to set a very strong password on your wireless router, too. In one infamous New York case, a homeowner became frustrated with setting a password on his router and left it blank. That is, until federal agents entered his house to arrest him on child pornography charges. The actual culprit was a neighbor who was stealing his signal.

facebook Favorites

Social media is changing the way we communicate. A recent Nielsen report on social media showed Americans spent 53.5 billion minutes on Facebook* in May. That's why Facebook is a good place to share information and connect people with similar interests.

DHHS is on Facebook, too, and we now have more than 600 friends and counting. You can access DHHS' Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts through our public and employee websites. Click on the [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#) icons on the home page.

Here are some Facebook posts DHHS has made recently: Antibiotics - Will they work when you really need them? Unnecessary antibiotics can make future infections harder to treat. It's Get Smart About Antibiotics Week. Find out why antibiotic resistance is

one of the world's most pressing public health threats and what you can do about it.

Veterans Day pays tribute to our veterans for the sacrifices they have made to protect our freedoms and to keep our country strong. Hundreds of people honored our veterans yesterday at the Grand Island Veterans' Home annual parade.

Got something you'd like to share on DHHS' Facebook account? Send in your information to [Leah Bucco-White](#), public information officer.

**Facebook is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages, and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues.*

Way to Go! Statewide and national recognitions, honors and awards



Woods Award winners, from left: **Dave Reece** (honorable mention), **Shannon Steinmetz**, **Emily Wills**, **Jay Schmitz**, **Janae Hood**, **Maurice (Maury) Egan**, and **Christy Buell** (honorable mention). Not pictured: **Rick Kaiser** (honorable mention).

Photo by Linda Jiskra, Lincoln Regional Center

The unit nurses review the nominations with the committee. The event occurred during National Mental Health Awareness Week in October.

This year, the 60th ceremony was introduced by the Woods Award Committee chair Rose Hanzlicek with a welcome by **Bill Gibson**, Facility Administrator.

Editor's Note: There were many nice bulletins on the employee homepage throughout October about the Woods Awards honorees. Here's a good example:

Congratulations to all of the Woods Award Recipients. Your role in the hospital is so incredibly important and valued, and it was nice to take a moment to remember how critical your role is and to appreciate those of you who have gone the extra mile! **Rachel Johnson** gave a very nice speech (at the awards ceremony) and **Char Hurbert** and **Heidi Fahrnbruch** did a great job planning the event and putting on a very nice spread after. Thanks for all you do and for those of you who made the ceremony special!

LRC Employees Honored with Thomas Woods Awards

Over a half-century ago, Thomas C. Woods of Lincoln began an annual recognition ceremony recognizing the contributions of mental health security specialists and psychiatric technicians at the Lincoln Regional Center. Recipients demonstrate outstanding service to patients, as evidenced by displays of kindness, commitment, imagination,

initiative in performance and good work habits.

The tradition continues to this day, with honorees receiving plaques, certificates and monetary awards. Mental health security specialists and psychiatric technicians are selected for awards by a committee of involved citizens. Nominations are made by staff members, patients and their families.

GI Veterans' Home Doctor Named "Medical Director of the Year" by NHCA

The Nebraska Health Care Association (NHCA) recognized **Dr. Jennifer King**, medical director at the [Grand Island Veterans' Home \(GIVH\)](#), as the 2011 Medical Director of the Year at the association's annual convention in Lincoln.

The award recognizes a medical director who helps facility residents and staff realize their full potential and whose outside activities enhance the long-term care profession.

"Dr. King is passionate about her work and about the veterans she serves," said **Alex Willford**, GIVH



administrator. "Dr. King shows great compassion and advocates for our members. Her top priority is making sure our members receive the best care possible."

"This truly is an honor," said Dr. King. "I work with a great team of social workers, nurses, therapists and others who have all been very supportive of changes I've proposed and together we continue to improve the quality of care at GIVH. I'm proud NHCA recognizes the great teamwork at this facility."

Dr. King, an internist, is also on the GIVH quality assurance committee, risk management team and wound clinic.

Read more [here](#).

DHHS employees should be proud of themselves and each other. If you earn statewide or national recognition or know a co-worker who does, let *Connections* know, and we'll proclaim it here!

Families Matter Update

Families Matter Focuses on Keeping Kids Safe and Connected

Families Matter is a statewide initiative at the Department of Health and Human Services that focuses on making sure kids

are safe and connected to caring adults.

Here's an update on how DHHS is working with KVC Nebraska and Nebraska Families Collaborative to provide support and interventions that can help children stay with their parents safely.

DHHS has responsibility for investigating child abuse, and our staff members are often accompanied by law enforcement to assess safety. Now, on some investigations, our partners respond with us. When safety issues are identified by a DHHS employee, KVC NE and Nebraska Families Collaborative can quickly access community resources that provide immediate support to families, alleviating the crisis and helping families stay together. One of the new alternative ways to work with families through our partners is the Initial Response Unit (IRU).

Most of the interventions are rooted in common sense and developed collaboratively with families. For example, late one cold night, police were dispatched to check on a mom and her children, living in a trailer with no heat. In the past, the children would probably have been removed. The IRU team put their heads together to find a safe solution that police could support, finding a motel the family could stay in for the weekend until utilities could be restored. That mom and her children were very grateful to stay together. No trauma, no removal, the children are safe and being cared for by their mother. This is one example of what the Families Matter initiative is all about, safely supporting children and families and alleviating the need for children to be removed.

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This is one example of what the Families Matter initiative is all about, safely supporting children and families and alleviating the need for children to be removed.

Vicki Maca (pictured at left) is the Administrator of Families Matter for the Eastern and Southeast Service Areas. Read more about Families Matter and DHHS' partners [here](#).



In their own words

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

Katherine Rosenthal (Social Service Worker, North Platte),

I just wanted to tell you how much I appreciate all you have done for me and my family. It is wonderful, and you have made our lives better and easier. You are greatly appreciated.

A Thankful Client

Erica Hardessen (Children and Family Services Specialist, Kearney), and Department,

Without the hard work, care, love and understanding you provided, this would or could have turned out totally different. Thank you for caring and loving our kids like you have. Kearney, Nebraska, is lucky to have such a wonderful staff. You truly do what is best for the children and not what would be the easiest way out. Thank you.

Grateful Parents

Rey Rodriguez (Facility Operating Officer, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center – Kearney),

Thanks to you, **Nancy Lyon** (teacher, YRTC-K), **Shantel Eatherton** (teacher, YRTC-K) and the group for helping us lay sod! What looked like a four-hour job was finished in an hour thanks to you.

Habitat for Humanity

To the Staff at BSDC:

I often say that supporting people with disabilities is not a vocation that you choose: it is a vocation that chooses you. Your vocation is often misunderstood and frequently underappreciated. I write today to thank you for the service you provide and to ask you for increase vigilance. Nebraska has placed an important and great responsibility with you: that of protecting her most vulnerable citizens.

We all share, individually and collectively, the responsibility in protecting citizens at BSDC from abuse and for making the service there a model for the country. We are partners in this effort and can only achieve our goals if we work together.

A State Senator

Kathy Hickox (Child Care Inspection Specialist, Gering),

I wish to thank you for taking the time from your busy job and schedule to share information with the students regarding licensing and regulations. The students really appreciated your humor and yet professional role to ensure children are safe and well cared for. Thanks again for your support!

Chadron State College Child Development Center

In their own words

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

To **Jane Cleveland** (Services Coordination Supervisor, Developmental Disabilities),

I just wanted to tell you that **Tina Bruning** (Developmental Disabilities Service Coordinator) was wonderful to work with. She helped us to accomplish something we have worked on for three years! She was professional, knowledgeable and made one of our families really think about what was best for this person. It was her new insight and explanation that finally allowed us to achieve something very badly needed. She was flexible with her schedule and meetings ran smoothly. It was a great pleasure to work with her. She took time to get to know the individual and ask them what they wanted. She was a true advocate for them. We will miss working with her.

NorthStar Services, a Developmental Disabilities Provider in Wayne

Dear **Shaun Clark** (Teacher, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center – Kearney) and Washington Cottage Men,

We'd like to thank you for the wonderful gift of time and work that you gave to make the Bright Futures Preschool playground a happy and enriching place for our children. Kearney Public Schools would certainly not have been able to afford the quality of sand box that you were able to create at the Kearney Education Center. Seeing the little ones have such a good time is hopefully a great reward for you as it is to all of us. This was a dream of our teachers that is now a reality. Thanks so much for being wonderful, giving people. You have made a difference and are so appreciated.

Kearney Public Schools staff

Brenda Bender (Social Services Supervisor, Kearney),

As my mother's resources were dwindling, I applied for Aid to Age, Blind and Disabled and Medicaid. The case was assigned to **Jae Bertrand** (Social Services Lead Worker) in May 2011. I want you to know she has been an angel. It took her just a short time to figure out that I hadn't mailed one sheet from the funeral home. That document was the only one missing that was holding up this whole process. Because of her thirty years experience and her care and thoughtfulness to help out someone who had just been transferred from one person to another, the issue was resolved.

Please make note in Jae's personnel file that she truly is an awesome caseworker. I know her caseload is very heavy, yet she took the time and effort to get the issues I was dealing with resolved. She deserves only the best.

A Grateful Daughter of a Client

Editor's Note: DHHS Help Desk staff often work behind the scenes to keep things running smoothly. The note below was sent by an external N-FOCUS partner. The staff person had lost her access to C1 and had to be set up again.

To **Mary Harding** (IT Help Desk Coordinator) and **Delores Feeken-Schmidt** (IS&T Staff Assistant),

Thank you both for such excellent service! You told me yesterday that it would be three days and then here we are less than 24 hours later - it is fixed. Thanks again for your support!

A Grateful Staff Member from ResCare Workforce Service in Kearney

Please send letters from satisfied customers via any method listed in our editorial box on page 2, and we'll publish as many as space allows.