

CONNECTIONS

October 2014 VOLUME 13, ISSUE 10

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

Recognizing, Honoring DHHS Employees for Employee/Supervisor of the Year Awards and Special Service Anniversaries

This issue of *Connections* is dedicated to you, the employees of DHHS, who have devoted your careers to serving Nebraskans and making a difference in their lives.

Employees/Supervisors of the Year
Pages 4-8 list the 2014 Employees and Supervisors of the Year, complete with photos and a short write-up from their nominators about why they received this special honor.

Recognition for Years of Service
Many employees have been with DHHS for a number of years and are celebrating special years of service this year. See pages 11-14 for a complete listing of employees and their years of service, starting with 10 years.

CEO **Kerry Winterer**, H.R. Administrator **Alex Garcia**, and various Division Directors attended ceremonies across the state honoring employees with special years of service awards. This year, nearly 625 DHHS employees received awards for reaching milestone years of service.



Left: Bryson Bartels, legislative coordinator and Employee of the Year talks with CEO **Kerry Winterer** during an awards event at the Embassy Suites in Lincoln .
Photo: Mike Wight



Special years of service awards for employees in the Lincoln area were presented by Lt. Governor John Nelson (pictured above and to the left) at ceremonies at the State Capitol on Oct. 21, 2014.

Above: Married with 75 years of service! **Lynn Stone** (second from left), Program Analyst in Operations, celebrates 40 years of service. Next to Lynn is his wife, **Barb**, Child and Family Services Specialist, with 35 years.

Left: Janice Ropers, Trust Officer Supervisor in Operations, at LRC, with her crystal bowl representing 50 years of service with the state. Celebrating with her are from left: Lt. Governor Nelson, CEO **Kerry Winterer** and CFO **Matt Clough**.
Photos: Bill Wiley

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

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

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Homepage Homeruns

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.

Program to Help Former Wards Transition to Adulthood, Aug. 29, 2014 & Oct. 2, 2014

Children and Family Services recently launched [Bridge to Independence](#), a program designed to help young adults who age out of state custody transition to adulthood.

In the program, also called b2i, 11 independence coordinators will provide guidance to former and current wards who will soon age out of the system. The hope is to provide the kind of support that other young adults get from their parents.

"Bridge to Independence enables us to provide resources that most young people inherently receive from their parents at this critical stage in their life," said DHHS CEO **Kerry Winterer**. "Through our program, we hope to help former wards live better lives as they journey to adulthood."

Independence coordinators, will be providing case management services statewide for former wards, said **Thomas Pristow**, director of DHHS' Children and Family Services. The youth will meet with them monthly and make their own life choices while coordinators provide developmentally appropriate services and help in developing an independent living plan aimed at reaching their goals.

Former state wards participating in the program will receive a monthly stipend to assist with living costs such as housing, education and other expenses.



Some may qualify for Medicaid or will be given assistance in arranging health insurance.

"Hundreds of DHHS employees and stakeholders have worked thoughtfully and diligently to build a program that will give former wards the best chance to succeed after aging out of our system," Pristow said. "Thanks to their hard work, we now have the policies, regulations and materials in place to more effectively support former wards and have a better chance to be successful when they take their next step in life."

About 180 young adults 19-21 years old will be eligible to participate in the program this year.



Medicaid and Long-Term Care Poster Wins at Conference, Sept. 3, 2014

Medicaid and Long-Term Care's **Ruth Vineyard**, deputy director of initiatives and eligibility, and **Jeanne Larsen**, deputy director of claims, recently attended a conference in Denver which brings together leaders from the public and private sectors to discuss Medicaid systems and initiatives.

At the conference, Vineyard presented a poster on the Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS), which is the claims processing system for Nebraska's Medicaid program.

The objective of the poster was to represent Nebraska's vision for an enterprise MMIS solution using a number of resources and traditions specific to the state.

Medicaid and Long-Term Care staff used the state's links to Arbor Day and the Ogallala Aquifer to demonstrate how

"Nebraska intends to plant seeds for a healthy Medicaid program and wisely use resources to grow an enterprise MMIS that will not only be sustainable, but reap benefits for future generations."

Vineyard's presentation of the poster earned Medicaid and Long-Term Care a first place award in the poster session's Original Content category.

Congratulations to Vineyard and the rest of the Medicaid and Long-Term Care staff who made this win possible! Also congrats to **Cynthia Schneider**, graphic artist in Communication and Legislative Services, whose design skills helped bring this great idea to life!

First Puppy Snickers Promotes the Importance of Emergency Preparedness for Pets, Sept. 19, 2014

September is National Preparedness Month, a time to: consider the types of emergencies common in Nebraska; create a family preparedness plan; and build an emergency kit. At a news conference, Gov. Dave Heineman and First Lady Sally Ganem talked about pet preparedness, and showed off First Puppy Snickers' "pet pre-PAW-edness" emergency kit, created to help care for a pet in the event of an emergency.

"For most of us, our pets are important members of our families," said Gov. Heineman. "They depend on us for their care and well-being.

We owe it to them to make sure they are safe at all times, especially in an emergency."

Preparedness information is available from [NEMA](#) and through local emergency managers.



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



October is State Employee Recognition Month and is a special time. This year I was able to participate in all of the recognition ceremonies across Nebraska. These events are important, and I appreciate that State Personnel, in the Department of Administrative Services, continues to coordinate these events. I also appreciate our own Human Resources staff who work hand-in-hand with them on behalf of DHHS, and the effort of **Alex Garcia**, our own Human Resources Administrator, to attend all the ceremonies.

I say these events are important because they recognize the continued

commitment of our greatest resource, our people. We don't make widgets here; our product is the service and talents we as employees bring to our tasks every day. Recognizing years of service and our employees and managers of the year is a means to recognize commitment and dedication on the part of our people, both of which are critical in effectively serving the people of Nebraska.

During this month particularly, I see people who do things day in and day out that require patience, perseverance and dedication to our mission. And, for so many of you, your personal mission matches that of DHHS: Helping people live better lives. I don't know that I could do what so many of you do on a routine basis.

We do not know what lies ahead with the election of a new governor. I have been honored to be part of this organization, working side-by-side employees who have a great deal of pride and commitment in what they do.

I know you will continue to take your responsibilities as state employees, and especially as employees of DHHS, seriously. I urge you to continue to do your best work and to help your coworkers do their best work.

I will say, again, thank you for what you do every day as you continue to make a difference in the lives of thousands of people.

Handwritten signature of Dave Heineman.



"Thank you for your years of service to the State of Nebraska. Every day, you and your coworkers work hard to provide exceptional products and quality services to the citizens of our State. It is because of dedicated employees like you that we are able to continue our standard of excellence in public service. Congratulations on your achievements. Together we are creating a positive impact in Nebraska."

Sincerely, Dave Heineman, Governor

Employees of the Year 2014

DHHS is proud to introduce the 2014 Employees and Supervisors/Managers of the Year. It's such an incredible honor! These employees were recognized for their achievement at a ceremony at the State Capitol, a reception at the Governor's Residence and a ceremony at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Lincoln--all on Oct. 28, 2014.

State agencies are allowed to select one employee and one Supervisor/Manager of the Year for every 500 people employed by the agency. The following write-ups were taken from the nomination forms. Pictures were provided by the Department of Administrative Services. Congratulations to all!



Kris Azimi

(IT Business Systems Analyst Coordinator, Medicaid and Long-Term Care, Lincoln) always goes the extra mile to help her coworkers. She is extremely knowledgeable and

well-respected. She is a mentor to new staff as well as existing staff. Kris volunteers for additional assignments in areas where she knows her knowledge can benefit the project. She is a team player and approaches projects with a positive attitude. She never hesitates to jump in and assist when needed. Kris is a conscientious worker. Her calm demeanor allows her to lead meetings effectively and produce good results. Kris' behavior models the DHHS Values and Core Competencies. She is a true asset to DHHS.



Bryson Bartels

(Legislative Coordinator, Communications and Legislative Services, Lincoln) has excellent working knowledge of the legislative process and a broad-based understanding

of the work of the Department. His understanding of Unicameral protocols and the relationships he's fostered with legislative staff are helpful in strategizing for and accomplishing DHHS legislative goals.

Work during the legislative session is fast, furious, detailed and high profile. Bryson tailors his approach to the preferences of different divisions and staff which helps move the process along more smoothly. His commitment and loyalty are unquestioned. Bryson's contribution to DHHS is considerable and allows the agency to react, respond and lead on legislative issues important to our work and mission.



Nichole Bouc

(DHHS Resource Developer, Children & Family Services, Southeast Service Area, Lincoln) is an exceptional employee who is always conscious of the DHHS mission.

Nichole approaches her work with a positive attitude. Her communication with staff and providers is always respectful and helpful and has built great relationships with internal and external partners. She is always willing to go above and beyond to locate the best match for a child needing a home. Nichole's work ethic is an example to her team. Nichole is dependable and always has a helpful and supportive attitude toward her fellow teammates. Nichole truly is an asset to our agency and is committed

to making a difference for the children and families we serve.



Lynn Chelewski

(Training Specialist I, Developmental Disabilities, Beatrice State Developmental Center) is an exceptional employee who is respected by his coworkers and management. He is

hardworking, dedicated and a team player. Lynn often offers to work on his days off and is always going above and beyond his job duties. He is a certified MANDT instructor and assists with teaching and training new employees and recertifying current employees. He serves as a mentor for new employees. Lynn has a wealth of knowledge and always presents it in the most positive manner. He frequently makes suggestions to management on improvements at BSDC. He is a true asset.



Joan DeVries

(Safety Specialist, Behavioral Health, Lincoln Regional Center) has done a great job of building a positive reputation

for LRC and has demonstrated how LRC can help our community in the event of a crisis. Joan reviews the LRC environment to find opportunities for improvement and to protect the hospital from deficiencies. Joan has a constant commitment to excellence. She embraces opportunities for improvement which has assisted LRC in being awarded a Top Performer with the Joint Commission and being successful in our recent accreditation survey. Joan emulates a high personal standard of integrity, and her work is a demonstration of how she holds herself to this standard. Joan is a compassionate person dedicated to LRC.



Staci Ellermeier

(DD Service Coordinator, Developmental Disabilities, Ainsworth) displays compassion, energy and tenacity in the services she provides. She works

diligently with diverse teams to develop and implement individuals' plans that support people to achieve personal outcomes. She has a knack for finding creative solutions and consistently focuses

on people, their attributes, celebrations, outcomes and needs. It is amazing what Staci can accomplish. Staci has been an ambassador for a new electronic documentation system adopted by DD. She went above and beyond, and her input has been instrumental in a successful implementation thus far. Staci's compassion is threaded through work, family and our community.



Leona Groskopf

Is an Accounting Clerk II at the Western Nebraska Veterans' Home in Scottsbluff. Her willingness to help others, supportive nature toward her team and ability to keep a

positive attitude every day are tremendous. She is willing to help in other departments when the need arises. Leona goes above and beyond taking time out of her schedule to assist members with an activity or getting them back to their room. Leona's years of service, dependability and dedication to our members in the facility are outstanding. She shows our members and staff high integrity, kindness and sincerity. Leona is truly an asset to our facility and deserves to be recognized for her dedication, strong work ethics and positive attitude.



Kathleen Jankowski

(Child/Family Services Specialist, Children & Family Services, Eastern Service Area, Omaha) displays her commitment to

excellence each day by meeting her monthly performance measures. She responds to safety situations with professionalism and grace, and collaborates with other community stakeholders to ensure that children and families are safe from abuse and neglect. She volunteers to mentor new employees on the team and is able to use her Excel skills to teach them how to track and review data to meet quality outcomes. Katie strives to be a leader in the agency by volunteering to be on workgroups, adhering to agency policy and practices, and continuing her education. She is invaluable to her team and shows respect to everyone.



Susan Jensen

Is a Child Care Services Inspection Specialist, Public Health, in Grand Island. Responsible, accountable, supportive and ethical with an unswerving devotion to the care

and well-being of children, are traits that describe Sue. Sue played a large part in the successful implementation of new child care licensing regulations that went into effect last year. She served on a committee that designed the new provider orientation training while continuing the maintenance of her large caseload. She demonstrated her constant commitment to excellence through completing required inspections and providing service to providers, parents and their children. Sue has dependable knowledge and expertise on child care regulations. The children are always her final focus, and they benefit greatly from her dedication.



Danielle Larson

(Youth Counselor I, Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center, Geneva) oversees the YRTC-Geneva's nationally recognized Mothers and Babies Program. She works hard with teen

parents and pregnant teens to assist them in achieving their objectives and works to maintain the mission and integrity of the program. Danielle has also served as co-lead in the YRTC's Accreditation and Prison Rate Elimination Act initiatives. Danielle actively applies herself to quality assurance initiatives and has done an outstanding job. Danielle is a leader at the YRTC and has impressed staff and workers alike with her energy level, motivation, conscientiousness and commitment to the facility's mission.



Catherine Liberty

(Social Services Lead Worker, Medicaid & Long-Term Care, Falls City) demonstrated a commitment to excellence when she supported the Falls City staff as they transitioned

into ACCESSNebraska in 2010 and again when they transitioned to the separation of Economic Assistance and Medicaid in 2013. She is well respected by the MLTC staff, her peers, and community partners. Cathy is a representative on the N-FOCUS User Group, and is always willing to listen to concerns and suggestions from staff and

effectively communicates those to the User Group. She views extra responsibilities as an opportunity to learn and not as a burden. Cathy is 100 percent dedicated to supporting the staff and her supervisor while demonstrating professional composure and high integrity.



Kelly Ostrander

(Administrative Assistant II, Behavioral Health, Lincoln) has an amazingly positive personality and is always willing to help. She has excellent administrative

skills and is a trusted coworker. Kelly develops positive working relationships with everyone, including people calling in with complaints. Kelly provides back up to many of the Assistants in the Director's Office and knows the other content areas sufficiently to provide genuine support. She is trustworthy, loyal and discreet with the confidential material in the office. Kelly is committed to the values of the Department and is willing to ask questions and come back for clarification rather than make a mistake. Kelly is a true asset to the Department.



Mary Schwanke

(Social Services Worker, Children & Family Services, Fremont Customer Service Center) goes out of her way to help new workers

feel supported in their role and has served as a mentor for new employees. Mary is always willing to stop what she is doing to help another coworker. She is always going above and beyond with the responsibilities that are assigned to her. Mary's interactions with clients are always pleasant and she is able to effectively handle any questions clients have. In addition to her outstanding performance and dedication to others, in the last year Mary has volunteered to assist with several projects



Angela Weis

(DHHS Staff and Partnership Development Systems Consultant, Human Resources & Development, Omaha) brings a positive presence to the workplace

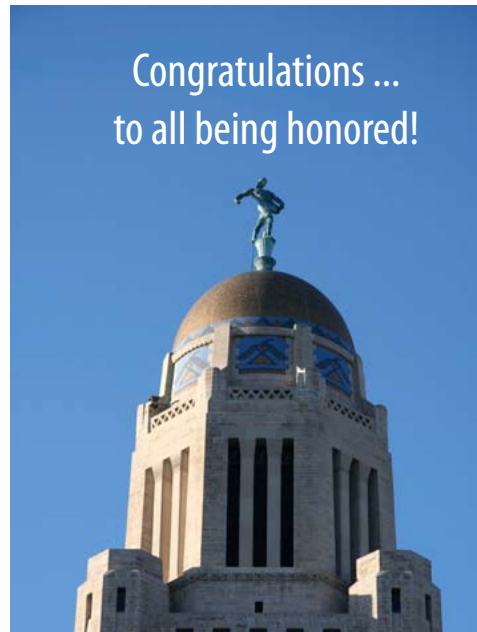
every day. Regardless of the situation, she conveys a respectful, positive demeanor and optimistic attitude that inspires others. She demonstrates accountability by seeing things that need to be fixed, taking ownership and then taking action. Angela became a Certified Emergenetics Associate and has integrated Emergenetics into DHHS in useful and understandable ways. Angela has tailored and led leadership development sessions to many leader groups. She has expertise in leadership development and coaching and was instrumental in developing the DHHS specific Leadership 360 degree feedback tool. Angela enriches the work environment and brings out the best in others!



Elaine Wessendorf

Is a Switchboard Operator/ Receptionist at the Norfolk Veterans' Home (NVH). Elaine's willingness to assist, organizational skills, multitasking abilities, warm

personality and smile make her a natural fit for her position. She makes a wonderful first impression for NVH and consistently displays her willingness to do what is best for our members. Elaine has been instrumental in developing policy and procedure as well as implementing and training the reception staff to ensure our team provides exceptional customer service. She is a team player who enjoys what she does and embraces each new challenge with a positive attitude. Elaine is genuinely liked and respected by all who come in contact with her and is a great ambassador representing our home.



Supervisors of the Year 2014



Denise Brill

(Social Services Supervisor, Children & Family Services, Scottsbluff Customer Service Center) has high standards of integrity, ethics and morals. She has a positive, non-

judgmental attitude. She inspires and motivates workers daily to be the best they can be and pass that on to the customers. Denise always takes time to listen and be available to every member of the Customer Service Center. Denise recognizes the strength of each member on her team and listens to their suggestions. She is generous with her thanks and praise. Denise is the epitome of sincere devotion to her work, her employees and the betterment of those around her. Denise is a leader, inspirer, motivator and friend.



Kim Collins

(DHHS Program Analysis and Research Administrator, Financial Services, Lincoln) supervises and directs staff in preparation, tracking, and research of

DHHS program budgets, reports and special projects. Kim is a great teacher and mentor. She leads her staff with

expertise and decades of knowledge and experience. Staff seek out Kim's bottomless bucket of knowledge in hopes of learning more each day and becoming better and more productive employees. Kim drives her employees to better themselves both professionally and personally. Even though she is very busy and gets pulled in many directions from different divisions, she puts forth her best effort and encourages her team to do the same. Kim's willingness to work with her staff is the epitome of what a wonderful supervisor should be.



Denise Drake

(Child Support Enforcement Supervisor, Children & Family Services, Lincoln) has experience as both a worker and a supervisor. She uses that experience to

calmly deescalate callers, ask appropriate questions, and conduct research to answer their concerns. She maintains a positive attitude throughout each process and treats customers with dignity and respect. Denise is always willing to take on new responsibilities and help out other supervisors. She works closely with program specialists to develop new policies and procedures. Denise clearly defines the expectations for her staff and is open and approachable. She is always looking to increase her knowledge of the Child Support Program as a whole in order to better serve our customers.



Dwana Flaig

(Social Services Supervisor, Medicaid & Long-term Care, McCook) and her team took on the huge project of converting more than 30,000 Assistance to the Aged, Blind, or Disabled (AABD)

cases on NFOCUS with the separation of Medicaid and Economic Assistance cases. Dwana worked alongside her staff, updating and recommending changes as they discovered challenges with the process. She took on the most difficult cases herself. Dwana is recognized as a leader in moving the team forward, always having a can do attitude and walking the talk. Dwana and her team consistently exceed the work performance standards. She has coached other supervisors in strategies to engage and motivate staff toward improved performance. Dwana always volunteers to participate in team projects and coverage for other supervisors.

required by the Affordable Care Act. Catherine willingly took on additional responsibilities for the Medicaid eligibility transition. She worked collaboratively with her peers to review every policy and all training required for eligibility staff. Catherine put in extra time and effort to ensure the timely delivery of changes and services to best support the population we serve.



Travis Harms

(Youth Security Supervisor, Behavioral Health, Hastings Regional Center) maintains a calm and professional demeanor with everyone he interacts with. He sets personal work goals

at the beginning of each shift and works hard to complete them. He is dependable and responsible. Travis is a great team player, dropping what he is working on to help out his coworkers. Travis has a great relationship with the youth, challenging them to do well in the program and role modeling mature adult male behavior at all times. Due to his high level of concern for youth security and safety,

Travis is the recognized “King of Contraband” at the facility, finding more contraband than any other employee.



Howard Isaacs

(Health Program Manager II, Public Health, Lincoln) is dedicated to helping Nebraska’s public

water systems deliver safe drinking water. He has excellent communication skills, trusts his employees and gives them the freedom to do their work. He has 100 percent confidence in his staff and that is evident in his supervisory techniques. When he empowers his team this way, it creates an environment of ownership where his workers always strive to do their best every day. Howard doesn’t create an environment where people are afraid to make mistakes, but when they are made, he uses them as a learning tool. Howard’s job knowledge and people personality have allowed the department and program to achieve excellence.



Jennifer Jennings

(Certified Master Social Worker Supervisor, Behavioral Health, Lincoln Regional Center) approaches people with a desire to encourage learning and growth and

promotes cooperative team relationships. Jenny invests time in others by inspiring and motivating them while giving them a sense of hope to accomplish personal successes. Jenny is dependable and friendly and demonstrates a constant commitment to excellence. Jenny recognizes the unique skills of others to develop strategies to be successful. She takes on new tasks to challenge herself and become a knowledgeable resource for others. Jenny is a great role model for other supervisors. She treats people with dignity and respect while fostering a Person-Centered Care environment.



Deborah Kosmicki

(DD Service Coordination Supervisor, Developmental Disabilities, Omaha) demonstrates the mission and values of

the department in her daily work. She is very compassionate about the individuals we serve as she makes sure their hopes and dreams are met by the providers. Debbie visits with her workers on a daily basis and makes sure to attend monthly meetings with the workers. She challenges her team to look outside of the box and guides them in finding answers to their questions. She genuinely values her team and takes time to get to know them and share in their joys, sorrows, and daily challenges. Debbie truly plays a vital role in “helping people live better lives.”

John McArthur, III



(Principal at West Kearney High School, Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center, Kearney) brings a high level of energy, compassion, insight, assistance and professionalism to both staff and youth

while serving on a variety of committees that are inherent to the office of Principal. John is visible in the school by visiting classrooms on a regular basis, listening to staff, making positive suggestions when handling challenging students, communicating with administration, and correcting staff in a respectable, appropriate



Catherine Gekas Steeby

(DHHS Administrator II with Medicaid and Long-Term Care in Lincoln) In addition to effectively supporting her team of policy specialists through a major

transition, Catherine played a critical role in implementing historic changes to Medicaid eligibility. She took the lead role on a multi-disciplinary team that successfully met a very challenging implementation date to affect changes in policy and processes

way. He has conducted teacher meetings efficiently by effectively delivering a lot of information to the teachers completely and quickly. John is friendly, listens and truly aims to be fair.



David Meyer

(Mental Health Security Specialist III, Developmental Disabilities, Beatrice State Developmental Center) has been an integral part of moving the Bridges program from

an institutional model to an integrated community based model. Dave has an excellent rapport with the men served by the program and has assisted them in becoming involved in many special community volunteer projects. Dave supports all individuals, developing their interests and ensuring they have opportunities for activities. Dave does an outstanding job of training and supporting his staff to become quality workers. He works alongside them teaching them every day. Dave is a humble and hardworking employee. Everyone who knows Dave realizes he has passion, values and talents that make him exceptional.



Rhonda Sherman

(Associate Director of Nursing, Grand Island Veterans' Home) is a great leader for her staff and a strong advocate for our members. Member care is her

number one concern. Rhonda addresses members' needs and makes sure staff know what those needs are immediately. She has implemented successful changes that have allowed staff to better serve our members. Rhonda experiences challenges staff face first hand, listens to their concerns, and gains their trust which develops great working relationships. She has made great strides in her goals of retention, education and empowerment. Rhonda shows fairness, consistency and compassion in her treatment of staff. She is a shining star in all that she does!



Paul Thober

(Certified Master Social Worker Supervisor, Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home, Bellevue) truly goes above and beyond in terms of being an excellent member advocate. He is noted

for his exceptional work and credibility with members and their families. Paul spearheaded a great response rate to the ENVH's annual satisfaction survey. He has been an invaluable resource to staff and the care treatment of mental illness and those with major behavior disorders. Thanks to Paul's work with the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) and CPI training, the number of major behavior interventions have been drastically reduced. He is always ready to teach, train and support staff regarding issues, boundaries and mental health concerns. Paul walks the talk and is a positive role model for state employees.



Leo Vestecka

(Warehouse Manager, Information Systems & Technology, Lincoln) is conscientious, well organized, and an industrious member of the IS&T team.

As manager of the Roger's Warehouse, he inspires his team to provide fast, efficient service to fellow members of IS&T. Thousands of items are tracked in the warehouse. Warehouse employees keep others informed when requested items arrive—usually within a few minutes after they have been received. The speed, competence, and dedication of Leo's warehouse team are the best tribute to his value as supervisor. His positive attitude, genuine concern for others and dedication are outstanding. Leo is a major factor in maintaining the morale of IS&T and does more than his share in bringing success to our mission of helping people live better lives.



Rickie Wynne

Is a Child and Family Services Specialist Supervisor with Children & Family Services in Gering. Rickie's desire to provide every child with timely permanency, positive

support to peers and employees, and leadership on statewide and service area teams, make her a great supervisor. Rickie's professional development of herself and her team and her time management and organizational skills show her commitment to excellence. Her passion for the work and for the children and families she serves is abundant. Rickie is always one of the first supervisors to take on new or additional tasks to support the service area and statewide organizational goals. Rickie's overall support, expectations, recognition, use of data, independence and her critical thinking skills are what set her apart.

Congratulations

Coaching Winners!

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

What are the characteristics of a good coach? When I facilitate discussions about how we as staff can help one another succeed, the responses I typically get sound like, “A great coach is...”

- A helper
- A champion
- A team leader
- Enthusiastic
- Goal oriented
- Supportive, and most of all...
- Someone who challenges me to do better than even I thought possible.

Let’s think about that for a minute. My brain defaults to sports when I first think of coaching. I grew up playing organized sports and I am seeing some common language here. (I am six feet tall, so maybe it was more of a draft.) I am thinking: A coach plays the game along with me, from the sidelines, without putting on the uniform. That parallels our interpersonal relationships and how we experience coaching at work, both from our supervisors and our peers.

Sports coaches experience these same challenges because they don’t touch the ball. That’s our job as the players. They are seen as the decision makers, yet don’t have direct control. They can see the big picture and have a strategies to accomplish goals, while it’s up to us to perform. Their challenge is to motivate others to perform a combination of skills for a win.

I ran track and played basketball. I enjoy both individual and team sports, and for different reasons. When I ran track, all the responsibility and motivation had to come from within me. That is how I am wired. If something needs to get done, I just do it. That’s not always a good thing, because it can make me want to take over projects, people, and teams. I think I am being assertive and “just” getting the work done, but where does that leave others? Others don’t want to be “fixed” or “have us do it for them”, they want to be “coached” – helped along the way to do it right.

Now when I played basketball, it was altogether another story. We practiced as a group and we played as a group. That gave us the opportunities to learn how each other acted and reacted to situations. We were individuals, each with a different skill set. The magic came from how we differently practiced each of those skills and formed a team that could act and react as one. We learned plays and strategies which relied on our communication and relationships.

We learned how to follow directions from our coach. Our coach played basketball right along with us, and his duty was to remain behind the line painted on the floor, motivate, and signal us as needed. He could only watch us succeed or fail, but was entirely responsible for our results.

That sounds a lot like the successful supervisors and employees of



DHHS. The supervisors have the responsibility of each of us, but they can’t play in the game for us. Successful supervisors have the skillset to do things for us, but they can’t. Their role is to bring out the best in each of us, while not doing our jobs for us. Successful employees know their duties for task completion, and also impart confidence up the chain that they are capable, and that the best decisions and work products will be generated. Their supervisors can

trust that decisions made in the moment within the given circumstances will be sound.

After surveying this esteemed group, those YOU nominated as DHHS Supervisors and Employees of the Year, I detected a few themes I want to share with you.

Winners:

- are aware of what motivates them; they feel a reward in doing a good job.
- appreciate and feel honored to serve their customers, veterans, and populations.
- are in humble service and know that in their work, they will be taught something new every day.
- have a sense of humor, and know the power of positivity.
- see themselves as human and fallible while strong and resilient.
- see opportunities where others may see obstacles.
- feel supported by their bosses, coworkers and teams.
- truly feel their staff provides excellent care to those they serve.
- are committed to their personal learning and growth and are open to new information.
- see how accountability fits into the big picture of the whole organization.

Congratulations to all of our DHHS Employees and Supervisors of the Year! May your examples be known and modeled throughout our organization!

Recognition for Years of Service 2014

DHHS employees leave a legacy every day by helping people live better lives. Some people have been with DHHS for a number of years and are celebrating special years of service awards this year. Congratulations!

Here's a listing of those employees and their years of service. Because employees are located across the state, those working in facilities and service areas are identified accordingly. We hope everything is spelled and listed correctly. If it isn't, let us know and we will pass the information along to Human Resources.

A Note from H.R. Administrator Alex Garcia

This was my first participation in Employee Recognition Month events, and I was thoroughly impressed! Not just with the level of effort that went into planning and logistics (thanks State Personnel and those locations that hosted them!), but also the length of service people have dedication to the State and our mission.

It was a great opportunity for me to continue to get out and meet the people in DHHS, and I was excited at the level of support of those who attended to cheer on those recognized. It was surprising to see the number of mugs still sitting there after the ceremony for those who couldn't or chose not to attend. It was great to see the supervisors and HR staff picking up those mugs and hearing their reassurance that they would deliver them and present them properly within their work areas. I hope we can all help encourage even more attendance in the future.

Again, congratulations on achieving those great milestones. I look forward to receiving my first mug!

50 YEARS OF SERVICE

Lincoln Regional Center

Janice Ropers

45 Years of Service

Beatrice State Developmental Center

Renae Novotny

Children & Family Services – Eastern Service Area

Karen Marquez

Children & Family Services – Juvenile Justice System

Michael Reddish

Director's Office – IS&T

Gloria Sanborn

Norfolk Regional Center

Donna Baumann

40 Years of Service

Beatrice State Developmental Center

Elaine Connelly
Wayne Goetz
Teresa Hausman
Duane Lenners

Children & Family Services

Cynthia Hartley

Children & Family Services – Central Service Area

Charles Ponec

Children & Family Services – Eastern Service Area

Maureen Pane
Mary Craig

Children & Family Services – Northern Service Area

Teresa Chamberlain
Deborah Habrock

Director's Office – IS&T

Debra Fraas
Monica Vance

Grand Island Veterans' Home

Glenda Beckler
Janice Fladseth

Lincoln Regional Center

Pearl Hepburn
Mark Vaske

Medicaid & Long-Term Care

Kris Azimi
Donald Vanecek
Gene Minnick

Norfolk Veterans' Home

Debra Becker
Richard Dohmen

Operations – Financial Services

Lynn Stone

Public Health

Susan Farnsworth
Trudy Hill
Barbara Pearson
David Palm
Donna Marking
Jane Bailey
Carol Ann Gray
Helen Meeks

Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center – Geneva

Mary Janssen

Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center – Kearney

Keith Scheidies

35 Years of Service

Beatrice State Developmental Center

Janice Duntz
Karen Girch
Ricky Hofeling
Richard Karas
Michele Ottersberg
Susan Rehm
Robin Retchless
Debi Rinne
Patricia Sookram
Chizuru Vanek

Behavioral Health

Robert Bussard

Children & Family Services

William Davenport
Reed Clark
Margaret Ewing

Children & Family Services – Central Service Area

Shelly Dankert

Children & Family Services – Eastern Service Area

Patricia Heimes
Susan Pluta
Margaret Williams

Children & Family Services Juvenile Justice System

Peggy Barner

Children & Family Services – Southeast Service Area

Carol Koch
Barb Stone

Children & Family Services – Western Service Area

Sharon Trauernicht

Developmental Disabilities

Kim McFarland
Lynne McGrew-Winans

Director's Office – IS&T

Allan Albers
Stephen Daly
Lois Little
Denise Manton
William Patterson
Kathy Ryder
Paul VanArsdall

Grand Island Veterans' Home

Joann Ewoldt
Kimberly Mostek

Annette Partridge
Sharon Schweitzer

Hastings Regional Center

Donna Hartzell
Korena Hoshaw
Dean Stromer

Lincoln Regional Center

Vicky Buchholz
Joan DeVries
Cynthia Dykeman
Manuel Gamez
Nancy Goff
Scott Loder

Medicaid & Long-Term Care

Eric Bachenberg
Karen Cheloha
Tonye Eisenhauer
Paula Markuson
Mary Robertson

Norfolk Regional Center

Sandra Bohlken
Patricia Brand
Marilyn Fuller
Kathy Herian

Norfolk Veterans' Home

Marjorie Goetsch
Leon Herbolsheimer
Randal Jensen

Operations – Financial Services

Donald Swartz
Sandra Van Dyke

Operations – Human Resources

Deborah Avey
Paulette Wathen

Operations – Support Services

Ric Tilman

Public Health
 Sherry Wirth
 Sue Medinger
 Jeff Newman
 Nancy Herdman

30 Years of Service

Beatrice State Developmental Center

Carol Mick
 Douglas Porter
 Jimmy Stevens
 Ginnie Winkle

Developmental Disabilities

Renee Brown
 Robert Gonderinger
 Michael Mischnick

Director's Office – IS&T

Elliott Horton
 Keith Larsen
 Sue Reynoldson

Director's Office – Legal Services

Eugene Kelly

Children & Family Services

Cynthia Dorcey
 Joan Frahm
 Diane Lewis
 LeRoy Shelden
 Peggy Walters

Children & Family Services – Central Service Area

Judy Regelin
 Bryan Allen

Children & Family Services – Eastern Service Area

Sherry Buhrmann
 Colleen Crowley

Children & Family Services – Northern Service Area

Vicki Viox

Children & Family Services – Southeast Service Area

Rita Beachler
 Paula Jones

Children & Family Services – Western Service Area

Shelli Arensdorf
 Patricia Anderson

Children & Family Services – Customer Service Ctr. –Fremont

Sheila Bacon

Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home

Steven Zulfer

Grand Island Veterans' Home

Connie Bebernis
 Renee Bennet
 Sheila Grosvenor
 Cheryl Husak

Hastings Regional Center

Linda Erickson
 Betty Kilmer

Lincoln Regional Center

Mark Dewitt
 Tamara Foley
 Phillip Jefferson
 Sherry Nielsen
 Laurie Reinsch
 Louise Stone

Medicaid & Long-Term Care

Wendall Roberts
 Madhavi Bhadbhade
 Sharon Gruhn
 Sheri Leffler
 Cathy Liberty
 Deb Heinrichs

Kathy Fiorelli
 Margie Hoffman
 Peggy Knoles
 Lana Parmenter

Medicaid & Long-Term Care Customer Service Ctr. – Lexington

Marnie Carr

Medicaid & Long-Term Care Customer Service Center – Lincoln

Art Weiland

Norfolk Veterans' Home

Marilyn Blunck
 Paula Janssen

Norfolk Regional Center

Sandra Bogue
 Dawn Collins
 Eleanor "Ginger" Jensen
 Jean Laing
 Patricia Leise
 Daniel Sturgis
 Polly Timperley
 Lisa Weible
 Leann Weich

Operations– Financial Services

Brad Pope
 Tom Ryan

Operations– Support Services

Gary Brennan
 Luetta Sinner
 Diana Wiedel

Public Health

Mary Arends
 Stan Cooper
 Shirley Nave
 Kathryn Parham
 Regina Paschold
 Tom Rauner

Harriet Spelts
 Sharon Steele
 Suzanne Weber

Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center -- Kearney

Marvin Carr
 Brett Hansen
 Cindi Kidder
 Irvin Nelson
 Robin Smith

25 Years of Service

Beatrice State Developmental Center

Nancy Huber
 Thomas Carpenter
 Lesa Hauptman
 Theresa Hyberger
 Mike Izer
 Gary Jurgens
 Lisa Munstermann
 Kathy Pretzer
 Donna Stansberry
 Rudy Vazquez, Jr.
 Keith Vorderstrasse
 Bonny Walker

Children & Family Services

June Vogel
 Luana Collins
 Douglas Kreifels

Children & Family Services – Central Service Area

Cindy Fankhauser
 William Ryan
 Darrin Wyatt
 Michele Anderson
 Lisa Jurens

Children & Family Services – Eastern Service Area

Debora Kipper

Shannon Siebe
 Vicki Romero

Children & Family Services – Northern Service Area

Peggy Garrod

Children & Family Services – Southeast Service Area

Kimberly Adams
 Mike Baumfalk
 Evelyn Burrage
 Karen Dehart

Children & Family Services – Western Service Area

Dawn Anderson
 Marcia Bremer
 Jerrilyn Crankshaw
 Patsy Juedes-Fulk
 Dennis O'Brien
 Catherine Studt

Children & Family Services – Customer Service Ctr. –Fremont

Sarah Carnahan

Developmental Disabilities

Leanna Lukas

Director's Office – IS&T

Jeffery Rozendal
 Tsai-Chin Sun

Director's Office – Legal Services

Darrell Klein

Grand Island Veterans' Home

Waunita Dimmitt
 Rose Helmer

Hastings Regional Center

Susan Kotas

Lincoln Regional Center

Larry Birkett
 Brian Dugas Lassalle
 Scott Schnirl
 Stacey Werth-Sweeney

Medicaid & Long-Term Care

Larue Cole
 Stacey Brooks
 Michelle Eby
 Pam Hirschmann
 Sandy Payne

Norfolk Regional Center

Diane Hassler
 Jyl Hochstein
 Kristi Kortje
 Steven Lindstadt
 Rose Prather
 Anthony Uttecht
 Donna Young

Norfolk Veterans' Home

Linda Frank
 Steven Hult
 Ann Richter
 Terrin Schroeder
 Anna Simpson

Operations – Support Services

Robin Mauseth

Public Health

Julia Schmitt
 Judy Anderson
 Joyce DeLay
 Julie Thomsen
 Melissa Leypoldt
 Lori Anderjaska
 Michelle Humlicek
 Rita Watson

Western Nebraska Veterans' Home

Alphonso Hernandez
 Nancy Marez
 Elva Neuharth

Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center – Geneva

Kathryn Burback
Holly Davenport
Diane Hill

Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center – Kearney

Micky Stagemeyer

20 Years of Service

Beatrice State Developmental Center

Lorie Drake
Debra Fralin
Carrie Haake
Laura Helms
Donnie Meyer
Scott Parker
Amy Schroeder
Barbara Smethers-Brenden
Jamie Snyder
Marc Thyfault
Kevin Weichel

Children & Family Services

Barbara Beran
Sondra Cluck
Teresa Fritton

Children & Family Services – Central Service Area

Wanda Frink
Nancy Schmitz
Julie Wood

Children & Family Services – Eastern Service Area

Jerry Burrus
Gregory Kosmicki
Michell Onken
Anne Vasilisin
Ellen Wilkins

Children & Family Services – Northern Service Area

John Ullrich
Stephanie Zoubek

Children & Family Services – Southeast Service Area

Jane Harms
Sherrie Spilde
Cynthia Wehrwein
Glenda Wimes

Children & Family Services – Western Service Area

Laurie Orr
Yvette Troyer

Children & Family Services – Customer Service Ctr.– Scottsbluff

Esther De Los Santos

Developmental Disabilities

Suzette Blakely
Charlene Blakeman
Nancy Chapman-Heiser
Jane Cleveland
Jill Dahlgren
Paul Piper
Richard Voss

Director's Office – IS&T

Brian Covault
Laurence Jones
Donald Losh
Douglas Meek

Director's Office – Legal Services

Darlene Nordby

Grand Island Veterans' Home

Vicki Lepant
Debra Lipovsky
Daniel Meier

Hastings Regional Center

Lesa Struss
Douglas Bonham

Lincoln Regional Center

Dennis Connolly
Sandra Findley
Dale Huddle
Jennifer Johns
Sandy Rodriguez
Joseph Schmieder
Shawn Schwartz
Rick Whiting

Medicaid & Long-Term Care

Joseph Manley
Candice Pappas
Maryland Williams
Karen Denaeyer
Jenise Erikson
Deanna Ewing
Juanita Cunningham

Norfolk Regional Center

Barbara Buettgenbach
Rebecca Inness
Jeanne Jensen
Lori Nuttelmann
Lawrence Sohler

Norfolk Veterans' Home

Janell Schramm

Operations – Financial Services

Ellen Novak

Public Health

Tom Christopherson
Bryan Miller
David Sizer
Terri Holman
Dawn Freiberg
Rita Krusemark
Susan Riepe

Western Nebraska Veterans' Home

Barbara Jacobs
Nora Moreno
Nadine Wearne

Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center – Geneva

Jane Beethe
Judith Filipi
Elizabeth Mattox
Marie Pope
Nancy Seward
Carolyn Stephens

Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center – Kearney

Cynthia Krolikowski

15 Years of Service

Beatrice State Developmental Center

Anthony George
Robert Ideus
Timothy Johnsen
Kent Korinek
Tracia Lattimer
Diane Mayer
Dianna Mohr
Lucille Salts
Amy Sturm

Behavioral Health

Blaine Shaffer

Children & Family Services

ANDI Center – Omaha

Nancy Frederick

Children & Family Services

Brenda Anderson
Carmen Dunlap
Chris Lovorn
Teresa Morland
Tanya Rhodes
Rosana Stearns

Children & Family Services – Eastern Service Area

Rebecca Beck

Cora Davis
Melissa Dixon
Naomi Goodwin
Cipriana Robles
Carrie Hauschild

Children & Family Services – Northern Service Area

Jacqueline Amos-Baden
Tammy Henery

Children & Family Services – Southeast Service Area

Randy Agena
Janet Apfelbeck
Paul Chapman
Susan Martinez
Tom Ross
Laura Weatherby

Children & Family Services – Western Service Area

Peggy Lohr
Theresa Davis
Debra Demilt
Danielle Dickman
Marilyn Luna
Cynthia Sample

Developmental Disabilities

Sara Beans
Kathryn Brown
Michele Coover
Lannie Doffin
Robert Mathena
Rebecca Meseraull
Michelene Nissen
Heather Otte
Deborah Peterson
Kelly Stoddard
Keith Van Drew

Director's Office – IS&T

Michael May
Leo Vestecka

Director's Office – Legal Services

Ronald Sanchez

Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home

Pamela Bechtolt

Grand Island Veterans' Home

Joanne Badura
Pamela Deal
Cindy Kelley
Florence Matthiessen
Larry Molczyk

Hastings Regional Center

Mary Haberman
Tony Martin
Danny Pendergast
Mildred Powell
Kathryn Stack

Lincoln Regional Center

Trudy Bakesz
Susan Childress
Scott Collier
Vera Friesen
Kyle Malone
Yancey Moore
Ika Obradovic
Lori Rasmussen
Dustin Trospen
Jeffery Van Lent

Medicaid & Long-Term Care

Margaret Booth
John Naujokaitis
Suzann Langner
Mary Ann Davis
Teri Stukenholtz
Angi Ulrich
Michael Hazledine
Roxana Skidmore
Matthew Pry

Norfolk Regional Center

Donna Crist
Jolene Johnson
Freddie Kleeb
Benjamin Kohlhof
Janie Oswald
Loren Ransen
Carol Ruge
Daryl Stephenson
Marilyn Stromberg
Donna Wagner

Norfolk Veterans' Home

Deborah Cattell
Megan Halsey
Diane Jacobson
Judy Kopejtko
Cynthia Throener
Elaine Wessendorf

Public Health

Steve Drda
Andrew Kahle
Mary Poe
Patti DeLancey
Tracy Beranek
Ming Qu
April Varga
Lori Altmaier
Susan Chocholousek
Carrie Erickson
Nancy Foral
Eve Lewis
Jacque Pelley

Western Nebraska Veterans' Home

Jeanette Fisher

Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center – Geneva

Carol Mathiesen
Pam Rose
Mamie Salmon

Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center – Kearney

Ilene Anson
Russell McCartney
Linda Veeder

10 Years of Service

Beatrice State Developmental Center

Anthony Brown
Susan Brown
Nicole Carnes-Woutzke
David Hackler
Gladys Hartley
Miriam Kelle
Darrell "Max" McKenzie
Lois Oden

Children & Family Services

Debra Cary
Raquel Edmunds
Michelle Fowler
Daniel Redler

Children & Family Services ANDI Center – Omaha

Michelle Newman
Michael Rooney

Children & Family Services – Central Service Area

Amy McCain
Cynthia Bremer
Wendy Kemp
Teresa Rivera
Alecia Smith

Children & Family Services – Eastern Service Area

Sonia Cantu
Davina Cerveny
Kelly Douglas
Daniel Lighthipe
Gina Mack

Marilyn Morrissey
Rina Nielsen
Tayla Ryon
Rosa Valencia
Shannon VanLaningham

Children & Family Services – Northern Service Area

Seth Coates
Danita Owens
Pamela Potter
Patricia Sanne

Children & Family Services – Southeast Service Area

Melinda Abbott
Scott Faulder
Lark Ferguson
Robin Gibreal
Amy Lauritsen
Annie Lund
Adrian Rubottom
Chris Siefken
Shawn Strickland
R.J. Wollenburg
Barb Young
Julie Zegers

Children & Family Services – Western Service Area

Katherine Batt
Melissa Betts
Jennifer Johnson
Desiree Montgomery
Kelly Nelson
Jererianne Snyder

Children & Family Services – Customer Service Ctr. – Scottsbluff

Gayline Brill
Robin Gomez
Brigette Palmer
Melissa Schwartzkopf

Developmental Disabilities

Natalie Dyer
Erin Hendricks
Heidi Kooij
Deborah Kosmicki
Jackie Langan
Bonnie Liggett
Rose Wozny

Director's Office – Communications & Legislative Services

Dianna Seiffert

Director's Office – IS&T

John Chambers
Chad Cole
James Louvau
Kristie Seacrest
Andrew Scherer

Director's Office – Legal Services

Carmen Bachle
Jeanie Boerger

Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home

Thomas Dudderar
Mailene Eliam
Tracy Pickens

Grand Island Veterans' Home

Margaret Hamm
Susan Kutschkau
Thomas Pribnow
Amanda Rodriguez

Hastings Regional Center

Tamara Buscher
Jill Holling
Ruth Kaiser
Phyllis Nelson

Lincoln Regional Center

Kevin Anderson
Crystal Buhmann
Maggie Copple

Reginald Farr
Brandon Frye
Charlene Hurbert
Jeremy Lincoln
R.R. Peters
Anthony Prue
Steven Purdie
Anne Regelean
Keith Sintek
Fernando Sotelo
Billie Thompson
John Trotter
Judy Vana

Medicaid & Long-Term Care

Sheila Balvin
Erica Brooks
Judith Debuhr
Tania Finney
Anita Foley
Lisa Fox
Betsie Steenson
Teresa Hill
Heather Leschinsky
Rhonda Prusa
Beverly Quiring
Danny Vanourney, Jr.
Kellie Wiers

Medicaid & Long-Term Care Customer Service Ctr. – Lincoln

Fauna Wikoff

Norfolk Regional Center

Kristine Hunt
Shelia Lewis
Michael Mejstrik
Mary Nemec
Stacey Sommerfeld
Ronald Vick

Norfolk Veterans' Home

Lori Haase
Pamela McLean
Deann Stodola

Operations – Financial Services

Dona Brhel

Operations – Human Resources

Jennifer Creed
LeNee Cross
Tracy Poppe

Public Health

Doug Allen
Janeen Berg
David DeVries
Amy Eckery
Marcia Fiala
Kathy Gross
Connie Hughes
Sheila Johnson
Mary Lentini
Sara Morgan
Jerry Richling
Lori Rowley
Marla Scheer
Julie Smithson
Jennifer Van Eperen
Mark Versch
Kay Wenzl
Melissa Weyer
Tara Wulfekoetter

Western Nebraska Veterans' Home

Esperanza Cisneros
Crystal Edmunds
Kristi Kutschara
Diana Smith

Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center – Geneva

Anita Haumont

Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center – Kearney

Ann Abels
Tracy Carpenter

Teamwork Takes DD's "It's My Life!" Conference to the Top

By *Gwen Hurst,*
Developmental Disabilities

"You seriously ROCKED it!"
Service Coordinator

"Staff were more than kind, they were very helpful and caring!"
Presenter

"Great conference!"
Conference Center Staff Member

Those are just a few of the many enthusiastic comments from conference center staff, presenters and state employees about the Sept. 22-24 It's My Life! conference organized by the Division of Developmental Disabilities. More than 625 people attended the three-day conference held in LaVista.

"I have attended and helped organize many conferences in the past," said one of the national presenters, "and this was truly in the top three I have ever attended!"

The conference was the brainchild of Division Director Jodi Fenner. She wanted a high quality, regional conference with national presenters who would help attendees harness systems and resources to support people with developmental disabilities in living an enviable life. Jodi painted the vision, then turned it over to staff members to implement.

"I wish I could tell you that we set aside other job responsibilities for the coordinating team," Jodi told the 600+ people attending the opening kick-off session. "We didn't. These folks organized the conference on top of all their regular responsibilities."

Kudos go to the whole team, which



From left: Mary Eman, Cindy Ashmore-Blunck and Jeff Blunck welcome conference participants to breakfast.

included staff from the Division of Developmental Disabilities and other Divisions as well. Team members included (other Divisions indicated in parentheses): Natalie Bacon (Nebraska Interactive), Patty Bade (now Medicaid & Long-Term Care), Leah Bucco-White (Communications & Legislative Services), Jessy Davis (now Public Health), Russell Fralin, Megan Gray, Jody Hansen, Gwen Hurst, Kathie Lueke, Tracy Luu, Pam Mann, Tricia Mason, Christina Mayer, Kim McFarland, Kathie Osterman (Communications & Legislative Services), Marci Regier, Cynthia Schneider (Communications & Legislative Services), Dianna Seiffert (Communications & Legislative Services), Theresa Starr (now Medicaid & Long-Term Care), Rose Stehno, Joyful Stoves, Dr. Todd Stull, Teresa Tack-Stogdill, Jan Wagner, Tyla Watson, Brad Wilson and Rhonda Yost.

The conference was a stellar example of people willingly—and cheerfully—lending their expertise to not only do a job but to turn a dream into a better-than-expected reality.

Whenever we encountered a hurdle, the question was, 'How do we make this work?' The focus was always on making the conference the best possible experience for everyone involved—attendees, presenters, conference center staff and the conference planning team.

Everyone went above and beyond to exceed the goal and realize the dream.

"All of the [breakout] sessions were great!" *Presenter*

"Amazing ideas, attitudes and motivation." *Attendee*

"Want more and more and more!"
Attendee



Christina Mayer, left, and Tyla Watson helped organize the presenters and room hosts.



Opening Kickoff: Jodi Fenner, director Developmental Disabilities, way in front of the room at the podium, fires up the large, early morning crowd and sets the tone for the conference.

Way to Go!

Statewide and national recognitions, honors and awards

DHHS Wins Three Public Health Communication Awards

Three entries from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services have won awards for excellence in public health communication from the National Public Health Information Coalition (NPHIC).

“These awards recognize the importance of messages that resonate with people to help them live better lives,” said DHHS CEO **Kerry Winterer**.

NPHIC is a network of public health communicators in the United States

with more than 400 members. The organization, based in Atlanta, is committed to “making public health public” by sharing knowledge, expertise and resources. The Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Georgia judges the annual awards competition.

The [Nebraska Family Helpline’s “Future Babies”](#) Campaign won gold awards in both [radio](#) and TV marketing categories. Using cute babies to tug

at parents’ heartstrings, the ads stress that we all start fresh with enormous potential and warn parents that there may be behavioral challenges down the road. The goal is to let parents know about the Family Helpline, which can connect them with resources, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (1-888-866-8660). DHHS contracts with Boys Town to manage the hotline. Boys Town took the lead in developing the campaign which resulted in an increase in calls to the Helpline. Information about the Nebraska



Family Helpline can be found on the [DHHS website](#).

The [Nebraska Worksite Wellness Toolkit](#) received a bronze award in the website category. The toolkit is a free online resource for Nebraska businesses, with a step-by-step approach that helps employers start or expand employee wellness programs and policies focused on making it easier for employees to reach, maintain, and lead healthier lives. It includes how-to guides, case studies, wellness policies and surveys.

LRC’s Walker Named Outstanding Pro in Therapeutic Recreation

Diana Walker was named Outstanding Professional in Therapeutic Recreation at a recent conference. Diana, an Activity Specialist at the Lincoln Regional Center, began her career as a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist at LRC in 2007. She graduated from Northwest Missouri State University in 2005 with a Bachelor’s degree, finishing her Master’s degree in 2011.

Diana is currently the Committee Chair for the Lincoln Regional Center Wellness Committee. This team has one of the top workplace wellness programs in Lincoln as they deliver quality programs for employees, including exercise classes, lunch-n-learns, health fairs, blood drives and golf tournaments, just to name a few. Diana has also taken on additional responsibilities this year by supervising a Therapeutic Recreation student intern, showing her leadership abilities and dedication to the profession.

Diana recently completed her President term at Nebraska Recreation and Park Association. She currently serves on NeRPA’s licensure subcommittee and continues the research and advocacy of the therapeutic recreation profession to licensure.

In her nomination form, Jeni Durfey, a recreation therapy Coordinator with On With Life, Ltd., wrote, “Despite changes in staffing, supervisors and day-to-day operations, Diana remains committed and optimistic. For all of these reasons and more, I feel so grateful to have this woman in my life and to have not only called her a coworker, but colleague, advisor and great friend.”

In Gratitude

Letters to DHHS employees who are helping people live better lives

Alice Ann Johnson, (Social Services Worker, ACCESSNebraska Customer Service Center, Fremont),

I wanted to thank you so very much for all the help you gave to me and my family. You took a lot of stress and worry away, and for that I am so very grateful. I don't think you will ever know just how much it meant to me for all the help you gave us. God bless you and your family. You really are a special person to help people as much as you do.

A Thankful Client

For **Judy Hartmann**, (Social Services Worker, ACCESSNebraska Customer Service Center, Scottsbluff)...

Millions of thanks and prayers that I was given Judy to handle my case! I feel Judy gave me so much hope and gave me back my pride, and I'll give help in my own special way to others.

A Grateful Client

Ramona Robertus (Social Services Worker, ACCESSNebraska Customer Service Center, Scottsbluff),

I'm new to this state thing, and if it wasn't for taking in three of my sisters' kids, I wouldn't be here. Out of my whole life, countless customer service calls, 34 years of dealing with rude people... I got a wonderful lady who really cared. She did a great job! And she was really nice!

A Thankful Client

Editor's Note: The YRTC-G recently received its highest American Correctional Association audit rating ever. [More information here.](#) Here's a note from an ACA audit team member.

Dan Scarborough (Administrator, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center, Geneva),

I would like to extend my congratulations to you and your team and to say a big thanks for the hospitality, courtesy and professionalism extended to the team last week. I came away again very impressed with what you do with the kids in Nebraska. You are among the few who still view the kids as victims and not criminals. I applaud you for that. I was particularly impressed with your dedicated and professional staff. I hope the experience was as positive for you as it was for me. Keep up the good work within the "treatment" environment. I would like for you to extend my appreciation to your staff. I especially ask that you acknowledge **Sandi Renken** (Business Manager) and **Danielle Larson** (Youth Counselor). There were obviously many others also that played a major role in hosting our visit. Thanks!

Chairperson from YRTC-G's American Correctional Association audit

Teri Stukenholtz (Social Services Worker, Medicaid and Long-Term Care, Nebraska City),

I do appreciate all of your hard work. I am very happy that you know your job well and you do know how to take care of people.

Let your boss know that I said "they are lucky to have you."

A Grateful Family Member of a Client