

CONNECTIONS

September 2012 VOLUME 12, ISSUE 9

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

Ten Years of Preparedness

September is National Preparedness Month, and on the preparedness front, a lot has changed since Sept. 11, 2001. As a state, we're more prepared now than ever before. We continue to plan for the worst, hope for the best and see what Mother Nature hands us.



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Why We Give...Charitable Giving Campaign Wrap up

DHHS employees embraced the Charitable Giving theme of "Why I Give" and shared many special stories. The campaign raised a record \$526,000+ this year and DHHS was a big part of that effort.

[read more >](#)

Diversity in Nebraska

Nebraska's population is growing more diverse by the year. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Nebraska's total population in 2010 was 1,826,341 and of that the minority population was 17.9%.

[read more >](#)



READY FOR A DISASTER?



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

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DHHS Employee Website . . . A DHHS Employee Exclusive

Looking for exclusive information about DHHS? Try the DHHS [employee website](#) . We add new information and photos every day, things that are relevant to you and the work you do.

Here are some recent posts on the DHHS employee website 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 .

Kool-Aid Man Visits Hastings Regional Center, Aug. 21, 2012

Sherry Block, Activity Supervisor at the Hastings Regional Center, has connections!



Photo: Corinne Jensen

Prior to the Kool-Aid Days celebration recently in Hastings, Sherry was able to make arrangements for the Kool-Aid man to make an appearance at the Hastings Regional Center on Aug. 10. Kool-Aid man made time with the youth in the Hastings Juvenile Chemical Dependency Program to have photos taken before heading out to the Kool-Aid Days festivities. Youth and staff at HRC enjoyed cool glasses of Kool-Aid and cookies, too, as a "thank you" for a job well done. Youth in the program assisted the Kool-Aid celebration by folding commemorative t-shirts and unloading various supply trucks in downtown Hastings as part of their Community Service projects.

This Bug is One Big Attraction, Sept. 7, 2012



Photo: Robin Williams

That's a ginormous mosquito buzzing around your head! Molly the mosquito made an appearance at the Nebraska State Fair. Not only was she a big hit with the kids, she was a great learning tool, too. Children could see exactly what a mosquito looks like with this larger-than-life replica and learned how to protect themselves from West Nile Virus.

Candid comments:

"I would really hate to get bit by her!"

"It's a giant spider!"

"We've got mosquitoes that big down south."

"It's better than a bouncy house or a clown for my kid's birthday party."

"You need a lot of DEET to keep that one away!"

"I feel like I'm in a B horror movie."

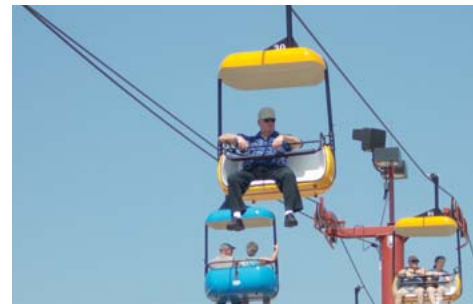


Photo: Nancy Klimek

High Flying Fun at State Fair, Aug. 31, 2012

Grand Island Veterans Home member Ralph Starman rode the new sky tram at the Nebraska State Fair recently when GIVH members and staff attended the Senior Citizen Day events.

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

Serving People with Excellence

Helping people live better lives is our mission.

DHHS is the largest human service organization in the state. Our business is all about being the best we can be to help others live better lives. That's why

I always say providing great customer service is our job. Great customer service – or “people” service – grows from a great work culture.

My vision is for DHHS to be a great place to work. Let me tell you what I've learned in my years in different work places. The quality of the work culture isn't the responsibility of one person. We are each responsible for our own working culture. It's affected by every individual interaction of every person who works here.

Last year, we established a set of [Values and Core Competencies](#) to help guide our work and provide standard expectations. They are broad-based and shared by our employees statewide, and help us achieve our mission.

This year every employee will attend a two-hour session called “Serving People with Excellence.” This session sets the standard for customer service in DHHS and expands on the Values and Core Competencies to include ways to more effectively work with and serve people. My hope is that “Serving People with Excellence” is the next important step in the Department's journey to an improved culture.

Since early this year, all new employees have received this training as part of New Employee Orientation. Now we're ready to roll it out to our entire workforce.

Why customer service?

It's my expectation that each of us treat all people we encounter with dignity, respect and “impeccable manners.”

First and foremost, I think it's important to recognize that customers exist both internally and externally and how we treat them is key to our success.

A customer can be a DHHS colleague whether he or she sits next to you or is in another town. It can be a partner to DHHS, like the employee of a local health department or community action agency, or a foster parent.

Or, it can be a member of the public who's contacted us for a birth certificate or for public assistance benefits. It can also be someone who doesn't have a choice but to work with us, like the holder of a professional health care license or a parent whose child is in our temporary custody.

Regardless of the connection they should know that we care. We may not be able to always provide them what they want, but we can treat each customer with respect and understanding.

We can listen. We can explain our actions and help them understand our systems or decisions.

We can be helpful, courteous and anticipate their needs.

Each and every day we're judged by what we say and do. The perceptions that people have of the employee with whom they interact means that is probably the perception they will have of DHHS as an organization. My expectation is that their experience will be positive.

I want to thank **Matt Clough** and our Human Resources and Development staff for developing the “Serving People with Excellence” curriculum, and I want to thank all of you for the work you do every day.

Plan for Worst...Hope for Best...10 Years of Preparedness - Then and Now



Strategic National Stockpile exercises help ensure life-saving supplies and medication can be delivered across the state swiftly and safely.

By Leah Bucco-White

September is National Preparedness Month, and on the preparedness front, a lot has changed since Sept. 11, 2001. As a state, we're more prepared now than ever before.

LB 692, the Nebraska Health Care Funding Act, passed in 2001 created new, multi-county health departments. Now all counties in Nebraska are covered by a local health department with a total of 21 in the state.

Nebraska received more than \$112 million in preparedness funds 2002-2013 which were distributed across the state to increase response capacity at the state and local level.

To be ready for a crisis situation, planning, training, exercising and

education are key. Numerous full-scale exercises, tabletops, trainings and conferences have been conducted over the years.

In 2003, Nebraska received around 4,000 doses of smallpox

vaccine and vaccinated health care workers, law enforcement and public health professionals who would be involved in responding to a contagious disease outbreak. TERREX (Nebraska's annual statewide emergency response exercise) scenarios focused on plague, active shooter, pandemic flu, foot and mouth disease and chemical releases.

Preparedness funding increased surveillance capacity. Surveillance tells us where disease is and how fast it's spreading which helps pinpoint outbreaks.

Preparedness funding played a crucial role in the development of the state's Health Alert Network which allows the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to send critical health information to all providers in the state electronically.

Funding also helped make Nebraska's Telehealth Network a reality. There are now more than 100 sites statewide including hospitals, health departments, mental health centers, doctors' offices and rural health clinics.

Nebraska was chosen as one of a handful of states to hold a CDC-sponsored public forum on pandemic flu preparedness where citizens provided input on the national pandemic plan. Nebraska also hosted a Pandemic Flu Response Summit in 2005. More than 600 people attended. Thousands watched the live broadcast on either Nebraska's Telehealth Network or Nebraska Educational Television.

All the pandemic planning and education paid off during H1N1. Nebraska's first human cases of the novel virus showed up in April 2009. Before the World Health Organization would declare an end to the pandemic a year later, H1N1 influenza would wreak havoc on our state, stretching and straining our medical resources and sickening our people. H1N1 killed 15 Nebraskans.

At its worst, H1N1 hospitalized 499 people in one week and 26 schools were closed due to flu-like illness in one month affecting just over 2,300 students.

Health officials undertook one of the fastest and largest vaccination campaigns in history vaccinating more than 475,000 Nebraskans and saving lives. Just because Nebraska had a pandemic, it doesn't mean preparedness planning stops.

Other real life events we responded to in the last 10 years include: Hallam tornado, Hurricane Katrina, wildfires in 2006 and 2012, 2007 Ice Storm, Flooding in 2008, 2010 and 2011 and now the worst drought in decades. We continue to plan for the worst, hope for the best and see what Mother Nature hands us.



Pandemic flu planning ramped up when cases of avian influenza (H5N1) in birds and humans started increasing and spreading overseas in 2003-2004. Nebraska's pandemic flu preparations were ahead of the curve and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognized Nebraska as a leader in pandemic flu planning.

Why We Give. A Wrap Up on this Year's Charitable Giving Campaign

Unemployment... chronic illnesses...hunger...There are so many people who need support. The Charitable Giving Campaign raises money for many important charities. It's a way for state employees to show their support for organizations affiliated with United Way, Community Health Charities of Nebraska and Community Services Fund of Nebraska.



Heather Younger, Public Health, shared her story. Pictured above: James and Cole Younger at 10 weeks. The twins decided to make their appearance dangerously early at 25 weeks, 5 days. Heather says, "I give to the United Way because I know many others before us gave to the March of Dimes so my boys could have a better chance at life."



Ahoy Mateys! DHHS employees at the Norfolk Veterans Home showed their creative fundraising skills in this swash-buckling pirate penny war adventure.

This year's Charitable Giving Campaign ran from Aug. 6-31, and Department of Health and Human Services employees embraced the "Why I Give" theme and shared their special stories. Throughout the campaign, "Why I Give" stories were featured on the employee website and Bulletin Board. The stories were powerful reminders that charitable giving organizations affect us all in so many different ways.

\$526,000+ Raised Makes 2012 a Record-Breaking Year. Because of all your hard work, energy, creativity and dedication, the State of Nebraska raised more than \$526,000 with more than 4,000 people donating. That's a 19 percent increase over last year's total.

DHHS was a big part of that effort. In 2011, DHHS raised \$100,854. For this year's campaign, DHHS employees raised an amazing \$132,875. That huge increase earned DHHS the Champion of New Dollars award. Way to go!

In the past, there have been challenges between state agencies on collecting money for the campaign. This is the first year all of DHHS was on the same team for the fundraising challenge. **Dr. Joann Schaefer** lead the Planning Committee efforts, and helped brainstorm some fun fundraising events, as well.

Several local offices, units, sections, divisions and 24-hour facilities hosted fun and memorable fundraisers that raised a lot of money for the campaign. There were also two statewide



We love our pets and we love a good cause. DHHS' Most Charming Pet Pageant was another creative way to raise money for the Campaign. Pictured here is DHHS' most charming pet Zoey with owner Katie (daughter of **Stacey O'Kief**, IT Business Systems Analyst).

fundraisers, jeans day and the pet pageant, that raised money as well. DHHS raised more than \$6,000 in special event dollars (money raised in addition to the pledge cards). All of this creativity earned us runner-up in the Champion of Creativity award.

The campaign may be over but the charitable giving of DHHS employees carries on. Many state agencies have fund raisers throughout the year to raise money for the Charitable Giving Campaign. Watch for news about upcoming Charitable Giving Campaign fundraisers throughout the year.

The success of the Charitable Giving Campaign shows that DHHS employees do a world of good right here at home. Charitable Giving is one more way DHHS employees help people live better lives!

How Diverse is Nebraska?

By Josie Rodriguez, Administrator,
Office of Health Disparities and Health
Equity



Nebraska's population is growing more diverse by the year. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Nebraska's total population in 2010 was 1,826,341, and, of that, the minority population was 17.9%. From 2000-2010, the white population total change was 0.4%. In that time frame, the total minority population increased 50.7%, with the Hispanic population having the largest increase at 77%. The Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander population increased 53%, the Asian population increased 7.2%, and the African American population increased 20.9%. Between 2000 and 2010, refugee arrivals in Nebraska increased from 552 to 4,597 and included people from more than 23 different countries. Recent estimates put the number of different languages spoken in Nebraska between 55 and 70.

While Nebraska is comprised of many different racial and ethnic

groups, Hispanics are the fastest-growing minority group in the state. According to the 2011 American Community Survey, within the Hispanic/Latino ethnicity are included Mexican (173,430), Puerto Rican (3,963), Cuban (1,883), Dominican (499), Central American (20,850), and South American (3,116). Based on our work, the make-up of the Central American category for Nebraska includes Guatemalan, Honduran, and Salvadorian.

The Hispanic population of the United States as of July 1, 2011, was 52 million, or 16.7 percent of the nation's total population, making Hispanic people the nation's largest ethnic or race minority. The projected Hispanic population of the United States on July 1, 2050, is 132.8 million and they will constitute 30 percent of the nation's population by that date.

Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated Sept. 15 – Oct. 15. To learn more about the Hispanic population visit:

www.dhhs.ne.gov/healthdisparities
www.latinoac.nebraska.gov/

The Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity's mission is...Improve health outcomes for culturally diverse populations in Nebraska. The Vision: Health equity for all Nebraskans.

Results Based Accountability – Turning Data into Action



Mark Friedman, Director of the Fiscal Policy Studies Institute and developer of RBA, works with providers during the exercise session.



RBA Training participants collaborate on their final report.

By Russ Reno

In August, about 450 DHHS employees and providers attended training in Results-Based Accountability, a measurement of outcomes that provides a clearer picture of the impact of services.

Children and Family Services Director **Thomas Pristow** announced all Children and Family Services' contracts will include RBA measurements to identify how well they are achieving a quality of life result and where changes may be necessary. He said RBA turns data into action and allows contractees and contractors to plan with confidence, improve the delivery of services, document impact and identify trends over time.

Lexington Customer Service Center Donates School Supplies to Early Learning Academy

By Russ Reno

To start the school year off right, employees of the ACCESSNebraska Customer Service Center in Lexington donated school supplies to the Lexington Public School's Early Learning Academy.

ACCESSNebraska, which is part of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, receives and processes applications for public assistance, and answers questions and helps recipients with their needs.

Sue Allen and **Lydia Loewenstein** organized the drive in coordination with the ACCESSNebraska Lexington office's Social Committee. Each month two members of the committee plan a benefit for a local group, and employees donate items and funds. ACCESSNebraska and the Early Learning Academy are housed in the same building at 1501 Plum Creek Parkway.

"Our staff is very appreciative of the support we receive from the community," said Lexington Customer Service Center Administrator Alvin Zimmerman. "Our Social Committee provides a means for employees to reciprocate that support, and we are glad to be a part of the Lexington business community."



From left: Sue Allen, DHHS resource development worker, and Lydia Loewenstein, DHHS social service worker, present school supplies to Dr. Robert Ripp, director of the Early Learning Academy.

Broadcasters Association Contract Helps DHHS Get the Word Out

By Mike Wight

If you were to buy a packet of movie tickets that cost you \$24 but that packet allowed you to attend 36 movies at no cost, would you find that a great deal? Well that's the deal the Department receives each year from the Nebraska Broadcasters Association. Let me explain.

Most of us have heard the acronym 'PSA.' But do we all know what they are and how they are used? Here's a simple description. PSAs, or public service announcements, are TV and radio announcements, or newspaper space, which are run or printed by the media at no cost. An organization produces the spot or newspaper article/ad then asks the media to run the PSA.

Though they are not actually PSAs, the Nebraska Broadcasters Association (NBA) provides a similar option to a few contracted non-profit organizations for a small initial contract fee. The member stations agree to run those spots for the year of the contract for a relatively low fee. This fee means these

are not actually PSAs though the cost is still very minimal compared to paying commercial costs for the air time.

DHHS' Division of Children and Family Services has had one of these contracts for several years now and the cost savings are substantial. For a TV spot, for example, the cost of the air time member stations use to run our spots is worth upwards of 12-15 times the cost of the contract!

That means for every dollar we spend on the contract we receive \$12-\$15 in air time on member TV and radio stations. Since the cost of the current contract is \$65,000 the Department typically receives between \$780,000 and \$975,000 in air time.

The Department is very grateful to the NBA member stations for the chance to get our message out to the public at such a reasonable cost. DHHS' Communications and Legislative Services produces the TV and radio spots for the Department. This allows DHHS to more fully benefit from the reduced cost of running the spots.

In Gratitude

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

Editor's Note: Here are three great letters of appreciation for the community service work that involved staff and youth from the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Kearney.

Jana Peterson (Administrator, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center, Kearney), and **Chad Cooke** (Youth Security Specialist II, YRTC-K),

I would like to thank you for the boys volunteering to help with the 2012 Buffalo County Stampede half Marathon and 5K. It was a huge success.

Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center staff in Kearney

Thank you for volunteering for the Heartland Showpig Shootout. Without your time and dedication, it would not be possible for us to host such an elite agricultural event for youth from all over the Midwest.

Sincerely,

Heartland Showpig Shootout Committee

Jennifer Dozler (Youth Counselor I, YRTC-K) and **Jana Peterson** (Administrator, YRTC-K),

Thanks so much to you, and to the Youth at YRTC. They did a great job cleaning the cars and it has been awhile since they have looked so good. All of the staff, commented about how good the cars looked. Thanks!

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation

Melissa Clark (Social Services Worker, ACCESSNebraska Customer Service Center in Fremont) shared this message with **Lisa Thoene** (Social Services Supervisor, Fremont):

A client wanted us to know how much she enjoys our new system. She said that although she has to wait 10 minutes on the phone, it is so much better than the two or three days she had to wait before for a case worker to call her back. She said that every time she calls she gets a nice person on the phone and she appreciates that.

Doug Gillespie (Program Manager II, Office of Environmental Health Hazards & Indoor Air, Lincoln)

Several months ago the ceiling in the apartment in Omaha where my 22-year-old daughter and her roommates were staying collapsed. The contractor that was repairing the damage told us that the materials that fell from the ceiling included vermiculite which could contain asbestos and that the girls should immediately vacate the apartment. My daughter and her father and I were extremely concerned about possible asbestos exposure, so the day following the incident I contacted Mr. Doug Gillespie. Mr. Gillespie was very polite, kind and understanding of our concerns. He immediately contacted Mr. Brown, a building inspector in Omaha. Mr. Brown met us at the apartment, spoke with us and took samples of the materials that had fallen from the ceiling. He said that he would immediately take them to the lab and have them tested and get back to us with the results. The same day he phoned with the results of the testing which fortunately showed that there was no asbestos.

This whole process only took from 8:30 am to 11:30 am. I have never experienced such professional and exceptional service in either the private or public sector. That day I can tell you that I was an exceptionally satisfied taxpayer.

A Satisfied Customer