

# CONNECTIONS

December 2012 VOLUME 12, ISSUE 12

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

## Quit Tobacco with the Help of Quitline

While all people are encouraged to quit tobacco, people with diabetes should be especially concerned about tobacco's effects. The Quitline, sponsored by the Tobacco Free Nebraska Program, is a great way for tobacco users to get the support and resources they need to quit.

**read more >**

## Eliminating Negativity at Work

We all have an occasional bad day at work. But persistent negativity in the workplace is a real morale buster for everyone. How can you turn negativity around in your world? **Richard Mettler's** column, "Making Courtesy Common in the Workplace," tells you how.

**read more >**

## Here's to the New Year

Once again the new year and the inevitable resolutions are upon us. Lose weight. Exercise more. Be more responsive to the family. These are all good goals. Want a better chance of making them stick?

**read more >**

## Play It Safe, Know Your Limits When it Comes to Gambling

By Marla Augustine



The Gamblers Assistance Program unveiled a new public awareness campaign recently to caution people who gamble to play responsibly. The campaign, called *Play It Safe*, employs a website, web banner advertising, TV, radio and newspapers to reach the intended audience of adults who choose to play. The goal is to bring awareness to the fact that there are high-risk behaviors that can lead to gambling addiction and to provide responsible strategies to keep gambling more recreational and at lower risk of harm.

"While gambling can be a source of entertainment for many people, it can cause significant financial, personal and family turmoil," said **Maya Chilese**, program manager of the DHHS Gamblers Assistance

Program. "This new awareness campaign will help Nebraskans understand their limits and offer resources for those struggling to stay in control."

"We want people who gamble to understand the risks of gambling and know how to play responsibly if they do choose to gamble," said **Scot Adams**, director of the Division of Behavioral Health. "The first defense against problem gambling is to know which behaviors are considered low-risk and which ones may be warning signs of a potential problem."

Tips for gamblers include:

- Set limits on time and money spent.
- Know when to quit; don't chase your losses.
- Play for fun, not just for money.
- Bet only what you can afford to lose.
- Never borrow to play.
- Don't play to escape.
- Never gamble when stressed, depressed or in recovery.

"Having an awareness of responsible gambling is so important," Chilese said. "As many

as 55,000 Nebraskans may engage in problem gambling behaviors—and they may not even know they're doing so. For those affected by problem gambling, treatment is available and it works."

Treatment may include individual counseling, group therapy, family counseling and crisis prevention.

The Division supports a statewide Problem Gambling Helpline, available 24/7, which can provide immediate support and referral information to local providers. The helpline number is 1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537). Family members who have concerns about the gambling activities of someone they love may also call this helpline for advice. There is also a *Play It Safe* website at <http://www.playitsafe.ne.gov/>.

The *Play It Safe* campaign is funded by the Gamblers Assistance Fund, a beneficiary of the Nebraska State Lottery.



## Stay Connected on



### make the connection . . .

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

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### [DHHS' Employee Website...](#)

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

## Homepage Homeruns .....

### Be Ready Nebraska! Dec. 3

Snowstorms along with other emergencies and disasters can strike at unexpected moments. It's important to take the time now to do some simple things to prepare for emergency situations and keep your family safe.



Visit [www.bereadynebraska.com](http://www.bereadynebraska.com) for Emergency Planning information for:

- Families
- Pet Owners
- Agriculture
- Senior Citizens
- Functional Need
- Businesses
- Schools
- Health Care Facilities



### Oh Christmas Trees...at the Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home, Nov. 29, 2012

Fifty volunteers from the Offutt Air Force Base 55th Wing Contracting Squadron assisted the ENVH Recreational Therapy Department in setting up and decorating 15 Christmas trees at the Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home in Bellevue.

One ENVH Member said that walking through the Town Square "is like walking through a lighted forest."



There are six lighted and decorated 12' tall trees in the ENVH Town Square alone!

# 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

I have said this before, but as 2012 comes to an end I want to say it again: I am constantly impressed with the “can do” attitude that exists in the Department of Health and Human Services.

You deserve to be proud of the work you do and I’m pleased to celebrate with you the many accomplishments and successes we’ve had.

This isn’t to say that we haven’t had challenges this past year; we have. It isn’t to say that responding to them has always been easy; it hasn’t. But what I have seen is that people come together to work through issues and toward solutions. There’s a shared concern for budget constraints, meeting the needs of our customers and meeting the increased expectations that others have of us.

Programs and services in each division and operation of DHHS directly and indirectly touch the lives of real people.

We may hear that we should have helped differently, and some will say not at all, but we continue to fill that vital role of responding to the needs, oftentimes the crisis, that is part of life for so many Nebraskans.

I expect our activity level to remain high during the coming year and ask that you continue to provide the energy, expertise and support on which I, and the directors, have learned to depend.

As we move through this holiday season, I hope you will remember that the things

that are wrapped aren’t necessarily the most important. My wish for you is to enjoy those things that are important to you, whatever they may be.



*I wish you all a prosperous and happy New Year, and thank you for all you have done this year to help people live better lives.*

## Quit Tobacco with the Help of Tobacco Free Nebraska's Quitline

By Joshua R. Russo,  
Diabetes Prevention and Control Program

"A rural Nebraskan was a heavy smoker of cigars and cigarettes. He tried to quit smoking several times before, but was unsuccessful. Eventually, he went to a medical center with heart issues and he continued to smoke.

That was before he called the Nebraska Tobacco Quitline.

After placing the call, determining a course of action – and with individual support from a health department – he was able to quit smoking. After three smoke-free months, he was happy to share his story.

"He was very excited because it was something he could not do alone," said **Shirley Deethardt**, a Community Health Educator with the Health Promotion Unit, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. "When you are a smoker, you have to change your behavior. It was hard (for him) to go more than six hours (without a cigarette)."

The Quitline is sponsored by the Tobacco Free Nebraska Program. The toll-free Quitline – 1-800-Quit-Now (1-800-784-8669) – gives Nebraska residents free access to counseling and support at any hour. It has more than 3,000 callers a year, and many of which

are low-income and have a chronic disease, such as asthma or COPD. The Quitline averages 250 to 280 calls a month. The need was great for the current Quitline when it was created in 2005, and there continues to be a need. About 276,000 Nebraska adults are smokers, which equates to 20 percent of the adult population.

"The Quitline is a wonderful way for every smoker to get support and resources free of charge, because the Nebraska Tobacco Quitline is open to all of the residents of the state of Nebraska," Deethardt said.

While all people are encouraged to quit smoking, people with diabetes should be especially concerned about tobacco's effects.

Quitting smoking leads to better blood sugar control and better blood pressure. Smoking raises blood glucose and blood pressure. A smoker's blood pressure has been shown to drop 20 minutes after quitting. There is also less of a risk of blindness. Smoking raises the risk of

diabetic eye disease, one of the leading causes of blindness. Quitting also leads to better foot circulation, lessening chances of a foot ulcer which could lead to amputation. One of the best reasons to quit is a lower risk of heart attack or stroke, and the risk of renal failure is higher for smokers.

The health benefits from quitting are both long- and short-term. Within 12 hours, the carbon monoxide level in a person's blood drops to normal. Within two weeks to three months, circulation improves and lung function increases. Within one year, a person's risk of coronary heart disease will be half that of a continuing smoker's.

The Quitline is relatively easy for callers, Deethardt said.

Calls to the Quitline are answered by trained cessation counselors/coaches at Alere WellBeing. During the first call, a person is given a choice of services, including telephone counseling, self-help materials, referrals to community programs, or a combination of these. If a person chooses counseling, they are immediately offered a brief counseling

session and given the option to enroll in proactive counseling as well; in which counselors call the person at a time that fits their schedule.

"Once you contact the Quitline, they will connect with you," said Deethardt, who added that there are also follow-up calls after seven months and 13 months after the quit date. The quit rate – those who continue to be tobacco-free – after 13 months is currently between 25 percent and 27 percent.

The counselor or coach on the phone then tries to understand the caller's pattern and history of smoking. The caller is asked to set goals and an eventual quit date. The second call with the Quitline is the day after the established quit date.

Web coaching and online support is also available through the Quitline. The website, [QuitNow.ne.gov](http://QuitNow.ne.gov), connects to other resources and cessation sites including a text messaging option. Callers also have access to self-help guides, brochures and quit guides.

Calls to the Quitline are completely confidential. Once a person registers, demographic information about the caller is collected; however, no names are collected.

For more information about the Quitline, go to [QuitNow.ne.gov](http://QuitNow.ne.gov).



# Keep Your New Year's Resolutions Alive

Once again the new year and the inevitable resolutions are upon us. Lose weight. Exercise more. Be more responsive to the family.

Those are the typical goals that people make and break in January. Sometimes it seems that the only New Year's resolution that works is resolving not to make one.

Still, these are good commitments. If you want a better chance of making them stick, you might heed the advice of Roy F. Baumeister and John Tierny, authors of "Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength."

First, remember that every exercise in mental self-control takes a physical toll.

The authors give an example of an experiment in which hungry students were immersed in the yummy smells of baking chocolate cookies. Some of the lucky hungry kids were put in rooms by themselves and told to eat the warm cookies if they wanted to. Other unlucky students were left alone in a room and told they could not eat the cookies but they could eat radishes. The radish eaters used their willpower to not eat the cookies. Later, the radish eaters, having exhausted themselves by not eating cookies, were much less able to spend time on other tasks.

Willpower, the author says, is diminished with use. Resisting temptation costs willpower and so does controlling strong emotions or focusing

on a mental task. So if you are tired, overworked and overwrought, you are in danger of breaking resolutions because you don't have any willpower left to keep them.

Luckily, willpower is also replenished by rest. So if you want better family relationships, come home early or give yourself time to rest after work. If you want to exercise more, make sure you aren't mentally exhausted before you get on the treadmill.

You can help yourself by doing certain things, too. If you are on a diet, you can plan ahead as to what you will do when confronted with a buffet (I'll eat the grilled chicken but not the cake). You can promise yourself cake later (I'll have a piece but not today).



*"The trick is in what one emphasizes. We either make ourselves miserable, or we make ourselves strong. The amount of work is the same." ~Carlos Castaneda*

## Eliminating Negativity at Work

By Richard Mettler,  
*Human Resources and Development*

We all have an occasional bad day at work. But persistent negativity in the workplace is a real morale buster for everyone. This is discourteous and unfair to innocent bystanders.

Negativity should not be confused with positive, productive identification of problems and their solutions. The workplace cannot have too much of this.

Negativity in the workplace is complaining just to complain. Negativity is contagious, and negative people will seek out others to play the game of "Ain't it awful?" Complainers thrive in a world of sympathetic or silent audiences.

Here are four things you can do to turn negativity around in your world:

- (1) Make a conscious choice to be positive. Do not participate in negativity and complaining.
- (2) Be solution focused. If a complaint is about something that has a possible solution consider problem solving with this person. Ask, "What do you think you could do about this?"
- (3) If a complaint is about something that cannot be changed, don't listen to endless negativity. You could politely say, "I'm sorry that you're unhappy, but it sounds like this is something neither of us can change. Let's talk about something that we can make better."
- (4) If there is a person who is consistently bringing you and others down at work, then talk to your supervisor about it. Don't allow a negative person to affect your attitude at work.



Please email me your thoughts, concerns, or suggestions about workplace courtesy and workplace relationships at: [Richard.Mettler@nebraska.gov](mailto:Richard.Mettler@nebraska.gov).

I will email you a response, and perhaps anonymously feature your thoughts, concerns, or questions in a future column.

## Adoption: Making a Difference in the Lives of Children

Adoptive families make a difference in the lives of the most vulnerable children in our state. Adoption Awareness Month, held in November, gave DHHS the opportunity to spotlight the children in foster care and the tremendous need for families to give them loving, permanent homes.

More than 125 foster children were adopted in special ceremonies across the state in November and December. During these special ceremonies, courts open their doors to finalize the adoptions of foster children and celebrate the families who adopt and all who have helped them on their journey to adoption. National Adoption ceremonies were held in Fremont/ Dakota City/Columbus, Grand Island,



When Lincoln held its 8th annual adoption day on Dec. 1, 61 children found forever homes with 36 families. Lincoln's adoption day festivities were held at the Justice and Law Enforcement Center.

*Photo: Russ Reno*

Hastings, Kearney, Lincoln, Norfolk, North Platte, Omaha and Scottsbluff/ Gering.

The children adopted during these special ceremonies were wards of the state -- meaning they had lived much or all of their lives in foster care. Many were older -- school age or teenagers. Many came with siblings. All of which can make it harder to find families. Thanks to all of the parents who have opened their hearts and homes to the children who need them most.

## Wreaths Across America Honor Nation's Fallen Heroes

"Wreaths Across America" ceremonies were held in six locations in Nebraska on Dec. 15, to honor our Nation's fallen heroes. The ceremonies were at Ft. McPherson National Cemetery, Wyuka Cemetery in Lincoln, Forest Lawn Cemetery in Omaha, Pawnee City Cemetery, Mount Hope Cemetery in Valentine, and the Grand Island Veterans Home (GIVH).

The Patriot Guard Riders sponsored the event at the GIVH. Jim Sidel, American Legion Department of Nebraska State Commander, was the keynote speaker. Members of the Armed Forces placed remembrance wreaths for each branch of the military, as well as one for the nation's POWs/MIAs.

The Wreaths Across America story began in 1992 when Worcester Wreath Company (a for-profit commercial business from Harrington, Maine) began a tradition of donating and placing wreaths on the headstones of our Nation's fallen heroes at Arlington National Cemetery.

In addition to the 10,000 wreaths that went to the Arlington National Cemetery this year, wreaths were also donated to state and national cemeteries across the country, as well as to 24 veterans cemeteries on foreign soil, and aboard U.S. ships sailing in all seven seas.

For more information about Wreaths Across America you can go to [www.wreathscrossamerica.org](http://www.wreathscrossamerica.org).



Members of the American legion at the Wyuka Cemetery in Lincoln. *Photo: Brenda Anderson*

# Way to Go!

Statewide and national recognitions, honors and awards

## Kris Chiles Receives ASWB Award

**Kris Chiles**, Office Administrator, Behavioral Health and Consumer Services, Licensure Unit, Public Health, was recently selected as one of two recipients of the 2012 ASWB Board Administrator Award. The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) gives these awards to people promoting the board's functioning, facilitating a fair and responsible process for legal regulation in Nebraska and educating the public and the profession about legal regulation.

In her nomination, Susan Meyerle, chair of the Nebraska Board of Mental Health Practice, credited Kris with excelling in all areas for which the awards are given. Kris is very knowledgeable on state statutes and regulations. Susan added, "The depth of her (Kris') knowledge and expertise appears endless. As



From left, Helen Meeks, Kris Chiles and Jenifer Roberts-Johnson.  
Photo: Bill Wiley

the "go-to" person for the board, as well as the historian, Kris helps to provide guidance for decisions, which is invaluable." Kris is also a very important and effective link between the board and Public Health and is often requested to address licensees and students in many settings.

Recipients of the Administrator Award are given funding to attend ASWB's annual meeting. Kris was recognized for her work at the Nov. 2 annual meeting in Springfield, Illinois.

## Nominations Sought for Outstanding Community Services Awards

It's that time of year...time to think about others and nominate them for the good volunteer work they have done. ServeNebraska is accepting nominations to honor volunteerism and service throughout Nebraska with the annual First Lady's Outstanding Community Service Awards. The nomination period for these awards is Nov. 15, 2012, through Feb. 15, 2013. Honorees will be recognized at a luncheon on April 12, 2013, in Kearney.

The First Lady's Outstanding Community Service Awards reflect Nebraska First Lady Sally Ganem's passion for education, and honor adult, youth and group nominees in a variety of categories. Eleven awards will be presented, one in each of the following categories:

- Lifetime Achievement in Volunteer Service
- Volunteer of the Year
- Volunteer Group of the Year
- Service-Learning Program
- Community Partnership in Education
- Business Support for Education
- School Volunteer Program
- Student Leader
- Community Service Project
- National Service Award
- Professional Commitment to Service: Debra Hartman Award

Among the Awards is the Debra Hartmann Award which honors a staff member whose efforts in the areas of professional commitment to national service or volunteerism have significantly improved the quality of life of their fellow Nebraskans.

"The good life we enjoy and the high national volunteerism ranking we honor will only continue if the ethic of service and commitment to community we all have is continued in future generations of Nebraskans," said Ganem.

Details including award categories, the nomination form and instructions, and past honorees are available online at [www.serve.nebraska.gov](http://www.serve.nebraska.gov) or contact Kimberle Hall at 402-471-6228 or [kim.hall@nebraska.gov](mailto:kim.hall@nebraska.gov).



# In Gratitude

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

**Lori Harder** (Deputy Administrator for Services, Developmental Disabilities, Lincoln),

**Jackie Langan** (Service Coordinator, Lincoln) was quite impressive today at a client's hearing in her testimony and her ability to relay the information that was important in this case. I know that she and **Jillion Lieske** (DD Service Coordination Supervisor, Lincoln) work hard on the DD court ordered custody cases, and they should be recognized for that hard work.

An Attorney with **Anderson, Creager & Wittstruck**,  
Lincoln

**Rene' Tiedt** (Administrator, Rehabilitation and Community Services, Public Health, Lincoln),

...there are a couple of very very key staff who work within DHHS who make a difference SOO much that I cannot imagine two specific offices without them!

One is the Office of Public Health with **Mr. Bill Wisell** (Health Licensing Coordinator, Lincoln) and the other is the Office of Medicaid and Long-Term Care with **Ms. Jackie Rapier** (Program Specialist, Lincoln).

KUDOS to both of you for being such wonderful people to work with and so cheerful and easy to get along with! You each are marvelous people!

Thank You!

**From a Nursing Home Administrator**

**Cherie Swanson** (Payment Reviewer, Medicaid and Long-Term Care),

I wanted to take this time to tell you I have really enjoyed working with you the past five years and am so appreciative of all you and the State have done for my son.

**A Grateful Parent**

**Editor's Note:** **Jessica** received this e-mail from one of her state wards after letting the youth know that the court had approved increasing her visitations with her mother and holiday visitation plans with her brother and sister.

**Jessica Cardamone** (CFS Specialist, Lincoln),

First off, I want to thank you and everyone on the team. Yes, this is good news. Please let everyone at the next team meeting know I am very thankful for your effort and your determination on us kids. Thanks for not giving up on us.

**A Grateful Client**

**Jennifer Dozler** (Youth Counselor, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center, Kearney),

Thank you very much for your help and work with my son at YRTC. He's doing well at Epworth, and I believe he's optimistic within himself to make the choices he needs to be making.

I appreciate you and the staff working with him and taking the time to get to know him. I believe in all the phone meetings and time we had to interact, you took time to see his strengths and areas of improvement realistically and wanted the best for him. My son has been in various placements and that has not always been my take on staff and services.

My son is talking more positively about his future, and that means the entire world to me. He is expressing desires to move into adulthood with an education, family, respect, and dreams. He is working hard to get a pass to come home for Christmas.

**A Thankful Parent**