

# CONNECTIONS

## Watch Your Mouth and Smile!

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***read more >***

## Is Your Wellness PPO Checklist Complete?



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***read more >***

## Earned Income Tax Credit: You’ve Earned it, Now Claim It!

“People deserve to get the tax credits they’re eligible to receive through the EITC (Earned Income Tax Credit) program,” said **Scot Adams**, interim director of the Division of Children and Family Services in DHHS.

***read more >***

## Honor Your Co-workers for the Great Work They Do

2012 Employee/Supervisor of the Year nominations are due March 23!

*By Amy Borer*

Even though the work we do at DHHS can be very fulfilling, it’s always nice to hear kind words for a job well done. Know someone who goes above and beyond in their work at DHHS? Here’s your chance to recognize those people for their special contributions to this agency and the people they serve.

Nominations for the DHHS Employee/Supervisor of the Year are being requested. Here’s a link to the nomination forms: [http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/hur\\_recognition\\_governorsprogram.aspx](http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/hur_recognition_governorsprogram.aspx) You can also get the forms from your human resources office. Nominations may be submitted to recognize co-workers within your unit or outside of your immediate work area. But hurry! Nominations are due by March 23, 2012.

DHHS employees are the core of our agency. Recognizing them for demonstrating the [DHHS Values and Core Competencies](#) with their coworkers and the people they serve gives credit where credit is due. So, encourage excellence and share your thoughts about those who set a great example!



February 2012 VOLUME 12, ISSUE 2

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

## Thanks for the Feedback on Connections’ New Format!

We liked hearing all the positive comments about *Connections* and the extra interactivity the new format gives us.

We even liked hearing the negative comments (not as much, though 😊) because that gave us an opportunity to improve the newsletter. The biggest “negative” turned out to be the small type size we used in the articles. Several people wrote asking how to increase the font size.

### **You spoke. We listened.**

We increased the type point size on all the articles in this issue. We’re trying to keep articles short and easy to read. Let us know how we’re doing!

If the type in the newsletter still seems too small, and you’ve recently had your vision checked to make sure your eye glass prescription is current 😊, here’s a tip to increase point size... Hit the Escape button twice and use the toolbar at the top to increase the percentage size, either by hitting the plus sign or by selecting the percentage number.

# 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@nebras10.6](mailto:dhhs.helpline@nebras10.6)

Chief Executive Officer: <b>Kerry Winterer</b>	Medicaid and Long-Term Care Division Director: <b>Vivianne Chaumont</b>
Behavioral Health Division Director: <b>Scot Adams, Ph.D.</b>	Public Health Division Director/Chief Medical Officer: <b>Dr. Joann Schaefer</b>
Children and Family Services Interim Division Director: <b>Scot Adams, Ph.D.</b>	Veterans' Homes Division Director: <b>John Hilgert</b>
Developmental Disabilities Division Director: <b>Jodi Fenner</b>	Chief Operating Officer: <b>Matt Clough</b>

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

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## Homepage Homeruns

**Exclusive!** Looking for information about DHHS that only DHHS employees can see? Try the [DHHS employee website](#). We add new information and photos every day on the employee website, things that are relevant to you and the work you do here at DHHS.

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).



### Get Moving. Stay Motivated with the 100-Day Challenge, Jan. 23, 2012

The Live Healthy Nebraska 100-Day Wellness Challenge is a great way to connect with co-workers, friends and family to get active and make healthy choices. The challenge is based upon teaming up for better health. Those interested can find additional information at [www.livehealthynebraska.org](http://www.livehealthynebraska.org) or contact the Live Healthy Nebraska offices at 402-471-2544.

### YRTC in Geneva Earns Three-Year Re-accreditation, Jan. 27, 2012

The YRTC in Geneva remains among the best of the best after earning its

three-year re-accreditation. Auditors praised YRTC-G's follow through on suggestions from past audits, and the center's ongoing commitment to accreditation and excellence.



### Valentines for Veterans, Feb. 16, 2012

Valentine's Day cards now cover the main hallway at the Grand Island Veterans Home (GIVH), transformed it into a "Lovers' Lane" of sorts. Valentines from youth groups, schools, and organizations from Grand Island and from other points across the state have been flowing in daily. A handful of cards from each group were used for this display in this hallway. The remaining Valentines were delivered throughout the week to the members at GIVH.



## Better Homecoming, Use the 90-Second Rule

Author Jim Fannin says you can make family relationships more rewarding in just a minute and a half.

If you've been away from someone you love for two hours or more, the first 90 seconds you see the person have more impact on the relationship than spending hours with him or her later.

As you drive home, finish thinking about work and get your mind ready to go inside to the people you love and care about.

When you get home, don't take off your coat or put your briefcase down, find your family first. If you have children, let them run to you. Hug them and hold them up. Then tell them to let go so you can hug your spouse.

The first 90 seconds can say, "I missed you. I care about you. I need you and I value you in my life."

Fannin recommends "mirroring" the mood at hand. If kids are excited, be excited. If your spouse is sad, speak sadly and ask if it has been a bad day. Then you have a chance to rise to a more positive level.

# 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

Halfway and counting! Last week was a milestone of sorts on the legislative front. Consider that:

- Three of the legislative bills introduced on our behalf advanced to final reading (LBs 723, 794, 871),
- The hearings on bills that impact the Department are over, and
- We hit the halfway mark – last Tuesday was the 30th day of the 60-day session!

I want to take a moment mid-stride to say thanks to those who have had a hand in our work so far. DHHS employees from divisions, operations, facilities and service areas have all been involved – it's a true team effort, and a big one.

How big? Here's a look by the numbers:

- 467 bills introduced by Senators.
- 140 bills reviewed and analyzed by staff, a whopping 30% of all bills.
- 206 impact summaries (some bills are assigned to more than one division).
- 83 fiscal notes completed.
- 43 bills on which we've taken action – 30 testimonies and 13 letters.
- 34 amendments reviewed (with many more to come).
- Over 150 meetings with or requests for information from Senator's offices.

It's usually neck-and-neck between Public Health and Children & Family Services when it comes to the number of bills reviewed. This year, CFS led the way with 63, followed by Public Health (48), Operations (31), Medicaid and Long-Term Care (27), Behavioral health (14), Developmental Disabilities (12), Veterans' Homes (6), Legal (4), and Communications and Legislative Services (1).

With a focus by the Legislature on child welfare bills, we've also found ourselves in the news. I want to take this opportunity to thank the children and family services employees whose work is resulting in improved federal measures, more kids with their families and fewer state wards over all. There is good news, but it doesn't often make the news. As these bills advance to floor debate we will hear and read more – please know your work is appreciated.

I hope you follow bills that affect your areas of DHHS. You can find them along with our testimony and letters on the DHHS Employee Website at <http://dhhsemployees/sites/CLS/Legislation/Pages/LegislationHome.aspx>

If you have questions about these bills, you can contact Communications and Legislative Services staff Bryson Bartels (471-0541) or Aishah Witte (471-9108), who are responsible for coordinating our legislative efforts.

Thank you for the work you do each day.

# Oral Health Campaign / Watch Your Smile!

By Bill Wiley

The new “Watch Your Mouth” campaign by the DHHS Office of Oral Health and Dentistry stresses the importance of dental health and the connection between good oral health and overall well-being.

“Good oral health can make a real difference in a person’s quality of life,” said **Dr. Joann Schaefer**, Nebraska’s Chief Medical Officer and Director of Public Health for DHHS. “We hope the “Watch Your Mouth” campaign will result in parents making dental health a bigger priority for their children, and for all Nebraskans to learn how they can improve their quality of life in a big way by taking care of their teeth and gums.”

The Oral Health campaign was developed in-house, using staff from Communications and Legislative Services, Oral Health and Dentistry, and Graphics and Layout. Children of DHHS employees were photographed, and their smiley faces are now being shown statewide on billboards, newspaper ads and the DHHS website. Television ads and radio public service announcements were also created that are currently running statewide through April. Also included are various public relations events like

the Healthy Smiles Art and Writing Contest where more than 100 entries have been received from children kindergarten through eighth grade. All of these activities combine to create awareness of the difference that good oral health can make. The campaign is part of a federal grant that focuses on two key messages:

- 1) **Parents need to take their children to see a dentist at least once a year.** According to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, children

in the United States miss 750,000 days of school each year because of dental problems – 90% of which are preventable. Starting at age one, seeing a dentist regularly will get children off to a good start with their oral health.

- 2) **Oral health directly affects many other aspects of your total health.** Recent information suggests the health of your mouth directly relates to the body’s overall health. People with good oral health have been shown to be at a lower risk of heart disease,

complications from diabetes, and oral cancer. Taking care of your teeth and gums can add years to your life.

Many educational materials and resources are available online at <http://dhhs.ne.gov/healthysmiles>.

For more information, contact the Office of Oral Health (402) 471-0166 or <http://dhhs.ne.gov/oralhealth>.



## Upclose and Personnel: Meet the Human Resource Assistants of Payroll

By LeNee Cross

There are a dozen Human Resources assistants who complete the payroll functions for DHHS offices and facilities across the state. These 12 principal payroll performers are all that stand between you and that biweekly check, making payroll happen for thousands of DHHS employees across the state. They work from Lincoln in the Nebraska State Office Building since October, 2010, when DHHS Payroll became centralized.

Last year, payroll staff processed an incredible \$215 million in payroll checks, added more than 1,200 new hires to the books, deleted about the same number (1,300) of employees who left the Department, and processed more than 1,600 job status changes that affect payroll. Every month employees maintain the data bases and make sure your deductions, withholding, etc. are what they should be. That's no small task when you're working with an organization that has more than 5,500 employees.

Each payroll representative has a particular area for which they complete payroll-related work. You may have met with your representative on your first day of work; however, changes occur, and you may have a different person assigned to your area.

Our newest Payroll Assistant is **Kaitlyn Betz**, who now does payroll for Public Health. **Rachelle Divis** (representative for Beatrice State Developmental Center) and **Natalie Kinnaman** (who is now an HR Officer at BSDC) star in new informational videos produced by DHHS in connection with NERO (New Employee Recognition and Orientation).

If you have any questions or concerns about payroll, benefits, or Kronos you may call Human Resources @ 402-471-9241 to find out the name of your payroll representative or [click here](#) for a listing.



From left: Catherine Benoist, Pam Bretos, Karin Jensen, Pam Schmidt, Kaitlyn Betz, Rachelle Divis, Chris Silvey, Cynthia Hendel and Roger Anderson.  
Not pictured: Debbie Avey and Natalie Kinnaman Photo: LeNee Cross

## Is Your Wellness Checklist Complete?

By Denise Uhing

All employees and spouses covered under the Wellness PPO Health Plan and those considering becoming eligible for the Wellness PPO Health Plan for the 2012–2013 benefits plan year, have until March 30 to complete Step 1 on the Wellness PPO Checklist.

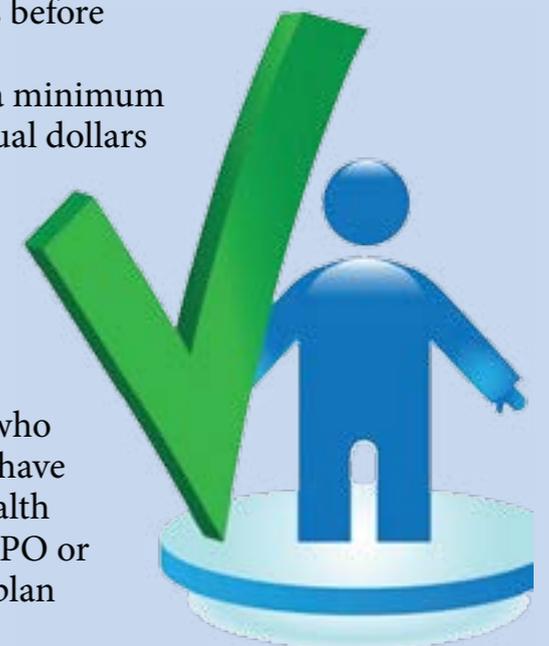
Aren't sure if you've met the requirements? To confirm the status of your Wellness PPO Checklist visit the Wellness Options website at <https://www.liveforlife.net/go.hcn?hcn2~SBegin~stateneb>.

After you have logged in, you'll see a check mark on the right side of the page if you've completed Step 1.

Currently we have four program options to choose from. Each has specific requirements to meet before March 30, 2012, in order to be eligible for the Wellness PPO Health Plan 2012–2013 plan year. The four programs and requirements are listed below.

- ✓ **Empowered Health Coaching** – Complete three or more calls before March 30
- ✓ **Walk this Way** – Log a minimum of 600,000 Steps before March 30
- ✓ **Condition Management Coaching** – Complete four or more calls before March 30
- ✓ **Feel Like a Million** – Earn a minimum of \$1 million individual virtual dollars before March 30

Employees who meet the Wellness PPO criteria will have the option of electing or remaining in the Wellness PPO Health Plan. Those employees who have NOT met the criteria will have the option to enroll in other health plans like the high deductible PPO or regular PPO for the 2012–2013 plan year.



# Way to Go!

Statewide and national recognitions, honors and awards

## Jackson Serves as President of Alumni Chapter of UNMC's College of Public Health

Congratulations to **Steve Jackson**, Program Manager of DHHS' Ryan White program, who was elected President of the Alumni Chapter for UNMC's College of Public Health (COPH) for 2011-2012. UNMC's College of Public Health Alumni Chapter is fairly new, and Steve's been active with the organization from the start.



In 2009, the Dean of the UNMC College of Public Health called alumni together to discuss the formation of a new alumni chapter for UNMC. The group of students who gathered and ultimately comprised the charter Board of Directors for the new UNMC College of Public Health Alumni Chapter included none other than our own Steve Jackson. Steve earned his Master's Degree in Public Health from UNMC in 2006.

In his initial capacity for the Alumni Association, Steve served as the Social and Events Chair for two years. As the President, it is Steve's job to ensure that the mission, vision and values of the Chapter are realized, and that includes ensuring the health of the public through active participation in public health, advisor to new student enrolling in the COPH and providing leadership within the community. Way to go, Steve!

# Earned Income Tax Credit: Claim It If You've Earned It!

By *Russ Reno*

Low- to middle-income taxpayers are encouraged to file for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which could result in a reduced federal tax, no tax payment or even receiving a tax refund beyond the amount of tax withheld.

EITC is a refundable tax credit for eligible workers with low to middle incomes. It is based on income and filing status. For example, childless singles making less than \$13,660 a year, or married couples with two children making less than \$46,044 annually from wages, self-employment or farming in 2011 could qualify. To electronically file returns and get the fastest refunds, both spouses must be present to sign joint returns.

"People deserve to get the tax credits they're eligible to receive through the EITC program," said **Scot Adams**, interim director of the Division of Children and Family Services in DHHS.



"EITC is a financial boost for working people especially in these challenging economic times."

Adams urged that before filing tax returns, taxpayers should determine if they're eligible even if they've qualified in the past. He said they can move into and out of eligibility depending on changes in their earnings, and parental or marital status.

To help Nebraskans take advantage of the EITC program, DHHS works with community organizations to provide free tax preparation assistance by IRS-certified volunteers to low-income individuals and families. To locate assistance sites, or to have eligibility questions answered, call 2-1-1 or 1-800-906-9887

For more information visit: [www.canhelp.org/EITC.htm](http://www.canhelp.org/EITC.htm)

# In Gratitude

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

**Julie Splichal** (Service Coordinator, Developmental Disabilities, Crete),

I want you to know how much I appreciate everything you have done for my sister throughout the years and especially during the last 13 months. My sister seems to be adjusting well in York and so far seems very happy. You have always been the one I felt I could lean on, talk to, count on during those rough times. I don't know what I would have done without your guidance and support. You're awesome! Thank you so very much!

**A Sister of a Client**

Dear **Mr. Rey Rodriguez** (Facility Operating Officer, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center, Kearney),

On behalf of our Youth Leadership Kearney group, I would like to say thank you for letting us visit YRTC. For me, I really enjoyed touring YRTC and getting to know the boys a little more. They were very courteous, and I hope we can visit again soon. Thanks again!

**Youth Leadership Kearney**

**Emily Walter** (Human Resources Manager, Lincoln),

I just wanted to let you know that you have a "gem" of a worker in **Karin Jensen** (Human Resources Assistant, Lincoln). She is so knowledgeable and easy to work with!

These are a few things she has helped me with:

- After being gone longer with my surgery than anticipated, she helped me make sure I used up all my vacation time I had to by the end of the year.
- She helped me fill in my credit union deduction change form correctly (which is a way different form that it used to be).
- And last but not least, she also helped me fill in my time sheet appropriately. I have been working over-time and probably will be for a while. I have not worked over-time in such a long time that I didn't know the rules or how to record it in Kronos.

I know these are all things she probably helps a lot of people with on a daily basis, but it is the professional/kind/patient way she goes about helping you which is really refreshing.

**A Grateful DHHS Employee**

# In Gratitude

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

**Larry Morrison** (Accounting & Finance Manager, Lincoln),

I want to tell you how much I really enjoy working with your staff. **Pat Rall** (Federal Aid Administrator) was a life saver when he answered questions about my grant funding number. I lost N-fuse access when I switched jobs, and didn't know it until I needed it this morning.

Also, I wanted to tell you how much I depended on and really enjoyed working with **Bryan Klein** (Federal Aid Administrator) when I was in a previous job. He was always there when I needed him and no question was stupid - (okay, yes some were stupid) but Bryan was so awesome in helping me through those "moments." His straight forward communication saved us all a lot of time and pain. I am going to miss working with him, I just want you to know how much he is appreciated!

**Jude Dean**, RN, BSN, MS  
Hepatitis Program Coordinator

**Jackie Rapier** (Program Specialist, Medicaid & Long-Term Care)

Thank you so very much. (for helping her understand filing claims using a new process and format) I was close to tears because I was really lost. I really appreciated your help.

**An Assisted Living Facility in Nebraska**

**Abbi Shanle** (Children and Family Services Specialist, Lincoln)

Abbi says... "Every month as I read the stories at the end of *Connections* I think of this email that I received several months ago. I printed it, hung it on my wall, and continue to share it with my co-workers in the office. It's a good reminder that I am making a difference and that I had a positive impact on a child's life. This email pretty much made my day, week, month, and probably my year better when I received it!"

Two years ago today...

- you saved a little boy's life.
- you turned my life upside down.
- a little girl didn't have to go to that apartment any more.
- a little boy learned what three meals a day are.
- a little boy fell asleep in a chair while the adults figured out how to make him safe.
- you spent your Friday night at my home.
- a little boy was excited because Uncle Robert had "water."
- a little boy found out doors are always suppose to open.
- a little girl got to be a little sister instead of a protector/provider.

Two years ago today, after a very long week with countless hours, you made a difference!

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