

Connections

WINNER OF THE NATIONAL
PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION
COALITION'S GOLD AWARD

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

May 2011
VOLUME 11, ISSUE 5



Photo: Dianna Seiffert

DHHS celebrates the opening of the Fremont Customer Service Center with honored guests (from left): Scott Getzschman, Fremont Mayor; Mike Puls, DHHS Northern Service Area Administrator; Kerry Winterer, DHHS CEO; Governor Dave Heineman; Senator Charlie Janssen; and Pat Langan, Executive Director, Greater Fremont Development Council.

HIGHLIGHTS (Click on headline to jump to story)

The Good Life	3	Families Matter Success Stories	9
Students Take Action to Get Healthy	4	NVH Twins Update	9
Whatcha Doin'?	5	Volunteer Week Highlights	10
Website Upgrades	6	Park Bench Donated at BSDC	11
DHHS is on YouTube	6	100th GED at HRC	11
Report Elder Abuse	7	Wellness Champions	12
Project Homeless	8	In Their Own Words	13

DHHS now on [twitter](#), [facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) .

You can follow DHHS at <http://twitter.com/NebraskaDHHS>

DHHS in the News Update. . .

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

[Be a Foster Parent - Change a Lifetime](#)
[Older Nebraskans Connect With Their Communities](#)

May 2, 2011
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Did you know that DHHS employees write columns that are sent to media across the state? Topics include: Families Matter, ACCESSNebraska, and Preventing Medicare Fraud. Here's a link to recent columns:

<http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/newsroom/columns/>

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

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

make the connection . . .

DHHS Public Website: www.dhhs.ne.gov

DHHS Employee Website: www2.dhhs.ne.gov

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About the Cover:

Customer Service Center in Fremont Hosts Grand Opening Ceremony

DHHS celebrated the opening of its second Customer Service Center with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in Fremont on May 6. A lot of staff were on hand to celebrate including employees from the new center in Fremont and from surrounding areas. Throughout the morning Fremont Center employees conducted tours of the new facility. Local businesses helped make the celebration even more festive with their donations of refreshments.

The Fremont Customer Service Center staff will conduct interviews, take customer changes and provide information and referral services for public assistance via the telephone. The center also has a computer for clients to use to apply for benefits.

“We’re celebrating another successful component of ACCESSNebraska, which is one of this Department’s biggest priorities,” said Kerry Winterer, CEO of DHHS. “We’re working hard to bring efficiencies to the people in our state. That means doing our best to provide great customer service and make it easier for people who are eligible for our economic assistance services.”

By 2012, DHHS will have four Customer Service Centers: Lincoln, which began taking calls last fall, has 100 staff; Fremont, 150 staff; Lexington, 50 staff; and Scottsbluff, 100 staff. The Centers are part of the Division of Children and Family Services.

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



Photo: Bill Wiley

By Kerry T. Winterer,
CEO

As most of you know, this is my first experience working in state government, and, from the beginning, I have heard that government is different from private business. I do agree with that to an extent, but I believe that there are more similarities than differences.

A few weeks ago a book came to my attention which deals directly with these similarities. I was attracted not only by its title, “We Don’t Make Widgets,” but also by the subtitle: “Overcoming the Myths that Keep Government from Radically Improving.”

The author, Ken Miller, is someone who’s been there. By his own admission, he’s worked in many government positions and with most types of agencies. The myths he works to overcome are: 1) We don’t make widgets; 2) We don’t have customers; and 3) We’re not here to make a profit. His position is that we aren’t really different from industry, but we often have to think differently about our work to recognize these things.

For example, as with private business, we do make widgets; that is, we do produce things. In our case, these things can be inspections, reports, licenses, treatment plans, supervised activities, child abuse investigations, food benefits, Medicaid reimbursements, job training classes, appeal decisions, permits, notices of violation, filled vacancies, purchase orders, training classes, etc.

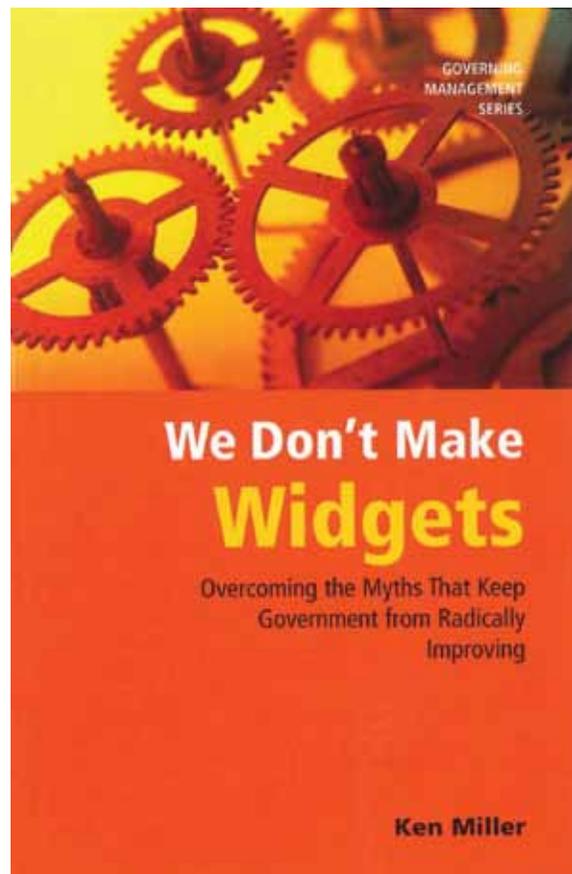
And, although we probably would all agree that we do have customers, it can be helpful to be specific about who our customers are. Our customers, as in business, are the end users of the widgets we produce. Others may have an interest in our widgets and how we produce them, but they are more akin to investors (taxpayers), the board of directors (legislature), and brokers (those who advocate for or

represent our customers). Our customers are the recipients of the services (widgets) we produce, but sometimes we have to think about who that really is.

Making a profit is probably one of those things that most would say separates government from business. But Miller points out that profit to business is the outcome that justifies its existence. Although they may not be measured in the same way, that is, as dollars to the bottom line, we also have outcomes that justify our existence. Profit equals desired outcome.

At 118 pages, this book is a quick and entertaining read, and it’s available as an e-book and in paper.

I’ve asked the division directors and my direct reports to read it, and it’s been a topic of conversation at director meetings. I would encourage you to read it also. It helps us think of the work we do and the challenges we face each day in a different way.



Take Action!

Schools, Organizations Work With DHHS to Help Students Get Healthy

By Leah Bucco-White

Culinary contests, food tastings, watermelon seed spitting, hula hoop contests, P.E. every day, walking and running clubs, Zumba and yoga, and recess before lunch... these are some of the creative approaches Nebraska schools are taking to get students interested in eating more fruits and veggies and increasing physical activity.

And this makes DHHS' Nutrition and Activity for Health Program tickled pink or should we say "pink grapefruit?"

Program staff along with **Dr. Joann Schaefer**, Chief Medical Officer and Director of Public Health were on hand recently to hand out 2011 Action Awards to 59 schools that have shown a strong commitment to student wellness.

"The healthy choice should be the easy choice. When schools provide opportunities to eat healthy and be active, students learn to default to the healthier choice," said Dr. Schaefer.

Eating fruits, vegetables, low-fat and fat-free dairy, and whole grains and being active every day prevents disease and helps students learn better now and sets them up to live longer later.

DHHS works with Nebraska Action for Healthy Kids and schools statewide to help create that culture of wellness which means improving nutrition and physical activity while kids are at school.

Despite many success stories, DHHS data on Nebraska high school students shows there's still more work to do in school, at home and in communities across the state.

Did you know?

- Only one in five high school students is physically active for 60 plus minutes a day. We can change that by encouraging kids to be active every day. Whether it's playing sports or exercising at the gym... even walking the dog... Get at least one hour of physical activity every day.

- Only one in four report eating fruit at least twice a day. We can change that by tasting the rainbow, and we're not talking about Skittles. Eat lots fruits and veggies in a variety of colors every day...think red apples, orange carrots, yellow bananas, green beans, blueberries, purple plums... Students should pick the good stuff for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks. How many kids play video games? Watch American Idol, House or Glee? Spend time on Facebook or texting friends? Who doesn't, right? But too much isn't a good thing.
- Around 20 percent of students watch TV, play video games or use a computer three plus hours a day. That's a lot of screen time!

We can change that by going lean with the screen.

Turn off the TV and get outside.

Making changes is good for students and families. It gives students a chance to challenge their parents, not about curfew, but about health.

Kids can be the ones to tell their parents to eat their fruits and veggies... "finish the last of those brussels sprouts." Challenge them to live a healthier lifestyle if they aren't already. Families are in this together.

And together schools, students, communities and families are making a difference. They are working toward lifelong

success by investing in healthy schools that support healthy behaviors.

So whether it's Fit Friday or Fruit Friday, DHHS continues its work to help students take action and get healthy.

You can find out which schools were recognized and read their success stories here:

<http://docushare.lps.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-870642/Summit%20Booklet%2011%20final.pdf>



Jessye Goertz, UNL Extension Office and Action for Healthy Kids Co-chair; Dr. Joann Schaefer, DHHS Director, Division of Public Health; students from Plattsmouth High School; and Pat Timm, State Board of Education

Whatcha Doin? Campaign Creates a “Buzz” in High Schools

By Betsey Stehlik, *Whatcha doin? Campaign Coordinator*

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has a question for teens in the Cornhusker State: “Whatcha doin about fruits, veggies and physical activity?”

Whatcha doin? is a high school wellness campaign that uses student-organized activities to encourage teenagers to eat more fruits and vegetables and get more physical activity in fun and unique ways. The campaign challenges high schoolers to get creative, a little wacky, and have some good, healthy fun.

From a Carrot Man mascot to stability balls in the library, Whatcha doin? is creating a memorable buzz in Nebraska high schools: fruits, vegetables and physical activity can be fun anywhere, anytime, and in any way. As the campaign tagline explains, living the Whatcha doin? way is easy: “How you do it is up to you!”

The campaign began as a unique collaboration between the DHHS Nutrition and Activity for Health Program and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln advertising program. Each year, the campaign continues this joint effort by employing a senior in the UNL advertising program to coordinate the campaign.

Currently in its fourth year, the campaign is being implemented in 13 high schools across Nebraska, spanning the entire length of the state. This year, Whatcha doin? reaches over 9,000 students in 10 Nebraska health districts.

While some traditional mass media advertising is used in the campaign, including billboards and cable TV spots, an essential ingredient is the use of non-traditional channels, such as “Buzz agents” in schools, a web presence, and promotional activities that reward teen participants with T-shirts and other incentives. Each participating school selects a teacher coordinator to organize the campaign at his or her school, who then recruits a team of high school students to serve as Buzz agents. The Buzzers spread the campaign messages in stealthy and random ways to gain buzz about the campaign. This year, the Whatcha doin? campaign has over 130 Buzz agents working to promote campaign messages.

“I like being behind the scenes,” said one student Buzz agent. “It’s fun being part of a team.” Everyone really likes the idea of being random.”



Students and teachers alike have enjoyed the wacky and out-of-the-box way of making fruits, vegetables, and physical activity fun in a high school setting. Each participating school is given a full-size carrot costume and several large green stability balls to use during campaign activities, and each Buzz team is encouraged to get creative with the campaign messages.

“The best thing we’ve done was at the end of a few class periods, we played the ‘Cha Cha Slide’ over the intercom and people got up and joined in to dance,” says one student Buzz agent. “The whole school really got into it!”

“We had a school-wide event where if you found a hidden Whatcha doin? sticker, you got a prize, which was piece of fruit or a smoothie,” says one coordinator. “It went over really well with the students.”

This year’s Whatcha doin? campaign will conclude at the end of the school year in May, when the Buzz teams will hold their own Whatcha doin? “DO-A-THON” events, which are student-organized and coordinated school-wide activities that promote fruits, vegetables and/or physical activity.

Whatcha doin? is all about being unexpected and random, but one thing is for certain: across Nebraska, the Whatcha doin? campaign is making a positive impact on how high school students think about fruits, veggies and physical activity.

For more information, go to www.whatchadoin.org. To see videos of Carrot Man and other student-made campaign videos, click on the “Video Contest” tab.

This article was originally published in the March 2011 issue of NPHIC News, a newsletter from the National Public Health Information Coalition.

Website Upgrades will Improve DHHS Emergency Communication Efforts

By Greg L. Votava

The DHHS public and employee websites are two key components of the DHHS emergency risk communication strategy. Both sites deliver daily and emergency information to the public and DHHS employees.

The DHHS Web team and IS&T staff are currently in the process of converting both websites to the Microsoft SharePoint content management platform in order to improve efficiencies during regular business and during emergencies.

SharePoint will be used to provide a framework for employee collaboration, which will:

- Improve response times during emergencies;
- Enable all DHHS Public Information Officers to edit Web content;
- Improve ability to quickly implement CDC syndicated content and tools;
- Improve internal collaboration using Web 2.0 capabilities and document sharing;
- Provide more accurate and efficient content updating;

- Improve support of local health departments that rely on DHHS web content;
- Improve the navigation of our sites getting people to information quickly, by better managing content and by advancing our ability to analyze and understand how various audiences use content.

This new work environment will allow employees to more easily share information and collaborate across domains and statewide geographic locations.

Employees will be able to access their work site from any computer at any location, and the DHHS Communications team will also have the ability to update both sites quickly and efficiently at any time day or night.

The DHHS public website provides information to a wide range of audiences from the general population, to health professionals, to special populations. The site averages over 250,000 unique visits and nearly 1 million page views per month. The site currently has 14,800 people who subscribe to content and receive email or text messages when content that fits their interest is updated on the site.

DHHS is Uploading & Sharing Videos on YouTube™

Did you know DHHS is on YouTube? It's another way DHHS is using technology to connect and communicate with people with similar interests.

YouTube is a video-sharing website where users upload, share and view videos. The amount of content on YouTube is amazing. Users are currently uploading 24 hours of video to this social video site every 60 seconds.

On the DHHS YouTube Channel, you can:

- Take a virtual tour of the Grand Island Veterans Home;
- See a public service announcement about the Nebraska Family Helpline;
- Find out what it's like to work at an ACCESSNebraska Customer Service Center; and
- Learn about the Beatrice State Developmental Center through the many training videos we offer.

Just to name a few things.

Here are some of the YouTube videos we've recently uploaded for DHHS :

- Three entertaining public service announcements from the Office of Oral Health and Dentistry; and
- The new artists chosen for the 2011 Tune project.

Check out the DHHS YouTube Channel here!

http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Nebraska+DHHS&q=f

You can also get to it by clicking on the YouTube icon on the homepage of our website.

www.dhhs.ne.gov

Working to Make Nebraska Free of Elder Abuse

By: Julie Hippen, Program Coordinator

Adult Protective Services (APS) and the Unit on Aging programs are making plans for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15, 2011.

DHHS is raising awareness of vulnerable adults in Nebraska who are the victims of financial exploitation, neglect and physical abuse. Often, these victims are afraid to speak out because the abuser is a family member or a caregiver upon whom they depend. These vulnerable adults may fear retribution, lack of care, embarrassment and/or institutionalization. Join us and wear something purple on June 15, 2011, for Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Also, be alert to the warning signs and SPEAK UP!

Warning Signs of Elder Abuse or Vulnerable Adult Abuse

- Sudden changes in behavior or finances
- Physical injuries, dehydration, or malnourishment
- Extreme withdrawal, depression, or anxiety
- Absence of basic care or necessities
- Kept away from others
- Unsanitary living conditions
- Personal items missing



Adult Protective Services staff conduct investigations in a variety of settings, such as: individual homes, nursing homes, assisted living, hospitals and group homes. The program coordinates with various agencies including: mental health, public health and law enforcement agencies; the probate courts; aging network and community groups; as well as the public.

Speak Up!

Report Abuse to Adult Protective Services at 1-800-652-1999

To learn more about preventing elder abuse, visit the National Center on Elder Abuse website at www.ncea.aoa.gov.

Seniors Beware

In a recent column titled "Beware of Con Artists," **Vivianne Chaumont**, Director of Medicaid and Long-Term Care, talked about how senior citizens can be particularly vulnerable to pressure from con artists. Volunteers with Nebraska's Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) in DHHS visit senior centers, retirement communities and other organizations to educate seniors on how to recognize and ward off con artists. If you or someone you know thinks they've been scammed, or for information on being a SMP volunteer, call 1-800-942-7830 or go to www.dhhs.ne.gov/smp.



To read Vivianne's column on the subject, click here.

<http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/newsroom/columns/042511Bewareofconartists.pdf>

Providing Services through Project Homeless Connect

Project Homeless Connect was held on March 25, at Creighton University, and DHHS employees were on hand to provide assistance.

“This event is so eye opening for me,” said **Darla Berger**, Community Support Specialist, Omaha.

“Sometimes you don’t even realize all the hardships people face, especially if they are homeless.”

Darla was one of the DHHS employees at Project Homeless Connect. Here’s what she said about the event:

Community Support Specialists from the Eastern Service Area, Southeast Service Area and the Northern Service Area set up and represented DHHS. We took about 40 applications for assistance. In addition we answered questions or resolved issues for another 40 people. For example, we checked current status, answered eligibility questions, changed addresses, showed how to use EBT card, etc.

We always had two Community Support Specialists on the floor networking with other agencies and clients. We answered a lot of questions about ACCESSNebraska and handed out brochures and information. We heard many positive comments about ACCESSNebraska and Universal Caseload. One agency told us they are relieved when their clients are in Universal Caseload because it means they can make one phone call and their questions are answered right away.

During Project Homeless Connect, clients are assigned volunteers called “Navigators.” Those Navigators take them



From Left: Jacey Schmidt, Maxcine Jackson, Melissa Kratky, Darniece Amos, Darla Berger, and Stacy Schenk.

around to difference services. The Navigator listens and the services are offered based on client concerns.

The event coordinator said that Project Homeless Connect served 525 unique clients. Of those, more than 250 went through healthcare, over 150 received eye exams and prescriptions for free glasses, more than 180 saw a dentist and over 400 received haircuts.

There are so many volunteers at this event. It’s rewarding to be able to serve.

Families Matter Success Stories



Families Matter focuses on making sure kids and neighborhoods are safe, and that kids are connected to caring adults and are given the tools to lead productive lives. Here are just a few of the successes that are happening for children and families.

Returning Home

Single mother “Maya” has four young children, all with high behavioral needs which she could not control. The youngest children were placed back home while Maya participated in services to transition her two older children home as well. In March 2011, the foster home caring for the oldest boys said they could no longer be a placement. The caseworker searched but the only available foster home was nearly two hours away from their mother, school, and therapist. A review showed Maya and the children had made excellent progress, and the best option would be to move the two boys back home, with wrap-around services for extra assistance. The court approved the reunification and the family is doing well and continues to make progress.

Update on NVH Twins

In the last issue of *Connections* we introduced you to Marvin and Melvin Jones, twins at the Norfolk Veterans’ Home (NVH). It was an endearing story about twin brothers sharing their lives, including time spent serving our country in the Army, before being reunited again at the Norfolk Veterans Home.

We’re sad to report that one of the twins, Melvin, passed away recently. **Linda Sparr**, Administrative Assistant, said Melvin enjoyed his stay at the NVH and the two were planning to room together before Melvin’s health began to decline. Linda said the families of the twins were extremely pleased to have copies of the photos that were taken for the article in *Connections*.

Supporting New Mom

Because “Brenda” has suffered from severe Postpartum Depression with her previous children, caseworker Katie made an individualized plan to ensure Brenda was supported in the home after the birth of her new baby. Because of that support, her other children were returned to her home a few weeks after she gave birth. The judge commented positively that she had not seen such an individualized plan for a family before.

Getting Kids Involved

“Mike” is a good-sized eighth-grader who had never wrestled before. A caring DHHS worker’s family is very involved in wrestling and school activities. They encouraged Mike and bought him shoes so he could participate in sports. He signed up for a local tournament and pinned his first kid, and was on cloud nine. After the meet, Mike helped clean up and the head coach gave him a whole left-over pizza for doing so well. You would have thought that it was Christmas, from the big smile on his face. Mike’s doing very well and is accepted by his classmates. Who knows, he may be a state champion next year.

Dirty Home Remedied

Two-year-old “Beth” is a bubbly toddler who came into care in July 2010 due to physical neglect and an extremely dirty home. Her parents took initiative and the mother got a job in October 2010 and enrolled at a community college in December 2010. The father was hired at a higher paying job and is working toward his GED. Beth remained at home, her parents maintained a clean, safe home and were approved for a Family Unification Program housing voucher. Beth is learning new words every day and is physically and developmentally on track! The case was closed in March 2011 and they are now engaged in Aftercare Services with hopes of moving into their own apartment very soon.



DHHS Gives Thanks, Honors Volunteers During National Volunteer Week

At DHHS we're grateful for the many volunteers who make such a positive difference in our lives and the lives of the people we serve. The people who volunteer at DHHS donate an incredible amount of their time (45,931 hours, to be exact, from July 1, 2009, to June 30, 2010). The positive impact from those thousands of hours of volunteer services is felt each and every day.

National Volunteer Week, April 10-16, was a good opportunity to show our appreciation for our volunteers. We featured many great volunteer stories on the employee website all week long. We compiled all of those great volunteer stories and photos into one document. It's on the DHHS employee homepage under DHHS In the News. Find it here: <http://www2.dhhs.ne.gov/InTheNews/>

Here's another volunteer story we didn't have time to feature on the employee homepage. This one comes from the **Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center (YRTC) in Geneva:**

Together, 60 volunteers at the YRTC in Geneva contribute over 100 hours each month.



Photo: Heather, YRTC-G Youth

From Left: Anita Haumont, Marilyn Christiancy and Dan Scarborough, Facility Administrator.

The annual recognition banquet in April recognized volunteers with five, 10, 25 and 30 years of service. Two people had 39 years of service, and one woman (Marilyn Christiancy) has been a volunteer there for 43 years.

"All of our volunteers are so dedicated and several serve in more than one volunteer program. Volunteers give of their time freely – expecting nothing in return," said Volunteer Coordinator **Anita Haumont**. "We are grateful for their commitment to the youth – much of this facility's success is due to our volunteers."

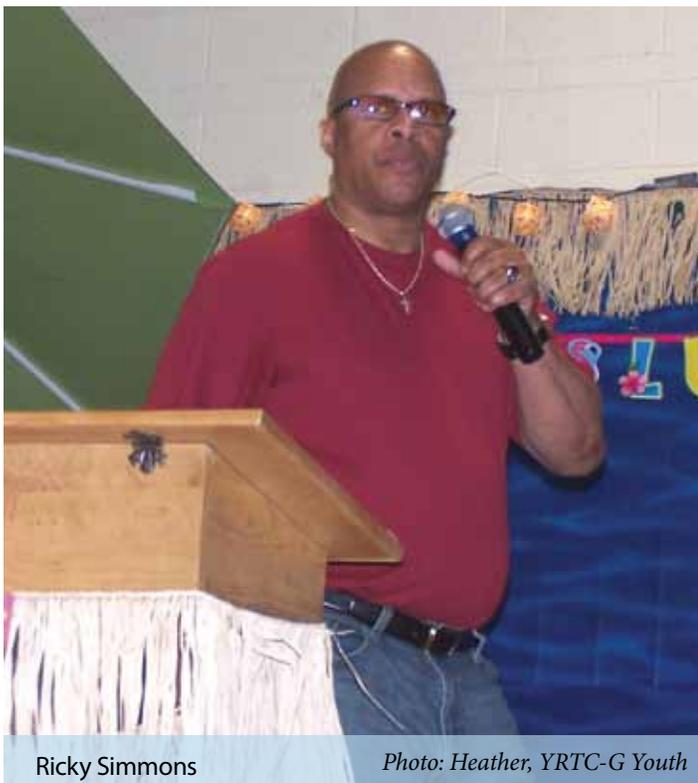
It's really encouraging to see how many people are volunteering right now at DHHS.

To learn more about our volunteer program visit: www.dhhs.ne.gov/volunteers

YRTC-G Youth Attend Banquet, Listen to Motivational Speaker

Sixty-eight youth also attended the YRTC-G volunteer banquet. After seeing the volunteers being honored, they heard motivational speaker Ricky Simmons, a former UNL Husker and a professional football player whose message is one of triumph over addiction and hope for those caught in its grasp.

After the banquet, one youth said, "Ricky told us of his story, which was truly amazing and many of us could relate, and we immediately admired him. He was funny, very kind, and addressed some very serious subjects. I want to give a special thanks to all of the staff that went through the effort of putting this together."



Ricky Simmons

Photo: Heather, YRTC-G Youth

Park Bench Donated in Recognition of Recycling Efforts

“Keep Beatrice Beautiful” recognized the Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC) efforts in recycling, energy efficiency and litter pick up by donating a park bench made out of recycled tires and plastic bottles.

The bench was dedicated to all students, staff, teachers and administrators involved in the BSDC school program over the past 125 years on Earth Day in April.

Much of the recycling success is due to the “Green Team,” created a year ago and made up of people at BSDC. The team works hard to recycle paper, plastic, aluminum cans and cardboard from throughout the campus.



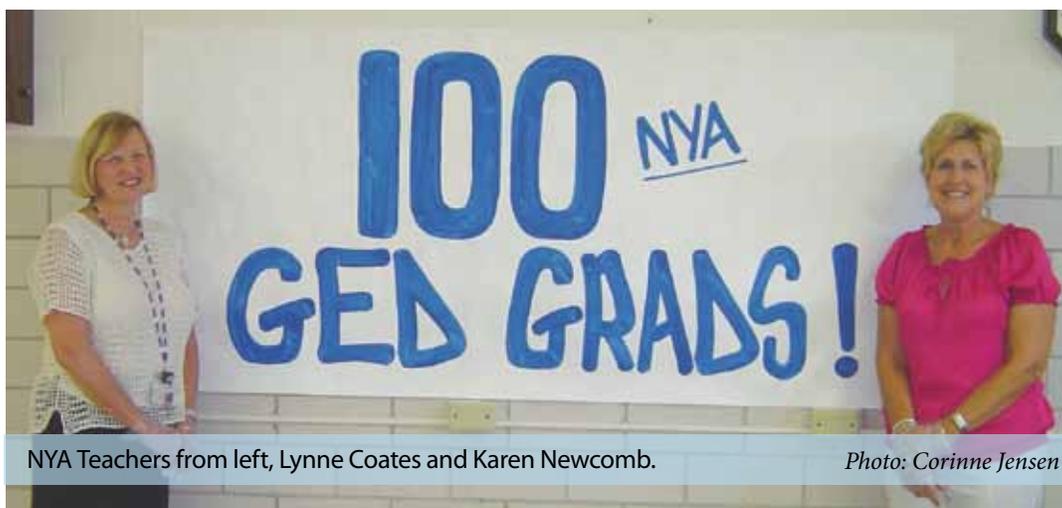
Photo: Lois Oden

Pictured from left: Teacher Dianne Springer, Green Team members Trevor Sherman and John Hoelsing, Voc Rehab Supervisor Jason Cohorst and Special Education Teacher Cathy Schock stand by the new bench on the BSDC campus.

Nebraska Youth Academy at HRC Celebrates 100th GED

Congratulations to the Nebraska Youth Academy for attaining its 100th General Educational Development (GED) graduate!

The Nebraska Youth Academy (NYA), as a state accredited interim school program, offers youth in the Hastings Juvenile Chemical Dependency Program at the Hastings Regional Center (HRC) an opportunity to pursue a GED or earn high school credits that transfer back to their home schools. The NYA teachers work with students individually or in small groups to help them prepare for testing. GED tests are given on the Regional Center campus and approximately 75% of those who take the test pass it. A celebration of this achievement was held on May 3rd in honor of National Teachers Day.



NYA Teachers from left, Lynne Coates and Karen Newcomb.

Photo: Corinne Jensen

Wellness Champions: Making Health a Priority

DHHS employees continue to make health a priority. Many credit the wellnessoptions program for giving them a good reason to start. Two DHHS employees were recognized as “Wellness Wall of Famers” for making some pretty amazing lifestyle changes resulting in significant health improvements. Here are their success stories. We congratulate Mike and Claudia for their commitment, interest and passion for investing in their health!

Michael Scanlan, Lincoln

This has truly been a life changing experience for me. Nov. 11, 2009, is when everything changed for me based on the encouragement of a very good friend to go to the gym and work out that day. I weighed close to 200 pounds at that time. Shortly thereafter, the State of Nebraska was just launching their wellnessoptions program and I thought, well, since I’m already working on eating healthy and exercising, I might as well sign up and continue my progress.

I enrolled in the EMPOWERED Health Coaching program and was assigned to Michele as my coach. Michele has been very instrumental with my success - keeping me informed and making suggestions on how to improve healthy living and lifestyles. Four months later, I have been working out seven days a week and having the time of my life.

A potential heart attack, my excessive weight, but most importantly my good friend prompted me to begin to take my health more seriously. Today I no longer drink 64 oz of coffee a day. I used to eat out every day for lunch (burritos) and dinner. Now I have a regular breakfast for the first time in over 30 years! And I find myself wanting to help others change their lives!

The State of Nebraska wellness program impacted my ability to improve my health, starting with a good Health Coach, and Michele has been outstanding in helping me achieve my goals. The State of Nebraska’s wellnessoptions program was part of my success. It was important to me to have achieved success!

Claudia Trexler, Omaha

I was gaining weight significantly, tried everything and struggled with my weight all the time. I elected the Wellness PPO medical plan and got everyone in my office to sign up for Walk This Way. I walked over two million steps the first year and plan on doing at least that much and more this year. We now have at least five to six people who walk within the office or outdoors, so I have been instrumental in positively encouraging my colleagues to get moving.

I lost weight considerably at first. My challenge is to lose more and I know I will if I continue to walk. I eat better because I am now more aware that what we put in our mouth has to go somewhere and have been eating more fresh vegetables and fruit. I feel better all over and my cholesterol has dropped to normal. At my last annual exam all my routine blood tests were normal and some lower than normal.

As far as my advice to others, I’d recommend walk—don’t run! Walk for your health and quite possibly to save your life. It is fun and keeps your mind clear as well as keeping you trim and fit. See the results for yourself—it really works! The pedometer keeps you accountable. Don’t take it off—it is positive reinforcement!

My increasing age prompted me to take my health more seriously, in addition to the fact that I was gaining weight slowly and not feeling healthy. I was sick all the time and now I am not due to the increased physical activity.

I have benefited with lower premiums in the Wellness PPO medical plan, and I stopped gaining weight.



In their own words

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

Hi **Mary Jane Austin**, (Social Service Supervisor, Omaha),

A family here told me what a great help **Clare Burton** (Service Coordinator, Omaha) has been, "going out of her way" to help them with things here in Omaha after their move from Fargo.

I hear good things about the waiver services coordinators frequently but usually don't take the time to mention it.

Anyway – they are all great!

Children's Hospital & Medical Center

Sheryl McCright (Service Coordinator, Omaha),

My wife told me how nice and professional you were when you came to our home. I really appreciate the time and effort you have given us.

A Thankful Parent

Jana Peterson (Administrator, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Kearney),

Wow! What a great experience we all had touring YRTC. Such a great life and career exploration experience for these KHS (Kearney High School) students. The kids who served as our guides did a terrific job. Many thanks to the boys, you, **Matt Christiancy**, (Youth Security Supervisor), and **Rey Rodriguez**, (Facility Operating Officer) for a wonderful tour.

Kearney High School

Editor's Note:

The Lincoln Regional Center (LRC) thought their patients could use some additional reading material. So, a few enthusiastic employees at the State Office Building got together to make some flyers and host a book drive. Here's a thank you note from that effort.

Marla Augustine (Public Information Officer, Lincoln) and **Aishah Witte** (Administrative Assistant, Lincoln),

I wanted to let you know we received many books as a result of the postings you put up at the State Office Building. I thank you, but the patients thank you even more!

Gayle Resh,
Activity Supervisor, LRC

Brenda Roetman (CFS Supervisor, Kearney),

I just wanted to let you what a pleasure it was working with **Jeremy Chizek** (Children and Family Services Specialist, Kearney). He did a great job communicating with the team throughout our client's stay, was always easily accessible when we had questions or concerns, and was firm yet supportive of our client as he progressed through treatment. Jeremy also did a great job getting services in place in the home before our client's discharge so that there was no lapse as he transitioned home. I was very impressed with his professionalism and just wanted to make sure that he was recognized for the great work he is doing with the youth he serves.

Developmental Services of Nebraska, Inc.

Hi **Karen Heng**, (Administrator, Lincoln),

I was just looking at the ACCESSNebraska application and noticed that there is a specific reference to face-to-face interviews and a box that allows folks to provide comments. Thumbs up for these tweaks!

**Nebraska Appleseed Center for
Law in the Public Interest**

Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care,

Thank you very much for the care and concern your office has shown in handling my father's affairs. **Jon Sterns** (Early Development Coordinator, Medicaid and Long-Term Care, Lincoln) was very helpful and caring when I phoned his office. His is the only one I visited with twice, and I found him very nice and gentle with this matter.

A Grateful Family Member

Julie Hippen (Program Specialist, Lincoln),
Sue Michalski (NE Domestic Violence
Coordinating Council), and
Michelle Zinke (NE Domestic Violence,
Sexual Assault Coalition)

The training that you presented last week (A Collaborative Victim Centered Response to Abuse in Later Life), was very well done. You all did an excellent job of presenting it in a way that held my interest throughout the two days. You did not read from the PowerPoint (a pet peeve of mine); instead you covered the information using examples and professional points of view. By doing so you modeled the collaborative communication that was a major outcome of our time together. The printed workshop information was well organized and complete, as were the additional resources provided.

Thank you for sharing your expertise in a forum that connected with your audience. I feel the time I spent with you will benefit the work I do with clients.

Toni Pastory,
Children and Family Services Specialist, Omaha

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