CONNECTIONS

November 2016 VOLUME 16, ISSUE 11

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

Meet Dr. Tom Williams, DHHS's new Director of Public Health and Chief Medical Officer

By: Melissa Lindell

For **Dr. Tom Williams**, coming to work at DHHS was all about the timing. "It was serendipitous. I found out about this position at the only time in my career that I would have considered it. A year later I would have been firmly planted in retirement. A year earlier and I wasn't sure if I would be ready to retire from Pathology," he said.

Dr. Williams is DHHS's new Public Health Director, but for the past 38 years he has been with Nebraska Methodist Hospital. The last 22 years he has spent as the Laboratory Medical Director and the chairman of the pathology department. He is also a Clinical Assistant Professor of Pathology at the University of Nebraska College of Medicine.

The science of medicine has always fascinated Williams. "I knew I wanted to do something in science even before kindergarten. I'm fascinated by how stuff works. I toyed with aviation and the military as well," Williams said. By the time he got to high school, medicine became the clear choice. "I love science and the practice of pathology and laboratory medicine is basic science applied to diagnosis and patient care," he said.

When he looks at his past; his volunteer work, his hobbies, and work experience, Williams sees a clear path to becoming the new Public Health Director. "I have volunteer experience with disease prevention and local emergency planning, CDC working groups, and Nebraska Public Health committees. I think my background and interests are pretty pointed this way. I feel like this will be a good fit," Williams said.

Williams says that he also looks forward to the public service aspect of his new position. "The people here are committed and caring, and have interesting work that matters. At this stage in my career, it is an opportunity to give something back," he said. Working at DHHS is "a different way to do what I believe in doing. DHHS offers a way to help people that is diverse and broad. There is opportunity to help whole populations, rather than a single or local population or patient."

Herding sheep with bearded collies.

Williams says he is excited to join the team that DHHS CEO Courtney Phillips has built. "The first responsibility of a leader is to support their team. I have found the culture at DHHS to be warm and welcoming and I believe that culture is everything for an organization. Accomplishments are a team effort, so I want to nourish and support a motivated and healthy team. A great team will do great things," Williams said.

Williams met his wife Sue at Lincoln Southeast High School. They have been married for 45 years now. Sue practiced radiology at UNMC and retired after they adopted their children Rachel and Nicholas. In his free time, Williams enjoys amateur radio, (call WXOL for other operators out there!), hiking with his wife around Nebraska and Colorado, working on their new home on the prairie near Lincoln, and going on trips with Sue as she herds sheep with their bearded collies, Lexi and Ellie. He is a licensed private pilot, not currently flying.

Their daughter Rachel has her MPA from UNO and works for Lutheran Family Services, and their son Nicholas works for Wal-Mart in Omaha.

Left to right: Sue, Rachel, Tom, Nicholas.
Bearded Collies: left to right, Ellie and Lexi.

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DHHS Employee Website: http://dhhsemployees/

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

Chief Executive Officer:
Courtney Phillips

Behavioral Health Division Director:
Sheri Dawson.

Children and Family Services Division Director:
Doug Weinberg

Developmental Disabilities Division Director:
Courtney Miller

Medicaid and Long-Term Care Division Director:
Calder Lynch

Public Health Division Acting Director:
Courtney Phillips

Veterans' Homes Division Director:
John Hilgert

Connections is published for employees of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services by Communications and Legislative Services (CLS).

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Veterans Day -- November 11

VETERANS DAY AND DHHS VETERANS' HOMES

On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918, an armistice, or temporary cessation of hostilities, was declared between the Allies and Germany in the First World War. First known as Armistice Day, November 11 became a legal federal holiday in the United States in 1938. Following World War II and the Korean War, Armistice Day became Veterans Day, a holiday dedicated to American veterans of all wars.

We want to take this day to honor those in our Veterans' Homes for their service to our country. We thank you for the selfless sacrifice you have made.

"Veterans Day gives us an opportunity to celebrate the commitment and sacrifice of our state's Armed Forces heroes. We thank them for their service," said John Hilgert, Director of DHHS' Division of Veterans' Homes.

All four DHHS Veterans' Homes are saluting our heroes with a variety of activities. For more information on those, click here:

VETERANS DAY FACTS

- In 1954, President Eisenhower officially changed the name of the holiday from Armistice Day to Veterans Day.
- In 1968, the Uniform Holidays Bill was passed by Congress, which moved the celebration of Veterans Day to the fourth Monday in October. The law went into effect in 1971, but in 1975 President Ford returned Veterans Day to November 11, due to the important historical significance of the date.
- Britain, France, Australia and Canada also commemorate the veterans of World Wars I and II on or near November 11th: Canada has Remembrance Day, while Britain has Remembrance Sunday (the second Sunday of November). In Europe, Britain and the Commonwealth countries it is common to observe two minutes of silence at 11 a.m. every November 11.
- There are approximately 23.2 million military veterans in the United States.

There are a variety of free services for veterans on Veterans Day (with valid military ID or proof of service) including:

- Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium will offer free gate admission to all veterans and their immediate families on Veteran's Day, Nov. 11. The free admission applies to active or retired Veterans and their immediate families.
- Starting Nov. 11, veterans and active-duty service members can get a free haircut at any Great Clips hair salon. Customers who stop in for a service can get a free haircut card to give to a veteran. The free haircut cards are redeemable until Dec. 31.
- Participating Meineke Car Care Centers are offering veterans and active-duty service members a free oil change on Nov. 11. Call ahead to verify your location's participation.
- Local Hy-Vee stores will celebrate Veterans Day by offering a free breakfast buffet to all veterans and active-duty military members during regular breakfast hours on Nov. 11 as a way of thanking veterans and military members for their service.

Congratulations...

Congratulations to Sam Minne, Kris Horton and Taylor Kindig who have been working toward certification in Brief Strategic Family Therapy since December, and recently were awarded their Certificate of Competency for demonstrating proficiency in conducting Brief Strategic Family Therapy. This has been a great addition to the Hastings Juvenile Chemical Dependency Program as we work to help families.

Left to right: Sam Minne, Kris Horton and Taylor Kindig.

Message from Courtney Phillips, CEO

Courtney Phillips, CEO

Greetings #TeamDHHS:

The holiday season is upon us, and November is a time that we traditionally reflect on the year and give thanks.

As 2016 starts winding down, I just want you all to know that I am thankful for #TeamDHHS.

Public service is a calling in many ways. We have been chosen to serve and we do not take that privilege for granted. It is an honor.

Your commitment and dedication is inspiring. You are on the front lines in so many ways, from helping individuals and families in need, to educating and protecting people through public health programs; to providing safety and services to abused and/or neglected children and adults; to working with patients, and residents in our 24-hour facilities, and much more.

Working together as a whole, our impact is felt by people from one end of the state to the other. I am thankful that I get to serve alongside you. We are an agency that is filled with good people who are committed to our mission of helping people live better lives.

While we are thankful for so much, many people are thankful for the services that we provide throughout the state, and across the department. Each day, you give of yourselves to help people live better lives through the work you do with people across the state including our state's most vulnerable citizens. I know they are thankful for you and your assistance and work. Without you, some wouldn't have the services they need.

This month I would like to challenge you to think about what you are thankful for, and then post it on our employee bulletin board. CommentGuidelines.aspx This will be a good way for us to remember just how good we have it here in the "Good Life!" I look forward to reading your notes each day. I'll start us off by saying that I'm thankful for my little man, all of the amazing members of #TeamDHHS that I get to work with each day, my warm coat (it came in handy for my first Nebraska winter!) and the new friends I've made here. Y'all work so hard and make sacrifices to do the work we do each day. It is appreciated.

As we start the whirlwind of the holiday festivities I want to wish you and your family a safe and healthy season. I hope you each have the chance to spend some time with your loved ones this Thanksgiving. Please have a happy and safe holiday.
Never miss the chance to express your thanks for the simple gifts we are given each day.

Grow Nebraska

Governor Ricketts has identified a vision for all of state government, Grow Nebraska, along with a mission statement, priorities and values, which bring all state agencies together with a shared focus and direction.

As you know, our mission, helping people live better lives, is front and center in our day-to-day work. Our Values and Core Competencies guide how we work to achieve our mission and effectively serve our customers.

These two sets of guidance work well together and provide a road map for #TeamDHHS toward exceptional service for Nebraskans.

Later this month, each office and facility will receive posters providing this information to remind each member of our team the road we are on as we continue on this journey.

We are keeping our fiscal responsibility in mind and will provide limited copies.

Thank you for all you do.

Health and Fitness Tips

Overstuffed

Source: Health Enhancement Systems©

Experts contend that Americans gobble 1500 calories/day more than necessary. Fewer home–cooked meals and the supersize mentality both have fueled the overload. In fact, average Americans consume about 33% of calories from restaurants, which in the past 20 years have increased portions well beyond recommended serving sizes.

Guard yourself from gluttony with these simple modifications:

- Slow down. Studies show wolfing down your meal triggers overeating. Try to sit at a table and be mindful of each bite. Chew deliberately to savor eating as an experience rather than a chore or something to get done on the run to something else.
- Stay home. Evidence suggests restaurants subliminally prompt you to gorge and bolt. Bright décor can heighten anticipation and cue your appetite while cranked–up music over–stimulates the senses, stirring you to snap for the check. Stay in control and have a better experience by dining in. Cook your favorite dish, light a candle, and play soft background music for a conversation–friendly environment. If you do head out, choose off–peak hours and a quiet place; request a booth — they're more comfortable than chairs and tend to be on the perimeter rather than in the hub of activity.
- Try these tips. Watch portions; it's easier if you use smaller plates. Cut a chicken breast in half, use a tablespoon to scoop smaller side dishes, and wait 20 minutes before going back for seconds — it can take that long to feel full. Split entrées with your meal mate, or save some for tomorrow.

Work Stress

Source: Health Enhancement Systems©

Unresolved job stress can lead to poor health and increase the risk of tobacco and alcohol use, obesity, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. Job conditions that can lead to stress include excessive workloads, conflicting expectations, infrequent breaks, hectic pace, management style, poor social environment, job insecurity, and dangerous working conditions, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

Common warning signs of job stress include headaches, absenteeism, sleep disturbances, difficulty concentrating, short temper, upset stomach, depression, job dissatisfaction, low morale, apathy, and cynicism.

Wipe out work stress by:

- Exercising. It's great for all parts of you, including your mind.
- Managing your time. Tell your boss if your workload is unmanageable, and discuss ways to set priorities.
- Getting more sleep. You need 7–9 hours of shuteye nightly.
- Striking a balance. Schedule time for fun, friends, and family.
- Taking breaks. Your anxiety level can heighten after consecutive hours of nonstop effort; make time to stretch, take deep breaths, and walk.
- Remaining calm. Caffeine and nicotine will make you jittery, no matter the workload; when stressors start to swirl, stay relaxed by breathing deeply and slowly.

DHHS Readying for Launch of Heritage Health

By Julie Naughton

Nebraska's Medicaid recipients have until Dec.1 to choose their providers for Heritage Health, Nebraska's new health care delivery system, which combines physical health, behavioral health and pharmacy programs into a single comprehensive and coordinated system for Medicaid and CHIP clients.

Consumers can choose from three plans: Nebraska Total Care, UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Nebraska and WellCare of Nebraska.

"Integration of services supports better communication among primary care providers and behavioral health providers, more opportunities for preventive care, and more consistent, all-inclusive coverage for individuals," said Courtney Phillips, chief executive officer of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. "Heritage Health will improve health outcomes and the financial sustainability of Medicaid."

Throughout the fall, information packets about Heritage Health and its three plans have been mailed to each individual who is covered by Nebraska Medicaid. A counseling line is being offered to supply additional information. It is 888-255-2605, and is available Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Interpretation services are available to callers.

At a minimum, each plan must provide all physical health services, behavioral health services, and pharmacy services required by Nebraska's Medicaid State Plan, other than dental services, long-term care waiver services, nursing home services and Personal Assistance Service, noted Calder Lynch, director of the Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care. Consumers can change their health plans at any time within the first 90 days after the Jan.1 Heritage Health start date, and then again each fall during open enrollment. No one can opt out of being enrolled in one of the three health plans.

Information about Heritage Health, including frequently asked questions, public events and additional resources are available on the Heritage Health webpage at: www.dhhs.ne.gov/HeritageHealth

December 31 is a milestone day for Lean Six Sigma - White Belt Training

By Linsey Sousek, C.L.S.S.Y.B.
DHHS-Operations, Operational Excellence Team

Governor Ricketts' vision is to Grow Nebraska by creating opportunities through a more effective, more efficient, and customer-focused state government. His priorities focus on efficiency and effectiveness, customer service, growth, public safety, and reduced regulatory burden.

One way to realize these is through the use of a structured process improvement model. The goals of process improvement are to enhance customer satisfaction, improve quality, increase production, reduce waste, and produce cost savings that will strengthen the state's bottom line.

It's exciting that DHHS has been on the ground floor of process improvement projects with our ACCESSNebraska program in Children and Family Services and our Professional Licensing areas in Public Health. In these projects, our DHHS team members are seeing significant improvements - they know it is working!

The techniques, tools and training for process improvement that Governor Ricketts is bringing to state government is called the Lean Six Sigma model. It is being coordinated through the Center for Operational Excellence, located in the Department of Administrative Services, and will provide the state government-wide/ enterprise guidance and training needed for agencies to fully engage in process improvement activities.

The Lean Six Sigma model includes five levels (belts) of training and expertise, known as White, Yellow, Green, Black and Master Black Belts.

All employees will take the basic White Belt training by December 31, 2016. While not every area in DHHS will work on specific in-depth projects, Lean Six Sigma will be part of the Nebraska state government culture and it is important for everyone to understand the basic concepts and terminology.

Employees working on specific projects will receive advanced levels of training, working through the five belts, as necessary. Several DHHS workgroups have received Yellow Belt training and our DHHS Operational Excellence team (Team Members include: Linsey Sousek, Seth Fager, Katie Maschmann, Jesse Cushman, Sharon Kruse) is working on their Green Belt training.

With an understanding of the concepts, DHHS will pursue operational excellence and deliver value by driving improvements through effective practices of daily problem solving and management, minimizing non-value added activities (like re-work, handoffs and layers of approvals) through projects, and promoting awareness and opportunities for continuous process improvements. With streamlined and durable processes, we will have a more streamlined and durable state government.

The White Belt training is available through the Employee Development Center (EDC) or classroom training at no cost. At the end of the training you'll have a basic understanding of the Lean Six Sigma methodologies and tools we'll be using to improve our processes. Again, please take the training by December 31, 2016.

All state employees must take the training by December 31, 2016.

As of November 7, 2016, #TeamDHHS has certified:

- **2,922 white belts**
- **31 yellow belts**
- **3 green belts**

As a reminder for those who haven't completed the training:

1. Go to http://link.nebraska.gov and click on the "Employee Development Center (EDC)" button.
2. Enter your username and password to sign in. If you do not know your username, or need assistance signing in please contact the LINK Help Desk at 402-471-6234 or at as.linkhelp@nebraska.gov.
3. Once signed into the Employee Development Center, type "Lean Six Sigma White Belt" in the search field in the upper right hand corner and press Enter your keyboard.
4. Once the search results come up, click the title of the "Certification Lean Six Sigma – White Belt" online course, and then click "Request".
5. You will be taken to your transcript. Click "Register" for the course, and then "Launch" to begin the course.

Great American Smokeout is November 17... and the Nebraska Tobacco Quitline is Ready to Help

By Jean Stilwell, Program Coordinator, Tobacco Free Nebraska

Every year, on the third Thursday of November, smokers across the nation take part in the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout. This campaign encourages smokers, and other tobacco users, to use the date to make a plan to quit, or plan in advance and then quit on that date. By quitting tobacco, even for one day, smokers take an important step toward a healthier life and reducing their risk for cancer and other life-threatening conditions.

The Nebraska Tobacco Quitline, a program of Tobacco Free Nebraska (TFN), is ready to help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, anyone wanting to give up tobacco.

The Quitline provides no-cost resources to anyone over the age of 16 who resides in Nebraska. Quitline services include counseling with a trained Quit Coach, help with creating a quit plan, printed materials and more. Medicaid clients have a low co-pay for nicotine replacement medicine, if prescribed by a healthcare provider. To qualify, Medicaid clients need to register with the Quitline and complete one coaching session.

After enrolling with the Quitline, a client can also access Web Coach, other e-learning tools, resources by mail and social support. A no-cost QuitNow mobile app is also available at QuitNow.ne.gov under Tools for Quitting.

NEBRASKA TOBACCO QUITLINE
QuitNow.ne.gov
1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669)
Free Confidential 24/7

The Nebraska Tobacco Quitline is funded through the Nebraska Healthcare Cash Fund as a result of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Suzanne Forkner is a DHHS Community Health Educator Senior who manages the Quitline.

"The largest number of referrals to the Quitline come from health care providers. When someone's doctor or other healthcare professional tells smokers to quit, they take it seriously," says Forkner. This led TFN to create a healthcare provider toolkit that helps providers understand the services of the Quitline and how to encourage patients to use it.

TFN encourages other programs within DHHS to learn more about the Quitline and how it can support efforts to reduce the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the world.

The Nebraska Tobacco Quitline
1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669)
In Spanish: 1-855-DEJELO-YA (335-3569)

Additional information and resources can be found at QuitNow.ne.gov .

Testimonials from Nebraska Tobacco Quitline participants:

"I don't think I would have been able to do this without you. I feel much more motivated to quit now."

"Thank you for all your help! It has really made a difference."

"This has saved my life. I owe thanks to the founders of this program and all of the counselors that have helped me."

"There are so many people like me out there that have tried everything to help them quit, and it feels so good to finally find something that works."

Smoking Cessation Products for State Employees

Effective July 1, 2016, select over-the-counter and prescription tobacco cessation products will be covered at no cost for eligible members on all 3 health plans. To qualify, members must be:

- Age 18 or older
- Must have a prescription for the products from their physician, even for products that are available over the counter
- Fill the prescription at a network pharmacy

Products available will include nicotine replacement gum, lozenges, patches and generic Zyban. For a complete listing, please refer to the Pharmacy Drug List "PDL" on the Employee Wellness and Benefits web site.

If you are a state employee with the Wellness Opton, a coach can assist in making a Lifestyle Management Change:

Lifestyle Management: Work with a coach to support and guide you in making lifestyle changes. Select among 19+ different focus areas related to physical activity, healthy eating, stress management and smoking cessation. Enroll at the time of your Health Advisor call OR by calling 1-866-956-4285, option2 OR by selecting the 'Coaching' tab after completing your online Health Assessment. Enroll by November 30, 2016 and complete 10 goals with your coach by March 31, 2017.

TOBACCO FREE NEBRASKA
for a great state of health

#TeamDHHS Presents at Successful Opioid Summit in Omaha

By Julie Naughton

More than 300 members of the public health, medical, and law enforcement communities in Nebraska gathered on Oct.14 at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha for the first Nebraska Opioid Summit: "Charting the Road to Recovery: Nebraska's Response to Opioid Abuse."

The Summit — hosted by the Office of the Nebraska Attorney General, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Nebraska and the University of Nebraska Medical Center — focused on prevention, treatment, and law enforcement through direct collaboration with the public health, medical, and law enforcement communities in Nebraska.

DHHS team members took part in the Summit, sharing their varied knowledge on the subject of opioids. Dr. Todd Stull, chief clinical officer for the Division of Behavioral Health, moderated a panel on the treatment of opioid use disorders and problems, which included Kenneth Zoucha, medical services director of the Hastings Juvenile Dependency Program at the Hastings Regional Center. Ashley Newmyer, epidemiology surveillance coordinator for the Division of Public Health, presented on Nebraska data and the state's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP).

"With opioid abuse on the rise nationally, UNMC, Attorney General Douglas J. Peterson's office, and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services are showing great leadership by putting a proactive focus on this issue here in Nebraska," said Gov. Pete Ricketts, who opened the program. "By working together, we can ensure opioids are available for appropriate medical purposes while preventing abuse. The creation of Nebraska's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program is a big step towards prevention and will help Nebraskans build better lives."

"There is power in partnerships and the Summit provided the beginning conversation regarding Nebraska's solutions," said Sheri Dawson, director of the division of Behavioral Health. "When individuals and communities are engaged, Nebraskans will be healthier."

Nebraska is in an enviable position of being proactive, rather than reactive, to the opioid problem. "The concept of organizing the Summit and engaging partners around prevention treatment and law enforcement is unique," said Deborah Gilg, U.S. Attorney for the District of Nebraska. "Nebraska's recognition of the need to address all three components will go a long way in finding solutions and saving lives."

Among the topics addressed: a primary care team-based approach to opioid prescribing and pharmacology of opioid addiction; the DEA's efforts to work in a 360-degree method to break the cycle of drug trafficking, drug violence and drug abuse, and statewide solutions for prescription opioid abuse.

Speakers included physicians from UNMC and DHHS, as well as Peterson, attorney general of Nebraska; Brad Schimel, attorney general for the State of Wisconsin; Jeffrey B. Stamm, director, Midwest High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area; John H. Armstrong, M.D., surgeon general and secretary of health, State of Florida, and Scott Collier, diversion program manager, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, St. Louis Division.

In Gratitude

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services' mission:
Helping people live better lives.

Department of Health & Human Services DHHS NEBRASKA

Here are some letters & notes DHHS employees have received thanking us for the work we do every day to help people live better lives.

Dear **Angelique** (Social Services Worker),

I'd like to tell you how much I and my brother appreciate everything that you've done for us. You are the best. You are one of a kind… doing your job with all your kindness and professionalism.

Yours Truly,

Thankful siblings

DHHS Licensure Unit

THANK YOU to DHHS for the incredibly fast service on my license renewal. I was working on a deadline last week and forgot to renew my license due 1 Oct until 2:30am last Friday. I was absolutely shocked to receive the renewed license in my mailbox in Atlanta yesterday, just two business days later! Now *that* is government efficiency at its best. Thank you again.

A thankful physician

To **Ruth Smith** (Social Services Worker) and all at GI DHHS – My wish for you all- happy, happy everything- all year. Every year. Thank you. God Bless All.

A grateful client

You guys have a wonderful, friendly, professional and extremely helpful employee who deserves, at the very least, recognition for excellent customer service.

On Saturday I received my renewal application back in the mail. My fault entirely, I failed to make a check mark distinct enough for your office to read. I fixed it and faxed the application in today, 10.24.16. My employer is generous enough to pay for license renewal and sends a group in to you in a batch. My question when I initially called was did you still have MY payment (my co-workers are all renewed). It took a few transfers and callbacks and all roads seemed to lead to poor **Magen Schachta** (Health Licensing Specialist). With every interaction she was helpful, polite and profession and went so far as to both email me and call to assure me that everything was in order.

I deal with rude and lazy people daily here in my world. It was an absolute pleasure to find someone as helpful and professional as Magen was. She is truly a credit to your group.

A grateful RN

CLS-PB-1 (99726)