These DHHS employees were among the first in the nation to respond to Louisiana’s plea for help in processing disaster food stamps for its victims of hurricanes and flooding. Once they got to New Orleans, they found their brightly striped vests made it easier to find each other in the crowded Convention Center. Front row left to right: Crickett Phelps (Dakota City); Dalene Krebs (Lincoln); Cynthia Hartley (Lincoln); Mickey Kotlarz (Omaha); Sonia Diaz (Omaha); Sheila Loguda (Omaha); Margaret Ahola (Crete) and Stacy Brown (Chadron); Back row left to right: John Butler (Lincoln); Josue Cabral (Omaha); David Loguda (Omaha); Donna Hajek (North Platte) and Margie Hoffman (York). More on page 2!

Nancy Montanez Johner was one of the speakers at the 2008 World Day on the Mall. Story the on page 10!
DHHS in the News Update...

Here are a few headlines of news releases recently issued by Communications & Legislative Services about DHHS programs. A full text of all releases is available under “Newsroom” on the DHHS Web site. Go to www.dhhs.ne.gov, clicking on the “Newsroom” link and then on “New Releases.” Listen to sound bites issued with releases.

Nebraska Celebrates Employ Older Workers Week  September 19

Health and Human Services Workers Assist Relief Efforts in Louisiana  September 11

Project Helps People Live “Wherever They Choose”  September 8

Time to Check for Head Lice  September 2

Have a story idea you think DHHS should be sharing with media? Contact Communications & Legislative Services at (402) 471-9108!
Nebraskans have high expectations for state government and for state employees.

I’m proud to be the CEO of an agency where people are proud to be state employees and want to serve others through our health and human services programs.

I want to recognize all of you for your dedication and professionalism. It’s an honor to serve with you.

And, of course, I want to congratulate the DHHS employees who are being honored this month through our State of Nebraska Recognition program, including our Employees of the Year, Managers of the Year, and those who have reached Length of Service milestones.

Information in this issue of Connections exemplifies your work ethic and commitment to helping people live better lives. These aren’t empty words.

Helping people is what you do every day, whether you’re providing safety to abused and/or neglected children or vulnerable adults; educating and protecting people through public health efforts; serving those in need of 24-hour facility care; assisting the elderly, poor and those with disabilities; or working behind the scenes to support all of those efforts.

Each day, the Department impacts the lives of thousands of people. That really is an awesome responsibility.

Thank you all for helping people live better lives.

Christine Peterson

October is State Employee Recognition Month
DHHS provides emergency Food Stamp Disaster Relief for Gulf Coast hurricane victims

By Jerry Crisp

After doing the same for victims of severe weather and flooding in Nebraska last summer, DHHS employees provided emergency Food Stamp Disaster Relief for victims of Hurricane Gustav in September. The federal disaster food stamp program is designed to put food back on the table for low-income families who experience losses from flooding and power outages.

On September 12th, 13 employees from the Division of Children and Family Services from around the state left Lincoln for Louisiana. Some of the people being deployed had provided aid after Hurricane Katrina and helped after some of the recent damaging spring storms in Nebraska.

The group left at 9:00 Friday morning and arrived in New Orleans about 8:00 the next evening. The team assisted for three weeks.

The first day at the convention center, Economic Assistance Program Specialist Cynthia Hartley reported to supervisor Trish Bergman that about 200 Convention Center staff distributed Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards to long lines until cards ran out. After that, staff took about 10,000 applications for emergency Food Stamp benefits. With staff working 13-hour days, she said that “the 13 DHHS employees on site are tired but doing well.”

Hartley also reported that at first there was no food or water at the convention center, and that staff had to leave on breaks to eat. Before the weekend was over, water was being provided.

A week later, Hartley reported that work hours had been cut to 10 hours a day, and that long lines had been replaced by “a steady stream of people at all times.” She also said that “a large number of eligibility workers made it
possible for applicants to be seen right away.”

From September 9 through 23, Hartley estimates that they served approximately 80,000 of the estimated 380,000 eligible households in Louisiana. During the second week, the Nebraska delegation was divided into two groups and relocated from the convention center to smaller sites in the West Jefferson and Algiers Parishes.

The DHHS group received numerous comments from others on site about how admirable it is that Nebraska provided assistance.

“We have a well-trained work force, and I’m proud of these employees for responding to another state’s need,” said Todd Landry, Director of the Division of Children and Family Services.

“We learned how devastating power outages can be after several Nebraska communities were hit by summer storms, leaving thousands temporarily without electricity,” said Governor Dave Heineman in a news release on September 11. “I want to thank each state employee who deployed to lend a hand to communities and people in need.”

Recent disaster relief efforts testify both to DHHS preparedness and to the commitment of DHHS employees to respond to emergency needs.

(Top) Hurricane Gustav moves inland from the Gulf of Mexico.

(Center) A common scene in many Gulf Coast communities as people search for survivors and assess storm and flood damage.

(Right) People come to the convention center in New Orleans seeking disaster relief. Photo: Crickett Phelps
DHHS Employees/Supervisors-Managers of the Year!

DHHS is proud to announce the 2008 Employees/Managers of the Year. State agencies are allowed to select one Employee and Manager/Supervisor of the Year for every 500 people employed by the agency.

Employees of the Year

Steve Breault, Activity Specialist, has taken a leadership role in shaping the pre-vocational class at the Hastings Regional Center. When the class took on laundry and cafeteria duties, he helped establish procedures. When a youth has a vocational interest, he plans job skill activities and arranges visits to work sites and the community college. He also helps youth register for selective service, study for driver’s license exams and complete resumes. Steve is an excellent mentor who encourages youth and provides the tools they need to succeed.

Steve Breault

A Program Specialist and Consumer Liaison in the Division of Behavioral Health in Lincoln, Daniel Powers has risen to national prominence through advocating for recognition, integration and acceptance for people in recovery from mental illness and substance abuse. He coordinates Nebraska’s PATH grant, the state’s support service delivery for people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless, and helped make a national consumer memorial in Washington, DC, a reality.

Daniel Powers

Jeromy Warner, provisionally licensed psychologist, performs all psychology functions for the Beatrice State Developmental Center’s Bridges Program on the Hastings Regional Center campus. With a strong work ethic, high standards and commitment to a team approach, he settles for nothing less than 100% effort. Gathering input from all team members including the consumer, he involves all in program development and shared success.

Jeromy Warner

Doug Fuller, Emergency Medical Services Specialist, coordinates the EMS/Trauma Program in the southeast region for the Division of Public Health. He has contributed significantly to implementing a state-of-the-art electronic patient data collection system for pre-hospital providers. More than 80% of Nebraska’s 381 licensed transport ambulance services have now converted to electronic reporting. This has saved DHHS and EMS pre-hospital providers time and money. That data is now used to enhance patient care. Also through Doug’s efforts, federal grants will provide automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) to 172 rural communities to treat those who experience sudden cardiac arrest.

Doug Fuller

Paul Richard, a Maintenance Specialist at the Western Nebraska Veterans’ Home in Scottsbluff, cares for the facility as if it were his own home. He follows projects through to completion, maintains high quality standards, and has been in charge of the Maintenance Department when his supervisor was absent. With skills that include electrical, plumbing, carpentry, painting, landscaping and lawn irrigation, he gives prompt attention to maintenance issues and willingly cross-trains co-workers to enhance their skills and better serve both members and staff.

Paul Richard

Judy Shuda, Administrative Secretary to the Grand Island Veterans’ Home’s Maintenance Department, has a love for veterans that prompts her to make recommendations to make members’ lives more comfortable and happier. The facility’s Safety Coordinator, she assists with Veterans Administration and Fire Marshal inspectors, from whom she earns commendations. As coordinator for environmental rounds, she documents and records notes, and develops a repair schedule spreadsheet for the maintenance specialist for repairs.

Judy Shuda
An Information Technology Business Systems Analyst for DHHS Operations who works with Child Support Enforcement, Tina Zegers helps bridge the gap between state and local government. Her knowledge of computer systems is unparalleled. When enhancements are made in the CHARTS system, she makes applications accessible to all involved. She is the go-to person when something needs to be repaired and can’t be fixed in the usual way. The ultimate beneficiaries of her work are children and families who receive support to which they are entitled.

A Child & Family Services Specialist for the Eastern Service Area office in the Nebraska State Office Building in Omaha, Melanie Auxier went beyond the call of duty as case manager for a state ward who had been in state custody since 2004. Concerned about his safety, several previous case managers tried diligently but unsuccessfully to find the missing youth. Within 30 days, Melanie confirmed the youth’s whereabouts and gained custody of the youth and a sibling. Her dedication to clients and willingness to assist others in coverage and professional development are highly valued.

Diana Blythe, Social Service Worker in the Beatrice office, advocates for accurate benefits and dignity and respect for clients. A team leader and mentor, her strengths include problem-solving, creativity, and time-saving ideas. Involved with the Food Stamp Southeast Accuracy Team (SEAT) and the area’s Disaster Response Team, she is also active in the community.

A Recreation Assistant at the Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center at Geneva, Anita Haumont excels in communication skills, dependability and relationship-building. During the past year, she has taken on the added duty of First Aid/CPR instructor and directed the facility’s Charitable Giving Campaign. Ensuring that all staff learned about the benefits of their contributions, charitable giving substantially increased. She is also instrumental in arranging the annual IMPROV camp for youth, Anita’s eye for detail, work ethic and dedication are exemplary.

A Business System Analyst with the Division of Children and Family Services in the State Office Building in Lincoln, Barb Ohnoutka works on the N-FOCUS project and is dedicated to her work. With re-authorization of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program in 2006, many changes were needed in policy, the N-FOCUS system and an almost total rewrite of an extensive federal report. Barb assisted the TANF team in this huge undertaking. She has also developed a close relationship with the regional federal office staff to assist Nebraska in making its reports more accurate.

A Program Coordinator with the Division of Children & Family Services in Lincoln’s State Office Building, Allison Wilson is well-organized, supportive and results-oriented. She shepherds many assignments in which outcomes are integrally related to funding and federal approval. She was one of two asked to write the State’s Program Improvement Plan and was able to bridge gaps, obtain consensus, and assist with developing a plan approved by federal officials and now implemented across the state. She coordinates audits for the Division’s federally required Children and Family Services Review and is always on the lookout for ways to streamline processes and support people.

Supervisors of the Year

An Administrative Assistant within the Division of Developmental Disabilities in the Lincoln office, Kim McFarland has strengths that include sensitivity to others’ needs and the ability to connect person-to-person. Her skills allow her to relate to and communicate effectively with people with developmental disabilities, advocates, and co-workers. Knowledgeable and resourceful, she contributes to the Division’s efficiency and effectiveness. Division employees consider themselves lucky to have her as a co-worker, mentor and friend.

Irene Hirschman, Nurse Supervisor at the Lincoln Regional Center, is called a “great communicator.” She keeps staff well informed and provides ongoing updates about clients. She not only cares about staff but is always willing to help, especially with patients exhibiting challenging behaviors. She knows every aspect of nursing needs and has solid
John Kroll, Director of Nursing at the Norfolk Regional Center, has kept the nursing department staffed and the staff educated to maintain quality care throughout a period of change. His exemplary leadership and character helped keep a viable workforce and quality care in place during reorganization of patient care. While continuing his duties as Director of Nursing, John also took on interim duties as Facility Operating Officer and did a fine job of managing the hospital.

The Qualified Mental Retardation Professional Manager at the Beatrice State Developmental Center, Delvin Koch also performs administrative functions for the Active Treatment Administrator position. Beginning as a direct care provider, later serving as a Psychological Services Assistant and advancing to supervisory positions as QMRP and Team Leader, he has demonstrated leadership skills in each position. His commitment to excellence and dedication to a team approach are obvious to anyone fortunate enough to work with him, and he willingly devotes long hours implementing Plans of Correction he helped design.

Cindy Kadavy is an administrator within the Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care in Lincoln’s Central Office. Cindy supervises an area that serves persons who are elderly or have disabling conditions and need ongoing services through nursing facilities, intermediate care facilities for those with mental retardation, home health, personal assistance and hospice. She oversaw the startup of the federal Money Follows the Person initiative to encourage transition of people from facilities to home-based and community-based settings. Cindy makes a habit of incorporating logic, consistency and efficiency in policy decisions as she and her staff implement new approaches to streamline processes and promote positive outcomes in a fiscally responsible way.

The Health Program Manager for the Environmental Health Section within the Division of Public Health, Tom Christopherson encourages staff to use their experience in the water well industry more as teachers than enforcers. He has helped create a working atmosphere that makes one proud to be part of the Water Well Standards Program. He has been instrumental in leading a project that has produced ground-breaking research showing how grout performs underground. This research will affect how water wells are constructed in the future and is being followed by other states. Tom works with staff to set attainable goals and then encourages them to apply personal skills to get the job done.

Brenda Knutson, Director of Nursing at the Eastern Nebraska Veterans’ Home in Bellevue, cares deeply about vulnerable adults in general and veterans in particular. A recent challenge was helping to keep two facilities operational for several hours during transfer of members from their former home in Omaha to their new home in Bellevue, 27 miles away. Her planning was flawless, and the move was smooth for all involved.

Kari Calvillo, Nurse Director/Associate at the Norfolk Veterans’ Home, lives the facility motto of “Members Living Well.” This is shown in her commitment to the care of each individual member that earns her the trust of both members and staff. Kari exhibits her ability to be Charge Nurse, assist the Medical Director with member rounds, and respond to any need and meet any challenge with a level of professionalism that is second to none.

Bradley Gianakos, an attorney with Legal Services for DHHS Operations in Lincoln, provides leadership and a calm and steady role model to those he supervises. While offering the management needed for staff to deliver effective legal services, he is a selfless, can-and-will-do attorney who brings a wealth of experience with DHHS programs to his new role as General Counsel section leader. His experience in child protection and public health and many working relationships he established as a hard-working advocate serves him well. With a clear understanding of the law and the agency he serves, he also understands people and never asks those he supervises to do more than he would do himself. Brad’s experience and intellect serve the agency well.
Good Things Are Happening!

In December 2004, the average number of page views and downloads on the DHHS Web site totaled just over 18,000 per day. Activity on the site has grown twice as fast in the first six months of 2008 than in most previous full calendar years.

DHHS Webmaster Greg Votava attributes these skyrocketing stats to a new design, more user-friendly navigation, simplified language and the ability for people to subscribe to content, creating more consistent return visits — yet another example of DHHS ongoing outreach to clients, customers and the general public!

Brenda Brooks, the Children & Family Services Supervisor in the Western Service Area in the North Platte office, is a catalyst to change for families in difficult situations. She lets them know their input is valued, gives them hope and remains committed to their progress. When families are faced with safety issues, she is honest but not judgmental. When co-worker workloads are heavy, she is the first to offer help. When getting the Child Advocacy Center up and running, she assisted with training and community awareness. She sets the bar high for herself and inspires others to do the same.

Mary Eman, the Service Coordination Supervisor in the Division of Developmental Disabilities’ Holdrege office, positively impacts persons with developmental disabilities statewide through serving on the quality assurance committee. She shared her expertise by helping develop new Individual Program Plan format forms and a quality assurance review process. She also assisted with developing a statewide training program for Service Coordinators. Those whose efforts she oversees benefit from her vast knowledge, strong advocacy and innovative thinking.

A Youth Security Supervisor at the Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center at Kearney, Brian Long has a positive, caring attitude and is never too busy to listen to youth and staff concerns. He’s fair and never asks others to do what he wouldn’t do himself. His leadership has led to a strong nucleus of staff who have enhanced campus security. He also continues to conduct tornado emergency preparedness training that keeps the facility ready for any weather emergency. Brian is part of the glue that helps hold everything together.

Tami Osborne, the Children & Family Services Supervisor in the Northern Service Area in the DHHS O’Neill office, volunteered to train Tribal staff members from the Santee, Winnebago and Omaha Child Protective Services Programs. She puts her creativity to work when designing ways to motivate and challenge her staff to better serve children and their families. She communicates often with employees to acknowledge the quality of their contributions. Her knowledge and experience is a vital resource for staff and the children and families they serve.

Carolyn Pendrell, Social Services Supervisor for the Eastern Service Area office in Omaha, sets an example of superior customer service. Her leadership contributes directly to the quality of work provided by the Employment First (EF) team she oversees. She has made contributions to increase the Food Stamp accuracy rate and the work participation rate for EF participants. Her solid reasoning and sound judgment make her an invaluable asset to both EF and DHHS.

Congratulations to these Employees/Managers-Supervisors of the Year and to all DHHS employees, managers and supervisors yet to be so honored for helping people live better lives.
World Day on the Mall

2008 marks the 11th year of World Day on the Mall—an annual extravaganza to honor state employees and celebrate diversity and acceptance of all people.

Held on Centennial Mall just north of the State Capitol, the event is hosted by DAS State Personnel and DHHS with help from several state agencies. It is sponsored in part by a grant from the Nebraska Arts Council and contributions from local businesses.

Those attending World Day enjoyed tasty ethnic cuisines and the talents of “Son Del Liano,” a group reviving classic musical sounds of 1950s and ’60s Havana, original salsa and elegant boleros. Also performing was “The Executive Steel Band,” as well as an award-winning step team from Lincoln Southeast High School.

Nancy Montanez Johner was one of the presenters of “Loving Your Family — Feeding Their Future” in the State Office Building in Lincoln on September 9. Former Director of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Johner is Under Secretary for Food,
Nutrition and Consumer Services with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Lieutenant Governor Rick Sheehy was keynote speaker at World Day’s opening ceremony [photo at right]. He called World Day on the Mall “a great tradition helping celebrate the diversity represented by Nebraska’s peoples and cultures.”

The Lieutenant Governor concluded his remarks by saying, “We must be able to utilize all of our available resources—especially our human resources, and the hard-working men and women of all backgrounds who call this state home… Today’s celebration is part of our recognition that Nebraska’s growing diversity is something that has the potential to make great contributions to our value as a state and our ability to forge a prosperous future for our children and grandchildren.”

World Day’s Planning Committee represents a multi-agency collaboration and includes representatives from DHHS, State Personnel, Department of Education, Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, Department of Roads, State Patrol, Department of Agriculture, Mexican-American Commission, Worker’s Compensation Court, and members-at-large. The Planning Committee is co-chaired by Roxanne Rediger and Charles Roberson of Administrative Services—State Personnel.
**SHAKEN BABY SIMULATORS**

Five seconds of shaking is all it takes to damage a baby’s brain and cause lifelong problems or even death.

“Infants and young children are susceptible to Shaken Baby Syndrome because their heads are bigger than their bodies and their shoulders and neck muscles are underdeveloped,” says Yolanda Nuncio, administrator of the Central Service Area.

The DHHS Grand Island office now has two new Shaken Baby Syndrome Simulators, donated by the Saint Francis Foundation. The simulators are infant-size dolls with a clear head and face. They cry and can be held and rocked – and shaken. When the doll is shaken, different sections of the ‘brain’ light up and show potential damage to memory, speech, vision, emotions or arm and leg movements.

“We’ll use the simulators to train staff; at team, parenting and foster parenting meetings; and during home visits,” said Nuncio. “It gives us a chance to share alternatives for coping with a crying baby.”

Nuncio said those alternative include laying the baby down on his/her back in a crib, going to another room for a short break, or taking deep breaths and counting slowly to 10.

*Photo courtesy of RealityWorks*

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**HOT WAX, COOL ART!**

Take molten beeswax, paint pigment and a dose of creativity, and you have a successful encaustic art activity at the Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center in Geneva (YRTC-G). Lincoln artist Margaret Berry spent 20 hours of one week teaching 44 YRTC-Geneva girls and 18 staff members encaustic wax art. Encaustic wax can be molded, sculpted, textured and combined with collage materials by fusing colors in wax to a surface with a hot iron.

“I was impressed with the girls’ problem-solving skills and creativity while working in a new medium,” said Elizabeth Mattox, Chemical Dependency Training Specialist at YRTC-Geneva. Having seen Berry at a Nebraska Arts Council workshop last fall, Mattox arranged for the artist-in-residence visit.

Berry is the only encaustic instructor in a 5-state area and thinks YRTC-Geneva is the only facility of its kind in the U.S. to offer it. Her residency was funded in part by a grant from the Nebraska Arts Council.

*Photo: Mary Stofer*

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If you have a photo of a DHHS activity you’d like to share with co-workers across the state, contact Connections by any means listed in the editorial box on page 2, and we’ll publish as many as space allows.
Jan Wagner has a no-nonsense, businesslike way about her that leaves room for a twinkle in her eye—qualities that help her do her work as Administrative Assistant in Legal Services, a job she’s been doing for more than a dozen years.

In addition to the usual office duties typical for any Administrative Assistant, Jan’s primary focus is on the Division of Public Health (where she worked for almost a decade before coming to Legal Services). When she arrives in the morning, she checks her calendar for scheduled public or legislative hearings, gathers files and exhibits that DHHS attorneys will need, and reads for any emergency that might arise and often does.

“CEO Chris Peterson, the six Division Directors or program people might pop in at any time with a question, concern or special project,” Jan says. “Like any other part of Operations, we’re a support service to all those who fulfill the DHHS motto of helping people live better lives.”

“Jan has all kinds of contacts in the Nebraska State Office Building in Lincoln,” says Brad Gianakos, General Counsel Section Leader for Legal Services, “She always knows exactly who to talk to whenever we need something.”

Like many other DHHS employees, Jan’s biggest challenge is finding—or making—time to get everything done in a timely fashion, but she finds compensations as well.

“The main reward is all the great people we work with throughout DHHS whose work requires legal advice or assistance,” says Jan.

But the legal advice people seek isn’t always DHHS-related.

“Every spring, we get phone calls from people inquiring about the legality of returning swimwear,” Jan explains. “They buy a new swimsuit, later find it doesn’t fit as well or doesn’t look as good as first thought, and wonder if they can still return it. There’s no law that says one can’t return swimwear, of course, but every spring we get those calls anyway.”

“We constantly juggle multiple projects, and Jan handles the ever-changing workload with a great sense of humor,” says Jodi Fenner, Legal Services administrator. “While we all take our work seriously, her contagious laughter helps us keep everything in its appropriate perspective.”

Respected by her colleagues and co-workers throughout DHHS for her professionalism, Jan Wagner does her work with a dash of wry humor that only makes her more personable.

Listen with ears, eyes and heart!

Listen with our ears means listening actively by focusing on the person speaking to us and what they’re saying by clearing our minds of distractions. If that sounds obvious, remember that most of us don’t do this most of the time!

Listen with our eyes means observing body language that can reveal mood or attitude and maintaining eye contact to show interest and help us focus on what they’re saying...if you see what I’m saying!

Listen with our hearts means listening empathetically, making a conscious effort to see things as others do, to walk a mile in their shoes. Whether we end up sharing their viewpoint or not, we understand them better than we would otherwise.

Listening with ears, eyes and heart makes us all better listeners, as we all discover for ourselves whenever we do it!

For What It’s Worth...

An anonymous tip from a DHHS co-worker you might be able to use:

To share your tip (anonymously if you like), contact Jerry Crisp by phone at (402) 471-3995, or by e-mail at jerry.crisp@dhhs.ne.gov.
November Observance: National Adoption Month!

For many reasons—including neglect, abuse and abandonment—there are children who have found themselves in the foster care system. Many of these children are free for adoption and are looking for a loving family.

You can get information about adopting children who are state wards by calling 1-800-7PARENt (1-800-772-7368). Children who are free for adoption are featured on the DHHS Web site at http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/adoption/children.htm and on the Heart Gallery Web site at http://nebraskaheartgallery.org/heartgallery.htm. Here’s a quick visit with a few of these deserving, loving children.

**Nakyta** is a very sociable little girl who loves to interact and play with others. She enjoys being active and can often be found riding her bike and playing outside.

**Michael** is an affectionate, friendly, polite and helpful young man. He enjoys being outdoors, playing basketball and football.

**Shyanna** is a smart, young lady who can keep herself busy doing different craft projects. Shyanna enjoys doing beadwork and even knows how to crochet. She also likes going to the mall and shopping for new clothes to add to her wardrobe.

**Chyann** is an energetic and fun-loving young lady. She loves to play outside, swim, and read. Her brother **Nathen** is a very active boy who loves to be outside. He can spend hours riding his bicycle, skateboarding, or roller-skating.

**Aaron** is a typical teenager and enjoys typical teenager activities. He has a good sense of humor and likes playing video games and hanging out with his friends.

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**Kronos is coming!**

**A Heads-up from Human Resources and Development**

Half of you will hear that “Kronos is coming” and say, “Kronos is already here!” The other half will say, “What’s Kronos?” Kronos is an electronic time-and-attendance software system that captures employee’s work time, leave used and leave accrued. All DHHS 24-hour facilities already use it, but Kronos will soon be used by all DHHS employees.

If you work in a DHHS Service Area and Central Office locations, you will soon be using a new Internet-based module of Kronos to record your time. In these areas, Kronos will replace Excel timekeeping spreadsheets now used. Since this is a Web-based system, entry and approval can be done from any computer with Internet access, eliminating use of paper timesheets.

You will also have real-time leave balances on-line through this system. Leave and comp time balances are downloaded from the NIS system. Leave usage entered on your timecard deducts those hours immediately to show a real-time leave balance in Kronos. Supervisors/managers will also be able to see real-time balances in Kronos for those they supervise.

Human Resources and Development is working on an implementation and training plan for the rollout of Kronos software. The goal is to have it implemented system-wide by the middle of 2009. All employees and supervisors in the Service Areas and Central Administration will attend computer classroom training on the software.

More information will be provided as Kronos implementation approaches.
Dear Ann Kawata (Economic Assistance Administrator, DHHS Broken Bow office):

I want to tell you what a great job Darrin Wyatt (Social Service Worker, DHHS Grand Island office) did while I was working with him. Last winter my husband was laid off from work due to the weather, and he was off for three months. During that time, I had to swallow my pride and ask for assistance. It took us a month or more to get the first unemployment check. I had applied for food stamps and Kids’ Connection for all three of my children. Fortunately, when the decision was made regarding food stamps, my husband began receiving his unemployment benefits, so we didn’t need the food stamps.

Walking into the office and asking for assistance was very tough for me, but Darrin made me feel at ease. He was so non-judgmental and kind. I think he should be commended for doing such a great job and being so family-centered.

A Central Service Area client
Dear Gina Ruskamp (Social Service Worker, DHHS Wayne office):

I want to thank you for helping me and my girls these past few years with health care and food stamps. This assistance truly helped us during my return to graduate school and transition into a new career. My family and I are truly thankful for such programs.

A Northern Service Area client

Dear Patsy Juedes-Fulk (Children & Family Services Specialist Supervisor, DHHS Gering office):

I am writing to compliment you on Child & Family Services Specialist Barton Blair for his rapid response to ensure a safe discharge for a vulnerable adult found to be in need of an emergency temporary guardianship. Due to great teamwork and coordination, this vulnerable adult was discharged in a timely manner to a safe setting, with support of his extended family and friends. Please extend to Bart my sincere thank you for his efforts that ensured safety and long-term plan for a patient.

LaVonne Ashwood
Medical Social Work
Regional West Medical Center
Scottsbluff, Nebraska

Dear Mary Rice (Eligibility Technician, Nebraska State Office Building, Omaha):

Wow, Mary. I was astonished to get that package of authorizations in the mail from you yesterday! Thank you so much for your hard work on this. I appreciate it immensely. The Child Saving Institute is thrilled to be able to work with you because your efficiency and attention to details is amazing. Thank you again so much!

Micaela A. Moderow, MHSA
Volunteer & Training Coordinator
Child Saving Institute
Omaha, Nebraska
Because it’s included in the job description for some state government employees, we might be tempted to think that recycling is their job, not ours. Fact is, recycling is EVERYONE’s job.

Most people might agree that recycling is a good thing and even want to do their part, yet many of us have picked up wasteful habits. For instance, what do we do at work with a large binder of material that is no longer needed?

Have you ever pitched that binder full of outdated material into the nearest wastebasket?

Why? That wastebasket might be close by and seems like the quickest, easiest solution to the problem.

But why not remove the contents to put in the nearby recycling basket? Then decide to reuse the perfectly reusable binder, see if someone else could use it, or send it to Surplus Property for resale.

Doing the right thing takes only a few moments longer and helps us become part of the solution. If no recycle bin is handy, ask your local recycling coordinator or office manager to get one and place it next to your wastebasket so that wastefulness is no longer easier or more convenient!

“Waste not, want not” might be an old adage, but age doesn’t keep it from still being perfectly valid. The more we reduce waste and conserve resources, the better for our workplace, our community, our planet and ourselves!

This is only one way for all of us to become more efficient recyclers. Keep reading Connections for more recycling tips in upcoming issues.
LEARNING TO SAVE LIVES
One hundred Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) were distributed to DHHS buildings across the state in July.

“The aim of our educational sessions is to help anyone feel comfortable using an AED to help someone in need,” Kari explains. “The more comfortable a person feels, the more likely they will be to use the device to save a life.”

Easy to operate, an AED uses voice prompts, lights and text messages to instruct the rescuer. The rescuer will be prompted to apply the two pads provided with the AED to the victim’s chest. Once applied, the AED will monitor the victim’s heart rhythm and, if necessary, direct a rescuer to deliver an electrical shock or delivers the shock automatically. After the shock, the unit prompts for CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) with a built-in metronome that sets the pace for proper chest compressions and instructs you through the CPR process.

“We all hope AEDs won’t be needed,” Majors says, “but if someone experiences sudden cardiac arrest, AEDs could make the difference between life and death.”

INTERNATIONAL VISITORS
Seven non-governmental leaders from around the globe visited with DHHS officials on September 2nd. Staff from the Division of Children & Family Services shared information on how they interact with private sector agencies. The group came from Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Dominica, Jordan, the People’s Republic of China and Saudi Arabia.

“The meeting was helpful for the visitors and us to learn how communications and policies are handled in their countries compared to ours,” said Mike Harris, Administrator of the Economic Assistance & Child Support Enforcement Unit.

If you have a photo of a DHHS activity you’d like to share with co-workers across the state, contact Connections by any method listed in the editorial box on page 2, and we’ll publish as many as space allows.
Jill Hatzenbuehler and Megan Hicok, two direct care providers at the Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC), were excited about an upcoming cheerleading camp at Diller-Odell High School and used break time at work to practice.

“If you want to show clients your cheers and work their programs into it, this could make a great learning experience,” said Treatment Specialist Karen Engelman.

Center clients enjoyed the activity so much that Engelman asked the cheerleaders if they’d share it with the whole campus. On July 24, the two staff members were joined by a third member of the high school cheerleading squad in a couple dance routines and several cheers at the campus gym in which Center clients were included.

Well over 175 clients and staff members showed up. Plans are to offer this event again next year and invite the entire high school cheerleading squad!

Shown is Center citizen James Blankenau surrounded by Jill Hatzenbuehler (left), Megan Hicok (right), and high school squad member Julie Kalivoda following their performance at the BSDC campus gym. BSDC clients benefit in more ways than one from on-call high school students like these who supplement full-time employees by assisting with eating and recreational activities. The youthful energy they bring to entertaining activities like cheerleading also finds its way into the daily care they provide, enhancing both quality of services and quality of life for the clients they serve.
The following DHHS employees are recognized for years of service from 10 years to 45 years in 5-year increments. Their service is both valuable and valued. Please congratulate those you know for their contributions to helping people live better lives.

Connections publishes this information provided by DAS State Personnel. If errors or omissions appear, please contact your local Human Resources Office.

### 45 Years of Service

- **Hastings Regional Center**
  - Rose M Henricksen

- **Lincoln Regional Center**
  - Billy G Haughton

- **Norfolk Regional Center**
  - Darlene M Porter

- **Northern Service Area**
  - David Lee Prokesh Sr

### 40 Years of Service

- **Beatrice State Developmental Center**
  - Linda K Hyberger

- **Hastings Regional Center**
  - Marlene M Petr

- **Lincoln Regional Center**
  - Susan Dahlman

- **Northeast Service Area**
  - Larry L Bamesberger

### 35 Years of Service

- **Beatrice State Developmental Center**
  - Gwen Duitsman

- **Hastings Regional Center**
  - Charlene J Gentert

- **Lincoln Regional Center**
  - Audrons L Dapsys

- **Northern Service Area**
  - Mary A Bishop

### 30 Years of Service

- **Beatrice State Developmental Center**
  - Rita Allen

- **Hastings Regional Center**
  - Lindy Belford

- **Lincoln Regional Center**
  - Beverley J Weber

- **Northern Service Area**
  - Mary A Bishop

CONTINUED
30 Years of Service

Division of Medicaid and Long Term Care
- Kristi K Holmes

Division of Public Health
- Mary M Becker
- Marlene A Janssen
- Debra A Stoltenberg
- Jerry P Fischer
- Cynthia L Kelley
- Virginia J Sisson
- Marvie J Sullivan

Operations
- Kaylene M Wessel
- Diane M Schnase

25 Years of Service

Beatrice State Developmental Center
- Priscilla A Andersen
- George E Clark
- Susan B Clausen
- Melba Engel
- Tony Kelley
- David Kniely
- Stanley A Miller
- Bernice Rinne
- Judy A Scholl
- James K Stone
- Wayne Waltke
- Sara Young

Hastings Regional Center
- Lynn A Folck
- Lisa A Sedlak
- Marsha E Utech

Lincoln Regional Center
- Teresa Bernt
- Barbara Foley
- Marijo Herman
- Brad Huddleston
- Deborah L McTee
- Paula Nicholls

Norfolk Regional Center
- Kristine R Boe Simmons
- Douglas S Moats
- Kenneth D Palmer

Eastern Nebraska Veterans’ Home
- Robin E Caniglia

Grand Island Veterans’ Home
- Kristi L Bowers
- Cindy L Copley
- Barbara L Ellrott
- Tamala S Hansen
- Jeff A Hawkins
- Vicky L Lierman
- Diann L Sandberg
- Karen C Sweatman

Norfolk Veterans’ Home
- Tammy S Mefford

Central Service Area
- Debra R Corman
- Judy L Regelin
- Dorothy Wadas
- Rebecca J Weber

Eastern Service Area
- Don Warren Davis
- Charline M Duncan
- Janice K George
- Evelyn K Hanner
- Douglas G Kagan
- Donna J Kudirka
- Craig Marshall
- Ronda L Newman
- Patrick A Rapier

Northern Service Area
- Sherry D Bedel
- Robert L Furr
- Mavis A Hatzcliff
- Patricia C Havel

Southeast Service Area
- Andrea L Carpenter
- Terri L Chmelka
- Richard G Kreifels
- Eike D Marthaler
- Loretta Pellan
- Mary J Richey
- Mary B Treick

West Central Service Area
- Tammy S Mefford
- Christina Magdelano
- Dee Walton
- Tiara M West
- Sandy J White
- Elizabeth A Widener

YRTC Kearney
- Michael A Buchta
- Deborah B Einich
- Debra E Murrih

YRTC-Quincy
- Carol A Shaffer
- Debra K Sumpter
- Richard Mayfield
- Sherri L Scholl
- Mary Shanahan
- Marcia A Alber
- Alicia A Hahne Oestmann
- Dale C Shallenberger
- Kathleen S Krogh
- Kirsten Olmsted
- Judy Ann Barker
- Thomas G Budenholzer
- Deborah Christlieb
- Gill Parks

20 Years of Service

Beatrice State Developmental Center
- James L Bush
- Robert E Chace
- Frederich E Devries
- Elton D Edmond
- Nettie S Grant Sikyta
- Janet B Hiner
- Shelly A Johnsen
- Garry Klein
- Nancy Lamb
- Delores H Marmon
- Billie J Miller
- Laurie M Muhlkenbruch
- Virginia L Reimer
- Karen K Schmidt
- Catherine Schrock
- Shari S Swett
- Hai H Tran
- Julie J Weyer

Lincoln Regional Center
- Theresa Conner
- Laurie A Conbruck
- Lori Ditson
- Darlene Drees
- John E Eilers

Lincoln Veterans’ Home
- Joleen K Carrillo
- Debra S Dimmitt
- Sharon K Gleason
- Brenda A Hall
- Linda M Marisch

Division of Children and Family Services
- Jill L Bittner
- Carol K Case

Division of Public Health
- Beverly Spang
- Shirley A Deethardt
- Connie M Luers
- Paula Eurek
- Janice Re Heusinkveld
- Julie A Luedtke-Miller
- Donna J Range
- Ladonna K Shippen

Operations
- Linda K Jimenez
- Pamela J Spale
- Richard E Mettler
- Patricia Mulvany
- Sheryl Y Oberheu
- Carmen Segura
- Malinda K Shobe
- Kathie K Osterman
- Karen K Kammann
- Lori Keenan
- Ann C Mallory

Norfolk Regional Center
- William C Block
- Raymond D Garver

Eastern Nebraska Veterans’ Home
- Beth A Huskey
- Yvonne L Leonard
- Lillian F Wesemann

Grand Island Veterans’ Home
- Joleen K Carrillo
- Debra S Dimmitt
- Sharon K Gleason
- Brenda A Hall
- Linda M Marisch

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- Sheryl Y Oberheu
- Carmen Segura
- Malinda K Shobe
- Kathie K Osterman
- Karen K Kammann
- Lori Keenan
- Ann C Mallory

Norfolk Veterans’ Home
- Kimberly A Benson
- Lanell E Bilau
- Shelley R Hubers
- Lori B Retzlaff
- Sandra K Wiserman

Western Nebraska Veterans’ Home
- Janet Boyer
- Laura Singleton

Operations
- Linda K Jimenez
- Pamela J Spale
- Richard E Mettler
- Patricia Mulvany
- Sheryl Y Oberheu
- Carmen Segura
- Malinda K Shobe
- Kathie K Osterman
- Karen K Kammann
- Lori Keenan
- Ann C Mallory

Eastern Nebraska Veterans’ Home
- Rita B Briggs
- Paul G Farrand
- Anita L Hagerty
- Diana F Hostetler
- Rosemarie Jackson-Griffith
- Dana A Johnson
- Mary L Kangiar
- Sandra A Key
- Vickey L Kobza
- Diane E Martig
- Michele A McClellan
- Debra L Pflager
- Joel D Rogers
- Vickie A Stauffer
- Jane M Tetan

Northern Service Area
- Julie K Brennies
- Stacey R Brockhaus
- Vicki S Schindler

Southwest Service Area
- Betty P Daubendiek
- Rita J Simpson

Western Nebraska Veterans’ Home
- Gregory L Stinson
- Joan K Cornish
- Kerry H Hopkins
- Pamela J Mann
- Beverly A Prosacco
- Vicky J Stanec

Operations
- Sandy L Anderson
- Jon A Grubb
- Lorelee J Novak
- Darren A Duncan
- Karen J Dvorak
- Cynthia Strufing
- Dan P Theobald
- Penny L Clark
- Linda J Shandera
- Ruth E Westergren
- Harry M Farley
- Heidi Burkland
- Georgia A Claborn
- Karen M Homes

Division of Children and Family Services
- Kristi K Millstad
- Shirley A Pickens-White
- Joyce E Schneider
- Lynelle J Schwedhelm
- Susan L Zook

Division of Public Health
- Peggy Prusa-Ogea
- Nila Irwin
- Cynthia Stolldorf
- Dean Cole
- Ali A Latifi
- Kathy K Fischer
- Jacqueline R Johnson
- Sheila M Exstrom
- Nancy M Hauchild
- Charlene Kelly
- Tony L Kopf
- Nancy D Stava
- Linda K Stewert
- Wanda E Wiese

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- Ruth E Westergren
- Harry M Farley
- Heidi Burkland
- Georgia A Claborn
- Karen M Homes

Division of Developmental Disabilities
- Pamela Hovis
- Sharon K Kahm

Division of Public Health
- Peggy Prusa-Ogea
- Nila Irwin
- Cynthia Stolldorf
- Dean Cole
- Ali A Latifi
- Kathy K Fischer
- Jacqueline R Johnson
- Sheila M Exstrom
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- Cynthia Strufing
- Dan P Theobald
- Penny L Clark
- Linda J Shandera
- Ruth E Westergren
- Harry M Farley
- Heidi Burkland
- Georgia A Claborn
- Karen M Homes
15 Years of Service

Beatrice State Developmental Center
Marcia Holst
Anna M Izer
Shannyn Kiehn
Mary F Klein
Amy J Peterson
Julie Pinnick
Harold W Thaut

Hastings Regional Center
Sally M Weiss
Nancy J Kinyoun

Lincoln Regional Center
Judith Delgado
Jeanette Fischer
Linda Jiskra
Carleen L Kinney
Rafael Tatay

Norfolk Regional Center
Laura Gorham
Stephen J Oneill
Robert S Walton
Joy K Wieseler

Central Service Area
Carolyn Williams
Pamela S Gerdes
Carol A Sheets
Sam G Kaplan
Bradley Gianakos
Cindy A Wieseler

Northeast Nebraska Veterans’ Home
Stephanie A Bolles
Veterans’ Home
Joyce K Wieseler
Robert S Walton
Stephen J Oneill

Norfolk Veterans’ Home
Karen K Hitz
Barbara A Uehling

Hastings Regional Center
Bonnie J Anderson
Janie B. Perry
Katheri Hall
Becky Wicks

Division of Children and Family Services
Divide, and Conquer
Wendy J. Hengen
Sharon L. Jorgensen

Division of Public Health
Beverly A. Mowery
Stephanie L. Riedel

OPERATIONS
Robert A Peters
Douglas T Roach
Randall E Cull
Richard J Kohel
Ann M Linneman
Sherry L Nutsch
Sandra L Warford

10 Years of Service

Grand Island Veterans’ Home
Mary S Bonczynski
Patricia Bryer
Natasha L Hamm
Jan Hettiger
Barbara Labenz
Linda S Lewis
Deborah Lohman
Zaccariah Matthiessen
Rebecca Quandt
Jo A Robertson
Ernest S Rother

Norfolk Veterans Home
Cynthia Krause
Kari L Kubes
Joseph P Mrsny

Western Nebraska Veterans’ Home
Valerie Connolly
Kathie Meier

Central Service Area
Cheri R Anderson
Janie A Bryan
Patricia J Foster
Candi L. Launer
Kristie Mott
Julie A Shively
Cheri M Strong

Northeast Nebraska Veterans’ Home
Joseph L. Blecher
Toni Kuhl
Barbara E Liisa
Mistah D Marking
Linette M Molczyk
Golyn Paprocki
Nadine M Reyes
Colleen R Schuchman
Jolene Stockamp
Robert D Thomas
Daniel D Wieneke

Southwest Service Area
Barbara G Arens
Kris T Armatural
Jennifer Barber
Shauna R Becker
Lori A Coon
Laurel A Ekstrand
Rhonda Erikson
Tanja M Evans
Jayme E Fochtmann
Jodilyn K Fransen
Tangela L Gropp
Sherry L Holmes
Patricia A Kerrmoade
Tammy R Kocian
Mary C Koester
Patrick C McClure
Debra A McQuiston
Julie Splichal

Western Service Area
Jeanne L Burns
Alice Dentler
Pamela B Herron
Tracy E Huxoll

YRTC Geneva
Linda J Bottorf
Patricia A Carpenter
Louis H Matthies

YRTC Kearney
John R Dutton
Peggy L Jorgensen
Viola S Luce
Michael D McDonald
Brian R Robinson

Northern Service Area
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Traci K Kuhl
Barbara E Lilja
Mistah D Marking
Linette M Molczyk
Golyn Paprocki
Nadine M Reyes
Colleen R Schuchman
Jolene Stockamp
Robert D Thomas
Daniel D Wieneke

Division of Children and Family Services
Patricia G Callahan
Connie R Coffey
Bradley C Petersen
Micaela K Swigle
Cindy A Wieseler

Division of Public Health
Lenard A Brown
Chin F Chew
Sharon H Godfrey
Barbara A Mills
Nancy Hansen
Beverly M Kliment
Patricia A Patton
Janis N Singleton
Shirley F Davis
Gary Steele
Julieann Boyle
Rayma L Delaney
Vonda Apking

Operations
Leeann K Adams
Darla J Bollin
Dale D Hauptmeier
David W Hill
Darren R Knudson
Elishia Kroll
Nancy K Minchow
Carl W Morones
James R Oltjen
Misty D Sinsel
Brock C Witt
Lorie A Ayers
Ruth E Herman
Helen K Hanes-Palm
Pamela K Schmidt
Denise K Uhing
Sharon Valencia
Sharon J Johnson
Cindy L Kadavy
Bradley Gianakos
Sam G Kaplan
Carol A Sheets
Stacey A Nelson
Pamela S Gerdes
Carolyn Williams

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

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