Recognizing, Honoring DHHS Employees for Employee/Supervisor of the Year Awards and Special Service Anniversaries

This issue of Connections is dedicated to you, the employees of DHHS, who have devoted your careers to serving Nebraskans and making a difference in their lives.

**Employees/Supervisors of the Year**
Pages 4-8 list the 2013 Employees and Supervisors of the Year, complete with photos and a short write-up from their nominators about why they received this special honor.

**Recognition for Years of Service**
Many employees have been with DHHS for a number of years and are celebrating special years of service awards this year. See pages 11-14 for a complete listing of employees and their years of service, starting with 10 years.

CEO Kerry Winterer and Division Directors attended ceremonies across the state honoring employees with special years of service awards. This year, 538 DHHS employees received awards for meeting a milestone year of service.

**Left:** Rows of 10-year service mugs await new owners.

**Below:** Mary Gordon (left) Joni Dulaney, and Sue Dorffler (back) at the 10-year ceremony at the State Capitol.

**Billy Haughton,** Lincoln Regional Center, was one of three DHHS employees being honored for 50 years of service with the State. He is pictured above, center, with Gov. Dave Heineman, left, and DHHS CEO Kerry Winterer, right. Special years of service awards for employees in the Lincoln area, were presented by the Governor at ceremonies at the State Capitol on Oct. 24, 2013.  

Photo: Bill Wiley
Olivia's mother, Marsha, was surprised that Olivia remembered being at the veterans' home when she was 7 years old, delivering Valentines as part of a school project for St. Matthew Catholic School.

“I am truly humbled with Olivia’s generosity and indeed thankful for the gift from this remarkable young lady,” said Jeff Smith, Administrator, ENVH.

In Neat to Know, we reported that the DHHS office in Wayne was damaged by the recent tornado. Now that we have some pictures to share, it seems the word “damaged” is an understatement!

We are all very thankful that everyone in the office is safe. Our thoughts are with those who have experienced injuries, damage and loss over the devastating winter storms and tornadoes in Nebraska.

See also…Clean Up Continues in Wayne, Oct. 17.
The Good Life: A reminder of what we all share and hope to provide to our fellow Nebraskans

By Kerry T. Winterer, CEO

October is one of the highlights of the year for me. Why? Because it’s Nebraska State Employee Recognition Month.

I enjoy traveling the state to attend the Years of Service recognition events. This year, 538 DHHS employees received special awards for meeting one of the milestone years of service.

It’s an honor to be able to personally thank these employees for their commitment to making DHHS a place where we strive to help people live better lives. (I apologize to those at the ceremony in Beatrice for having a conflict; I wish I could have been there.)

Three DHHS employees were recognized this year for 50 years of service. This is truly something to celebrate and I can only imagine the changes they’ve seen over the years. Congratulations to Billy Haughton, a Food Service Worker at the Lincoln Regional Center; Darlene Porter, a Secretary at the Norfolk Regional Center; and Suzi Skinner, an Administrative Assistant in Financial Services at the Central Office.

I want to pay special recognition to the 30 DHHS employees and supervisors of the year. Governor Heineman recognized them at an event the morning of October 30 and we held our DHHS recognition that afternoon.

It is humbling and a true honor when someone is nominated by their peers for this recognition. As I read the nominating forms, I was struck by the admiration that came through. So many qualities were described, like energy, enthusiasm, fairness, ability to remain calm in the face of diversity – hundreds of attributes.

It’s clear these 30 people are an inspiration to those around them and to those they serve, and they are role models for all of us. Congratulations to you all.

It is without saying that not everyone can be recognized for years of service milestones in one year, and there were other employees and supervisors who were nominated by their peers for special recognition. I want to take this opportunity to thank all employees for the job you do every day, and to thank you for your continued support.

“You, as dedicated employees, work hard to provide exceptional products and quality services to the citizens of our State. It is because of your dedication that we are able to continue our standard of excellence in public service. Congratulations on your achievements. Together we are creating a positive impact in Nebraska.”

Sincerely,

Dave Heineman, Governor
DHHS is proud to introduce the 2013 Employees and Supervisors/Managers of the Year. It’s such an incredible honor! These employees were recognized for their achievement at a ceremony at the State Capitol, a reception at the Governor’s Residence and a ceremony at the Lincoln Country Club—all on Oct. 30, 2013.

State agencies are allowed to select one employee and one Supervisor/Manager of the Year for every 500 people employed by the agency. The following write-ups were taken from the nomination forms. Pictures were provided by the Department of Administrative Services. Congratulations to all!

Karen Berry
Karen Berry is an Administrative Assistant II for Public Health. Karen is an exemplary employee and always willing to go the extra mile. She has a positive attitude, strong work ethic and professional manner. Even when her workload dramatically increases, Karen tackles the assignments with dedication and a smile. She is very knowledgeable and enjoys sharing that knowledge with others. She communicates in such a way that enables her to resolve differences, build trust and respect, and create an environment open to creative ideas, problem solving, and compassion. Karen is a team player and a great asset to DHHS.

Diana Duran
Diana Duran is the DHHS System Advocate with Communications & Legislative Services. Diana responds to inquiries made through the DHHS Helpline and helps people navigate the department’s wide breadth of programs and services. Diana is extremely compassionate and possesses a truly remarkable ability to listen attentively and patiently to someone asking questions or expressing concerns. Diana earnestly works to benefit clients while reinforcing DHHS policies and procedures and achieving greater acceptance and understanding of why we do what we do. Diana helps people live better lives and serves people with excellence every single day.

Billy Easterling
Billy Easterling is a Social Services Worker for the Division of Children and Family Services in the Eastern Service Area. Billy makes customer service, treating people with dignity and respect, and providing timely responses a part of his daily work. His goal is to have positive interactions with both internal and external customers. Billy’s customers often comment on his fair and customer oriented approach. He volunteered to be a Champion of Serving People with Excellence. Billy’s honesty, integrity and commitment to provide excellent customer service were clear in all of the sessions conducted. His genuine belief in what he was training provided inspiration to many staff members. Billy has consistently done the best job possible with timeliness, accuracy and great customer service at the forefront.

Renee Faber
Renee Faber is a DHHS Program Coordinator for Behavioral Health. Renee serves as a liaison and contract manager for designated Behavioral Health Regions. Her positive attitude and conscientious work ethic have helped her develop relationships and maintain contract compliance. Renee’s willingness to take on new tasks and contribute in a unique way is remarkable. She is a positive role model for new staff and demonstrates a strong commitment to the DHHS values. Renee promotes a positive culture and brings humor, grace, wisdom and integrity to her work. Her flexibility, professional manner, willingness to mentor and ability to extend her commitment and character is exceptional.

Kristine Hanefeldt
Kristy Hanefeldt is a Social Services Worker for Children and Family Services in the Northern Service Area. Kristy is dependable and can always be counted on for her program knowledge. Kristy completes her case work with very high accuracy and payment error rates. She was selected as a trainer for Serving People with Excellence which included traveling to various local offices to provide training to staff in the Northern Service Area. Kristy is currently assisting with the transition from Economic Assistance to the Medicaid Long-Term Care division. Kristy’s ability to adapt to changes with ease and maintain a positive attitude makes her a true asset.

Erica Hardessen
Erica Hardessen is a Child/Family Services Specialist for Children and Family Services in the Central Service Area. Erica is knowledgeable and has a drive to help not only the families we serve but also the agency itself. Erica carries her large caseload without complaining and goes above and beyond for the families. She continually receives high scores on her performance accountability report for her face-to-face contact with youths and parents. She continues to display a high level of leadership and can be relied upon to...
help coworkers in their times of need. Erica is always present, smiling, and has a laugh that carries throughout the office.

**Cynthia Hartley**
Cynthia Hartley is a DHHS Program Specialist for Children and Family Services. In her capacity as a Policy Specialist for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Cynthia drafts responses to complex policy issues that are circulated as memos, tips or policy guidance. Cynthia has also served on several ACCESSNebraska work groups charged with improving efficiency, accuracy and customer service within the call center model. Cynthia is compassionate, caring and upbeat. She seeks to find the positives even in the most frustrating situations. Over her years of service, Cynthia has shown fairness and generosity with others, a deep respect for the work of the agency, and an eagerness for improvement.

**Grant Johnson**
Grant Johnson is a Compliance Specialist at the Hastings Regional Center. Grant has excelled in his role by developing opportunities to evaluate safety and compliance and improve care and processes. The youth in the program are comfortable around Grant and often seek him out to ask his advice. Grant is a certified trainer and often attends additional training to improve his ability to serve the facility. He has taken on the responsibility of scheduling staff training to ensure there are no lapses in training. He recognizes and utilizes the strengths of his coworkers and is generous with compliments for jobs well done. Grant’s personal motivation and desire to do the best possible job makes him a true asset.

**Janet Johnson**
Janet Johnson is an IT Business Systems Analyst Coordinator with Information Systems & Technology. Janet has great organizational skills and is highly knowledgeable about the Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS). She accepts each new assignment as a challenge to increase her knowledge. Janet is dedicated to keeping the MMIS functioning accurately and at maximum processing capability while incorporating extensive program modifications and functionality. Janet is a great mentor, providing valuable background knowledge, direction for the Business Analyst Team and coordination of the technical system changes. She is a good communicator, very professional, and highly respected. IS&T is fortunate to have Janet working on the team.

**Jackie Langan**
Jackie Langan is a DD Service Coordinator for Developmental Disabilities. Jackie has a specialized caseload working with individuals placed on the Developmental Disabilities Court-Ordered Custody Act. Jackie was the first Service Coordinator to cover someone on this Act and now covers all of these cases in Lancaster County. Jackie’s attention to detail and ability to communicate is vital because individuals placed on this Act pose a threat of harm to others. Jackie continually displays the DHHS Values and Core Competencies. She demonstrates responsibility and accountability, has a positive attitude, and shows good judgment. Jackie is a joy to work with and a tremendous asset to the Service Coordination team.

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**Maggie McPherson**
Maggie McPherson is a Human Resources Officer for Operations – Human Resources and Development. Maggie is the epitome of the DHHS Values and Core Competencies. She is courteous, prompt, efficient and committed to excellence. Maggie helps managers and applicants navigate through the hiring process. She works with managers to utilize selection tools to help find quality applicants. She takes time to research and develop creative methods to promote DHHS as a great place to work. Maggie’s extensive knowledge of DHHS policies and procedures often makes her the “go to person” for recruiting and hiring questions. Maggie is a valuable team member and a true asset to DHHS.

**Patricia Montgomery**
Trish Montgomery is a Case Aide for the Division of Children and Family Services in the Northern Service Area. Trish has an upbeat, optimistic attitude and helps make the jobs of others more manageable. She is always willing to help, never complains, is very organized, and gets everything done in a timely manner. Some of her duties include mailing, filing, printing, faxing, notarizing, dictating, assigning cars and completing authorizations. Additionally, Trish prepares files for the foster care review board and tracks case plans and court reports. It is often because of Trish that the work is done and documented on time and files are kept in order. Trish always goes above and beyond and her team is very grateful to have her as a Case Aide.
The Good Life

Joette Novak

Joette Novak is a DHHS Program Specialist for Medicaid and Long-Term Care. Joette recently spearheaded two large projects geared towards enhancing ease of program use for providers and staff. Joette's commitment to quality customer service and saving valuable time and resources has shown throughout these projects. Her attention to detail, excellent communication skills and ability to recognize potential problems in advance have been essential to her success. Joette has been an excellent role model to new staff and encourages their growth and development. Joette has proven herself as an asset for making DHHS a great place to work and to come to for service.

Nadine Wearne

Nadine Wearne is a DHHS Quality Assurance Coordinator at Veterans' Home (WNVH). Nadine's willingness to take on new tasks, openness to change, and strong work ethic have served WNVH well during the formation of the Quality Assurance program. Nadine's hard work and dedicated efforts in leading mock surveys and follow-up work for any perceived issues have been instrumental in being deficiency free for three years running. In addition, Nadine has enthusiastically taken on the challenge of being a Super User for Electronic Medical Record (Avatar) and RX Connect. She also serves on several committees. Regardless of the assignment, Nadine brings her knowledge and enthusiasm and puts forth her best effort.

Scott Wilson

Scott Wilson is a Facility Maintenance Specialist at the Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home (ENVH). He is a very talented member of the maintenance team. Scott's positive customer service and support of ENVH's mission of taking care of America's heroes is remarkable. Scott is typically assigned to the dementia unit where he patiently responds to the needs of 30 members plus staff with a smile and a can-do attitude. He often goes above and beyond by volunteering to help with special projects. During a disaster in which high winds damaged ENVH's roof, he was one of the first on the scene to assess damage and begin repairs. Scott is valued throughout these projects. His attention to detail, excellent communication skills and ability to motivate help her excel at welcoming and training new employees. Jill is a hard worker and spends hours preparing to make sure new workers feel comfortable and empowered during their training. She is a good listener and is never too busy to answer questions or provide clarification. Jill is very professional and has a positive attitude. She encourages communication and problem solving and never stops thinking of ways to help the team succeed. Jill puts her heart and soul into every single day. She is truly dedicated to the success of others.

Susan Yates

Sue Yates is a Developmental Technician II at the Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC). Sue has a great personality and attitude. She brings lots of experience and joy to the individuals living at 411 State on the BSDC campus. She has a great rapport with the 411 gentlemen. They treat her like family as she does with them. Sue is very dependable and always goes above and beyond. Sue is always first to volunteer to help out when there is a shortage of staff. She is willing to work extra to make the lives of the individuals and other staff better. Sue is truly an asset to the BSDC and deserves to be recognized for her commitment, kindness and hard work.

Supervisors of the Year 2013

Jill Aksamit

Jill Aksamit is a Social Services Supervisor for Children and Family Services at the Fremont Customer Service Center. Jill manages the training unit. Her caring spirit, enthusiasm, humor and ability to motivate help her excel at welcoming and training new employees.

Kimberly Bro

Kim Bro is a Child/Family Services Specialist Supervisor for Children and Family Services in the Southeast Service Area. Kim has a strong work ethic, positive attitude and great sense of humor. Her expertise in child welfare is widely valued. Kim has a zero backlog expectation and works with her team to ensure deadlines are met. She thoroughly reads each assessment to make sure that it is following policy. Kim is professional and confident in her role as a leader and a mentor. She is a great role model for her team and a valuable asset to the DHHS.

Katherine Becker

Katherine Becker is a Social Services Supervisor for Children and Family Services at the Lincoln Customer Service Center. Katherine is fair, honest, knowledgeable and trustworthy. She has great communication skills and can be counted on to follow through on promises. Katherine has demonstrated a calm demeanor in dealing with an ever changing environment. She has a positive attitude and encourages others to be positive. Katherine makes herself available to her team and other employees to answer questions. She guides her employees with a firm but consistent disposition that encourages growth and the overall well-being of her employees. Katherine strives for excellence and is dedicated to the success of her team.
offers constructive criticism in a way that is helpful and not hurtful. Kim is extremely approachable and works to make her team feel comfortable. She is always willing to listen to new ideas and implement different ways of doing things. Kim not only cares about the work produced, but also cares about her team.

Shawn Bryant
Dr. Shawn Bryant, PsyD, LP, is the Psychology Director at the Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC). Dr. Bryant’s leadership skills helped foster a team environment within the Behavior Support Team (BST) following a period of departmental restructuring. The newly-redesigned BST has made tremendous progress toward meeting DoJ settlement requirements. Dr. Bryant has contributed greatly to improving employee morale and enjoyment of the work place. His management style focuses on team members’ strengths which helps inspire success. Dr. Bryant is very humble, hard-working, respected and deserving of this recognition.

Lori Burns
Lori Burns is a Business Manager II at the Norfolk Veterans’ Home (NVH). Lori is an outstanding supervisor who listens and works well with her staff. She provides excellent guidance regarding policies and procedures governing NVH and the Veterans’ Home Division. Lori works hard to ensure the members receive the benefits they are entitled to. Lori has shown grace under pressure throughout the changes the business office has experienced over the past two years. She is a great person to have in charge of the budget because she does her best to get needed services and supplies for staff while keeping in mind that taxpayer money is being spent.

Jane Cleveland
Jane Cleveland is a DD Service Coordination Supervisor for the Division of Developmental Disabilities. Jane’s spirit with the DD program is contagious. Her extensive knowledge of programs in Nebraska is impressive. Jane is a great team leader and supervisor. She is dedicated to the success of her Service Coordinators and the individuals they work with. Jane challenges her Service Coordinators in many ways to encourage them to do a fantastic job for the individuals. She goes the distance for her staff. Jane has monthly team meetings with her staff so they can learn new information that is being passed on to the Service Coordinators throughout the state. Jane always makes time to listen to her staff and help them become the best Service Coordinators possible.

Jon Eisenhauer
Jon Eisenhauer is a Food Service Manager for Children and Family Services at the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Geneva. Jon’s past experiences and food service industry knowledge benefit the entire facility. Jon and his staff have met the challenge of changing the menu to meet the new federal guidelines of reduction of fat and adding more fruits and vegetables while also appealing to the youth. He has used the food youth survey to modify the menu. The food service department works as a team to produce high quality meals which often receive compliments. Jon is willing to step out of the box with ideas and join committee efforts to enhance the quality of life for the youth.

Chad Frank
Chad Frank is a Medical Services Unit Manager for Medicaid and Long-Term Care. Chad is a dependable, knowledgeable, and compassionate supervisor. He has taken a true leadership role in the Nebraska Money Follows the Person (MFP) program. MFP supports the rebalancing of long-term care systems to transition individuals with Medicaid from institution living to community living. Chad is dedicated to the MFP program and has aspirations of enhancing the long-term care system. Chad advocates for the people he works with in order to create a system. He is always thinking outside of the box and coming up with new ideas and ways to improve the program. Chad genuinely wants the program to succeed and demonstrates that sincerity daily.

William Manhart
Ross Manhart is a DHHS Resource Developer Supervisor for Children and Family Services in the Eastern Service Area. Ross has a positive attitude and accepts challenges with dedication, humor, and creativity. He understands the importance of Resource Development (RD) in relation to ensuring the safety of children and families. He is focused on making RD valuable and effective. Ross is always available to listen whenever his team has questions or concerns. He stays actively involved. RD is constantly changing and Ross is able to quickly adapt while keeping his staff positive and focused. Under Ross’ leadership, RD has become an essential part of Child Welfare reform.

Mark Miller
Mark Miller is a Health Data Coordinator for Public Health. Mark is a great listener and tremendous leader. In addition to directly supervising staff, Mark provides guidance, advice and
leadership to 20+ coworkers in his role as System Administrator for the Vital Records Electronic Registration System (ERS). The enhancements Mark orchestrated to the ERS have made it the envy of the nation. Other states have praised Mark’s leadership in advancing data exchange between states. Mark also serves as an expert in backing up the Vital Records helpdesk which supports 1300+ statewide providers on birth, death, marriage and divorce data. Mark has the skills and patience necessary to make system-wide changes interesting and exciting.

Thomas Nider
Tom Nider is the Pharmacy Manager at the Lincoln Regional Center (LRC). Tom has a positive outlook and is a genuine, hardworking employee. He is team-oriented and encourages the Pharmacy staff to work together. Tom has been instrumental in improving the treatment of patients by educating team members on the benefits and potential side effects of medications. LRC is the pilot facility for the new Electronic Medication Administration Record (e-MAR) system. Tom has been collaborating with nurses and medical staff to determine how e-MAR will benefit all DHHS 24-hour facilities. He is always looking for new ideas to improve patient care and the work environment for employees. Tom is a positive role-model for serving our patients and the State with excellence.

Lisa Sedlak
Lisa Sedlak is the Food Service Director II at the Grand Island Veterans’ Home (GIVH). Lisa truly puts the interests and welfare of the members first. She developed a Food Committee that meets monthly to address any food concerns or complaints of the 200+ members. Lisa has been integral in meeting member needs by rearranging the snack provision process on each nursing unit which has increased member satisfaction of snack and beverage choices. She provides a great deal of organization, support, and leadership. Lisa is approachable and addresses issues and takes action to help prevent recurrences. She willingly jumps in where there is a need and has a tremendous ‘make it happen’ attitude.

Emily Walter
Emily Walter is a Human Resources Manager II for Operations – Human Resources and Development. Emily effectively manages the team who processes payroll for all DHHS employees. She meets strictly enforced deadlines while balancing technology and policy changes. Emily embraced the transition to the Employee Work Center by assisting DAS with training, never-ending patience, and continued improvement of processes within the new program. Her technical expertise with many other programs has made her an invaluable resource. Emily is always available to provide support, advice, humor, or simply an ear. She not only helps her staff problem solve, but goes the extra mile to teach the justification behind the answer.

Heather Wood
Heather Wood is a Quality Improvement and Data Performance Manager for Behavioral Health (DBH). Heather possesses a high personal standard of integrity and works diligently to make a difference. She is dedicated to the success of others. Heather seizes every opportunity to coach and mentor her team and make sure they feel valued. She has also been a leader in analyzing and recommending strategies to improve the DHHS employee survey. Heather assisted DBH in using employee survey results to find strategies that will improve work experiences and build upon the team culture. Heather consistently shares her time and talents to further the DHHS mission of helping people live better lives.

50 Years of Service...Darlene Porter Remembers
Many employees have been with DHHS for a number of years. This year is particularly special for Darlene Porter, Secretary at the Norfolk Regional Center, because she is celebrating her 50th anniversary working for the state.

Darlene tells Connections...
“I started my state career at the Norfolk State Hospital, now the Norfolk Regional Center, in 1963. I have been in the same office for all of those 50 years! I started as one of three support people and eventually became the only one serving an extended department. I have seen the Regional Center go from 1,200 male and female patients to 80 males. We went from locked wards to some open units and from a totally open building and grounds to no admission to the building without keys.

Word processing went from dictation on red records to the telephone system. There were no copy machines when I started. Carbon paper was an important part of every day; from manual typewriters to computers; from mimeograph and ditto machines to copiers, fax machines, scanners, etc.; From taking a quarter to lunch and bringing back change, to $4 for lunch. From having our own dairy, garden, and bakery, to food cooked at the Veterans’ Home, and back to cooking at NRC.”

When asked what gets Darlene back to work every day, she answered quickly...the great bunch of people I work with. They are my work “family.” The most important part of all the years, she said, “is the people I have known because of my work here at the Regional Center.”

Congratulations, Darlene on this important honor.
Email Etiquette

By Richard Mettler,
Human Resources and Development

Email is the perfect tool to use for a message that’s brief, quick and effective. A tremendous amount of DHHS communication is through email. Many of us are so familiar with email that we fall into lazy habits, making our messages needlessly difficult for readers.

Following are some reminders to help ensure successful communication.

- Ask yourself, “Is email the best choice? Would a phone call or in-person conversation be a better way to communicate what I have to say?” For example, conveying personal information and doing confidential problem solving are often done best in real time with the human voice.

- Write to your audience and the relationship you have.

- A brief yet descriptive subject line informs the recipient of content and purpose—what the email is about, including actions requested, by when.

- Be concise and get to the point of the email quickly.

- Make your email reader-friendly.
  - Use 12 to 14 font size.
  - Break text into small paragraphs.
  - Use bullet points, numerals, and ample spacing.

- Don’t discuss multiple subjects in a single email. If you need to discuss more than one subject, send a note for each.

- Do not type in all caps for emphasis—it feels to the reader as though you’re SHOUTING. Also, all caps are difficult to read.

- Be careful about your tone. Avoid humor, irony or sarcasm, none of which convey well in a brief note, and can accidentally offend the reader. It’s best to keep the tone polite, friendly and professional, including the social graces such as, “Good morning/afternoon,” “Please,” “Thank you,” “You’re welcome.”

- Use an email signature with your name, title, email address, mailing address and phone number.

- Do your best to reply to email within 24 hours, and remember to activate the Out of Office Assistant as needed.

- Always proof read email before sending.

- Before sending ask yourself, “Would I appreciate receiving this email?”

Please email your thoughts, concerns, or suggestions about workplace courtesy and workplace relationships to: Richard.Mettler@nebraska.gov. I will email you a response, and perhaps anonymously feature your ideas in a future column.

Woods Awards...a Tradition of Excellence

The Woods Award is a prestigious award given each year to direct care staff at the Lincoln Regional Center who provide outstanding service to the people in LRC’s care. The Woods Foundation has provided this award since 1952 to deserving front line staff. The Thomas C. Woods family began this important tradition to recognize excellence in patient care given to a relative of the Woods Family.

Psychiatric technicians and security specialists are selected for awards by a committee of involved citizens. Nominations are made by fellow staff, patients and family members.

Congratulations to the Lincoln Regional Center 2013 Woods Award Winners:

2013 Woods Award winners, from left: Trudy Bakesz, Lori Ditson, Karen Friday, and Jade Richtarik. Photo: Linda Henslee
Recognition for Years of Service 2013

Celebrating Long and Loyal Service…

DHHS employees leave a legacy every day by helping people live better lives. Some people have been with DHHS for a number of years and are celebrating special years of service awards this year. Three people are celebrating 50 years of service with the state. Congratulations Billy Haughton, Darlene Porter and Georgia Skinner on that remarkable accomplishment. We appreciate your dedication and devotion through the years and continue to rely on your expertise.

Here’s a listing of those employees and their years of service, starting with 10 years.

Because employees are located across the state, those working in facilities and service areas are identified accordingly. This information is provided by DAS State Personnel. We hope everything is spelled and listed correctly. If it isn’t, let us know and we will pass the information along to Human Resources. This information is provided by DAS State Personnel. If errors or omissions appear, please contact your local Human Resources Office.

50 Years of Service

Lincoln Regional Center
Billy Haughton

Norfolk Regional Center
Darlene Porter

Operations - Financial Services
Georgia Skinner

45 Years of Service

Operations - Financial Services
Shirley Baack

Public Health
Jack Daniel

Children & Family Services – Northwest Service Area
Deborah Silverman

40 Years of Service

Beatrice State Developmental Center
Teresa Goetz
Marilyn Hoppe
Carol Janssen
Barbara Jones
Susan Laber

Children & Family Services
Sandra Accardy
Michelle Buresh
Beverly Weber

Children & Family Services – Central Service Area
Deborah Pool
Sheryl Taylor

Children & Family Services – Eastern Service Area
Katie Adams
Mariellen Becker
Joan Brunkov
Robert Cummings
Jeannette Dyer

Children & Family Services – Northern Service Area
Elizabeth Nicolas

Medicaid & Long-term Care
Agnes Davis

Operations – Financial Services
Sandi Aden
Julia Schluckebier

Operations – Human Resources
Linda Sylvan
Wanda Yoachim

Operations – Support Services
Rodney Halm
Wade Remmenga

Public Health
Kathleen Goddard

Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center – Geneva
Donald Belau
Delores Hartman

Developmental Disabilities
Kay Rehtus
Joan Speicher-Simpson
Debra Bigando
Susan Strand

35 Years of Service

Beatrice State Developmental Center
Rita Allen

Grand Island Veterans Home
Kathleen Hegwood
Janet Warneke

Hastings Regional Center
Jean Luther
Gary Peisiger
Charlene Shay
Peggy Weseman

Lincoln Regional Center
Audronis Dapsys
Gwen Duitsman
Randolph Jacobs
Susan Wesche

Behavioral Health
Jan Goracke

Children & Family Services
Jeanette Harris
Dalene Krebs

Children & Family Services – Central Service Area
Susan Jensen
Kay Schenck

Children & Family Services – Eastern Service Area
Robin Hudson
Nadine Plambeck

Children & Family Services – Northern Service Area
Judith Pedersen

Children & Family Services – Southeast Service Area
Sharon Bulin
Linda Harral
Irene Marcussen
Ramona Tuxhorn
Victoria Vanarsdall

Developmental Disabilities
Kay Rehtus
Joan Speicher-Simpson
Debra Bigando
Susan Strand

Director’s Office – Communications & Legislative Services
Judy Barker

Director’s Office – IS&T
Kay Wessel

Grand Island Veterans Home
Shiela Daniels

Hastings Regional Center
Mary Bishop
Steven Fielder

Lincoln Regional Center
Cynthia Hunter
Steven Lagemann
Jeanne Lytle

Medicaid & Long-term Care
Diane Schnase
Debra Sumpter
Donald Severance
Dale Shallenberger
Kristi Holmes

Norfolk Regional Center
Julie Beutler
Susan Waterman

Norfolk Veterans Home
Edith Eichberger

Operations – Financial Services
Kirsten Omlsted

Operations – Human Resources
Mary Shanahan

Operations – Support Services
Thomas Budenholzer
Deborah Christlieb
Linda DeVore
30 Years of Service

Beatrice State Developmental Center
George Clark
Susan Clausen
Melba Engel
David Kaisely
Stanley Miller
Bernice Rinne

Children & Family Services – Central Service Area
Debra Corman

Children & Family Services – Eastern Service Area
Donna Kudirka
Malinda Shobe
Charline Duncan
Janice George
Ronda Newman

Children & Family Services – Northern Service Area
Gina Ruskamp
Bob Furr

Developmental Disabilities
Rebecca Weber
Ladonna Shippen
Patrick Rapier
Richard Kreifels
Lori Pellan

Director’s Office – Communications & Legislative Services
Kathie Osterman

Director’s Office – IS&T
Linda Jimenez

25 Years of Service
Beatrice State Developmental Center
James Bush
Robert Chace
Frederich DeVries
Elton Edmond
Shelly Johnsen

Children & Family Services – Eastern Service Area
Anita Hagerty
Rosezerian Jackson-Griffith
Dara Johnson
Diane Martig
Jane Teten

Children & Family Services – Northern Service Area
Stacey Brockhaus
Julie Brennes

Children & Family Services – Southeast Service Area
Andrea Carpenter
Don Davis
Mary Treick

Children & Family Services – Western Service Area
Tiara West
Sandy White

Customer Service Center – Fremont
Dian Schellenberg

Customer Service Center – Lexington
Dee Walton

Public Health
Bev Spang
Shirley Deethardt
Connie Luers
Paula Eurek
Julie Luedtke
Donna Range

Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center – Kearney
Michael Buchta

EOY/SOY
Mary Becker
Jerry Fischer
Marlene Janssen
Cynthia Kelley
Debra Stoltenberg
Marvie Sullivan
Debra Uarich

Children & Family Services – Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center – Geneva
Nancy Kalvoda

Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center – Lincoln
Gregory Stinson

Developmental Disabilities
Bonnie Fisher
Rita Briggs
Pam Hovis
Pam Mann
Paul Farrand
Rita Simpson

Director’s Office – IS&T
Sandy Anderson

Director’s Office – Legal Services
Jon Grubb

Eastern Nebraska Veterans Home
Beth Huskey
Lillian Wesemann

Grand Island Veterans Home
Joleen Carrillo
Debra Dimmitt
Brenda Hall
Linda Marisch

Lincoln Regional Center
Scott Casper
Lori Ditson
Darlene Drees
John Eilers
Heidi Fahrnbruch
David Fricke
James O’Connell
Cynthia Reece
Gordon Tebo

Medicaid & Long-term Care
Penny Clark
Joyce Schneider
Ruth Westergren

Norfolk Regional Center
William Block
Raymond Garver
Sandra Wiseman

Norfolk Veterans Home
Lanell Bilau
Shelley Hubers
Lori Retzlaff

Operations
Sharon Kahm

Operations – Human Resources
Karen Dvorak
Dan Theobald

Operations – Support Services
Karen Homes

Operations – Support Services
Karen Homes

Public Health
Shirley Pickens-White
Dean Cole
Ali Latifi
Heidi Burkland
Sheila Exstrom
Nancy Hauschild
Michele McClellan
Nancy Stava
Linda Steners
Cynthia Strufing
Wanda Vodehnal
Peggy Oega-Ginsburg
Kathy Fischer
Jacqueline Johnson
Nila Irwin
Cynthia Stolldorf

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Shirley Deethardt
Connie Luers
Paula Eurek
Julie Luedtke
Donna Range

Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center – Kearney
Michael Buchta

Children & Family Services – Western Service Area
Darren Duncan

Customer Service Center
Beverly Probasco
Dana Thornburg

Customer Service Center – Lexington
Alvin Zimmerman

Director’s Office – Communications & Legislative Services
Kathie Osterman

Director’s Office – IS&T
Linda Jimenez

Eastern Nebraska Veterans Home
Beth Huskey
Lillian Wesemann

Grand Island Veterans Home
Joleen Carrillo
Debra Dimmitt
Brenda Hall
Linda Marisch

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Jacqueline Johnson
Nila Irwin
Cynthia Stolldorf
Congratulations ... to all being honored for their years of service!
In Gratitude

Letters to DHHS employees who are helping people live better lives

To: Rene’ Tiedt, Program Manager, Public Health

Michelle Humlicek (Health Licensing Specialist, Lincoln) has been very patient and helpful. I appreciate the work she does to support our Occupational Therapy students as they work their way through the licensure process.

Creighton University

Care Was Wonderful...from the Norfolk Daily News,
Plainview—I would like to share with your readers the “prize” they have--the Norfolk Veterans Home.

My husband recently passed away there after a struggle with Alzheimer’s disease. He was cared for in the Alzheimer’s pod.

He was a resident at the Home for 18 months.

The nursing staff in this facility is wonderful. They have compassion, patience, kindness and love for those they care for.

The social workers at the Home and with hospice also were so kind and helpful to all of our family.

The supporting staff is excellent, and as I walked down the hall, I would be greeted with a smile and greetings.

Thank you, dear ones, at the Home and AseraCare hospice.

I will never forget you and the loving care given our loved one.

A Thankful Spouse

Spirit of Giving Continues Year-Round

The Spirit of Giving is alive and well at DHHS and continues to live in the hearts of our coworkers. Here's an idea from our coworkers in the State Office Building in Lincoln. They have developed an easy, simple and fun way to support the Lincoln City Mission and want to share their idea with others in the hopes of getting even more people involved. Even though this story comes from employees at DHHS, they will be the first ones to say that their giving efforts are not about them, but rather about people in need who they support.

A group of Surveyors/Consultants in the Division of Public Health travel a lot for their jobs. During their travels, they collect the little soaps, shampoos, lotions and other toiletries from the hotels where they stay. They gather all these items and then they donate pounds and pounds of the needed supplies to a very appreciative Lincoln City Mission.

“We’re traveling anyway, and this is a really easy thing to do,” said Jessica Schoepf, Developmental Disabilities Surveyor/Consultant, Public Health. “We collect more items than we ever thought we would, which is great.”

Jessica, Karen and others who work with them said that they would like to gather even more of these supplies and would welcome other donations to this special cause. It's all about paying it forward to others.

This group doesn't stop with travel supplies, either. They purchase and gather other items as needed for the Mission. In September, it was school supplies, now there's a need for hats, scarves and gloves/mittens. There's always a need for socks.

“We don’t exchange holiday presents with each other anymore,” Jessica said, “because we enjoy doing things for the Mission so much more. It’s really not about us anyway. It’s all about what we can do for others.”

Jessica and Karen said they would be happy to collect items (NSOB, 3rd floor, southeast corner) and will deliver them to the Mission.

DHHS Spirit of Giving stories abound during the holidays and throughout the year. We want to feature as many stories as we can on the employee website and in Connections. Send your ideas to Dianna Seiffert and/or post them to the Employee Bulletin Board.