

Connections

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

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

April 2011
VOLUME 11, ISSUE 4



New Fremont Customer Service Center.

Photos: Matt Clough and Jeanne Atkinson. Collage: Robby DeFrain

DHHS now on and About the Cover:

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

DHHS in the News Update. . .

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

[Lincoln Regional Center Accredited by Joint Commission](#) March 28, 2011

[Emergency Medical Services Workshops Coming to Your Community](#) March 28, 2011

[DHHS Survey Will Give Feedback on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services](#) March 25, 2011

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

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

make the connection . . .

DHHS Public Website: www.dhhs.ne.gov

DHHS Employee Website: www2.dhhs.ne.gov

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

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Behavioral Health Division Director: Scot Adams, Ph.D.	Medicaid and Long-Term Care Division Director: Vivianne Chaumont	Chief Operating Officer: Matt Clough
Children and Family Services Division Director: Todd Reckling	Public Health Division Director/Chief Medical Officer: Dr. Joann Schaefer	

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About the Cover:

Making a Move: Employees Head to Fremont Customer Service Center

DHHS recently celebrated another ACCESSNebraska milestone with the opening of a second Customer Service Center – this one in Fremont. Staff began moving into this new center the week of March 7, but many people worked a lot of long hours for many months before to make moving day possible.

Since building a Customer Service Center is such a team effort, we've dedicated the front cover of this month's *Connections* to the employees who work at the center and their coworkers across the state who made it possible. Read more about the new Customer Service Center on page 5 of this issue.

Pictured from left: **Mike Puls**, Norfolk; **Jim Buresh**, Lincoln (below); **Myra Hoffart**, Norfolk; **Molly Chamberlin**, Fremont (below); **Curt Helgoth**, Lincoln; **Dian Schellenberg**, Fremont; **Mary Belchal**, Fremont (below); and **Libby Hanzel**, Fremont.

HIGHLIGHTS

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



Kerry Winterer

Photo: Bill Wiley

By Kerry T. Winterer, CEO

April 28. Mark the date on your calendar!

Why is April 28 so important? Because that's the last day you'll be able to complete this year's employee survey. It should take you only about 10 minutes, and I'd like everyone to participate so we can get the most accurate picture possible on important aspects of DHHS as a workplace.

Our first Department-wide survey, in December 2009, had a 61% response rate from employees. That was an extremely high response, and I hope we can top it this year.

We learned from that survey – both from how you answered each question and from your comments – and that's why we're doing another one. I hope you're as generous this year sharing your thoughts

and ideas, whether they're quick observances or in-depth views.

This survey touches on the same important issues; however, we made a few changes based on comments from last year. For example, many of you said you weren't sure if some questions were asking about your work team, your division, or the agency as a whole. We've tried to make this year's survey clearer because we want the most accurate responses possible.

Employee survey - be sure to respond by this Thursday, April 28

We do take the results of the survey seriously. Last year a need for better communication ranked high. We listened and have made some changes.

The employee website homepage, which began a year ago this month, is one example. Employees now

share news and congratulations with one another nearly every day on the bulletin board, and information is provided through "In the Box," Neat to Know and Need to Know. You can access news articles published about the Department and news releases we issue. You can see all of the legislative bills we're tracking, and, if we've testified, you can read the testimony.

Through "In the Box" videos, I shared information about the DHHS and legislative budget processes and the furlough process last fall.

You can now communicate with me directly through talk2kerry@nebraska.gov. I appreciate those of you who have sent comments, questions and suggestions, and I look forward to hearing from more of you.

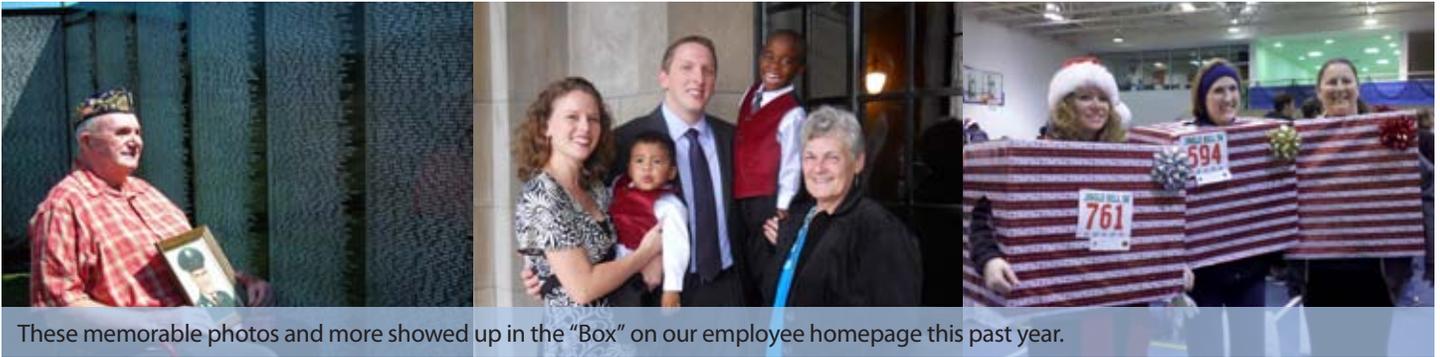
In fact, I've received a couple of questions from employees asking about the confidentiality of information provided on the survey. Just like the survey in 2009, the answers and comments you provide are confidential. Responses will not be identified as yours. We will, however, be able to aggregate the information by divisions and their subparts so that we can identify areas of strengths and areas where we can do better.

The results of this year's survey will be shared in *Connections* once your responses have been tabulated.

If you haven't taken this survey yet, please refer to my April 14 e-mail for the link.

If you've already completed the survey, *thank you!*

Happy First Birthday Homepage



These memorable photos and more showed up in the "Box" on our employee homepage this past year.

"I really like the new Homepage :) Great update!"
"This is a wonderful communication tool, and I know it will be used daily."
"I love the new website and the video was great fun to watch!"
"The new design looks fantastic."

One year ago in April, we launched a new employee homepage. The comments above were some of the very first ones DHHS employees wrote on the bulletin board.

Since then, DHHS employees have submitted more than 800 bulletins. Bulletins of best wishes to co-workers who are retiring soon... Favorite notes and quotes... Congratulations on jobs well done... Whatever the reason, DHHS employees are using the bulletin board to share information across the state.

The bulletin board is just a small part of the employee homepage. There are daily updates in Neat to Know with interesting information about DHHS employees, programs and services, links to web pages you use every day, inspirational quotes, recipes and health and wellness tips. "In the Box" features one-of-a-kind photos, graphics and videos.

So what do employees have to say about the homepage now?

Here are some comments from a recent survey.

"The homepage offers an opportunity to recognize that we are more than the work that we do."

"All of the wonderful retirement announcements and quotes that people post really inspire me to work hard every day."

"I like the healthy recipes I can prepare for myself and my family."

"It creates a sense of unity with co-workers around the entire state."

There's still more work to be done.

We welcome your feedback, and it's our goal to make the homepage better and better. Here's what some said they would like to see improved.

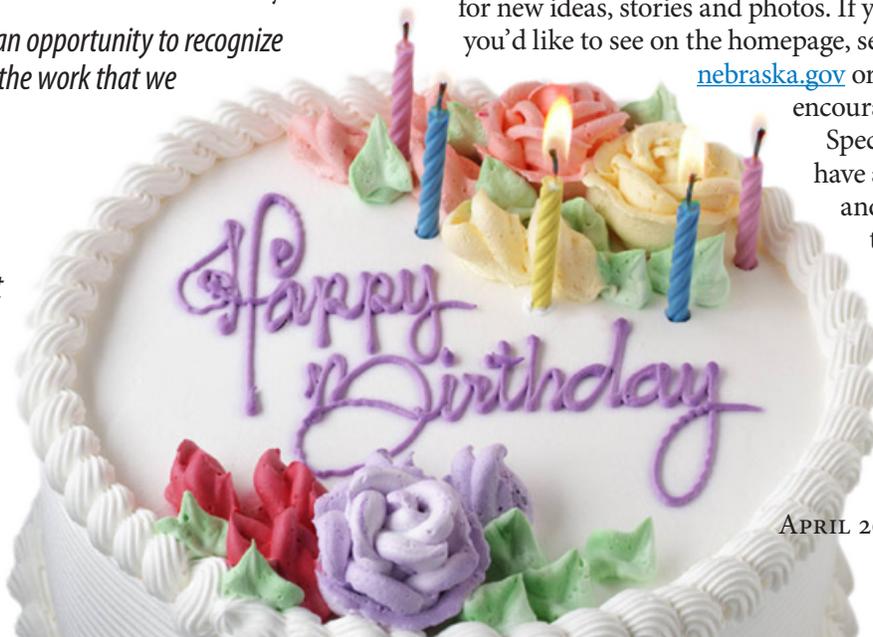
"The 'In the Box' feature is good, but it should focus more on specific divisions/program areas."

"The employee bulletin board seems to have become a way to wish employees farewell and on occasion to recognize employee accomplishments. I would like to see more helpful hints, etc. on the bulletin board from all departments."

"Seems very oriented to people who work downtown, but what about the other DHHS facilities?"

Remember, the employee homepage is truly a team effort. It's your homepage, so it's what you want it to be and what you make of it. It's a challenge to come up with new information every day, and that's why we're always looking for new ideas, stories and photos. If you have something you'd like to see on the homepage, send it to dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov or submit a bulletin and encourage others to do so.

Special thanks to those who have already given us ideas and photos. We appreciate the help and support. And keep submitting those bulletins—yours could be the next one we post!



DHHS Employees Move to Newest Customer Service Center in Fremont



Mike Puls, Northern Service Area Administrator Photo: Matt Clough

DHHS recently celebrated another ACCESSNebraska milestone with the opening of a second Customer Service Center – this one in Fremont. Staff began moving into the new center the week of March 7. With around 150 staff, Fremont will be the largest of the four planned Customer Service Centers.

Opening a Customer Service Center is a team effort that involves a lot of people. Special thanks to the following people for pulling together and making the move and the new center possible: DHHS Human Resources and Development staff, DHHS technical program staff and staff in NFOCUS and Support Services, staff and supervisors from the Eastern and Northern Service Areas, staff from the Chief Information Officer's Office and DHHS IS&T, and the community of

Fremont itself. A grand opening ceremony and tours are planned for May 6.

Customer Service Centers are only one part of ACCESSNebraska. ACCESSNebraska started with on-line applications and screenings and continues with ways to help us improve how we provide economic assistance like universal case load management and document imaging (electronic scanning, storing and retrieving of documents).

By 2012, Customer Service Centers will be up and running in four Nebraska communities, and DHHS will have a single phone number that people all across the state can call for services and information.

Here's a little more information about each of the four centers:

- **Lincoln:** This center opened first and has approximately 100 staff. Staff at this center began taking calls from economic assistance clients in mid-November under the universal case management system.
- **Fremont:** Construction started last summer, and staff moved in recently. For now, the focus remains on training so the staff will be ready to take calls toward the end of May.
- **Lexington:** 50 staff plan to move to the location in the fall of 2011.
- **Scottsbluff:** 100 staff will be in this renovated building in January 2012. Some employees are scheduled to move into the Customer Service Center space the first week in May.

Good Luck! Congrats Fremont CSC!

- I just wanted to congratulate all of the employees of the new Fremont CSC on their big move this week. I have no doubt the move will go well and that your new team will be a great success because of all of your dedication and skill!
- Best of Luck to **Sheri Leffler, Jean Compton** and **Joy Rahn** as they head to the new Fremont Call Center!

These were just a few of the comments employees posted on the DHHS bulletin board the week of the move.

ACCESSNebraska News and Tips

Here are some quick facts from the March 2011 [ACCESSNebraska News and Tips newsletter](#). This information is current as of Feb. 28, 2011.

Clients Aren't Waiting in Line, They're Applying On-Line!

- DHHS has received nearly 200,000 E-applications since we started accepting applications on-line in September 2008. The exact number of E-Applications is 195,568.
- E-Applications received in February 2011: 10,716
- 60% of all applications we received in February were received on-line.
- 36.4% of those February on-line applications were received after business hours.

Document Imaging Update

- The scanning centers in Lincoln and Omaha scanned 51% of all the pages and documents that needed to be scanned in February. Smaller scanners

are also located in many of the local offices.

- The centers are scanning documents within 24 hours of receiving them.
- 6,928,719 pages (1,770,815 documents) have been scanned as of Feb. 28, 2011.

Customer Service Center Update

- From Nov. 15, 2010, to Feb. 28, 2011, the Customer Service Center in Lincoln received 73,716 calls.
- Skilled Service Center employees answered caller questions in less than three minutes 88.26% of the time.

More information about ACCESSNebraska and the Customer Service Centers can be found on the [DHHS employee intranet](#).

BSDC's First of Five Receives Certification



BSDC friends and families celebrated progress toward regaining federal certification on March 20. From left, **Sen. Norm Wallman**, District 30; BSDC Neighborhood Services Assistant Manager **Jesse Bjerrum**; **Landen, Megan** and **Taryn Bjerrum**; and BSDC CEO **Dan Howell**.

By Jeanne Atkinson

The first of five parts of the Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC) has been federally certified as an Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) and is now receiving federal funding.

“This is good news,” said **Gov. Dave Heineman**. “I want to recognize and applaud the work of **Jodi Fenner** and her team at BSDC. They have made significant progress in providing quality services to individuals with developmental disabilities.”

BSDC is transitioning from being one large institution to five smaller, independently-licensed ICFs, which should all be certified by July. Each unit must pass a state licensing survey and two federal surveys to get recertified and get federal funding reinstated.

Jodi Fenner, Director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities, thanked the employees who are working so hard to make certification possible. “I’m gratified to see that the work done over the past several years shows such positive results,” she said.

Changes that make certification possible include: a full range of medical services, more community involvement for individuals, consistent staffing and assigning staff to one of the five areas, and improved training and support in the homes. Additionally, individuals now have more employment opportunities. More than 30 people have jobs ranging from working at manufacturing plants, car dealerships, and delivering newspapers to selling their own greeting cards.

Surveys Say: Behavioral Health Consumers Satisfied

By Marla Augustine

According to surveys conducted by the Division of Behavioral Health, consumers are generally satisfied with the services they receive from the state’s six behavioral health regions. The survey asked about both mental health and substance abuse services.

“Most consumers reported that the services they received from community-based mental health and/or substance abuse programs had improved the quality of their lives,” said **Scot L. Adams**, Director.

The first survey of 1,120 adults found that 85 percent were satisfied with services. The youth survey of 232 youth

and their parents found 78 percent were satisfied with the services their child had received.

The majority of adults and youth felt mental health or substance abuse services had improved their quality of life (82 percent of adults and 72 percent of youth).

To see the full report, called the Nebraska 2010 Behavioral Health Consumer Survey, go [here](#).

DHHS is conducting another survey. This time for people who received mental health or substance abuse services in 2010. The survey process runs from April through September.

“I encourage anyone who gets a phone call or a written survey to participate and give us honest feedback about the services they received,” said Scot Adams. Read more [here](#).

Seeing Double? Twins Together Again at the Norfolk Veterans' Home



Marvin, left, moved into the NVH first. He's pictured here with his brother Melvin.

Photo: Linda Sparr

By Marla Augustine

The Norfolk Veterans' Home is now home to a set of twins- **Melvin** and **Marvin Jones**. They are the first set of twins in any of Nebraska's veterans' homes.

At 84 years old, they are a lively pair who have shared many experiences, as twins have a tendency to do.

They did almost everything together as children and spent very little time apart as teens.

At the time of their 18th birthdays, the U.S. was embroiled in a bloody world war. Able-bodied men were needed. So the Jones brothers left high school and joined the US Army.

They were assigned to the same unit, trained together and were shipped out to the Pacific Theatre together, landing on an island in the Phillipines.

The United States was on the brink of invading Japan. Then Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed. The brothers were in Tokyo Bay when the Japanese surrendered to Gen. Douglas McArthur. They witnessed the ceremony from their ship, the USS Birmingham.

Then the twins moved into Japan and encountered the ruins of Hiroshima. They spent 18 months driving ambulances and getting to know the people of Japan.

When their tour of duty was up, Melvin stayed in the service for a few years. But both brothers eventually returned to Norfolk, married, raised families and worked.

Now, after living apart for 60 years, the brothers are back together at the Norfolk Veterans' Home. They spend their days watching TV, playing games and talking about the "old days."

"It's great to be together again," Melvin said.

Public Health Month Focuses on Safety and Injury Prevention

By Bill Wiley



It only takes a moment for an injury to happen. April is Public Health month in Nebraska, a good time to talk with people about safety and how to become injury-free. This year's theme for national public health week is "Safety is No Accident: Live Injury-Free." A common misconception is that unintentional injuries happen as a result of "accidents," when in fact, most injuries are predictable and preventable.

"Injuries are a major public health problem in Nebraska resulting in significant numbers of deaths, hospitalizations, and emergency department visits," said **Dr. Joann Schaefer**, Chief Medical Officer and Director of the Division of Public Health. "From 2004 to 2008, intentional and unintentional injuries were the fifth leading cause of death in Nebraska. Let's work together to make Nebraska a truly safe place to live."

Injuries include motor vehicle crashes, falls, suicide, drowning and being struck by an object. Taking actions such as wearing a seatbelt, properly installing child safety seats and storing cleaning supplies in locked cabinets promote safety and prevent injuries. [Click here](#) for more information.

Keep kids safe. Use properly installed child safety seats.

Sweet Tweets: Favorite DHHS Twitter Posts

Did you know DHHS is on Twitter? We've got 735 followers and counting.



Twitter is a social networking and microblogging service that allows you to answer the question, "What are you doing?" by sending short text messages, 140 characters in length, called "Tweets," to your friends or "followers."

Twitter and Facebook are among the ways DHHS is using technology to connect and communicate with people.

Here are some of the Tweets we've recently posted:

- Did you know? 458 Nebraskans are currently on a waiting list for organ and tissue donation. [Donate life.](#)
- Have you tried this fabulous frozen treat with apricots the fruit of the month? Blend sliced apricots and OJ, freeze in ice trays and enjoy.
- Ready to stop smoking but don't know how to begin? Visit <http://QuitNow.ne.gov> for helpful tips to get you started!

Families Matter to All of Us

By Jeanne Atkinson

Families Matter is changing how families are being served through the child welfare and juvenile services system in Nebraska. The Division of Children and Family Services is working with private and public partners to have fewer children in the state's care and more served safely in their homes.

On-going case management was moved to private partners earlier this year. KVC Behavioral Health care is coordinating cases in southeast Nebraska. KVC and Nebraska Families Collaborative are coordinating Douglas and Sarpy Counties. The goal is to eliminate duplication of work to provide services and case management for children and families.



The focus continues to be on decreasing the number of children in out-of-home care. In February of 2010 there were 4,351 state wards in out-of-home care and today there are 4,271.

More children and families are served through voluntary services. Almost 500 families are voluntarily receiving services to help resolve the issues they're experiencing, without involvement of the courts in their lives.

Approximately 1,500 families are receiving the new Aftercare services that support them for up to 12 months after their case with the state closes.

Check out the [Families Matter site](#) to find easy-to-read 'data-at-a-glance,' to see success stories, and to learn more about our partners.

Project Harmony Honors Bob Owens with Kids First Award



(From left) **Bob Owens**, Children and Family Services Specialist, **Leo Knowles**, President of Project Harmony's Board of Directors, and **Gene Klein**, Project Harmony executive director.

Photo courtesy Project Harmony

Project Harmony, the Child Advocacy Center in Omaha, is a safe place where children who have been abused only have to tell their story one time. Several agencies are co-located there, including DHHS and the Omaha Police Department, making it easier to coordinate services.

For over 30 years, **Bob Owens**, Children and Family Services Specialist, has been responding to the issue of child abuse. He recently received the "Kids First Award" from Project Harmony in Omaha. This award is given to professionals and volunteers who have made significant, long-term contributions to the well-being of children.

Bob began his career as a foster care worker, worked for many years assessing children where abuse or neglect was alleged, and recently moved to a new position on the statewide child abuse hotline, housed at Project Harmony.

Those nominating Bob said: He is simply one of the best ... Bob understands family dynamics and can work with parents, police officers, county attorneys and other professionals.... He has been instrumental in helping our team make the right decisions for children ... He advocates for each and every child in a manner that is respectful, demonstrates dignity and is in their best interest.

Schiermeister Receives First Barbara Scarbrough Trailblazer Award



(From left) **Shayne Schiermeister**, **Barry DeJong**, Eastern Service Area Administrator, and **Barbara Scarbrough** at a reception held at Project Harmony on March 25. Photo: Rosa Valencia

By Jeanne Atkinson

Shayne Schiermeister, Child and Family Services Supervisor of Omaha, is the first recipient of the Barbara Scarbrough Trailblazer Award for outstanding and professional work with families.

The Scarbrough Trailblazer Award exemplifies the pride that employees in

the Eastern Service Area feel for their profession. It is named for **Barbara Scarbrough**, a woman who has dedicated her life to improving the lives of children and families.

“I am deeply honored and humbled to receive this award,” Shayne said. “Barbara has left a great legacy and an example for all of us to follow.”

“Shayne is a great leader who balances staff accountability and support with compassion and respect for the families we serve,” said **Todd Reckling**, Director of the Division of Children and Family Services. “Like Barbara Scarbrough before him, Shayne exemplifies an unfailing commitment to do what’s right for families.”

Shayne Schiermeister began working for the Department in 1992 and is currently a Child and Family Services Supervisor in the DHHS Eastern Service Area.

“I have been so fortunate to be surrounded and supported by so many dedicated professionals at the Department, that this honor would not have been possible without their commitment and dedication to the families we serve,” said Shayne.

Barbara Scarbrough returned to Omaha to personally present this award. She was a supervisor for DHHS until the late 1990s, and her legacy lives on within DHHS.

She is currently Field Liaison/ Adjunct Professor at the University of Alabama School of Social Work and continues to be motivated by helping build and improve the quality of human service professionals in her community.

Hundreds Helped Shape the Behavioral Health Plan

By Marla Augustine

Hundreds of Nebraskans participated in the development of the Behavioral Health Division’s strategic plan for 2011 to 2015.

According to the plan, collaboration between provider and consumer can empower consumers to make informed decisions about their own care.

“We believe in person-centered recovery, which means that consumers utilize their support networks to achieve wellness,” said **Scot Adams**, Division Director. “Support networks can include family, friends, psychotherapists, and support groups.”

This plan serves as a call to action to others in the system. Providers and consumers have responsibilities to ensure accessibility, quality, and effectiveness for a recovery-oriented system of care.

“Consumers need to know that prevention is possible, treatment works and recovery is within reach,” Adams said. “This plan will encourage sound behavioral health practices for all, to provide treatment when necessary and to celebrate recovery when it is achieved.”

The vision of the division is: The Nebraska public behavioral health system promotes wellness, recovery, resilience and self-determination in a coordinated, accessible consumer- and family-driven system.

[A copy of the plan](#) can be found on the DHHS website.

In their own words

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

Jeremy Chizek (Children and Family Services Specialist, Kearney),

It was nice to see you recently. The opportunity reminded me of how much I have to thank you for with my son. You walked a very difficult path with me. You continued on when others turned away. You continued on when I became hopeless and angry. Jeremy, I owe you more than I can express. I am forever grateful.

May your new year be blessed.

A Thankful Mom

Editor's Note:

DHHS Information Systems and Technology recently installed new business and clinical software systems at the four DHHS Veterans Homes in Bellevue, Grand Island, Norfolk and Scottsbluff. Here's a note of appreciation from one co-worker to another.

Dawn Longwell (Senior Applications Developer, Lincoln),

Thanks for EVERYTHING! I cannot tell you how much all the business office staff and I appreciate the work, dedication and coaching you put in. There is a special spot with lots of chocolate in heaven for you. I cannot tell you how much I have appreciated working with you!

Beth Wewel (Financial Analyst, Division of Veterans Homes, Lincoln)

Vivianne Chaumont (Director, Division of Medicaid and Long-term Care) and **John Naujokaitis** (Program Analyst, Medicaid and Long-term Care, Lincoln),

I wanted to let you know about an employee of DHHS Medicaid who was a tremendous help to me. Her name is **Margaret Ahola** (Program Specialist). I have a client who cannot speak English and was confused about what to do to complete the Medicaid application for her newborn son. She had some questions I could not answer. After some phone calls to the wrong people, I finally was directed to Margaret. She was absolutely wonderful. She answered my questions patiently, took the time to explain what I needed to know in detail and promptly faxed a form we needed. On top of all of that, talking to her was a pleasure. She was warm, friendly and eager to be helpful. My client is quite relieved and now knows exactly what to do. I am definitely putting Ms. Ahola's phone number in my "VIP" file.

Public Health Solutions District Health Department, Crete

Karen Hawthorne
(Social Service Worker, Omaha),

Thank you so very much! You've been an angel!

A Client Grateful for Receiving Assistance

Mr. Randy Cramer (Child Support Services Supervisor, Lincoln),

I just wanted to let you know that your child support worker, **Cindy Dorcey**, (Child Support Enforcement Worker, Lincoln) receives a 110% out of a possible 100% from me. Ms. Dorcey was able to resolve my withholding problem today in a professional and yet personable manner. She came across as caring and empathetic while resolving the problem with me and my employer.

A Grateful Client

A nice voice mail message sent to **Tony Green** (Administrator, Children and Family Services, Omaha):

Meredith Ardery (Children and Family Services Specialist, Omaha) was our case worker. Our case was closed today, but I want you to know that I thank her very much. I appreciate everything that she did for all of us, and she really was a blessing and went out of her way to help me save my daughter's life. I want you to know that I appreciate everything that she did and I just wanted to tell you that as her supervisor that this mom appreciates everything that you do.

Vivianne Chaumont (Director, Division of Medicaid and Long-term Care),

I have been working with Anh (**Anh Nguyen**, Telecommunications Coordinator, Operations) on the recent phone conversion, voicemail problem etc. He has been wonderful. He is timely with his responses, explains the issues and follows up on calls and emails.

As we were working to resolve the phone issues, Anh asked several questions about our recording. He advised that our Auto Attendant DOES have the capability to handle multiple prompts/route callers to other numbers, etc.

He sent me a voicemail tree to review and wants to set up a time for us to visit. He stated he'd be glad to help us get our recording set up to best handle/route callers.

I just wanted you to know he has been extremely helpful and has made it easier for us to serve our clients.

Lancaster County Medical Society

Here's a thank you for everyone in the **Lincoln Customer Service Center**:

A daughter of a client called to clarify something and said to thank everyone for the help we are giving her mother in the nursing home and how quickly we approved her. She was worried about her mother and ended up very pleased with our service.

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