

# SOWER

it's my  
**LIFE!**



**T**he Division of Developmental Disabilities hosted the colossal It's My Life! conference September 22-24 at the La Vista Conference Center. One of the many outstanding speakers was Melanie Hecker. She co-presented with her mother, Phyllis Hecker, on "Dual Diagnosis from the Inside." The two told of their discovery of Melanie's diagnoses with autism and bipolar disorder and of the challenges they have faced since that discovery.

This was Melanie's first trip to Nebraska. She lives in Albany, New York, where she is a college student and she also works as a system advocate for the YOUTH POWER! organization. In her job, she writes letters to legislators and state agencies, reviews policy articles and provides updates to members on current issues.

Melanie has been a motivational speaker since she was 15 years old. Her first speaking engagement was to a group of college psychology students during Autism Awareness Week. She says she knew then and there that she wanted to be a motivational speaker. She saw then, and she continues to see, that she has the ability to change and motivate people with her words. "I have always known that my true calling is to be a motivational speaker," Melanie says. "I speak for those on the autism spectrum who do not have a voice and for the mentally ill who may be struggling for acceptance."

Melanie recently launched her website:

[www.melaniemotivates.com](http://www.melaniemotivates.com). There you can find information about awards she has earned (including the Lt. John Finn Award for Volunteerism from the Albany County Division of Youth and Families), about her mission and vision (motivating families, providers and students dealing with special needs through public speaking) and about her speaking engagements. Topics of some of her speeches include:

- ▶ Living a Rich Life with Autism and Bipolar Disorder
- ▶ Being a Contributing Member of Your Community
- ▶ The Importance of Highlighting Your Gifts instead of Focusing on Your Challenges

One thing Melanie wants everyone with a dual diagnosis to know is: "You're not alone. Even if it feels like things will never change, just know there will always be improvement." She also had a few words of wisdom for all individuals with disabilities and their families. She says, "Even when you think things can't improve, they can, and likely will."



Contact Christina with your story ideas:  
Christina Mayer  
Community Liaison  
402-440-4129  
[christina.mayer@nebraska.gov](mailto:christina.mayer@nebraska.gov)  
Give her your name and a way to contact you so she can find out more about your story idea.

We hope you'll enjoy reading the Sower. If you'd like to read it online, go to:  
<http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/newsletters.sower.aspx>

Sower is published quarterly by the Division of Developmental Disabilities, part of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. It is a celebration of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, guardians, service providers, community agencies and services, advocates and other interested individuals.

DHHS CEO: Kerry Winterer  
DD DIVISION DIRECTOR: Jodi Fenner  
CREATIVE TEAM: Gwen Hurst and Christina Mayer  
LAYOUT & DESIGN: Cynthia Schneider  
ADA/AA/EOE

Consent is obtained to use photos of all service recipients in this publication. DHHS is committed to affirmative action/equal employment opportunities and does not discriminate in delivering benefits or services.

IT'S MY LIFE!



**Lynn Redding: always advocating**

Lynn Redding knows firsthand how self-advocacy can significantly improve one's life and impact the lives of others. Self-advocacy means speaking up for oneself, stating one's needs and desires. It means that although a person with a disability may call upon the support of others, the individual is entitled to be in control of his or her own resources and how they are directed.

Lynn is a well-known self-advocate in Nebraska. She was invited to speak at the It's My Life! conference in September. Lynn discussed her experience as a person living with a disability. She went into detail about barriers she has faced that she has turned into opportunities for growth. Her presentation included stories of her involvement with legislative advocacy. She often speaks to the Nebraska Legislature about policies and issues that affect people with developmental disabilities.

Lynn believes in and is always learning more about self-advocacy and advocating for others. She turns her learning into a benefit for others, as she also teaches others to advocate for themselves.

Lynn is involved with several statewide organizations. She is the governmental affairs chairperson for the Arc of Nebraska. She serves as the treasurer for People First of Nebraska. She was appointed to the Governor's DD Advisory Committee and volunteers for the Nebraska Quality Review Teams. In her spare time, Lynn enjoys photography, Toastmasters and being with friends.

## Unique gift-giving!

Individuals who create or consign unique gifts invite you to consider Bear Creek Gifts and Studio for your holiday and end-of-year gift-giving.

The gift shop/studio takes its name from a nearby creek. Individuals living at the Beatrice State Developmental Center explore what Bear Creek Gifts and Studio has to offer. Some individuals work on their own projects which they later consign for sale in the Gift Shop. Others take part in working on steps of projects that together become magnificent creations.

### Hours

- ➡ Monday - Friday: 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.
- ➡ Saturday: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- ➡ Closed Sunday and State Holidays

The shop is located at 202 Sheridan at the Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC), 3000 Lincoln Boulevard in Beatrice. You can also visit the store online at [http://dhhs.ne.gov/developmental\\_disabilities/Pages/bearcreek.aspx](http://dhhs.ne.gov/developmental_disabilities/Pages/bearcreek.aspx)

Can't make it to the shop? No worries! Just contact Bear Creek at 402.223.8542, or email James Bush at: [James.Bush@nebraska.gov](mailto:James.Bush@nebraska.gov) to arrange payment and delivery.



## FALL SPECIAL

Bring in this coupon and receive **20% off** of one item's regular price!  
Expires 12/31/2014

Unique artwork and products crafted by individuals living at the Beatrice State Developmental Center.

202 Sheridan  
c/o 3000 Lincoln Blvd.  
Beatrice, NE 68310  
402-223-8542



## Annual Conference for People First of NE



October 10, 11 & 12, 2014 • Holiday Inn, Kearney, NE

One of the very basic ideas behind the entire disability community is “**Nothing About Us Without Us**,” which is the theme of the 2014 Annual Conference.

Attendees will share and learn from each other. People with disabilities, family members and support staff share a vision of inclusion.

People First asserts that people with disabilities should be at the table anytime there is a discussion about disability. The October conference will provide an opportunity to gain new perspectives on how this can happen from young advocates and veteran leaders. There will be opportunities to discuss issues affecting young people with disabilities, communicate strategies for including and empowering new advocates and develop proactive systems advocating action and solutions to barriers new and old!

Workshops at the conference will include issues related to the following themes: **Inclusion • Advocacy • Self-Determination • Accessibility**

For more information, “like” People First of Nebraska’s Facebook page.



## 11th Annual NDE Transition Conference



October 13 & 14, 2014 • Holiday Inn, Kearney, NE

The conference is for transition specialists, high school resource teachers and counselors and administrators. The two-day conference will feature keynote presentations and breakout sessions. Cost for the conference is \$65 per person. Registration is open now. <https://connect.esu9.org/workshops/SectionList.aspx>

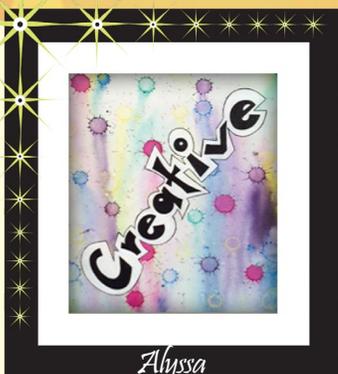
Keynote presentations include “Transition Assessment: Connecting to the Transition Plan & RDA to Transition” with Dr. James Martin and Dr. Amber McConnell and “Transition Assessment Planning” with Dr. Amy Baumer Erickson and Megan Bomgaars. Breakout sessions will highlight issues of interest and importance to educators and administrators working with students with developmental disabilities.

For more information, contact Rita Hammitt, State Transition Coordinator, Nebraska Department of Education at 402.595.2092 or [rita.hammitt@nebraska.gov](mailto:rita.hammitt@nebraska.gov)

Register online at <https://connect.esu9.org/workshops/SectionList.aspx>



## Nebraska artists represent *It's My Life!*



People attending the It’s My Life! Conference celebrated the artistic expressions of individuals with developmental disabilities. On display at the La Vista Conference Center were: *canvas and watercolor paintings, wire sculptures, hand-made jewelry, quilts, pencil drawings, writing, photographs, art boards and more!*

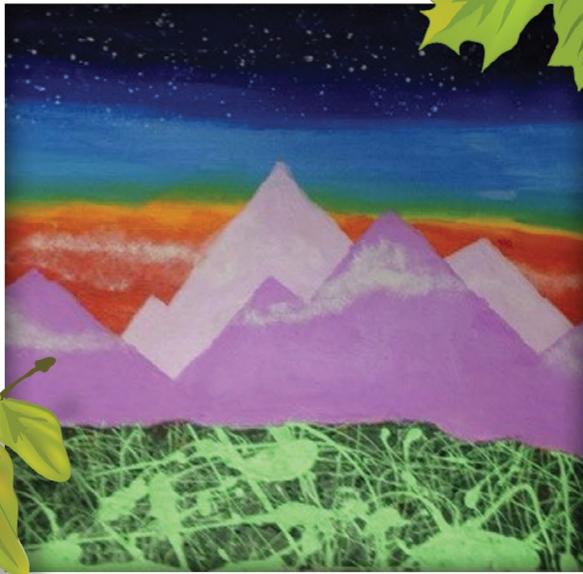
Adding to participants’ mealtime pleasure were special performances or presentations. Some of the presenters have been featured in previous issues of the Sower. Cassie Lacy and Marshal Rabe danced the afternoon away. They stepped out to some popular tunes as they demonstrated their award-winning ballroom dancing for the lunchtime crowd of more than 400. They were featured in the [Spring 2014 Sower, page 1](#).

Lynn Redding, featured in this Sower, utilized the public speaking skills she has honed as a member of Toastmasters as she presented her experiences with self-advocacy in a speech entitled, “It’s My Life!”

Tuesday dinner guests learned about roping and lassoing from Matt Kolasa. He was recently nominated for “Best Cowboy” at the Durham Western Heritage Museum’s Wild West Days. Matt applied for horse riding lessons in 2011 and started with horse and buggy driving lessons. Shortly after learning more about horses and western heritage, Matt began lassoing with help from Tom Cramer. He started with half hour lessons using a hay bale or barrel. For practices and for demonstrations like the one at the conference, Matt uses a plastic steer head on a sawhorse.

Amanda Coker, featured in the [Spring 2014 Sower, page 2](#), treated the Wednesday lunch crowd to some of her favorite songs. The songs she chose and her beautiful voice provided motivation for all present to live meaningful lives.

NEBRASKA ARTISTS



*Anthony*



*Jillian*



*Alyssa*



*Joshua*



*Alyssa*

NEBRASKA ARTISTS



Jannie



Anthony



Anthony



Jannie



Jeffery

DHHS/OMNI



Trainings are provided by OMNI Behavioral Health and the Department of Health and Human Services as an effort to improve the quality of life and care for people with developmental or intellectual disabilities in Nebraska. While target audience are suggested in the online descriptions, trainings are free (unless marked) and open to anyone who registers to attend.

Best Practice Strategies for Maximizing Staff Performance:  
**In Place – Just In Time Training**  
with Dr. Thomas Pomeranz

“Don’t blame them, train them.”

Free Trainings Open to the Public  
Attendance is Limited. Register Early!  
Meets the criteria for an approved CEU program for mental health practice. (6 CEU available) \*certificate will be provided\*

### Just in Time Supervisory Training

In this inspiring and motivating session, **Dr. Tom Pomeranz** focuses on the four coaching strategies (model, support, prompt and celebrate) that can dramatically enhance the effectiveness and productivity of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs).

Professionals (DSPs).

All sessions 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

- ▶ October 6 at Chadron State College
- ▶ October 7 at Alliance Knight Museum
- ▶ October 8 at Holiday Inn, Sidney
- ▶ October 9 and 10 at Gering Civic Center

Nurturing the Development of Young Children with Developmental Disabilities:  
From Birth to Age 5  
with Dr. Thomas Pomeranz

“We learn what we live.”

Free Trainings Open to the Public  
Attendance is Limited. Register Early!

### Nurturing the Development of Young Children

In this session, **Dr. Tom Pomeranz** will discuss a variety of strategies that can easily be used by parents, foster parents and surrogate families to promote and facilitate the development of their young child with developmental disabilities.

All sessions 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

- ▶ October 6 at Chadron State College
- ▶ October 7 at Alliance Knight Museum
- ▶ October 8 at Holiday Inn, Sidney
- ▶ October 9 at Gering Civic Center

Two Topics - One Training!

Self-Care for Caregivers and Service Providers of Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities  
Maintaining Boundaries for Caregivers and Service Providers of Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Presented by  
**Dr. Meredith Griffin**

This training meets the criteria for 6 CEUs for Mental Health Practice.

### Self-Care and Maintaining Boundaries for Caregivers and Service Providers

(Two topics; one training!)  
Self-Care reviews the definition of stress and different types of stressors; additionally, it reviews the definition of burn-out and four stages of burn-out. Maintaining Boundaries reviews the definition and functions of boundaries.

Department of Health & Human Services



OMNI Behavioral Health  
SPECIALISTS IN COMMUNITY SERVICES

All sessions 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

- ▶ October 15 at ESU 10, 76 Plaza Boulevard, Kearney
- ▶ October 22 at Country Inn & Suites, 5353 North 27th Street, Lincoln
- ▶ October 29 at Scott Conference Center, 6450 Pine Street, Omaha

Agency Management and Supervision  
Presented by:  
Cathy Lynch  
Dr. Bill Reay

This training is for Agency directors, supervisors, and staff who are responsible for managing and supervising staff who provide services to individuals with developmental disabilities. This training will provide you with the tools and strategies you need to effectively manage and supervise your staff.

Department of Health & Human Services  
DHHS  
OMNI Behavioral Health

### Agency Management and Supervision

### Communication and effective leadership

Attendees will learn about four communication styles and common miscommunication and misunderstandings within different management levels of an organization.

### Data, data AND . . . more data

Learn what data to collect, how to use it and how to implement effective changes.

### Looking into the crystal ball

What you need to know to take your agency’s mission and programming into the future.

### Motivation and engagement

Learn how agency management, employee engagement and good business outcomes are related. Diagnose problems, and take steps to re-engage staff at a higher level.

- ▶ 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. with a one-hour lunch break (bring your own lunch)
- ▶ Friday, October 17 at Scott Conference Center, 6450 Pine Street, Omaha



## Nutritional Assessment and Meal Planning for Individuals with Disabilities

Terri Lykins and Deb Kolman will present detailed information about ways to improve care for individuals with DD including enhanced dining, nutrition and support. Morning sessions will cover methods of food preparation with an eye toward safety and comfort in eating. Afternoons will feature nutrition assessment and body positioning.

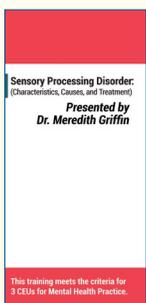
- ▶ All sessions 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- ▶ Friday, October 17 at Midtown Holiday Inn, 2503 South Locust Street, Grand Island
- ▶ Friday, November 7, at Scott Conference Center, Pine Street, Omaha



## Conducting Serious Incident Investigations \$200 fee

Participants attending this three day course will learn fundamental principles of investigation. Students who score a passing score on the exam will be certified as a Level One Certified Investigator.

- ▶ October 20-22, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. at Country Inn & Suites, 5353 North 27th Street, Lincoln

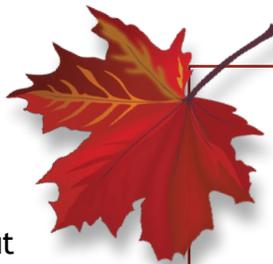


## Sensory Processing Disorders: Causes, Characteristics and Treatment

Dr. Meredith Griffin will review characteristics and causes of Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD), how characteristics of SPD can mimic behavioral disorders and/or mental illness and assessment and treatment options for SPD.

- ▶ Wednesday, November 5, 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. at Kearney Public Library, Kearney
- ▶ Wednesday, November 12, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. at Country Inn & Suites, 5353 South 27th Street, Lincoln
- ▶ Wednesday, November 19, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. at Scott Conference Center, 6450 Pine Street, Omaha

To register or inquire about any of these courses, contact Rebekka Erks at 402.397.9866 ext. 120 or email [rerks@omnibehavioralhealth.com](mailto:rerks@omnibehavioralhealth.com)



**Resources, Education, Disability Information**

**Caring for the Caregiver & Respite**  
August 17 - 2pm & 7pm (Central Time)  
If you have ever wished you could "take a break" or "get away" from your caregiving responsibilities, you need to know, on the webinar, you will learn about specific programs, funding sources and provider resources that are available to support family caregivers across the state and across the lifespan.

**Social Opportunities**  
August 26 - 1pm & 7pm (Central Time)  
If you are looking for social opportunities for individuals with disabilities across the state, this webinar will present on their statewide programs. Participants will be presented a resource list of recreational opportunities available in their area.

**Challenging Behaviors**  
September 23 - 10am & 12pm (Central Time)  
How can families address challenging behaviors? What resources are available in our state to help? Learn the answers to these questions and more.

**Transition**  
October 21 - 10am & 6pm (Central Time)  
If you are a parent of a child with a disability (age 12 or older), now is the time to start planning for transition. This webinar will provide an outline of steps to adulthood and discuss the role that Vocational Rehabilitation plays in the transition from school services into employment and post-secondary education.

# R.E.D.I.

(Resources, Education, Disability Information)

## Transition

- ▶ October 21 at 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. (Central Time)

If you have a child (aged 12 or older) with a disability or chronic health condition, now is the time to start planning for transition. This webinar will provide an outline of steps to adulthood and discuss the role that Vocational Rehabilitation plays in the transition from school services into employment and post-secondary education.

To register, go to <https://events-na8.adobeconnect.com/content/connect/c1/1089784797/en/events/catalog.html>

For questions, contact:  
**Kim Falk at 402.559.4951 or [Kim.Falk@unmc.edu](mailto:Kim.Falk@unmc.edu)**

The R.E.D.I. Project is funded by the Munroe-Meyer Guild to offer FREE webinars providing information and resources to families, professionals and individuals with disabilities across the lifespan and across the state. Topics are presented live twice each day and are archived on the Monroe-Meyer website for future viewing. Each webinar lasts approximately one hour.

JOTTINGS FROM:



## Jodi Fenner

Director of DHHS  
Division of Developmental Disabilities



September's colossal It's My Life! conference provided a great opportunity to meet people and renew acquaintances, learn from self-advocates and professionals, appreciate the many artistic expressions of Nebraskans with disabilities and be inspired. You'll read about some of the people who helped participants harness systems and resources to support people with developmental disabilities in living an enviable life. Thank you to all who participated!

Fall brings thoughts of school and the realization that education is a life-long process. This Sower includes information about educational opportunities in October and November. Self-advocates are welcome at all trainings. Your voice is vital as we work to ensure that all services are person-centered. By that I mean that we start with what each individual wants or needs and what is important to or for them. When individuals with DD are part of training or educational experiences, we remember that each individual is the expert about her or his life, living out the theme, It's My Life!

If you haven't visited Bear Creek Gifts and Studio in person or online, you'll want to do so after reading about it here. Not only are there great gifts hand-made by individuals with DD, you also receive 20% off the regular price of one item ... just in time for end-of-year gift giving!

As we near the end of the year 2014, I take this opportunity to express my thanks to you. Each individual I meet or talk with reminds me that public service is about you—your dreams and goals ... your life. It is a pleasure to journey with you as you declare, "It's My Life!" and as we work together to make it so.

## E-Learning Opportunities



Southeast Community College (SCC) is offering free online classes designed for individuals with developmental disabilities, their families and their providers.

### Together We Can!

This course includes six modules that provide information about how an individual and provider can work together to increase the individual's opportunities to live, work and participate in the community. Modules include the topics of:

- ▶ Building a Partnership
- ▶ Creating a Good Life
- ▶ Getting Involved in the Community
- ▶ Teaching and Learning and Going to Work.

### It's All About The Plan

This includes a set of four courses designed to assist students, individuals, parents and guardians to meaningfully participate in their Individual Education Program (IEP) process and/or their Individual Support Plan (ISP) process. The four courses include:

- ▶ The Student and the IEP
- ▶ The Parent and the IEP
- ▶ The Individual and the ISP
- ▶ The Family/Guardian and the ISP

All courses were developed by Fritz & O'Hare Associates and SCC through a grant from the Nebraska Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities.

To register, contact the Southeast Community College Continuing Education office at 402.437.2700. For general information about the course or assistance in using it in group settings, call Fritz & O'Hare Associates at 402.890.0636, or email Lloya Fritz at [lloyafritz@windstream.net](mailto:lloyafritz@windstream.net).