

# SOWER

Division of Developmental Disabilities

July 2011

sowing seeds of closer communication among  
Nebraskans working to ensure dignity,  
choice and quality of life for persons with  
developmental disabilities

## From the Directors Desk. . .

Wow! This past month has flown by so fast. There has been much going on—both at BSDC and in our communities across the state. What an exciting time to work for the Division of Developmental Disabilities!

I enjoyed a brief vacation in June where I floated down a stretch of the Illinois River in Oklahoma soon after a few significant rain events. The water was still quite high through much of our trip. While there were a few patches of hair-raising rapids with fallen trees and other debris in our path, there were also periods of smooth waters where we could reflect on our journey. Through both the rough and the smooth areas, we bonded with our family and took care to ensure no one “fell out of the boat.”

The trip reminded me of the journey we have gone through in the division over the past few years. There have been many rough patches, but we have worked together to tackle

the challenges before us. Our work has bonded us as a “family,” and together we have succeeded in implementing significant changes at BSDC and in our community programs. We were occasionally sidetracked by unexpected obstacles, but we stood firm in our commitment to ensuring quality services that allow people to live the most inclusive and meaningful lives possible. Our “life-jackets” consisted of fellow staff members (from front-line service coordinators and direct care staff to managers) who have dedicated decades of their lives to supporting people with developmental disabilities at BSDC and in the community. Yet, unlike my rafting trip, our journey doesn’t end at a pre-determined destination. Our path is never-ending, and our efforts will continue in seeking ways to better support those that we serve.

We are blessed to have several recent successes that we can enjoy, such as certification of our first two ICFs on the BSDC campus, implementation

of our new community waivers, and the addition of new service coordinators so that we can continue to serve new graduates and individuals from the waiting list.

I personally feel honored to work with division staff all across Nebraska and can say from first-hand experience that we have an amazing team! I am proud of what our team has achieved, and I look forward to continuing to work together towards future goals and accomplishments. I also value the partnerships we have with our community providers and the individuals that we support and their families.

Enclosed in this edition of the *Sower*, you will see a few of our wonderful staff that are being recognized this month for making a difference in the lives of the people they support.

Join me in recognizing their efforts, and have a wonderful July!

*Jodi M. Fenner*

# ★ YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE ★

## Division of Developmental Disabilities

**Katie Burgess, DTSS — BSDC, Kennedy Building:** Katie works very closely with the direct support staff at 104 Kennedy. She helps keep the home functioning at a high level of efficiency. She has worked very hard and long hours preparing for licensing and certification. She dedicates herself fully without any hesitation, without being asked, and with a positive attitude that is contagious. Katie is a very important part of the team for the people who live and work at 104 Kennedy.



**Alyssa Arntt, DTII – BSDC, Sheridan Cottages:** Alyssa is noted for her commitment to ensuring that all individuals are afforded dignity and respect and are provided with numerous opportunities to exhibit independence. She is known for her patience to ensure that individuals have the time needed to complete tasks successfully. Alyssa will adjust her schedule to ensure adequate staffing or to assist an individual with special needs. Most recently Alyssa adjusted her schedule and made personal sacrifices to accompany an individual during a hospital visit for surgery and recovery, not only for the individual but to support the family as well. Alyssa is a true advocate for all individuals who call Sheridan Cottages home.

**April Wagar, DTII – BSDC, Solar Cottages:** April has been a vital member of the Solar Cottages team, working tirelessly to support her teammates, especially new staff members. She ensures that the gentlemen she supports have the best opportunity to lead full and engaged lives. April is a team player, and consistently puts others needs in front of her own. April always has a positive, ‘can do’ attitude, which makes working with her a fun and enjoyable experience. She is truly an asset to not only 420 Solar, but the entire Solar Cottages team!



**Kari McPeck, DTSS – BSDC, State Cottages:** Kari has proven to be a valuable leader and team member. She is willing to support the homes as necessary, and has done an excellent job in leading the homes on the way to certification. Kari does an excellent job when working with staff members as well as the individuals we provide services too. Her dedication and compassion is an inspiration to others. Kari is truly an asset to the State Cottages team!

**Rhonda Bohling, DTII – BSDC, State Building :** Rhonda commitment to excellence and success in State Building is clear. She has near perfect attendance and a long history of positive performance. She is straight forward and willing to give it her all. Rhonda is an important key to success in maintaining a positive work environment and is a HUGE asset to the State Building team.



**Cary Udell – BSDC, Central Services/ Recreation Department:** Cary is in charge of arranging activities and outings for the individuals who live in the various homes on the BSDC campus. He brings people from all areas of campus together and provides opportunities for socialization and recreation on campus and in the community at large. Cary approaches his job with enthusiasm and lots of energy, and his leadership is evident by the high attendance at the activities he organizes. Cary is well known across Nebraska, and his relationship-building efforts have opened doors for the people we support to many different opportunities. People just want to be around Cary and come to his events because they know, whatever it is, it is sure to be an adventure!

**Cindy VanBoening, MHSSII - Bridges Program:** Cindy always displays a very positive attitude as she supports the individuals that she works with on a daily basis. She is super-efficient and can be depended on to consistently provide quality services. While the challenges at Bridges can be great at times, Cindy always has a smile on her face and her attitude is contagious. She is a valued team member who is committed to continuous program improvements and to contributing to a positive work environment. Cindy is awesome!



**Tammy Siedband, Service Coordinator - Southeast Services District:** Tammy was recognized by a provider for her dedication to her clients and her genuine concern for their well-being. She has shown this dedication by being available at various times to assist or meet with individuals and their teams, by ensuring that concerns are adequately addressed, and by her clear investment in ensuring that the people she supports have access to inclusive and meaningful life opportunities. Tammy goes above and beyond in staying up to date with information and seeking outside resources to support individuals. She is respectful and understanding when working with the team and is always open to suggestions. The provider noted: “We are grateful for Service Coordinators that are so dedicated to their jobs and are committed in finding solutions and opportunities for her clients. We always enjoy working with Tammy and other coordinators who display these characteristics.”



**Stephanie Weissinger, Service Coordinator - Eastern Service District:** Stephanie has served individuals with developmental disabilities for over thirty years. She has always gone above and beyond the normal expectations of the position and has formed long-term relationships with families and the individuals that she supports. She empowers people to make their own decisions about their hopes and dreams for the future and encourages them to think creatively about how their services should be configured. She always makes herself available to accommodate the families’ schedules and needs. She makes a point of attending special events for the people she serves, such as graduations or productions of plays, even when scheduled on weekends. Stephanie is a true gem!

**Mike Cool, Service Coordinator, Service Coordinator - Central Service District:** Mike is a master of organizational skills and known for the quality and consistency of his work. He continuously steps up when needed, often volunteering even before he is asked. He is a competent and compassionate communicator, and Mike has spent years cultivating relationships with the individuals and families he supports and with others in the community who support them. His leadership on projects and activities, such as the eligibility determinations, adds significant value to the services provided in the Central Service District. Mike is incredible!



**Staci Ellermeier, Service Coordinator - Western Service District** Staci has a great attitude and is professional in her approach to every situation. Representatives from outside agencies have commented positively on Staci’s demeanor and the quality of her interactions. Individuals and their families often comment on how much they value Staci’s support. She is recognized for her compassionate approach and for her dedication to individuals and their families. She is a valued member of the Western Service District and the Ainsworth community!

**Julie Kulisiak, Service Coordinator - BSDC Transition Team:** Julie is a dedicated worker who cares about her co-workers and the individuals she supports. Julie always asks what more she can do for individuals to make their lives better, and she listens intently to the responses received. Julie is a true leader. She understands her responsibilities and exceeds expectations. Her personality is determined yet compassionate, and she handles adversity and change with ease. Julie understands and believes in person-centered practices. She is a valued advocate for the people she supports.



**Deborah Peterson, Disability Service Specialist – Central Services :** Deborah works in the Kearney office, but her efforts are felt across the state. She is recognized for her willingness to support the rest of the team when needed, which was evident recently when she covered the caseload of a fellow disability service specialist on medical leave. Deb is able to juggle multiple projects at once, yet she always remains calm and ensures that her work is always top quality. Deb is a pleasure to work with. She is a valued member of our team!



The Nebraska Alliance for Full Participation Team sponsored a series of five webinars in spring of 2011. Those webinars were recorded and are now available to any interested party, using the links inserted below. Webinar topics relate to AFP's efforts to double the rate of employment of Nebraskans with intellectual / developmental disabilities. Learn more about our work by visiting [www.allianceforfullparticipation.org](http://www.allianceforfullparticipation.org).

**AFP Adventures Around the USA** <http://uom.na5.acrobat.com/p61734635/>

*During the webinar, we'll explore some of the most interesting activities currently engaged in by several of the 38 state teams associated with AFP. We'll chat about a few fascinating community initiatives spanning service, post-secondary education, and corporate diversity agendas now including people with disabilities. All of these have the potential for replication within Nebraska and all are demonstrating that people with disabilities are finding employment in both small and large businesses in a recession in every area of the U.S. **Speaker:** Karen Flippo, State Team Liaison, Alliance for Full Participation.*

**Customized Self-Employment for Anyone, Anywhere, Anytime:**

**Creating Careers in a No-Jobs Labor Market** <http://uom.adobeconnect.com/p8xw80ffv6f/>

*Customized self-employment builds on the energy created by supported employment, taking it to another level by refining the job development process, including self-employment as a legitimate career option. This seminar will be of particular interest to employment seekers, professionals, families and funders who seek to expand beyond traditional community employment. We'll identify a variety of collaborative funding and resource opportunities available to agencies and consumers in customized employment, state the advantages that self employment has over wage employment in the personal acquisition of wealth and equity, and explore the role of rehabilitation systems in expanding the use of customized employment strategies in both urban and rural settings. **Speaker:** Cary Griffin, Senior Partner at Griffin-Hamnis.*

**Work IS Possible** <http://uom.adobeconnect.com/p16klvps1ax/>

*Persons who experience disabilities and their families are in the best position to make choices about work when they receive good information about the impact of work on benefits. The more you know and understand, the better choices you can make about work. This webinar will help provide a general overview of the disability benefits that are administered by the Social Security Administration and the work incentives that individuals have available to them once work begins. **Speaker:** Crystal Norvell, Easter Seals Nebraska*

**Setting Employment as the 1<sup>st</sup> Priority** <http://uom.adobeconnect.com/p8s81umd63a/>

*Employment First has become a national movement among some state agencies, employment and self advocacy organizations, such as National APSE, AFP and SABE, and employment service providers. The common thread among these groups is that employment is expected to be the first priority when discussing and offering day services for youth and adults with disabilities. This session will focus on several ingredients that are important when considering setting employment as the 1<sup>st</sup> priority. Topics include career planning, how to create the expectation of work, setting employment outcomes for your agency, data collection (what's important to track and why), and nationally recognized approaches to promote change within a service organization. **Speaker:** Darla Wilkerson, The CSI Network*

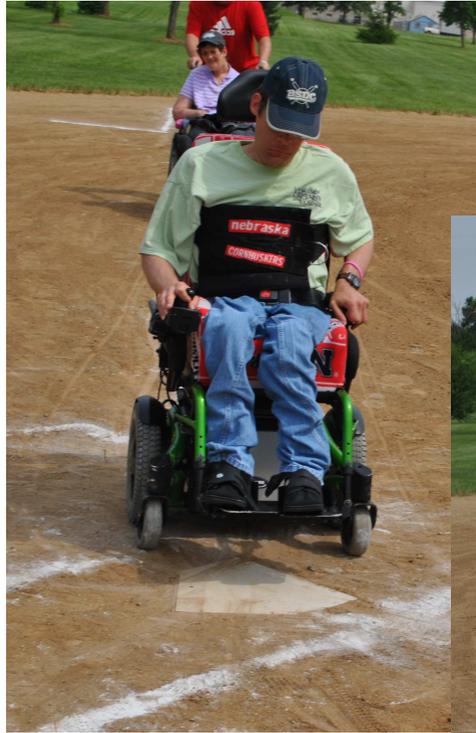
**Nebraska Employers: What Do They Need From Us?** <http://uom.adobeconnect.com/p1bw0xgdxtz/>

*In January of 2011, the NE AFP Team collaborated with the Nebraska State Council for the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) to survey the membership of the SHRM Nebraska chapters about their perceptions and experiences in recruiting and hiring job candidates with intellectual / developmental disabilities. Eighty-one respondents gave us some great insights to what employers need and want. We'll review the survey results and their implications. **Speaker:** Susan Rocker, University of Missouri Region 7 TACE Center*

# Fun in the Sun

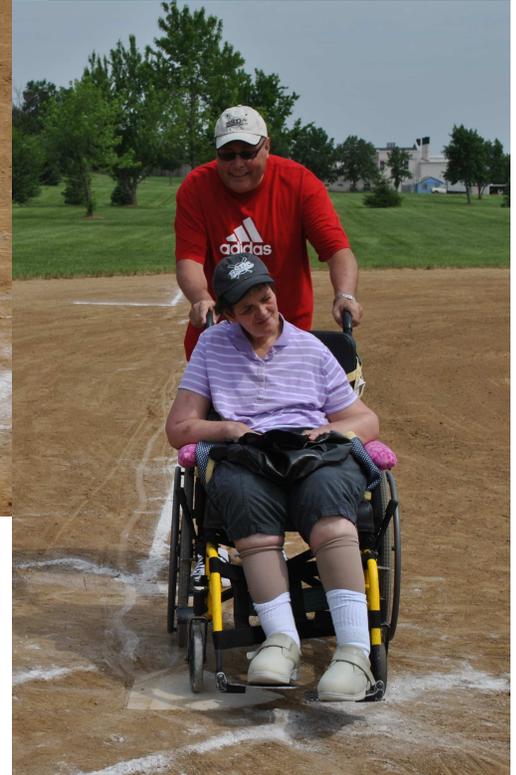
By Cary Udell

Beatrice State Developmental Center hosted its second annual softball game June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011 from 9:30am to 2pm. Invitations were sent out to Region V, Mosaic, Friends and Family, and all employees and their families. Everyone that attended received a ball cap and enjoyed lunch following the game. There were plenty of smiles and everyone really enjoyed the outdoor fun. The ball field at BSDC is a great sporting activity that gives everyone a taste of summer, both on the field and on the grill. Enjoy your summer and "Play Ball"!!!!



Left picture: David Courtney taking home plate.

Below picture : Jean Schmitz and Delvin Koch



All pictures taken by: Julie Belding, Recreation Director.

Left picture: Cary Udell and Josh Talbot.

Below picture: Luann Faris, Jared Knoble, and Cary Udell



## NOMINATIONS WELCOME FOR EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION!

Please send in your nominations if you work with a DHHS employee from the Division of Development Disabilities that you would like to see recognized for our monthly You Make a Difference awards. The work these individuals do does not always get the recognition it deserves and we would like your help in doing so. Nominations can be emailed to Tyla Vogt at [tyla.vogt@nebraska.gov](mailto:tyla.vogt@nebraska.gov) for consideration. If you have any questions please call 402-471-6038.

**Division of Developmental Disabilities**

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# Calendar of Events!

## JULY

### 15-17 Cornhuskers State Games

26 Nebraska Provider Network Meeting, Kearney

## AUGUST

19 DD Advisory Committee Meeting, Lincoln LLB

## SEPTEMBER

15-17 Torch Run Convoy

25 Family Fun Day at BSDC

If you have any items you would like us to add to the calendar please email to [Tyla.Vogt@nebraska.gov](mailto:Tyla.Vogt@nebraska.gov). Thank you!

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Readers are invited to submit time-sensitive news items for *Sower's* monthly edition to [DHHSDevelopmentalDisabilities@nebraska.gov](mailto:DHHSDevelopmentalDisabilities@nebraska.gov) or contact Tyla Vogt at 402-471-6038.

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