

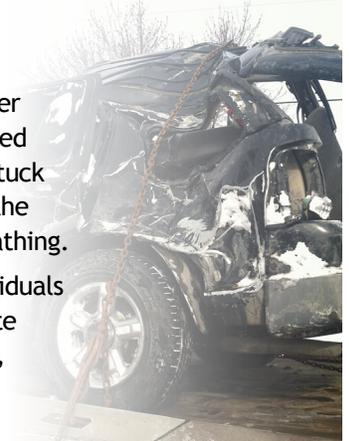
SOWER

ISSUE NO 1 | SUMMER | 2013



Joseph to the rescue

In mid-February, three people with developmental disabilities and their service provider were involved in a roll-over car accident due to snow and icy conditions. The car landed upside down, and the provider and two extended family home (EFH) residents were stuck upside down in the cold. Joseph Venable-Johnson (pictured left) was able to get out of the vehicle. He immediately helped the service provider and the others who were having a hard time breathing. The crash happened in a rural area. Joseph ran several miles up the road to get help. One of the individuals in the car needed significant medical attention. He was life flighted to Omaha where he had immediate surgery. Joseph's actions may have saved his life. Joseph was honored for his actions with a big trophy, and he was interviewed by an Omaha news station on March 6, 2013.



Jottings from Jodi Fenner

Director of
DHHS Division
of Developmental
Disabilities



Joseph's story is a great introduction to this issue of the *Sower*. His actions are inspiring! President Ronald Reagan signed a Proclamation in 1987 declaring March **National Developmental Disabilities Awareness** month. In his Proclamation, he encouraged everyone to help increase "public awareness of the needs and the potential of Americans with developmental disabilities." Joseph's actions do just that.

We want your help!

Our new creative team wants to hear from you.

The *Sower* is meant to do the same thing. It spotlights the needs and potential of Nebraskans with developmental disabilities. Do you see the puffball graphic at the top of this page? One little puff and the little fuzzies go flying. Like those fuzzies, stories like Joseph's (above), Gretchen's (page 2), or the Polar Bear Plungers (page 3) spread. They bring us joy. They encourage and inspire us. They also encourage us to look for and share other good things happening in Nebraska.

We want your help! Our new creative team wants to hear from you. Do you know an individual doing something fun or inspiring? Do you know a service provider making a difference in the life of a person with DD? Do you know of an event or a resource that others would like to know about? Let us know!

*Simply contact:
Christina Mayer
Community Liaison
402-440-4129
christina.mayer@nebraska.gov
Be sure to let her know that you're contacting her with an idea for the Sower, and give her your name and a way to contact you so she can find out more.*

*We hope you'll enjoy reading the Sower. It'll come to you quarterly. 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 (DDD), part of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), for the benefit of families, guardians, service providers, allied agencies and services, advocates and other interested individuals.

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Readers are invited to submit time-sensitive news items for Sower's monthly edition to Christina.Mayer@nebraska.gov or contact Christina Mayer at 402.440.4129.

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.

ADA/AA/EOE



Together We Can!

Road trip time!

At least it was for Gretchen Stauffer. Last year Gretchen, a Beatrice State Developmental Center, 415 Sheridan resident, went to her nephew's wedding 143 miles away in Salina, Kansas. Leaving in the morning, Debi Rinne R.N., drove Gretchen to Kansas and assisted with any cares before, during, and after the wedding.

Gretchen went all out for this trip. She got a new dress, jewelry, and shoes. She had been looking forward to her trip for a while. Even though she has been out in the Beatrice Community many times to go bowling or shopping, this was her first wedding. She couldn't have been more excited.

Editor's Note: *This event took place last year, but the article wasn't able to be published until now. Our thanks to Gretchen and the BSDC staff who worked hard to make this event happen.*



Together We Can!

Southeast Community College (SCC) has announced a FREE online class designed for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities and their independent providers. Independent providers are persons working under contract with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to provide services and supports for individuals with an intellectual or developmental disability.

The "Together We Can!" course will be offered at no charge through December 31, 2013. The course was developed by Fritz & O'Hare Associates and SCC through a grant from the Nebraska Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities.

The course includes six modules that provide information on how individuals and providers can work together to increase opportunities to live, work and participate in the community.

Modules include the topics:

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

"Together We Can!" is designed to allow the individual and provider to take the modules together or separately. Those taking the course may complete all of the modules or only those in which they are interested and at their own pace and schedule. The course may also be beneficial to others, including family members of persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

*To register for the course or for more information, contact:
Diane Siefres
Training Consultant in
SCC's Continuing
Education Division:
402-323-3386
or email:
dsiefres@southeast.edu*

Drop the "R" word from state law

Jodi Fenner, Director of DHHS' Division of Developmental Disabilities, recently testified in support of LB343. The bill calls for the removal of the words "mental retardation" and "mentally retarded" from Nebraska law. The words would be replaced with people-first language, such as "individual with an intellectual disability" and "intellectual disability."

"For too long, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have had to overcome the challenges society has put forth through stereotypes," Fenner said. "It is time for a change."

Currently, all but seven states have taken action to reduce or eliminate the use of the "R" word in state laws.

Fenner's full testimony can be found here: http://dhhs.ne.gov/Legislative%20Documents/LB343_DD.pdf

Legislative Bill 343 was introduced by State Sen. Colby Coash of Lincoln, who works in the developmental disability services field.

The phrase "mental retardation" shows up in many different laws, including laws on the death penalty, annulment of marriage and the licensing of what are now called intermediate care facilities for the mentally retarded.



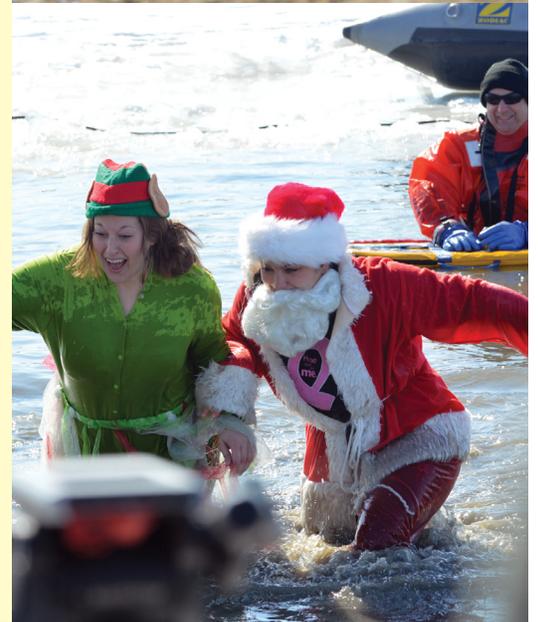
Polar Bear Plunge

Brrrrrrrrrrrr

It was a "bone chilling" February morning as the Lincoln Fire and Rescue dive team broke up a patch of ice at Holmes Lake in Lincoln, Nebraska. Nearly 40 teams, totaling 220 courageous plungers, lined up in wacky costumes to take a dip in the freezing cold water for the annual Polar Bear Plunge. This event began in Nebraska 15 years ago as a fundraiser to benefit Special Olympics, and has been going strong ever since. Special Olympics of Nebraska has brought in over \$500,000 dollars from the Polar Bear Plunge since 2007. A heap of smiling faces came out to support the plungers and the cause. Before the event, first-time plungers watched videos to prepare themselves for the experience. Repeat plungers chatted with friends and helped get things ready. The plungers ranged in age from 7 years on up.

The fun began with Darryl Burg (pictured upper right). The eldest plunger, at 92 years took to the waters to show those who were to follow how it was done. Not only was he the first brave soul to step into the icy water, he also dunked under! The crowd cheered! As the morning went on, participants in a variety of different costumes took the plunge. The Lincoln Shooting Stars, who have raised approximately \$5,000 dollars for the cause, dressed in a Harry Potter theme. They have plunged a total of six times in memory of their friend Mary Crooks.

A team known as 'Shiver me Timbers', dressed as a giant tree accompanied by lumberjacks. They plunged last year, and couldn't wait to get out to the bitter cold water again. Team member Jessica Gieseke reported that she did this because "all of the funds raised go to support Special Olympics and their athletes' right here in the great state of Nebraska." We also saw teams dressed as Scooby Doo, the Blue Man Group, Titanic's Jack and Rose, super heroes of all shapes and sizes, and Polar Bears. Most of the teams held hands, some danced, and a few tip-toed their way into the glacial water. This year, the Polar Bear Plunge raised \$56,890 dollars for the cause. What a great way to support Special Olympics while having a ton of fun!



Quality Review Team

QRT

Not just funny initials

As most of you know, here at the Division of Developmental Disabilities, we work hard to make sure individuals receive the quality of services they deserve. We are currently searching for Quality Review Team (QRT) members. Three teams are formed in the eastern, western, and central area of the state. Volunteer team members will travel throughout their area to visit residential settings and make observations regarding the quality of life for persons living in these homes. After visits are completed, the team members make recommendations to improve the quality of services provided. If you are an individual receiving service, a family member, or a community member who is interested, please contact us. We are looking for passionate people who want to make a difference!

If interested, contact:
Christina Mayer
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402-440-4129
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Lincoln, NE 68509-9847

Making a difference!

Do you know someone who has made a difference in the life of someone with a developmental disability and should be recognized? We want to know about them!

Send an email to Christina Mayer at: Christina.Mayer@nebraska.gov

Call her at: 402.440.4129 or go to <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MakingADifferenceNomination>

Please include the person's name and a short description of how they make a difference. Please include your contact information in case we need a little more information.

Making a difference!

Amy Peterson,
Disabilities Services Specialist

Hi, Amy. Pat and I want to thank you for how superbly you conducted your ICAP (Inventory for Client and Agency Planning) interviews with each of us yesterday. The entire process was very satisfying to us. We felt our ability to fully articulate our impressions and concerns were enhanced by the way you conducted your in person face-to-face interviews. We are very impressed with your positive, caring attitude towards persons with developmental disabilities and the problems they face in their daily life. You represent HHSS in a most positive way.

Thank you.
~ Jim and Patricia Flanagan

Kelly Sweigard,
Community Coordinator Specialist



Kelly Sweigard, Community Coordinator Specialist, was instrumental in reuniting an individual with her brother. They had lost contact with one another. Due to her increasing needs for support, the now 65 year old individual relocated to a provider agency in the Norfolk area. Community Coordinator Specialist Kelly Sweigard carefully reviewed the woman's information and found information about a brother who had last seen his sister at a young age, and had lost contact with her since that time. Kelly contacted the brother who was overjoyed to be reunited with his sister. He has now introduced her to his wife and children, and they all enjoy visiting. The brother is also in the process of becoming her guardian. The priceless value of Kelly's efforts can be observed by anyone who sees how the individual's face lights up when her brother pats her knee and says her name, as only her family did before they were separated so long ago.

~Kathie Lueke

What is Special Olympics?

Special Olympics is an international organization that changes lives by promoting understanding, acceptance and inclusion between people with and without intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics has created a model community that celebrates people's diverse gifts. Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics provides people with intellectual disabilities continuing opportunities to realize their potential, develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage and experience joy and friendship.

Sports overview

Special Olympics Nebraska offers 19 different sports. Athletes train for 8 weeks before competing at any regional or state competition. Athletes who place 1st, 2nd, or 3rd at the regional level have the opportunity to advance to state level competition.

Unified sports

Special Olympics Nebraska offers several "Unified" sports which brings together athletes with and without intellectual disabilities who train and compete as a team. This a great way to break down stereotypes and misperceptions, while building friendships both on the court and off.

Sports offered

Alpine Skiing	Bocce	Golf	Powerlifting	Softball
Aquatics	Bowling	Gymnastics	Roller skating	Tennis
Athletics	Cross Country Skiing	Flag Football	Snowshoeing	Volleyball
Basketball	Equestrian	Floor Hockey	Soccer	

