

SOWER

...Sowing Seeds of Closer
Communication Between the Center
and the Community-At-Large

Within the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, the **BEATRICE STATE DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER** provides 24-hour residential, medical, habilitative and consultative services for Nebraskans with mental retardation or related conditions.

BSDC VISION: Best Support for Dignity and Choice: "Learning for Life."

Developmental Disabilities Director's 1st year a record of shared successes, continuing challenges

When **John Wyvill** took the reins of the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DD) in the Department of Health and Human Services a year ago, the Beatrice State Developmental Center was facing serious challenges. Since then, the facility has met some of those challenges and, according to the Director, "continues to improve by leaps and bounds with every passing week."

When federal surveys identified serious problems at the facility, an all-out effort by Developmental Disabilities staff and BSDC employees resulted in continued "rightsizing" from 329 clients last December to a current count of 252. Transitioning clients to community-based services results in enhanced services for both those who left and those who remain.

Challenged by a facility in crisis, long-time BSDC employee **Ron Stegemann** was named as

DD Director John Wyvill (center), BSDC Chief Executive Officer Ron Stegemann and Community-based Services section leader Tricia Mason work closely together to enhance quality of services and life for all persons with developmental disabilities in Nebraska.



persons with developmental disabilities in Nebraska. Photo: Bill Wiley

Chief Executive Officer to lead the facility forward. Based on the facility's progress over the past year, Wyvill counts that appointment among significant successes.

Another success was realized when mandatory overtime that stretched quality of services and

stressed exhausted staff was reduced significantly.

Before July 1st, Service Coordinators who link clients with services were in the DHHS Division of Children & Family Services. Now, 222 Service Coordination staff are in the DD

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Division. In addition, **Tricia Mason** has been named administrator of DD's Community-based services section to help ensure service delivery contract oversight, fiscal responsibility, and accountability.

While much remains to be done, significant successes have been realized during Wyvill's first year. The Director marked this anniversary with a special message to all employees within the DD Division. The message opened with his expression of "gratitude, admiration and respect for each of you." After recounting both successes and remaining challenges, Wyvill closed with a personal experience:

At the end of the day, I always ask myself, "What have I done to make a difference?" This reflection is done with two purposes: to take stock on what we accomplished and to have an answer for my six-year-old daughter during her bedtime stories when she asks me, "What did you do at work today, Daddy?"

I tell her what we do every day to make a difference for those we serve. At the end of the day, I hope you ask the same question...

I suspect all of you will have the same answer.

Although the road has been bumpy and challenges still lie ahead, the DD Director, the Center CEO and all employees within the DD Division can look back with pride and ahead with confidence to a brighter future for the clients they serve.

Former Center citizen now makes new home in the capitol city

When **Marci Higer** moved to Lincoln last year from the Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC) to live in a community setting with Developmental Services of Nebraska (DSN), she said good-bye to what had been her home for two decades. Like all such moves, it was both an ending and a beginning.



Marci Higer relaxes at home with Pumpkin. Photo: Jerry Crisp

Marci now lives in an apartment in Lincoln with a roommate. **Ashlynn Arrants**, Residential Manager with DSN, says they get along well and recently acquired a third roommate—a cat named **Pumpkin**.

Marci works at Labor Solutions West through DSN, a workshop that supports and assists individuals in finding community employment. At the workshop, Marci has a small business making blankets that she sells

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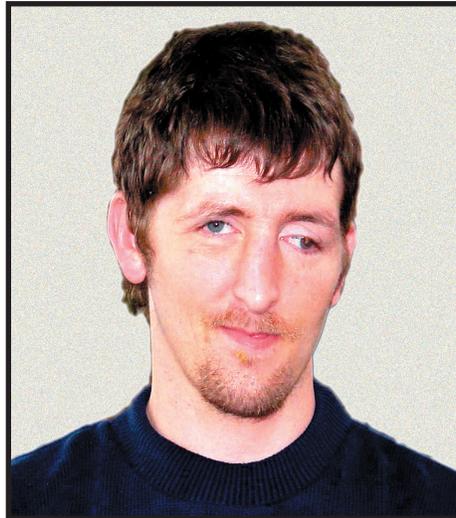
The following editorial is from **James Plate**, former Center citizen who contributed to *Sower* for three years, edited a newsletter of his own for BSDC clients, and is now served by Mid-Nebraska Individual Services (MNIS) in Kearney. Thanks to MNIS Production Assistant **Kathy Quail**, James' articles continue to appear in *Sower*.

Words of Wisdom

By *James Plate*

I'm not that smart so don't expect there to be a lot of logical thinking here. I have to put up with a lot of confusion because of my lack of ability in verbally expressing myself, so here we go. Keep reading if you will.

I feel like I'm working in constant chaos, but my care providers try to make it feel more like home. Speaking of home, as we get ready to celebrate the holidays with family and friends,



James Plate
Photo: Roger Girch

stop and take a moment to thank those who enrich our lives. I am lucky enough to have so many people who help to enrich my life and hopefully so do you.

Well, that's it for now, readers.



From the Director

For many of us, holidays means sharing with friends and family. It also means sharing with those in need of our help and work.

Many have benefitted from the sacrifices you have made for the betterment of people with developmental disabilities. While we all are all independent, our greatest achievements are accomplished working together.

In counting our blessings this holiday season, one of the first is having the opportunity to work with you to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities at BSDC. Thank you for the privilege of saying that I work with you.

From my family to yours, I wish each one of you a joyous holiday season.

John Wyvill, Director
Division of Developmental Disabilities

BSDC Family and Friends Association seeks funds!

The BSDC Family and Friends Association raises funds to purchase items tax dollars can't. More than 40 years old, the Association is incorporated and granted federal tax exemption.

Among projects the Foundation targets: A golf cart for individuals who are aging or with disabilities to transport themselves around campus; two-seated trikes for individuals to enjoy cycling experiences; landscaping improvements for the BSDC section of Evergreen Cemetery; and awards for exemplary care-giving.

Please send your donation to the BSDC Friends and Family Association in care of **Joel Bute** at 1126 North 150th Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68154. If you want more information about developing a trust for a person served that may ultimately benefit the BSDC Family and Friends Association, please contact Joel at the address above or call (402) 496-1686.

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to staff for themselves or their pets.

On weekends, Marci takes part in Special Olympics bowling and track. She also has an hour of independent time to spend at her residence or in the community, as she chooses. During this time, she especially enjoys spending time at the library or going for walks.

Marci has a boyfriend. They often go out for dinner, and Marci is also enhancing her cooking skills. Among her favorites are homemade pizza and pies. While a cooking hobby can sometimes be a challenge for folks trying to maintain a healthy weight, Marci watches what she eats, exercises regularly and as a result has lost seven pounds since April!

Arrants says that Marci is also working on responsibility for becoming self-medicated—a big step toward greater independence.

“Marci is very helpful and always polite and respectful,” says Arrants.

When Marci moved to Lincoln, she took with her many things she had learned during her years in Beatrice. She had acquired numerous skills during her time there, according to BSDC Employment Coordinator **Jan Hiner**.

“Among skills she acquired while working at the Snack Shack on campus were cooking, working a cash register and waiting on customers,” Hiner explains. “She also had learned how to write checks.”

When Marci left BSDC, she didn’t leave everyone behind either. Hiner is now Marci’s legal guard-

ian.

“When Marci moved to Lincoln, her guardian, a Beatrice attorney, asked if I would be interested in serving as her guardian,” Hiner explains. “He felt that I might be able to spend more time with her than he could. In addition, Marci also requested that I become her guardian, since she and I had developed a friendship over the years.”

Among many things Hiner does as guardian are advocating for Marci, ensuring that she maintains skills and acquires new ones, reviewing medications, monitoring health, and mentoring.



At the DSN workshop, Marci has a small business making blankets that she sells to staff for themselves or their pets. In the last couple of months, she has sold more than 15 blankets. Photo: Jerry Crisp

“I also attend quarterly meetings involving DSN and stay in close contact with Marci’s Services Coordinator, **Wayne Harris**.

Marci and Jan Hiner share many social activities in Lincoln that includes shopping, playing bingo and attending church together.

“Marci generally spends holidays at my home in Beatrice,” says Hiner. “We love to catch up on things and share cooking duties. Her favorite dish to prepare is a corn casserole.”

Many clients are leaving their former home at Beatrice to take up new residence in other communities. Like Marci Higer, they hope to move to a new life and also carry significant portions of their former life with them.

To help “unlock voices” for individuals with developmental disabilities, Sower offers this installment in a series of interviews with Center citizens.

Speaking for myself

Joyce Langdale, a resident of 414 Sheridan Drive on campus, is a very loving person, and we can prove it.

Asked which staff member she feels closest to, her answer is immediate: “**Cindy Lytle** (Developmental Technician III) — I love her!”

Asked what she likes to do most on campus, she replies, “I love to get my hair done at the Beauty Shop!”

Asked why she likes about getting her hair done at the Beauty Shop, and she says, “I love to look good, and I love to talk with everyone there!”

“I’ve been doing Joyce’s hair every week for 34 years,” says **LuAnn Faris**, the Center’s Cosmetologist Supervisor. “She is very close to me and a very special friend. Whenever time permits, we have a cup of coffee and a cookie or roll after her hair is done.”

Asked to name another favorite spot on campus, Joyce says, “Carstens Cafe — I love to drink coffee and talk with people!”

Lytle reports that Joyce has a collection of several coffee cups, including a trio of prized **Elvis Presley** cups.

Asked about her favorite activities off campus, and Joyce



Joyce Langdale (at right) with Cindy Lytle, direct care provider, friend and member of Joyce’s campus family. Photo: Jerry Crisp

says that she “loves to go shopping at malls in Beatrice and Lincoln!”

Asked what she is looking forward to most, she replies, “I love to phone my brother in South Carolina and my sister in Colorado!”

With her adamantly avowed

affection for coffee cups, getting her hair done, visiting with people and unabashed love for members of both her campus family and her biological family, Joyce Langdale is clearly a very loving person. Not a bad way to be and a good example for the rest of us.

Sower is interested in interesting its readers. If there’s something you’d like to see covered in these pages, contact us by any means listed in the editorial box on page 3, and watch for an article in an upcoming issue!

ENCOR home means new friends *and* family ties

*By Kellie Boury,
Developmental Disabilities
Services Coordination
Supervisor, Omaha*

Ashlee Bradley is a charmer. Ask anyone who knows her, and they will mention her smile, infectious laugh, sparkling eyes and positive energy. The people who know Ashlee are aware of her challenges and needs due to diagnoses of mental retardation, cerebral palsy, scoliosis, microencephaly and a seizure disorder. They know her nutrition is received via a g-tube. But those are not the things that come to mind; they are not what defines Ashlee.

Her's is the story of a strong, loving family, of living in her family home, surrounded by people who love and appreciate the engaging young woman she has grown to be. It is a story of a young lady who loves shoes, new clothes and spending time with friends. Walking into a room and having Ashlee's face light up with a smile is an experience that is not soon forgotten. She might not even have to see you. Just hearing her sister's voice elicited a joyful response on a recent visit.

Recently, Ashlee's mother received a medical diagnosis that changed things. As usual, the



Ashlee Bradley at her day program with sensory items full of lights, sounds and textures. Photo: Kellie Boury

family rallied, supporting each other and making sure Ashlee's needs were met. But due to the diagnosis, it was necessary to make other living arrangements for her.

After receiving the funding for residential services, Ashlee and her team, including family members and Service Coordinator, **Randy Jary**, began to search for a home that would meet her needs and be a place where a 25-year-old woman would be able to have friends and continue the activities she loved.

ENCOR, one of the agencies that provides services to individuals with developmental disabilities in the Omaha area, had a home the team toured. It was a home in northwest Omaha that had no

physical barriers and offered Ashlee an opportunity to continue living in her community and doing the things she loves.

ENCOR staff members, including Residential Manager **Katrina Wachter** and R.N. **Diane Pien**, soon learned what Ashlee's needs were and set up training so that all staff members could assist Ashlee. As in most emergency situations, there were a few bumps along the way, but Ashlee and her team agreed that her new home was just right.

She continues to be involved with her family,

including spending time with her grandmother and staying in touch with her sister in Denver. Ashlee is the proud aunt of 9-year-old **Evan**, who thinks the world of her.

"It helps ease my heart and mind to know that Ashlee is being cared for with some of the respect and love that she always received from my mother," says Ashlee's sister.

Installing a hammock on the back porch of the house is a real possibility for next spring. What better way to spend your free time than relaxing, listening to your favorite music and hanging out with new friends!

Center citizens deliver Meals-on-Wheels

Some Center citizens volunteer their time to the local community. Several from 412 State Avenue and 202 Sheridan Drive pick up hot meals at Beatrice Community Hospital twice weekly and deliver them to home-bound seniors.



Accompanied by Activity Specialist **Max Schmidt** (at left), **Ron Tillman** (center) and **Johnny Knight** head up a Beatrice driveway.



(Far left) Ron delivers a meal to **Ruth Drake**, and (at right) Johnny follows with soup or salad and a roll.

“Everyone feels good about helping others, and the clients jumped at the opportunity,” says Activity Specialist **Brandon Shelby**. “They make sure that senior citizens get their meal with a smile and know they are doing a good thing,” adds Activity Specialist **Max Schmidt**.

Meals-on-Wheels provides nutritious congregate meals to older citizens at senior centers or churches and delivers meals to homes of persons who are unable to leave their home due to injury, illness or frailty.

Photos: Jerry Crisp

Four Developmental Disabilities staff named DHHS Employees, Supervisors of the Year

Center employee **Jeromy Warner** was among 13 named Employees of the Year, and **Delvin Koch** was among 13 named Supervisor of the Year by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

A provisionally licensed psychologist, Jeromy Warner performs all psychological functions for the Beatrice State Developmental Center's Bridges Program at the Hastings Regional Center. With a strong work ethic, high standards and using a team approach, he settles for nothing less than 100% effort, according to a nominator. Gathering input from all team members including the consumer, Warner involves all in program development and shared success.

Delvin Koch is a Neighborhood Services Assistant Administrator at BSDC. Koch rose from the ranks, starting as a direct care provider. Throughout his tenure in each position, according to his nominators, Koch demonstrated leadership skills. Koch is also credited by nominators for devoting long hours to implementing Plans of Correction he helped design.

Also earning honors as a DHHS Supervisor of the Year is **Mary Eman**, Developmental Disabilities Service Coordination Supervisor in the DHHS Holdrege office. Nominators cited achievements including benefiting persons with developmental disabilities state-



Jeromy Warner
Photo: Hal Maggiore



Delvin Koch
Photo: Robert Thompson



Mary Eman
Photo: Robert Thompson



Kim McFarland
Photo: Robt. Thompson

wide through serving on the quality assurance committee, and helping develop a new program plan format and quality review process and a statewide training program for Service Coordinators.

"Those she oversees benefit from her vast knowledge, strong advocacy and innovative thinking," said one nominator.

Also singled out as a DHHS Supervisor of the Year is **Kim McFarland**, Administrative

Assistant within the DHHS Division of Developmental Disabilities in Lincoln. Among strengths singled out by nominators were sensitivity, the ability to "connect" person-to-person, and communication skills.

Said a nominator, "Division employees consider themselves lucky to have her as a co-worker, mentor and friend."

Campus groups join forces to enhance employee recognition

Diverse groups on campus with common interests are working more closely together to recognize employee contributions. By joining forces when interests coincide, these groups intend to avoid overlap and enhance impact.

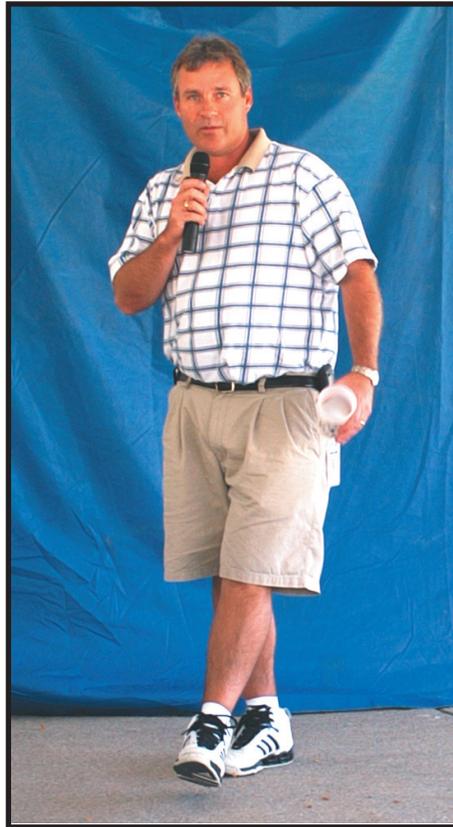
Spearheading this effort is Personnel Officer **Ryan Broker**, who termed it “T.E.A.M. BSDC” for “*T*eaching, *E*ncouraging, *A*cknowledging and *M*otivating.” After being asked to chair the Incentives and Recognition Committee, Broker noted the work of other campus groups that had been involved with employee recognition for many years.

One of these groups is the Friends and Family Association, headed by **Joan O’Meara**, whose daughter lives at BSDC.

“This group has always been a strong supporter of employees who do a difficult and demanding job well,” says Broker.

Another campus group is “W.A.T.C.H.” (Worthwhile Activities to Create Harmony), an employee-led group that sends welcome notes to new hires, publishes news about employees and their families, sends cards when a death occurs in an employee’s family, and collects money for employee and natural disasters like tornadoes and fires.

Yet another group is the Communication Task Force that has



At the first T.E.A.M. BSDC recognition program, Center CEO Ron Stegemann thanked Center employees for helping BSDC clients live better lives.
Photo: Nancy Sedlacek

focused on enhancing campus communication and working relationships and publishing the *BSDC Employee Newsletter* to keep employees updated and build pride in both employee and facility successes.

“While each of these groups has a different primary focus and approaches employee recognition from different perspectives,” Broker explains, “I was delighted

that all expressed strong support for a unification effort.”

T.E.A.M. BSDC’s first collaborative effort was a special employee recognition during the annual Fun Day event. Center CEO **Ron Stegemann** led the way by personally thanking all employees for helping clients live better lives. *T.E.A.M. BSDC* members then distributed color-changing cups bearing the team logo, donated by the Friends and Family Association. Large banners expressing thanks for employee contributions, also donated by the Friends and Family Association, were displayed across campus.

T.E.A.M. BSDC has no central control but simply works together to avoid overlap and redundancy and offer opportunities to combine efforts whenever it’s in their mutual interests. Team members can do their own thing and come together whenever they choose.

“It’s important to remember,” says Broker, “that one doesn’t need to be a member of these groups to belong to *T.E.A.M. BSDC*. Anyone who thanks, encourages, acknowledges or motivates is already a team member!”

“If employees feel their contributions to serving clients are appreciated, they will stay longer, be happier, and clients will be better served,” Broker says. “When that happens, the credit will belong to anyone who contributes to this team effort.”

Fun Day!

A beautiful fall day was a backdrop for another “Fun Day,” the annual extravaganza that brings clients and their families and employees and theirs to share fellowship and fun. *Photos by Nancy Sedlacek*



RENEWING OLD FRIENDSHIPS: Accompanied by MENTOR Program Manager Leyna Acosta-Martin, Phillip Patrick, now living near his family in Omaha, returns to his former BSDC home to reunite with old friends and enjoy a fun-filled day.



MAKING NEW FRIENDS: Facility Maintenance Supervisor Don Zimmerman (at right) introduces his miniature horse, “Lobo,” to Fun Day goers. Don has been sharing miniature horses and donkeys at Fun Day and nursing homes for 20 years.



COLLABORATIVE CREATIVITY: In spite of the bite mark on this surfboard, no shark attacks were reported at Fun day. However, Center citizen Emily King (at left) accepted a 1st-place prize in a surfboard decorating contest on behalf of two roommates with whom she collaborated, Jenny Rosencrans and Juanita Bax. The competition was in keeping with this year’s Fun Day theme—“Beach Party BSDC!”

Photos by Nancy Sedlacek

More Fun Day fun!



FUN AND GAMES! (Above left) An array of activities in the carnival game area attracted those attending Fun Day, and one (above right) tries his luck at darts.



TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT! Wannabee swish-shooters test their athletic prowess at some “B-ball.”



READY, AIM, FIRE! Fun Dayers found that even a water gun shootout in the “Water Tag” arena (above left) couldn’t “dampen” their spirits (above right) and only “wet” their appetites for more fun in the sun.

Photos by Nancy Sedlacek

Something to *CHEER* about!

Jill Hatzenbuehler and Megan Hicok, two direct care providers at 203 Kennedy Boulevard, were excited about an upcoming cheerleading camp at Diller-Odell High School and used break time at work to practice.

“If you show the 203 Kennedy individuals your cheers and work their programs into it, this could make a great learning experience,” said Human Services Treatment Specialist **Karen Engelman**.

Individuals at 203 Kennedy enjoyed the activity so much that Engelman asked the cheerleaders if they’d share it with the whole campus. On July 24, the two staff members were joined by a third member of the cheerleading squad for a couple dance routines and several cheers at the campus gym in which 203 Kennedy clients were included.

Well over 175 clients and staff members showed up.

“I got to that number and quit counting because we only had 100 cookies,” says Engelman. “We’re grateful to the kitchen staff for rushing additional refreshments to meet the unexpected demand!”

In addition to Food Service, Engelman says many areas including Recreation, Warehouse,



Center citizen James Blankenau poses with Jill Hatzenbuehler (left), Megan Hicok (right), and high school squad member Julie Kalivoda following their performance at the BSDC campus gym.

Photo: Cary Udell

Developmental Therapy and Transportation helped make the campuswide event possible. Plans are to offer this event again next year and invite the entire cheerleading squad.

BSDC clients benefit in more ways than one from on-call high school students like these who

supplement full-time employees by assisting with eating and recreational activities. The youthful energy they bring to entertaining activities like cheerleading also finds its way into the daily care they provide, enhancing both quality of services and quality of life for the clients they serve.

Share Sower’s new address

If you know someone who might be interested in reading *Sower*, let that person know the Center’s national award-winning publication is available at

www.dhhs.ne.gov/Sower.

Special birthday request



Center citizen **Jay Swoboda** had a special request for decorating the ice cream cake celebrating his 55th birthday. Instead of asking for the usual “Happy Birthday” or a picture of his favorite activity or interest, Jay requested “God Bless BSDC, God Bless 408.”

Both Jay’s roommates at 408 State Avenue and folks across the BSDC campus were flattered by his sentiments.

Said Jay, “I really love my home a lot!” *Photo: Sue Clausen*

When BSDC employees help individuals with developmental disabilities live better lives...

Facility Faces

...then Center services and Center service providers become one and the same.

A BSDC employee for 21 years, **Leroy Lopez** has been a Vehicle Operator for 15. On top of his transportation duties, he has served on the Diversity Committee. What Leroy enjoys most about his work is interacting with clients and driving them to work, medical appointments and community activities.

The most memorable thing that ever happened on the job was 18 years ago while Leroy was delivering wood pallets made by Center clients to a local firm. Walking inside, he wondered why the place was so dark and deserted. Hollering to rouse someone without success, he finally figured that the business was closed that day and someone simply forgot to lock all doors.

Walking outside, Leroy ran into Beatrice police officers, who greeted him with drawn guns. Their weapons were only lowered when he shouted, “I work for BSDC, I work for BSDC!” Leroy will never forget the day working for BSDC saved his life.

“It might be funny *now*,” Leroy says, “but I can tell you it was less amusing *then*.” *Photo: Jerry Crisp*

