

Connections

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

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

May 2009
VOLUME 9, ISSUE 5

Updating the State



Photo: Bill Wiley

Dr. Joann Schaefer, Nebraska's Chief Medical Officer and Director of the DHHS Division of Public Health, spearheads a media briefing on the novel H1N1 flu. More on this story inside!

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.

[Carol Coussons de Reyes is Director of the Behavioral Health Office of Consumer Affairs](#) April 1, 2009

[Scam Artists May Target One-Time Economic Recovery Payment](#) April 6, 2009

[Stress Happen: Rethink Your Reaction](#) April 16, 2009

[Department of Health and Human Services Contracting with ENCOR for Additional Community Services](#) April 19, 2009

Have a story idea you think DHHS should be sharing with media? Contact Communications & Legislative Services at (402) 471-9108.

About the Cover:



Dr. Joann Schaefer, Nebraska's Chief Medical Officer and Director of the DHHS Division of Public Health, spearheads a media briefing on the novel H1N1 flu. Five briefings were held between April 28 and May 4 to keep the media and the public informed. One day, more than 18 media representatives were either present in the DHHS studio or listening via conference call. Nebraska gained national attention when it reported its first case of H1N1. More on next page.

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DHHS Public Web site: <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov>

DHHS Employee Web site: <http://www2.dhhs.ne.gov>

DHHS System Advocate: 1-800-254-4202, (402) 471-6035 in Lincoln, or via e-mail at diana.duran@dhhs.ne.gov

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EOE/AA/ADA

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DHHS takes lead in state's H1N1 response

By Jodie Fawl
Public Information Officer
NE Emergency Management Agency

DHHS took the lead in Nebraska's coordination and response to the H1N1 flu outbreak that involved multiple state agencies, local health departments and federal partners, including the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Department of Homeland Security, working together during the last week of April and into May.

The ongoing response to the outbreak of a novel influenza virus that started in Mexico and quickly spread across the globe was coordinated in Nebraska by DHHS with Incident Command System planning and support from the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

Dr. Joann Schaefer, Chief Medical Officer and Director of the DHHS Division of Public Health, held daily news briefings during the first week of the outbreak.

"We are engaged in a response to a pretty significant public health outbreak," Schaefer told reporters on April 30. "This is a new virus, no one is immune and things can escalate. We need to do what we can to lower impact to the community."

Reducing the transmission and severity of the illness was the primary focus in Nebraska and throughout the country. A major part of the effort was providing information to health care providers, public health officials and the public.

"I think the media reported and the public followed our public health precautionary messages," she said. In addition, the Health Alert Network provided advisories to health care providers throughout the state on H1N1 surveillance, diagnosis, testing, infection control and treatment recommendations.



Photo: Bill Wiley

NEWS FLASH! **Bruce Dart**, Lincoln/Lancaster County Department of Health Director, and **Dr. Joann Schaefer** update the media during a daily news briefing on the H1N1 outbreak. The DHHS response involved networking with many other community agencies.

The Public Health Laboratory was also a big help in identifying the virus. The lab has now been certified by the CDC to do confirmatory testing. This means it is able to do Nebraska's testing without sending specimens to the CDC for testing.

"We are glad that this outbreak wasn't as serious as it could have been," Schaefer said. "It's giving us a good look at how the system we have in place would work in the case of a serious pandemic. It shows that our preparation for a pandemic has helped us in a real situation."

On April 27, Dr. Schaefer authorized the staffing of the DHHS Emergency Coordination Center (ECC). Although staff did not relocate from the Nebraska State Office Building, this decision formalized DHHS activities within an

Incident Command Structure. **Jackie Miller**, Community Health Section administrator, managed the ECC and assigned staff to specific ECC positions and responsibilities.

Members of the ECC met twice a day for two weeks to make sure the appropriate plans were in place and daily activities were accomplished, in preparation should the outbreak reach a pandemic level.

One of the ECC's responsibilities is the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS), consisting of antiviral medications and medical supplies, which was released to states from the CDC. The receiving, securing and dividing of Nebraska's portion of the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) was successfully accomplished.

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H1N1 response: (continued from page 3)

Twenty-five DHHS employees divided the state's allotment of the federal SNS on May 5. More than 64,700 treatment courses of antivirals were packaged in apportioned lots for local health districts.

Shipments to Nebraska were coordinated carefully by CDC, said **Russ Wren**, DHHS Emergency Response/SNS Coordinator.

"We had a plan and it worked well," Wren said. "Everybody has done a great job. It's good to see that the plan works."

The 55 pallets took four hours to open up and repackage. The antivirals are being held in a secure, temperature-controlled location and will be deployed, if necessary, at the direction of the Chief Medical Officer.

If the antivirals are distributed, they will be sent to local health departments across the state, according to **Grey Borden**, Bioterrorism Surveillance Coordinator with the Division of Public Health. The antivirals and other supplies will be distributed throughout the state equitably based on area population.

The Nebraska State Patrol provided transportation security, and the Lincoln Police Department and Lancaster County Sheriff's Office provided site security for the SNS. The Nebraska Department of Roads provided two employees and a forklift. The Office of the Chief Information Officer provided communications and IT support.

"I'm really proud of the work that state employees did so quickly to get these antivirals ready to be distributed," Schaefer said. "Now Nebraska is in a good position to deploy the treatment courses if they are needed. Antivirals are really our first line of defense against this illness because there is no vaccine."

In addition to the federal allotment of antivirals, the state has an additional stockpile of 45,600 courses



A planning meeting was held each day as part of the Incident Command system to develop plans for the next day. The meeting includes planning and operations chiefs who work on the Nebraska Action Plan for H1N1. Clockwise from lower left are: **Bonnie Engel**, **Russ Wren**, **Lela McNinch** (Dept. of Education), **Tom Rauner**, **Jackie Miller**, **Chris Newlon** and **Sue Medinger**.

in another secure location, which can also be deployed, if necessary. Some local health departments have their own stockpiles.

The DHHS communications logistics trailer was activated to the SNS site. It includes two-way radio and phone coverage over satellite for communication with Emergency Command Center at the State Office Building and the State Emergency Operations Center at NEMA.

DHHS public information staff worked on daily news conferences and news releases, arranged media interviews, and continually updated the DHHS Web site.

"The information flow from a variety of national sources was staggering," said **Kathie Osterman**,

Communications & Legislative Services Administrator. "This was good to see and meant we all had updated information to share with the public."

A multi-agency response

As part of the Nebraska Multi-Agency Coordination System, NEMA opened the State Emergency Operation Center (SEOC) to

coordinate a comprehensive state response. The SEOC was opened throughout the first weeks from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.

"NEMA provided assistance to DHHS in support of **Governor Dave Heineman's** state declaration of a medical emergency on April 30," said **Al Berndt**, NEMA Assistant Director.

"Nebraska state agencies were quick to respond as far as analysis and identification of the event. Our state has been prepared for this and it is working."

"It is important to remember the declaration was a precautionary move by the state and allows for the initial activation of the Governor's Emergency Fund to support current state agency level activities," Berndt said.

Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy led daily policy group meetings as Nebraska's Homeland Security director. In addition to Sheehy, Schaefer and Berndt, **Bryan Tuma**, Superintendent of the Nebraska State Patrol, **Col.**

(continued on page 4)

H1N1 response: (continued from page 4)

Thomas Schuurmans, Director of the Joint Staff for the Nebraska Army National Guard and **Carlos Castillo, Jr.**, Director of the Department of Administrative Services, make up the policy group.

NEMA is responsible for assembling and gathering information from other agencies and writing an action plan in the event of a state-wide crisis, according to **Cindy Newsham**, Program Manager for NEMA's Response and Recovery Division. The plan provides a description of the State of Nebraska response and measures the effectiveness of the state response.

"It went very smoothly," Newsham said. "We exercised this possibility in 2007, and our part has been going very well because of our previous training."

Local county and regional emergency managers were also alerted and encouraged to reach out to local public health directors following the state emergency declaration.

Lela McNinch, Safe Schools coordinator for the Department of Education, was their liaison to DHHS and the ECC regarding school closings and the number of cases affecting school children.

"Working from the ECC gave me great access to information," McNinch said. "It was good for communication and provided productive information sharing."

State of Nebraska human resource staff began making daily reports to the state's Administrative Services department on the number of state employees who were absent from work each day due to their own or a family member's illness. The daily reports were requested to help state officials determine a baseline of the number of people absent due to illness and to help monitor the impact of H1N1 on the potential operational readiness of the state. Supervisors were also asked to report if staff members had traveled to Mexico during a specific two week period, were currently in Mexico or who were planning to travel to Mexico in the near future.

The list of states with the number of people who are confirmed cases is updated daily at the CDC web site at approximately 10 a.m. at <http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/>.

Employees can search the DHHS Web site for information on the H1N1 flu at <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/H1N1Flu/>.

Reducing Risk of H1N1 Flu:

Dr. Joann Schaefer, Nebraska Chief Medical Officer and Director of the DHHS Division of Public Health, encouraged Nebraskans to:

- Stay home from work or school if they are feeling sick
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose and mouth
- Cough or sneeze into their elbow or into a tissue, then throw the tissue away
- Wash hands frequently, and
- Contact their physicians if moderately ill with symptoms including cough, fever, fatigue and possibly diarrhea and vomiting.



Photo: Jodie Fawl

TAKING STOCK **Grey Borden** and **Tom Rauner** check antivirals and other medical supplies at the state Receiving, Shipping and Storage site.

A breath of fresh air

By *Monica Pribil*
Program Coordinator
Division of Public Health

On June 1, the entire state will be saying “hello to clean air” when the Nebraska Smoke-Free Air law goes into effect.

The Nebraska smoke-free air law (officially the Nebraska Clean Indoor Air Act) was passed by the legislature and signed into law by **Governor Dave**

Heineman in February 2008. The law requires all indoor work spaces and public places in the state to become smoke-free.

“This law is great for the public health of all Nebraskans,” said Chief Medical Officer and Director of the Division of Public Health **Dr. Joann Schaefer**. “We

know that smoke-free air laws protect people from the harmful health effects of secondhand smoke.”

The only exceptions to the law are:

- Up to 20% of hotel rooms
- Tobacco-only retailers defined as a “store that sells only tobacco and products directly related to tobacco. Products directly related to tobacco do not include alcohol, coffee, soft drinks, candy, groceries or gasoline”
- Cigar bars

- Facilities researching the health effects of smoking

- Private residences, except when a residence is being used as a licensed child care program

To help make the transition to smoke-free air as smooth as possible, the DHHS Division of Public Health

DHHS has also established a toll-free information line, 1-877-633-7331 and e-mail address smoke.free@dhhs.ne.gov as additional ways to communicate and ask questions about the law.

As of earlier this year, a total of 15 states, along with Puerto Rico and

Washington D.C., had laws in effect that required workplaces, restaurants and bars to be 100% smoke-free. Nebraska, South Dakota and Montana will increase the total when their laws go into effect later this year.

“There is mounting evidence that communities

and states become healthier once smoke-free laws go into effect,” said Dr. Schaefer. Pueblo, Colorado, instituted a smoke-free air ordinance in 2003 and researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that heart attack hospitalizations decreased 41% over three years.

“We’re bound to see positive health effects in Nebraska as well,” said Dr. Schaefer.



established the web site <http://smokefree.ne.gov> as a clearinghouse for information about the law, noted Dr. Schaefer. On the site:

- Business owners can find materials to share with their employees and customers.
- Organizations can find materials to place in their newsletters.
- The public can find information on how the law will impact them.

2009 Public Health Conference

The annual state-wide Public Health Conference was held in Lincoln on April 9 by DHHS Division of Public Health and its partners. The conference is the first conference combining the women's health, lifespan health and minority health conferences held in previous years.

Four awards were given at the Conference, two for exceptional merit and two for volunteer service.



Dr. Joann Schaefer, Chief Medical Officer and Director of the Division of Public Health, presents the Individual Volunteer Service Award to **Dr. Alan Thorson**, Omaha surgeon and clinical associate professor of surgery at both Creighton University and UNMC. "Dr. Thorson has contributed enormous amounts of time at both state and national levels to reducing the burden of cancer," Dr. Schaefer said. Dr. Thorson has been the founding chairperson of Nebraska CARES, the state's comprehensive cancer control partnership and a driving force in developing a Nebraska Colon Cancer screening Program.



DeAnn Carpenter and **Gerardo Martinez** accept the Organization Exceptional Merit Award on behalf of the Bienestar De Por Vida Diabetes Program at the Mary Lanning Hospital in Hastings in serving Hispanics. In 2008, 50% of participants lost weight and lowered body mass index, 66% of participants maintained or increased physical activity, and 85% of clients who exercise had cholesterol numbers within accepted guidelines.

Photos: Bill Wiley



Dr. Schaefer with the Individual Exceptional Merit Award winner **Betty Cernech** of the Omaha Visiting Nurse Association. "For over 25 years, her spirit and tireless efforts have left a significant mark on the well-being of women, infants, the elderly, and the homeless," Dr. Schaefer said.



Julie Bydalek from Franklin County Memorial Hospital and **Heather Easton** from Two Rivers Health Department accept the Organization Volunteer Service Award on behalf of Good Beginnings in Franklin County. Good Beginnings is a volunteer group that brings quality programming into their community to advocate for healthy lives in such areas as alcohol and drug abuse, smoking cessation, obesity and wellness.

Customer Service Center Update

Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Rural Response Hotline

Twenty-one cities responded to a Request for Proposal (RFP) and are in the running to have a customer service center in their area. The customer service centers are part of ACCESSNebraska, DHHS' new economic assistance service delivery system.

Communities were able to bid for various sizes, including staffing of 50, 75, 100, 150 and 200.

The proposals are being evaluated and rated based on information about the available workforce, technology and building costs. The list will be pared down to between three to six later this summer, when decisions relating to local offices and staffing will be announced.

This project will be fully implemented in 2012.

All announcements and updates concerning the RFP process will be on the Administrative Services web site at <http://www.das.state.ne.us/materiel/purchasing/rfp.htm>

These communities/areas submitted proposals for customer service centers.

Community/Area	Customer Service Center Sizes				
Alliance	50	75			
Atkinson	50				
Aurora	50	75	100		
Beatrice	50	75	100	150	200
Columbus				150	
Fremont	50	75	100	150	200
Fullerton	50	75	100		
Geneva	50				
Grand Island	50	75	100	150	200
Hastings	50				
Lexington	50				
Lincoln	50	75	100	150	200
Norfolk	50	75	100	150	
North Platte	50				
Omaha	50	75	100	150	200
Sarpy County	50				200
Scottsbluff/Gering	50	75	100		
Seward	50				
South Sioux City	50	75			
Stuart	50				
Wahoo	50	75	100		



The toll-free Rural Response Hotline at 1-800-464-0258 has helped Nebraska's farmers and ranchers affected by various rural economic crises for 25 years.

In the early 1980s, legal and emotional stress reached a crisis stage for many Nebraska farm families as land values plummeted, debt piled up, and foreclosures reached a record high. In May of 1984, Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska helped form a coalition of member church denominations and organizations with a direct interest in confronting rural hardship.

As the number of calls increased, the need for mental health services became apparent. The Counseling, Outreach, and Mental Health Therapy Project was created through the Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Behavioral Health and Office of Rural Health and is made possible through federal Mental Health Block Grant funding.

Between July 2007 and June 08, there were 4,157 calls to the Hotline. Fifty per cent of those calls were related to the mental health voucher program. Callers included farmers, ranchers, agribusiness owners, spouses and other family members.

Operators help callers find resources to help cope with stress, depression, and other mental health issues. Attorneys, financial advisers, professional counselors, mediators, clergy, and others have volunteered their expertise to the program.

Callers can receive no-cost vouchers for confidential mental health services. More than 167 mental health professionals work with the Hotline, and over 100 mental health providers across the state accept the vouchers as full payment for their services. In fiscal year 2008, 2,741 mental health vouchers were mailed out.

Partners include Nebraska denominations, the Departments of Health and Human Services and Agriculture, Nebraska Rural Health and Safety Coalition, UNL Extension, National Rural Mental Health Association, Farm Aid, Farm Crisis Response Council, farm organizations, and Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska.

DHHS Goes *Hollywood!*

EXT. NORFOLK VETERAN'S HOME - DAY

FADE IN: OPENING SHOT ON FRONT DRIVE BEFORE THE TANK, WITH CAR COMING SLOWLY ON TO GROUNDS.

POINT OF VIEW: BACK SEAT TIGHT SHOT OUT FRONT WINDOW, THEN WIDE SHOT SHOWING DRIVER, PASSENGER.

SUPERIMPOSE TITLE OVER OPENING SCENE AFTER 2-3 SECONDS. HOLD FOR 5 SECS.

DIP TO BLACK, THEN FOLLOW CAR TO VISITOR PARKING. SHOW SIGNAGE.

MIKE

We've got speed... Action!

MIKE

(con't)

Cut! Let's reset and get a safety.

By Mike Wight

No, you aren't in Hollywood, but there's a touch of Hollywood right here in DHHS! That's right – if you're in the right place at the right time, you'll see actors, actresses, cameras, lights and several folks working hard to put on videotape what you, or the public, need to see and know.

The same general procedures used in Hollywood for the last 100 or so years (and now "Bollywood," as the film industry in India is called) are still in use. Many of the same terms, like "a take" (footage) and "a wrap" (completion) are still heard, and the same is true of names for production crew members, like "gaffer" (rigging) and "grip" (lighting).

But much has changed, too. Epic adventures that now fill a theatre screen in wide vision technology have superseded grainy black and white "flickers." Many over age 40 can probably recall the cheesy and often outdated "audio/visual aids" videos they watched

HELLO DOLLY!

(Left) A production crew goes on location for a water well security video. Division of Public Health employee **Randy Fischer** (2nd from left) was technical adviser. The wheeled device on which the camera rides for a drive-by shot is called a "dolly."

in high school or in workplace training that roused little more than boredom and occasional guffaws. But videography today has come of age and is now used for everything from music videos to Internet "streaming."

(continued on page 10)



Photo: Mike Wight

Hollywood: (continued from page 9)

Not about to be left behind, DHHS uses videos to inform employees and reach the general public. These videos must entertain or create interest in order to inform and must have impact if their purpose is to move people to action.

Bet you didn't know that more than 55 video and audio productions in 2008 were scripted, produced, directed, taped and edited by CLS staff. Using

professional equipment and only three staff who aren't full-time production folks, CLS has produced award-winning videos in demand across Nebraska and the nation.

A university professor once called in a panic because his copy of one of our productions had broken. Claimed he couldn't teach his class without it and needed another copy quick! Not all the CLS-produced videos will impact professors this way but will help DHHS programs get their message out to fellow employees and the

public across Nebraska. For example, an ACCESSNebraska TV spot tells a statewide audience how they can fill out a DHHS application form on-line.

While requests for productions often must be put on a waiting list, if you need help getting word out about your program, call (402) 471-9108 and ask for **Clint Eastwood**. Better yet, ask for Public Information Officer and CLS video production lead Mike Wight instead.

IS IT A WRAP? Randy Fischer (left) and **Mike Wight**, Public Information Officer who spearheads CLS video productions, decide if a scene's footage is final or another "take" is needed. The monitor is wrapped to reduce glare.



Photo: Leah Bucco-White

Future installments of DHHS Goes Hollywood will follow a 'shoot' at two DHHS 24-hour facilities to help you decide if a video could be in your future!

Conversations for a Healthy Life reaching its audience

By Andrea Wenke
Community Health Educator
Division of Public Health

Conversations for a Healthy Life is averaging just over 950 downloads per month from the DHHS web site, indicating that the weekly program is reaching an audience.

This radio and podcast series began airing in September 2008. For those who might not know, Wikipedia describes a podcast as “like a radio program except people can download a podcast to a portable media player, such as an iPod or other mp3 player, and listen to it at their convenience.”

Produced by the Office of Women’s and Men’s Health (OWMH), 25 programs have aired, tackling topics

such as breast cancer, obesity, eating disorders, stress and colon cancer. Chosen by a committee of OWMH staff, topics reflect health and lifestyle issues pertinent to the target populations and Nebraskans in general.

To help with production of *Conversations*, OWMH contracted with UNL broadcasting student **Bryan Odel**. Odel serves as production coordinator, guest/presentation liaison and program host. Prior to each broadcast, Bryan uses a planning guide to outline the upcoming show’s production details. Broadcasts are recorded at a radio station in Omaha.

Conversations could not have been accomplished without participation of many partners, such as DHHS programs like Tobacco Free Nebraska and Cardiovascular Health, as well as the American Heart Association, UNL Extension, Omni Behavioral Health, and many other agencies, physicians and partners who provided speakers and information.

Listen to *Conversations for a Healthy Life* at KCRO 660 AM every Wednesday from 4-5 PM, or download the program at your convenience at <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/womenshealth/podcasts.htm>

Biking boasts many benefits

By Bill Wiley and Brian Coyle
Community Health Educator
Division of Public Health

Spring is in the air, and it’s time again for Nebraskans to shed their winter clothes and turn to outdoor activities. May is National Bike Month, and Americans of all ages and backgrounds enjoy bicycling. Approximately 42.5 million Americans ride bicycles, often for one or more of the following reasons:

Enjoying the beautiful state of Nebraska with its many low volume roadways and numerous highways with paved shoulders to bike on.

Taking many scenic trails available for biking, including the Steamboat Trace and the new Missouri River Pedestrian Bridge in Omaha. One of the longest trails in the country is the Cowboy Trail, which runs from Norfolk to Valentine. To find more information about Nebraska trails, go to <http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/parks/guides/trails/cowboy/cowboy.asp>

Participating in two popular multi-day annual bike rides - BRAN (Bike Ride Across Nebraska) and TdN (Tour de Nebraska). Both offer a great way to see the state since they change their route each year.



Seeing Nebraska on a bike is not only a very green, environmentally friendly activity, but also allows one to meet friendly people in many rural communities.

Making friendships by joining a friendly bike club and meeting other outdoor enthusiasts.

Biking is affordable and used bikes are plentiful in Nebraska. Everyone can ride a bike, no matter your age.

Sharing in some family fun by taking your bikes to one of Nebraska’s State Parks, historical parks, or recreation areas.

Bringing your old cruiser (single speed) bike and enjoying easy pedaling through the state’s rural farmland areas that are relatively flat, especially in south central Nebraska.

Biking is a great way to stay healthy, keep fit and enjoy Nebraska’s clean air, while having a great time. So get energized and enjoy the great outdoors on a bicycle!

Front Liners

There are thousands of stories to be told about DHHS employees who deliver direct customer services that *help people live better lives*.

..... This is only one of them.

By Jerry Crisp

Issuing licenses for medical and specialized health professionals who prescribe controlled substances is vital to ensuring public safety.

That's the focus for **Becky Wisell**, Section Administrator in the Division of Public Health. She oversees the licensing of physicians, dentists, dental hygienists, pharmacists, optometrists, podiatrists, veterinarians and radiologists in Nebraska.

"I certainly can't do the job of issuing, renewing or reinstating over 26,500 licenses per year all alone, and that's why I have two license coordinators, four health licensing specialists, and three pharmacy inspectors across the state to assist in this process," says Wisell. "I'm really fortunate to have a great staff with a genuine interest in helping people."

When she's not on the phone, at her computer or attending weekly management meetings, she might be working with no fewer than nine boards or committees in the various professional areas she licenses.

"Each group is committed to public safety and contributes valuable recommendations on applicants," says Wisell. "These boards and committees also take stances on various pieces of legislation."

When she's not working with these professional groups, Becky is involved in regulatory activities.

"We develop rules and regulations pertaining to legislation that's passed

and get involved in disciplinary actions," she explains. "In these cases, we submit information to the Attorney General's office for action. I have also testified at legislative hearings."



Photo: Jerry Crisp

With her office view of the State Capitol Building, Becky Wisell is ever mindful of her focus on helping safeguard the health of her fellow citizens.

In this regard, Wisell is grateful for the expertise in DHHS Legal Services, with whom she also works closely.

"In my job, we really need to multi-task and be ready to shift gears quickly," says Becky. "But keeping our focus on customer service keeps us on track."

One of the main challenges Wisell faces is dealing consistently with people in so many various and unique fields.

"We must deal with each area fairly and consistently, yet take into account all of the many key differences among them," says Wisell. "In this effort, we get strong support from my supervisor, **Helen Meeks**, Administrator of the DHHS Health Licensure Unit, as well as from Deputy Chief Medical Officer **Dr. Joseph Acierno** and **Dr. Joann Schaefer**, Chief Medical Officer and Director of the Division of Public Health."

Part of the drive for doing Becky's work comes from a book titled "A Blind Eye." It tells of a medical professional who left death in his wake because people who should have safeguarded the public failed to do so.

"Most medical and health professionals are dedicated to promoting health and safety, but we must always remain vigilant for the few who aren't," she says. "It's good to know that I'm able to play some small part in making Nebraskans safer."

Although she doesn't do her work for recognition or gratitude, Becky feels good when people appreciate her contributions.

"Once we received a huge basket of fruit and a nice note from a radiology group from Colorado serving western Nebraska via telehealth for whom we obtained temporary licenses," she says. "We get our share of criticism, of course, but every now and then a customer says thank you, and that's nice."

Honor Flight tributes members of *Greatest Generation* for their service to our nation



Photo: Patti Howe

Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home members (L-R) **Ed Tharnish**, **Howard Johnson** and **Ken Todd** were among 750 veterans from the area traveling to the nation's capitol to visit the WWII Monument.



On April 23rd and 24th, the last two Nebraska Honor Flights to Washington D.C. left Omaha. Three individuals from the Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home were on board and on their way to Washington, D.C. to see the WWII Monument. All were thrilled to have the opportunity of a lifetime.

They visited the WWII Monument and then went on a motorized tour of Washington, D.C. and Arlington Cemetery. While at Arlington they were able to witness the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Ed enjoyed the day with his son, who flew in from Denver, Colorado, the day before.

Howard said pictures of the WWII Monument didn't do it justice, as it was more awesome than he expected. Ken said that the trip was well-organized.

Lines of people greeted them at the terminal, and throughout the day many shook their hands, expressing for all of us gratitude for their service to our nation.

Skin Cancer 123s and ABCs

Skin cancer and the incidence of sunburns are increasing in the United States. This is the time of year to keep in mind the 123s and ABCs of skin cancer that can protect us from the sun's harmful UV rays.

1 Seek Shade. Especially between the hours of 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

2 Cover Up. Wide brim hats, sunglasses, and clothing.

3 Apply Sunscreen. Choose an SPF 15 or higher and reapply regularly. If you have moles, regularly perform a skin self examination. Use the ABCDE rule to help identify potentially suspicious moles.

Asymmetrical or an irregular-shaped mole.

Border of the mole is uneven

Color of mole may contain varying shade of brown, black or red.

Diameter of mole is larger than a pencil eraser.

Evolve – the mole has changed in size, color or shape.



More importantly, schedule a yearly appointment with a dermatologist to have moles examined by a health care professional.

For more information about skin cancer, contact **Jennifer Dunavan**:
(402) 471-0505 or jennifer.dunavan@nebraska.gov

Scarborough helps shape leader training

Dan Scarborough, Administrator of the Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center at Geneva, was asked by Eastern Kentucky University to help develop a position profile for future Juvenile Correctional Facility Administrators. He joined a group of five other administrators from Kentucky, Indiana and Tennessee identified as high-performing leaders in their field.

The group developed a job description for the position of juvenile facility administrator, identified duties and associated tasks, and sequenced and prioritized those duties and tasks.

“This position operates in an increasingly complex environment and change occurs constantly,” Scarborough said. “It’s important that the position is understood so that universities can use this knowledge to develop specialized educational programs and training for tomorrow’s correctional leaders.”



Dan Scarborough

In April, **Rick Ruddell**, Associate Professor at Eastern Kentucky University, wrote to **Todd Reckling**, Director of the DHHS Division of Children and Family Services, to say, “The panel members did a lot of hard work, and the product is important for juvenile justice agencies developing leadership and management training, and the profile will be posted on the Internet in the next few weeks to any agency that can use the information. Furthermore, we intend on publishing the results of this research in the North American Association of Wardens and Superintendents’ Grapevine, as well as Corrections Today. Last, the Correctional and Juvenile Justice Studies Department at Eastern Kentucky University will use this information to help develop our educational and training programs—ensuring that what we teach our students is current and relevant.”

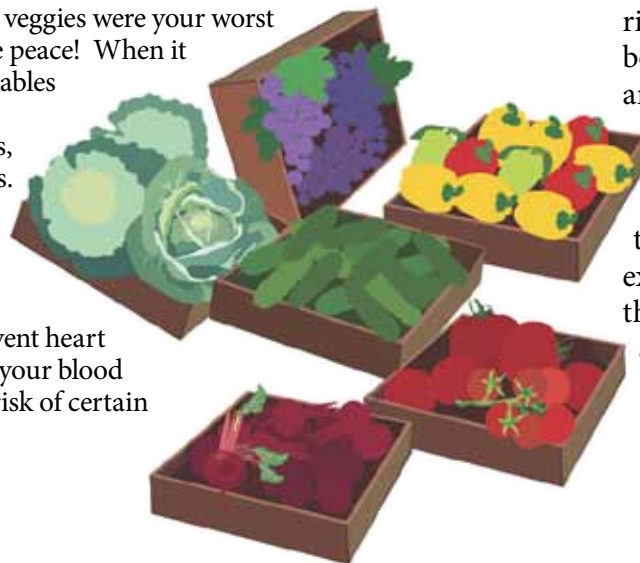
Photo: Mary Stofer

Wellness Words: *Think Health!*

If you grew up thinking that veggies were your worst enemies, then it is time to make peace! When it comes to your well-being, vegetables are your best friends. They are potent powerhouses of vitamins, minerals, fiber and antioxidants.

Vitamins are better absorbed from vegetables. You should eat 5 to 9 servings a day. They’ll help you keep trim, prevent heart disease, control diabetes, bring your blood pressure down and reduce the risk of certain types of cancer.

Dr. Joann Schaefer
Chief Medical Officer



WASTE NOT, WANT NOT!

When to SHRED

In previous installments in this series, we have reminded everyone what we should all be doing with pop cans, glass bottles, paper, cardboard, phone books, newspapers and plastic containers and wrap. We close with an effort to clarify any confusion about when to use regular recycling bins and locked bins for shredded paper in the workplace.



Instead of using whichever container is closest, always be sure to put regular paper for recycling in the appropriate container and use the

bins with locked tops ONLY for disposing of obsolete-but-still-confidential files. Fact is, DHHS pays for shredding services but not for regular recycling. Choosing the right means of disposal is essential both to maintaining confidentiality and cost-effectiveness.

Next time you’re at work and need to dispose of paper, make sure you put the paper in the appropriate container. The extra few moments it takes to make the right choice will be time well spent!

Let’s Recycle TOGETHER!

In their own words

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

Dear **Steve Huffman** (Youth Counselor, Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center-Kearney):

Just wanted to let you know how I am doing well. I get off house arrest in a couple more weeks, and I gonna work to keep my free time short from my old friends.

I saw one the other day, and he asked me to get high with him. It was so hard to say no but I had to.

I never got a chance to say thank you before I left, so thank you for helping me. I haven't lied or stole once since I've been home, which feels great.

I tried to golf one time, and I don't know how you do it. It's hard for me, but anyway, I wanted to keep in touch with you. Thank you for helping me, and write back if you want.

A former YRTC youth
Kearney, Nebraska

To **Vital Records**, Division of Public Health):

During the first part of February, I needed to obtain a Nebraska birth certificate, as one was never issued at my birth in 1932. A document stating a certificate was on file was issued in place of a birth certificate at that time. I needed this certificate to renew my driver's license in another state.

I wrote to you stating I was in a time crunch, and if a certificate could be sent ASAP, I would appreciate it. I am happy to say the certificate came quickly and all went well in obtaining my new license.

I wish to thank you for your help and kindness in helping me solve this problem. It shows what can be done when people care, and you people did. Thank you so much!

A Satisfied Customer

Dear **Dave Kreutzer** (Director of Social Work, Grand Island Veterans' Home):

After my 60 hours of volunteering, I am planning on writing a letter to **Ginada Hostetler** (former GIVH Administrator) and **John Hilgert** (Director, DHHS Division of Veterans' Homes) about their outstanding Social Work Department here in Grand Island, and what a joy and education all of you have been to work with. I'm glad you gave me the "geriatric bug" at the University of Nebraska at Kearney (where Kreutzer taught a class with his goal of igniting a passion for students to work with people who are elderly). **Cindy Bennett** (Certified Master Social Worker), **Cindy Kelley** (Certified Social Worker) and **Brenda Paro** (Social Worker II) fostered and grew that "bug!"

I was not a morning person until January 13, when I started my internship. Now I'm awake usually one to two hours before my alarm goes off and just wanting to get to the Veterans' Home. Every day I leave the Home, I catch myself thinking, 16 and one-half hours and I'll be back...that 16 and one-half hours just doesn't go fast enough! I realize I'm new at this, and after 15 or 25 years, this feeling might wear off, but it's nice to see that this same fire to empower hasn't worn off on all of you.

Dave, you asked me earlier if I was enjoying my internship. To be honest, I enjoy it all. There is one thing I don't like though—my internship is only 400 hours! I pray that I can be surrounded with people of your level when I get into the field. I thank God every day to be able to learn from my 400 hours working with you!

Jim Rogers
GIVH Intern

Dear **Gina Ruskamp** (Social Service Worker, DHHS Wayne office):

I want to thank you for all your help. With your kindness, you made life a little easier for me. With one word, you made it possible for me to get to work and provide for my family.

You made it all happen, and I thank you with all my heart.

A Northern Service Area client

While *Connections* receives more letters from satisfied customers than we can ever publish, please send letters via any method listed in our editorial box on page 2, and we'll publish as many as space allows.

Happenings!

Photos spotlighting DHHS activities around the state



Photo: Jerry Crisp

VENI! VIDI! VICI!* Among the winningest of BSDC athletes, **John Hoelsing** sports only some of the medals he has earned in Special Olympics events over the years. He also has a large box of medals and ribbons too numerous to hang around his neck without falling over. Like other Special Olympics competitors, John knows that such success shows what folks can do when they put their mind to it.



Photo courtesy of BSDC

HOOP DREAMS The Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC) basketball team took 2nd place honors at the Special Olympics state basketball tournament on March 28. The event was held at East High School in Lincoln.

"Special Olympics participation enhances physical coordination, builds self-confidence, and fosters teamwork," says BSDC Recreation Director **Julie Belding**. "Competition at regional meets and on the state level also allows the athletes' families to see their achievements and share in their pride."

Shown are BSDC hoopsters (L-R) **Tony Robinson, Johnny Knight, Trevor Sherman, Robbie Shepard** and **John Hoelsing**.

*For those who don't read Latin, this three word message is famed as the briefest military report in history. When **Julius Caesar** was victorious in a campaign against Gaul (modern-day France), he sent this message to the Roman Senate: "I came! I saw! I conquered!"

If you have a photo of a DHHS activity you'd like to share with co-workers across the state, contact *Connections* by any means listed in the editorial box on page 2, and we'll publish as many as space allows.

“Defenders of Our Freedom” Parade

Two previous issues of this publication featured the first two paintings in the “Defenders of Our Freedom” collection by artist Teri Rosario that found a home at the Eastern Nebraska Veterans’ Home at Bellevue. Here’s the third: “Thunder at Dawn” by **Teri Rosario**.

“Thunder at Dawn” depicts the USS Princeton (CVL-23), sunk in 1944 in the Battle of Leyte Gulf. She is the only light carrier that was lost in WWII, but few know her story and that of other courageous ships and crews who tried to save her.

Cruising off Luzon in the Philippines, the Princeton sent her planes against airfields at Dulag and San Pedro Bay to prevent Japanese land-based aircraft from attacking Allied ships massed in Leyte Gulf. On October 24, enemy planes found the task force and retaliated with heavy air strikes. While most of the Japanese planes were intercepted, shot down or driven off, a lone dive bomber hit the

Princeton with an armor-piercing bomb. Fires spread rapidly, followed by a series of explosions.

Covering vessels, including the USS Birmingham, USS Morrison, USS Irwin and USS Reno as depicted in the painting, provided rescue and fire-fighting assistance and shielded the stricken carrier from further attack. While the other ships fought fires and rescued personnel, the Irwin braved flames, explosions, falling debris and exploding shells to come alongside the Princeton. The Irwin then dispatched boats, and her men dived into icy seas to rescue survivors.

Though damaged herself, the destroyer stood at close quarters until she had rescued 646 men from the sea and the deck of the Princeton. For her heroic action, the Irwin earned the Navy Unit Commendation.

After all personnel had been removed, the Irwin torpedoed the Princeton, and she sank into her watery grave. While 108 men on the Princeton were lost in the attack, 1,361 crew members were rescued.

For more information about the painting and painter, go to <http://www.terirosario.com>, and watch for the other three paintings in this collection that will appear in upcoming issues of Connections.



Watch for a continuing parade of “Defenders of Our Freedom” paintings in upcoming issues of *Connections*.

© Teri Rosario