

State of Nebraska

Excellence in

~~NEBRASKA~~

Good Life. Great Opportunity.

Leadership

Teammate Recognition Month | November 18, 2020

Welcome!

Since 1985, the State of Nebraska has sponsored a statewide recognition program which has been coordinated by the Administrative Services State Personnel Division on behalf of the Governor's Office. The goal of this program is to show appreciation to state teammates for their loyalty and professional excellence. The program focuses both on exceptional performance and career tenure. Exceptional performers are recognized with an Excellence in Leadership award, while career teammates are honored with an Excellence in State Service award.

The Excellence in Leadership program recognizes teammates whose job performance has exceeded the highest standards and contributed to the overall effectiveness of the agency. These teammates are then honored at the Excellence in Leadership award ceremony, which is held in the State Capitol Rotunda. To date, 2,940 state teammates have received this honor. Today, 225 new recipients shall be added to this list of honorees.

We are pleased to honor these very fine Nebraska State Teammates.



Index

Aaron Anderson.....	36	Heather Kanzler.....	22	Nathan R Watson	21
Adam Giddings.....	25	Heather Myers.....	27	Nathan Schulz	30
AJ Divis.....	9	Heidi K. Ore	13	Neleigh Boyer.....	14
Alison Keyser Metobo.....	21	Heidi R. Wallace	31	Nichole Fiene.....	20
Amara Block.....	4	Holly Woldt.....	24	Nicole Miller.....	27
Amy Nutter.....	17	Idara Gibson.....	34	Nicole Ramirez.....	5
Amy Sturm.....	20	Isaac Ascherl.....	30	Noah Pitts.....	33
Andrew M. German	22	Jacob Kawamoto.....	21	Paige Freeman.....	22
Angela Hansen-Kruse	23	Jaime L. Hegr.....	15	Pat Selk	6
Anne Harvey.....	21	James Kenney.....	12	Paul Jacobson.....	30
Antonia M. Bonsera.....	13	James Lillis.....	35	Peggy Arp.....	9
Barb Pursely.....	35	James Restau.....	35	Peggy Wen.....	36
Becky Bliven.....	29	James Wilson.....	12	Phyllis McCown.....	25
Benjamin Ptacek.....	33	Janet Greser.....	23	Polly Putney.....	25
Bert Wilkinson.....	5	Jason Scott.....	30	Quin Gooch.....	30
Blake Hendrickson	15	Jay Shaeffer	22	Ralph Quick.....	12
Blake Hendrickson.....	21	Jeanette Bessler.....	20	Rayma L. Delaney.....	20
Bob Seger.....	33	Jennifer Chvatal.....	22	Rebecca Navarrette.....	22
Brad Hauptman	24	Jennifer Zarek.....	10	Rebecca Cooksley.....	30
Bradford M. Finch.....	33	Jerry Rhoades.....	12	Rena Ferris.....	35
Bradley Fuchs.....	14	Joan Thompson.....	22	ReNae Schwaninger.....	28
Brandy Harper	26	Joe Thiesfeld.....	11	Rey Enriquez.....	35
Brian Luppen.....	16	John Mamaryl.....	35	Rhonda Bayne.....	9
Bruce Cramer.....	36	John Weyer.....	19	Rhonda K. Ahrens	22
Bruce Hoffman.....	12	Julie Foral.....	7	Richard Noyes.....	35
Bruce Mayfield.....	36	Julie Galloway.....	11	Richard R. Aldag IV.....	30
Cameron S. Pullen.....	17	Karen K. Michaelson	8	Robert Colman.....	12
Carisa Schweitzer-Masek.....	21	Karen Solc.....	35	Ronald Drudik.....	12
Carmen Schull.....	20	Kate Severin.....	9	Ryan Harvey.....	33
Caryn N. Vincent.....	21	Kathryn Gillmore.....	35	Ryan L. Stork.....	18
Catherine Gekas Steeby	21	Katie Goin.....	35	Ryan Mahr.....	8
Chacey Jones.....	28	Katie S. Thurber	23	Ryan Sothan.....	6
Cheryll Scherer.....	22	Katie Watchorn.....	20	Sarah Jensen.....	22
China Christiansen.....	20	Kay Grote.....	35	Scott Dodge.....	36
Chris Kiiment.....	9	Kayla Adams.....	22	Scott Hartley.....	28
Chris Schroeder	24	Keith Powell.....	17	Scott Jones.....	28
Christin Kamm.....	5	Kelly Gewecke.....	10	Seth Shields.....	20
Christina Lopez.....	35	Kelly Nelson.....	16	Shannon Callahan.....	20
Chuck Long.....	28	Kelly Taylor.....	18	Shawn Fitzgerald.....	25
Cindy Dulas.....	11	Kelsey Soukup.....	22	Shawna Lara.....	11
CJ Johnson.....	36	Kevin Griess.....	21	Shayne Daughenbaugh.....	34
Cole Gibbons.....	30	Kevin Stary.....	30	Shelly Meyer.....	26
Corporal Daniel Rabenhorst.....	9	Kevin Wikoff.....	28	Shirley Danahy.....	31
Cory Drummond.....	35	Kim Farnstrom.....	12	Shuhai Zheng.....	26
Dan Sweetwood.....	27	Kristen VanWinkle.....	27	Sonja Horst.....	20
Daniel Lovercheck.....	12	Kristi Kutschara.....	35	Stephanie DeGroot.....	27
Danielle Reynolds.....	9	Kristine Radke.....	21	Stuart Bauer.....	12
David L. Jones Jr.....	34	Kyla Black.....	9	Sue Spence.....	25
Dean Gress.....	28	Kyle Hanna.....	12	Sulema DeLeon.....	35
Deb Eckert.....	22	Lance Lambdin.....	6	Susan B. Clausen.....	20
Deb Home.....	29	Lane Carr.....	11	Susan Baumann.....	35
Deborah J. Kai.....	25	Laurene Sedivy.....	11	Susan Gutzmer.....	6
Deirdre Barney.....	11	Leah Bucco-White.....	14	Suzy Fredrickson.....	32
Dennis Carraher.....	12	Lesa Hauptman.....	20	Sydney Archibald.....	30
Derek Wallman.....	22	Linsey Sousek.....	34	T'Ronne Estwick.....	30
Diane M. Lowe.....	20	Lisa Helms.....	35	Tamara Gavin.....	15
Diane Poppert.....	9	Lisa Mathews.....	34	Terry Einspahr.....	32
Diane Sabatka-Rine.....	9	Lisa Schultis.....	20	Theresa Kratochvil.....	16
Dianna Seiffert.....	5	Lois Oden.....	20	Thomas M Wuestewald	28
Donny Christensen.....	25	Lonnie Filip.....	20	Tim Diedrichsen.....	25
Doug Carlson.....	5	Marcia Scheinost.....	30	Timaree Buell.....	20
Doug Wilson.....	33	Maria Gamino.....	35	Todd Baustert.....	21
Drew Preston.....	21	Maria Nguyen Ramirez.....	20	Todd Flick.....	12
Elliott W. Veal.....	10	Marina Stansberry.....	20	Tom Dudderar.....	34
Esperanza Cisneros.....	35	Mark Rummery.....	9	Tony Pella.....	28
Estela Finn.....	8	Mark Studnicka.....	28	Tori Hoesche.....	20
Esther Saenz.....	20	Mary Avery.....	6	Tracy Gantz.....	35
Felicia Quintana-Zinn.....	18	Mary Lou Bohuslavsky.....	31	Trp. Matthew J. Maus.....	29
Felicia Quintana-Zinn.....	21	Matt Berens.....	13	Verla Dorn.....	20
Flora Coan.....	21	Matt Marisette.....	28	Vern Buis.....	23
Gary Lofton.....	12	Matthew Starkey.....	35	Veronica S. Lueders.....	25
Gordon Hay.....	22	Mayra Ramirez.....	22	Walter Moy.....	32
Grace Rittenburg.....	7	Melissa Weyer.....	19	Zachary Broshears.....	33
Greg Laksa.....	12	Michael Bouwens.....	12	Zainab Rida.....	11
Greg Walklin.....	21	Michael Muldoon.....	22	Zidarta Alin Winfrey.....	19
Harbans Deol.....	7	Molly Bargmann.....	25		

2020 *Excellence in Leadership*



Department of Administrative Services

Amara Block

Amara took the lead in drafting and negotiating emergency contracts for TestNebraska, Quarantine and Isolation Centers, emergency hotel stays for first responders, and other COVID-19 response contracts. Amara worked countless nights and weekends to ensure these contracts were executed and put in place to serve Nebraskans. Her efforts led to increased PPE, testing, and quarantine and isolation space for Nebraskans across the State. Amara also played a vital role with the Families First Coronavirus Relief Act, ensuring that state teammates had the resources available to them for paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specific reasons related to COVID-19.

Department of Administrative Services

Doug Carlson

Doug has been and continues to be paramount to the success of the State's testing strategy and PPE procurement. Both of these initiatives were non-existent pre COVID-19. In regards to PPE, Doug was successful in securing procurement supply chains despite the imbalance with supply-demand across the entire country. What at first seemed hopeless, Doug was able to procure the necessary equipment and ensure an inventory that ranges from 30-100 weeks. Doug continues to collaborate with DHHS in solidifying a vendor contract as a sustainable solution that includes an inventory management system, warehousing and distribution.

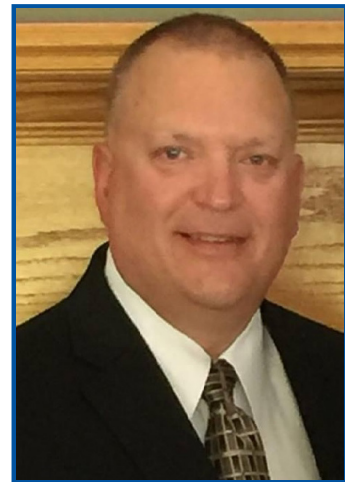
Doug in quick order was able to establish a testing structure through TestNebraska. This included coordination with the Nebraska National Guard for two testing teams, then expanded to six. This heavy lift out of the gate included establishing laboratory capabilities and capacity that have since proven to be the most reliable in the entire State.



Department of Administrative Services

Bert Wilkinson

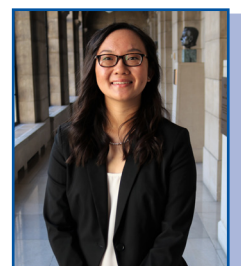
Bert is the manager over three highly visible IT teams critical in allowing state teammates to work successfully from home during COVID-19. The Active Directory team is responsible for setting up VPN accounts for teammates to work successfully and securely from home. The Video team is responsible for the OCIO's WebEx solution. With state teammates working from home due to COVID-19, agencies immediately recognized that they needed to be using a secure video conferencing solution in order to maintain essential business functions with each other as well as the citizens of Nebraska. The third team that Bert is over is the Exchange email team. When COVID-19 began impacting Nebraska, this team was approximately 1/3 of the way through the migration of email accounts to the Cloud. Although we paused for a few weeks while the teams were busy helping teammates from other agencies set up their work from home environments, we quickly returned to the project schedule. These last two migrations included DHHS, as well as all law enforcement teammates. Bert became part of the OCIO team through the IT Consolidation, joining us from NDOT. Prior to that, he worked in a management position in the private sector.

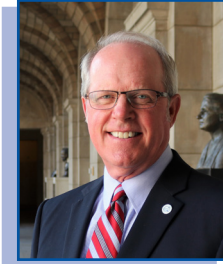


Department of Agriculture

Team: Christin Kamm, Nicole Ramirez, and Dianna Seiffert

Our Public Information team is consistently quick to respond to requests and this did not change during COVID-19. Their work benefits the efficiency and effectiveness of our teams every day and during the pandemic they quickly built a webpage and worked with our focus areas to make information available that would benefit industry and citizens. As Directed Health Measures evolved, they worked with County Health Departments, various industry leaders and others to assist in identifying which businesses and industries were impacted and in what way getting information out as quickly as possible could be done and could be helpful. While carrying out these actions, our Public Information team also successfully spearheaded agency efforts to turn the Nebraska Youth Agriculture Institute - one of NDA's largest public outreach events - into a virtual affair. Their effective communication with both internal and external customers led to teamwork that focused on customer service, transparency, aligning resources and valuing people.





Attorney General Team: Susan Gutzmer, Pat Selk, and Ryan Sothan

We gratefully recognize the committed service of Pat Selk (Records), Ryan Sothan (Outreach) and Susan Gutzmer (Senior Legal Assistant) from the Attorney General's Office. These three team members stepped forward to seamlessly support the AGO in serving the citizens of Nebraska and its elected officials during the recent months of an unforeseen and challenging COVID-19 impact. While it was necessary for agencies, courts and businesses to make accommodations because of the pandemic, our office doors and phones remained constant in readiness of response to those who would arrive in the Capitol or reach our many points of contact with needs or inquiries. This team mobilized daily to make certain that each form of service we provide, both citizens and officials, as well as to our own team members, remained operational. Pat Selk, Ryan Sothan and Susan Gutzmer formed a dedicated team through their resolve and perseverance during recent challenging months.

Auditor of Public Accounts

Mary Avery

Mary has worked at the Auditor of Public Accounts since 1979 and has worked under five elected State Auditors. She has an extreme historical knowledge of state and local governmental entities and is a valuable asset to the office. Mary always enjoys learning new things and after 40 years of working for the APA, took on the new challenges with COVID-19 in stride. Mary took on researching not only how the virus would affect the personnel and work in the APA office, but also how the office would work with other entities to ensure that audits could be completed in a timely, efficient manner.

Mary was responsible for making sure staff had all the resources needed to work remotely including assistance and training with virtual communications, such as, Zoom, Webex, Skype, and others. Once staff returned to the office, she was responsible for ensuring the office had personal protective equipment, supplies, and safety procedures in place. Mary received and reviewed a virus health screening form every day from every teammate to ensure the APA was keeping staff safe. Mary donated extra personal time to ensure all staff had what they needed to continue working safely throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.



Auditor of Public Accounts

Lance Lambdin

Lance has been Legal Counsel with the Auditor of Public Accounts since 2007, prior to that he worked with the State Legislature since 1997. He is a valuable asset and does an exceptional job researching compliance issues and explaining statutes in words that auditors can understand. He is very meticulous in everything he does and produces high-quality work.

During COVID-19, Lance researched State and Federal laws to ensure the Auditor of Public Accounts was in compliance with COVID-19 requirements as the situation evolved. Further, Lance put together a summary of compliance issues and requirements put out by the Federal Department of Labor. He is excellent in ensuring legal references are correct and in readable format. He made sure he was available at all times during the remote working from home so that all staff could reach out to him as needed.



Department of Banking and Finance

Julie Foral

Julie is the first person encountered when entering our department, whether that be a fellow teammate or a customer. Over the years, Julie's upbeat personality, professionalism, and patience while providing customer service has always reflected positively on our department.

During the pandemic, Julie served as an essential frontline worker exhibiting dependability and stability. Julie's duties, include providing reception coverage for the office, logging checks, and sorting mail. These duties required her to work onsite. Additionally, Julie collaborated with teammates to ensure that incoming calls, mail, and checks were processed efficiently and distributed to the appropriate teammates. Julie's presence in the office provided the opportunity for other teammates to work remotely.



Department of Banking and Finance

Grace Rittenburg

Since Grace started with the department she has always exhibited teamwork, served by example, and has always been willing to help her teammates with any project regardless of size or difficulty.

During the pandemic, Grace served as an essential frontline worker exhibiting dependability and stability. Grace's duties include: scanning checks for remote deposit, daily check and ACH deposits, and picking up and delivering mail to the basement. These duties required Grace to work onsite.

Providing backup to our receptionist is not part of the Accountant's normal duties. However, Grace became the primary backup to the receptionist during this time. Grace was also called upon many times to scan documents for people working remotely. Grace's willingness to collaborate with teammates helped them to complete their essential duties. Grace's presence in the office provided the opportunity for other teammates to work remotely.



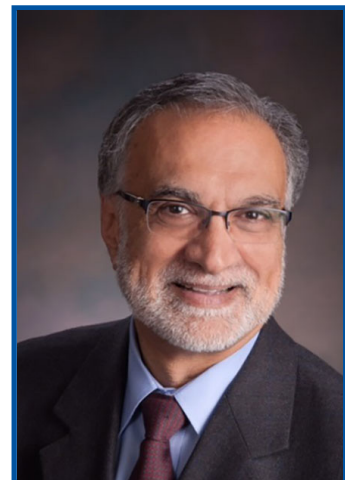
Department of Correctional Services

Harbans Deol

Dr. Deol earned his Ph.D. in Immunology and Microbiology from New York University, and his D.O. from Des Moines University, followed by a residency in Internal Medicine at the Norwalk Hospital, an affiliate of Yale University. He has conducted research in HCV and HIV using molecular biology techniques as a research scientist in a pharmaceutical company. He has numerous patents and publications in the scientific arena. He has served as hospital Chief of Staff and as Medical Director for nursing homes. Dr. Deol was in private practice for 15 years prior to joining the Iowa Department of Correctional Services as the Health Services Administrator. Dr. Deol joined the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services in 2017 as the Health Services Medical Director. He oversees all aspects of health care including medical, mental and behavioral health, nursing, dental, pharmacy and lab among other ancillary departments.

NDCS and Nebraska are incredibly fortunate to have an expert like Dr. Deol provide guidance during COVID-19. He serves as the chair of the American Correctional Association Healthcare Committee, and has been a national voice on managing the coronavirus in correctional settings.

From the onset of COVID-19, Dr. Deol educated and collaborated with other agency leaders to ensure the success of the response by NDCS. Given his experience, he was able to provide guidance on issues as they were presented as well as planning for the duration of the pandemic.





Department of Correctional Services

Estela Finn

Estela is an administrative assistant with the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS) with nearly 17 years of state service. As a translator for the agency, Finn said she believes she makes a difference by, "being a channel between our teammates and incarcerated individuals."

Finn has distinguished herself twice in the past two years. In the spring of 2019, she volunteered with the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to answer phone calls from Spanish-speaking flood victims and provide translations of essential information.

During COVID-19, Finn has provided translations of memos, posters and other essential information for the NDCS incarcerated population.



Department of Correctional Services

Ryan Mahr

Ryan has been with the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS) for 35 years. He began his career as a corrections officer and has held multiple positions of increasing responsibility during his tenure. In 2010, Mahr was appointed warden at the Nebraska Correctional Youth Facility (NCYF). For a period of time, he oversaw operations at both NCYF as well as the Community Corrections Center - Omaha (CCC-O).

Warden Mahr led team members through a challenging period when CCC-O was placed in quarantine due to the detection of a positive COVID-19 case. Mahr and his team are commended for their management of the situation in the weeks that followed. As a result of their actions, the facility was able to emerge from quarantine quickly, without additional inmates or staff members becoming ill.



Department of Correctional Services

Karen K. Michaelson

Karen started her career in August 1978 as a typist in the steno pool at the Nebraska State Penitentiary, and held various clerical positions there until transferring to Central Office as a personnel assistant in 1999. She also held the position of personnel officer, and in 2002 received another promotion to personnel manager. She has led the payroll and benefits functions for the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS) ever since.

Karen has learned to adapt to all challenges in her nearly 42 years of employment with NDCS, and was well prepared to tackle COVID-19. To ensure that all payroll processing operations would remain intact during the pandemic, she and her team worked from home. Karen organized and managed those operations, to the benefit of 2100+ NDCS staff members who received their compensation and benefits on time.

Department of Correctional Services

Corporal Daniel Rabenhorst

Corporal Rabenhorst has been a teammate with the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS) since October 15, 2013. Since his hire, Cpl. Rabenhorst has been assigned to different security posts at the Diagnostic and Evaluation Center (DEC) and is currently assigned to Central Control on first shift. Cpl. Rabenhorst is a security-minded person who completes daily tasks with the safety of his teammates and the inmate population top-of-mind.

During the pandemic, Cpl. Rabenhorst has kept track of new commits at DEC, which has included knowing when individuals have gone on and off quarantine. He has also been responsible for ensuring that they are moved to general population housing at the appropriate time. This duty is one that has been more complicated during COVID-19, but essential to fulfilling the agency's mission: Keep people safe.



Department of Correctional Services

Diane Sabatka-Rine

Diane is the chief of operations for NDCS, serving as the second-in-command for an agency that employs more than 2,100 teammates and houses more than 5,000 incarcerated individuals. She has more than three decades of experience in corrections having filled multiple roles, from officer to warden and deputy director. In her current assignment, she uses her vision and inclusive approach to system management to identify and implement necessary and critical operational improvements. Ultimately, this makes corrections safer, more efficient and more effective.

Chief Sabatka-Rine distinguished herself during the COVID-19 pandemic by taking the leadership role in the many initiatives, communications and responses by NDCS. Her actions were instrumental in allowing the agency to fulfill its mission: Keep people safe; and with regard to COVID-19 in particular -- keeping people healthy.



Department of Correctional Services

Team: Peggy Arp, Rhonda Bayne, Kyla Black, AJ Divis, Chris Kliment, Diane Poppert, Danielle Reynolds, Mark Rummery, and Kate Severin

The purchasing team represents the collective and collaborative efforts by the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS) to meet the needs of staff members, incarcerated individuals and external agencies with regard to personal protective equipment (PPE) and other necessary resources during COVID-19. In addition to ensuring that all 10 NDCS facilities and associated buildings were properly supplied throughout the pandemic, this team also worked closely with other state agencies including Administrative Services, the Nebraska National Guard and the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

Together, these individuals represent more than 115 years of combined state service. NDCS' business operations could not have been maintained without their joint efforts and commitment to: Keep people safe.

Pictured from left to right

First row: Peggy Arp, Rhonda Bayne, and Kyla Black second row: AJ Divis, Chris Kliment, and Diane Poppert third row: Danielle Reynolds, Mark Rummery, and Kate Severin



Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice

Elliott W. Veal

Elliott is a Research Analyst II at the Commission. In his short time with the Commission, Elliott has shown himself to be a proven leader and innovator, driving initiatives and living the vision of the Commission's Systems and Research Division. Elliott has played a critical role in several of the Commission's premiere initiatives, including the Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA) and Use of Force projects from development to collection and reporting. Elliott's efforts have established Nebraska as a leader in these areas of federal compliance. Elliott has exhibited significant skill in mocking up documentation and results compilations. During a staffing turnover, Elliott stepped into the breach and filled in for teammates by processing information for Uniform Crime Reporting. Elliott consistently leverages his diverse background to help his teammates navigate issues and establish himself as the Commission's subject matter expert on GIS and mapping. Using his skill with mapping applications, Elliott created an interactive map of all law enforcement agencies in the state that has proven very useful for his Division and Commission leadership. Elliott has also taken steps to safeguard the image and integrity of the Commission by securing the Facebook page associated with the Commission before others outside the Commission could do so. Elliott personifies many of the Commission's core values, but especially lives our most important directive: "We are stewards of this agency, entrusted by the citizens of Nebraska with its well-being and operation."



Department of Economic Development

Kelly Gewecke

During the COVID pandemic, Kelly has played a key role as a member of the team tasked with building and executing the Livestock Producers grant. As a member of our Field Staff, she was invaluable in reaching out to, and communicating with, the livestock producers that were impacted. It is not uncommon for Kelly to exceed expectations and do more than she is asked. She truly will go above and beyond to get the job done and is a key team member in assisting DED in the execution of its mission and values.



Department of Economic Development

Jennifer Zarek

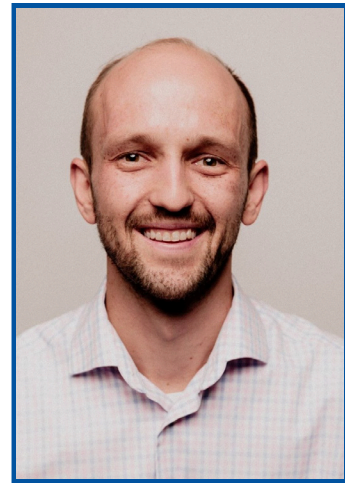
Jennifer was in the middle of implementing our new grants management software, a task big enough on its own, when the COVID-19 pandemic started. Rapidly, we needed to roll out multiple new COVID-19 related grants into the system with only days to go live. Jennifer adapted and worked tirelessly to make sure the systems worked and the data linked up. Because of this great effort, the grant roll-out was a success.



Department of Education

Lane Carr

Lane is an instrumental leader in coordinating the Nebraska Department of Education's (NDE) Launch Nebraska effort in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Launch Nebraska provides the tools, actions, opportunities, and resources to support the complex planning and preparation needed by Nebraska school systems as they work to restart schools and support students as they transition back to school buildings. Within days of the pandemic, Commissioner Blomstedt tapped Lane to coordinate resource efforts across the state for schools. He quickly assembled internal and external teams and got to work. The existing relationships Lane holds with school-based partners and his ability to genuinely develop new relationships made Lane the right person to coordinate the Launch Nebraska efforts. From helping secure hand sanitizer and masks for local schools, to designing holistic guidance for school reopening plans, Lane exemplifies leadership in action at NDE. Lane's regular job responsibilities are related to the statewide school accountability system (AQuESTT) and he recognizes the importance of safe and healthy learning environments for each of the students in all schools statewide. His forward thinking and continuous improvement mindset, along with his ability to recognize individuals' contributions make Lane worthy of the Excellence in Leadership award.



Department of Education

Zainab Rida

Zainab is a key member of the Commissioner's senior leadership team at the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) in the COVID-19 pandemic response. Commissioner Blomstedt identified Zainab to assume a key role in the NDE's response to the pandemic and coordination of external efforts. She quickly reached out to the Department of Health and Human Services and the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department to bring together the right partners. Zainab also made connections in the governor's office and the University of Nebraska Medical Center to ensure coordination on the statewide education response to the pandemic. These coordination efforts were important in planning the Commissioner's weekly virtual meetings connecting Governor Ricketts with school superintendents and leaders. She has started her days early and ended them late to prepare for the unknown of what the next day will bring. Zainab was recently appointed to the role of Equity Officer within the NDE and assumed administration over a new office structure within the agency during the pandemic. Through this time, Zainab continues to work as a team player and assist her colleagues, even though her plate is full. Zainab's service to the NDE, the statewide education system, and public health during this time has positioned the NDE to provide useful and meaningful guidance and resources to Nebraska schools through Launch Nebraska. Her commitment and perseverance make Zainab Rida a worthy recipient of the Excellence in Leadership award.



Department of Environment and Energy

Team: Deirdre Barney, Cindy Dulas, Julie Galloway, Shawna Lara, Laurene Sedivy, and Joseph Thiesfeld

In mid-March, agency staff went home to work, which ended July 10th. The Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy Records Team remained working in the office maintaining the agency's core paper mail handling processes. The Mail Process continued uninterrupted with program staff at home. Team members opened, scanned, and indexed over 12,000 documents. Agency staff continued receiving daily mail through the electronic workflow. A few other staff were in 1 day a week to make outgoing mail items available to Records. Besides mail processing, the team was available for questions, records requests and supporting each other. As staff made requests for paper files, the files were pulled, scanned, and made available electronically. The team is also responsible for staffing the reception desk. Jake was here every day from 8 to 5 to answer calls and transfer to the appropriate staff. Jake also assisted with indexing documents, ordering critical supplies, preserved photos, scheduled meetings, and assisted agency staff. Deirdre works in our file room to image our paper files. She provided assistance to co-workers and made it possible for remote staff to utilize applications. The team responded to 200 public requests and imaged more than 7,500 files. 25,874 documents were scanned and indexed during this time.



Front row, from left: Julie Galloway, Cindy Dulas, and Laurene (Jake) Sedivy. Back row, from left: Shawna Lara, Deirdre Barney, and Joe Thiesfeld



Electrical Division

Team: Michael Bouwens, Stuart Bauer, Dennis Carraher, Robert Colman, Ronald Drudik, Kim Farnstrom, Todd Flick, Bruce Hoffman, Greg Laska, Gary Lofton, Daniel Lovercheck, Ralph Quick, Jerry Rhoades, and James Wilson

During this pandemic, the Electrical Inspectors continued to insure public and electrical safety without complaint or hesitation. They carried on, as they usually do, helping our State's citizens. It didn't matter if it was a 'hot spot' for COVID-19 or not, this team was in the field everyday continuing to serve our State. If a citizen or electrician had an issue or questions, each and every one of this team was there to assist. Proving once again, when a crisis hits they become a stronger team, helping each other to insure the Agency's mission and public safety is carried out.

Pictured left from to right. Top row: Michael Bouwens, Stuart Bauer, and Dennis Carraher; Second row: Kim Farnstrom, Todd Flick, and Bruce Hoffman; Third row: Greg Laska, Gary Lofton, and Daniel Lovercheck; Fourth row: Ralph Quick and James Wilson. Not pictured: Robert Colman, Ronald Drudik, and Jerry Rhoades

State Fire Marshal

Kyle Hanna

Kyle, Accountant I for the Nebraska State Fire Marshal Agency, has only been with the agency for a year. During this past year, Kyle has not only learned the financial aspects of the accountant position and how to support the new programs but he also stepped up to the plate to help ensure continuity of agency operations during COVID-19 in three notable ways. The SFM Agency conducts monthly testing for occupational licenses. A teammate who has a chronic health condition asked to be excused from proctoring the exam due to COVID-19. Kyle did not hesitate to take on this responsibility and proctored exams during periods of peak demand while ensuring that the agency and examinees followed recommended safety practices. In addition, Kyle took on the responsibility for overseeing the agency's website content while the SFM Agency had no active teammate in this role. This is a completely new skill that Kyle had to learn. Lastly, during the first part of May, a staff assistant who is an essential member of the Accounting Division left for a twelve week leave after the birth of her baby. The agency had intended on hiring an SOS teammate but after the onset of COVID-19, teammates working in the Lincoln office started working remotely part of the time. It was decided that it wasn't feasible to employ a SOS teammate in this type of work environment. As a result, Kyle was asked to cover these additional duties including preparing and delivering the daily deposit.



State Fire Marshal

James Kenney

Deputy Kenney serves the State of Nebraska as a Healthcare Inspector for the Nebraska State Fire Marshal Agency. As COVID-19 took hold earlier this year, the Center for Medicaid Services (CMS) began to curtail inspections of hospitals and nursing homes. Deputy Kenney, seeing this trend, and without being asked, volunteered to return to his former position of Plans Examiner. Deputy Kenney knew that this Division was short-staffed and was in need of qualified people to assist this Division with their workload and to keep Nebraska growing. By ensuring that the Plans Division could review, approve, and return architectural plans to those that had submitted them, Deputy Kenney ensured that construction and development activities that Grow Nebraska continued.



Foster Care Review Office

Heidi K. Ore

Heidi has been with the Foster Care Review Office for 27 years serving as Business Manager II at the FCRO in Lincoln since December 2018. Prior to that, Heidi served as Administrative Coordinator at the FCRO for 23 years. In her role and in the absence of a permanent executive director at the FCRO, Heidi coordinated the transition of 28 staff from working in the office to working from home over a 3-day period in March 2020, coordinating the issuance of equipment, working to get various technology platforms up and running, troubleshooting computer and equipment problems and providing technical assistance to staff to effectuate a seamless transition to working from home. Since then, Heidi has continued to coordinate the procurement of cleaning and disinfecting supplies for FCRO's two offices and personal protective supplies for staff and local boards. Heidi has engaged in creative problem-solving, proactive management, and aligned FCRO resources to continue operations and support the work of the FCRO team during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Heidi is proud of the FCRO staff who were able to maintain productivity levels and the important work they do to serve Nebraska's children in out of home care.



Department of Health and Human Services

Matt Berens

Matt is a newer Service Coordinator with the DHHS Division of Developmental Disabilities. Matt has been with the division just about a year. In that time Matt has shown a lot of compassion for the individuals he serves. Matt has taken the time to get to know the individuals on his caseload and has worked hard to advocate for their needs. This past March when DHHS was looking at telework for DHHS teammates, Matt offered his assistance and technical expertise to his peers in the Lincoln office, District 2 and Statewide. Matt had prior experience with the type of laptop computers being used, and Citrix from work on one of his previous jobs. If a teammate approved for telework ran into issues with connectivity, Matt took the time to talk with teammates about their concerns. Most of the time he would provide a couple of things they could do to troubleshoot the issues. Matt balanced his assistance to his teammates with his regular work duties, and he was able to successfully accomplish both. Matt was always patient, understanding and kind to his fellow teammates, who at times would be very frustrated with technology and being able to understand. This helped his teammates be more comfortable working with technology and successful in their roles of helping people. Matt is a great example of a team player providing assistance outside of his normal job, so that his peers could telework and assure the health and safety of the individuals we support.



Department of Health and Human Services

Antonia M. Bonsera

Antonia (Toni) Bonsera is a Program Specialist on the Safety Team within the DHHS Division of Children and Family Services (CFS). During the public health emergency, guidance to front line staff and direct service providers needed to be developed in order for staff, providers, children and families to continue to receive services. Toni was tasked with developing and updating the guidance needed for families, staff, providers, and other stakeholders related to drug and alcohol testing. Toni needed to work closely with Public Health experts; Behavioral Health and contracted service providers to ensure the best services could be provided that also provided for provider and family safety. Toni took the lead in developing the Guiding Principles for Drug Testing. The necessary protections for families and direct service providers needed to be considered in developing the guidance, as CFS did not want to continue a practice that may have spread COVID-19. Toni conducted research to determine the safest type of drug testing that could be utilized during the pandemic. It was determined that the safety form for testing did not allow for alcohol testing. Toni then needed to research ways to obtain the necessary testing for alcohol for families working with CFS. The need for these revisions, was to ensure that CFS was continuing to provide the necessary services required for families as to not delay permanency for children. Toni was instrumental in the development and the implementation of the Guiding Principles for Drug Testing.





Department of Health and Human Services **Neleigh Boyer**

Neleigh was recently appointed lead attorney for the DHHS Division of Children and Family Services (CFS). She assumed direct supervision of all DHHS court room attorney. In her new role, she has already met with each court room attorney region, as well as county attorneys. Neleigh successfully hired additional attorneys for Omaha and Lincoln and is currently searching for a new Central Office CFS attorney. Neleigh has tirelessly supported not only the CFS Director, but also the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers (YRTCs) and was instrumental in assisting the YRTC education program and development of new YRTC programs. Neleigh is always willing to take on new duties with a positive attitude. She is willing to learn new skills or concepts if needed to get the job right. Her drive to provide great customer service, no matter the obstacles, sets a great example for others. Neleigh is a valued teammate.



Department of Health and Human Services **Leah Bucco-White**

Leah leads state-level communications for the DHHS Division of Public Health. She advises public health leadership and team on all communications issues. She has developed communications strategies and executed messaging across appropriate mediums to include the Division of Public Health Communications Plan. Leah successfully managed critical communications when Nebraska received Ebola patients in its Biocontainment Unit and for active crisis situations including H1N1 influenza and various disease outbreaks, most recently this included the COVID-19 pandemic response. A seasoned media spokesperson who on average responds to approximately 250 reporter inquiries a year, she often reviews and consults with the communications director on inquiries handled by the other PIO III staff. She continues to build relationships with the media and pitch stories to proactively promote the work being done inside the Department. She is responsible for researching information and writing news releases, articles, letters, annual reports, business plans, speeches, legislative testimony, broadcast scripts and internal communications. Additionally, Leah spearheaded the agency's adoption of social media, managed agency social sites and worked to create the agency's social media policy. She enjoys working with program areas on public information campaigns and collaborating with various partners to promote department-related initiatives through joint communications efforts.



Department of Health and Human Services **Bradley Fuchs**

As Benefits and Leave Administration supervisor for DHHS Human Resources, Brad took a leadership role in developing processes to respond quickly to the numerous new requests for leave time related to COVID-19. Brad guided his team by example, often working long hours to answer both questions and requests from teammates. Brad demonstrates a high degree of customer service by providing quick and accurate responses to employees. His leadership by example can be seen exhibited by his team in all of their functions including those related to COVID-19. Brad also developed a new request form for Emergency Paid Sick Leave time off requests as well as modifying the ADA form to better meet the Agency's needs in response to COVID. Working closely with Legal, he put together a WebEx to deliver training to all supervisors regarding new federal guidelines related to the CARES act. Brad facilitated numerous training COVID benefit trainings for all of the leadership team. Additionally, he provided FAQ's for both supervisors and teammates to address their questions. As we continued to look at the new hire/onboarding process in light of COVID, Brad has developed on online new hire forms processes. Using DocuSign, our new hires will be able to complete I-9's, tax forms, and other paperwork in the comfort of their own home or office. This will not only speed up the process, but make for a better experience for our new hires.

Department of Health and Human Services

Tamara Gavin

Tamara is the Deputy Director in the Community Based Section (CBS) for the DHHS Division of Behavioral Health. In April, Tamara also took over the role of being the Hospital Administrator at the Lincoln Regional Center (LRC), during a COVID pandemic. Tamara is a very bright individual and has an incredible work ethic. She worked endlessly to ensure both of her teams (CBS & LRC) had leadership and direction during this very difficult time. Please understand that Tamara put in an incredible amount of time and energy to make sure that CBS and LRC did not suffer during the transition. In fact, I would say that LRC benefited greatly from the time Tamara spent with them. Tamara is decisive, compassionate, driven and a great person to have as a leader. We are all lucky she is a part of DHHS.



Department of Health and Human Services

Jaime L. Hegr

Jamie is an Attorney for DHHS. Since being promoted three years ago, Jaime has built a dedicated team to handle voluminous public record requests, as well as litigation discovery. In addition to this, she has managed, tracked, helped draft and submitted the regulation promulgation process for the entire agency. She has also managed the agency record storage consolidation project. Moving, inventorying and consolidating over twenty thousand boxes of records, thus reducing agency warehouse space and cost.



Department of Health and Human Services

Blake Hendrickson

As an Epidemiology Surveillance Coordinator with the DHHS Division of Public Health, Blake was instrumental in developing and implementing the State's contact tracing strategy with the primary purpose of providing support to local public health departments and expanding the capabilities at the State level. This plan involved coordination with various agencies, identifying staffing sources, develop training material (both on-line and in-person), developing interviewing scripts and ensuring required HIPAA compliance education for new interviewers. Blake conducted training and was pivotal in mentoring contact tracing team leaders and other trainers. Additionally, Blake worked through IT issues and established initial data collection protocols, databases and reporting to include operational metrics.





Department of Health and Human Services

Theresa Kratochvil

As a Social Services Lead Worker for the DHHS Division of Children and Family Services, Theresa has demonstrated excellent leadership with her team as well as other coworkers by helping create fillable templates and guides to make the COVID-19 policy changes easier to follow and understand. Theresa will take the time to work individually with workers so they have all their resources up to date and easy to find so the workers always can assist the clients to their full potential.



Department of Health & Human Services

Brian Luppen

As a Community Coordination Specialist with the DHHS Division of Children and Family Services, Brian, supported his fellow teammates during the pandemic by facilitating morning huddles while his supervisor was on extended leave. During the pandemic, Brian continued to work onsite in the Gering office. Brian was open to taking on other duties as assigned, including assisting with contact tracing during the COVID-19 response. Since Brian was the only person on his team who was not assigned to telework, Brian assisted his teammates with printing documents, mailing correspondence, and scanning incoming mail. With the approval of Appendix K for the HCBS waiver for DD Services, Brian assisted his team in editing budgets and Individual Support Plans to reflect the changes to how Service Coordination would provide targeted case management during the pandemic. Brian is an excellent co-worker and his teamwork skills are outstanding.



Department of Health & Human Services

Kelly Nelson

As a Child and Family Services Specialist for the DHHS Division of Children and Family Services, Kelly leads a team of CFS Specialists that are called upon to help achieve permanency for children being served in the Western Service Area. Kelly leads by example, she puts the children who are served by her team first and helps her workers navigate decisions with safety and well-being in mind. Kelly provides support to her staff when they are struggling with secondary trauma that comes along with child welfare work. Kelly has been a leader who teaches new staff how to carry out the work while knowing the policy that guides the work. Kelly is creative in working to secure funding for services needed for families, while also being mindful of spending taxpayer dollars. In the past two years, Kelly has led her team to complete adoptions for 50 children, all within 12 months of Adoption being their permanency objective, which is in accordance with policy. As of July 2020, her team has completed adoptions for 13 more children, with 5 more scheduled within 60 days, despite COVID-19 complications and delays. Kelly has ensured that her team has carried out their work as usual while employing precautions during COVID-19.

Department of Health & Human Services

Amy Nutter

Amy is a Service District Administrator within the DHHS Division of Developmental Disabilities. Amy's area had the first COVID-19 positive person in the state. Amy worked tirelessly to communicate with the dozens of agency providers in her District in order to ensure all providers were able to assure the health and safety of those we serve. Amy has continued to communicate with those providers throughout the pandemic. Also, during this time, Amy worked to ensure the Health and Safety of her Districts staff while also assuring they were fulfilling their job duties which were more critical now than ever! Amy met daily with her supervisory team providing informational updates, answering questions, and problem solving for her teammates and those served, and helping to keep everyone calm and focused. Amy met weekly with all staff in her District weekly to provide updates, answer questions and to keep everyone connected while many were socially isolating and working remotely. Amy's District is the largest within the Division and she leads in such a way as to convey confidence in her team and to instill an atmosphere of cooperation and quality Customer Service.



Department of Health & Human Services

Keith Powell

Keith is a Child Support Enforcement Supervisor with the DHHS Division of Children and Family Services (CFS). However, Keith has held several other prior positions within the DHHS which helped to grow his knowledge base and working relationships. Keith worked at the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Kearney as a start to his career with DHHS. He also previously worked with family and youth as a Child and Family Services worker at the Lexington Local Office. Keith developed strong bonds with the families and coworkers and gained great understanding for what today's youth face. Keith transitioned to the DHHS Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care when he joined the Lexington Customer Service Center team as a Social Service Worker determining Medicaid eligibility. Keith then moved to the Kearney Local office where he continued to serve clients. As a Social Service Lead Worker, Keith provided leadership and support to a team of 9 workers from 4 offices. Keith is a wealth of knowledge to those who know him. Workers from CFS and Economic Assistance as well as agencies outside of DHHS, including schools, will reach out to Keith for information on appropriate referrals and direction for those they are serving. Keith serves in capacities outside of DHHS by growing youth and influencing those he is around. He has been a Youth Pastor at First Lutheran church for many years.



Department of Health & Human Services

Cameron S. Pullen

Cameron is a Social Services Supervisor at the Fremont Customer Service Center with the DHHS Division of Children and Family Services. Cameron has consistently demonstrated excellent leadership as he has been finding as many ways as he can to improve processes to help with the pandemic. Cameron helped with compiling employer contacts and information to make it easier for workers to verify employments due to COVID-19 for our clients. Cameron strives to have his team have high accuracy and is extremely knowledgeable in policy and procedures, he was able to easily assist his team and others with many of the changes that occurred during COVID-19. He is hands-on supervisor who wants his team to be successful.



photo not available

Department of Health & Human Services

Felicia Quintana-Zinn

As a Deputy Director with the DHHS Division of Public Health, Felicia plays a key role as the Division of Public Health's subject matter expert. Felicia has been instrumental in driving the State's strategy for COVID-19 response, advising the Governor, CEO and CMO. As well Felicia is the chief liaison for NEMA, UNMC and LPHDs; ensuring a collaborative and aligned strategy with these entities. Felicia has been the "go-to" person for all things related to COVID-19 for the entire Public Health Department. She has ensure a continuity of operations while responding to the pandemic. She continues to demonstrate top-shelf leadership in operations and guiding teammates in completing the mission. Felicia has been responsible for developing the State's Directed Health Measures, providing guidance and direction for the State in response of COVID-19, and in establishing guidelines for each of the phases.



Department of Health & Human Services

Ryan L. Stork

Ryan is a Social Services Worker at the Fremont Customer Service Center with the DHHS Division of Children and Family Services. Ryan has gone above and beyond with his excellent customer service he has provided our clients during the pandemic. Ryan is kind hearted, compassionate and has extremely good integrity. Ryan has already received a several client compliments for how he took the time with the client to explain the programs DHHS offers as well as other resources they could apply for during the pandemic. Ryan makes it his goal to always serve our clients with the best care and attention he can give to them as well as delivering the agency's mission of helping people live better lives.



Department of Health & Human Services

Kelly Taylor

Kelly is a Service Coordination Supervisor in the DHHS Division of Developmental Disabilities. Kelly kept the DHHS LaVista office up and running safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kelly wanted to make sure the open area of the office was following CDC recommendations, keeping our customers and teammates safe. Kelly also was the supervisor who did multiple check in with teammates from all three Divisions to make sure all where okay. Kelly not only made sure work was being done, but checked in with others about their needs and feelings. Kelly would work at the front desk, supporting customers who entered. Kelly had some incidents where she needed to use her wonderful customer service skills to calm some customers down. Kelly worked with her team and the providers to make sure our participants were taken care of and needs were being met. Kelly went up and beyond to make sure everyone she came in contact with was happy, safe and healthy.

Department of Health & Human Services

Melissa Weyer

Melissa is a Program Manager with the DHHS Division of Children and Family Services. Melissa works with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the Emergency Food Assistance Program, and the Food Distribution Program for DHHS. Melissa was the programmatic lead in responding to food needs during the pandemic. She proposed and implemented state waivers and obtained federal approval in order to provide additional food assistance for families in Nebraska while helping to streamline processes that would help ACCESSNebraska more quickly process the increased need. Melissa was in tune with the needs of the food banks of the state providing technical assistance and responding to their increased needs. Additionally, she was the lead in designing and implementing the Pandemic EBT program that will provide additional food assistance to over 80,000 children in the state of Nebraska.



Department of Health & Human Services

John Weyer

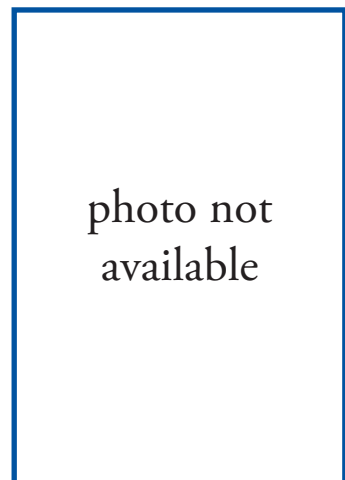
John Weyer is a Registered Nurse in the DHHS Division of Behavioral Health. John serves as the Infection Control Manager at the Lincoln Regional Center (LRC). John has been at LRC for 17 years, but just transitioned into the Infection Control role in October 2019. During the COVID-19 pandemic, John Weyer's leadership and expertise has been critical to Lincoln Regional Center's COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts. John's commitment to his colleagues and patients alike is evidenced in all he does. He has managed the incredible responsibility of developing and implementing staff and patient screening protocols and has led PPE training and tracking strategies for the campus. As the expert liaison with public health officials, John developed and implemented LRC's contact tracing processes and related oversight and tracking mechanisms. He is responsive to the ever-changing environment and has made himself available--literally 24 hours per day--to ensure staff and patients have information and resources needed, to answer questions, to provide guidance and expertise. His expertise and commitment has not only served LRC, but other DHHS facilities in this time of crisis. John has been tasked with a very challenging role, given the COVID-19 pandemic, but has done so with integrity and tenacity. His leadership and willingness to go above and beyond for LRC teammates and our patients is inspiring.



Department of Health & Human Services

Zidarta Alin Winfrey

Zidarta is an Epidemiology Surveillance Coordinator with DHHS, Division of Public Health. Zidarta was instrumental in creating the foundational guidance, SOP and operational plan for the quarantine and isolation program as part of the Nebraska Accommodations Project. Additionally Zidarta facilitated movement to automated surveys, created and managed web sites and participated in community planning for testing and provided support for daily activities and operations.





Department of Health & Human Services
Team: Jeanette Bessler, Susan B Clausen, Verla Dorn, Lesa Hauptman, Tori Hoesche, Sonja Horst, Lois Oden, Lisa Schultis, Marina Stansberry, and Amy Sturm

A team of DHHS teammates in the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC), made more than 500 face masks that have been used at BSDC and shared with other state facilities. They also made gowns and begun making clear masks to help with visual communication for those that are deaf or hard of hearing. This team has excelled in team work and being resourceful at meeting the needs of the people we serve. They showed great value in the people we serve and their co-workers by contributing to a safe environment through their sewing skills. They have demonstrated innovation and forward thinking by redesigning the mask to assist with communication for those that are deaf or hard of hearing.

Pictured standing: Sue Clausen, Marina Stansberry, Lois Oden, Sonja Horst, Lisa Schultis, Tori Hoesche, and Verla Dorn; pictured seated Lesa Hauptman, Jeanette Bessler, and Amy Sturm



Department of Health & Human Services
Team: Rayma L. Delaney, Diane M. Lowe, and Katie Watchorn

This team of DHHS teammates were the masterminds behind the best way to organize, develop, and administer three new grants. Under guidance from DHHS Chief of Staff Emily Dodson, the team was tasked to develop several new grants, totaling \$85 million to help Nebraska stabilize impacted businesses and support community institutions called Community CARES. The CARES act provided Nebraska over a billion dollars of relief for the impacts of COVID. This team had to work with two preselected vendors in Amplifund and Deloitte to be able to create and administer the three new grants. They did a phenomenal job in planning and executing the very time-compressed deliverable. Katie Watchorn performed, documented, and helped with the process that had to happen to ensure a great product. Rayma Delaney and Diane Lowe were instrumental in bringing their grant application knowledge and ensuring a properly drafted grant was created as well as help in developing the material and communications for a well informed grant review team.



Department of Health & Human Services
Team: Timaree Buell, Shannon Callahan, China Christiansen, Nichole Fiene, Lonnie Filip, Maria Nguyen Ramirez, Esther Saenz, Carmen Schull and Seth Shields

This group of DHHS teammates are being recognized for their hard work, dedication to others, and adaptability. This team was formed as a response to the Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care COVID-19 State of Emergency policy. The work grew from managing one position number with 5,000 cases to three position numbers with over 11,000 total for the three positions. The team stepped up to the challenge of the new work with the guidance of the supervisor. The supervisor on the team volunteered to lead the charge by facilitating the work, monitoring the work and collaborating with a team in Lincoln. This work has been different than what staff are used to and they quickly adapted to the changes to ensure the clients continue to receive a critical benefit during the uncertainty of this pandemic. This team continues to make this work a priority as the State of Emergency has been extended into October 2020 and this work will overlap with the implementation of Heritage Health Adult program. The members on this team have exceeded the goal of clearing this position number of the alerts and moving on to help the Lincoln team. These individuals have shown a great deal of motivation and exceptional customer service even while moving to a work from home status. This team continues to exceed their goals and adapt to the changes in the work they are doing.

Pictured left from right. Top row: Timaree Buell, Shannon Callahan, and China Christiansen; Second row: Lonnie Filip, Maria Nguyen Ramirez and Esther Saenz; Third row: Carmen Schull and Seth Shields. Not pictured: Nichole Fiene

Department of Health & Human Services

Team: Todd Baustert, Flora Coan, Catherine Gekas Steeby, Anne Harvey, Jacob Kawamoto, Drew Preston, Kristine Radke, Carisa Schweitzer-Masek, and Nathan R Watson

This DHHS team took the initiative to lead the efforts of the Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care (MLTC) through the initial (and current) period of the pandemic. This is a cross functional team covering many business functions to include Health Policy and Services, Eligibility Policy and Regulations, Managed Care, Provider Screening and Enrollment and Program Integrity, and Communications. This team met daily for the first 60 days of the pandemic, outside of "normal business hours", to implement proactive measures to ensure MLTC could meet the many known (and yet unknown) needs of the Medicaid ecosystem, to include providers, community partners, beneficiaries, managed care entities, and employees. The team continued to meet (and still does) on a less frequent occurrence (initially moving to every-other day and now weekly) as the situation stabilized. This team created a line of communication to stakeholders, issuing 18 COVID-19 related provider bulletins and numerous other announcements to keep stakeholders informed. They also held regular conference calls to share information, initially weekly, which scaled back to every other week, and now occurring every three weeks as the situation has stabilized. The team also triages questions from the community and providers, utilizing a shared mailbox.



Pictured left from to right. Top row: Todd Baustert, Flora Coan, Catherine Gekas Steeby; Second row: Anne Harvey, Jacob Kawamoto, Drew Preston; Third row: Nathan R Watson. Not pictured: Kristine Radke and Carisa Schweitzer-Masek

Department of Health & Human Services

Team: Kevin Griess and Greg Walklin

DHHS Procurement Administrator Gregory Walklin and Attorney Kevin Griess teamed up to draft and execute numerous complex contracts for both DHHS and DAS in support of the state response to COVID-19. Contracts included the purchase of PPE equipment, contract tracing and consulting needs. Their dedication and commitment to getting things done to protect the Agency are evident in everything they worked on.



Department of Health & Human Services

Team: Blake Hendrickson, Alison Keyser Metobo, Felicia Quintana-Zinn, and Caryn N. Vincent

DHHS Teammates from the Epidemiology Department with the Division of Public Health are being recognized for their work during the COVID-19 pandemic. This team had a strong impact on the COVID-19 response to ensure we are able to help all Nebraskans. The team is led by Felicia Quintana-Zinn Deputy Director.



Pictured: Blake Hendrickson, Alison Keyser Metobo, and Caryn N. Vincent. Not pictured: Felicia Quintana-Zinn.



Pictured left from to right. Top row: Jennifer Chvatal, Paige Freeman, Sarah Jensen; Second row: Rebecca Navarrette, Mayra Ramirez, Cheryl Scherer; Third row: Joan Thompson. Not pictured: Kayla Adams, Heather Kanzler, and Deb Eckert

Department of Health & Human Services

Team: Kayla Adams, Jennifer Chvatal, Deb Eckert, Paige Freeman, Sarah Jensen, Heather Kanzler, Rebecca Navarrette, Mayra Ramirez, Cheryl Scherer, and Joan Thompson

This DHHS team of Social Service Workers and their supervisor from the Fremont Customer Service Center are being recognized for their teamwork and support of other teammates during the COVID-19 pandemic, including those teammates who were working from home. The team took on every obstacle presented and brainstormed within the team to share information and worked together to ensure everyone was successful. As a result, the teams' productivity goals were made on a daily basis and surpassed goals set most days. They mastered the use of Citrix and tackled the softphone issues among themselves. This team shared their knowledge with others around the state to make sure the work from home experience was successful for everyone. As a result of the knowledge gained and shared, other teammates starting to work from home were able to do so with less issues. Beyond the technical and productivity, this team worked on self-care and built each other up in a time that was stressful and often overwhelming. They had great communication in the daily huddles and chats and everyone was willing to share ideas to help each other get through the days.



History Nebraska

Team: Andrew M. German, Kelsey Soukup, and Jay Shaeffer

With very little time to prepare, the History Nebraska I.T. team came up with technological plans and resources which allowed History Nebraska teammates to work from their homes and access their work at the start of and during the COVID-19 shutdown. The I.T. team was an "essential" team, which required them to report to work every day and continue to assist teammates in facilities and the majority of teammates working from home. Their tireless efforts allowed History Nebraska staff to continue moving forward with the mission of History Nebraska during an unprecedented time in history.



Department of Insurance

Rhonda K. Ahrens, Gordon Hay, Michael Muldoon, and Derek Wallman

The Nebraska Department of Insurance Actuarial Team members have collectively and individually contributed expertise and guidance to assist regulators and insurers with navigating the COVID-19 disruption. One important example is the development of guidance for health insurers that is being used to consider and communicate insurance rate impacts of COVID-19 as they move forward with developing 2021 premium rates. The template developed in Nebraska and communicated to other states via the National Association of Insurance Companies has been adopted or modified by multiple other jurisdictions. In spite of the shut down of in-person training needed for obtaining actuarial certification, one of the department actuaries was able complete his actuarial certification during this period. The department's actuarial team has provided support to important ongoing work related to long term care regulation for not only Nebraska but nationwide, and has diligently supported Nebraska's insurance regulatory duties during the period of COVID-19 disruption.

Department of Labor

Angela Hansen-Kruse

Angela directs the IT program for the Nebraska Department of Labor (NDOL) and had primary responsibility for the implementation of a new Unemployment Benefits system, which was successfully launched in October. The new system made it possible for NDOL to process essentially four years' worth of unemployment claims in four months. The new system had design capabilities that made it possible for NDOL to stand up three entirely new types of unemployment benefit programs in a matter of weeks. In addition, Angela was responsible for acquiring computers, cell phones, and personal protective equipment that allowed NDOL to double the number of individuals taking unemployment claims. This provided NDOL with the opportunity to handle the increased workload and keep local offices open to take claims and assist workers who lost their employment because of the pandemic outbreak. Due to federal fund source restrictions, NDOL manages its own buildings. Angela bore the primary responsibility for oversight of the architectural and construction design and RFP process for a complete renovation of NDOL main office building. Angela is a tireless worker and treats all NDOL teammates with dignity and respect.



Department of Labor

Katie S. Thurber

Katie is General Counsel and Legislative Liaison for the Nebraska Department of Labor (NDOL). In July 2019, she acquired the duties of Acting Director of Unemployment Insurance (UI), the department's largest program. Katie was instrumental in achieving the successful launch of a new unemployment benefits system in October 2019. The pandemic outbreak resulted in a tremendous increase in the number of unemployment claims filed. As Acting Director of UI, Katie was responsible for making it possible for the UI staff to take and process 157,490 unemployment claims, essentially four years' worth of claims, in four months. Even with the increase in claims, 85% of all regular UI payments received first payments within 28 days of the claim being filed. As the claims load increased, she had to double the number of teammates processing unemployment claims, shift a significant number of teammates to home-based work, and help stand up three entirely new unemployment programs. All of this was done while continuing to perform her duties as General Counsel and while getting all of NDOL's legislative initiatives on track for passage when the Legislature returned. Angela works tirelessly to achieve the agency's mission.



Nebraska Library Commission

Team: Vern Buis and Janet Greser

In preparation for the transition to remote work due to COVID-19, Vern developed instructions for teammates with the assistance of the OCIO help desk. Janet set up sixteen of the Commission's reserve and training laptops and assigned them to teammates as needed for remote workstations. Together they prepared teammates to use laptops at home to continue to support the Library Commission's business operations. Vern and Janet worked to align the Commission's use of technology with the statewide plan during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Vern contacted the OCIO to discuss how Commission teammates could remote access their workstations following the specifications of the State's technology plan. The OCIO technology plan states the use of VPN as the only access method for agencies to offer teammates remote access to their workstations. Vern worked with the OCIO and acquired the proper licensing and number of VPN connections for all teammates to have the option to remote from home to their workstations. Vern set up the VPN software and computer settings on all of the remote access computers to successfully use a VPN connection to access the Commission's network. Janet tested each device to be sure that teammates had a properly working computer. Janet documented the step-by-step instructions for teammates to follow to use the OCIO authorized VPN access to their workstations.



photo not available

Nebraska Library Commission

Brad Hauptman

Brad is recognized for his efforts that go beyond his job description; volunteering to help deliver over 200 boxes of cartridges to the post office to be recycled as well as help out when and where he could when the commission was short-staffed last fall. Brad is patron-focused in his approach to work. It was his idea (years ago) to send the Talking Book and Braille Service (TBBS) newsletter to all patrons in audio form. This forward thinking and patron focused approach has continued during the pandemic. Brad continues to perform his regular duties, but has taken it upon himself to research text-to-speech software to better our service and help TBBS get the commission's magazine program back on track post-pandemic. Brad's going above and beyond, his patron focused approach to service, his innovation, and forward-thinking are worthy of Excellence in Leadership recognition.



Nebraska Library Commission

Holly Woldt

Holly has recognized connectivity gaps in small libraries and has come up with innovative and creative approaches to finding funding sources to help libraries improve their internet access. Holly has been a champion for improving public libraries' technology over the past decade, starting with the NTIA BTOP grant for Nebraska Library Public Computer Centers in 2010. Holly partnered with the OCIO and successfully secured a \$25,000 Sparks grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for the Nebraska Schools and Libraries—Breaking the Ice and Igniting Internet Relationships project, which incentivized six public libraries and public school districts to share internet for the creation of "Homework Hotspots." In 2019-20, she helped engineer the first-ever NUSF-117 Nebraska Special Construction Matching Fund Program, which increases the E-rate discount for public libraries to install fiber connectivity to their libraries, with \$1,000,000 in funding through the Nebraska Public Service Commission. COVID-19 underscores the critical importance of broadband services. Holly's work is significant in supporting libraries' efforts to upgrade their internet connectivity.



Nebraska Military Department

Chris Schroeder

Chris has been an Emergency Management Program Specialist - Long Term Recovery with the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency since October, 2019. He coordinates intermediate/long term housing for Nebraska citizens affected by disasters. He developed working relationships with volunteer organizations, community resources and faith based organizations who are active in emergencies/disasters. Additionally, he supported communities impacted by disasters with the management of unsolicited donated goods and services, and spontaneous volunteers/organizations. Initially, Chris worked with flood victims, but then expanded to assisting Nebraska citizens who were impacted by COVID-19. He supported the mission to locate adequate food for children and families who were affected by the virus. He engaged with state leadership, voluntary groups and our federal partners to create a Food Security Taskforce. With schools closing, this put many children at risk of going hungry since the food provided at school may be the only food they have to eat. Chris worked with the two largest Nebraska food banks to ensure that they would continue to supply the local food banks and pantries across the state. Chris is highly deserving of this award. He is very dedicated, compassionate and a perfect fit for this position.

Nebraska Military Department

Team: Molly Bargmann, Donny Christensen, Tim Diedrichsen, Shawn Fitzgerald, Deborah J. Kai, Phyllis McCown, Polly Putney, and Sue Spence

Understanding the implication of immediate fiscal relief, the Military Department's teammates/people leaders in Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, State Support Services Division, and State Human Resources took on COVID-19 related tasks with enthusiasm and fervor. The environment and setting was clearly a challenge due to the immediacy of needs and rapidly developing guidance. COVID-19 duties were a high priority which were coupled with the day to day duties that still needed to be accomplished. Each section showed exemplary skill/expertise in ensuring expediency and accuracy with COVID-19 expenditures, reimbursements and pay. While the fiscal team allocated tens of millions of dollars to Public Health agencies, the Human Resources team hired and paid nearly 1,000 Nebraska National Guard men and women who served at the direction of the Governor to respond to these crises. The amount paid to State Active Duty employees was \$1.93 million. They worked together internally and externally to solve problems for our citizens. Each individual nominated as part of the multi-sectional team had a hand in making these missions a success.

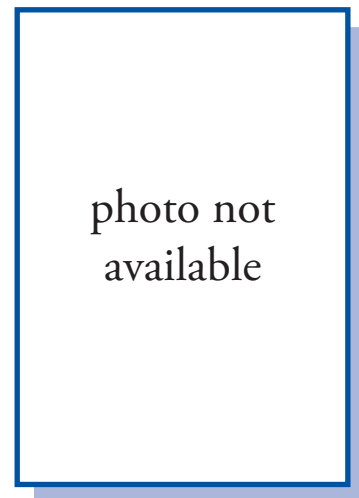


Pictured left from to right. Back row: Tim Diedrichsen, Molly Bargmann, Phyllis McCown, Shawn Fitzgerald, and Deb Kai. Front row: Sue Spence and Polly Putney. Not pictured: Donny Christensen.

Department of Motor Vehicles

Adam Giddings

Adam is Assistant District 3 Supervisor for the Department of Motor Vehicles. Several offices that Adam directly supervises were deemed "hot spots" for COVID-19, but they remained open throughout the pandemic. This required daily direction from a leader who was efficient and able to make customer service, both internal and external, a priority. Adam was involved in communicating with his entire team, as well as county officials, on a daily basis, throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic. Whether teleworking or working from his office, he was instrumental in keeping district 3 informed and operating as close to "normal" as possible.



Department of Motor Vehicles

Veronica S. Lueders

Veronica is a "go to" employee in the department. Her commitment to the agency was not only exhibited during the COVID-19 pandemic, but throughout the year. In addition to her regular workload, she has coordinated the logistics involved with setting up and decommissioning of an off-site office. She took on the additional responsibility of serving as planning coordinator for a conference of nearly 900 attendees. During the COVID-19 pandemic she coordinated efforts to secure the necessary communication equipment to set up a phone bank within 24 hours. She has managed the process to install glass barriers between our customers and teammates to maintain proper social distancing. Her contributions have lead to successful results on every project where she is involved. She is a tremendous asset to the agency.

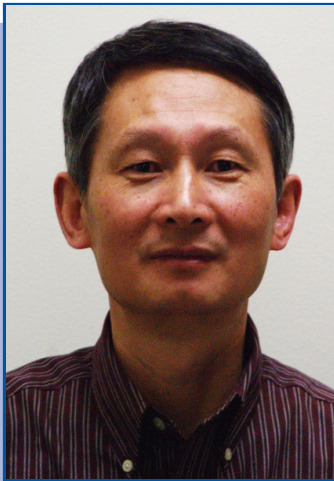




Department of Natural Resources

Shelly Meyer

Shelly was a great help in keeping the department financial processes flowing during this initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Shelly has brought energy, experience, and enthusiasm into the department in her role as a Federal Aid Administrator II. Since joining the department in 2018, she has been a key teammate in changing and improving processes and she has been able to resolve long standing issues in some older federal grants. Additionally, she took a leadership role in the management of our statewide Nebraska Environmental Trust grants and in accounting for Platte Basin Coalition projects by taking on some of the complicated and time consuming work efforts of other Divisions. From the time of her arrival, Shelly has demonstrated that she is a key team player, both having a positive effect on morale and increasing the efficiency of the work processes in the Division. Her prior financial experience in the private sector, and at another State agency, have added to the experience, knowledge, and bench strength of the department.



Department of Natural Resources

Shuhai Zheng

Shuhai has provided excellent representation for the department in disaster management efforts with local, state, and federal agencies during and after flooding in 2019, and in participating in Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (MRRIC) activities. During this initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, he aggressively transitioned his Division by equipping staff with the tools needed for remote access capabilities. During the flooding events of 2019, Shuhai worked long hours at the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency command center. He and his team consistently provided timely and accurate information to meet customer needs then and continue to do so now. He has gone above and beyond in serving as the agency lead on Missouri River activities and the development of a levee inventory following the 2019 historic flooding. He is very good at building relationships at other agencies and he communicates the issues at hand in a clear and succinct manner. Shuhai's broad base of knowledge and over 30 years of experience allow him to help the varied groups interested in water resources throughout the State and the region.



Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Brandy Harper

Brandy was one of the few employees who remained on site during COVID-19. Due to her being in the office, she not only has worked more hours but has taken on more duties to fill in the gaps. This includes covering the front desk, helping the administrative office with paperwork and signatures, and continuing her work with the Business Office to ensure bills are paid on time. She is friendly, thoughtful, and willing to step in to make sure our agency is running as smoothly as possible. Her attention to detail and willingness to learn has helped not only teammates but our clients as well. Her positive personality is a huge asset to our agency, especially during times of change and the unknown with the pandemic. Thank you for all of your hard work!

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Stephanie DeGroot

Stephanie joined the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NDHH) in January 2019 as the new Business Manager. She brought to the agency over twenty years of accounting experience. A native Nebraskan, she returned home to run her family farm. In addition to her “day duties” and running the family farm, Stephanie is also an Assistant Fire Chief and an EMT for her local community. Stephanie was nominated by her colleagues at NDHH for her work in coordinating the agency’s COVID-19 response for the workplace and teammates while other teammates advocated for deaf, blind and hard of hearing individuals throughout the state. She tirelessly worked to adjust the continuity of operations plan, ensured all teammates were set up to work from home, worked to ensure that the workplace was safe, disseminated information and resources for all five state offices locations, and all the adjustments made to make sure the agency was up to date. Stephanie’s effless work made it possible for agency personel to focus on helping fellow Nebraskans during this public health emergency.



Nebraska Board of Parole

Nicole Miller

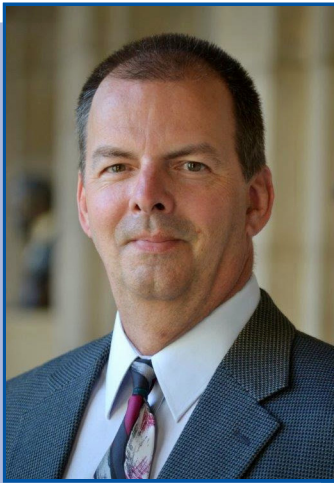
As agency Legal Counsel, Ms. Miller has been a great asset to our agency. During this pandemic time, Ms. Miller, was inspirational in her ability to mangle the circumstances. She worked diligently to ensure that decisions that were made on how to proceed were within the agency’s scope to implement. She proved to be an excellent sounding board for the Director of Supervision and Services and always had the best interest of the agency in the forefront of her mind. She communicated with the Board, the Division of Parole, and our community members to provide accurate information in an ever changing time. She has demonstrated the following qualities as a leader: accountability, integrity and dependability. She shares her legal knowledge with the Board of Parole and Division of Parole Supervision. She is a leader with great ideas, who continues to share her leadership skills with others while maintaining a professional demeanor at all times. She has assisted the Chairperson of the Board of Parole on projects, such as legislative liaison, strategic planning meetings, and keeping our website updated. Projects are always finished in a timely manner. Ms. Miller has stayed focused on her legal briefings and other legal work pertaining to this agency.



Nebraska State Board of Public Accountancy Team: Heather Myers, Dan Sweetwood, and Kristen VanWinkle

The Nebraska State Board of Public Accountancy demonstrated careful planning and detailed response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Starting in March, teammates reviewed the previously developed contingency plan to prepare for the possibility of working remotely and reached out to the Executive Committee of the Board with possible scenarios for the Board to consider based on the ongoing threat of COVID-19. By early April, the Uniform CPA Examination was being significantly impacted by the announcement Prometric Test Centers were closing. Candidates in the process of sitting for the examination were stressed and concerned regarding daily announcements. Board teammates immediately set up a COVID-19 News page on the Board’s website to assist in getting communications out to candidates and others. Board teammates worked hard to ensure the biennial renewal process was not impacted. Starting mid-March, staff worked remotely with Nebraska Interactive and OCIO to ensure the online applications worked properly. Through this preparation, online renewals opened on time with minimal issues. In addition to the technological side, Board teammates had to take on additional responsibilities including: printing and mailing 1200 active permits, 500 inactive registrations, and 900 firm permits. Teammates put in additional time to ensure all permits and registrations were mailed out in a timely manner while keeping up with their normal responsibilities.





Public Employees Retirement Systems

Dean Gress

Dean has served the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Systems (NPERS) and members of its retirement plans for over 33 years. Dean is continually looking for innovative ways to increase efficiency. He loves to question why things are done a certain way and is great at identifying gaps in a plan, when analyzing a process. NPERS IT team receives many requests for assistance daily and Dean works a high percentage of those requests. The primary reason because his co-workers know he is highly knowledgeable, capable, and will get things done. At the onset of the COVID-19 response, NPERS IT team moved quickly to prepare the Agency to perform work functions remotely. When the administrative direction was given to reduce the number of teammates working in the office, Dean was on the forefront setting up teammates with everything they needed to work from home. You would even find him delivering equipment to co-workers' homes, providing one-on-one support and training until teammates were comfortable in their "new normal" workspace. He was instrumental in NPERS' mission to maintain business as usual and ensure members of all of our retirement plans did not see an interruption or delay in receiving service or payments of their retirement benefits.



Public Employees Retirement Systems

Thomas M Wuestewald

Tom started with NPERS as an SOS Temporary employee in January of 2019, providing assistance to the refunds team in our benefits area and assisting the receptionist. A permanent position opening provided the opportunity to bring Tom on as a permanent member of the refunds team, just over a year ago. In this short time, he has shown exemplary dedication to his daily work, while finding new and creative ways to improve the benefit refund process. Tom routinely submits ideas for ways to improve both the business and technological aspects of his job. His innovative thoughts and effective communication skills spearheaded the more efficient procedures currently used. His effort and direction, while collaborating with the IT team, resulted in faster processing and fewer errors, providing more time for his team to focus on other tasks. Tom's optimistic demeanor and understanding attitude make him a delight to work with, especially when he is training and coaching new staff.

Department of Revenue

Chuck Long, Scott Hartley, Scott Jones, Chacey Jones, Matt Marisette, Tony Pella, ReNae Schwaninger, Mark Studnicka, and Kevin Wikoff

The weekend of the Governor's Emergency Declaration this team was already anticipating the necessity of the Department of Revenue (DOR) working remotely. During that time, and still today, this team has accomplished some difficult and demanding projects that involved social distancing for safe working conditions, teammates working from home, and deploying computers and monitors. They provided curbside pickup for IT equipment, as well as, office supplies for Lincoln teammates and although eight of these teammates are not trained for computer infrastructure support, they rose to the occasion along with Scott Hartley and were able to accomplish some amazing things to keep things running smoothly, IT wise. In addition to accomplishing this, these teammates were able to stay working in the office and see that the daily and monthly mailings were all sent out on time, PPE/cleaning supplies were available for teammates in the office, all while doing their "normal" support for the department. Scott Hartley, Business Systems Analyst/Coordinator, was able to move 60% of teammates to remote working in a very timely manner with little additional IT assistance. Soon thereafter, 75% of teammates were working remotely, again with Scott doing the vast majority of the work alone! During this time, Scott also fielded his "normal" everyday questions from teammates in the office and he did this all with an extremely helpful attitude.



Pictured left from to right. Back row: Chuck Long, Scott Hartley, Mark Studnicka, Kevin Wikoff, Tony Pella, and Matt Marisette. Front row: Scott Jones, Chacey Jones, and Renae Schwaninger

Nebraska State Patrol

Becky Bliven

Communications Site Manager, Becky Bliven, is very deserving of this award due to her continual leadership demonstrated in the Communications Division Lincoln Joint Operations Center, which covers both Troop H and Troop C. She supervises a team of 14 communications specialists and their supervisors in a center that handles 1.6 million radio transmissions per year. In the first quarter of 2019, when her commander was away at training for three months, Becky stepped up and successfully filled his role, acting as the Director of Communications for the agency. Immediately upon his return, due to a staffing change in the division, she agreed to lend her expertise to be the acting Site Manager at the Troop A Communications Center in Omaha. She has been the Site Manager for both of the busiest centers, again demonstrating a tremendous attitude for success, which is passed on to her dispatchers and supervisors. The difficulty of maintaining a quality of service to our customers while teammates have been forced to take COVID-19 precautions has only added to her challenges. She has been diligently setting the example for visionary leadership for the past 15 months, at times with 50-60 hour work weeks, in spite of no reduction in her current duties. She continually develops her supervisors to succeed in serving our customers. Without Becky's great leadership, the transitions that the agency has successfully weathered would not have been possible and the agency is greatly indebted to her!



Nebraska State Patrol

Deb Home

Deb has been instrumental in numerous process improvements for the Evidence Technicians, now Forensic Technicians, and the work flow they use to complete their job duties. Deb made a lot of changes to policy and SOP, making the initial reach out to the banking industry to find an efficient process for all troop areas. She assisted with the re-writing of the job duties/responsibilities for the Forensic Technicians that allowed them to get a much needed pay increase and reclassification. Deb goes above and beyond when dealing with the sworn officers who collect evidence and the rest of the judicial system as cases move through the court process. She is also responsible for returning property when it is no longer needed for court purposes. She is able to communicate effectively with each level she interacts with. During Deb's tenure as the Forensic Technician, she oversaw numerous small, but extremely important changes for the division. The list is extremely long, including a flood in the basement that caused a total relocation of the evidence (tracking included) during a remodel and the transfer of all long-term evidence from Grand Island to Norfolk. She also responds to crime scenes to assist Investigators with the collection of evidence. Deb has been working diligently in combining cases from reporting systems, and during this time she has taken it upon herself to repackage evidence that has to be kept for 99 years. The evidence has become weathered from time; but she makes sure it is kept beyond reproach. She wants to leave the evidence in a better place than when she found it. Deb is a very valuable team member and completes her duties without complaint. Nebraska State Patrol is lucky to have her as a teammate!



Nebraska State Patrol

Trp. Matthew J. Maus

Trooper Maus is very well attuned with his shift and is always concerned with their well-being and this was never more evident than during the recent passing of Trooper Fahnholz. Being new to the shift, Trooper Maus brought his attention to his teammates and how they were dealing with the death. Trooper Maus' recognition and empathy for his fellow Troopers was stellar and he is often counted and looked upon for guidance when a supervisor is not available. He has shown multiple times his ability to lead and coordinate with other troopers and other agencies. Even more impressive is his handling of Troop C's accident reconstruction program. Trooper Maus has conducted hundreds of scene reconstructions not only for the Patrol division, but he is exclusively called upon by Investigative Services to reconstruct their various types of crime scenes. He and his teammates have been called upon numerous times to assist other troop areas and allied agencies across the state. This is a testament to his professionalism, experience, expertise, and quality reports he creates. Trooper Maus embraces both current technology and has identified ways to push the Nebraska State Patrol Accident Reconstruction Team into the future. He has identified and mentored troopers to be the next generation of reconstructionists and is always looking for the latest technology to help his team, the Patrol, and the people of Nebraska. Trooper Maus embodies the qualities the agency looks for and tries to foster in all of our troopers. It's his excellence in these areas that make him stand out among his peers.





Nebraska State Patrol

Jason Scott

Captain Scott is employed by the Nebraska State Patrol and serves within Troop A providing mission critical support and leadership during the COVID-19 public health emergency. He supervised the deployment of personnel, equipment, and resources during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Captain Scott's dedication to his teammates and willingness to serve the public by example during the COVID-19 public health emergency is commendable.



Nebraska State Patrol

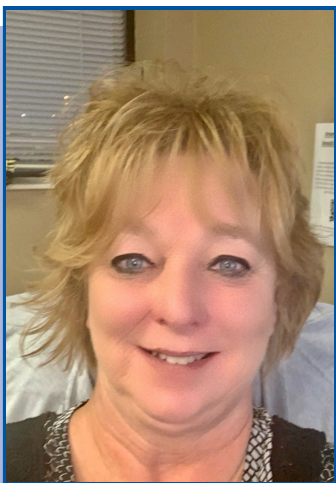
Team: Richard R. Aldag IV, Sydnee Archibald, Isaac Ascherl, Rebecca Cooksley, T'Ronne Estwick, Cole Gibbons, Quin Gooch, Paul Jacobson, Nathan Schulz, and Kevin Stary

This team provided innovative leadership and collaborative support during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Their contributions allowed the Nebraska State Patrol to continue to meet its mission of providing high quality law enforcement to ensure a safe and secure Nebraska during a challenging and evolving COVID-19 public health emergency.

Their selfless actions provided compassionate customer based law enforcement, while simultaneously providing valuable assistance to the communities of which they serve during a time of novel uncertainty.

Their actions embody honorable public service and are worthy of recognition.

Pictured left from right. Top row: Richard R. Aldag IV and Sydnee Archibald; Second row: Rebecca Cooksley and Quin Gooch; Third row: Paul Jacobson and Kevin Stary. Not pictured: Isaac Ascherl, T'Ronne Estwick, Cole Gibbons, and Nathan Schulz



State Treasurer

Marcia Scheinost

Marcia has been with the State Treasurer's Office since 2001. She has seen many changes in her time, and has adapted with an easy going attitude that allows her to be flexible through these changes. She is knowledgeable in her areas of expertise and can hop in at a moment's notice to help out any area in the SDU. She has a heart of gold and is always there to lend an ear or a helping hand to anyone who needs it.

Marcia was instrumental in the quick transition to be able to work from home during this pandemic. She quickly identified areas that would need a change and found solutions that were the most cost effective and timely for the circumstances. She worked tirelessly to make sure everyone had what they needed. Being a volunteer EMT, she has also been a great resource for safety protocols as teammates return to the office.

State Treasurer

Heidi R. Wallace

Heidi has been with the State Treasurer's Office for 23 years, starting as an intern, and currently holding the title of Chief Deputy of Treasury Management(TM). She has a wealth of knowledge for all operations of the division. Her Accredited ACH Professional (AAP) certification gives her the knowledge to advise agencies on ACH payments that have been sent by the State or the vendor, when issues arise.

Yearly, Heidi follows all bills introduced by the Legislature to see which will affect the divisions of the Treasurer's Office. She follows any transfers that are required to be made by the Office in an organized fashion. Tracking each transfer that is approved by the Legislature and those directed by the State Budget Administrator, Heidi works with the agencies to ensure the correct fund is used in the accounting system

Over her 23 years of service, she has taken all the office changes in stride and has tackled more responsibility with professionalism and pride.



Department of Transportation

Mary Lou Bohuslavsky

Customer service focused excellence and valuing people is one of Mary Lou's greatest features. She always goes above and beyond when processing payments for utility reimbursements. These payments are especially important during COVID-19 in serving our customers in a timely manner and to keep projects moving forward. With effective communication, Mary Lou addresses any discrepancies timely and reaches out to make sure reimbursements are not delayed. The Utilities Department appreciates her detail to processes and timeliness.



Department of Transportation

Shirley Danahy

With COVID-19, social distancing required transitioning the Highway Safety Section team to working remotely. A new strategy and tool was needed to maintain the Location Marking Unit's daily QDIP board. Their QDIP board is the daily hub of workload management, teammate feedback and quality management. Without an effective virtual QDIP board, working remotely was going to lead to miscommunication and lost productivity. Shirley saw the need for virtual communication tools and collaborated with the Lean Sigma Six (LSS) team to develop an Excel file QDIP board. The file included the familiar QDIP board structure with significant calendar date automation features to make running a daily QDIP virtually as easy as opening a file and sharing a screen. Without Shirley's forward thinking and innovation, this would not have been a possibility for the Highway Safety Section team.



photo not available

Department of Transportation

Terry Einspahr

Terry's dedication to the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT)'s, teammates and customers is displayed daily with constant attention to the safety of his crew while providing the best possible service to the citizens of our state, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. From the inception of the Maintenance Decision Support System, Terry has understood the importance of this tool and portrays it positively to those he leads. His involvement has led to many breakthroughs as he is always willing to provide the support necessary to test the system and implement changes. The work that he and his team do will help others in the state with the implementation and use of the system. Terry is a leader in our pavement maintenance improvement projects and is always looking for more innovative ways to get the work done with the least impact to traffic.



Department of Transportation

Suzy Fredrickson

Suzy seeks opportunities for the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) in planning so that innovative technology can happen and she intuitively understands the logics for each system and how they play together. She uses this skill to collaborate systems, which reduces cost and enhances production or processes. Suzy was instrumental in requesting a script that puts all stone profiles in the machine settings so everyone can automatically remote into their own desktop which is a great feature to have in place with so many teammates needing to work remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Suzy monitors tickets to see how the issue could impact NDOT, and she goes out of her way to educate or suggest alternatives to benefit the user. Suzy is always positive and takes advantage of every opportunity to assist teammates in any way she can.



Department of Transportation

Walter Moy

Walter leads the Traffic Forecast and Analysis group team and assists in improving the efficiency and accuracy of Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT)'s traffic counting program. This data is used throughout the Department of Design Decisions and Planning. Some improvements recently instituted by Walter include consolidation of various software applications used in the processing of traffic data. Walter has also directed major changes to the traffic count program through the use of data analytics during COVID-19. His dedication to innovation and continuous improvement was displayed during the pandemic. Due to the urgency of the request, Walter and his team developed a weekly reporting process that concisely described travel data for a wide variety of road types to be ready when requests for data came in. Walter was able to develop a framework and process to regularly report weekly pandemic traffic patterns.

Department of Transportation

Noah Pitts

Noah looks for the latest means and methods in designing projects by trying the latest software and conducting training on changes in design practices for those involved. This was especially important while teammates were working remotely during COVID-19. Noah always remains positive and has an answer ready for those in need. When teammates were wanting to submit plans and just get it done during this pandemic, Noah pressed on with guidance to have the project submitted correctly the first time. Noah is an asset to not only his team but to Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT)!



Department of Transportation

Benjamin Ptacek

Ben excels at whatever he does, leads by example, and explains processes to ensure teammates understand what is expected. During this pandemic, Ben readily responds to situations while working remotely. Nothing deters him from being there and ready to assist when needed. He walks teammates through the problem so they can respond to the situation themselves. Ben values each teammate and their input on projects. While juggling family life and work, he has been able to strike a balance and maintain a positive outlook.



Department of Transportation

Team: Zachary Broshears, Bradford M. Finch, Ryan Harvey, Bob Seger, and Doug Wilson

The AASHTOWare Project Team leads by example, scheduling Webex meetings and quickly adopting features in Skype, Slack, or other systems to allow continued collaboration between the team and Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) stakeholders. This team is customer focused and worked quickly to prepare everyone to work remotely and be successful at their jobs. The AASHTOWare Project Team has not missed any beats with COVID-19 and has stayed on track with all the changes and challenges happening around them. Due their effective communication strategy, there has not been any support outages or significant downtimes.

Pictured left from to right. Top row: Bradford M. Finch and Bob Seger; Second row: Doug Wilson. Not pictured: Zachary Broshears and Ryan Harvey.





Department of Transportation

Team: Shayne Daughenbaugh, David L. Jones Jr., Lisa Mathews, and Linsey Sousek

In the last few years the Lean Six Sigma (LSS) Team has helped the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) achieve new levels of performance. Team members take on projects to help teammates improve their processes, eliminate waste, and find savings. Their customers range from the front-line worker to executive leadership. Their patience, dedication, and outside-the-box thinking has helped many in NDOT overcome difficult and sometimes uncomfortable problems. The LSS team was able to establish virtual huddles immediately after the pandemic hit to keep their work on track and maintain team cohesiveness. This model allowed the team to assemble a variety of new tools that helped the agency transition from office to home at the start of the pandemic. The very nature of the LSS team is leadership, which is demonstrated daily as they help lead teams to a more efficient, more effective, and customer focused approach to their work.



Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs

Tom Dudderar

Tom is worthy of this recognition. As the supply specialist for the Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home, he offers his knowledge and expertise to the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs without hesitation. Tom embodies the spirit of teamwork and displays great customer service always. Tom brings credit upon himself, Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home, and the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs. Tom has worked for ENVH since 2004.



Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs

Idara Gibson

Idara, medication aide at the Central Nebraska Veterans' Home, serves as a role model for her co-workers in numerous ways. She is kind, caring, and patient, not only with those she cares for, but also for her fellow staff. She is more than dependable, showing up for work and picking up extra shifts to help care for those in need. She takes exceptional care of the members we serve and is proud to also serve those who have served us. She is a leader with med pass and assists in training her successors to be successful in passing medications. When we moved the home from Grand Island to Kearney, it was a huge transition for everyone. She adapted extremely well to the change and even helped initiate ideas and strategies to help the workflow of the new building. Idara is big on team approach when it comes to doing her job. She assists not only in training others to be successful with passing medications but also other CNA's in their role working the floor. She is very knowing pickups up on new items quickly, and does her job efficiently and with ease.

Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs

Team: Susan Baumann, Cory Drummond, Rena Ferris, Kathryn Gillmore, Lisa Helms, John Mamaril, Richard Noyes, James Restau, Karen Solc, and Matthew Starkey

The State Service Office (SSO) Team consists of a total of 12 teammates, three front office teammates, eight veteran service officers, and a state service office manager. The mission of the State Service Office is to Honor and Serve Nebraska's Veterans. The State Service Office does this by interviewing military veterans, their spouses, and dependents to establish tentative eligibility for veterans' benefits provided by federal and state laws; to advise applicants with claims before the US Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA); and to assist them in the accurate completion of application forms and transmit them to the proper federal or state agency for processing. The State Service Office assists and manages both initial appeals and appeals to the Board of Veterans Affairs. The State Service Office also provides submission of claims for county veteran service officers across the state of Nebraska. The State Service Office also conducts trainings and outreach across the state of Nebraska. The State Service Office (SSO) Team has continued to provide all services to veterans and county veteran service officers (CVSO) throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency. Being flexible and innovative, the SSO began providing virtual services to veterans the very day the Veteran Administration Regional Office (VARO) closed to the public.



Pictured left from to right. Back row: James Foster, Rena Ferris, Richard Noyes, Matthew Starkey, Cory Drummond, and James Restau; Front row: Levi Bennett, Susan Baumann, Kathryn Gillmore, John Mamaril, and Karen Solc. Not pictured: Lisa Helms

Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs

Team: Esperanza Cisneros, Christina Lopez, Rey Enriquez, Sulema DeLeon, Tracy Gantz, Katie Goin, Barb Pursely, Kristi Kutschara, Kay Grote, and Maria Gamino

These unsung heroes were selected to receive this award because of their dedicated service to the members, their teammates, and the facility. When the war on COVID-19 began, this team stepped forward to achieve whatever was necessary in maintaining a clean, safe, and coronavirus free environment. Because of their efforts, the health of our members and teammates has been preserved. In addition to their normal essential duties, these teammates assisted the dietary department with delivering meals to members in quarantine. When the Administrator asked for volunteers to become part of the COVID Care Team, this group of professionals signed up and some offered to complete nurse aide training. Despite the fact many of them would possibly be spending months working with sick and dying members, none wavered from offering everything, so they could make a difference.



Pictured left from to right. Back row: Kay Grote, Kristi Kutschara, Barbara Pursley, Tracy Gantz, and Reynaldo Enriquez; Front row: Katherine Goin, Sulema DeLeon, Esperanza Cisneros, Maria Gamino, and Christina Lopez

Workers' Compensation Court

James Lillis

James has worked for the Workers' Compensation Court since 1994 and has served as the court's Continuity of Operations (COOP) facilitator since 2015. James has taken extraordinary pride in, and been passionate about ensuring our court can seamlessly continue operations despite of any disruption presented to it. Using a combination of annual mock tabletop disaster scenarios and updating our COOP plans with lessons learned during actual disruptions (such as extensive flooding in Nebraska in 2019), he gave the court a head start when the COVID-19 pandemic threatened our operations earlier this year.





Workers' Compensation Court

Team: Aaron Anderson, Bruce Cramer, Scott Dodge, CJ Johnson, Bruce Mayfield, and Peggy Wen

The Information Technology (IT) Section of the Workers' Compensation Court is composed of dedicated experts who skillfully and patiently provided remote access for every member of our court staff, if needed, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each member of the IT Section brings technical skills used in our operations. Aaron Anderson has managed the IT Section since 2016. His steady and innovative leadership positioned the court to solve any technical issue presented by remote work settings and video conference trials. The remainder of the IT staff have been with the court as follows: IT Software Application Developers, Scott Dodge since 1997 and Peggy Wen since 2002. Bruce Cramer, IT Deputy Manager/IT Infrastructure Support Analyst since 2005 and CJ Johnson, IT Infrastructure Support Analyst since 2019. IT Software Applications Developer Bruce Mayfield started at the court in 1995 and retired in April of 2020.

Pictured left from to right. Top row: Aaron Anderson and Bruce Cramer; Second row: Scott Dodge and CJ Johnson; Third row: Bruce Mayfield and Peggy Wen.

STATE OF NEBRASKA



Proclamation

WHEREAS,

The dedicated teammates of the State of Nebraska work hard every day to preserve the efficient and effective operations of state government to which our citizens have grown accustomed; and

WHEREAS,

These same teammates are devoted, providing vital services to the citizens of our great state by carrying out their duties and responsibilities in an exemplary manner; and

WHEREAS,

Nebraska's competent and productive teammates consistently display their commitment to excellence and it is important to recognize these workers for their professionalism and integrity.

NOW, THEREFORE,

I, Pete Ricketts, Governor of the State of Nebraska, DO HEREBY PROCLAIM the month of October, 2020

NEBRASKA STATE TEAMMATE RECOGNITION MONTH

in Nebraska, and I do hereby urge all citizens to take due note of the observance.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand, and cause the Great Seal of the State of Nebraska to be affixed this Fifteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord Two Thousand Twenty.



Attest:


Secretary of State


Governor



NEBRASKA

DEPT. OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

A Publication of Administrative Services
State Personnel Division
November 2020