

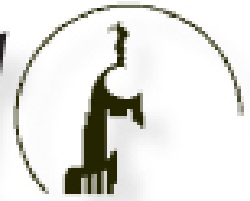
Pete Ricketts
Governor

Dr. Frank Turk
Chairperson

John C. Wyvill
Executive Director

The Communicator

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



Summer 2015

A newsletter surveying health, government and issues affecting Nebraskans.

Governor Signs LB 287 Into Law



Governor Ricketts has signed LB 287 into law (seen above with NCDHH Interpreter Program Assistant Crystal Pierce and Executive Director John Wyvill). LB 287 requires all community interpreters who receive compensation for providing interpreting services to have a license. NCDHH will issue those licenses. Educational (K-12) and religious interpreters are exempt, with educational interpreter requirements covered under special education regulations (Rule 51) regulated by the Nebraska Department of Education. Video Remote Interpreter (VRI) providers in the state will also be required to obtain a license. The purpose of this legislation, sponsored by Sen. Ken Haar, is to ensure proficiency and competency for sign language interpreters providing effective communication access in the community setting. Currently, a license is only required for interpreters practicing within courts, state agencies, and law enforcement.

With the passage of this bill, it ensures NCDHH to continue to carry out its' vision as a proactive and reactive state agency: to strive to enhance collaboration by creating support, cooperation and understanding to achieve fairness and equality in all aspects of mainstream for Nebraskans who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing.

Executive Director's Corner

by: John Wyvill



We have helped over 8,000 Nebraskans to better communication in the first six months of this year.

As part of our mission to better serve the people of Nebraska, we will be expanding our outreach capabilities by offering web based services later this year. You will be seeing webinars and webcasts from NCDHH. For those not familiar with the terminology, a **webinar** is an internet based presentation, lecture, workshop, or seminar that would be transmitted over our website using video conferencing software. The essential components of a webinar is its ability to be interactive and allowing us the ability to give, receive and discuss information; basically a web-based meeting. In addition and contrast, we will also be offering **webcasts** in which the data transmission is one way and doesn't allow for interaction between presenter and the audience.

The advantage of a webinar is that it can reach a larger audience, geographically, and it is more cost effective for all of those involved due to little to no travel and people can watch these presentations at a time that is convenient for them. Saving time means saving money which means this will free up existing resources.

We plan to have a series of accessible webinars on our new Advocacy Resource Handbook this fall, which you will read more about in this newsletter.

We welcome suggestions and ideas for webinar topics. Please email your ideas and suggestions to ncdhh@nebraska.gov or you may call us at (800) 545-6244.

2014 Legislative Review: A Successful Year

As previously mentioned, we are very excited to see the interpreter licensure bill become law (LB 287). We have already started the process with rules and regulations to get the ball rolling.

We received funding to restore a field representative, office and full time presence in Western Nebraska in Scottsbluff. As noted in the Lincoln Journal Star the two year state budget raise was the third lowest in the past 30 years according to a public policy think tank. We are grateful for the support and recommendation of the Legislative Appropriations Committee and the Governor for their approval of our budget.

There are many people to be thanked for the successful legislative session. These include each and every member of the NCDHH Board and NCDHH team. In addition, our friends, The Nebraska Association for the Deaf (NeAD), Hearing Loss Association of America- Omaha Chapter, and Nebraska Hands and Voices deserve our thanks and gratitude. These three statewide advocacy organizations stood by our side in the time of need for the Deaf, Deaf Blind and Hard of Hearing. All of us working together for the common good of our fellow Nebraskans have made a difference.

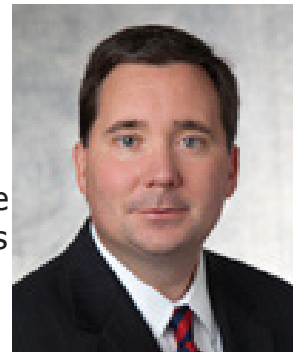
NCDHH Full Board Welcomes Three New Members

Governor Pete Ricketts made his first appointments to the Board of the Nebraska Commission of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH). The three new board members are:



Norm Weverka: Norm is the current president of the Omaha Association of the Deaf (OAD). Mr. Weverka was a long time employee of the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing serving as a field representative before retiring to a life of farming. Mr. Weverka is also a board member for the Nebraska Association of the Deaf (NeAD). Mr. Weverka replaces Mr. Steven Manning.

Jeremy Fitzpatrick: a partner with the Omaha Law Firm Kutak Rock and concentrates his practice in construction law as well as other complex litigation matters. Mr. Fitzpatrick currently serves on the Federal Practice Committee for the United States District Court for the District of Nebraska. Mr. Fitzpatrick also serves on the board of directors for Nebraska Hands and Voices. Mr. Fitzpatrick replaces Ms. Diane Muelleman.



Dr. Stacie Ray: an Associate Professor of Practice in Audiology. She is a licensed audiologist in the state of Nebraska and holds the Certificate of Clinical Competency through the American Speech-Language and Hearing Association (ASHA). Dr. Ray also manages the Hearing Aid Clinic at the Barkley Memorial Center and is the administrator of the Sertoma and Lions Hearing Aid Banks. Dr. Ray is a committee member of the Nebraska Early Detection and Intervention program, a member of the Nebraska Speech-Language and Hearing Association, and a fellow of the American Academy of Audiology (AAA). Dr. Ray also established the Nebraska Children's Hearing Aid Bank in 2007 and Hear U Nebraska in 2011. Dr. Ray replaces Dr. Jan Moore.

Need A Good Publication on Self-Advocacy?

by: Kim Davis, Field Representative



Amazingly, it has been 25 years since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Most of Nebraskans who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind or Hard of Hearing share the same challenges and needs: access to effective communication through the use of various available auxiliary aids and services. We have come a long way to gain access, and, unfortunately, we are still at making requests and advocating for necessary technology and communication access to achieve equality and opportunity in all aspects of daily life.

I'm thrilled to announce our agency's publication, "Advocacy Resource Handbook for Nebraskans Who Are Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing" has just been released and is available on our website. Great timing considering the

25th anniversary of the ADA! As my Executive Director, John Wyvill, said in his foreword of this publication, "A critical section of empowerment and self-advocacy is being aware of your rights. In this handbook, we have addressed some of the challenges that Nebraskans who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing face related to housing, education, employment, the legal system, and more." The topics within this publication are broken down into Life Areas. Each Life Area section includes a legal history chronicle, examples of consumer concerns, a brief overview of state or federal laws, and contact information on how individuals can exercise their rights (file a complaint, grievance, etc.) at the local, state, or federal level. The handbook is not intended to offer legal advice, but rather to provide information on relevant laws and to suggest resources that may assist with advocacy efforts.

Even more exciting, while this is still in the pre-planning stage, one of our agency's plan is to establish a series of webinar workshops covering each topics within the handbook. If you have a Facebook account be sure to Like Us, or you can subscribe to our electronic news (e-news) through email, so you may obtain announcements about our webinar workshop events.

It is our hope that this handbook, and the upcoming webinar workshops, will empower the lives of our deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing Nebraskans and make our state truly a great place to live for those who are deaf, deaf-blind or hard of hearing. Until then, onwards and upwards we go!

Citations of Interest:

"Advocacy Resource Handbook for Nebraskans Who Are Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing"

www.ncdhh.ne.gov/Publications

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NCDHH@nebraska.gov

Nebraska: Boldly Going Where No One Has Before

by: Crystal Pierce, Interpreter Program Assistant



To all my fellow nerds out there, this famous Star Trek quote said it all as I look to the future of our sign language interpreting field. People often think of the Midwesterners as simple, slow to change, and/or uncultured. And now, Nebraska is helping lead the charge of raising the standards in the field of sign language interpreting.

If you asked a random interpreter to guess what states have Legislation in place to regulate interpreters, a few states may quickly come to mind. Most likely, Nebraska would not be one of them. In reality, only a limited number of other states have interpreter regulations in place. Even fewer states require licensure for individual interpreters working for Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) providers. Nebraska is the first state to require VRI providers to have a business license that enables communication services to Deaf and Hard of Hearing people that are in Nebraska.

Now that our interpreting bill (LB287) has passed, an Interpreter Review Board (IRB) committee is hard at work preparing their recommendation of changes to the current rules and regulations. The full IRB board will review this and make a final recommendation for the NCDHH Full Commission Board to evaluate and approve. Once the Full Commission Board approves the changes, the final draft is presented to three state government officials for approval in the rule making process. This all must be completed before the law goes into effect on January 1, 2016. Lots of work to be done and so little time to do it.

LB287 affects many people. Not only does the law affect the sign language interpreters in Nebraska, but it also affects members of the Deaf Community as well as entities that utilize interpreters. So now is the time to get your opinions heard on what the rules and regulations should look like. Both the IRB board meetings and the Full Commission Board meetings are open to the public.

During election time, you often hear people say, 'If you do not vote, you cannot complain who gets elected.' Well, if you don't get involved and share your thoughts and opinions, you cannot complain once the rules are complete. Well, technically you can, but working through the legislative process to get changes made is A LOT more work than working alongside us now.

Be daring, be bold, and be willing to take that first step of getting involved as we take this voyage.

"Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all."- Helen Keller

The Unheard Journey of Deaf Nebraskans

by: Peggy Williams, Mental Health Specialist



"A journey is a person in itself; no two are alike. And all plans, safeguards, policing, and coercion are fruitless. We find that after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us."

–Quote by John Steinbeck, author of *The Grapes of Wrath*.

The "Unheard Journey of Deaf Nebraskans" took us on an amazing trip to look at the history of Deaf Nebraskans, the Nebraska School for the Deaf, oralism, audism, Deaf organizations and culture to produce a 30-minute documentary. This program was co-produced by the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and produced by Nebraska Educational Television.

Production for the "Unheard Journey of Deaf Nebraskans" began in January, beginning with developing the concept of the program followed by countless hours of interviewing, taping, writing and editing the script to be narrated. I would like to offer at this time my appreciation to the following people who took time from their busy schedule to be a part of this documentary making it the success that it was:

Linsay Darnall, Jr. – NSD Museum and Jr. NeAD
Jerry Siders – Retired teacher and volunteer at the SAC Museum
Peggy Scherling – NSD alumni
Julie Dahlke – NSD alumni
Jonathan Scherling – NeAD president
Norman Weverka – Omaha Association of the Deaf president
Albert Sparks – NSD alumni
Ben Sparks (and children) – Sign Language Interpreter

From my experience working on this program, I feel Mr. Steinbeck said it right. This trip took me on my own journey by experiencing what we all need to understand as professionals working with individuals who are Deaf and that is the many struggles that the deaf community in the State of Nebraska has experienced since the late 1800s.



If you were not able to watch this documentary on NET2 in July, please take time to view the "Unheard Journey of Deaf Nebraskans" at www.netnebraska.org/hearing_loss

You may also find this on our website at www.ncdhh.nebraska.gov/publications/publications.html

I would appreciate any feedback you have on this program! Any feedback can be sent to peggy.williams@nebraska.gov

Deaf & Hard of Hearing Awareness Night at the Haymarket Park

July 1, 2015 was the Second Annual Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Night at the Lincoln Saltdogs game at Haymarket Park. Following last year's success, the turnout was more than we could have hoped for, reaching over 700 fans with information about our services.

Leading up to the event, Field Representative Kim Davis appeared on Channel 8 Eyewitness News Midday Forum promoting the public about the awareness event. We also created a video in ASL with Mental Health Specialist Peggy Williams Executive Director John Wyvill and Field Representative Kim Davis that was published on our Facebook page.

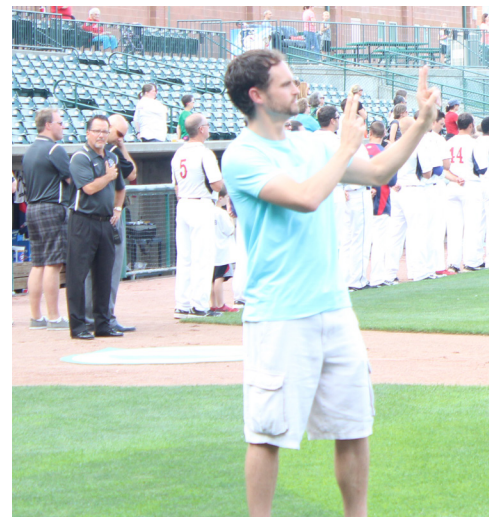
NCDHH had a welcome booth at the front entrance, where fans were greeted by Field Representative Kim Davis and Mental Health Specialist Peggy Williams. Nebraska Relay baseballs and NCDHH handouts and information were given as well.



Jonathan Scherling, President of the Nebraska Association of the Deaf (NeAD), signed the National Anthem at the beginning of the game. Vice Chairperson of the NCDHH Full Board, Margie Propp, threw out the first pitch.

During the 5th Inning was when the "Silent Inning" took place. No announcing, music, or voicing over the big screen. This awareness activity was so all Saltdogs fans alike can experience baseball through the eyes of a Deaf or Hard of Hearing individual.

NCDHH would like to thank the Lincoln Saltdogs and President Charlie Meyer for allowing us back a second year in a row to help us with such a great event. Until next year!



NCDHH Hires Scottsbluff Field Representative



Brittney Graham is the new Field Representative for the Scottsbluff area and Western Nebraska. Brittney has a degree in Special Education from Chadron State. If you are in the area and would like information or assistance on our services, Brittney can be reached at Brittney.graham@nebraska.gov

Governor Ricketts and the Nebraska Unicameral approved the budget for the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH). Within the budget contained a request to reestablish a full time presence in Scottsbluff to adequately meet the need of Western Nebraskans who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Previously closed due to budget restrictions, this position and office will cover consumers in eleven western counties, including over 14,000 square miles.

Field Representatives deliver information regarding the services provided by NCDHH, as well as maintain and distribute a collection of information about strategies for living with, prevision of, and the impact of deafness and hearing loss on Nebraskans. The Field Representative is a crucial part of the mission at NCDHH: to promote and advocate for Nebraskans who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind or Hard of Hearing. They educate and advocate for clients, parents of those who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing, service providers, community organizations, governmental agencies and schools regarding the state and federal laws. Field Representatives also coordinate and administer the Sertoma and Lions Hearing Aid Banks for NCDHH.

“Help Yourself: Stress Management”

by: Peggy Williams, Mental Health Specialist

On May 16, 2015, Dr. Ron Lybarger presented a “Help Yourself: Stress Management, Self-Care and Resiliency Strategies for Interpreters” workshop to the Nebraska community and educational interpreters. Dr. Lybarger holds degrees in sign language interpreting, addiction studies, and counseling psychology. This workshop was provided by a grant received from the Omaha Enrichment Foundation.

This interactive workshop provided participants with stress management training based on scientifically proven strategies including breathing techniques, biofeedback, emotional self-regulation, cognitive behavioral strategies for rational thinking, meditation and yoga. Dr. Lybarger stated the best way for interpreter to manage stress effectively is to ensure they are getting their needs met and that their internal resources are adequate. Forty-two interpreters attended the workshop.

A special thanks to CHI Health in Omaha and the Southeast Nebraska Regional Program (SNRP) for co-sponsoring the workshop. It was a pleasure working with both of you and your contributions for the workshop made this workshop very successful!

Hearing Loss Support Groups: Why?

by: April Guthrie, Field Representative



Hearing Loss Support Groups are one of the many services offered by NCDHH. There is not a perfect formula for the groups, so each group is different. In the Tri-City area, I run three different support groups: one in each city. Each group is held monthly and features a different topic every month. However, the groups differ each time based on the members who attend and any questions they may have. I present the information for the topic of discussion, and give members a chance to ask questions and make comments. The members are also invited to ask questions about topics other than the topic of discussion. These questions provide valuable information for the members of the group, who often have similar questions.

With a different topic every month, there is always something that can be learned. Additionally, these groups provide members with an opportunity to ask any questions about hearing loss and to receive additional information. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, support groups provide just what they say, support. Members of the group get the chance to meet other individuals who have a hearing loss and to learn from them. Often, members have similar questions and concerns and are able to make and receive suggestions from me and from other members.

Attend a local support group! Attendance is open and anyone is welcome!

Grand Island

1:30 p.m. the SECOND Thursday of the month at
Primrose Retirement Community (3990 West Capital Ave)

Kearney

1:30 p.m. the THIRD Thursday of the month at
Brookdale Kearney Northridge (5410 17th Ave)

Hastings

1:30 p.m. the FOURTH Thursday of the month at
The Kensington (233 N. Hastings)

*The November meeting will be held the FIRST Thursday of the month due to the holiday

Monthly topics

August: Help! I Have a Dual Loss

September: Hearing Loss: You're Not Alone

October: Hearing Aid Awareness Week

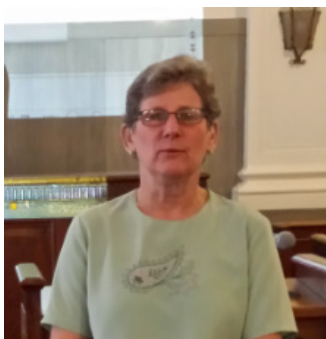
November: New Technology

December: No meeting, Merry Christmas!

For questions, comments, or if you need an interpreter to be present at any meetings, please contact April Guthrie at (308) 627-4509 or april.guthrie@nebraska.gov

Hearing Loss Support Groups: How Can I Set One Up?

by: Beth Ellsworth, Field Representative



A question I'm often asked is where are support groups. Because Nebraska is so spread out, there are many communities that do not have a support group where Deaf or Hard of Hearing people can come and reap the many benefits support groups offer.

Why is joining a support group beneficial? When I was first dealing with my hearing loss, I felt alone. Unable to hear and understand conversation, I became discouraged and decided that there was no point in attending activities. I found out through my local chapter of Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) that there were others like me. So the first benefit of joining is finding out You Are Not Alone!

At meetings I learned so much. I found out about devices, information and tools that could help me overcome my hearing barriers. Others in my group shared what they tried and speakers made recommendations that helped me find what worked for me.

I met experts and attended workshops that kept me current on advances in technology and research. I gained a wealth of knowledge and was able to ask questions and hear other members' questions.

Most importantly, I found others that I could communicate with and understood what it is like to have a hearing loss. Making Friends was life changing for me. I am still a member of our local hearing loss support group through HLAA and it is a tremendous group!

If there is not a support group in your area, here are some tips to starting one:

- Find another person to help set up the group. If you are the only person in your area contact your audiologist and let them know you want to start a group and post a flyer to let others know. There may be some who would like to join you in setting up a group.
- Find a place to meet that is physically accessible. Check with a library, church, or community center.
- Advertise your group. Post a flyer at the super market, doctors' offices, audiologist & ENT, sometimes there are TV channels that advertise for free events.
- Plan how often you want to meet. Most support groups meet once a month.
- Decide on some topics. Often times the first meeting a "getting to know you" format is beneficial. Or if you have someone knowledgeable about hearing loss ask them to come and speak.
- As the group develops you can expand and select a president, vice president, treasurer, someone to do a newsletter. You may also be interested in becoming a chapter of the National Hearing Loss Association.

For more information and resources, please contact me 402-682-7129 Video Phone (local), 1-800-545-6244 toll free or email me at Beth.ellsworth@nebraska.gov

NeAD Biennial Conference

by: Brenda Chappell, Field Representative



Deaf people across Nebraska came together for the Nebraska Association of the Deaf (NeAD) Biennial Conference. They were browsing booths and picking up freebies, they hugged their long lost friends and immersed into chatting. Bobbie Beth Scoggins, former National Association of the Deaf (NAD) president, and Susan Elliott, award-winning educator, came to provide workshops.

NeAD members gathered together for a meeting with discussion and voting, and elected the new officers. Entertainment was provided by a performance of the Anderson Twins, comedians who are deaf and hearing brothers and by the premiere of the NET program, "The Unheard Journey of Deaf Nebraskans."

I know that getting together is rare and precious time. It was a good opportunity to spend time with other members within the Deaf community. Deaf individuals can only learn with what they see. In their daily lives, they go through invisible language, greet their neighbors with a waving hand and smile, and find about sales in advertisement and on boards. Many of their friends live distantly. But when they attend a deaf event like this, they begin to sign rapidly and talk endlessly without any possibility of ending conversations.

The theme was "Fuel the Future Together" and I liked that. Like I mentioned, there are very few events where deaf people can go, especially youth. Since the Nebraska School for the Deaf (NSD) closed, it is very important to get together and help each other. They don't have as many places to go as hearing children do. Too many deaf people are told that they can't do anything, but they had role models at NSD and deaf activities. Often times, today's youth are told they can't because of their hearing loss and they don't know where to seek for inspiration. Deaf adults need to be there and guide them. They also need to find parents of deaf children. When parents learn that their children are deaf, they become scared and, unfortunately, there are many people who would underestimate their hope. Deaf people need to show them how much they accomplished and tell them that their children can achieve so much.

I believe if they are together, they can become strong and work together to improve the future of deaf children.

NCDHH In The News

NCDHH has received various forms of publication across the nation and statewide in the last few months and listed below:

- Deaf Digest, a national publication, reported on the re-opening of our Scottsbluff office, the clip can be found at <http://deafdigest.com/mid-week-news/20150522>
- The Columbus Telegram, local newspaper of Columbus, Neb., featured NCDHH Board Member Gina Frerichs to tell her story about coping with her military-related hearing loss and advocating. The article can be found at: http://columbustelegram.com/news/local/city-woman-sounds-call-to-help-deaf-hearing-impaired/article_fd0d0334-92fa-508b-90e2-d027e6a63544.html
- Articles published by the Lincoln Journal Star and Omaha World Herald related to ACCESSNebraska improvements, with quotes from Executive Director, John Wyvill. The articles are found in the legislature section at www.journalstar.com and www.Omaha.com
- Deaf Digest published praise towards the production "Unheard Journey of Deaf Nebraskans" by NET with producing by Mental Health Specialist, Peggy Williams. The article can be found at <http://deafdigest.net/mid-week-news/20150708/>
- Announcer Drew Bontadelli, broadcasting for KFOR 1240 AM, interviewed Executive Director John Wyvill for NCDHH Information and Resources during Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Night at the Lincoln Saltdogs baseball game

Know Someone Who Deserves Recognition?

NCDHH started Boss of the Month as a means to highlight a member of the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing community, or stakeholders that we work with.

If you would like to nominate someone for Boss of the Month, please email Executive Director John Wyvill at john.wyvill@nebraska.gov

A list of previous honorees can be found on our website at www.ncdhh.nebraska.gov/Publications/botm.html

BOSS OF THE MONTH

For July 2015, is awarded to

Senator John Stinner



Sen. John Stinner of District 48 was elected to Nebraska Legislature in 2014. Sen. Stinner is a member of the Appropriations Committee, working with the State's proposals and budgets. He says his goal is to continue to expand his knowledge on the state's budget and work to match funding to priorities to build a better Nebraska in the future.

Sen. Stinner is a graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a B.S. in business administration and a M.A. in economics. Currently he is the banking chairman and CEO of Valley Bank and Trust Co. Stinner says his goal is to be involved in all issues that would impact the people of District 48.



If you know of someone deserving recognition, please contact John Wyvill at john.wyvill@nebraska.gov

2014 Employee of the Year: Peggy Williams



Peggy Williams, Mental Health Specialist, has been at the Commission for nearly 34 years. First as a Field Representative, and then as her current position, Mental Health Specialist. In recognition and appreciation of the contributions she has made not only to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community and NCDHH, but to the State of Nebraska, she has been named NCDHH Employee of the Year for 2014.

Ms. Williams' outstanding leadership, mentoring, impact and dedication to the Commission has made a tremendous imprint on our agency. Ms. Williams' character and work ethic is parallel to the mission statement of the Commission: to promote and advocate for Nebraskans who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, or Hard of Hearing; to achieve equality and opportunity in all aspects of their daily lives, and to enhance and monitor access to effective communication.

"Peg is known for her work ethic, being a 'straight shooter' and bringing out the best in everyone that she works with. Working with external stakeholders, Peg represents what we all aspire to be in representing the mission and values of the Commission. We are so fortunate to have had the privilege of working with her and having her on our team," Executive Director, John Wyvill, said.

Peggy Williams has left an impact on all of us through her work in interpreting, Mental Health services, numerous NET program specials, and passion for what she does.

Social Media and Technology

NCDHH

Nebraska Commission
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Media Center

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American Sign Language

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Hearing Loss

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Available to Nebraskans, NCDHH has a free media center loan program. Available materials include books, videos, and teaching materials on topics from American Sign Language, deafness, interpreting, hearing loss, and more

Browse and Submit Your Request at:

ne.gov/go/ncdhh-media

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NCDHH welcomes ideas and articles for consideration and insertion into future issues of the newsletter.

Please submit articles to:

**NCDHH Newsletter Ideas
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Lincoln, NE 68510-4844**

or e-mail them to:
ncdhh@nebraska.gov

Articles submitted are not necessarily the views of NCDHH. The NCDHH newsletter is published four times annually.

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