

DDS CONNECTIONS

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY SERVICES QUARTER 3 | 2026 FALL ISSUE

CELEBRATE the strengths and achievements of the people we support.

APPRECIATE the DSPs who turn our mission into daily action.

GROW new possibilities through OA Navigator and purposeful services.

A NOTE FROM DDS:

A quarter worth celebrating

Thank you to every individual, family, provider, teammate and community partner who helped create opportunities for growth, independence and belonging. We are proud of what we are building together.

PRIDE, PROGRESS & POSSIBILITY

Our second annual Disability Pride celebration brought all three DDS communities together in Hastings on July 21.



A day centered on the people we support

Individuals, families, guardians, staff, Shared Living providers, service coordinators and community partners gathered for awards, lunch, games and activities. The day celebrated disability as a natural and valuable part of human diversity and recognized friendship, positivity, communication, helpfulness, volunteering, perseverance and years of involvement in Goodwill services. More than a ceremony, the event created time to connect, laugh and celebrate the people at the heart of DDS.

Each achievement matters. Every person deserves to be seen, heard, and celebrated.

We were excited to celebrate together, and we look forward to continuing to build opportunities around what matters most to each person.



OUR THANKS

The world works better with all of us

Thank you to everyone who participated, planned, transported, supported and celebrated alongside the people we serve.

**—YOU ARE A—
ROCKSTAR!**

★ Thank you for all you do. ★

DSP RECOGNITION WEEK

THANK YOU, DSPS!

Thank you for showing up every day with patience, compassion and heart. Thank you for supporting choice and helping people participate in their communities. Thank you for noticing the little things, staying steady during the hard moments and celebrating every step forward.

You are the rock stars behind the scenes and the people who turn our mission into daily action. We appreciate you during DSP Week and throughout the year.

YOU ARE THE HEART OF OUR MISSION

September 13-19 brought appreciation, connection and rock-star energy to Hastings, Grand Island and Kearney.

A week of celebration

This year's rock-and-roll theme showed up in decorations, music, giveaways and activities. Staff enjoyed breakfast, raffles, a talent show in Grand Island, dress-up days, site lunches, awards, movies and time to relax together. Embroidered Goodwill backpacks and other gifts were shared as practical reminders of how much the team is valued.

The fun mattered, but the message mattered even more: one week can never fully capture our gratitude. DSPs advocate, teach, encourage, problem-solve, comfort and celebrate. The small moments they create build confidence, independence, dignity and opportunity.

The work of a DSP is visible in every new skill, confident choice, meaningful relationship and step toward greater independence.



STATEWIDE RECOGNITION

Congratulations, Jennifer Burkey!

Jennifer, DSP, was selected as one of the Nebraska Association of Service Providers' 2026 Top 5 DSPs. We are proud of the positive impact Jennifer makes through direct support and commitment to meaningful lives.

Tip Top Secret was officially pulled off at our Kearney location!

We are thrilled to share that Jennifer Burkey has been nominated and selected as a NASP Top 5 DSP. She had no idea until Shanda, the NASP representative, arrived alongside Jennifer's family to celebrate this incredible achievement.

This honor reflects Jennifer's dedication, compassion, and the impact she makes every single day. Congratulations, Jennifer — we are so proud of you!

Join us in congratulating Jennifer on this outstanding honor. We are so proud of you, Jennifer! Goodwill Industries of Greater Nebraska (<https://na2.hubs.ly/H07JjzG0>)

#GoodwillGreatPlains #NASPTop5DSP #CongratulationsJennifer #MakingADifference #CAREValues #GoodwillImpact



MEET TWO DDS LEADERS



**Shared Living
Manager**

KURTIS GIERHAN

Kurtis accepted the Shared Living Manager role effective August 30. He brings hands-on knowledge of DDS operations, training, quality work and cross-site support. In this leadership role, he is helping strengthen home visits, provider support, ISP and interRAI coordination, and consistent Shared Living practices. Kurtis is known for stepping in where needed, keeping people connected and helping complicated work feel manageable.



**Grand Island
Program
Manager**

TRACY KARR-HANSEN

Tracy returned to DDS in July as the Grand Island Program Manager after serving in Behavioral Health Services. Her Goodwill career has included work across multiple programs, giving her a broad understanding of services, staff support and the needs of the people we serve. Tracy brings a calm, practical leadership style and a strong commitment to teamwork, communication and quality care. DDS also recognized her 10 years of service with Goodwill this summer.

LOOK AHEAD

GROWTH AND EVENTS

Grow with Goodwill: Coming This October

OA Navigator is coming to DDS this October to enhance, not replace, the great work already happening across our programs. By adding a consistent framework for goal setting, skill development, and progress tracking, OA Navigator will help create a clearer path toward achieving personal outcomes while celebrating growth along the way. The rollout will occur gradually to support meaningful implementation and ensure every person's journey remains individualized.

Grow with Goodwill

OA Navigator launches in DDS **this October**, creating a clearer path for building skills, exploring possibilities and celebrating progress.



EMPLOYMENT & WORK READINESS

Explore interests, strengths, career goals, volunteering and practical job-readiness skills. Connect with Goodwill Employment and Career Services when employment support is a good fit.



INDEPENDENT LIVING & PERSONAL GROWTH

Strengthen communication, social interaction, emotional regulation, hygiene, healthy choices, money skills and community navigation.



EVERY PATH IS PERSONAL

The goal is possibility, not pressure

Some people may focus on employment, some on independent living, and many will build skills that support both. Beginning in October, brief work-readiness groups will create practical opportunities to learn and grow.



*Building skills.
Exploring possibilities.
Celebrating progress.*



🎃 UPCOMING EVENTS: GOODWILL TRUNK-OR-TREATS!

Grab your costume and join us for a fun-filled afternoon of treats, games, and community celebration! Everyone is welcome to attend.



Want to host a trunk?

Contact your local Program Manager for registration details. A completed consent form is required before setup.



Costumes • Candy • Community • Fun

We hope to see individuals served, providers, staff, families, and community members at one of our Trunk-or-Treat celebrations this October!

HASTINGS

📅 October 22
🕒 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.
📍 Hastings Goodwill Store

GRAND ISLAND

📅 October 24
🕒 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
📍 North Grand Island Goodwill Store

KEARNEY

📅 October 29
🕒 12:30 - 2:00 p.m.
📍 Kearney Goodwill Store

REMINDERS

OUR COMMITMENT

One Team. One Why. One Future.

As we continue learning, growing, and improving together, we remain committed to keeping each person at the center of everything we do. We value open communication and welcome questions, ideas, and feedback from individuals, families, providers, and community partners. Strong partnerships help us build stronger services and a brighter future for all.

Thank you for being part of the Goodwill DDS community. ♡ ♡

STAFFING UPDATES

CURRENT OPENINGS

- DSPs – Hastings
- DSPs – Kearney
- Medical Specialist – Hastings

WELCOME TO THE TEAM!

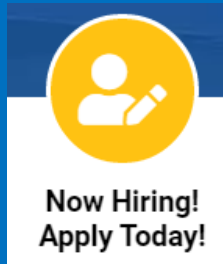
- Miranda Taylor – Hastings DSP
- Lindsey Robinson – Hastings DSP

ON THE MOVE

- Tracy Karr-Hansen – GI Manager
- Kurtis Gierhan – SL Manager

DEPARTURES

- Jessica Rains – Kearney DSP
- Ashley Bower – Kearney DSP



Join our Team!

Want to make a difference by:

“Helping people with disabilities or barriers reach their goals and improve their quality of life”?

If interested in joining our team, please contact your local Goodwill DDS office or complete an application on our website.

<https://goodwillne.org/apply/>

CONTACT US

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 **Tell Us How We Are Doing**