



NEBRASKA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

www.education.ne.gov

301 Centennial Mall South

P.O. Box 94987

Lincoln, NE 68509-4987

TEL 402.471.2295

FAX 402.471.0117



MARK SCHULTZ
Manager of the Year
2016

Mark began employment in 1989 and has gone from Technology Specialist with ATP to ATP Director, VR Assistant Director, and now to Deputy Commissioner and VR Director. Mark is responsible for managing approximately 200 staff in 14 VR teams across the state. As well, he oversees the Assistive Technology Partnership and Disability Determinations Section of NDE.

Mark is an extremely creative and dynamic person promoting ideas and services and working effectively with professionals from varying backgrounds. Among the creative initiatives he has promoted are Meet You Where You Are, Customized Employment opportunities, creation of the Business Account Managers, Data Dashboard, Talent Bank and Employer Database, Fed Ex Day, and creation of a new logo and "brand" for Nebraska VR. Nebraska VR has the 2nd highest rehab rate (number of successful outcomes vs. terminations) of VR agencies across the nation.

Mark works collaboratively with other agencies in Nebraska and is currently the Chair of the Partner Council, which is a cross agency group in the Workforce System. He is also President of the Council of State Administrators of VR, a national council of chief administrators of public rehabilitation agencies serving individuals with physical and mental disabilities in the United States, District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories.

Mark has a strong commitment to consumer satisfaction and support. He also takes pride in connecting with employees. He regularly sends out notes of appreciation for a job well done. He always has an "open door" policy and is quick to point out the positive qualities of others, gives positive feedback to individual goals, and challenges his employees to grow to reach these goals. Mark motivates staff by including them in the decision making process and giving them the freedom to determine a plan of action. This provides staff a feeling of ownership and as a result they become more invested in the outcomes.

We feel the quote, "Nobody Knows the Future. You Can Only Create the Future (Jack Ma, Founder and Chairman, Alibaba Group) represents Mark in his work with Nebraska VR and NDE.



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FREIDA LANGE
Honorable Mention
Manager of the Year

2016

Freida Lange is the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), Senior Administrator for Accreditation and School Improvement. She has served in this position since 2005 and is responsible for supervising and supporting the accreditation, approval, and continuous improvement issues of public and non-public schools, interim programs, virtual high schools, and educational service units in Nebraska. In addition to her responsibilities at the Nebraska Department of Education she serves as the AdvancED Director for the State of Nebraska.

Ms. Lange's leadership style is democratic, inclusive, and compassionate. She has the unique leadership ability to identify her team members' strengths and then build the capacity of her team to utilize these strengths as they work with schools and ESUs in the improvement of student learning. She is a caring and compassionate Team Leader. She is a role model for her team, maintains a positive attitude, and is always at the "top of her game". She is a person who has high level of integrity and trust with her staff and constituents.

Freida's ideas, knowledge, and guidance carry considerable weight to all of the Nebraska schools and ESUs. She skillfully addresses challenges by pulling together key stakeholders, facilitating open discussions, and coming to identifiable resolutions. She has a steady approach of listening to others and is one to entertain new innovations and initiatives in order to improve the future of education.

Freida recently has taken on more responsibility with the expansion of her team. She has taken the opportunity to help assist team members and grow with their strengths. She is the consummate professional and she encourages and supports her employees professionally and personally. It would be hard to identify an educational leader as well-known and highly respected across the state as Freida Lange. She is truly one of a kind.



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JUDY VOHLAND
Employee of the Year

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Judy began employment with NDE and Nebraska VR in August 1993 as a counselor in our Hastings office. She became an Office Director/Area Administrator in August 1999 for the Grand Island area moving to her current role as Program Director for Community Services in August 2012.

Judy's commitment and dedication to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with mental health issues, has been instrumental in the development of innovative strategies to improve VR services.

Judy took on the challenge of improving the accountability of Supported Employment Services to VR clients by developing and implementing a revised process and fee structure to pay providers for these services. This new innovative funding model allowed SE providers to work with more VR clients which in turn allowed for more successful outcomes for VR clients. Judy's leadership was instrumental in making this transition a smooth and transparent one.

Judy recognized that the number of VR clients who received social security benefits was on the rise but the successes of these clients was not. Judy collaborated with Easter Seals staff to develop a process resulting in more clients having the necessary benefits information to be comfortable making a good decision about going to work and reducing or getting off of benefits. Her efforts had the added benefit of improving the working relationship between the VR Team across the state and Easter Seals staff.

Judy is currently working on several disability-related committees. Her experience, input and guidance in these work groups is expected to result in more individuals with disabilities becoming eligible for DD and VR services.

While Judy can clearly let you know her stance on a subject, her ability to communicate with people who have different perspectives as well as different focuses is one of her strengths. This skill has contributed to the success of the initiatives she has worked on. Judy provides a tremendous amount of support and encouragement to field staff and recognizes and respects the work of the staff dealing directly with clients. And they likewise recognize her expertise and hold her with high regard and respect for her contributions.



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LINDSAY BROWN
Honorable Mention
Employee of the Year

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Lindsay Brown began her career with NDE in August of 2008 and is a Transition Senior Service Specialist with Nebraska VR located in Omaha. She has a terrific impact on the team by providing leadership within the schools, students she serves, community agencies, parents, teachers and fellow teammates. Over the past year, Lindsay has volunteered to participate in several VR transition committees, local school committees and Project Search Partnerships.

She demonstrates excellent leadership qualities with her work, office activities, and special projects and to the team. She is dependable, has high expectations for herself and the work is completed on time, correctly, and with attention to detail. She embraces the use of technology in the completion of her work. She collaborates with her teammates to help with ideas and seeks input to focus on allowing the student to make an informed choice with their future career options. Lindsay provides her clients with optimism and options.

Lindsay is passionate about her work and takes great pride in adhering to policies and procedures. Her enthusiasm and high energy is appreciated. She realizes and demonstrates the importance of doing quality work and providing good customer service. She exhibits a commitment to service that is a model for all state employees!