

EXTENSION NEWS

Dorn Receives Statewide Educator Award



(L-R) UNL Extension Associate Dean Elizabeth A. Birnstihl, Extension Educator Tom Dorn and Program Leader DeLynn Hay

In October, University of Nebraska—Lincoln Extension in Lancaster County Extension Educator Tom Dorn received the top Educator award presented statewide by UNL Extension: Distinguished Educator Award.

Dorn has worked for UNL Extension for 27 years, serving as an extension technologist, district irrigation and conservation specialist, and an extension educator in Holt, Fillmore and Lancaster Counties. He has worked in Lancaster County for 10 years, focusing on agricultural profitability and sustainability.

He teams up with Extension colleagues to create and teach educational programs. He coordinates a wide variety of local programs such as Crop Protection Clinics, Private and Commercial Pesticide Applicator Trainings, Nitrogen Management Trainings, Computerized Farm Financial Recordkeeping Workshops and Pesticide Container Collections. He consults individually with many ag producers, answering questions and diagnosing crop and livestock problems. He is extension's statewide contact for grain storage questions.

Dorn is part of the district-wide Acreage programming team and part of the statewide Water Management and Integrated Crop Management Systems teams. He helped develop a workshop, Ten Easy Ways to Boost Profit \$20 Per Acre, which was presented in several counties in 2005 and 2006.

He has served as President and Treasurer of the Nebraska Agribusiness Club and President, Vice President and Treasurer of the Nebraska Association of County Agricultural Agents (NACAA).

What is a Parenting Plan for Divorcing Parents?

See "Nebraska's New Parenting Act Puts Children at the Center—Not the Middle—of Divorce" on page 1.

The purpose of a parenting plan is to help families adjust to the changes experienced with divorce by considering the needs of all members, specifically the physical and emotional needs of children. It is based on the belief it is in the best interest of the children to have as full of relationship as possible with both parents.

The parenting plan is an agreement between both parents defining authority and responsibility of each parent and reduces the children's exposure to harmful parental conflict. Financial issues, such as child support, are not included in the parenting plan.

Parenting plans include:

- a plan for both parents to continue to be involved with the children's activities including school, sports and other interests;

- an agreement about which parent will have physical custody of the children and a plan for parenting time by the other parent;
- a plan for how major decisions will be made regarding the children's education, health care and religion;
- an agreement on a schedule for holidays, special occasions, vacations and unique situations; and
- a plan to reduce harmful parental conflict, including a way to modify the agreement when necessary to adjust to the changing needs of the children and parents.

Adapted from: Nebraska Supreme Court
Web site: <http://supremecourt.ne.gov/mediation/publications/parenting-plan.shtml?sub7>

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more detailed information about developing a parenting plan, refer to "We Agree" by the University of Minnesota Extension at www.parentsforever.umn.edu/weAgree/index.html

Nebraska Needs 300 Addition Foster Care Homes

Jeff Nelson
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According to a Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) study, Nebraska ranks first in the United States per-capita for the number of children in foster care with 7,133 of which 1,568 live in Lancaster County.

Of all Nebraska cases, 77 percent of all youth's families have struggled with substance abuse, resulting in the children being removed from their homes and placed in foster care. Nebraska's methamphetamine abuse is a part of the problem. Attorney General Jon Bruning says, "Our children are our future, but many are broken by drug use and domestic violence in the home. The foster care system is a critical part of keeping children safe in Nebraska."

To address the need for reform, Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman gave a directive addressed to the DHHS which prioritized some



immediate and specific actions. Heineman has identified as a top priority, the need for more permanent placements for children to avoid repeated transitions in and out of homes.

"DHHS should recruit and support 300 additional foster homes to meet the needs of children," says Carolyn K. Stitt, executive director of the Nebraska State Foster Care Review.

Currently, one quarter of young children were in foster placements caring for four or more other children. In addition, the State Foster Care review board states "few things affect children as profoundly as who provides their care and where they live." Stability of caregivers is crucial for children who have already experi-

enced the trauma of being removed from the parental home. Currently, the lack of appropriate placements results in many children being placed where beds are available, rather than where their needs can best be met."

Christian Heritage will launch a recruitment campaign called "Homes for Champions" which encour-

ages families to open their homes to children in need. Ron Brown, campaign spokesperson and former foster child, was nurtured by a supportive family who created a positive change in his life.

The "Homes for Champions" 2008 goal is to find 240 families who will become foster parents.

For additional information about statewide foster care, go to visit <http://www.answers4families.org/foster> or call the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services at 1-800-7PARENT (1-800-772-7368). Learn how to become a foster parent with Christian Heritage by visiting the Web site at www.chne.org or call, 421-kids (421-5437), for more information.

Divorce: How Parents Can Help

Studies have shown divorce affects children's social and emotional development, as well as their school performance. Parents are challenged to meet their own emotional needs, as well as their children's. With knowledge and support, parents can meet these needs so their families can successfully move forward.

Be Aware

- Children need extra attention.
- Children may behave as they did when they were younger.
- Children grieve the loss of the family as they knew it.
- Children need to have contact with both parents (visits, calls, letters).
- Children may become fearful about losing the parent with whom they live.
- Children respond based on their age and abilities.
- Children may have learning and behavior problems at school.
- Parents need extra support. (Find healthy ways to take care of yourself.)
- Families often find counseling helpful.

Do

- Explain the divorce to the children.
- Tell children the divorce is not their fault.
- Reassure children both parents still love them.
- Give your children permission to ask questions.
- Tell children it's okay to love "the other parent."
- Give children permission to feel whatever they need to feel.

- Encourage children to express their feelings in ways that don't hurt themselves or others.
- Reassure children that they will always be cared for.
- Explain to children what they can expect (Court, living arrangements, visitation.)
- Provide familiar surroundings and routines for your children.
- Continue to try to set consistent limits on your children's behavior.
- Give children responsibilities they can do successfully.
- Find someone to talk to other than your children (friend or counselor).
- Use the legal system if you are concerned about your children's safety with the other parent.
- Let school know what's happening.
- Give extra time to your children.
- Give extra hugs.
- Say "I love you" often.
- Listen to your children.

Don't

- Don't pretend the separation/divorce has no effect on children.
- Don't use your children as your emotional support.
- Don't ask children to deliver messages to the other parent.
- Don't ask your children questions about your former partner's personal life.
- Don't "put down" your former partner in front of your children.
- Don't make your children responsible for deciding

- living arrangements. This is an adult decision.
- Don't make visitation depend on child support payments.
- Don't tell children that child support payments are a measure of their parent's love for them.
- Don't try to control or set conditions on what the other parent does during visitation (except for safety issues).
- Don't take visitation time away from your children because you are upset with your former partner.
- Don't involve children in the property settlement.
- Don't attempt to buy your children's affection.
- Don't share adult concerns (i.e. money, sexual issues) with children.
- Don't expect children to fill the absent parent's shoes.
- Don't ask children to choose "sides."

Source: Lincoln Public Schools, Lincoln Nebraska

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The following UNL Extension publications are available online at www.ianrpubs.unl.edu or at the extension office.

- Divorce Through the Eyes of Adolescents (NF566)
- Supporting Children of Divorce: Guidelines for Caregivers (NF549)
- How Divorce Affects Children: Developmental Stages (NF548)
- Parenting from a Distance (NF567)
- Successful Transitions for High Conflict Families (NF550)