

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services 600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck ND 58505

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Nov. 28, 2012**

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Two N.D. Developmental Center Employees Honored by Grafton Organizations

BISMARCK, N.D. – Two N.D. Developmental Center employees have been selected to receive prestigious community awards that recognize individuals who are making a difference in the community and in the workplace in Grafton. Dianna Denault has been named “Citizen of the Year” by the Grafton Chamber of Commerce, and Dan Kohler has been named “Boss of the Year” by the Grafton Kiwanis Club.

Denault has worked at the N.D. Developmental Center for 21 years starting as a direct care staff member supporting residents at the Center and now is the lead senior resident supervisor. In 2006, she organized the Developmental Center’s Community Helpers Group where residents living at the Center interact and contribute to the Grafton community through various volunteer projects. The group began with six members and has grown to 54 people. They participate in various community events including Santa’s Shopping Day, setting up luminary bags for the annual Relay for Life, and providing entertainment at a local nursing home. The Community Helpers Group is a vital piece of Grafton’s volunteer efforts.

Kohler began his career at the N.D. Developmental Center 31 years ago as a direct care technician and currently is the director of the Dakota East day program, which provides productive and meaningful work for people with disabilities based on their interests and skills. This summer, Kohler guided a substantial community integration project by relocating the Dakota East Trophy and Engraving Shop from the Developmental Center’s campus to Grafton’s Main Street. Other individuals who receive services from Dakota East are involved in a wide variety of activities including leisure programs, volunteer activities, and work site jobs both on campus and at Grafton businesses.

“I am extremely proud of Dianna and Dan for their commitment and team work in helping people with disabilities to become active members of the Grafton community and surrounding communities,” said Alex Schweitzer, superintendent of the N.D. Developmental Center. “It is community integration that makes it possible for individuals to live meaningful and well-rounded lives.”

The N.D. Developmental Center, which employs about 375 people, is a state-operated, comprehensive support agency for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The center currently serves 92 individuals by providing specialized services, and it remains a safety net for people whose needs exceed community resources.

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