The Behavioral Health Center of Nebraska (BHECN) was created July 1, 2009 and is administered by the University of Nebraska Medical Center. The Nebraska Legislature passed LB 603 in April 2009 with the intent of developing a Behavioral Health Education Center that would be inter-professional in nature and would address the shortage of trained behavioral health providers in rural and underserved areas. In the spring of 2010, BHECN produced a seven strategy plan to address the mission of the program. Strategy four states that BHECN will fund psychiatry residents and other behavioral health trainees. This summer, Dr. Joel Strauch, one of the second-year psychiatry residents, participated in the first Rural Psychiatry Rotation.

Dr. Strauch, recently finished a rural psychiatry rotation in Region 1’s Scottsbluff, NE. The Behavioral Health Unit at the Scottsbluff Regional West Medical Center is an 18-bed acute stay and day program psychiatric facility. Dr. Strauch worked with the three full-time psychiatrists to admit patients and help facilitate their care. He also worked with Dr. Mark Scanlan and other psychiatrists to provide consult-liaison coverage for the 180-bed hospital and traveled with Dr. William Michael to Pine Ridge Job Corps to provide psychiatric care for adolescent patients.

Dr. Strauch spent two months living and working in Scottsbluff this past summer, staying at the hospital’s on-campus Inn Touch housing. He was able to participate in weekly educational lectures with his PGY-II classmates back in Omaha via the hospital’s telehealth system. During down time, Dr. Strauch was able to enjoy outdoor activities in the region, including hiking the Bluff, taking in a demolition derby at the county fair, and whitewater rafting in nearby Poudre River canyon.