

Agency Stories

ACLU of Nebraska

“We have said publicly before God, our family and our friends that we love each other and are committed to one another and our children. At this moment, I want to spend time loving my children and my wife while knowing that should I die, they will be cared for. By not recognizing my family, Nebraska is making a difficult situation much more difficult emotionally and financially.” – Sally Waters, ACLU of Nebraska Client

Sally and her wife Susan are facing stage four breast cancer knowing that when Sally passes away, Susan will have to pay an 18% inheritance tax on their home while holding a death certificate saying her wife of nearly two decades is single. Along with six other same-sex couples, they have sued the state of Nebraska to have their relationships recognized. They represent thousands of same-sex couples who could benefit from the ACLU’s work as well as many more Nebraskans who choose to leave our state rather than live where their family won’t be recognized.

Join the over 2,000 members and supporters of the ACLU’s work in Nebraska and help us protect fundamental freedoms and Nebraska’s motto of “equality before the law.”

Angels Among Us

A young family from Council Bluffs, Iowa came to Angels Among Us for financial assistance with their mortgage. Their son was diagnosed with ALL Leukemia and was facing a three and a half year cancer treatment schedule. Because of this diagnosis, his mother had to quit her job as a teacher to care full time for her son, taking him to and from Omaha for treatment. This meant that the family faced a decrease in over half their total income. This created an immediate financial crisis for the family.

They did their best to make ends meet as long as they could but then fell behind in their mortgage payments. They sought the assistance of the social work office at Children’s Hospital and Medical Center where their child was being treated. After filling out an application and subsequent approval, Angels Among Us was able to step in and provide \$500 each month for a year so that the family could stay in their home. Their son is now Leukemia free and the family is on their way to a financially stable future thanks to our support.

The Arc of Nebraska

Thanks to the generosity of CFS contributors, The Arc of Nebraska was able to pair 5 people experiencing a developmental disability with their State Senator for a dinner and conversation about important legislative decision to be made in 2017. One of those conversations has led to a monthly meeting over coffee with a self-advocate and their State Senator, a true relationship has been created. Thank you for your consideration of a donation.

Audubon Nebraska

Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center near Lincoln, through the eyes of a Fourth Grader: Thank you so much for telling us about the prairie. I can’t wait to tell my family

about the great time I had. I hope my parents will let us see the prairie. I'm sure that they will love to hike on all the trails, and see the pond and the cottonwood tree.

This was one of the best field trips I have ever gone on, and you made it way more fun. You are the best!

Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary, from Aurora Fowler: Rowe Sanctuary has always been a part of my life; I grew up exploring the river and listening to the cranes. This place I call home was also my classroom. Staff and volunteers opened my eyes to the world around me. Now I help other kids take time to look at the little things.

I have listened to adults talk about the threats to the cranes and the future of the river. It is very frustrating for me to realize that in the future, the cranes might not be here for everyone to see.

As I watched kids fall in love with the river this summer, they gave me hope. We are hope. All of us are hope for the future of this river.

Autism Center of Nebraska, Inc.

"Joe" came to ACN after residing for several years in a group home operated by another agency. Others thought his behavioral issues and intellectual disability precluded any independence.

However, ACN offered "Joe" the opportunity to live with an Extended Family Home, with the stated expectation that the placement would last approximately one year. During his year living with a couple trained by ACN in positive behavioral supports, "Joe" was supported in learning the skills necessary for independent living. After one year, "Joe" moved into his own apartment, where he receives intermittent staff supports, 3-4 times each week for a few hours at a time.

"Joe" has developed many strengths, such as administering his own medications, cooking, managing public transportation, using email and telephone, and often can identify when he needs help in making an important decision and to whom he can reach out for such help.

"Joe" states he is very happy with his life and his new home. "Joe" has family in various parts of the United States and travels regularly. ACN supports him in purchasing airline gift cards, and assisting in planning the logistics of each trip.

"Joe" comes to the ACN offices to pay his bills and write out his checks, moving toward greater financial independence. He is able to describe what each check is for, and his assessment of whether the expense is reasonable or not. He also determines (through a computer-assisted budgeting program) how much he can allocate for discretionary spending and what he plans to do with that spending money. ACN supports "Joe" in whatever spending he'd like to do, never forgetting that it is HIS money.

"Joe" is his own guardian and determines the course of his own life. ACN works to ensure that all people have value, all people contribute, all people participate in our society.

Boy Scouts – Cornhusker Council

The Webelos Scouts (4th Graders) of Pack 19 just finished their First Responder Adventure a few months ago. An accident happened on May 7, 2016 in which a Scout kept calm and acted quickly to save his 5-year-old brother from drowning.

An accident happened on May 7, 2016 in which a Scout kept calm and acted quickly to save his 5-year-old brother from drowning. This Scout was fishing from the dock in his back yard. He had caught a large fish and so his younger brother and younger sister went down to the pond to watch. Apparently, the Scout's 5-year-old brother, saw some moss that he wanted to touch and reached down to the water from the dock. The Scout, seeing his brother reaching down, started to say, "NO, you shouldn't..." And his brother was in the water just that fast. The Scout dropped his pole and immediately laid down on his stomach, reached out grabbing his brother's shirt and then arm and pulled him up onto the dock. His brother was quite rattled by the whole incident. He was crying as they got close to the house.

Later in the evening, his mother asked the Scout how he knew what to do. He said, "It wasn't that big of a deal Mom, but I guess Scouts taught me some things, like laying down, reaching out, and to not become a victim yourself."

The Bridge Behavioral Health

In her 40 years, Kathleen has never felt so healthy. But it wasn't always that way. She started using alcohol and drugs as a teen, making her lifelong battle with asthma an even greater struggle. She frequently visited the local hospital's emergency department.

Whenever Kathleen attempted to stop drinking on her own, her heart would race and she would begin to have tremors. Kathleen came to The Bridge's Voluntary Withdrawal Unit and continued with ongoing Outpatient Treatment. Thanks to medical referrals provided by The Bridge staff, Kathleen is safely managing her asthma. She says that The Bridge saved her life.

Camp Confidence

Tim is a refugee who was recently adopted by a Nebraska family. Through Camp Confidence, Tim was able to connect with new friends across his community and discover the beauty of nature by mountain hiking, whitewater rafting and horseback riding. Tim was new to Omaha with a new family. He was shy and overwhelmed. But out at Camp Confidence, Tim found the time to discover and respect himself, nature and his community. He participated in our many service-learning projects and quickly found the confidence to express himself and get more involved. Now he is talkative, enthusiastic and an avid learner. He is more involved in his school and playing sports with friends. Because of your support, Tim is more confident to overcome any obstacle in life!

Capital Humane Society

In mid January, Thor, a shy Great Pyrenees was brought to us by Animal Control. He had been an outside only dog and when put in a kennel he would cower in the back and hide, as people would walk past. During his first month and half, our Animal Behaviorist worked with him. At first, when he was leashed up, he was very hesitant to walk. Another time, when he was outside and off the leash, he tried to climb a brick wall to get away! After time and many dedicated hours of working with him, he was put up for adoption. Thor was a CHS favorite with the staff and volunteers.

Over the course of his journey here at the Capital Humane Society a handful of people came to look at him. Finally, in April, Thor went to his forever home. The dog who had been afraid of his kennel, his toy, cats and his leash went to a home with a Golden Retriever named Sam. They are best friends now. It's because of the support of people like you that we at the Capital Humane Society are able to put so much love and attention into an oversized teddy bear. It's because of your donations of time, love and money that Thor has a home.

Center for Rural Affairs

Greg traveled to Washington D.C. carrying a message. He wanted a newly elected senator to know she had the opportunity to be a champion for small towns and family farms. He wanted to share with her his passion for a cherished way of life.

You might be like Greg. He lives and works in a small town. For 15 years he's worked with us to make sure rural Americans have a fair shot.

We need you to be part of this story. For forty years, we've fought for family farmers, small-town businesses, and for fairness in Congress—with supporters like you by our side. By donating and becoming a supporter you'll help:

- Launch more small-town businesses and strengthen our rural communities.
- Train more beginning farmers, bringing young people back to rural communities.
- Lead an ambitious campaign for clean energy, so our energy dollars stay closer to home and protects our climate.
- Make people healthy, through policy and community work that improves rural health.
- Campaign for a better farm bill that creates opportunity for farmers and communities while protecting our natural resources.

Maybe you sense a growing excitement across rural America. Will you invest in this growing excitement with a gift today? All it takes is people like you to add your support.

CenterPointe

"When I was referred to CenterPointe I was leaving the Regional Center after a 3 month stay.

I had really limited resources – I found a job in food service, which only paid about \$2.00 per hour and I had to rely on tips to makes ends meet.

My counseling at CenterPointe was a lifesaver. I had so much trauma in my childhood. I had to learn new coping skills.

Because I didn't have to pay for services, I could stick with it and I made real progress. I started to reach my potential.

In time, CenterPointe made a referral to Vocational Rehabilitation that changed the arc of my life.

I'm the first in my family to graduate with a four-year degree. I still live with mental illness but today I'm in recovery, healthy and stable.

Without CenterPointe my life would be vastly different. I'm so grateful for all I was given."

Clinic with a Heart

People who live in poverty, immigrants, and refugees are just a few of those served by the volunteers of Clinic with a Heart. In 2016 volunteers provided over 2,800 visits to patients. Martha came to the clinic because she had an abscess. She has been in pain for many weeks. As the dentist examined her condition he saw she had a much more complicated condition and asked one of the volunteer medical providers to come in (both services are provided at the same time). It turns out Martha has a serious tumor growing in her mouth that was going to cut off her airway. Thanks to the collaborative care provided at the clinic and with the help of our referral coordinator, Martha was able to get into the hospital and have life-saving surgery.

Crane River Theater

Crane River Theater is established around the belief that lifting up the arts will only help in creating a richer and more vibrant community. The arts improve our quality of life. They remind us how to dream. They allow us to escape. They encourage us to fantasize about a world we aspire to. Our journey with Crane River Theater has witnessed this first hand on many occasions. Whether it is the child on the playground that organizes rehearsals with her friends to recreate the joy she shared at one of our Yanney Park productions, or the high school student that has long been silent finding the strength to express himself for the first time in one of our workshops, or even the elderly woman that waits for an hour following each production to offer her gratitude to each and every performer for giving her the opportunity to reflect on her own life, the power of theater is limitless. Thornton Wilder once said "the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being is through the theater." Please take a moment today to help us encourage the creativity of our youth, and remind us all why it is important to laugh, cry and reflect.

Foundation for Lincoln Libraries

A mother of five young children, with one of the children dealing with a serious illness, commented that she loves Lincoln City Libraries, because our libraries are free and are the ONLY options that her children have for books and entertainment.

Habitat for Humanity of Lincoln

Christina, originally from Lincoln, lived in a two-bedroom trailer on rented land for eight years with her two teenage daughters who shared a small, cramped bedroom.

The trailer home was in poor condition assessed at \$3,000 due to the cracked floors, windows that leaked in cold air and rain, and a roof that required yearly maintenance. In 2012, Christina found herself unemployed and going through not one, but two cancer surgeries. Their home was not safe or healthy for this mother and daughters in which to live.

Soon, things started to turn around for the Rodriguez family. In 2013, after Christina was told she was cancer free, she applied to be a Habitat homeowner– and was accepted during the 2014 application process.

A short year, and 300 sweat equity hours later, Christina and her family moved into their new home. A home where everyone has their own room, the windows don't leak, the roof is intact, and they can live healthy and happy for years to come.

Hear Nebraska

When you mention Nebraska to people outside the state, what do they say? Does the response support the narrative that Nebraska is flat, boring, corny, old, backwards, nowhere?

The Nebraska we see is full of life, energy, creativity and passion. It's full of hard-working people who want to close their eyes sometimes and connect with something greater than themselves. But what really gets us excited is the creative energy in this state. It's the ability to surround oneself with brewers and chefs, developers and designers, songwriters and poets, farmers and carpenters who are all driven to create something original, something uniquely them. Here, people have to do it themselves. DIY is in this state's DNA.

That's what makes Hear Nebraska so crucial. Our people tell vivid stories about these people and disseminate them to the world. While 60% of our site's audience comes from Nebraska, 40% comes from outside the state. And 7% comes from outside the country.

We produce events that bring together people across disciplines, races, ages and sexes to experience something new and always something surprising. And we have our finger on the pulse of the young people deciding whether they should make a life somewhere else, or stay and make that life here.

Hearts United for Animals

Early one morning the telephone rang at the Hearts United for Animals shelter office. The caller was a very sad mother. She said that the family's elderly Labrador could no longer use his back legs. He was the family's beloved old dog, and to make the story sadder yet, he was the constant companion of their young daughter who was being treated for leukemia.

The family's funds were exhausted by the cost of the daughter's medical care, and anyway veterinarians could offer nothing for treatment that was advisable considering the dog's age. The HUA representative asked if the mother thought they could handle a doggie wheelchair for the animal. She said she thought so and took measurements of the animal for a custom cart to be made.

HUA ordered the canine cart from a website where other carts have been purchased and had the cart delivered to the family residence. All went well for the elderly gentleman dog, and he could continue to be a comfort to his beloved little girl.

Houses of Hope of Nebraska

Chad had struggled with serious alcohol and drug use for 28 years and was recently diagnosed with depression. He experienced legal problems, loss of employment, financial struggles, and detachment and loss of family. Chad was referred to Houses of Hope to continue treatment for his substance use and mental health - and support as he learned life skills and discipline he would need to successfully transition back to the work force.

Chad participated in individual, group and family counseling sessions to improve interactions with others, to learn about his addiction, and to develop healthy ways to maintain his mental and physical health. With that foundation in recovery Chad was able to obtain two part-time jobs. After several months he found a full-time job that offered insurance benefits.

In the 11 months he was in treatment Chad remained sober, was able to get caught up on overdue bills, set aside money for a deposit on his own apartment, and for furnishings he needed for that move. Chad was successful in drug court and by the time of his graduation from treatment he had family members that were once again actively involved and supportive of his recovery efforts.

As he moved into his own apartment, Chad was stable and using a strong sober support group in the community. Chad once again had hope for his future.

Humanities Nebraska

Jacob learned to look at global issues from all sides before forming his own opinion as a high school student participating in **Capitol Forum on America's Future**. He now has skills to be an informed voter throughout his lifetime.

Elizabeth discovered the joy of reading and universal humanities lessons of compassion and loyalty within books. **Prime Time Family Reading Time** gave her and her family the opportunity to read together in English and Spanish.

Sharon, a U.S. military veteran, found the creative outlet she needed in **Nebraska Warrior Writers** and became a published author.

Sam and Ella turned their challenges and frustrations as Muslim immigrants into a **Speakers Bureau** presentation that promotes understanding and tolerance.

Inclusive Communities

A 7th grader at Millard Central Middle School who participates in the school's IncluCity Middle Club: Handprint, is just one of many students that have been affected positively by Inclusive Communities programming.

Handprint is an afterschool diversity and inclusion education club for students. The

group meets twice a month and has allowed this student and his colleagues to attend a diversity training at UNO, take a team-building high ropes course at Camp Carol Joy Holling in Ashland, NE, and participate in tough conversations about bullying, stereotypes and the current social and political climate among other activities.

This one-of-a-kind Inclusive Communities program has encouraged this student to acquire the necessary tools to combat bullying in his school. "I'm only twelve and I've experienced things that normal people at my age couldn't imagine going through," says the student, adding "through Handprint, I think we can reach out to show each other that we are not alone and that other people know and care about what we're going through."

Ultimately, the educational programming Inclusive Communities hosts in schools in Omaha, Council Bluffs and the Dakota regions help reduce bullying in school and allow students to become advocates for themselves and others.

"I think every school should invest in a club like Handprint and other clubs like it to make the world a better place for kids and adults alike," says concludes the 7th grader.

The Junior League of Lincoln

Since 2012, ClothesLine has been JLL's signature project. ClothesLine provides free clothing to low-income youth in eleven LPS middle and high schools and addresses everything from bullying to providing basic needs. Students may lack clean or varied clothing, not own seasonally appropriate clothing, or may simply have an emergency where a new item is needed. This initiative has provided 9,000 clothing items to more than 1,000 students. ClothesLine allows students to focus on their studies and other issues affecting them rather than worrying about what to wear.

Members organize donated clothing in a storage facility, reallocating unsuitable items for teenagers to other community organizations to ensure nothing is wasted. Members maintain "closets" within the schools that any student can visit, with the assistance of a guidance counselor, to select any clothing items needed. Closet maintenance involves coordinating with schools to replenish inventory from the storage facility to meet the specific and timely needs at that school. Together, JLL volunteers spend approximately 1,200 hours annually on ClothesLine.

Leaderships Lincoln, Inc.

Part of our alumni engagement is an outreach program for any group or agency in the community that wants to develop a greater understanding of the issue related to poverty. LL alumni volunteer to facilitate a poverty simulation to interested groups and then engage in a conversation with the participants following their experience helping them see the challenges facing those in the community experiencing poverty.

Often times participants share, "I had no idea it was this much of a struggle" and "How do you find time for your kids?"

It has been an extremely impactful exercise and one that is in high demand moving forward. Schools, churches and businesses have reached out to schedule time for their respective staffs to experience this activity.

Lincoln Arts Council

Have you ever felt so inhibited that you were afraid to apply more than one color to a paper page? John did. He had received so much criticism in his young life that he was paralyzed. When he first arrived at the Lancaster County residential detention center, the staff thought he was mute. Terese was a perfectionist. When she was presented with materials to sketch or paint, she had to have a straight edge to make shapes. She would become agitated if the lines and angles didn't look "just right."

Now imagine the transformation for John, who is rising to greet the resident artist, looking her in the eye and engaging in positive conversation. Visualize the freedom for Terese when she finally "let go," and just began looping large free-hand circles on her paper. "Look at me! I'm drawing!" It may be difficult to imagine a life without the simplest of art materials. Harder still to comprehend an environment devoid of positive reinforcement or the opportunity to experiment and create. Just know this – for some people, experiencing the arts genuinely changes their life. This is the work we get excited about. This is the work you support with a donation to the Lincoln Arts Council.

Lincoln Children's Museum

Lincoln Children's Museum has been impacting the lives of children and families in the Lincoln community for 27 years. From the children who met their first and best friends while playing in our building, or the parents who found the community they needed while watching their children play, the Museum is an essential community resource for all families in Lincoln. The Museum also strives to serve all families, regardless of race, age, socio-economic status or other designation, and does so through many programs throughout each year. Our Have a Heart membership program specifically serves low-income families by providing subsidized memberships for them at just \$15 a year. This allows these families to attend the Museum as often as they like in a 12-month period for the low price of less than admission for two people.

The Museum also has our Shining Star program which is made specifically for families with children who have immune-deficiency disorders and cannot normally visit the Museum due to the risk of infection. This event is held multiple times during the year and involves an intense cleaning and disinfecting of all items in the Museum, followed by a free event open only to those families with children who have immune issues. This allows them to play at the Museum without the fear of getting sick, and oftentimes it is the only time these children are able to play in such a way.

The Museum also partners with many organizations in Lincoln including the Autism Family Network, Down's Syndrome Association, CEDARS Foster Care, Mourning Hope Grief Center and more to assure that all children are able to have a safe and comfortable experience at the Museum no matter their circumstances.

Lincoln Children's Zoo

Children at the Zoo (CATZ) is the Lincoln Children's Zoo's largest community outreach program and an enduring symbol of community partnership. This program empowers at-risk children and their families to visit the Zoo, encouraging them to enjoy and connect to each other and the natural world around them. The Zoo partners with dozens of local human services agencies to distribute 20,000 free admission passes, as well as 1,000 family memberships for low income children and their families. The agencies that we

work with serve a wide range of ethnicities, physical abilities, and ages, and tickets are made available to children and families who would normally not be able to visit the Zoo due to their financial circumstances.

Studies have shown that the best learning outcomes result from those environments that stimulate the senses and provide hands-on opportunities for engagement and play—and that’s the very essence of the mission of the Lincoln Children’s Zoo: “To enrich lives through firsthand interaction with living things.” Unfortunately, not every child in Lincoln can afford to visit the Zoo. Through partnerships with community organizations that have identified children from low-income families, the Lincoln Children’s Zoo is committed to creating opportunities for families to have firsthand experiences in the natural world, and with your help we can continue to provide this vital outreach.

Lincoln Community Playhouse

From February-June 2017 is LCP’s fourth year for The Penguin Project. This program pairs children with special needs (artists) with peer mentors. Between 25 and 35 children with special needs participate each year, along with a similar number of mentors. The Penguin Project is a way for children ages 10-21 to be able to act, sing and dance in a live theatre production in front of an audience in a safe and supportive environment. LCP is a leading community theatre in an effort for the program, based in Illinois, to go national.

Eric, one of our Penguins who is on the Autism Spectrum, told his mom that the Playhouse, “It feels like home.” When she asked him why he felt that way, he told her, “I don’t have to pretend to be anyone but me.”

Lincoln Parks Foundation

Here is just one brief example from a family with two young children. They requested funding for Parker Pals Scholarships for swim lessons for their children.

As a family with two working parents and our children in day care, we don't have much money left for 'extras'. We would like our children to learn how to swim, as it is such a valuable skill to have. Our day care is near a pool that offers lessons, so the kids can get there-we just can't afford the lessons. We would really appreciate a scholarship to help pay for our two children to receive lessons this summer."

Lincoln’s Symphony Orchestra

Lincoln’s Symphony Orchestra began working with Family Literacy (an English Language Learning program for parents and children through LPS, serving the immigrant and refugee community) to provide a cultural literacy component in 2012. Participants attend both Family Concerts each season free of charge, along with all family members living in the same household (totaling approximately 500 persons per concert). In addition, transportation is provided. Prior to the performance, LSO staff visit each Family Literacy site with translators to prepare them for the concert experience. Attendees receive information including concert etiquette, classical music history, instruments used in the concert, and a description of the story line. Musical games are also incorporated, such as bingo (a Family Literacy favorite).

Through the partnership with Family Literacy, members of the immigrant and refugee community that are otherwise unable to attend cultural performances will enjoy live symphonic music. Mexican, Russian, Sudanese, Iraqi, Vietnamese, Burmese, and Kurdish families, and others, are in the program. Most are unable to attend not only because of the perceived cultural barrier, but because of the very true challenge of transportation and financial restrictions. This partnership ensures that participants experience all aspects of American culture, going beyond what is typically learned in an ELL program. This unique element, cultural literacy, is a portion of what helps Family Literacy participants more comfortable in American society.

Make-A-Wish Nebraska

Children are energized and encouraged by their wish. They can imagine, describe, plan, anticipate, and eventually rejoice in its fruition. Make-A-Wish encourages a child to envision a positive future and remain an active partner in treatment. One parent wrote these inspiring words about her daughter's wish:

“As a mom of a Wish Kid, I cannot tell you how much Make-A-Wish means to families. My daughter was diagnosed with cancer when she was 2 ½. After 10 months of surgeries, radiation, and chemo, she was able to go on her Make-A-Wish trip to Disney World. For that week, she was a happy, carefree 3-year-old. No doctors, no needles, no “ouchies”. Just a “normal” child. It brought tears to my eyes to watch her have the time of her life. She had private meetings with the Princesses as well as private time with Barney, who hugged her non-stop. Make-A-Wish made sure that she was treated as a true princess. At the time, we had no way of knowing that she would be soon having an emergency surgery that would remove 18 inches of her intestine. During her recovery, we often talked about her wish. She would say, “Tell me the story again of when the princesses all hugged me.” It is only with your help that Make-A-Wish can grant these types of life-changing moments for children.”

The Mediation Center

One of The Mediation Center's newest programs is Victim/Youth Conferencing in the Lincoln Public Schools' Middle and High Schools. This program brings youth who have committed an offense during school and their 'victim' together in a face-to-face meeting to learn from each other's perspective and find a way to solve the conflict and provide restitution. By participating in this, the youth stays out of the judicial system for an offence that might typically land them in front of a judge and, hopefully, learns a little bit about peaceful conflict resolution.

Point in fact: A student felt attacked by another student, certain that it was racially motivated, and responded physically. He was referred to a Victim/Youth Conference, led by The Mediation Center. During this conference he came to realize that his aggressive response not only negatively affected him but also negatively affected his family. This was a big "aha" moment for him. He worked with our facilitator and the other student to make it right while also working with our mediator on how to respond differently in the future. This type of positive outcome from a negative experience is precisely what the Victim/Youth Conference program works to achieve.

Mental Health Association of Nebraska

The Mental Health Association of Nebraska (MHA-NE), incorporated in 2001, is a

completely peer operated organization. Our board of directors is 51% or more people with lived experience, as stated in our by-laws, and every staff member/volunteer is a person living with mental health issues, substance use, and/or trauma. MHA-NE currently employees 29 Peer Specialist; 23 are full time employees. Many of us lived in mental health hospitals or were incarcerated for years but 8 of the peers have worked their way off of Social security benefits, many have got married, bought cars and houses and live a life many thought was not possible. All of us support each other and the people we serve. Working at MHA-NE is a part of our recovery but behavioral health issues, trauma and all that we live with is still part of our lives. We strongly believe in personal responsibility, informed choice, the dignity of risk and HOPE.

We are the evidence that no matter what happened to you or what you live with, Recovery is possible. Recovery looks different for everyone but with support, trust, opportunity and Hope the people we serve can find their purpose and feel a part of the community again.

Merryman Performing Arts Center

The MPAC is the area's major presenter of regionally and national known professional artists and touring companies. Our goal is to become "an engine of creativity" for area youth and a place of enjoyment and "affirmation" for the community. The MPAC achieves these goals with selected programming and continual outreach to area underserved audiences. The educational programs serve all area school children at no cost to the students. Area schools provide transportation to and from the Merryman Performing Arts Center, as the MPAC seeks funding for programming costs for the student matinee performances.

These diverse performances not only introduce and engage young students in the arts, but they also lay the foundation to develop a lifelong appreciation of the performing arts. Nearly 4,000 students attend student matinees at the Merryman throughout the school year. Recently, nearly 700 elementary students had the opportunity to learn about modern dance. Erik Kaiel, a choreographer who is based in the Netherlands, performed an original piece based on the Windmills he saw as he drove across Nebraska. After the performance the elementary students were able to ask Mr. Kaiel questions. This opportunity helped to expand an understanding of this art form. Students were asked to write a response following the performance. One fifth grade student responded, 'I've always wanted to be a dancer, but my Mom can't afford it, so this encouraged me to dance in my house and yard more.' These same students also have the opportunity throughout their school career to perform on this professional-quality stage for elementary vocal concerts, middle school musicals, and high school band and orchestra concerts.

Midlands Mentoring Partnership

The true power of mentoring can best be articulated through the nomination submitted for the 2014 Mentor of the Year, which is an award MMP gives out annually. Here is how mentee Peggy feels about her mentor, Dakotah:

I've been through a lot in my life. When I was 12 and went to jail, the only person who wrote to me was my mom and my mentor, Dakotah. When I got out, Dakotah was still there. She didn't have to stay with me but did. She has NEVER given up on me

because a lot of people have and I don't blame them. When you have someone who cares and loves for you like she does, you start having hope. She's helped me understand things I never could and helped me onto my feet again when I couldn't myself.

MilkWorks

Angela, mother of a toddler and now a newborn, came to MilkWorks to use the free drop in weigh station on a Sunday afternoon after her pediatrician raised concern that her baby, Jonas, was not gaining enough weight. Angela was in tears, unsure of what to do. She was able to see a lactation consultant at MilkWorks the next morning. After her appointment, Angela said, "I feel like my lactation consultant really listened to my concerns and was able to give me some pointers on how to increase Jonas' weight. She was so encouraging and nonjudgmental. Most importantly, she helped me feed my baby in a way that works for our family."

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Nebraska

When Jenna entered a room, it lit up, not only from her smile and personality, but from her willingness to help and inspire others. She was loved by her parents, family, teammates, friends, coaches, and really anyone she came into contact with. Jenna had a passion for sports ever since her mother could remember. Jenna's connection to sports allowed her to travel and compete against teams across the country. Her parents found joy in watching their daughter play sports, and spent many hours traveling and cheering her on.

On December 31, 2015, Jenna went to a New Year's Eve party with a group of friends. There was underage drinking at the party and even though people knew the driver had been drinking, they didn't stop him from driving. At just 16 years old, Jenna was killed after being ejected from a vehicle driven by a driver with a BAC of .208, more than twice the legal limit. The driver survived the crash. He pled guilty to criminally negligent homicide, and was sentenced to 5 years of probation. Jenna's parents were devastated by the court's decision. They believe that probation shouldn't be an option when someone kills someone else in a drunk driving crash. They continue to remain positive in honor of Jenna but would also like to see laws change to reflect the seriousness of the crime.

Jenna's mother, wishes she would have spoken to her daughter more about underage drinking, and encourages all parents to talk to their adolescents about the possible consequences. She believes drunk driving is a selfish act that is completely preventable. She hopes that Jenna's story will prevent others from making the same mistakes and save lives. MADD's Power of Youth works on creating intentional, ongoing, and potentially lifesaving conversations between parents and kids about alcohol. Join us to learn valuable strategies for how to talk with your child or teen about not drinking and not riding with a drinking driver.

Museum of Nebraska Art (MONA)

Designated as the official art collection of Nebraska by the Unicameral in 1979, MONA's mission includes making the art of Nebraska accessible to all the state's residents. In 1980, Gary Zaruba and Larry Peterson, two of MONA's Founders, began taking artworks to a few communities in Nebraska to provide opportunities for people to view

original art. There is nothing that compares to experiencing works of art firsthand, and these two professors with then the Kearney State College Art Department wanted to share that direct, transformational experience with other Nebraskans.

ARTreach has evolved from these periodic exhibitions to an annual average of 22 shows reaching an estimated 28,000 visitors. Communities hosting one or more ARTreach shows in the past few years include Ansley, Chadron, Falls City, Grand Island, Grant, McCook, Nebraska City, North Platte, Ogallala, and Omaha. Comments from venues underscore the value of the ARTreach experience for communities across Nebraska:

“We have received such an overwhelming positive response to the exhibit” that we are extending our hours next week to accommodate this popular show. (Rick Johnson, McCook Community College Art Instructor, McCook Daily Gazette, 1/18/2013)

“. . . [this exhibition] is further evidence of how beneficial Gallery 1516’s partnership with MONA is and will be in the years to come.” [David Thompson, Art Critic, The Reader of Omaha, 5/11/2016]

“The Friends of the Gallery is pleased to be hosting an exhibit of this caliber. . . we hope to bring more quality exhibits to western Nebraska.” (Kathy Zeller, Curator, Petrified Wood & Art Gallery, Keith County News, 4/22/2015)

NALHD – Nebraska Association of Local Health Directors

When we think of “health,” a visit to the doctor comes to mind. But factors outside clinics or hospitals—in our homes, workplaces, schools, and communities—play bigger roles in our health. Many health problems can be avoided with cost-effective prevention programs. As the locally governed Chief Health Strategists in districts that cover from 1 to 11 counties, Nebraska’s local public health departments (LHDs) develop programs and policies that promote safety, health, and wellness across entire communities. They work to keep their whole communities healthy and well by preventing diseases and by addressing public health emergencies. Resources to support LHDs are unpredictable and scarce. On average only 35% (and as little as 4%) of LHD revenues come from reliable state and local tax dollars.

Through NALHD, member LHDs secure additional resources and amplify their effectiveness. Since 2012, NALHD members have secured over \$2.5million in federal and private grants that are benefiting the 77 counties they serve. Through NALHD, members are providing military cultural competence training to over 500 rural providers, supporting veteran family-centered programs in rural communities, and helping LHD staff and partners hone their health communication skills with all community members, regardless of their English literacy.

An investment in public health system infrastructure, through NALHD, helps to prevent illness, reduce health care costs, and improve the quality of life for all Nebraskans.

The Nature Conservancy in Nebraska

Your donations help to support one of the most biologically diverse and beautiful places in Nebraska – the Niobrara Valley Preserve (NVP).

Over thirty years ago, The Nature Conservancy made a huge strategic investment in the conservation of the Niobrara River and its iconic valley. With the purchase of two ranches from willing sellers, the Conservancy created what is still the largest nongovernmental wildlife area in the state: the Niobrara Valley Preserve. This is particularly significant in Nebraska, which has the lowest percentage of conservation land of any state except Iowa. The investment was strategic, too, because it helped secure permanent protection for 26 miles of the Niobrara River.

The Preserve is a keystone of a 30-mile segment of the Niobrara River that biologists call the biological crossroads of the Great Plains. Six ecosystems converge there. More than 600 plant species and 85 butterfly species have been documented on the NVP. 268 species of birds have been reported, making it one of Nebraska's most bird-rich regions. This land, with its unique stands of aspen and birch, is known for its prairie grasses and species adapted to those grasses.

Visitors to the Preserve enjoy two nature trails. Two bison herds help manage acres of prairie that stretch as far as the eye can see. While the Preserve is operated as a working ranch, donations help the Conservancy host groups of students and researchers and meet our management goals so that this special place reflects Nebraska's natural heritage – forever.

Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers

The Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers supports its members, Nebraska's seven nationally accredited Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) that provide forensic interviews, medical exams and support to child victims and their families during child abuse investigations. The Nebraska Alliance's vision is to ensure that every child receives the same high-quality of services within every Nebraska county. The Nebraska Alliance gathers data about the served, under-served and un-served areas in Nebraska to address the ongoing establishment and sustainability of CACs. Even though all of our 93 counties are assigned to a CAC, in 2014, we found that in some areas of the state, a family has to drive 2-4 hours to the Center. A law enforcement officer could be taken away from their duties for an entire day to drive to a distant Center to participate in the coordinated investigative response.

At that time, even though 5100 children were served by the CACs, 30-40% of children who should have been seen simply did not have access. The Nebraska Alliance utilized these results to demonstrate the need to expand CAC services into the rural communities and funding was secured for the startup costs for four new rural CAC satellite offices, ongoing operations for the five established rural CAC satellite offices, and a statewide outreach coordinator to provide technical assistance support.

Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest

Jorge, a first-generation undocumented student at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln, always worked hard and excelled in school. After graduating with his Masters of Professional Accountancy from UNL, Jorge was studying to sit for his Certified Public Accountant exams.

Jorge came to the United States with his parents at only five-years old. He has called Nebraska his home for nearly two decades. So when he discovered that he could not be

professionally licensed as an accountant in Nebraska, he couldn't believe it. He had grown up, worked, and studied in Nebraska his whole life. He wanted the opportunity to fully apply the skills he had learned in Nebraska, his home.

Through Nebraska Appleseed, Jorge and other DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipients were able to help develop a bill, LB 947, that would allow DACA recipients to obtain professional licenses. Thousands of students would then be able to be fully licensed teachers, lawyers, plumbers, social workers, and more. Jorge was able to tell his story at the Nebraska Legislature, making the case for young Nebraskans like him.

In May 2017 LB 947 passed through the Legislature, overriding the Governor's veto in a show of bi-partisan support from Nebraska state senators. Jorge, now practicing as an audit associate at an accounting firm in Omaha, knows that when he is ready, he will be able to be a fully-fledged CPA in Nebraska, his home.

Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children

Ariel Shearer graduated at the end of the Summer 2016 term with her Unified Early Childhood Endorsement from the University of Nebraska at Kearney. Ariel is a full time teacher for 4-5 year old children at Westside Early Childhood/Paddock, a childcare program in Omaha.

Ariel was first awarded a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship in the Fall 2012 term. She completed 54 credits on the semester system online at the University of Nebraska at Kearney while working full time in Omaha for her sponsoring childcare program.

Ariel says, "What the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship has meant to me: I have higher standards set for myself in the quality of care I provide thanks to having a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship. I am more knowledgeable in early childhood development. I feel more confident in making long-term decisions and goals with my Unified Early Childhood endorsement. I feel the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship has opened doors for future possibilities and widen my range of abilities as a teacher. Not only do I have my original endorsement of teaching K-12 art, I now have an endorsement to teach birth through eight years old!"

Nebraska CASA Association

Alex entered the foster care system at the age of 5. He had been brutally sexually abused and severely neglected for much of his young life. Alex was a "difficult to place" child as much of his trauma resurfaced in behaviors that often were too much for his foster parents to handle. Many professionals on the case were trying to send Alex out of state. His CASA volunteer did not believe that was best for him. CASA insisted and recommended that Alex stay in the Omaha area and he was placed with an amazing pre-adoptive family that had 3 other biological children.

Although this home appeared to be everything that Alex needed (children his age, therapeutic support, engaged parents, a big home, and a family pet), he continued to exhibit behaviors that were too much for his foster parents to take. They anguished over giving their notice but eventually made the decision to have him moved. Alex was moved again for the 7th time to a temporary foster home.

In April 2014, Alex was going to be moving to his 8th placement in 6 years, but this one would be different. Tom and Diane had heard about Alex, researched his history and picked him to be their son. Within a few short weeks, Alex's behaviors ceased and he finally began to thrive. Alex shared with his CASA Volunteer that he "finally feels safe" for the first time. Alex was adopted in June of 2015 and now has a safe, loving forever home.

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation

Each community we invest in undergoes a rigorous planning process before implementing a coordinated, focused effort on improving child welfare. The outcomes of this process create amazing results. A few recent examples include:

A family who has been evicted due to a recent job loss received emergency housing, career training, and financial literacy assistance. This allowed the family to stay together, avoid the welfare system, and get back on their feet.

A new father who was a victim of physical abuse as a child learned how to guide, correct and interact with his own son in a way that promotes healthy development—and the cycle of abuse is broken.

A young mother with limited supports from caring peers or family accessed free parent education training and home visits to ensure positive interactions that stimulate healthy development in her newborn.

A teenager who is aging out of foster care accessed housing, health care, and caring adults to guide him while he finished high school and got established in college or a trade.

A fifth grader attends the local afterschool program, where he gets the tutoring he needs to bring his grades up, and extra science activities that pique his interest in technology jobs. While he's there, his mother is able to continue earning an income to support this family.

A community looks at its numbers to discover that their local prevention efforts directed families to local services before a crisis happens, and fewer children were removed from their homes this year.

Nebraska Children's Home Society

Jose entered foster care, and had six placements before Nebraska Children's Home Society received his referral for permanency services. Because of Jose's traumatic history and challenging needs he was not able to maintain stability. After extensive searching, NCHS was able to locate Jose's paternal relatives. The family did not know that Jose was in foster care, and they were very interested in providing him a permanent home.

Family Finding meetings with NCHS staff and Jose's paternal family were held in Dallas. After several months and governmental hurdles jumped, NCHS received approval for Jose to visit his relatives and he was able to return often. After spending 2,043 days in foster care, Jose moved to Dallas to live with his aunt. Legal guardianship

was finalized six months later.

Jose went from having one life connection to 26 due to Family Finding. His challenging behaviors instantly disappeared. "He's not as mad, he's changed," his aunt said. "He's respectful, doesn't curse and doesn't break things. He's learned to be more patient and follow rules." This transformation can be attributed to the secure placement.

NCHS works to connect all children to their family. Jose's aunt said, "We get to show him what his parents didn't show him, how to love and be caring."

Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence

The Coalition envisions a world where domestic violence and sexual assault are a distant memory and healthy relationships prosper. To that end, the Coalition created a curriculum focused on healthy relationships and the prevention of violence, *Reaching and Teaching Teens to End Violence*. Created for use with young adults, this resource has been requested by organizations across the United States. While there is a cost to purchase the resource, the price only covers printing and mailing costs. Funds from donors provide for staff time to research, update, and distribute the curriculum. Recently a community educator shared her thoughts about using the curriculum with local youth. "As an educator in the classroom and in community-based settings, *Reaching & Teaching Teens* is a valuable resource. With interactive lessons, thorough information and great messaging, it is a must-have resource. The teachers I work with keep asking to borrow my copy! Sometimes I let them..."

Nebraska Sports Council

"I got my start in the Cornhusker State Games when I was 8 years old and that was my first introduction into competitive athletics and I've loved it ever since all the way up to the Olympics. I would encourage everyone to get involved whether your an Athlete...young or old...recreational or competitive or a Volunteer or a Sponsor and support the Nebraska Sports Council" ~Olympic Gold Medalist, Curtis Tomasevicz

Nebraska Statewide Arboretum

Located about halfway between Auburn and Falls City in southeast Nebraska sits the little town of Stella, population 160. On the north edge of town is the Stella Arboretum, located on the site of the former Southeast Consolidated High School. The arboretum got its start in the year 2000 when an ambitious science teacher and many local volunteers obtained a grant from NSA (the Nebraska Greenspace Stewardship Initiative) and began installing prairie plots, a pond and many new trees.

Although the school closed in 2009, care for the arboretum continued thanks to the commitment of several garden club members led by Jan McMullen and Laura French. The arboretum is a celebration of Nebraska's prairie heritage and includes more than 30 species of prairie plants as well as numerous trees and shrubs. It also has a beautiful lily pond and a new rose garden. This hidden gem of a garden is well worth a visit.

Though the school is gone, the garden carries forward and serves as a strong unifier for the community. The majority of the community takes part in annual events that include garden tours, plant sales and volunteer cleanup days.

Nebraska Trails Foundation

A young engineer, looking to move away from the big cities on the east coast, began a journey across the United States with his bicycle and a resume. After visiting many communities between New England and Nebraska, this promising young man decided to stop in Lincoln. He visited the State Capitol and received a free map of the multi-use trails in Lancaster County and greater Nebraska. He was impressed with the network and connectivity of the trails across the state. At a job interview, the interviewer looked at his resume and seeing his previous address in New England asked, "What made you decide to move to Nebraska?" His answer was that one of the key factors was the trail network. He described how he decided this would be a perfect place to raise a family. He said the network of trails would provide a safe place to exercise, bike to work, ride and walk safely with children.

The Nebraska Trails Foundation (NTF) is an important partner in the acquisition, development, and promotion of multi-use recreational trails across Nebraska. NTF participates in the purchase and acquisition of abandoned railway lines to be used for multi-use trails. The trails are used by the public for transportation, recreation, and promotion of healthy lifestyles, all while preserving the environment.

Nebraskans for Civic Reform

The Dawes homework zone serves thirty students on a weekly basis. Students can attend up to four days per week. Students who attend homework zone increase their academic performance, benefit from better relationships with adults, and build their grit by learning the connection between effort and success. Homework zone has also strengthened relationships between families and school by increasing communication and decreasing the stress of supporting students with failing grades at home.

Several students have benefitted from the opportunity of homework zone. For example, Isaac was suffering from poor grades due to missing work and low test scores. Absences had contributed to this problem. After speaking with Isaac's father, Isaac began attending four days a week. His grades made a dramatic improvement, especially in math and language arts.

In addition, Hailey has also seen successes after starting homework zone. Hailey requires additional time to get all classwork done. Homework zone has helped her get caught up on missing and incomplete work, keep her on pace with the curriculum, and offer extra support when needed. Her grade has moved from a C to a B.

Ally, a seventh grader, is another success story. Before starting homework zone she was scoring F's and low D's on her summative math assessments. She started homework zone and caught up on missing homework. After catching up she is continuing to come to homework zone for additional math help on current assignments. Her past two test scores were both A's.

Homework zone has helped students at Dawes prosper by assisting students with chronically low test scores to improve their confidence and test scores. It provides them with a quiet, safe place to complete work while holding them accountable. Each student has an updated Google document with their current grades in classes, missing assignments, and completed work.

Homework zone also provides opportunities for individual tutoring by certified staff. Each evening, there are at least two staff members in the classroom to collaborate with students. The facilitators break down difficult tasks into manageable tasks for students.

The Dawes creed states, “We Care. We Learn. We Hope. We Succeed. We believe. We are Dawes.” Homework zone celebrates this creed by providing gentle reminders that we care about their academic success even if they do not; students experience academic success, which builds their confidence.

NET Foundation for Radio

Members Recommend NET “Experiences”

Longtime NET members Laurel Van Ham and Tom Pappas of Lincoln recently welcomed us into their lovely home surrounded by trees, gardens and a bee hotel. Tom is a master gardener and built a bee hotel for solitary bee species looking for individual nests.

Laurel is passionate about the environment, too, and is active in the local chapter of the Citizens Climate Lobby. They also share their love of public radio and television as Tom turns on NET Radio first thing in the morning and they think twice before going out on Sunday evenings. “We don’t want to miss “Masterpiece”,” Laurel said. Tom and Laurel are self-described “experience junkies” and make a point to be in the live audience of shows they love. There was a trip to Chicago to see the NPR news quiz show “Wait Wait...Don’t Tell Me!”, and when NET brought “A Prairie Home Companion” with former host Garrison Keillor to Lincoln in 2013, they were there for the rehearsal and the show.

“We’ve also enjoyed the receptions NET hosts for members, like the “Downton Abbey” previews and the special event with “PBS NewsHour” commentator David Brooks,” Laurel added.

NET Foundation for Television

Since 1976, Frank and Betty Balderson have been members of NET. Their 40 years of support has helped to sustain outstanding programs that benefit all Nebraskans. Through the years, they have enjoyed watching Sesame Street with their children and grandchildren and have always looked forward to Ken Burns documentaries. Their other favorites include the high school and collegiate sporting events that NET carries live, as well as musical and holiday programs like Mannheim Steamroller concerts.

Why is NET a priority? “We value NET because they cover Nebraska issues and events including ag news and information from the Unicameral,” Frank said. Programs from Masterpiece Classic like Downton Abbey and science programs from NOVA have also provided hours of entertainment and education, Betty added.

Before moving to Scottsbluff 19 years ago, the Baldersons raised their family in Alliance, where Frank practiced law. Still active throughout the Panhandle, they attend many local events. And, Betty wouldn’t miss her “Betty Club” activities that include 25 other women in the area named “Betty.”

Nonprofit Association of the Midlands (NAM)

While not a direct service provider, we help nonprofits help Nebraska. There are thousands of nonprofits in our state – each trying to make a difference on their own. We bring them together so that each member can benefit from our collective strength. The Nonprofit Association of the Midlands (NAM) is the largest membership organization in the state dedicated exclusively to working with nonprofits of all sizes and missions. By connecting organizations with information, education, advocacy and collaboration, we help members focus their energy on the people and communities they serve.

Omaha Community Playhouse

"I find it difficult to put into a few words the impact the Omaha Community Playhouse has had on me. My life has been enriched as an audience member, a student in acting and dance classes, an actor in performances, a member of a community of volunteer and professional folks. [. . .] We have an opportunity here in Omaha to participate in a theatrical organization unlike any other. We volunteers get to work with professional directors, musical directors, choreographers, set designers, sound and lighting technical staff, costumers, etc., on two magnificent stages. [. . .] As an actor, each new script is an opportunity to learn and an opportunity to meet new fabulous people. My theatre friends are family. And I am a more confident, outgoing, educated, appreciative community member because of all of the time I have spent at the Playhouse. Still, when I can sit back at the theatre, lose the rest of the world, and take in a show that moves me, makes me think, makes me laugh, cry and takes me through some sort of cathartic arc with the rest of the audience, that's the best. Second only to being on stage, as a part of a huge group of folks who are creating that magic for the audience." - Omaha Community Playhouse volunteer and patron

Open Door Mission

Mark had a rough childhood, growing up. At age 12, Mark bent to peer pressure and began drinking and smoking marijuana.

This addiction grew to include meth, and Mark found himself in and out of prison. "I became so depressed, and just gave up on life," he said. "That's when I first began to experience homelessness."

With nowhere to go, Mark began living on the streets in a tent city by the river. He and five other people lived in makeshift shelters pieced together with items from dumpsters. Mark's "home" was made out of pallets and nails. Years passed, each with bitterly cold winters, but Mark continued to feed his addictions.

"The coldest I remember it being was -15°," Mark said. You just layer up with what you have, and run for town first thing in the morning. The only way to sleep is to drink until you pass out."

He heard about Open Door Mission and decided to seek shelter there this past October. After encouragement from the Men's Director, Mark joined the New Life Recovery Program, and his life has been changed ever since. "Sleeping outside in the cold, I had to worry a lot about survival," Mark said. "I don't have the worries no more. I'm warm, I have clothes, I have food, and I'm working towards bettering myself. I have goals."

Outlinc, Inc.

When Lincoln's LGBTQ community needs to be heard in government and with community leaders, Outlinc has provided a voice. From fighting so no one is fired because of who they are or who they love to working to give government employees fair and equitable benefits, Outlinc has brought the stories of LGBTQ people to these and many more important conversations. Through our work, some of Lincoln's most influential elected officials, faith leaders and business leaders have stood by the LGBTQ community. One of the individuals who shared their story with Outlinc said, "I moved from Lincoln and never thought I could consider moving back. Thanks to you, I might be able to call Lincoln home again one day."

Partnership for a Healthy Lincoln

Poor nutrition and inactive lifestyles has prompted an increase in obesity and obesity-related chronic diseases, especially in children. The impact of this epidemic can shave five years off our children's lives and cost our nation millions in increased healthcare costs and lost productivity. Studies show this may be the first generation of children to live shorter, sicker lives than their parents.

PHL is dedicated to improving health, wellness, and fitness in Lincoln and Lancaster County. We collaborate with over 20 local organizations on projects increasing the impact of our joint efforts - helping our community live longer, healthier lives. Initiatives include:

Infants and Babies: Through the Lincoln Community Breastfeeding Initiative, we work to implement consistent, evidence-based policies and education to improve the long-term health of mothers and babies.

Early Childhood: In the early childcare setting, we work with partners to teach families about healthy nutrition and the lifelong benefits of increased physical activity.

School Age: With Lincoln Public Schools and other organizations, we work to implement district-wide wellness policies to help schoolchildren reach healthy weights and improve fitness. Studies show that kids who are healthy and fit do better in school.

Community and Neighborhoods: To improve the well-being of our entire community, we collaborate with local organizations to bring health, wellness, and fitness education and programs to the workplace and all our neighborhoods.

People's Health Center

Janel and her family have been coming to People's Health Center for their dental care for almost six years. She admits being concerned about the quality of care she would receive from a dental clinic such as People's Health Center that provides services to patients with limited financial resources. Those concerns, however, were quickly alleviated.

"We receive top-notch treatment at People's Health Center," says Janel. "Everyone in the dental clinic -- from the dentists to the hygienists to the dental assistants to the receptionists -- is simply awesome. The staff are so patient, kind, and understanding."

They always treat my family with dignity and respect and go above and beyond to make us feel comfortable.”

This means a great deal to Janel. She, like many others with limited financial resources, had put off dental care for quite some time before coming to People’s Health Center. Coming back after a long lapse in care was intimidating and caused Janel some anxiety. “I knew I needed dental care, but I wasn’t able to see a dentist for many years because of other financial obligations,” she said. “I was so happy to find out that People’s Health Center offered a sliding fee scale for dental services. Without that, my family simply couldn’t afford dental care.”

“We feel so fortunate to get high quality services at a price that works with our budget. Thank you, People’s Health Center!”

Planned Parenthood of the Heartland

“I grew up in a family that didn’t expect much from me. From the time I was 11, my father lectured me on not getting pregnant because he expected me to become a teenage mother. I carried that message with me and wanted to prove my father wrong. When I was 17, I made the decision to become sexually active, and I went to Planned Parenthood. I’m now 26, and for almost a decade, I have relied on Planned Parenthood for multiple services, from birth control to annual women’s wellness and breast exams, and sexual health screenings. Planned Parenthood has always given me compassionate, informed care. I have never felt judged for my decisions. I always leave Planned Parenthood feeling more empowered than I did when I walked in; they helped me realize that I choose the narrative of what happens in my life.” ~ a PPH patient

Seniors Foundation of Lincoln & Lancaster County

“The Aging Partners Fitness Center has been a blessing for me. After my heart attack three years ago, my heart surgeon told me had I not been working out regularly, I most likely would not have survived the attack. The Fitness Center has enabled me to lose 45 pounds and keep it off. I try to work out three to five times a week and plan to keep coming back as long as possible.”

ServeNebraska

A two-year-old autistic child enters the ACT clinic and is assessed for verbal and behavior milestones by an AmeriCorps member; the child scores a 19. After working with the child for 6 months the assessment was given to the child again, this time the child scored a 76 on the same assessment. The Child made such huge gains in his verbal and behavioral activity the child's mother became even more engaged and wanted to learn what she could do at home to increase the verbal and behavior milestones. Early intervention with Autistic Children makes huge differences in their adult lives, AmeriCorps makes a difference in lives and impacts communities.

Sunrise Communications, Inc. – 89.3 KZUM

KZUM 89.3 FM has been Nebraska’s independent, community radio station since 1978. For the last 38 years, KZUM has been the source for music, independent news and vital community information that is not aired on commercial radio. Powered by 90 dedicated volunteers and a mighty full-time staff of three employees, we air original programming highlighting subjects ranging from gardening, pet care, arts and community matters. We

feature more local music and artists in a week than any other Lincoln radio station does in a year! Through our original programming we support diverse audiences, such as our Native American, Latino and Vietnamese populations, all while reaching the most under-served community members.

A strong community radio station is a sign of a growing and vibrant city, as is the case with Lincoln. KZUM is committed to being the voice of our city. We have a long history of working closely with our local, small businesses and nonprofits. Whether it's airing programs that advocate for nonprofits, running public service announcements for organizations offering vital services or sponsoring cultural community events, supporting our local economy is vital to cultivate our diverse and unique community.

Tabitha

Gerald is a strong, independent man who is struggling to remain in his home. He lost his wife after 68 years of marriage and now faces his own battle with cancer. After several months of receiving Tabitha Meals on Wheels, Gerald called to cancel his meals, saying he no longer needed them.

A few weeks later, Gerald called Susie, the Tabitha Meals on Wheels coordinator to request just one meal for the week. As Susie talked to Gerald, she discovered he was losing weight and feeling ill. In tears, Gerald told Susie he had stopped the meals because he could not afford to pay the \$5.75 daily cost of the meal. Through the support of Tabitha's generous donors like YOU, Susie was able to tell Gerald we could continue providing for his needs and help him through this difficult time.

Gerald now receives a hot, nutritious meal delivered to him each day by the hands of a loving volunteer. The meals allow him to keep up his strength, and the volunteer offers him a friendly smile and daily check-in to ensure he's safe. It's because of supporters like YOU that Tabitha is able to make it possible for Gerald and hundreds more like him throughout our community.

University of Nebraska Foundation

Alyssia Casillas was a 14-year-old with intelligence and drive. She had good people in her life, like her mom – a single mother who worked hard to raise her three kids. But Alyssia's lack of confidence had led her to make bad choices. Friends were getting pregnant. She was hanging with a rough crowd. So when a big, handsome envelope with her name on it arrived at her Grand Island home, she was surprised. She was even more surprised when her mom read the letter inside and screamed.

"You got it! You got it!"

"I'm either in trouble or I did something really good," Alyssia thought at the time. That was a decade ago. The letter inside announced that Alyssia had been selected for the Nebraska College Preparatory Academy, a program through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln that nurtures and mentors promising first-generation, low-income students like Alyssia through high school and college.

Alyssia graduated from UNL last year. She now is studying dental hygiene at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

“For me, the NCPA was huge,” she says. “It made that college experience that might have been extremely scary and hard so much more exciting and comfortable and enjoyable for me. “It helped me defy the odds.”

Volunteers of America – Western Nebraska

Volunteers of America - Western Nebraska offers a unique food pantry. Our purpose is to serve the hungry. Other food pantries have implemented barriers, we have chosen to eliminate barriers and focus on distributing food to those in need. Here are a few of the comments received from users:

“Money just doesn’t go far enough and sometimes we are just struggling to make any kind of meal to feed our little guy, to hold us over. We have been so thankful to have this food bank close enough to help.”

“I can supplement with pantry food to have a well rounded, delicious meal. Being a senior citizen, this is great.”

“If this pantry was not here, I would not make it month to month as I am on a fixed income.”

“I am thankful for the food pantry because over the past three years, it has helped me feed my kids when I needed help the most.”