

## **Community Services Fund of Nebraska Member Agency Stories**

### **ACLU of Nebraska**

Megan, a 16 year old ACLU of Nebraska client, shares her heartbreaking story of solitary confinement:

"My cell was about the size of a queen-sized bed. There was a small bed, a desk and a chair. There was no counselor to talk to about what I was going through. I was only able to talk to my mom every few days, sometimes for only three minutes. While I was at Geneva, I was in a constant state of depression. I had anxiety attacks and when I tried to get help for them, no one cared. While I was there, at least two girls attempted suicide and many others talked about it. I can honestly say that for the first time in my life, I thought about hurting myself too. Just like at Madison, I spent a lot of my time alone, confined to my cell, desperate for anything that reminded me of my old life. At different times while I was locked up in Madison and Geneva, I was not allowed talk with my lawyers and my family. Thankfully my family fought back to get me out and to help me share my story."

### **Angels Among Us**

Angels Among Us has assisted 115 families this past year, a record. One of those families is a family we have assisted four times. The families son was diagnosed with Leukemia five years ago and has suffered two relapses since that point. Angels Among Us was able to step in and pay the families mortgage so that they could focus on getting their child well.

While the family is still in the battle, we will continue to walk alongside this family for as long as the treatment plan requires. They can be assured that no one on this journey needs to walk alone and that Angels Among Us will provide this assistance for as long as it is needed.

### **The Arc of Nebraska**

One of our members lived in an institution for the first 20 years of her life. She barely spoke when she first came to a dance hosted by a local chapter. Through engaging in the trainings we hosted, she became a strong self-advocate speaking out for all people with disabilities. This work gained eventually led to a job, a strong network of friends, and improved access to services.

### **The Archway**

The Archway was first conceived of by Nebraska's 31st Governor, Frank Morrison, as a living memorial to the hundreds of thousands of pioneers and innovators who followed the Great Platte River Road through Nebraska and helped to build America.

Every year, the Archway informs and inspires thousands of students and adult visitors from Nebraska and from all over the globe with the stories of these adventurers. They faced many challenges, endured many hardships and made tremendous sacrifices to reach their destinations. They also found ways to work together to achieve their goals. Together, they built America.

Archway supporters become partners in our mission to preserve our history, share our story, and inspire our visitors to actively participate in America's ongoing saga of discovery, innovation, and adventure.

### **Audubon Nebraska**

We had a young woman and her father visit Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center recently. She was a college student now and it had been 10 years since she visited the prairie with her 4th grade class as part of our Prairie Immersion education program, a partnership with Lincoln Public Schools. That visit made a lasting impression and, even though she had not been back, she had never forgotten it. A young adult now she was thrilled to come back and bring her father with her to share the prairie with him. That 4th grade visit to the prairie had taken her out of the classroom inspired conservation values and an appreciation of our environment that will last her a lifetime.

### **Autism Center of Nebraska**

One cold afternoon, ACN received a telephone call from a local homeless shelter. She said they had a young man who obviously had disabilities, and who was clearly at risk with their population, as he was asking for affection from total strangers. She said, "Can you help?" And ACN said, "Yes, we can." Immediately, ACN mobilized to send two representatives to the shelter to meet with the young man and see if he would consent to coming to ACN for shelter and safety. Meanwhile, other ACN representatives began the process of investigating the young man's background and discovered that he did not yet have authorization for funding for residential services through the Developmental Disabilities system. Conversation with his local school district revealed that the family had reached their limit and could no longer provide appropriate care for this young man. ACN responded, gathering essentials and providing safe transit to an ACN group home. ACN provided safety and warmth, food and shelter, and caring staff on a 24-hour basis. The following day, his local school district made arrangements for the young man to receive his education at ACN's transition education program.

Some months later, this young man was granted funding through the State of Nebraska Developmental Disabilities Division. But without the support of donors, ACN would not have had the resources to provide the care, support, and intensive staffing needed to help this young man find success. Today this young man is thriving with wrap around services provided by ACN.

### **Bluestem Health**

Last year, a young mother left Honduras for Lincoln seeking political asylum. She brought her 5-year-old daughter who suffers from multiple congenital anomalies, physiological, and neurological problems to our clinic.

Her first visit found her malnourished and dehydrated. At 5 years old, she weighed 14 pounds. Our pediatrician connected the family to Children's Hospital in Omaha where a feeding tube was one of many procedures started to save her life. Following this, she required an expensive liquid diet. She was also susceptible to respiratory failure and exposure to people had to be limited.

Using clinic resources, we were able to purchase medications and nutrition. Our dietician developed a liquid diet using inexpensive, common foods. The Community Health Coordinator (CHC) completed home visits. The interpreter staff came to the home with the CHC to ensure

the family understood the treatments. We connected her with public school where they helped provide several therapies. We provided transportation to important doctor's visits. These services were all provided for free. For pediatrician visits, our billing and patient support staff developed a payment plan and assisted with our charity care application. We connected them with other agencies including Legal Aid and refugee services. She grew in height and weight. None of the care provided was extraordinary. This is how Bluestem Health provides care daily.

### **Boy Scouts of America, Cornhusker Council**

"I am very proud of the things that Saxon has learned in Cub Scouts! He started as a Tiger Scout in Den 1 and was one of the Founders of Pack 19 in Lincoln Nebraska.

An accident happened tonight in which Saxon kept calm and act quickly to save his 5-year-old brother from drowning.

Saxon was fishing from the dock in our back yard. Saxon had caught a large fish and so his younger brother and younger sister went down to the pond to watch. Apparently, Rowan, Saxon's 5-year-old brother, saw some moss that he wanted to touch and reached down to the water from the dock. Saxon, seeing his brother reaching down, started to say, "Rowan, you shouldn't ....."

And Rowan was in the water just that fast. Saxon dropped his pole and immediately laid down on his stomach, reached out grabbing Rowan's shirt and then arm and pulled him up onto the dock. Rowan was quite rattled by the whole incident. I heard him crying as they got close to the house.

Later in the evening, I asked Saxon 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 Webelos of Pack 19 just finished their First Responder Adventure a few months ago. Words can't express how thankful I am that Saxon was quick to act and knew what to do in this emergency. I would like to thank the Cub Scouts for providing such an awesome curriculum/training and beneficial life skills to boys across America."

### **The Bridge Behavioral Health**

Robert grew up in small town Nebraska. By the time he was 18, he regularly used alcohol, nicotine, cocaine, hallucinogens, PCP, Xanax, Opioids, meth. Life was a blur. Soon meth became his drug of choice. It was cheap, at first, and easy to get. And he was off to the races in his substance use disorder. More than once, he admitted himself for treatment to The Bridge. With the help of our counselors and professional team, he graduated after 10 weeks in treatment. He got his driver's license back. He has a good, steady job in construction. He rents a house with a peer who's also in recovery. He has responsibilities. He treasures a clean life. Without The Bridge, Robert says he wouldn't be alive. Any chance he gets, he tells his story of how the staff at The Bridge saved his life. Now when he gets stressed, he has coping skills he learned in treatment. He writes songs. He volunteers. He returns for continuing care meetings. He's planning a future, one day at a time. Now, he has hope. And he is grateful to the experts at The Bridge for turning his life around.

## **Bridges to Hope**

Jared's earliest memory is watching his mother get beaten to death at the young age of 4! He was immediately taken into custody of the state and placed in a foster home. Before long he had been in a total of 17 foster homes. You see, Jared, like any other human who would have witnessed such an atrocity, became rebellious. He was angry at the world and knew no other way to deal with it but to fight. He joined a gang, got involved with drugs and you know what happened next; incarceration.

After 15 rough years of being imprisoned and placed in solitary confinement for months at a time, Jared finally realized this was not the life for him. He became a model inmate and finally was released and found support through several nonprofit organizations such as Bridges to Hope. He was able to pick out furniture, clothing and household items to furnish his new home. Jared's gratitude has been repaid by volunteering with Bridges to Hope. He shares his painful story with others so our community understands that all those who are incarcerated are human and each has an individual story of their own.

## **Capital Humane Society**

A little 5-week-old kitten arrived at our Admissions & Assessment Center from Lincoln Animal Control after they had picked him up. The kitten, barely more than a pound, was missing his back left foot and the end of the leg was infected.

Our veterinary team cleaned the end of his leg and made him comfortable through his required holding period. No one came forward to claim him during the holding period so our veterinary team moved forward with amputating his leg just above the knee.

After surgery, Timmy moved to foster care with one of our staff members so his leg could heal. A couple of weeks later, he returned for the veterinary staff to look him over and remove the staples before he was ready for adoption. It didn't take Timmy long to find a new home, given how sweet and cute he is, and he was adopted the first day he was available for adoption!

## **Center for Rural Affairs**

From an early age, Yomara has loved all things floral. She helped her mother make fabric flowers for bouquets and decorations for weddings. Now, Yomara now makes her living selling flowers.

Yomara started her floral business in Schuyler in 2013. What began as selling arrangements to friends out of her garage has grown into a full-fledged business.

"Friends would ask for my help to decorate their parties. They told me I should have my own business," she said. And, Yomara knows what her customers want. "Language is an important factor," she said. "To speak Spanish gives people more confidence to order the arrangements. My arrangements are specially designed, and my personal touch is what customers like."

While she's come a long way, she didn't arrive there without help. Through the Center for Rural Affairs, Yomara obtained financing and training to invest in and remodel her business.

“Yomara closed her first loan with us in 2015, and paid it off successfully,” said Veronica Spindola, loan specialist with the Center. “She recently closed her second loan with us. Yomara was my first client. I helped her build her business plan.”

In the business world, nothing is guaranteed, but Yomara stays optimistic about the future.

“I keep positive and facing forward. I hope to continue with the support of the Center and growing as a business.”

### **CenterPointe**

"I don't what what the difference is between people who get it right away and people who don't. But, I didn't. There was something within me that felt so terrible and bad that only alcohol could solve it. It's a way of life you don't want to live, but you don't know how not to. I got into CenterPointe and it gave me, emotionally, the ability to know it was okay. I wasn't crazy. I had a voice and someone to listen. When I was at my worst, they didn't care. They cared about me - about me doing well. Without CenterPointe, I wouldn't be where I am today."

### **Civic Nebraska**

If you could be anything in the world, what you would be? And why? A wizard. A superhero. A pilot. A rap artist. An actress. A millionaire. Once the young scribes at Civic Nebraska's Lothrop after-school Community Learning Center got rolling, there was no end to the creative flow.

“Now, don't forget,” Damion Sayers said over the rising classroom buzz, each of the dozen students under his watchful eye. “The second question. That's to tell me more about it. Tell me why.

Active minds and newly sharpened pencils got going again. The students proudly handed Sayers their notebooks, satisfied with the first entries in what by the end of May will be a bound and printed chronicle of their vision.

“Writing can be hard,” third-grader Ronall, 9, said. “But it's fun.”

Sayers, who owns and operates the neighborhood barbershop Transitions, is a regular contributor to the Lothrop CLC. A childhood literacy advocate, he and others have created the North Omaha Barbershop Books project. Owners stock their shops with children's books so that when kids or their families come in for a cut, they can open one up to read – or even take a book home if they like.

Sayers said literacy is more than reading, however. That's why the Visionary Book Writing Project puts Lothrop students in the role of writers – and importantly, of picturing themselves doing big things. Third-graders write each month about a different aspirational topic with themselves at the center of the story.

“We love to see our students thinking critically about their role in the world, and imagining how they can act to create positive change,” said Equasha Smith-Gooch, Civic Nebraska's Lothrop CLC site director. “I'm grateful to Damion for being a great connection between the school, the CLC, and the community.

### **Clinic with a Heart**

Sam and Nancy are a married couple and lost their home several years ago due to a series of unfortunate accidents. Both have chronic high blood pressure. When Clinic with a Heart began a chronic care clinic for patients with hypertension, both Sam and Nancy qualified. They are now able to see a medical provider on a routine basis and stay on their medications.

Though the couple is still homeless, at least they have one less stress in their life. They also appreciate that when they come for an appointment, they also receive hygiene products. This helps sustain them through the month.

### **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.

### **Food Bank for the Heartland**

"The mobile pantry is a life saver. I come for the fresh produce. I take care of my 88-year-old mother and live on social security and disability. While my income stays the same, prices keep going up at the grocery store." -Grand Island resident.

### **Foundation for Lincoln City Libraries**

In today's world, Lincoln City Libraries are increasingly important as our community deals with the threat of the Covid-19 virus. Usage increased 35% for checkouts the first weekend of the threat. Online resources are also increasing usage. Libraries continue to provide education, entertainment, and service to all citizens!

### **Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools**

Mike loved being a dad. He and his wife Kris, have always had good jobs and done well for themselves. When little Jayden came along, they couldn't believe how much they loved being parents. The late nights and extra chores, all paled in comparison to their perfect little girl. Soon she was in grade school, and everything was going right on track, Mike thought. Until the day Jayden ended up in the hospital with an unexpected medical complication that caused numerous outstanding medical bills. They couldn't believe how expensive it was, but at least Jayden was ok. Mike and Kris set up a payment plan for their medical bills, but couldn't pay

them all, along with their rent and food bills - suddenly, they were on the verge of losing their home. Thankfully, they got help.

The Foundation and LPS worked with the family to pool the back rent and pay the landlord with the help of generous Foundation donors. Now the family is back on track, and they don't have to worry about uprooting Jayden from her school and home. Most families who receive assistance, only receive it once, due to unexpected circumstances. Assisting these families helps them to maintain stability over the long term.

### **Go Beyond Nebraska (formerly Camp Confidence)**

I didn't realize how much I was positively affected by my experience with Camp Confidence until I was a grown up. More specifically, not until I was in the position to show off my experiences of overcoming my fears and making awesome memories to the young people I serve. Those who know me well find it unbelievable but my memories (and photos) prove my stories to be true. At the time, I didn't appreciate repelling off of the side of the mountain OR hiking 6 miles in the wilderness after having "bear training" OR whitewater rafting with my glasses strapped around my head for safety! (See, I lost them in the lake the night before, and my counselor wanted to ensure I didn't lose them again!) I cried many tears during that two weeks, but I can say, it exposed this city girl to a life beyond my wildest dreams literally.

Seeing moose for the first time, having to use the restroom (ahem...) outside of a restroom. It completely took me outside of my box. It opened my eyes to know there was more to live than just my part of the city. It made me want to explore and get to know how others. And my perspective on how I learned changed. I realized that if I didn't get an understanding in the classroom, I still had a chance, and it was my responsible to get it at home. I can see the definite correlation of how learning begins with self-confidence, and I became much more confident in my abilities during and after that trip. I even caught a fish with a stick and some string!! Can you believe that!!? I overcame so many fears during that camp!! I experienced things I never would have done on my own. I was pushed to succeed. Just enough for me to take ownership and now reap the benefits. I am a better person because of Camp Confidence. And, I thank them.

### **Grief's Journey**

"We're grateful to the staff and support at Grief's Journey for helping us walk through the most difficult time in our lives," Sarah, Shawnee and Lucas.

Sarah and her family came to Grief's Journey in January 2019 after the death of Gary, husband and father. Gary died December 2018 from an unexpected heart attack. Sarah and Gary had been married for 15 years. Pregnancy didn't come naturally, so they chose to adopt through the foster care system. Sarah and Gary welcomed their two older children, Danny and Shawnee, when they were 6 and 8 years old in 2009. Lucas came into the family as a newborn in 2010.

Gary's death came as a complete shock. They found themselves lost as they missed "an excellent provider, spiritual encourager, and the one who brought the fun."

Sarah knew the importance of getting grief support for her family due to her role as a social worker, so they attended support groups and the Spring Family Day at Grief's Journey. "Due to the support of Grief's Journey, Shawnee is now volunteering with horses and has made

improvements at school and home. She is expressing her grief more versus holding it in, using tools she learned in her Grief's Journey small group. Lucas is also more expressive with his grief and is talking about dad now," said Sarah.

The family continues to utilize services and activities at Grief's Journey as they "try to find Gary's presence in our everyday lives and for ways we can continue to grow together, remember his servant heart and the encouragement that he gave us," said Sarah. "Even though the hurt is greater than we could have ever imagined; it is the result of having loved so deeply."

### **Habitat for Humanity Lincoln**

Habitat for Humanity builds AND repairs homes for qualified low-income families. Lar and Mya renovated a reclaimed Habitat home, alongside volunteers during Women Build re-landscaping, painting, hanging sheet rock, installing new cabinets and more. While they worked on their home, they met their neighbor and bonded over their love of gardening. The house looks completely brand new and is next door to Habitat homeowners Pa Na and Wasana, who happens to be family friends and was their family partner.

Lar, Mya and their four young children were living in a small two-bedroom apartment for the last two years. Mya and the three children sleep in one room and the baby and Lar sleep in the other room. The complex is not well maintained; it is dirty and has lightbulbs out in the main areas. The family lives on the second floor and has a sliding glass balcony door. It is not secured on the track and has fallen into the apartment. To solve the problem, their landlord gave them a piece of wood to "secure" the door in place, however, the door doesn't shut all the way leaving an inch gap which lets in the cold air. Lar and Mya are concerned for their children's safety if the door would happen to fall out again.

Now, they have a safe, secure, stable place to call home and raise their young family.

### **Houses of Hope of Nebraska, Inc.**

'Dylan' struggled with substance use for nearly 20+ years and had untreated depression. He was referred to Houses of Hope to continue substance use and mental health treatment, and for support to help develop skills and discipline to transition back into the community. As those issues began to stabilize he was better equipped to sort through physical and emotional impact related to his history of substance use.

Dylan worked in individual, group and family counseling sessions to improve interactions with others, to learn about his addiction, and develop healthy ways to maintain emotional and physical health. Dylan built a strong foundation of recovery and obtained employment through a 'temp agency' that turned into a full time position with healthcare benefits. Access to medical care and prescription coverage eased worries about dealing with medication and health needs. Dylan was able to reestablish connections with his family. Those relationships improved over the course of treatment and family members became part of his support system.

By the time Dylan was completing treatment he had been employed for over 8 months and saved for a deposit on his own apartment. He had built a strong sober support group in the community and had been sober over 10 months. With those supports and accomplishments, Dylan was optimistic about his future and potential for continued growth in recovery.

## **Humanities of Nebraska**

Sebastian was performing poorly in first grade until his teacher suggested his parents bring him to Prime Time Family Reading Time. Now he enjoys reading books with his parents and younger siblings, and he is in an advanced reading group.

By working with other veterans on writing essays, poems and stories, two participants in the Nebraska Warrior Writers workshops realized they had undiagnosed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. They have sought help from the Veteran's Administration and are now on the road to better mental health.

As their children reached voting age, Todd and Sarah wanted to equip them with the skills to sift through "fake news" so they could make choices based on fact. So, they brought them to a Democracy & Journalism community conversation, where the whole family grew in their understanding.

Julia learned to explore different perspectives on global policies at Capitol Forum on America's Future. She is now a senator representing her home district in the Nebraska Unicameral. Margaret is the sole librarian in her small Nebraska community, but by using the Humanities Nebraska Speakers Bureau, she can stretch her budget and provide engaging programming for people of all ages.

## **The Junior League of Lincoln**

The Junior League of Lincoln is working to support at-risk women transitioning to independence (ages 16-24). Transition-aged youth are a difficult population to reach, though this age can be a life-changing time. We know that young women who have stability in their lives are likely to have better outcomes such as better grades, high school graduation, and better pay; however, many transition-aged youth lack stability needed to succeed. These youth have faced a variety of challenges, for example, being in the foster care system since they were very young, criminal offenses, and/or mental health issues.

Further complicating the needs of transition-aged youth in Lincoln, is the long waiting list for adequate housing options, placing youth at risk of homelessness. For youth who are able to obtain housing, they do not have the financial ability to stock an empty apartment with needed goods.

For this reason, JLL established HomeStart, a "store" of household goods where young adults can shop for the basics needed to furnish their own apartment free of charge. Typical needs include shower curtains, cleaning supplies, linens, and dishware. JLL provides these items new or gently used. With basic household needs secured, transition-aged youth will be able to better establish themselves as independent adults by building resumes and/or pursuing further education. The store will remove barriers and support the stability of young women living independently.

## **Leadership Lincoln, Inc.**

Part of our outreach program is a role-play simulation for any business/agency/school/church in the community that wants to develop a greater understanding of the issues related to poverty. Leadership Lincoln alumni volunteer to facilitate the simulation and then engage in a

conversation with the participants following their experience to help them see the challenges facing those in the community experiencing poverty.

Often times the 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 and extremely impactful exercise and one that is in high demand.

### **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**

Lisa and her husband Eric were living the good life. "We were both working, making good money and enjoying ourselves. We didn't really save for a rainy day...but, then again, who really does? I never thought that I would someday qualify for Medicaid or stand in line at a food distribution center."

Unfortunately, Lisa hurt her back and was unable to continue working in her chosen career field. Not long after that, Eric lost his job in construction. After months of looking, he found another job, but his take-home pay dropped significantly. It was during this time that Lisa and Eric took advantage of the Have A Heart program, a subsidized annual museum pass for households meeting income qualifications.

The impact of the Have A Heart program for Lisa was significant. "When our world seemed to be falling apart, trips to the Museum with my girls became a real respite. For a few hours I could forget about our problems and take pride in the fact that I could still be a good mom, still provide good educational experiences for my kids. I want to thank all the donors who contribute to the Museum to make the Have A Heart program possible."

### **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. In 2019 the Zoo partnered with 46 local human services agencies and schools 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

ethnicity, physical abilities, and ages. Tickets are made available to children and families who would normally not be able to visit the Zoo due to their financial circumstances.

The program is simple in design. Nonprofit social service agencies and Title 1 schools apply for the tickets on behalf of their low income clients and students. Once their application is received, the Zoo grants free tickets to the limit of our ability. Those nonprofits, in turn, dispense the free tickets to their clients. Children and families can use those tickets to visit the Zoo at any time during the regular season.

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**

The Penguin Project is a program in its seventh year at Lincoln Community Playhouse. It is serving youth ages 9-19 with special needs. They are paired with peer mentors to rehearse and stage a musical. The Population(s) Served are as follows: Adolescents (9-19 years); People presenting with disabilities.

A parent of a child presenting with special needs shared the below:

"We wish to heartily express our enthusiasm in support of Lincoln Community Playhouse. As parents of a child with special needs, we often have to think outside the box to find activities for our son which are appropriate to his level of development and will still allow him to build skills and self-esteem and engage in our community. The Lincoln Community Playhouse has been a godsend for our family over the past several years by sponsoring the Penguin Project, which offers our son the opportunity to perform in musical theater and allows him to play to his strengths. The Playhouse staff are amazing in their support and inclusion of so many kids with such a variety of needs. Our son has grown immensely in his ability to interact socially, as well as in his sense of self-worth, through these mentored theater productions.

Another aspect of value not to be underestimated is how the Playhouse, through programs like the Penguin Project, fosters awareness in the community. Our daughter has also participated in the Penguin Project, as a mentor supporting other kids like her brother. This has given her the opportunity to see how other families like ours work together and has given her a sense of purpose and strength. This positivity is projected and amplified through the public performances put on by the Penguin Project cast, where the special talents, courage, and accomplishments of individuals with special needs are highlighted. Attendees come away with a renewed sense of appreciation for their community and their fellow human beings, and inspiration to spread positivity. The Playhouse staff do a truly commendable job in putting the arts to work within this community-building vision. The proposed activities have a transformational potential to make the arts meaningful for so many people in our community."

## **Lincoln Parks Foundation**

### **Doolittle Raiders Memorial Monument**

A local high school graduate lead the effort to raise funds to create a Doolittle Memorial Monument at the Veteran's Memorial Garden.

The Doolittle Raid was a mission conducted in retaliation of the Japanese attack on Pear Harbor. It was headed by James "Jimmy" Doolittle and it included 80 total men. Two of these men were from Lincoln, Nebraska. Their names were Donald E. Fitzmaurice and Richard O. Joyce.

These men put their lives on the line for the sake of the American people and they boosted American morale. This raid demonstrated that the American will would not be deterred for any enemy.

## **Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra**

Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra began working with Family Literacy to provide a cultural literacy component in 2012. Family Literacy, an English Language Learning program for parents and children through Lincoln Public Schools, serves parents and children in the immigrant and refugee community. Participants attend LSO Family Concerts free of charge, along with all family members living in the same household (approximately 700 people per concert). In addition, free transportation is provided. Prior to the performance, an LSO staff member visits all twelve Family Literacy sites with translators to prepare them for their concert experience. Attendees receive information on concert etiquette, relevant classical music history, the different instruments used in the performance, and a description of the story line.

Through this partnership with Family Literacy, members of the immigrant and refugee community that are otherwise unable to attend cultural performances will enjoy live symphonic music geared towards the whole family. Many families are unable to attend such a performance because of perceived cultural barriers and the 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 English Language Learner program. The unique element of cultural literacy helps Family Literacy participants feel more comfortable in American society while enjoying an afternoon of music and fun with their family.

## **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**

The Mediation Center's Victim/Youth Conference program, in partnership with the Lincoln Public Schools' Project Restore, serves students who have committed an offense in the school. It involves a face-to-face meeting between the youth who offended and his/her victim, mediated by a trained facilitator. This meeting allows each youth to hear the other's perspective and work together toward a shared agreement on how to make things right. Youth who participate in a conference have done something that, typically, would land them in front of a judge. This process keeps them out of the judicial system and exposes them to peaceful conflict resolution.

Seven high school girls, divided into two camps, got into a physical altercation over the ownership of an item. The facilitator met with each of them individually first to help them focus on the impact of what had happened. Then all seven, along with their parents, came together for the conference. The 2 youth who had been at the center of the fight had taken this seriously and recognized what a negative impact their aggressive actions had had on themselves and their families. To the facilitator's delight, these 2 girls took it upon themselves to lead a restorative conversation with the others during the conference, discussing and agreeing on actions they could take to never let this happen again. Success!

### **Mental Health Association of Nebraska**

My name is Teresa. I was incarcerated from 2010 to 2019 after being convicted of accessory to murder of my husband. Over the course of a 21-year abusive relationship, my husband took everything from me. I was no longer the woman I once was. I thought that by staying by his side that things would change and get better, but they didn't.

I moved to the work release center in 2017, where I learned about Honu. I was excited to be accepted into the program when I released to Parole in 2019. I spent 6 months at Honu where I was able to get support from peers 24/7. I tried to work two jobs, but my anxiety convinced me that I couldn't. Prior to being incarcerated, I held two jobs for over 8 years each. I felt defeated.

Upon leaving Honu I decided to apply to be a volunteer. To my surprise, I was offered a full-time position. I finally feel like I have found my purpose in life. Prison taught me who I really am and what I wanted to do with my life, but Honu Home has challenged me to become a confident, stronger, more passionate person. Here, I feel capable of anything. Here, I have found my best self.

### **MENTOR Nebraska**

For more than seven years, MENTOR Nebraska has collected mentoring data across the community. Based on the information gathered, it was determined at-risk audiences, including juvenile justice and foster care youth, were not being reached in high enough numbers with formal mentoring services. It was also clear from the data that more could be done to serve youth living in some of the higher poverty areas of our community. In partnership with member

programs, MENTOR Nebraska launched Youth Initiated Mentoring to reach at risk youth. The program helps youth identify a positive adult in their network to become their formal mentor.

Linda Rozo was asked by a youth she coached in basketball to be a mentor. "Mentoring has shown me the beauty of being someone else's cheerleader. I used to be so consumed with my personal, emotional, spiritual growth that I didn't pour into others around me. I guarded my time, energy, and resources for fear of depleting myself. And while I believe self-care and personal growth is incredibly important, I strongly believe that thinking outside of yourself is just as important. So, I went from being my own cheerleader in life, to finding great joy and significance in being hers." - Linda Rozo, Youth Initiated Mentor.

### **Merryman Performing Arts Center**

On Tuesday, February 12 the Merryman Performing Arts Center (MPAC) in Kearney, presented Illusion Theater of Minneapolis theatrical adaptation of Willa Cather's My Antonia. Despite a last minute rescheduling due to incimate weather, MPAC was still able to host 12 schools; Riverside High School in Cedar Rapids, Elwood Lexington, Arnold, Arapahoe, Loup City, well as nearly 100 students from Kearney Catholic Nearly 450 students attended the matinee performance. University of Nebraska Students also attended the public performance on Monday, Feb 11.

The Merryman provided post-performance surveys to students and teachers. These surveys asked for general impressions as well as specific comparisons to the novel. The students observed several different themes from the play from "the struggles that faced Nebraskans back in the day" to more personal resonances like "stay close to your old friends". Many of the students who had read the novel enjoyed the theatrical adaptation ("It was just like reading the book!") while other students were more critical of the liberties taken to condense Cather's story ("There was so much left out it didn't complete their characters").

Teachers commented: "So many rural kids don't get the benefit of a professional, live performance so I like to take them as much as possible!" Another teacher mentioned the benefits of attending live theater: "The [Illusion Theater study guide] was wonderful and provided a great resource for teachers/students. The students are so into technology, so a performance such as this pulls them into the world as it was". A few others commented specifically on how the play fit into their curricula. Several teachers used the play as an introduction the novel they were about to read and others asked students to compare the play to the novel.

### **MilkWorks**

MilkWorks strives to support families, no matter where they are in their feeding journey:

"I loved my experience at Milkworks and without it there is no way I would have been able to breastfeed my baby. They helped me pick out a breast pump when I was pregnant, helped me figure out our breastfeeding issues in 3 separate lactation consultations, and introduced me to some of my best friends through their mom talk support group. My daughter had some issues at birth and was losing weight. My Lactation Consultant worked with me and my family to help find a plan that would fit for our family. I would not have been able to breastfeed my daughter for 18 months if not for their help and dedication. I am beyond grateful for MilkWorks and the wonderful women that work there! - Jenny, Omaha Nebraska

## **Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)**

“Casey, my eldest, was what you’d call a ‘good kid’—on the honor roll, in marching band and choir; he wrestled and played football. Casey’s father had a drinking problem and Casey knew it contributed to our divorce. That gave me a false sense of security. I believed he had seen the problems alcohol could cause and was mature enough to handle drinking, but I was wrong. Casey was 18 the night he and his friends stopped at a drive-up liquor establishment that didn’t card underage buyers. They bought rum and decided it would be fun to see how much just one person could chug. That person was Casey. Around noon the next day, a police officer came to my door to tell me Casey was dead. It took 2 days for the coroner to confirm that Casey’s blood alcohol content was .41— more than five times the drunk driving limit for an adult. If I had it all to do over again? I would have made my message very clear. When I found that bottle of rum Casey had hidden in my garage, I would not have thrown it away and said nothing like I did. I would have taken it out and set it on my kitchen counter. Then we would have discussed why I did not want him drinking. I would have spoken to him about alcohol more often.” MADD’s Power of Parents program was created after working with mothers like Casey’s mom, to empower them to have the conversation early and often.

## **Museum of Nebraska Art**

MONA’s docents guide thousands of students annually through the galleries and relate many heartwarming stories about engagement with students. This is one such story.

The boy’s teacher advised MONA’s staff that the boy would be bringing his iPad for the docent tour as he may need to take a break from the group to find a space of his own. Being autistic and legally blind, the boy was known to thrash his arms and body around in response to situations.

Before each class tour, a docent provides a brief demonstration of “The Museum Walk” - - putting your arms behind your back and clasping your hands together. Such was the case with the boy’s class of 4th graders and the paraprofessional helped show him “The Walk.” As the docent showed the students large Whooping and Sandhill Crane photographs by “National Geographic” photographer Joel Sartore, the boy became more and more attentive. He asked if he could take a close-up look, as he really couldn’t see them from a few feet back. The paraprofessional was hesitant, knowing the propensity of the boy to unpredictably thrash around. She did not want him to accidentally damage the artwork.

The docent and paraprofessional reminded him of “The Museum Walk” as he approached a photograph. He perfectly executed it and thoroughly enjoyed the view. Thus is the power of art to captivate and transcend. What a great day at MONA!

Thank you, Mr. MONA, for helping the Museum bring joy to many!

## **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**

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 4-H Foundation**

Coming soon.

### **Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers**

Children and families impacted by child abuse deserve compassionate and high quality services, no matter what language they speak. With a growing number of children and families who speak other languages all across Nebraska, child advocacy centers and their partners have been challenged to ensure that a language barrier is not an obstacle to safety, healing, and justice for children and families.

This year, the Nebraska Alliance provided technology in three locations across the state to ensure child advocacy centers could access translators for over 250 languages, as well as services for those who are deaf or hard of hearing with the push of a button.

Access to MARTTI carts has already made a difference. A child and family impacted by possible abduction and sexual assault spoke Quiche. Instead of a complicated search for a translator or communicating in a second language, a high quality investigation occurred immediately occurred. The family was also able to receive needed services and fully understand their options.

Support for the Nebraska Alliance helps bring vital resources to responders to child abuse, and most importantly the children and families themselves. With your help, we can ensure that every child in Nebraska impacted by abuse can get what they need to find safety, healing, and justice.

### **Nebraska Appleseed**

Maria had been sick and working for years, often working two jobs to cover her medical expenses. Then, a medical emergency wrecked her life. She was uninsured and fell into the Medicaid coverage gap—earning too little to qualify for insurance, but unable to access Medicaid. The vital health care and medication she needed was out of reach.

Yet in the midst of her own struggle, she found drive and purpose in the fight for Medicaid expansion. She fought alongside Appleseed to make it a reality for herself and the 90,000 Nebraskans without healthcare.

With her warmth and spirited knowledge of the issue, she bravely shared her story and let friends, neighbors, and people all across Nebraska know that they are not alone. She worked with Appleseed organizers to organize monthly meetings of committed health care advocates to channel their voices directly to those in power. She worked with Appleseed policy specialists to bring other people without health coverage to legislative hearings, lawmaker's offices, and rallies.

Maria spent time in and out of the hospital, yet her tireless advocacy never stopped. She participated in a lobby day visit with Appleseed to bring her story to lawmakers in Washington, DC. And Maria was a key advocate in ensuring Medicaid expansion passed on the November 2018 ballot, showing Nebraskans fighting for justice are never alone.

### **Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children**

Amanda Nicholas graduated at the end of the Summer 2019 term with her Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Metropolitan Community College in Omaha. Amanda was first awarded a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship in the Fall 2017 term. She completed 43.5 credits and graduated with honors as a married parent while working full time as an assistant director in a child care program in Omaha.

Amanda says, "I will be forever grateful for the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship. I don't think I would have gone back to school and completed my Associates in Applied Science in Early Childhood Education if I didn't get the financial support from T.E.A.C.H. and my employer. I am now considering my future and thinking about applying again so that I can complete my bachelor's through UNK. Thank you again to Julie Warford, my T.E.A.C.H. counselor, and to those who sponsor this amazing endeavor."

## **Nebraska CASA Association**

Patty has been a CASA volunteer for 4 years, and she has already made such an impact on her very first case. When she first met her CASA child, Jaden, she was cowering in the corner during a pre-hearing conference. Patty immediately connected with her and began building that relationship of trust. During the 2 years that this case was initially active, Patty worked closely with Jaden and we witnessed this girl grow into a more outgoing and confident pre-teen. She was reunited with her mother and her case was closed, but Patty remained a constant in their lives and an informal support. When mom relapsed a year later, and Jaden witnessed her using, it was Patty that she called. At this time, Jaden and her mom are reunited. Patty still sees Jaden weekly, and she is listed on their safety plan. Patty has been an integral part of this family's reunification and success, and everyone on the team recognizes the importance of the life-long friendship she has established with them.

## **Nebraska Children and Families Foundation**

Barb, a single mom, was being evicted. She was overwhelmed and didn't know where to turn. She was down on her luck but was, thankfully, referred to a local Community Response Navigator, a strategy of Nebraska Children's prevention efforts.

Community Response (CR) connects families to local supports and provides preventative funding for services so that families are strengthened and can avoid unnecessary involvement in governmental systems such as child welfare.

The CR navigator worked with Barb to create meaningful change in her life. They collaborated to establish a budget and sustainability plan. The CR team helped Barb contact her landlord, who granted her a flexible payment plan for her past due rent. Now, Barb and her children could stay in the home they loved. Soon, Barb was saving money and keeping up with her commitments. She felt empowered by her new set of strengths and learned lasting skills.

If Nebraska Children's Community Response prevention strategy had not been implemented, Barb would have been homeless, and her child could have been removed. This new way of thinking saved heartache for Barb's family, and money for the child welfare system.

## **Nebraska Children's Home Society**

Your support is changing lives like Diana's.

Diana and her brother were subjected to physical and emotional abuse from their mother and other adults in their house. It was anything but safe and loving. By the age of 16, she ran away and entered foster care. Soon after she lost her brother at the hands of her mother's abuse.

Diana was in a deep depression and suffered from post-traumatic stress syndrome and in successive years became a mother to children that entered the foster care system with NCHS foster parents.

With the help of mental health counselors, in-home specialists, foster care mentors and parenting classes, Diana became the parent she never had. Although the odds were stacked against her, Diana succeeded in bringing her children back in her care. Today, she has had a constant support network from her NCHS "family" because of your generosity.

The specialists who supported Diana through her journey have the following things to say about her.

- “Diana is great mom who loves her children!”
- “She understands how she was parented and how she can be the best parent possible.”
- “She’s become a leader in NCHS’ support groups by sharing her story with others and guiding them through their challenges.”

Diana’s life has transformed. She has a full-time job, a home and a positive attitude. She is thriving! Her children are thriving!

Your financial gifts go directly toward helping a mother, a father and a child when they need it most. Gifts of all sizes will help improve the lives of families right here in Nebraska.

### **Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence**

The Nebraska Coalition coordinates the Mediums for Change Youth Expression Project to support the voices of youth from the ages of 13 to 18 years old in Nebraska. We engage young people to create a brave space for them to share their lived experiences through art, digital media, poetry, and prose. Following five themes, young folks express themselves and illustrate transformative social change. Their entries are published in a keepsake book. This project acts as a spring board that allows us to work directly with young people to find avenues where they can identify issues of concern to themselves and their communities, analyze the root cause of those problems, envision the world that they want to live in, identify pathways toward that vision, conduct education and outreach to build support for their cause, and act to influence policy and system change for transformative culture shifts. Through this project, youth increase their confidence in addressing the identified issues, and ultimately become more engaged in youth activism. The Nebraska Coalition believes that the youth are the future of our anti-violence movement, and will create positive change in our world.

### **Nebraska Recycling Council**

Our children are not thinking about micro-plastics in our drinking water, hazardous waste management, or the trillions of pounds of trash and valuable resources filling up our landfills. We do that for them. Nebraska Recycling Council works towards a future in which all materials and resources are reserved for the highest and best use and landfill disposal is the last resort. In 2018, we educated 15,213 people through webinars, presentations, meetings and outreach. We collected 13,260 pounds of recyclables at our first Lincoln Earth Day CHaRM event (hard to recycle materials), and had 8,676 visitors to our online recycling guide (where to recycle anything). We support the future generations.

### **Nebraska Sports Council**

Many children have grown up mostly in the Lincoln/Omaha areas and are able to participate in our events such as the Pumpkin Run and Cornhusker State Games thanks to the adopt an athlete program. This program is designed to allow children who would not be able to afford the entry fee a way to participate in these programs alongside their friends and classmates free of charge. Many students have grown into great individuals and student athletes from having the opportunity to attend our events even through financial difficulties.

## **Nebraska Statewide Arboretum**

Statewide, Trees for Nebraska Towns mini-grants (Free Trees for Fall Planting) has continued to be an extremely effective planting and outreach efforts, just completing its sixth year. Through this program, up to 10 trees are awarded for community projects in exchange for an outreach effort such as educational workshops and volunteer plantings. The small project size and simple expectations make it easier for small and/or inexperienced groups to take on a project, reaching a new and wider audience to encourage tree-planting. This fall's effort reached 46 communities, getting over 500 trees planted in 64 projects all across the state.

## **Nebraska Trails Foundation**

The manager of a locally owned running shoe store teaches running classes for people of all ability levels. She has taught these classes for several years, using Lincoln's trails to get people moving for a healthier lifestyle. She hosts special events on the trails with the Lincoln Track Club, teaches an annual marathon training class, and coaches Beginner's Luck class tailored for people wanting to start or get back into running. Some of these people in the class are overweight and have never run before. Staying active by running/walking on the trails, they lose weight, stay motivated and many go on to run half or full marathons. They wouldn't be able to achieve this without utilizing the trails we have!

Because of the coronavirus outbreak with people mostly confined to their homes, the trails have found new importance. With fitness centers, gymnasiums and malls closed, people have taken to the trails for relaxation, exercise and stress relief. Children/parents are riding bicycles, mothers are pushing strollers, people walking dogs, runners, walkers and cyclists are using the trails. Trails help people maintain a healthy lifestyle during a time of separation from others!

Nebraska Trails Foundation (NTF) is an important partner in the acquisition, development and promotion of the multi-use recreational trails across Nebraska. NTF participates in the purchase and acquisition of abandoned railway lines 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.

## **NET Foundation for Radio**

Classical Music Filled Time in the Tractor (Sept 2019 INSIDE NET) As a farmer, Bob Chilcoat spent many hours on a tractor while working his land near Stanton, Neb. He usually had the radio in his cab tuned to NET. "Nebraska Public Radio was about the only option that didn't turn your mind to cheese after a few hours of listening," Bob explained.

He enjoyed the classical music, especially Friday afternoon's Classics by Request, as well as other programs that engaged his brain. It wasn't too long before Bob realized others were supporting something he was enjoying. "It only makes sense. If something is important, it needs everyone's help to keep it alive."

So, Bob and his wife Chris became members of NET. Chris listens to NET in the car and is a big fan of the news-based radio quiz show Wait Wait...Don't Tell Me! If she misses an episode, she'll download the podcast.

## **NET Foundation for Television**

Long-Time Viewers Become Long-Time Donors.

Both Allan and LaDonna McClure are originally from the Arnold, Neb. area, but called West Point home for 33 years before retiring to spend time at the lake and in Arizona..

“We started watching NET in West Point in the 1970s,” said LaDonna. “I watched Sesame Street every day from noon to one with our son.” Allan watched ag news programs and PBS NewsHour, “It was more in depth than the other national media,” he said. “I still watch every evening and also Washington Week on Friday nights. They are good programs as far as getting an unbiased approach to the news.”

The couple also enjoys high school sports and Husker volleyball, as well as Doc Martin, Downton Abbey and music programs – especially the recent Ken Burns’ series about country music. In addition to being long-time viewers, the McClures are long-time donors. “It’s just a good place for our money to go. If people don’t support it, we won’t have it,” said Allan.

“The station reaches into the rural areas of Nebraska and that’s good. Everybody gets public TV,” said LaDonna.

## **Nonprofit Association of the Midlands**

We help nonprofits help their communities. There are thousands of nonprofits in our area – each trying to make a difference on their own. We bring them together so that each member can benefit from our collective strength.

Nonprofit Association of the Midlands (NAM) is the only membership organization in the state dedicated exclusively to working with nonprofits in the Midlands. By connecting organizations with information, education, advocacy and collaboration, we help members focus their energy on the people and communities they serve.

## **Omaha Zoo Foundation**

Conservation of the world's most precious species and habitats is at the core of the mission of Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium. From rescuing elephants from drought-stricken Swaziland to creating protocol for increasing the population of Amur Tigers, Omaha's Zoo strives to inspire learners of all ages.

Building first class exhibits to bring visitors closer to the animals in the Zoo's care, is one of the first steps in mission fulfillment and something that was at the forefront of rescuing the elephants. Preparing for their arrival included supporters of every kind. From every single donor who helped build the largest indoor herd room in North America, to the vet team who cared for them during transport, the multiplying effect of Omaha Zoo fans safely delivered them to their new home where they are thriving. Additionally, the genetic diversity offered by these elephants allows breeding efforts that will help sustain this species for generations to come.

## **Open Door Mission**

Something had to change. Jean realized her addictions to alcohol and drugs had taken over her whole life. She had tried to quit on her own but somehow found herself down the same path again. At the threat of losing her family, Jean was ready to do whatever it took to "beat" her addictions. A friend recommended that Jean go to Open Door Mission. Jean was "a little reluctant to go to a homeless shelter" but knew she had to have help; so she agreed "to give it a shot."

In Open Door Mission's New Life Recovery Program, Jean learned a lot about herself and how to get her life back together, which included establishing a relationship with God. Jean said, "At Open Door Mission, I was able to remember that my life matters and that I am loved by God, my family and my friends. My future is bright- God has a big plan for me."

Today, Jean is well on her way; she graduated from Open Door Mission's program and completed CNA training. She is working full time and has recently been accepted into a local college to study to become a licensed nurse. Jean said, "It wasn't easy but I am so grateful for Open Door Mission. The staff believed in me and every day encouraged me to keep going towards my goals and my future. I really changed- I got my life back."

Thank you for helping Jean and many other men and women achieve sobriety and job readiness through Open Door Mission every year.

## **OutNebraska**

When Nebraska's LGBTQ+ community needs to be heard in government and with community leaders, OutNebraska can provide 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, OutNebraska has brought the stories of LGBTQ people to these and many more important conversations. Through our work, some of Nebraska'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 OutNebraska said, "I moved from Lincoln and never thought I could consider moving back. Thanks to you, I might be able to call Nebraska home again one day."

## **Partnership for a Healthy Lincoln**

Now, more than ever, we are committed to improving the health of everyone in our community and giving children the best start in life. Partnership for a Healthy Lincoln works to help everyone in our community live longer, healthier lives. Especially during trying times, it's important to provide resources and programming that supports family, child, and senior health, helping to build up immune systems with good nutrition and safe physical activity.

We initiate and/or support projects that:

- (1) improve infant and maternal health and nutrition including our community-wide breastfeeding support campaign, (2) improve the health of school children and their families through nutrition education and physical fitness programs, (3) improve neighborhood health, safety, and vitality through our free annual outreach event, Streets Alive! and the corresponding Community Development Project, (4) create better patient outcomes by increasing cancer screening and vaccination rates, improving diabetes management, and promoting proactive patient outreach and preventative care, and (5) improve nutrition by decreasing consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages through a public education media campaign, "Rethink Your Drink".

Partnering with nonprofits across the community, we also work to improve health equity through coordinated health improvement projects that address significant disparities in health outcomes within Lincoln's most at-risk neighborhoods, aligning healthcare providers and community outreach efforts to connect patients with health resources.

### **Planned Parenthood**

Karla was fed a lot of misinformation about sex and her body when she was a teenager. The sex education in her school was woefully inadequate—and delivered through the narrow lens of abstinence-only programming. Had it not been for her sister bringing her to Planned Parenthood when she was 18, Karla might never have received the comprehensive sex education she had been denied and the birth control she needed but couldn't afford.

The next Karla is out there, in your community, right now. Every day, people like Karla walk into Planned Parenthood health centers needing not just compassionate care, but comprehensive sex education. You are the reason we can provide this, for every person, every time, no matter what.

You can protect the next Karla from politicians who are trying to block people from receiving affordable birth control, cancer screenings, STI testing, and other essential health care at Planned Parenthood. You can make sure the next Karla gets the care and education she deserves.

### **Rabble Mill (The Bay, Hear Nebraska, Skate for Change)**

The mother of one of our passholders, Dominick (name changed), came to our skatepark asking to meet our Skatepark Director, Matthew, so she could "put a face to the name." Upon meeting Matthew, she let him know how much The Bay has impacted Dominick. She also mentioned his birthday was coming up, and Matthew offered to throw him a birthday party after a Saturday Skate School and make it extra special for him, getting his name up on the marquee of the new venue and getting him a new deck. While planning the party, Dominick's mother said, "he's always gotten into trouble at school for not listening, or being disrespectful, and he was doing the same at home. The Bay has completely turned him around. It's changed his way of life, his thinking, and behavior."

There are so many other kids like Dominick, who find a home at The Bay, and it helps them in every other area of their life.

### **Ronald McDonald House Charities in Omaha**

Seven-year-old Michael and his family most recently visited our House from Lincoln, Nebraska, but their journey has been far longer than just 45 miles. They've experienced countless highs and lows as they've searched for answers to his many diagnoses, all so Michael can have something resembling a normal childhood. As his mother Rolanda explains, things are often at their most normal when they're in our House: "You feel like you're with your own family."

During their last visit to Omaha, Michael's surgery had a few complications that required the family to stay in Omaha a bit longer than expected. Those extra days meant they got to be a part of a Christmas brunch at the House, complete with a meal prepared by RMHC's board of

directors, presents from Adopt-a-Family donors, and of course, an appearance from Santa Claus.

Michael was ecstatic. He met Santa and opened presents, and while that may not seem that out of the ordinary, that's exactly the point. He was able to have a normal childhood experience – one he too often hadn't been able to enjoy – right here in the House.

And his mother could not have been more thrilled to see it.

The joy in Rolanda's voice when discussing that morning was palpable. "He was so, so happy! To see him getting a chance to just be a boy was such a blessing. I love it."

### **Seniors Foundation**

Aging Partners heard from a friend about Bev, a senior citizen in Lincoln, who was in need of help. She had no phone, internet or transportation. One of our professional caseworkers visited with Bev who was hesitant to share information. After gaining the trust of the woman, we discovered that 57% of her Social Security is going to pay for housing. Her refrigerator doesn't work, there was no food in the home and she didn't know where to turn for help. Aging Partners is working with her to access affordable housing, food assistance, engagement in social events and access to additional benefits that she was unaware of. This is just one example of how Aging Partners impacts the lives of many of Lincoln's Senior Citizens in poverty every day. Seniors Foundation supports Aging Partners.

### **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. DBA KZUM**

In 2019, KZUM launched the Podcast Partners program. This program puts the focus on empowering the community to have supportive discussions around health, parenting, the environment and entertainment, all with a local focus and in two different languages. With content produced by individuals and organizations, this content is uniquely Lincoln. Through training, KZUM hands over the power in knowledge of content and production to organizations and individuals who can represent their community's values and needs. This has reaffirmed KZUM's vision of engaging with the community in a profound, inclusive and supportive way.

### **Tabitha**

In 2019, Tabitha Meals on Wheels was privileged to serve more than 2,900 individuals—bringing them not only a hot, nutritious meal, but a much-needed safety check. This was certainly the case for Patricia, an elderly woman at risk for falls. This past year a Tabitha Meals

on Wheels volunteer attempted to deliver a meal to Patricia. When she did not answer the door, the volunteer knew something was wrong. The volunteer alerted the Meals on Wheels Coordinator who was able to reach Patricia's daughter. When she went to check on her mother, she discovered that Patricia had fallen and was lying on the floor unable to get up. The quick actions of Tabitha's volunteer averted a situation that could have turned deadly.

### **University of Nebraska Foundation**

Reggie is a student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha majoring in social work, driven by a calling to help others avoid the difficulties he has experienced.

Reggie grew up in Arkansas in a single-parent home with his three siblings. "I was academically illiterate. I was starting to be influenced by surroundings. They were not positive influences."

Reggie came to Omaha in 2007 to live with his father. However, life put more roadblocks in his way. "I was at risk of being homeless in 2010 after graduating from high school. My father was incarcerated for a short period of time and I was living at his residence. I had to leave because I just couldn't afford it."

Reggie eventually graduated from Metropolitan Community College in 2015 and realized he was destined to serve.

Reggie didn't know how he was going to pay for classes, but he was determined to attend UNO, which has one of the top social work programs in the nation. Thanks to donors, UNO was able to offer Reggie a scholarship to cover much of his tuition through his expected graduation in 2021. "I am so grateful for the opportunity to receive this scholarship. They saw the potential in me and saw I'm someone worth funding, because I'm determined to make a difference in people's lives for the better."

### **Women's Fund**

Every time a woman has the opportunity to become a leader, to earn enough money to support her family or to escape a violent relationship, our community becomes a little stronger and more vibrant. And we come a little closer to realizing our vision of a community where every woman and girl has the opportunity to reach her full potential.