



# Hope Inside



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## Together, our role is greater than ever before

*As we face all of the challenges and opportunities brought to us in 2020, we are more thankful than ever to have you by our side.*

Dear Friend,

Warm greetings to you. I hope that you and yours are staying healthy, safe, and hopeful as we face the challenges and opportunities brought to us in 2020.

In writing to you today, I first just want to thank you for your steadfast support. These past several months have brought forth challenges unlike any we've seen. But, at the same time, **I am hopeful for all of the opportunities that lie ahead. And that is because of you.** Each time we have communicated with you since the pandemic began, we have shared that the need for our services has been and will be greater than ever. Indeed, it is.

For instance, at the Gathering Place, we estimate we are serving nearly double the number of meals to double the people. In April and May alone, you helped provide 6,748 meals to your neighbors facing hunger in Lincoln. You've provided participants in Opportunity Passport™ with resources to meet their basic needs during a time of financial hardship. You've supported Emergency Services' provision of rent

and utilities to those who are struggling, and helped ensure families in Community Action Head Start continue to have their basic and educational needs met.

And we've asked you, as our partner and friend, to join us in responding—to give in a way you've never given before. You did. Give to Lincoln Day is just one example. Including \$10,000 in match support from Henning Family Fund this year, and challenge match funding from Lincoln Community Foundation and partners, Community Action raised over \$83,000. These funds will go to work in our community immediately—to prepare and serve nutritious meals at the Gathering Place, to provide everything those in our Head Start programs need to succeed, to ensure those in our community stay safely and stably housed, and more. From the bottom of my heart, and on behalf of our employees, volunteers, and participants, I thank you.

**Your generosity allows us to address the causes and conditions of poverty.**

In recent weeks, following the murder of George Floyd, we've been reminded in the worst possible way of one of poverty's ugliest causes: systemic racism. Our roots as a Community Action agency are within the civil rights movement. Just as our movement declared in the mid-sixties, we continue to

strongly voice our core belief in human unity, non-violence, and dignity and respect for all. Community Action knows that Black lives matter. We stand in support of and solidarity with our Black community—employees, participants, volunteers, donors, partners, and neighbors both near and far. We are dedicated to addressing and eliminating all causes and conditions of poverty, which include structural and systemic racial, gender, and other inequities.

**Through this dedication comes not only examination and conversation, but also action.** Our staff-led Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Committee and Leadership Team have convened on multiple occasions over the past several weeks to discuss this action. In this process, we have been and will continue to seek input internally and externally to develop a plan promoting greater opportunity, equality, and justice for all. I certainly invite you to share your input, too.

I look forward to a time in the future that we can connect in-person. Thank you for your partnership, your friendship, and your belief in our mission. Each of us can do a little. And this means that together, we can make a great difference.

Sincerely,

Vi See

# Community Action and CSBG CARES Act funding

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) provides \$1 billion in additional funding to the CSBG program—a funder of Community Action agencies. Given our status as a Community Action agency, we had the opportunity to apply for a portion of this funding. As part of that process, we conducted a community needs assessment specific to COVID-19 within our services area and developed a plan to respond.

We wanted you to be among the first to know that Community Action will receive an estimated \$899,203 to be

used through September 30, 2022. Following are just some of the ways we plan to utilize funds:

- Build capacity within our Financial Coaching program, including adding options for virtual classes to make skill building and case management more accessible.
- Expand our Emergency Services program to address increased need for assistance with rent, utility (including water), and deposit payments.
- Increase availability of basic care items such as diapers, formula, and personal and

household care items to all participants of Community Action programs.

- Expand the Healthy Food Access Program to all Community Action programs through multiple levels of intervention.

Although these funds will be critical in responding to unprecedented need, your continued support will be more important than ever, too. In the road ahead, we have great

opportunity to work together to support neighbors who are struggling – many for the first time in their lives. We can and will recover. But we can only get there together. Thank you now, and always, for your commitment to Community Action.

*Expanding Emergency Services will allow us to assist individuals and families experiencing or at-risk of experiencing homelessness.*



*Julia says, "I know that without Community Action and Opportunity Passport™, I wouldn't be where I am today. Neither would my children."*

## "I want everyone I know to have opportunities like this."

*Through participation in Opportunity Passport™, Julia is using her skills to encourage others.*

Julia's life has changed a great deal since she first enrolled in Opportunity Passport™ as a teenager. Over the past five years, she's: Worked to support herself while attending school. Purchased a reliable vehicle. Gotten married. Had a child. Moved into an apartment with her family. Taken classes to build her financial knowledge and skills. Improved her credit. In general, she's seized every opportunity to build a stronger financial future. And more recently, both she and her young son recovered from complications due to COVID-19.

"It's been a really scary time," she says of the experience, which coincided with her family's move and her current pregnancy. "I can't deny that. But thanks

to what I learned through Opportunity Passport™, I knew I had financial stability. I've worked hard for that. And when all of this happened, it meant we had some real peace of mind."

Julia and her son have both made a full recovery. Their family of three is settled into their new home, and are eagerly awaiting the birth of their newest member. And Julia hasn't stopped reaching for new goals.

As for what those new goals have been lately, Julia says, "I'm trying to make sure everyone I know is aware of this program and how to participate. I've told my siblings about the program, and my foster siblings, as well. I know that without Community Action and Opportunity Passport™, I wouldn't be where I am today. Neither would my children."

Your support of Community Action gives people like Julia the opportunity to build strong foundations for fantastic futures. Thank you.

# It takes a team

*Thank you for ensuring children like Charlie stay on the path to success.*

Early in the morning, two year-old Charlie watched his mother prepare breakfast. As she cut into a piece of fresh fruit, he grinned and said, "Mmm. Delicious!"

Sarah, Charlie's mother, was overjoyed. Charlie was mimicking—a crucial piece

*You have provided essential support and supplies like diapers, formula, and educational materials to Head Start families.*

of his language development. The past few weeks had been marked by transition. Transition to social distancing protocols, and to home learning. Sarah had been transitioning also, to more work in her essential role as a healthcare professional—necessary to support Charlie his siblings, and the community. And with all of this transition, Charlie had been happy, but quieter than usual.

"I didn't have anyone else to talk to at home," said Sarah of the time immediately following social distancing protocols. "But Head Start—they're our rock."

During regular check-ins and additional calls, Sarah shared specific concerns about both Charlie's needs and the needs of the whole family. "I told them Charlie had stopped speaking," she said.

And the Head Start team took action. In addition to delivering essential supplies like diapers and educational materials, staff worked to create fun activities which would address Charlie's



specific developmental needs. His Head Start teacher coordinated with additional community supports. Together, they met virtually with Sarah to discuss at-home activities to improve Charlie's language skills even while navigating a new routine.

After a few weeks of patience, regular engagement, and consistent check-ins, Charlie found his voice again. As Sarah says, "He's back."

Because you support Community Action Head Start, Charlie and Sarah were able to access community during a time of isolation. Thank you for giving your neighbors the gifts of support and stability, and the tools for success.



## "I have been incredibly grateful."



*You've given Karen the chance to pursue her dream of obtaining her M.S. in Counseling—a degree she'll use to continue supporting others.*

*Your support gave Karen the opportunity to reach her educational goals. And she's only just begun.*

Last month, Karen obtained her M.S. in Counseling. She has a job offer with a firm in Lincoln, and she's looking forward to beginning a career which she describes as "a way to use my skills to contribute to society in a positive way." And your

support helped her get here.

As a participant of Community Action's adult matched savings program, Karen received savings match to help pay for graduate school.

"The experience was incredibly valuable to me," she said. "I used every penny I could to further my education, and it wouldn't have been possible without this program. The program itself taught me so much."

Attending classes and working directly with

Community Action staff, Karen learned valuable skills to use throughout her future. Skills not only about saving money, but also about spending it wisely.

"I have been incredibly grateful," she said. "And I know these are resources I can share with my future clients who may want to go to school, open a business, or purchase a house."

Karen described her experience as "a partnership." Thank you for working alongside her.

# Community Action Welcomes **Pam Benner** as Human Resources Director

On Wednesday, May 27, 2020, Community Action welcomed Pam Benner to its leadership team as our Human Resources Director. Pam brings much human resources experience through leadership roles in privately owned, publicly traded, and non-profit organizations.



Pam's previous human resources experience includes service at Martin Luther Homes Society and Mosaic. Most recently, she spent six years as Director of People Services at Nelnet. She holds the lifetime designation of Senior Professional in Human Resources from the Human Resources Certification Institute.

We are so excited to welcome Pam to our team! Along with her experience, she brings an embodiment of our guiding principles: passion, integrity, respect, performance, and community.

# Thank you for your support on **give** To Lincoln Day

You made Give to Lincoln Day our best yet! Your generosity resulted in over \$83,000 for Community Action, at a time when need is greater than ever. Thank you for joining the fight against poverty. We also thank Henning Family Fund for matching the first \$10,000 we raised \$1 for \$1, and to Lincoln Community Foundation and their partners for leading a successful effort and providing challenge match funding.



**YES,** I want to help empower people living in poverty to reach economic stability.

Please accept my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Your donation will go toward supporting:**

- Feeding those who are hungry at the Gathering Place
- Preparing children for success in school
- Preventing and eliminating homelessness
- Helping families learn financial skills/save for major asset purchases

I would like to designate my gift to the following program (e.g. The Gathering Place, Head Start, Basic needs supplies for families)

\_\_\_\_\_

I have included (or intend to include) Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties in my will or estate.

My name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Company \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_

May we publish your name?  Yes  No

If so, how would you like your name(s) to appear?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Payment Options:**

- Check payable to *Community Action*  
 Credit Card:  Visa  MasterCard  Discover

Account # \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date (mo/yr) \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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