

Hope Inside

Community Action news and updates

We partner with our community in fearless pursuit of anti-poverty solutions so we all have the opportunity to live well.



Meat, cheese, & community, please

A moment in Kathy's kitchen

Because of you, Taco Tuesday — and every other day — finds a community served.

The menu changes daily at the Gathering Place. Except for Tuesday.

"Everyone knows it's Taco Tuesday," said guest Jeffrey, fondly known as Papa Smurf. "It's a tradition."

"And I love it," says another guest, walking by with a tray made just for their food allergies.

Behind the scenes, Kathy makes it all happen.

"I'm prepping for tonight—21 pounds of meat, maybe 30," said Kathy as she cooks in the Gathering Place's tiny kitchen. **"We're never totally sure how many guests we'll serve. Could be 150, could be 175.** That's why we always have a backup plan," Kathy says with a smile. "Because we're never for sure."

As Operations Manager, Kathy knows the planning and prepping involved to feed the Gathering Place community. Her workspace is like trying to host a dinner party in a food truck. The equipment is powerful,

but the space is tight. Every step is a shuffle. Every task a juggle. "It takes practice," she laughs. "A lot of practice."

She visits the Food Bank every Wednesday, orders fresh fruits and vegetables, and coordinates meals with care and precision. The shelves that run throughout the back of the kitchen and into the basement are stacked with canned goods. And the massive white board in the dining room holds the week's menus, grocery lists, and inventory, keeping the team organized.

Papa Smurf is a regular at the Gathering Place. "You never know how many folks it will be," he said. "But I'm in no hurry. On Tuesday, I'll grab the burrito, wrap it up, hands free," he laughed.

Waiting in the side room, out of the heat, a group of guests start throwing out ideas for Kathy to consider: Why only Taco Tuesday? How about Meatloaf Monday? Spaghetti Saturday? Fish Friday? And bingo on Thursday!



The gentle ribbing is worth it to Kathy. "Just serving the community here is great - just to know everybody is getting fed."

You make it possible for Kathy and the Gathering Place team to serve hundreds of nutritious meals each week. You keep the shelves stocked, the kitchen humming, and the community nourished. **Thank you.**



Innovative Solutions:

Powered by community support, Community Action creates bold, locally driven, fearless initiatives that meet real needs.

Thank you for supporting such innovation.

Letter from the CEO

You said 'Yes' to community

Dear Friends,

Every month, more than 1,000 people in Lancaster and Saunders Counties turn to Community Action. Their ask? A chance to breathe easier.

And you said, "Yes."

Yes to the mother who now has safe housing.

Yes to the child who walked into a Head Start classroom ready to learn.

Yes to the senior couple who received a warm meal and a kind welcome.

Last year, you helped 20,000 neighbors move from crisis to stability. That's not just a number. That's 20,000 lives changed—because you showed up.

Your donations. Your volunteer hours. Your advocacy. **Your belief in the power of community.**

Last month, we shared that impact with Nebraska's federal delegation. Congressman Mike Flood visited the Gathering Place. Senator Fischer's staff toured one of our Head Start centers. We told them what you already know: this work is urgent, together we are transforming lives, and the need for our services continues to grow.

Inside this newsletter, you'll meet a few



neighbors who are building new futures because you believed in them. And **we will celebrate our 60 years of impact on September 21 with dancing and fun.** Please come join us!

The challenges ahead are real. The need for support will continue. But with you at our side, we're ready.

Thank you for giving hope.



Heather Loughman
Chief Executive Officer



Agency Leadership

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Starting STRONG

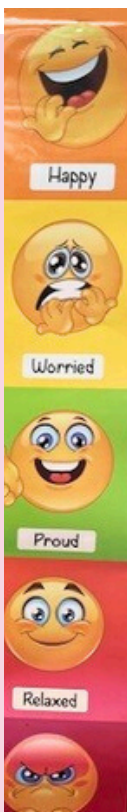
"Bee bee, bumble bee, can you say your name for me?"

Thanks to you, our Head Start classrooms are buzzing with energy and connection.

New and returning children are learning how to be at school — how to wash hands, share materials, take turns, ask for what they want, and even how to safely climb stairs.

Older kiddos are stepping up as helpers, welcoming new friends, translating, and building a true sense of community. One child comforted a nervous friend by saying, "I was sad when I started too."

That kindness? That's because of you. Thank you for making this warm and wonderful beginning possible.



*From infants
to preschool...*



One home at a time

Rapid Re-housing is at the core of our Supportive Housing Program. It's the process a Community Action advocate engages in with families to help them overcome barriers and quickly transition from homelessness to stable, permanent housing. **You make it possible** for families like Julia's to find their way back to solid ground.

Julia came to us unhoused, with three children and the weight of world on her shoulders. **"When you're worried about survival... that's what consumes your life,"** she shared.

One year into working with Community Action, now safe in an apartment, Julia is learning financial skills, using wraparound supports like the Community Action Store, and building her own path toward self-sufficiency.

"When you get help and survival's not your main worry, you can start flourishing."

Thank you for making this transformation possible. Your support is helping families move from crisis to confidence – one home at a time.

Hope within numbers

Stability requires access to food, housing, and education. You ensure Community Action creates a stable impact.

Gathering Place: number of meals served

2015: **27,212 meals** → 2025: **50,403 meals** (year to date)



Supportive Housing

Last year, **81% of participants** in homelessness prevention programs maintained safe, affordable housing for at least 180 days. **Zero participants** returned to homelessness.



Head Start

2025-26 school year currently enrolled children/ families: **416**

Staff Spotlight:

Alexis Cruz

Data Coordinator
Certified Community Action Professional



"Data is not just numbers. Data represents a person. Our data is a voice for some people."

Alexis' job is to keep our data as neutral and accurate as possible.

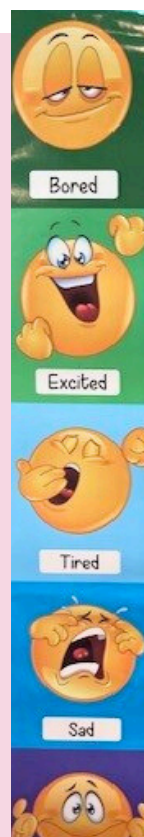
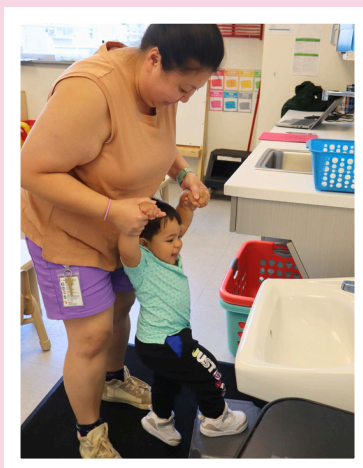
"I can compare 10 years ago to what we're doing today. Like, at the Gathering Place, I know we're doing some record numbers over there."

Alexis is guided by ethics, mission, and now, the deeper awareness she attained in earning her Certified Community Action Professional credential (CCAP.) This nationally recognized milestone highlights Alexis' leadership, vision, and commitment to creating **fearless, innovative solutions** that help break the cycle of poverty.

"It's in our name. **Partnership.** One of the core values is that poverty can be alleviated in partnership with your community."

Together, partnering data, vision, and you, we are stronger.

"And we're able to change lives due to that. We can endure."



...smiles all around!





Will you sponsor a Community Action Head Start classroom?



Head Start gives opportunity and inspires hope. Your gift will help create the quality learning environment young minds need to succeed.

Your \$1,500 classroom sponsorship:

- **stocks up** on essentials like diapers, wipes, and formula.
- **sparks imaginations** with books, toys, and art supplies.
- ensures teachers have what they need to **support learning**.

As a sponsor you'll receive:

- exclusive communications.
- volunteer/engagement opportunities.

Built upon 60 years of history, Community Action Head Start provides free early childhood education and support services to some of our youngest neighbors and their families. It cannot be done alone. Please join us.

Sponsor a classroom.
Build the future.

FEARLESS SINCE 1965 Community Action's BIRTHDAY BLOCK PARTY

Join Community Action for **FREE** family fun! Enjoy music, games, snacks, and more. Got spare change lying around? Bring it with you to support a Head Start community classroom!

Sunday, Sept. 21
1:00-3:00 p.m.

Bansal Family Home
for Head Start
1821 K St.

Note: Photos and video will be taken at this event, and media coverage may occur. By attending this event you acknowledge that Community Action may use these images for promotional or informational purposes.



Save the Date!

Gathering Place Match Campaign
Oct. 20 - Dec. 31, 2025

**Abendmusik Gathering Place
Fundraiser Concert**
Sunday, Dec. 14, 2025

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

☐ Please accept my gift of \$ _____

☐ I'd like to learn more about monthly giving.

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 _____

For more information contact:

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