“I needed connection, and the Gathering Place was there.”

Your support gave Ramona more than good meals – it connected her with resources to follow her dreams.

If you ask Ramona what she’s been up to lately, she’ll beam. “Well,” she says, “last week I went to the park and took samples from the stream. For homework. And that was so neat. I’m just so in love with my major.”

Having homework again is new to Ramona. Just last month, she enrolled in an environmental science degree program at UNL. She’s thrilled about it, and the opportunity to learn more about how the world is connected. Attending these classes is her dream.

If you ask Ramona what inspired her to go back to school, she won’t hesitate: Community Action’s Gathering Place.

When Ramona first went to the Gathering Place for meals this past February, her world seemed small and dark. She lives with PTSD and was going through a difficult time. She felt uncreative and isolated, distrustful of others, and suffered from distressing suicidal thoughts.

“The Gathering Place was like this beacon,” she said. “At that time in my life, it was the only place I could go and not feel scared or alone or looked down upon. People respected me there. I felt welcome. Eating at the Gathering Place feels like coming home to a big family dinner. There are people there who know me and care about me, and they’ve empowered me to gain confidence.”

You see, by giving to the Gathering Place, you give so much more than hot, nutritious meals. You give safety. You give encouragement when and where it is needed the most. And you give those who often feel hopeless and lost in the world a sense of community and hope. Ramona found connection.

“It’s felt like this intersection of everything for me,” said Ramona. “Because of the Gathering Place, I got connected to a hiking group, which inspired me to go back to school. Because of the Gathering Place, I learned about SNAP benefits I qualified for, which meant I could afford school. Because of the Gathering Place, I believe in myself and in other people. I feel safe, comfortable, and confident. And I can’t believe my life now is the life I get to live.”

Ramona says, “This picture is from the first day I went to UNL to talk about classes. I was so happy.”
Dear Friend,
No matter how long it’s been since you last went to school, doesn’t September always feel like the start of a new year? This is certainly true when your organization runs several early childhood education programs! In the past month, we’ve seen dozens of children new to Head Start walk through our doors. We’ve also seen familiar faces, and welcomed all of their families to walk with us on this journey toward economic stability. Throughout our other programs, too, fall is a time for change.
Each year, your support of our mission gives thousands of individuals and their families the opportunity to grow stronger and more empowered in unique, important ways. They receive the hot, healthy meals required to fuel the pursuit of their dreams. They earn savings matches to purchase reliable transportation, to drive to and from work. They become involved in their children’s education, strengthening a family bond and those children’s chances of school success. Each and every one of them works tirelessly in pursuit of their goals. Your generosity makes reaching those goals possible. Thank you.

So as fall approaches and leaves begin to change, I hope you take a moment to join me in celebrating the success of the remarkable individuals featured in this newsletter. Then, take a moment to think about your impact. It’s here, in every story shared. It’s also greater than these pages. It’s in the successful, stable lives these individuals now, thanks to you, have the opportunity to lead.

Thank you,
Vi See
Executive Director
Somewhere to turn

Your giving provided opportunities for Tiauna to succeed in high school, college, and beyond.

Tiauna has always been a hard worker. For the past few years, she’s lived and breathed work and school. A double major with multiple jobs, Tiauna understood the importance of managing both her time and her money—skills she was able to learn thanks to our Opportunity Passport™ classes she began taking in high school.

Throughout Tiauna’s Opportunity Passport™ journey, she learned how to budget, invest, and apply for reputable loans. Along the way, she worked hard to save her money. And thanks to the support of donors like you, we were able to match that savings. Tiauna was eventually able to purchase a vehicle using her match funds—and thanks to the education she received while in the program, she has the financial skills necessary to responsibly manage the decision.

“This summer, having my own vehicle meant I could work multiple jobs. I could have some independence. I’m so empowered by everything I learned.”

But Tiauna’s story doesn’t end there. Just a few weeks ago, Tiauna drove her vehicle to Omaha, where she officially moved to begin her new job. For the next several months, she’ll be paying it forward as a College Possible volunteer with AmeriCorps. She’ll be coaching low-income students in strategies to stay in school, get their degrees, and succeed, no matter what opportunities await them.

“Mi familia aprende juntos.”/ “My family learns together.”

Every parent wants the best for their child. Your support of Community Action Head Start gives parents the opportunity to realize this dream.

When asked to share something about herself, Ana said, in Spanish, “I am a mother of three sons: Oscar, Santiago, and David.” All three of her children are enrolled in our Head Start programs. Santiago and David both attend center classes, while Oscar has since moved on to succeed at a nearby elementary school.

But Ana isn’t only a proud

She now does the same for three-month-old David. In the morning, she rocks and holds him. As a classroom volunteer, she also assists with mealtimes and other activities.

“I love Head Start,” she said. “I love how they teach my children, and when we all read books together. When I volunteer, I can practice English with my children. I can see what they’re learning, and I know they’ll go to school with better English language skills.”

Your support of Community Action Head Start impacts both children and their families. It gives parents like Ana the opportunity to play an even greater role in their children’s lives—a critical influencer of school success.

Thank you for providing a space in which families can grow stronger together and create lifelong memories.

In closing a conversation with Ana, we asked what she appreciates most about Community Action Head Start. In English, she responded.

“We are learning. And everyone is kind.”
Thank you for caring for our community

Your generosity supplied over $5,600 worth of basic needs items to our community’s most vulnerable residents.

Soap. Laundry detergent. Diapers. You recognize these items for what they are: Necessities. And when we said there were people in our community going without, especially during the stressful back-to-school season, you stepped up and helped out. Thanks to you, and to Russ's Market and Super Saver, we were able to purchase thousands of items for those working hard through our programs who might otherwise go without. So whether you donated funds, supplies, or time to this cause, we can’t say it enough: Thank you for making a difference.

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)

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

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:
Heather Loughman, Communications and Development Director
(402) 875-9339  hloughman@communityactionatwork.org

From October 14th through December 31st of 2019, your gift to support our Gathering Place soup kitchen will once again be matched! Giving to this campaign provides a unique opportunity to see your dollars stretch even further to provide nourishment, comfort, and hope for those in our community who need it the most. Check your mail in October for more information about how you can give to this impactful campaign this holiday season!

Gathering Place Match Campaign launching in mid-October!

Thanks to our generous match sponsors, your gift to fight hunger in Lincoln will once again be matched!

2019 Gathering Place match sponsors, as of September

LEAD SPONSOR:
Acklie Charitable Foundation

PRESENTING SPONSOR:
Miriam Moeller Charitable Trust

PARTNERING SPONSORS:
Inspro
Union Bank and Trust

CONTRIBUTING SPONSOR:
Bukaty Companies

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