



Hope Inside



Board of Directors

President: Lisa Hale
 Vice President: Brodey Weber
 Treasurer: Lorene Bartos
 Secretary: Amy Jensen
 Members:
 Jim Baumann
 Grant Buckely
 Carl Eskridge
 Scott Larson
 Michelle Libal
 David Lux
 Christine Marvin
 Roy Rivera
 Marla R. Styles
 Ashley Ulmer
 Jaylen Vella

Management Team

Vi See, Executive Director
 Jeri Winkelmann, Chief Financial Officer
 Jill Bomberger, Early Head Start and Head Start Director
 Michelle Martinez, Community Services Director
 Heather Loughman, Communications and Development Director
 Pam Benner, Human Resources Director

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 } Teaching from the heart
- 2 } Letter from the Executive Director
- 2 } Thank you for keeping your neighbors warm
- 3 } We're lucky to know you
- 3 } Fostering a love of learning
- 4 } Stability for the long term

Teaching from the heart

Every day, Community Action Head Start teachers and parents work together to support children on the path to success.

The following was written by a Community Action Head Start teacher:

In every teacher's journey, there will be a child who comes along that changes the way they think and teach—a child who pushes them to be better. For me, Mason is that child. **Mason has autism, and when he joined our classroom he was mostly non-verbal.** At the beginning, communication was very difficult, and we needed to use a specialized app on the iPad to help him communicate his wants and needs throughout the day.

Bonding with Mason was easy, but learning to communicate with him was a little trickier. We would show Mason things and lead him to the table at meal or small group activity times and he would follow. Gradually, he began showing signs he was listening and knew exactly what we were talking about. Eventually, Mason began to sing familiar songs, say his ABCs, and learn his shapes, but he still had difficulty communicating his wants.



Your support of Community Action Head Start has helped Mason on his way to success in kindergarten and beyond.

So, we continued to work as a team and with his special education providers to support him in building his communication skills.

I vividly remember the first day Mason responded to me. I had taken him to the bathroom and when he was finished I asked him, "Are you ready to go back to the room?" and this time he responded with, "YES, YES!" I think I almost cried that day.

I was so excited to tell his mom. Mason's mom is nothing short of amazing. She takes Mason to speech therapy and outpatient therapy twice a week. She continues to advocate for his needs. As part of his individualized education plan, a provider works with us four days a week. **Mason's mom does an incredible job. We remind her of that as frequently as possible.**

Mason has grown so much since joining our classroom. He is showing us something new every day. And while we have supported him in building his communication skills, he has also helped us create a real sense of classroom community where everyone belongs.

Our friends in our classroom love Mason. They ask to play with him, give him toys they know he likes, and have become so mindful of the way he communicates. **He has changed our classroom community in the best way. I am so proud of his progress and can't wait to see that continue.**

By supporting Community Action Head Start, you make growth like Mason's possible. Thank you.



There's hope in the air, thanks to you



Last year, you helped provide 107,854 essential services to 17,940 individuals through support of Community Action.

Dear Friend,

It's no understatement: *Having you by our side has been one of the brightest parts of a dark year.* The past twelve months have been trying like never before, and in particular for those we serve. But thanks to your profound generosity, unwavering support, and unshakable belief not only

in our mission, but in your neighbors, we've been able to offer opportunities for support and stability like never before.

Over the past year, need for rent, utility, and deposit assistance has grown exponentially. You've noticed this need and given generously to address it. We anticipate that over the next several months, need for rent and utility assistance will continue to grow. *With your support, we'll be there to respond and increase access to services.* In fact, we recently opened a satellite office in Hickman to increase this access in rural Lancaster County.

You also know that the immediate need for access to hot, nutritious meals has been great for many in our community. Your support of Community Action's Gathering Place has helped us address it. Thank you, once again, for your

tremendous support during our 2020 Gathering Place Match Campaign. Together with the help of generous match sponsors, you helped raise a total of over \$254,000 to support the work of the Gathering Place. We'd also like to give special thanks to Downtown Lincoln Rotary Club #14 for including the Gathering Place in their recent Rise.Shine.Give. fundraising event. Thanks to their support, the Gathering Place has a new HVAC system, which will provide the increased utility efficiency we need to prepare and serve meals each night.

The past year has been one of transformation and hard work for many, and Community Action is no exception. Last June, I shared with you our agency's commitment to continue working to address *all* causes and conditions of poverty—

including systemic racial, gender, and other inequities. As one piece of this work, I'm pleased to share that **Community Action has begun work to create and implement a formal agency Equity Audit and Action Strategy. All agency staff will be involved in this four-month process, as well as the Board of Directors and program participants.** I look forward to sharing more information with you as this work continues.

The journey to healing will be long. It also won't be possible without you. We'll need to continue supporting each other in new ways, but I'm confident that together, we'll be able to make our way to something even better.

Sincerely,

Vi See
Executive Director

Save the Date:

give
To Lincoln Day
is Tuesday,
May 25, 2021!

Your kindness warms hearts

Through bitter cold temperatures and a difficult transition to spring, **you've given the gift of warmth and stability time and time again.** This winter we received countless donations of hats, gloves, socks, scarves, and more to distribute to guests of the Gathering Place and participants of our other programs.

Thank you for doing all that you can to keep your neighbors warm. Your gifts of clothing and of housewarming items like diapers, sheets, dishes, and utensils for families transitioning into permanent housing have made a remarkable difference these past few months. Plus, sweet surprises like those pictured have made so many others smile!

Thank you for doing all that you can to keep your neighbors warm. Your gifts for families transitioning into permanent housing make a remarkable difference.



Thank you for supporting Community Action's work to provide Jane and many neighbors like her with access to safe, warm housing this winter.

"I'm one of the lucky ones"

You've given neighbors like Jane the chance to thrive.

Jane is strong, dedicated, and driven, with a heart for improving her community. And she's no stranger to hard work.

"I raised my kids all by myself, and my whole life I did manual labor," says Jane. "It was so rewarding, making the city I live in a better place."

Now in her 70s, Jane lives by herself and is navigating life with health concerns. "I'm so strong and I'm proud of myself," she says, "but I can't work anymore. I can't make my own repairs. It's just not physically possible. My home wasn't safe, but I didn't know what to do." Then, she heard about Community Action.

Through our Weatherization program, Jane received a new furnace and water heater last year, just before temperatures began to drastically dip.

Her home is now not only safe, but warm.

"Before you came to do this for me, I just felt so alone," she says. "It's hard when you're old and you can't work, especially right now. I can't do the things I used to, or help out, and it had gotten me down."

You all saved my life. You made things easier during this difficult time.

Jane has spent her whole life caring for others. We're honored to have had the chance to help her care for herself. *Thank you for supporting Community Action, and making connections like these possible.*

Doing whatever it takes

Much like you, our Foster Grandparents continue to answer the call to make a difference.

Greg Brown, or "Grandpa Greg" as he is better known within the four walls of our Marvelous Manatees Head Start classroom, sits in front of an iPad from his Lincoln home. On the other end is a group of preschool-aged children settling onto their cots for naptime. Grandpa Greg just read them a naptime story – *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.

"I think we have the best grandpa in the whole world," he overhears a child telling her teacher. "You know, we really should share him...but I don't want to!"

This is just one memorable moment Grandpa Greg, a volunteer within our Foster Grandparent Program, recalls from the past year – a year that has been marked by change he, like all of us, couldn't have anticipated.

You see, prior to COVID, Greg and his fellow Foster Grandparent volunteers served in-person. They were a part of the daily classroom setting – people our Head Start children and teachers looked forward to seeing every day, and vice versa. But since the

Foster Grandparent Program transitioned to a virtual model last year, Greg has embraced the opportunity to connect virtually, instead. Each day, he "Zooms" with his classroom during center lessons and story time, and even shares his love of art by sketching drawings to give to the children he works with.

"I try to base [them] on things they tell me they like," says Greg. "A little girl told me the other day that her favorite animal is a chicken. So this [drawing] is what's going to her next week."

Greg's involvement in the program means a lot to him, and for many different reasons. It allows him to continue pursuing his passion for education in retirement. It keeps him engaged in his community. And, perhaps most of all, he thinks it would have made his mom – who was instrumental in getting a Head Start program in Missouri started in the 1960s – proud.

We celebrate Greg and our seven additional Foster Grandparents for their dedicated service to our program. Thank you for giving them opportunity to exercise their passions to make a difference in children's lives.



“You have to know what a difference you make”

Your support of vital Community Action programs like Emergency Services keeps families safe.

Kyla and her husband became landlords because they wanted to provide community members with opportunities to achieve stability. Being a landlord, she says, means being able to provide safe, stable, single-family living arrangements to families who want to raise their children in a house of their own, but for whom homeownership might not yet be an option.

Thank you for supporting your neighbors in need of rent, utility, and deposit assistance. You've given the gifts of hope and stability throughout a year of great uncertainty.



“We’ve known many of our tenants for a long time,” Kyla says. “They’re our friend-tenants, and we really care about each other. It’s unique, I think.”

The past year has been financially difficult for many, including tenants of Kyla’s.

“I know what it’s like to be a tenant, and the stress people face when rent is due and the money just isn’t there, through no fault of their own,” says Kyla. **“It’s such a relief to know that I can refer my friend-tenants to Community Action—not only because support is available, but because I know my friends will be treated with kindness and respect throughout the process of receiving it.”**

When you give to Community Action, Kyla says, “You have to know what a difference you make.”

Thank you for giving not only stability, but hope, to so many through your support of Community Action.

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 _____

For more information contact:

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



210 O Street
 Lincoln, NE 68508
 www.communityactionatwork.org