



Hope Inside



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IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 } A neighborhood celebration
- 2 } Letter from the CEO
- 2 } Teaching for the future
- 3 } The success of a child begins with the success of their family
- 4 } Double your impact at the Gathering Place
- 4 } Community Action at Work Award

Celebrating 40 years of good food, good friends, and good times

This year is a milestone anniversary for Community Action's Gathering Place. Thank you to all who joined to celebrate!

In May of 1982, the Gathering Place opened its doors at 1448 E Street in Lincoln. Originally designed as a hospitality center, its mission according to one of the original founders was to establish a place "where anyone would feel welcome." Although the Gathering Place has been a Community Action program since the 1990s, the founders' original mission still echoes through our work today.

On Friday, September 16, 2022, hundreds of our neighbors gathered to celebrate this original mission and the 40th anniversary of the Gathering Place. **In short, we threw a block party!**

Many of our regular Gathering Place guests attended, as well as neighbors from throughout the Near South area, volunteers, elected officials, Community Action staff and their families, and supporters like you.



We threw a block party this month to celebrate 40 years of service and community at the Gathering Place!



At the event, over 300 neighbors enjoyed a fresh meal provided by Southwood Lutheran Church.

Lisa Janssen, our Gathering Place Administrator, shared, "We have a strong community here at the Gathering Place. Guests know and connect with each other, and with our staff and volunteers. And of course, none of our work would be possible without your support.

Thanks to the generosity of regular volunteers Southwood Lutheran Church, over 300 of our block party guests were able to enjoy a meal of chili dogs, coleslaw, fresh fruit, pickles, and dessert. Attendees participated in plenty of other fun, free activities like face painting and balloon animal creation, yard games, sidewalk chalk, listening to live music, and more.

"We couldn't imagine a better way to celebrate 40

years at Community Action's Gathering Place," said Lisa. **"We're so fortunate to have the chance this year to celebrate all that you've done for the Gathering Place and those we serve.** Thank you to all who joined our block party and made this event great, and to those who support and make our work possible!"

Every night at Community Action's Gathering Place, your generosity provides so much more than a good meal to those we serve. As one guest, Paul, recently shared, "I've been coming here for years and I remember everyone who works here. I like the volunteers. You all make this a great place to be."

For all that you do to support Community Action, our programs like the Gathering Place, and most importantly, your neighbors like Paul: **Thank you.**

You turn our mission into action



Your support of Community Action and those we serve is building a better, stronger community.

Dear Friend,

I've always loved the start of autumn. Even as an adult, there's nothing quite like back to school season. At Community Action Head Start, our

new program year began just a few weeks ago. Toddlers transitioned to preschool classrooms and many of our preschool students packed their backpacks to begin kindergarten at Lincoln Public Schools and elsewhere. The transition is certainly bittersweet. But as students leave Head Start and join their peers in elementary school, we know they're set up for success. **Success made possible by you** and your belief in their potential.

As you read through this month's newsletter, I invite you to take a moment to recognize what your belief—*your generosity*—has made possible for so many of your neighbors.

At the Gathering Place, you've given so much more than free hot, nutritious

meals to those who need them most. You've also given your neighbors a space of warmth, welcoming, and belonging. And, as we celebrated this month, you've done this for forty years. **Thank you.**

In our homelessness prevention programs, you've given families a fresh start when they've needed it most. You've ensured individuals remain safely and stably housed during times of great struggle, and given your neighbors a solid foundation from which to build. **Thank you.**

In Community Action Head Start, you've given families like Felicita's the chance to grow into their full potential—to build the skills they'll need for success in school and beyond. **Thank you.**

Your steadfast belief in our

mission and those we serve has made so much possible. **We're beyond grateful to have you by our side as we move into the future.** Throughout this newsletter you'll also find information on some of the new goals we're working toward, such as strengthening Lincoln's early childhood workforce and increasing access to community resources in the neighborhoods surrounding 1843 K Street.

Know that these exciting new developments are only possible because you believe in us. *You know the value of Community Action's mission, and you make it a reality.* It's an honor to work with you.

Sincerely,

Heather Loughman
Chief Executive Officer

Strengthening Lincoln's early childhood workforce

Our workforce development program gives early childhood workers the opportunity to build new skills and advance their careers.

This April, Community Action applied for and received \$1 million in grant funding from the City of Lincoln to support strengthening our local early childhood education workforce. Funds received from this grant have allowed us to build a Workforce Development program for Head Start employees. This program will provide employment and on-the-job training to 70 people over a three-year period.

By participating in this program, staff will have the chance to earn their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, or other credential. Participants receive a stipend as they reach program milestones and supports like childcare and transportation are available for those who need them.

Currently, 21 individuals are participating in Community Action Head Start's Workforce Development program. Once they receive their relevant credential, participants will be eligible for a pay increase and promotion within Community Action Head Start.

Community Action Head Start staff who participate in our Workforce Development program can get paid to earn credentials to advance their careers.

As a friend of Community Action, you know how important it is to remove the barriers that keep individuals from reaching their goals and achieving success. This program does just that. And, like all good things at Community Action, it's only possible because of your belief in us—in the work that we do and the people we serve.

Thank you for supporting Community Action. Together, we can strengthen the early childhood workforce in Lincoln to support generations of children to come.



Partnering for a stronger community

Beginning this fall, we've partnered with Lincoln Literacy to offer free English and adult literacy classes at Community Action Head Start at K Street.



Last month, Channel 1011 and Channel 8 each shared news stories about an exciting new partnership between Community Action and Lincoln Literacy.

This year, Head Start's back to school season wasn't just for our youngest participants. We also welcomed dozens of adult learners to our K Street center thanks to a new partnership with Lincoln Literacy!

Since late August, Community Action Head Start at K Street has served as a host site for Lincoln Literacy classes offered four nights a week. These English language and adult literacy classes, provided by Lincoln Literacy, are free to both current Head Start family members and other Lincoln residents.

The neighborhood surrounding 1843 K Street has one of the highest poverty rates in Lincoln (41.7%), and 15% of those in the surrounding zip code speak a language other than English at home. The need for both programs' services is great. **This partnership is one step toward our vision for transforming the space at 1843 K Street into a hub for community resources.**

We look forward to sharing more with you about all the exciting things happening at K Street!

Building a home of love and support

Your support gives families like Felicitá's the opportunity to thrive.

Felicitá is a mother of four children and has been a resident of the United States for the past 16 years. When she moved to Lincoln, she could not speak, read, or write in English and could not read or write in Spanish, her native language. But she knew she wanted to build a better life for her children. And having grown up as the primary caretaker for her younger siblings and now as a mother of four, she knew the value of work hard. When Felicitá learned about Community Action Head Start, she applied on behalf of her almost two-year-old son.

Every week, Felicitá and her son met with their Community Action Family Educator. They spoke Spanish together and soon developed a good working relationship. Felicitá was curious about how to be a strong support system for her children—how to give them a healthy home environment unlike the one she

had growing up. **She wanted to and support her children in becoming the best versions of themselves.**

Felicitá's son became eligible for special services, and she worked together with her Family Educator to ensure he received all the supports he needed to grow alongside his peers.

When Felicitá became pregnant with another child, she continued receiving Community Action Head Start services. Together, she worked with her Family Educator to learn new strategies to bond with her children. She learned how to share stories through discussion of pictures, even when Felicitá herself was still learning to read the words on the page; doing so helped her children to grow their language skills and provided valuable bonding time for the whole family.

This year, Felicitá's youngest child will age out of Community Action Head Start, and her family will continue moving forward. When asked how she felt about starting the next chapter of her life, Felicitá smiled.

She said, "I am prepared."

As a friend of Community Action, **you know the success of a child begins with the success of their family.** Thank you for supporting parents like Felicitá and their families. Your generosity gives them the chance to move forward with strength, purpose, and opportunity.

The success of a child begins with the success of their family. Thanks to your support and Community Action Head Start, Felicitá's family is moving forward to success.





Bianka is a regular guest at Community Action's Gathering Place. She said, "I like the food and the people. I like that when I come here, I can help out." One of the ways Bianka helps is by picking up items from our Little Free Pantry to share with her family. Your support of the Gathering Place makes this possible.

This year, your gift to Community Action's Gathering Place will double.

Mark your calendars! **From October 17- December 31, all gifts to Community Action's Gathering Place will be matched, \$1 for \$1**, up to \$60,500 (so far!). This match is made possible thanks to the generous support of legacy sponsor Acklie Charitable Foundation, as well

as sponsors Union Bank and Trust, Bukaty Companies, Connie Maguire, Rohn and Beth Loyd, and James Stuart III Family Foundation. Keep an eye out for more information about this opportunity to double your impact. **We can't do this without you.** Thank you.

Marian Malone receives 33rd Community Action at Work Award

Thank you, Marian, for 10 years of volunteer service to Community Action!

This August, Community Action presented dedicated volunteer Marian Malone with the 33rd Community Action at Work Award. Marian truly embodies the mission of our agency in everything she does. Throughout more than ten years of volunteer service with Community Action, Marian has supported many of our programs including Tenant Support,

the Community Action Store, our fiscal department, our front desk, and more. "Marian is an outstanding volunteer," said Beth Donahue, Community Action Store Coordinator. "Whether she is helping with laundry, cleaning, donations, toy distribution, or supporting participants—she does it all with a cheerful and positive attitude."

Thank you, Marian, for all that you do to make Community Action's work possible! We're so honored to have you as a friend and volunteer.



Congratulations to Marine Malone for her receipt of the 33rd Community Action at Work Award. Thank you, Marian, for all of the ways you support our mission!

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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