



# Hope Inside



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## Winter at the Gathering Place

*Shorter days and colder nights make for warm, friendly evenings at the corner of E and Goodhue.*

If you've driven through the Near South neighborhood on a recent evening, perhaps you've seen it: a stately brick house on the corner of E and Goodhue, warm amber lights glowing within. If you walked past, you'd hear buzzing chatter and the welcome creak of the door as it opened for another guest. And another. And another. That's Community Action's Gathering Place.

Each time the door opened, you'd smell something hot and homey—macaroni and cheese, perhaps, or warm soup or fresh roast beef. There's also a good chance you'd hear piano music. Cheery notes fill hearts while hot, nutritious food fills guests' stomachs.



Mary has been visiting the Gathering Place to enjoy a meal and share her music with other guests.



One of the 2020 goals for the Gathering Place is to increase the nutritional value of meals by including more fresh content.

A lot has been happening at the Gathering Place lately. With your support, in 2019 the Gathering Place served 29,694 free hot, healthy meals to those struggling with hunger in Lincoln. We've been working hard to increase meals' nutritional value—an effort only possible thanks to you. This means providing wholly nourishing options, like sauteed vegetables with meat, noodles, and sauce as a main dish, in addition to sides of fresh fruit and veggies.

Maybe you've also heard about our year-end match campaign. **Now truly is the best time to give to Community Action's Gathering Place, because now through December 31st of 2019, your gift to will be matched!**

This means your gift to provide hot, nutritious evening meals to those struggling with

### 2019 Gathering Place Match Sponsors

**LEAD SPONSOR:**  
 Acklie Charitable Foundation

**SPONSORS:**  
 Rogers Foundation  
 Miriam Moeller Charitable Trust  
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 Nebraska Presbyterian Foundation  
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hunger in Lincoln can go even further.

As a supporter of Community Action, you know the importance of achieving

**In 2019, Community Action's Gathering Place served 29,694 meals to those experiencing hunger in Lincoln. Meeting this need is only possible because of your support.**

economic stability—and how impossible it is to accomplish without access to healthy food. At the Gathering Place, we strive to serve nutritious meals that not only fill the belly,

but also fuel the body and mind.

As of December 4th, donors like you have contributed over \$49,900 toward our year-end campaign—incredible! That means we only have \$28,100 left to reach our maximum match of \$78,000! Will you help us get there?

Donations can be made online at [communityactionatwork.org](http://communityactionatwork.org), or by mailing with the reply device on the back of this letter with the enclosed envelope.

**Thank you so much for your support.**

# Thank you for another successful year at Community Action

*In 2020, let's keep making great change.*

Dear Friend,

It's almost winter in Nebraska, which means shorter days and colder nights. Perhaps you're spending more time indoors, gathering with friends and family. Winter is often a time to turn inward and focus on what matters most—that's no exception at Community Action.

This time last year, we welcomed many new beginnings: Construction of our Healthy Food Access

Kitchen, thanks to Community Health Endowment, and expansion of our Financial Well-Being programs, to name just two. Thank you for believing in Community Action's continued journey, and most importantly, the journeys of our participants.

Now, at the end of 2019, I'm proud to share the successes of not only these new programs, but our work agency-wide to empower those Lancaster and Saunders County residents living in poverty to reach economic stability.

**In 2019, we—Community Action and you, who**



**support this work—provided 112,004 services to 20,066 individuals. An additional 289,799 meals were provided through the Healthy Food Access Program.**

This is only possible because of your kindness, generosity, and belief in the work we do.

Thank you. In 2020, together we can strengthen the new foundations you've helped us build.

With gratitude,

Vi See  
Executive Director

## Supportive Housing: It's so much more than a home

*Your support gives Renie and her family the opportunity to grow together.*

Today, Renie lives in an apartment with her supportive, loving partner, Zachary, and their three smart, happy daughters. Bright toys fill the floor and two highchairs line the wall. Today, Renie smiles when she opens the door. The road has been long, but today is good.

Renie and her family have been part of our Supportive Housing Program for almost a year. Since 2018, they've worked closely with Community Action Family Advocates and other partners to overcome a variety of obstacles and establish themselves on the path to self-sufficiency.

**“I just want to be the person who doesn't give up on someone. I'm only here...because other people didn't give up on me.”**

As Renie puts it, “There have been so many struggles.” Traumatic life events. PTSD. Unhealthy coping mechanisms and a minimal support system. A prison sentence. Time spent in a shelter.

Renie says, “We worked so hard. We persevered. I think that's one of our family themes—perseverance. And then we found Community Action, and that's been such a gift.”

Through Community Action's Supportive Housing Program, Renie, Zachary, and their girls have found a safe, affordable apartment. They work with our Family Advocates to identify and achieve new goals. Through our Head Start program, the girls and their parents also receive high-quality early childhood education and other whole-family services.

Zachary is training to be an automotive technician and Renie

will begin human service classes in January.

Thinking about her family's future, Renie says, “I just want to be the person who doesn't give up on someone. I'm only here, in this home with my girls, because other people didn't give up on me.” Thank you for believing in Renie.

*Your support of Community Action gives Renie and her family a chance to move forward.*



## “I’m so very thankful.”

*Thanks to Opportunity Passport™ and your support, Erich is on the road to success.*

Erich is a student at Southeast Community College. In his free time, he enjoys playing soccer and learning about cars—including how to best take care of his own, purchased using savings match from Opportunity Passport™.

Erich joined Opportunity Passport™ in 2017. He arrived with an incredible work ethic learned through living at Boys Town, and a definite goal: Save money to purchase a reliable vehicle. He attended financial education classes

at Community Action and worked full-time to support himself. All the while, he saved. Less than a year later, he met his first goal. But Erich is nowhere near finished.

Erich says he wants “a place to call his own.” He’s thinking about purchasing a home and starting his own business—thanks to the knowledge, skills, and savings match provided through Opportunity Passport™.

Erich’s dream business would provide vehicle detailing to customers and more importantly, support to the community. He’s a big fan of paying it forward—just like you. “If I’m successful, I want to be a donor to something like Opportunity Passport™,” he says. “I want



*Erich used his Opportunity Passport™ savings and match to purchase a reliable vehicle, which allows him to commute to work and school.*

to be independent enough to give back.”

We’re wishing nothing but good luck to Erich, and we’ll continue to work with him on his way to achieving those dreams.

## Sasha and Victor enrolled their young children in Early Head Start to give them **an opportunity to succeed**

*Little did they know, the program would help them succeed, too.*

You may have heard that becoming a parent changes you. You may have even experienced it yourself. Suddenly, your whole world revolves around your child. Dreaming about the person they’ll become. Saving every penny to provide positive opportunities. Sometimes becoming a parent means letting go of your own dreams. Sometimes that’s hard. But you know it’s all worth it.

Families who join our Early Head Start and Head Start programs are motivated to do the best for their children. Expecting their second child, Sasha and Victor found our Early Head Start program.

They were relieved to find a program that would support the developmental needs of their toddler and soon-to-be newborn. But what they didn’t anticipate was what came next.

During their first home visit, Sasha and Victor talked with their Early Head Start Family Educator about their children – how many prenatal appointments they’d been to, how their toddler was progressing, and what child development goals they’d like to work toward. But the second part of the visit caught them off-guard.

“Are there any other personal goals you two would like to work toward?” their Family Educator asked.

Victor looked at Sasha. “I’d love to finish my education,” he said. “But



**2019-2020 classroom sponsorships are still available!**

Interested in sponsoring a baby/toddler classroom for \$2,500? We have four available, so now is the perfect time to sign up! Contact Heather Loughman at [hloughman@communityactionatwork.org](mailto:hloughman@communityactionatwork.org) or (402) 875-9339.

with the kids and working full-time...it’s just not possible right now.”

Their Family Educator took notes. “Do you know about Community Action’s Free to Save Program?”

Both Sasha and Victor shook their heads. Then, their Family Educator broke the news: their savings toward Victor’s tuition would be matched 4:1. Sasha and Victor’s faces lit up. They applied and also received support from Community

Action’s Financial Well-Being team to file their complex tax returns. When they received a sizable tax refund, they knew exactly where they’d put it—toward their savings goals.

With support from Community Action, Sasha and Victor have the chance to begin their lives in Lincoln on the right foot. They have a chance to be the best for themselves so they can be the best for their children. Your support makes this possible.

# A whole-family approach to education

*Prioritizing whole-family education and services in Head Start means giving parents and caregivers opportunities to connect and learn.*

If you support Community Action Head Start, you know the importance of parent involvement in a child's educational journey. You know that our Head Start programs support whole families. Caregivers receive unique supports alongside their children. But what does that look like, exactly?

Once a month, it looks like Head Start parents coming together to learn about program updates and new, available resources. It's a time to share stories, advice, and build camaraderie. If you've ever parented a young child, you know firsthand how important it is to have a support system!

Take a look at these photos from last month's Parent View Café for families in our Early Head Start Home-Based program. Remember, when you support our Head Start programs, you support whole families on their way to reaching educational success and economic stability.

*At last month's meeting, parents drew pictures of a happy memory from childhood, and shared with the group. Lots of laughs and bonding followed!*



## What legacy will you leave?

As we quickly embark on a new decade, you may be thinking about future plans. You may be thinking about your legacy. How do you want to be remembered? What difference do you hope to make for generations to come?

In early 2020, we'll be sharing information about how you can build your legacy through a planned gift to Community Action. If you've already included Community Action in your will or estate, we'd love to hear from you! Contact Heather at [hloughman@communityactionatwork.org](mailto:hloughman@communityactionatwork.org) or (402) 875-9339.



**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.

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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