



Hope Inside



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Finding her voice

You believed in Marissa's potential, and now she's ready for success.

Three year-old Marissa is the thoughtful kind of shy. If you visit her classroom, she'll watch you for a while, head tucked to her chest, and stand a few feet away. Then she'll step closer, smile, and say, "Can you take my picture?"

You wouldn't know it, but Marissa hasn't always spoken so clearly. For her whole life, she's been part of the Community Action Head Start family. When Marissa was about 10 months old, her teachers started to notice something amiss. Marissa was having tantrums—more often than the average child—and struggling to communicate.

"Marissa used to spend most of her time alone," said her teacher, Nadya. "She had trouble communicating and isolated herself from her classmates and friends. We wanted her to succeed in kindergarten one day, so we knew we needed to help."

With support from Marissa's parents, they turned to Early Intervention. Thanks to your generosity, Community Action Head Start educators and Early Intervention worked alongside Marissa's parents to develop a plan. They were going to get this brilliant young girl back on track with her peers. Thanks to your kindness, she was given the time and space to learn words and how to use them to communicate.

You believe in children like Marissa. Because of that belief, Marissa is now able to use her words to ask to have her picture taken, to make new friends in her classroom, and to read books to her teacher. And perhaps most importantly? She helps others.

"It's really amazing. She's made so many friends, and when other children are



struggling, she helps them. Marissa's story shows what Head Start can do," said Nadya. "She's going to be so successful in preschool next year, and in life. I'm sure of it."

Marissa wasn't the only person you empowered. Because you believe in Head Start's dual-generation approach, Marissa's parents received support alongside their daughter. Working with Family Engagement Specialists, they took classes, changed jobs, and are now moving toward greater economic stability. With the family's change in income, and Marissa's developmental successes, soon they can move to another program, and we can support another child.

Marissa's story is what achieving our mission looks like, and it's only possible because of you. Thanks to you, Marissa found her voice. Thanks to you, Marissa is moving forward.



Marissa loves to use her imagination when she plays with her classmates.

Celebrating another incredible Give to Lincoln Day

Thank you for all of your incredible generosity!

Dear Friend,

We've always known our community was incredible, but on May 30th, you amazed us like never before. This year, Community Action once again participated in Give to Lincoln Day, a day of giving hosted by Lincoln Community Foundation. In total, kind people like you raised over \$5.5 million dollars for area non-profits. You topped last year's record by \$1 million. Thanks to your incredible generosity, Community Action also raised more than ever before—just over \$37,000.

We do not take your generosity lightly, and promise to use what you've given to empower others in our community.

Because you clearly care so much for your community, it's important that you realize how much your neighbors need your kindness, now more than ever. Your generosity can break the cycle of poverty once and for all.

This newsletter is full of celebration. We want to share not only our participants' successes, but yours as well. *Every one of these people has been given the opportunity to be successful because of you. You helped Marissa find her voice. You gave Julie a safe home again. You believed in Derrick and invested in*

Elizabeth's potential. Your giving opens the door for people to achieve their unlimited potential. And really, isn't that the greatest gift of all?

On behalf of every single person we serve at Community Action: Thank you. Every success we celebrate is only possible because of you. Thank you for continuing to make them happen.

Thank you,



Vi See

Executive Director



Julie can't wait to use her safe new stove to make dinners for her family.

A home transformed

For Julie, a new stove means the start of a new life.

This is Julie. She lives in Saunders County, and when recent flooding damaged her home, she turned to Community Action for help. The flooding made her a priority, but during routine inspection, we found much more than flood damage. We found a stove that had been leaking dangerous amounts of gas. Julie had no idea, and had been making dinner with it every night for years—she'd planned to use it again in just a few hours.

But the stove had to be disconnected, and soon. Julie was distraught. In addition to needing the stove that night, she also had an important family dinner scheduled for the weekend.

Thankfully, because of your support, we were able to quickly contact a nearby store and get Julie a brand new stove the next day.

She said she'd never before had a new kitchen appliance.

With the gas leak fixed and the new stove installed, Julie safely made dinner for her family that weekend. We'll be back soon to weatherize her home!

Only good things ahead

Your support is giving Derrick an opportunity to start again.

Hope. Ironically, it's often a feeling that comes to you when all seems to be lost – a light that, often out of nowhere, shines in your darkest moments. To find hope is a beautiful thing. And hope is exactly what Derrick found when he realized that there are people like you in the community who want him to succeed.

You see, the road Derrick has traveled hasn't always been straight and narrow. There was a cancer diagnosis. He had been incarcerated. He had moments of hopelessness. But in all of that, there was also incredible strength.

When Derrick was released from prison in 2012, he knew that he wanted to make a better life for himself. But he soon found out that doing so wouldn't be that easy. He struggled with homelessness – spending each day moving between his vehicle or hotel rooms. He struggled with hunger, relying on peanut butter and bananas to get through the day. He struggled to find a

way to pay for needed medical bills – to treat his cancer. He struggled with the repercussions of his past. And despite his desire to do so, he had no ability to save or fix his financial situation. Everything in Derrick's life was about survival.

But after years of struggle, Derrick found his community. He first came to us last year for assistance with rent and a deposit, which allowed him to find stability in a home to call his own. He embraced the opportunity to receive continued empowering support, too, and began working within our Financial Well-Being programs. He attended our financial coaching classes on a weekly basis, and was attentive –

asking questions, offering observations, and providing support to his fellow classmates. He embraced every opportunity to learn and grow, and his financial situation continues to improve every day because of it.

And in terms of his future? Derrick has big plans, and we know he will achieve them. But most of all, he wants to give back to the community that supported him. And he does just that in his job at Food Bank of Lincoln.

Derrick had the determination to turn his life around. Your support gave him the opportunity to do so.

Thank you.

Derrick loves his job at the Food Bank of Lincoln. It gives him the opportunity to give back.



Because of you, hard-working people like Elizabeth have the opportunity to invest in themselves.

The **best** investment

Because of your support, Elizabeth can build a better life through Opportunity Passport™.

Elizabeth found it easy to choose how best to spend her Opportunity Passport™ savings match.

"I wanted to invest," she said. "I felt like I had this incredible opportunity in front of me. I could put some money away while I had undergraduate scholarships, then attend

graduate school. By the time I'm done, I'll have given myself some savings—the start of long-term financial stability."

As a young adult entirely responsible for both her own well-being and her sister's, Elizabeth took advantage of every class Opportunity Passport™ had to offer. Because of your support, Elizabeth could learn valuable life skills about everything from how to properly maintain a vehicle to the nuances of maintaining good credit.

"I really appreciated the opportunity to self-educate," she said. "It's important to me to be able to take care of myself and the people who depend on me. There's always been a lot of pressure because if I fail, there's no safety net. Opportunity Passport gave me a support system, and the tools to succeed beyond the program."

Thank you for believing in Elizabeth's passion, drive, and dedication. Because of you, she's giving herself the gift of a brighter future.

Our Head Start kiddos say, "Thanks for stopping by!"

A special shout-out to some of our great friends!

Without continued generous support from partners like Ameritas, we could not empower our community's most vulnerable children and families. Thank you, Ameritas! >



UBT and Alexander Wealth Management, thank you for helping the Happy Hedgehogs grow! >



Thank you, WellCare of Nebraska, for your generous sponsorship of our Head Start Family Wellness Festival! 186 people attended! v



The Loveable Leopards loved their visit with one of their classroom sponsors, Dr. Bob Rauner! >



We love donor visits, and we'd love one from YOU! Contact Heather at hloughman@communityactionatwork.org or (402) 875-9339 to learn more about classroom sponsorship or simply to schedule a tour!

give To Lincoln Day

Your generosity raised over \$37,000 for Community Action to break the cycle of poverty!

Thank you!

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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