

Hope Inside

Community Action news and updates

We partner with our community in fearless pursuit of anti-poverty solutions so we all have the opportunity to live well.



It's time to build a bigger table

*When I'm happy, I want to celebrate here. When I'm sad, this is where I go to seek comfort. **And without fail, whenever I need it the most, you always seem to be serving my favorite meal – spaghetti.*** -Gathering Place Guest

Serving twenty meals was once considered a great night at the Gathering Place. “People were lonely, hungry and needed a friend to listen to them,” said Gathering Place founder Don Tilley, now 91.

Six neighbors founded the Gathering Place in 1982 on these core ideals: strangers are guests, food is connection, and the opportunity for change is always possible.

And they would not be delayed. They had a house, a cook, tables, and chairs. Said Don, “We were set to begin.”

The Gathering Place exists because **from the beginning, you have understood**

“It’s a safe place for an hour.”

- Gathering Place guest



that a meal can be a first step to something more.

Four decades later, hunger and food insecurity continue to grow in Lincoln. **And you continue to show up and meet it.**

Since 1982, neighbors have helped prepare **over one million meals** at the Gathering Place. ***Did you know the kitchen is only 120 square feet?*** To keep pace, we need a bigger kitchen. And our community needs a bigger table.

That’s why we are preparing to move to a new home at 919 S. 12th Street. With a larger kitchen, expanded dining areas, greater food storage, and private rooms for supportive services, the new location will have the tools we need to serve our neighbors for years to come.

Just like at our current home, every guest will be welcomed with a free warm meal, friendly faces, a safe place to gather, and support without judgment. **You make that possible.**

We need to raise **\$2.5 million more** to be able to renovate this space to meet our community’s needs.

Will you help build a bigger table?



Food for thought

The Gathering Place relies on a variety of support to serve free nightly meals today, tomorrow, and into the future.

Whether you give with cash, stock, a Qualified Charitable Distribution, Donor Advised Fund gift, a planned gift arrangement to our *Gathering Together Fund*, or in another way, we need you.

Always consult with your personal financial/tax advisor to determine the right move for you!



“We invite you to consider the miracle of the existence of the Gathering Place, its growing pains, its needs...”

- Ruth Thone circa 1989, Gathering Place founder

To learn more about this capital project and how you can support, visit Bigger-Table.com.

Or contact Jessie at 402-875-9338 or jhedrick@communityactionatwork.org!



Letter from the CEO

Looking back. Moving forward.

Dear Friend,

Some of our most important moments invite us to do two things at once: **celebrate how far we've come and imagine what's possible.**

Last month, dozens of neighbors, volunteers, donors, elected officials, staff, and community partners gathered to break ground on the future home of The Gathering Place. More than a construction milestone, it was a reminder of what happens when a community comes together around a shared belief: that everyone deserves access to food, dignity, and opportunity.

You embody that spirit of possibility. And this spirit of possibility is visible throughout our organization. As children return to Head Start classrooms this fall, families are beginning another year of learning, growth, and opportunity. We are also launching Aging-in-Place programming thanks to funding from AARP and Immanuel Vision

Foundation, helping older adults stay safe, connected, and independent in their homes.

While these initiatives look toward the future, they are built upon decades of partnership from people like you. **Every milestone we celebrate in this newsletter exists because you invested in a vision long before the outcome was visible.**

Thank you for believing in that vision. Thank you for building stronger foundations for children, families, older adults, and neighbors experiencing hardship.

Together, we honor our past while creating a brighter future for our entire community. Thank you for being there with us and those we serve, every step of the way.

Sincerely,

Heather Loughman
Chief Executive Officer



Agency Leadership

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'Wow. This is good.'

"My little one started at 6 weeks. I was crying that day."

No stranger to daycare, infant care at Community Action Head Start was new to Deborah.

"I was having mixed feelings," she said. "Like, this place I am going to is free. Would it be as competent as where I'm bringing him from?"

As graduate students, childcare was costing Deborah's family nearly as much as a year of tuition.

Their debt was rising.

Their future looking doubtful.

Then, a friend mentioned Head Start.

You share a goal with Head Start families and

staff: **Prepare children to succeed in school and life.**

Your commitment to this goal was immediately clear to Deborah. On that first day of school, her fears began to fade.

The classroom was bright, welcoming, full of toys, games, and colors. Because

you built a space to help her children thrive.

"I looked around and thought, 'Oh wow, this is good,'" she said.

Recently, Deborah's baby moved into his big-kid classroom.

"I just hugged his teacher and said, 'I trusted you with my 6 weeks old baby, and see how he's grown!'" **Thank you.**



David and Daniel, Deborah's sons, enjoy school with Head Start teachers like Justin!

"I am dreaming to someday be a donor like you. Thank you." - Deborah

Six Head Start classrooms still need sponsors this school year!

For \$2,000 per year, classroom sponsors ensure children like David and Daniel, and teachers like Justin, have everything they need to make learning fun! **Will you sponsor a Head Start classroom?**



“To everyone who worked at my house: I can't thank you enough for saving me and my children from the blistering heat and shivering cold. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.” - L.T.

Staff Spotlight:

Iyonna Clay

Weatherization Intake Specialist



Iyonna is a connector.

She has a giving heart strengthened from the experience of receiving.

“I’ve been there before,” she said. **“I know we might be their last hope, and just that phone call back is needed for them to know they are not left alone.”**

As a member of the Weatherization team, her phone call connects families facing financial challenges to critical home improvements, from small to large.

Iyonna’s desired legacy is to be known as being “the one.” The one who was there, who was supportive, who called you back.

The legacy you support.

And speaking from experience, she’d like to say:

“Your generosity is transforming lives and strengthening communities. And I thank you.”

The good fight

You may not wear a cape (nor does our Weatherization team) but every day you help families defeat some powerful villains: blistering heat, freezing cold, and sky-high energy bills.

Living in inefficient, uncomfortable, and often unsafe homes forces too many Lincoln households to choose between paying utility bills and meeting other basic needs. Every day, many of our neighbors have to make impossible choices: *Should I buy groceries for dinner or gas for my car?* Enter you, and Community Action’s Weatherization program.

The goal? Defeat the cracks and leaks that steal hard-earned dollars. Resolving “whole-house” issues maximizes efficiency and creates healthier, safer homes. And healthier, safer families!

The path to stability is often found on the other side of a sealed door, a well-insulated attic, or reliable air conditioning.

Thank you for your fearless support of your Weatherization superheroes. You take action that lasts.



Hope within numbers

Everyone needs access to safe, stable, affordable housing to reach economic stability.

On average, families whose homes are weatherized see:

- 7% electricity savings**
- 18% annual heating savings**
- \$514/year decrease in out-of-pocket medical expenses**
- \$372 energy bill savings**

When needs at home are met, one can travel a lot further on the path to stability.



1992

2026

Shared commitment, shared impact

Every donor comes to this work with a story. Not many start at 11 years old.

“Thirty-four years later, giving to The Gathering Place remains important to us because no one in our community should have to wonder where their next warm meal will come from. After starting Giving Realty in 2019, we wanted to continue our support of their mission and help provide nourishment, dignity, and a welcoming place for those who need it most.”

Mariah Zajic & Josie Tschetter
Community Action donors since 1992

Thank you for your passionate support of our neighbors. Together, we move our community forward.



Save the Dates!

**American Life
Charity Golf Scramble**
in support of
Community Action

Monday,
October 5, 2026



More Info:



**Gathering Place Match
Campaign Begins!**

Monday,
October 19, 2026



YES, I want to help empower people living in poverty to reach economic stability.

☐ Please accept my gift of \$ _____

☐ I'd like to learn more about monthly giving.

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:

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