

Hope Inside



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Leadership for a lifetime

Your generous support creates stability and opportunity for young people like Nedhal.

Nedhal has dedicated her life to advocating for change. When she graduated high school at 17, Nedhal moved out on her own following years of navigating the foster care

system. Independence, she admits, didn't come easy. But support from Community Action's Opportunity Passport™ program made it possible..

"This program changed my life," Nedhal says. "I don't like asking for support, but [Community Action staff] saw my potential and pushed me. I really couldn't have gotten to this place without their support."

Over the past six years, Nedhal has learned to realize her power and potential as an individual and a community member by speaking up to create meaningful change. In addition to participating in our matched savings program, Nedhal

gained leadership experience working in a fellowship role at a local advocacy organization. She became a Legislative Aide at the Nebraska State Capitol. And she served on the Nebraska Children Youth Advisory Board, where she organized and led a youth panel focused on improving racial equity within the foster care system.

"Over the past few years, Opportunity Passport™ helped me reframe the way I supported myself. I gained financial independence," says Nedhal.

Using her program match, Nedhal paid off some of the debt keeping her from moving forward. She built her credit.

When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in Lincoln, Nedhal temporarily lost employment. Her match funds provided a much-needed safety net as she searched for her next opportunity.

She found it and more. A few weeks ago, Nedhal moved across the country to Washington, D.C., where she began work as a Youth Fellow with the Annie E Casey Foundation. In this role, she's continuing her advocacy work to support young people transitioning out of foster care. It's a dream she's had since her years in foster care, and we are thrilled to be celebrating her accomplishment.

"Opportunity Passport™," Nedhal says, "is a safe place for foster youth. This program gives youth agency and input."

Your generous support of Community Action creates safe, encouraging spaces for young people like Nedhal to learn, grow, and turn their dreams to reality. Thank you.

While using her Opportunity Passport™ savings match to gain stability, Nedhal dedicated herself to becoming a young leader. She's since moved to Washington, D.C. where she's dedicating her career to supporting foster youth.



Together, we'll grow toward possibility



In 2021, your support helped to provide 101,461 services to 17,878 individuals. Thank you.

Dear Friend,

As I'm writing to you today, spring is just around the corner. The days are growing warmer and longer. It's been four months since I transitioned into my new role as Community Action's CEO, and I can't help but think:

Time flies, doesn't it?

Every day has been full of learning and growth, and of celebration of the tremendous success realized by our participants, several of whom have stories detailed here. I am grateful every day to work alongside our participants, as well as staff, volunteers, partners, and *generous people like you, who make these opportunities possible.*

You've accomplished so much in the months since we last wrote. At Community Action's Gathering Place, you raised over \$261,000 alongside our generous sponsors to provide free hot, nutritious meals to any Lincoln neighbor who needs one. You ensured 189 families received new toys and games to celebrate happy winter holidays. You provided warm, safe housing to hundreds of individuals and families at risk of spending

their nights in the bitter Nebraska cold. You gave young children and their families safe spaces to learn, play, and grow in the classroom and beyond.

Throughout 2021, your support helped provide 101,461 services to 17,878 individuals. Your continued generosity creates safety, opportunity, and hope.

There are so many exciting new things planned for Community Action this year, two pieces of which I'll share with you now:

First, in the coming months Community Action will begin work on a new Strategic Plan as well as an Equity Action Strategy. Both plans will be informed by findings from last year's Equity Audit. This process will involve staff and board members, as well as program participants. I look forward to updating you as this

work continues.

Secondly, Community Action was recently awarded a workforce development grant by the City of Lincoln. These funds will allow us to launch an on-the-job training program to support Community Action Head Start employees in earning additional credentials to advance their early childhood education careers. There's more exciting agency news to come, as well. I look forward to sharing!

Your generosity is noticed and appreciated every single day. Thank you for all that you do to support our work—our community—and make it stronger every day. It's an honor to work with you.

With gratitude,

Heather Loughman
Chief Executive Officer

Warm hearts at Community Action's Gathering Place

Wow. What a remarkable few months it's been at 1448 E Street. From October 11 – December 31, 2021, **your generous contributions to Community Action's Gathering Place, matched with our sponsors', raised over \$261,000 to support our work.** This is the most dollars ever raised during a campaign for the Gathering Place!

The donation match for our 2021 campaign was made possible thanks to the generous support of lead sponsor Acklie Charitable Foundation, as well as additional sponsors Nebraska Presbyterian Foundation; Miriam

Moeller Charitable Trust; Union Bank & Trust; Lincoln Rotary #14 Foundation; Bukaty Companies; Horizon Bank; DuTeau Chevrolet-Subaru; and Sue Quambush, in memory of Len Sloup.

What's more, you've continued to show up in support of our guests. Most recently, **your donations of new, unworn warm clothing items have kept your neighbors safe and comfortable during a bitter Nebraska winter.**

Thank you for looking out for all those who rely on the Gathering Place for their nightly meal. We couldn't do this without you.

Mona, a guest of Community Action's Gathering Place, says, "Thank you for the warm clothes!"



Thank you to our dedicated volunteers!

National Volunteer Week is April 17th – 23rd, but we'll gladly celebrate you every day!

Since last March, over 300 individuals volunteered their time and talent to support Community Action's mission. Their dedication to serving our community resulted in almost 18,000 hours of volunteer service.

There's only one thing we can say to this kind of generosity: **Thank you! You are so appreciated.**

Want to learn more about volunteering at Community Action

or get involved? Visit our website or contact Sam Bates, Community Engagement and Partnerships Specialist, at sbates@communityactionatwork.org or (402) 875-9320.

Every night at the Gathering Place, volunteers serve hot meals to our guests.



Thank you to those who volunteer to help keep our agency spaces clean and beautiful!

During last year's United Way Day of Caring, volunteers helped us prepare to provide outreach to our neighbors.



Ryan Schmidt receives 31st Community Action at Work Award

Thank you, Ryan, for seven years of partnership, support, and embodiment of our mission.

Earlier this month, Community Action representatives visited Baxter Toyota to present Ryan Schmidt, Sales Professional, with the 31st Community Action at Work Award. This award is given to those who, through their everyday work, embody the spirit of our mission to empower people living in poverty to reach economic stability.

For seven years, Ryan has worked with our Opportunity Passport™ program as both a partner and a volunteer. Through his job at Baxter Toyota, Ryan has connected countless program participants with the opportunity to use their hard-earned savings match to purchase a reliable vehicle.

In the words of Sara Drueke, Opportunity Passport™ Program Coordinator, **“Ryan puts a value on developing relationships that are based on trust, respect, and honesty.”**

I have heard from countless youth that have gone back to Ryan to find vehicles years after they bought their first car through our program. I'd venture to say that Ryan puts relationships over profits.”

We've lost count over the years of how many young people have benefitted from knowing Ryan and the team at Baxter.”

When he's not working, Ryan can often be found volunteering as an expert speaker for our Financial Well-Being classes. He's led hundreds of young people through the often difficult and stressful process

of purchasing a reliable vehicle.

“Ryan's work is priceless,” said Sara. “He once taught one of our participants how to drive a manual stick shift while our participant was on his lunch break. He replaced dangerous tires on the spot when one of our participants

visited the Baxter lot, because he couldn't let them drive away on unsafe tires. He taught another the value of investing and advised them to invest a settlement rather than spend the money on an expensive car. We've lost count over the years of how many young people have benefitted from knowing Ryan and the team at Baxter.”

Every day, we rely on partnership and generosity from people like Ryan in order to achieve our mission. Thank you, Ryan, for all that you do!

Earlier this month, we presented Ryan Schmidt with the 31st Community Action at Work Award in recognition of his dedication to his community and our mission. Congratulations, Ryan!



Introducing Community Action's new Communications and Development Director

On January 9, 2022, Community Action named Jessie Hedrick as our new Communications and Development Director, succeeding Heather Loughman. Jessie has been with the agency for three years, previously holding the position of Communications and Development Coordinator.

At Community Action, Jessie's contributions include increasing community awareness and support of our agency's mission and serving as Chair of the employee-led Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. Jessie actively participates in the Leadership Lincoln Advocates 15 cohort. She also writes this newsletter!

"Every day, your passion and generosity empowers and inspires so many. It's a tremendous honor to be able to work alongside you to advance our agency's mission. Thank you for your commitment to Community Action and those we serve. Someday soon, I hope to be able to share that thanks with you in person!"

If you'd like to learn more about our work, visit one of our sites, discuss a new way to get involved, or simply have questions, please contact me at (402) 875-9338 or jhedrick@communityactionatwork.org. I look forward to connecting soon!"



Jessie Hedrick,
Communications and
Development Director

Save the Date:

give
To Lincoln Day

is Thursday,
May 26, 2022!

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:

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