

# Hope Inside



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## Never Looking Back

*How your gift helped LaShan and her family find a new beginning.*

LaShan Reed had always dreamed of just one thing in this life: to live, work, and raise her children in a comfortable and safe place to call home. This is a simple dream that so many of us share, but for LaShan, it was one that seemed far out of reach. You see, LaShan and her family were living in a place where witnessing crime and illegal activity was a daily occurrence. They were living in a place with no jobs, no educational opportunities, no safe places to go to enjoy time out as a family, no sense of community. LaShan knew this was not the place she wanted her children to grow up; she wanted more for them. And while she knew she had nowhere else to go, staying was not an option. So one day she packed up her family and left, not knowing where the road ahead would lead, but hopeful for a better tomorrow.

Though LaShan felt immediate relief when she and her family eventually arrived in Lincoln, they had nowhere to go. They spent their nights in a local homeless shelter, and while it offered her family a tempo-



*Your gift helped LaShan and her family reach stability.*

rary living situation, LaShan knew she had to find something more long-term – a place to begin building her family's future.

**Because of the financial support from donors like you, LaShan got this opportunity.** She and her family were able to enroll in our Supportive Hous-

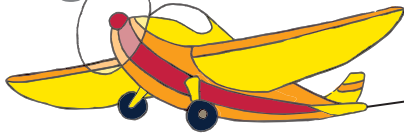
ing program, which moved them out of homelessness and into transitional housing. For the first time, LaShan felt safe – she felt hopeful for her family's future. She secured full-time employment

and was able to enroll her children in our Head Start programs. LaShan also began working toward financial goals, such as improving her credit and budgeting. After two years of hard work, LaShan has graduated from the program, and we're happy to say that she and her family are now in a safe, comfortable place of their very own – completely independent and secure. Without your support, this would not have been possible.

It is important that you know that without you, none of this would have been possible. Thank you for giving families like LaShan's the opportunity to live a better life.

*"My family is doing so much better now," LaShan said. "I see things differently. I'm moving forward, staying focused, and never looking back. My family is forever grateful."*

# With 5,200 children under age 5 living in poverty in Lincoln, the need for early childhood education is greater now than ever before.



*We've got some exciting news to share, and need your help.*

**G**reetings, friend! It has only been a few months since we last spoke, and I have to tell you about some exciting news – news that will impact our agency and the entire community:

Community Action has been awarded a \$6.2 million grant (\$31 million over the next five years) to operate Head Start and Early Head Start programs, which will provide early childhood education opportunities to 421 babies, toddlers, pre-schoolers, and pregnant women who are living in poverty in this community annually.

You're likely aware that Community Action has been operating these programs since 1966, but the plan for the next five years will bring about some exciting changes. Perhaps the most significant is the expansion of our full-day,

full-year program options.

These programs will be operated out of centers located at 23rd and O Streets (the Health 360 building) and 18th and Capital Parkway in Lincoln. Both centers are situated within two of Lincoln's most impoverished neighborhoods, giving our community's neediest children the chance to prepare for academic success, and their parents a no-cost childcare option so they can remain employed and/or attend school during the day. The center at Health 360 will additionally allow children and families easy access to primary and behavioral health care; we thank Community Health Endowment of Lincoln for helping us to create this opportunity for children and families.

Though many positive changes are on the horizon

for our community in the area of early childhood education – thanks in large part to community leaders like you – it is anticipated that the number of young children living in poverty will only continue to grow, and the demand for our services even greater. In order to assure long-term positive outcomes for children in this community, **we need your continued support and partnership.**

I invite you to help our community's neediest children and families prepare for a lifetime of success. Please see the backside of this newsletter for just some opportunities.

Thank you so much for your continued support of Community Action and care for your community, your



*Me with Head Start graduate Chloe, and her mom, Amy. Chloe will soar in kindergarten this fall thanks to friends like you.*

neighbors. Together, we are working to ensure everyone around us is not only able to survive, but to thrive.

With gratitude,

Vi See  
Executive Director

## So many smiling faces on May 21st Pre-School Olympics Event

All because of YOU!

**D**id you know that you brought smiles to the faces of 160 children and their parents on May 21st?

As the 2015-2016 school year came to a close, children (including 22 of this year's Head Start graduates!) and their families enrolled in our Head Start program gathered together at Community Action on May 21st to celebrate. The theme of the event: Pre-school Olympics. Each child had the opportunity to participate in fun Olympic-themed activities such as tricycle races, floor gym

gymnastics, long jump, an obstacle course, and more. Children not only had a great time, but also practiced important skills needed to be successful in kindergarten, such as being team player and working toward achieving victory!

As you can see, many smiles were had and lifelong memories were made. Without your support, this would not have been possible. Thank you for your commitment to building strong futures for our community's most important assets – our children.





## Introducing you to James Reilly, our Gathering Place Operations Assistant



In the last issue of our newsletter, we asked for your help to find a kind and compassionate person to serve as our Operations Assistant at The Gathering Place to support the work of Administrator, Michael Ryan. And this month, we are so happy to report that we found that person. It is great pleasure that we introduce to you James Reilly.

Like you, James is passionate about making sure everyone has access to nourishing meals. When James – who studied culinary arts – prepares meals, you can tell that he does it with not only skill and expertise, but with love and compassion. Just a couple weeks ago, James prepared individual-sized pizzas for Gathering Place guests to enjoy. It was a meal that brought smiles to the faces of all Gathering Place guests – **it was a meal that was made possible with your generous financial support.**

As James continues to settle into his new role, he will continue to utilize your financial support to deliver exceptional meals to the men, women, children, and seniors who depend on The Gathering Place each night.

*Just one of the meals your generous support of The Gathering Place made possible.*



### Gathering Place accepting produce donations!

You can help James prepare tasty and fresh meals for Gathering Place guests! If you are a gardener and have fresh vegetables, fruits, or herbs that you would like to donate for meals served at The Gathering Place, simply drop them off at The Gathering Place (1448 E Street in Lincoln) Monday through Friday from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. It's a great additional opportunity for you to help those who are hungry enjoy a delicious, fresh, home-cooked meal.

## Moving Forward

### How your gift helped Augusta keep working hard toward her dreams after difficult times.

After emigrating from Sierra Leone as a child, Augusta had high hopes for life in America. Her mother, whom she left behind, had always encouraged her to achieve her dreams...to get an education...to reach her potential. It was with that hope – that promise of a better life – that Augusta left her mother, her family, and everything she had ever known behind. It was bittersweet, but she wanted nothing more than to make her loved ones proud.

But when Augusta arrived in America, things didn't go as planned. After she was abused by her new caregiver, Augusta suddenly found herself in foster care. Not

having the close support of a loving family was something Augusta had never experienced before. Despite these challenges, Augusta moved forward. By the time she was 19, she moved out onto her own, was working full-time, and began taking college classes to pursue a career in the medical industry. Things were looking up, and Augusta was more driven than ever to reach that dream she came to America to pursue.

Then the unexpected happened. Shortly after her 21st birthday, Augusta once again became a victim of abuse – this time by her boyfriend. The injuries were so severe that Augusta had

to be hospitalized. She didn't have health insurance, so not only did Augusta have to deal with the emotional stress of the situation, she had to deal with the financial stress of it, too. The money to pay these unexpected medical bills just wasn't there, and soon, Augusta found herself with a significant debt load and a credit score that was dropping by the day. She knew she needed to do something...she knew she needed help.

#### **This is where you came in.**

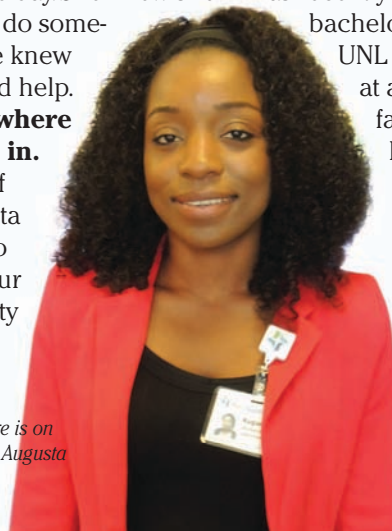
Because of you, Augusta was able to enroll in our Opportunity Passport™ program,

*A brighter future is on the horizon for Augusta thanks to you.*

offered in partnership with the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, where she developed a plan to pay down debt and improve credit. With the savings match provided through the program, Augusta was able to reach greater financial stability and continue moving forward toward her dreams. We are proud to tell you that Augusta has recently graduated with a bachelor's degree from UNL and is working

at a major medical facility in Lincoln.

In the fall, she will begin pursuit of a master's degree in public health. Augusta is well on her way, and is determined to make you proud to have invested in her."



# Over **\$5,000** raised for Community Action on **Give to Lincoln Day**

*Thank you for your incredible support!*

Another successful Give to Lincoln Day is in the books, and we want to thank you for contributing to this success. Between gifts given online and offline, over \$5,000 was raised for Community Action to fight poverty in

Lancaster and Saunders Counties. And thanks to the Lincoln Community Foundation and their sponsors, a portion of what you contributed will be matched! Please know that your generous gift is providing individuals who are struggling with the support and opportunities they need to live the best lives possible.



Thank you for making us smile on Give to Lincoln Day! Community Action staff Heather and Jill at Give to Lincoln Day Event at Tower Square.



**You can help us equip our new early childhood education centers with the materials needed for children to learn!**

Many materials are needed to outfit our new Head Start classrooms. View our wishlist here: <http://tinyurl.com/hkf4mz3> (be sure to list your name and address in the gift message upon checkout!) Or, send in contribution using the form below (write "Head Start" in designation line)

Find Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties on Amazon Smile! When you shop, Amazon gives!

**amazon smile**  
You shop. Amazon gives.

**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
- Keeping families safe and warm in their homes
- Helping families learn financial skills/save for a home, post-secondary education, or small business start-up

I would like to designate my gift to the following program  
\_\_\_\_\_ (e.g. The Gathering Place, Head Start)

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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