

Hope Inside

Nhu-Y and her mom and dad photographed by the capital building just after landing in Lincoln from Vietnam



Nhu-Y and her parents at her scholarship reception at the Harry Truman Library

2014. She is now staff attorney at the Legal-Aid Society in New York City where she provides legal counsel and advocacy on behalf of immigrants and the under-represented.

"I credit Head Start for helping me to get where I am today," Nhu-Y said. "It was while I was in Head Start where I began my love for learning. Head Start was a place I wanted to go. And eventually, school and college were also places I wanted to go, too. Head Start accepted me and my family how we were and helped us to adjust to a new environment. I really don't know where I'd be today if I hadn't been given that opportunity."

Thank you for investing in children like Nhu-Y – children who have all the potential in the world to be successful if given the opportunity. You are making an immeasurable difference – not only in children's lives, but in the long-term prosperity of our community and our world.

From Head Start child to New York City lawyer

The profound impact of your investment 25 years later

Nhu-Y Ngo was three when she enrolled in Head Start. Born in Vietnam, Nhu-Y had recently immigrated to the United States with her mom and dad. As you might imagine, when they first arrived in Lincoln they had little to call their own. While they found shelter in the small room of a basement church, the space offered limited resources to stimulate Nhu-Y's rapidly developing mind. Head Start filled that gap.

Now 28 and a lawyer in New York City, Nhu-Y recalls what being in Head Start meant to her so many years ago.

"When my parents decided to come to America, it was because they wanted to ensure a better future for me and my siblings, particularly in regard to education," she said. "Head Start opened me up to a whole new world. I remember many things about Head Start – my teachers, all of the bright colors in my classroom – but most of all, I remember this

brown cloth bag full of books that I got to take home from class with me each week. I'd spend hours looking at those books just turning the pages, examining the words, and looking at the pictures. From that moment on, I was hooked on learning."

And learn she did. It was during her time in Head Start when Nhu-Y learned how to speak English, where she learned to recognize numbers, recite the alphabet, and how to write her name – both in English and Vietnamese.

It was also where she got to interact with other children for the very first time in her life. "Even as a child, I can remember feeling isolated. Head Start gave me – and my family – opportunities to engage with and learn from others."

Head Start was what Nhu-Y describes as her "launching pad" to education. In 2005, she became the first in her family to graduate from high school, receiving a full scholarship to attend Columbia University. She went on to attend law school at UCLA and passed the California bar exam in



Nhu-Y at her graduation from Columbia University with her mom

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The importance of your financial support is greater now than ever before.

Thank you for providing HOPE to so many people who need it.

Greetings, friend! It is my absolute pleasure to bring you the inaugural issue of our newsletter. Stories focus on all of the truly wonderful things that are happening in peoples' lives and as a result of your financial support. No matter how you choose to give to Community Action, your generous support makes this community a better place to live.

Community Action has been serving southeast Nebraska since 1965 – you may have been with us last fall when we commemorated our 50th year of service.

In our 50-year history, the importance of your support of our work to fight poverty is greater than ever. Though the city of Lincoln and outlying Lancaster and Saunders Counties fare well on many fronts, there are many indicators of significant need. To name just a few examples, the number of people living in poverty has increased by 58% since 2005; in 2000, Lincoln had zero neighborhoods in extreme poverty – we now have six; and nearly 44,000 of our neighbors face hunger every day, over one-third of whom are children.

Your support is so critical in keeping people stable and able to work toward better futures. Last year, your financial support allowed us to provide services to 15,696

individuals – services that kept families in their homes; alleviated hunger; allowed people to gain greater financial stability; and that prepared our community's youngest and most vulnerable children for success in school.

Thank you for providing hope to all of the children and adults who come through our doors each day. I hope this newsletter brings you half the amount of joy that you bring to so many people right here in our community each day.

With gratitude,

Vi See
Executive Director

A place to call their own

How your gift helped Crystal and her family to reach their dream of home ownership

When Crystal and her family first arrived in Lincoln, they had nothing to their name but a couple of suitcases and bus tickets. Without anywhere else to go, her family lived in a hotel room for months. Each night, Crystal struggled to hold back the tears as she rocked her child to sleep. "I felt like a terrible mother," she recalls, "that I couldn't give my son a real home."

But Crystal was determined to achieve something better, driven by the love for her family. She enrolled in college classes to continue pursuit of a degree, found employment, and eventually moved her family into an apartment. Yet Crystal still dreamed of something even greater...of owning her own home.

Made possible through the financial support of donors like you, Crystal was able to enroll in our Individual Development Account program, which provides financial education and matched savings opportunities for low-to moderate-income individuals for the purchase of a first-time home, post-secondary education, or small business start-up. In the program, Crystal began working on fixing her credit and saving for a down-payment on a home – something she never thought she'd get



Crystal and her family pictured outside of the home your gift helped them to purchase

the opportunity to do otherwise.

"I started crying the day we closed on our house," Crystal said. "Without you, and the words you gave me, I would still be lying in my bed because I was so embarrassed about who I was and how I was living. You gave me one key and you changed everything."

Nearly two years after purchasing their home, Crystal and her family are thriving. Thank you for investing in their dream, as well as those of so many others who are working hard to reach economic stability.

Dwight and Martha can't say "Thank you" enough

When his beloved wife Martha was being hospitalized for health complications due to cancer, Dwight Peterson thought that life couldn't possibly feel emptier. That was, until he was diagnosed with cancer himself two weeks later...

It seemed like an unbelievable scenario – one that Dwight struggled to believe himself. You see, up until very recently, Dwight and Martha had lived a good life – a life free of much pain and suffering. They'd raised their children right here in Lincoln, owned their own home, and had jobs that afforded them the ability to live comfortably, even after they retired. Never once did they have to ask for help; nor did they ever plan to.

But neither one of them could have predicted that cancer would strike both of them in within a matter a two-week time period. Neither one of them could have predicted that they'd have to deplete their savings to pay medical bills; that they'd have to worry about how they were going to put food on the table or pay

When their finances had been depleted due to costly medical bills, your gift kept them safe and warm in their home.



their utility bills. And on a cold autumn day when they received a shut-off notice from their utility company, they knew they had to act quickly. They knew they had to ask for help.

Thanks to your financial support to our Gift of Warmth Campaign, we were able to provide Dwight and Martha with the emergency financial assistance necessary to reconnect their utilities – to keep them safe and warm in their home in their time of need. When we called to let them know

we'd be able to help, Dwight was driving Martha back from the hospital where she had just received her chemo treatment. He had to pull over because he was too overcome with emotion – thanking us through tears.

It's a wonderful feeling to know that you have made a difference in someone's life. We hope you know how much your financial support means to people like Martha and Dwight – to the thousands who come to us each year in similar situations. *Thank you.*

Your gifts to **The Gathering Place** help to serve nearly **30,000 meals** to people who are hungry each year.

We're seeking someone to cook these meals – will you help us spread the word?

As a Gathering Place donor, you understand how important it is that everyone has something hot to eat at night. With over 40,000 people who are food-insecure in Lincoln, the need for the free evening meals served at The Gathering Place seems to be greater than ever. Your support is so critical in keeping those who are hungry in our community nourished.

You may be aware that our dedicated Gathering Place Administrator, Michael Ryan, has been facing struggles with his health over the past year. As Michael takes much-needed time to focus on his

own care and recovery, you have been chipping in even more lately to lend a helping hand. This help has been so appreciated, and crucial in ensuring The Gathering Place is able to continue operating as normal.

As the demand for evening meals continues to be high, we are hoping to recruit your help to find the perfect candidate to serve as our Gathering Place Operations Assistant.

The Operations Assistant prepares a hot meal to be served at 5:00 p.m. each week night, coordinates food delivery, cleans and

sanitizes kitchen utensils and food preparation areas, and oversees daily operations in Michael's absence. The ideal candidate is someone who cares deeply about The Gathering Place's mission and has a few hours each day to help out. We expect this person to work about 20 hours per week.

Could this person be you? If you or someone you know is interested in helping out as our Operations Assistant, please apply at <http://www.communityactionatwork.org/about/career/>. Your continued financial support of The Gathering Place and help with spreading the word about this opportunity is so appreciated!



David is able to have a hot meal each night thanks to you.

Your famous home cooking wanted!

We know you have passion for feeding those who are hungry, but we are curious: do you also love to cook or bake?

We would love for kind individuals like you to share your homemade cookies, brownies, or other dessert bars for meals served at The Gathering Place. Desserts are needed to feed approximately 100 people each week night.

If you're interested in providing a homemade dish to share for an evening meal at The Gathering Place once, or perhaps on a recurring basis, contact Heather Loughman at (402) 875-9339 or hloughman@communityactionatwork.org.



Note from Heather Loughman, Development Manager

Here to make your giving experience the best it can be!

You have passion for the community and the people in it. You've entrusted your hard-earned dollars in us to fulfill this passion. The power of this exchange is profound. I want you to know that it is my absolute priority to ensure your giving experience with Community Action is the most rewarding experience possible. If you'd ever like to get together, learn about additional ways to get involved, or simply have questions, please contact me at (402) 875-9339 or hloughman@communityactionatwork.org. *Look forward to connecting soon!*

Heather



Children NEED YOU to be their heroes!

VOLUNTEER

Did you know that the simple act of reading to a child for 15 minutes per day could make a significant difference in their ability to achieve success? We are always looking for kind people like you to help out in our Head Start programs. To inquire, contact Georgann Roth, Volunteer Resources Coordinator, at (402) 875-9320 or groth@communityactionatwork.org.

DONATE

\$25 provides a set of blocks for a classroom for toddlers to foster cognitive development

\$55 provides two children with nutritious meals for one month

\$100 provides 10 pre-schoolers with books to practice literacy development

\$150 keeps an infant in clean diapers for a year

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

My name _____

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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*

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For more information contact:

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