



# Hope Inside



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## Getting ready for kindergarten one song, one book, one interaction at a time

*Your investment has given Alya a voice.*

"I see red!" young Alya says as the flash from the camera signals, ready to take her picture.

"Open!" she says, pointing to the window in her living room. "Make purple play dough!" she responds enthusiastically when asked by her Early Head Start Family Educator what she wants to do during their next home visit.

From an average three-year old, these words might seem insignificant. **But coming from Alya, they are extraordinary.**

You see, just two months ago, Alya – who is enrolled in our Early Head Start Home-based program – hadn't spoken a single word. As a child being raised within a bilingual family, this is not uncommon. Since birth, Alya had been exposed to both English and Arabic, which can sometimes cause confusion as dual-language learning children are developing oral language. But Alya's delays still caused her mother, Salma, to worry.

"She didn't know how to say 'please' or 'thank you' two months ago," Salma says, after hearing Alya say both words to her Family Educator. A look of relief and pride sweeps across her face as she gazes upon her daughter paging through a book on the floor.

The progress Alya has made in the past couple of months has been remarkable. But it

hasn't happened on its own. It is the result of a rigorous plan co-developed by Alya's family and their Early Head Start Family Educator. The plan called for daily activities and lessons centered on Alya's language development – singing songs, reading books, naming objects and animals and colors (in both Arabic and English), and other activities to immerse Alya in the world of language.

At a recent home visit, the work Alya's family has been putting in daily to support her language development was apparent. Alya greeted her Early Head Start Family Educator with a big "Hi, Danielle!"

as she walked through their front door. She was excited to see that Danielle had brought a song book, and smiled from ear to ear when everyone applauded after she concluded the ABC song "... next time won't you sing with me?"

Considering Alya wasn't talking at all two months ago, it was incredible to watch her page through her favorite books and point out the red square, the sad mouse, the baby's eyes and nose... to listen to her respond with

"meow" when asked what sound a kitty makes; with "carrots" when asked what rabbits like to eat.

"Alya's progress is breathtaking," says Danielle. "When I see her tiny hands moving as we sing 'twinkle, twinkle' I simply cannot believe how far she's come. Her progress is a testament to her family's hard work to support her development."



Danielle, Early Head Start Family Educator, and Alya reading a favorite book together.

There are so many children in our Head Start programs like Alya... children who often face more barriers to learning than others, but – with the right support – have the potential to thrive. Without your support, children like Alya would not get the opportunities they need to develop to their fullest potential. Your contributions to our Head Start programs are preparing our community's most vulnerable children for success – in kindergarten and beyond. Thank you!

# We will soon be transitioning 40 families from homelessness to housing

**YOU can bring these families the comforts of home as the holiday season approaches.**

Dear Friend,

I've always loved this time of year in Nebraska. The transition from summer to fall seems sort of magical – it's like the fields of green and gold make the sky a little bluer... and the excitement of back-to-school season make the air a little lighter...and the chilly evenings make our homes a little warmer, a little cozier. It is during this time of year that I am especially grateful for my home and all of the comforts it provides – a bed to sleep, a Keurig to make hot tea, a chair to relax and regrow, a

window to open to breathe in the crisp autumn air.

It is difficult to imagine that many in our community do not get to experience these same comforts. According to the Lincoln Homeless Coalition, there are over 600 people experiencing homelessness right here in Lincoln and many more who are at risk.

Community Action is proud to be one of many organizations in Lincoln working to prevent and end homelessness with the support of donors like you. And today, I am excited to share with you that in the next several months, we will be housing 40 families experiencing homelessness right here in Lincoln – just in time for the holidays.

**Will you bring these families the comforts of home?** All will be coming from homeless situations and will not have the supplies, furnishings, linens, and other goods to make their new houses homes. **But you can bring them these comforts!** I've enclosed a list of items we will gladly accept as we move families into their new homes. Together, we can ensure that everyone in Lincoln has a home that makes them feel warm, comforted, and safe.

Thank you for all of the ways you make a difference in the lives of those who need you in our community.

With gratitude,



Vi See  
Executive Director



*Me with our Supportive Housing Administrator, Lee Hefebower, who will be leading our efforts to house families.*

*P.S. If you would prefer to give monetarily to benefit our Supportive Housing Program and families served, simply use the reply card on this letter and designate "Supportive Housing Program."*



## So many babies!

**A new program year brings new faces to our early childhood education centers.**

August was a busy month within our early childhood education programs. As we successfully transitioned 45 children to kindergarten, we also welcomed 50 new children (mostly babies) into our centers to begin their developmental journeys. The energy and excitement of a new program year has been apparent – children have been getting into their daily routines, teachers have been busy assessing each child's developmental needs and crafting lesson plans, and our family engagement/health services staff have been working with families to create goal plans, get

well-child checks scheduled, and ensure each child is up to date on immunizations and screenings.

We love the beginning of new program years, as they bring a promise of great things to come. Over the next year, we will watch as these children take their first steps, speak their first words, make their first friends, and develop their own unique personalities. With each passing day, they will become more and more ready for kindergarten and for the rest of their lives.

**It's important that you know these children would not get this remarkable opportunity without you.**

If you would ever like a tour of our centers, or help out in classrooms, let Heather know at [hroughman@communityactionatwork.org](mailto:hroughman@communityactionatwork.org) or (402) 875-9339.



**Guess what?**

We recently received a grant from the Corporation for National and Community Services that will allow us to implement a Foster Grandparents Program in Lincoln. Foster Grandparents will be placed in our early childhood education centers to support the developmental needs of enrolled children.



## Keeping it FRESH at The Gathering Place

**Your support helped us to incorporate fresh produce in 100% of meals served in August.**

Your loyal support of The Gathering Place allows us to go above and beyond to ensure those facing hunger in Lincoln are provided hot meals at night. It ensures that our guests are not only served food, but full meals that are tasty, balanced, and nutritious. After all, the food we consume provides the fuel our bodies need to be strong and our minds to be bright. It helps us to maintain optimal health and reach our potential.

In the month of August, thanks to donors like you, we were able to incorporate fresh produce into 100% of the meals served at

The Gathering Place. Our guests have been enjoying the meals, which have included casseroles, pasta, salads, and more. Thanks to donations from Produce from the Heart, we've also been able to distribute fresh fruits and veggies for guests to take with them to enjoy later.

This year is The Gathering Place's 35th anniversary of providing meals to those facing hunger. The Gathering Place's work to fight hunger for all of these years simply would not be possible without your continued support. We hope that you will join us on October 25th to gather together for a meal to celebrate the work your contributions make possible. See details on the back of this letter and keep an eye out for a formal invitation soon!

## Driven to succeed

**A new vehicle has given Kenneth the opportunity to achieve his goals and pursue his dreams.**

Have you ever stopped to think about how much you rely upon your vehicle? Vehicles, quite literally, make it possible for us to achieve our goals. They get us to and from our jobs, medical appointments, our children's schools, the grocery store... and they allow us the ability to travel to visit friends and family near and far; to enjoy all that life has to offer. Vehicles help us to transform our dreams into reality.

But for many in our community, attaining a safe and reliable vehicle is not feasible. Vehicles are expensive and often require getting a loan. And in order to get a loan, purchasers need to have a positive credit history and should have a sizable down payment. For youth who are just starting out on their own, this can be challenging. And it is especially challenging for youth aging

out of the foster care system.

Such challenges of adulthood were apparent for Kenneth shortly after he graduated from high school. After being in foster care throughout the majority of his teenage years, Kenneth – like so many other youth who age out of the system – had to find a way to make it on his own. He knew he needed to be able to work in order to achieve his dreams to go to college and eventually buy his own home. But he did not have a vehicle, which limited his job prospects. And getting a vehicle would be tough. He did not have an established credit history, nor did he have the savings necessary for a down payment.

Kenneth was connected to our Opportunity Passport™ program, offered in partnership with the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. In the program,

he learned strategies for saving, establishing credit, how to get a loan, and successfully managing personal finances. He was also able to receive savings match to put a down-payment on a new vehicle – a 2009 Chevy Malibu. Our partners at Pinnacle Bank assisted Kenneth with the financing of the vehicle, offering a competitive interest rate to make car ownership as affordable as possible.

"I have really appreciated working with the program and Pinnacle Bank," said Kenneth. "Everyone has been so nice and understanding. They truly want to help you."

Since Kenneth purchased his vehicle a month and a half ago, he has been putting in the work to achieve his goals. He has recently been able to get a full-time job and has plans to eventually enroll at Southeast Community College to

attain a degree in Building Construction Technology. His ultimate goal is to buy his own home – a dream he is working toward every day with the support of the Opportunity Passport™ program, its partners, and donors like you. He is also happy that having a vehicle allows him to travel to spend time with family.

We are always looking for kind people/organizations like you to support young people like Kenneth as they transition into adulthood. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Sara Drueke at (402) 875-9347 or [sdrueke@communityactionatwork.org](mailto:sdrueke@communityactionatwork.org).

*Do you remember the day you purchased your first vehicle? This is Kenneth signing the loan documents as he purchased his. It was a great day!*



# Have you heard **the good news?**

**We've recently opened a new office in Wahoo to better serve near-homeless and homeless households in Saunders/Rural Lancaster Counties.**

Earlier this summer, we celebrated the opening of a new office in Wahoo. From this office, we will be operating our Emergency Services program, which provides financial assistance with rent and utilities to near-homeless and homeless households paired with case management.

The opening of this office responds to a significant community need for this type of assistance. In Saunders County, over 2,000 individuals are living in poverty – a number that has grown by 55% over the past 15 years. Households living in poverty are often just one life event away from crisis.

We are thankful for the opportunity to make our Emergency Services program more accessible to those in Saunders and Rural Lancaster Counties. Ensuring individuals are safely and stably housed is the first step in empowering them to reach economic stability. And it is only because of the support from donors like you that we are able to build our capacity to serve those in need!



*Community Action board members, staff, and Wahoo Chamber of Commerce members cut ribbon at new facility on July 12, 2017.*

## You're invited to The Gathering Place's 35th Anniversary Event on October 25th!

The Gathering Place is celebrating its 35th year of providing meals to those facing hunger in Lincoln. In honor of this momentous occasion, we will be doing exactly what our founders sought out to do when they first opened the doors in 1982: gathering together as one to enjoy a meal (catered by Valentino's). We hope that you will join us in fellowship to celebrate The Gathering Place and the impact it has made on the city of Lincoln.

**When:** October 25, 2017: 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM (brief remarks at 5:45)

**Where:** The Gathering Place  
1448 E Street, Lincoln, NE 68508

**Parking:** Street parking will be available; overflow parking available at McPhee Elementary School

**You may have been wondering whether or not we are doing another match campaign for The Gathering Place. Great news: we are, and we'll be kicking it off at this event! Be on the lookout for more information soon!**

## Save the dates for **Kampout for Kids: December 1st and 2nd**



We hope to see you at the 26th annual Kampout for Kids event in partnership with 104.1 The Blaze! This year's event will be held on December 1st (10:00 AM to midnight) and 2nd (8:00 AM to noon) at Spikes Beach Bar and Grille (2300 Judson

Lincoln). At the event, we will be accepting toy donations for children who would otherwise go without during the holidays and monetary donations to support our mission! There will also be some great silent auction items to bid on, so be sure to save the dates. We'd love to see you there!

**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
- Supportive Housing Program

I would like to designate my gift to the following program  
*(e.g. The Gathering Place, Supportive Housing Program)*

\_\_\_\_\_

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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