



COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP OF LANCASTER AND SAUNDERS COUNTIES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Community Action Receives Community Health Endowment Grant to Address Nutrition and Food Security Needs of Vulnerable Children and Families

Lincoln, NE – Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties has received a \$167,893 two year grant from Community Health Endowment of Lincoln to address nutrition and food security needs of children and families enrolled in its Head Start programs.

The grant will allow the agency to build upon Growing Great Beginnings, a childhood obesity prevention project originally piloted by the agency in 2013 with CHE funding. Over the past five years, Growing Great Beginnings interventions have resulted in positive behavior change outcomes closely tied to healthy weight in children including increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, decreased consumption of sugary beverages, and increased physical activity.

Community Action will build upon the success of the project to refine its evaluation design and introduce a new group-based nutrition education offering to Head Start families modeled after a project called "FEAST: Food – Education – Access – Support - Together" (formerly "Groceryships"). FEAST provides support on three levels: educational: participants learn about nutrition, healthy cooking, and shopping skills; economic: participants receive grocery scholarships to secure healthy food to try at home; and psychosocial: participants benefit from group support focused on emotional eating and overcoming food addiction.

The FEAST model, which has proven to result in positive outcomes, will respond to needs among Head Start families.

"Many of our families want to eat healthier, but doing so is often difficult due to barriers related to the realities of living in poverty," said Jill Bomberger, Early Head Start and Head Start Director at Community Action. "Trying new foods or changing diets is often risky for our families, as many do not have the luxury of utilizing their limited budgets to buy a food their child may or may not like. The FEAST offering will allow families to try

new foods risk-free while teaching them accessible ways to make the changes they desire.”

In addition to implementing the FEAST intervention, the grant will allow Community Action the opportunity to refine the evaluation model for its Growing Great Beginnings curriculum.

“Our goal is to eventually make our Growing Great Beginnings curriculum usable for other early childhood programs desiring to implement their own nutrition education activities,” said Bomberger. “The first step in getting there is to assure the accuracy and fidelity of our evaluation design. We are thankful to Community Health Endowment for allowing us the opportunity to do this work.”

The grant period will begin July 1st. Businesses and community members interested in supporting this project and its activities – including cooking classes, gardening activities, and more – are welcomed and encouraged to help. For more information, contact Jill Bomberger at (402) 875-9336 or jbomberger@communityactionatwork.org.

About Community Action

Community Action empowers people living in poverty to reach economic stability. Its 17 programs address the causes and condition of poverty in four impact areas: Early Childhood Education, Homelessness Prevention, Financial and Family Well-Being, and Hunger Relief. For more information about Community Action, visit www.communityactionatwork.org or call (402) 471-4515.

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