



Hope Inside



Board of Directors

President: Gail Steen
 Vice President: DeLynn Hay
 Treasurer: Lorene Bartos
 Secretary: Debbie Mumm
 Members:
 Chad Blahak
 Lester Buckley
 Doug Emery
 Lisa Hale
 Scott Larson
 Kal Lausterer
 Christine Marvin
 Jay Steinacher
 Amanda Sykes
 Ashley Ulmer
 Jaylen Vella

Management Team

Vi See, Executive Director
 Jeri Winkelmann, Chief Financial Officer
 Jill Bomberger, Early Head Start and Head Start Director
 Steve Langdon, Human Resources Director
 Michelle Martinez, Community Services Director
 Heather Loughman, Communications and Development Director

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 } Marilyn and Gabriel's Story
- 2 } Executive Director's Message
- 2 } Remembering Ruth Thone
- 3 } Mariah's Story
- 3 } Kortnie's Story
- 4 } New Playground at Health 360 Head Start Center
- 4 } Head Start Classroom Sponsorship Opportunity

A college diploma, a new career, and a bright future ahead

Your support has given Marilyn and her son the opportunity to realize their dreams.

Marilyn and her 11-year old son Gabriel sit across from each other at the kitchen table of their Lincoln apartment with a notebook and a pen. They are creating their "wants and needs" list for their future home. Their wants: a yard with enough space to plant a garden, and a big kitchen to prepare big family meals. Their needs: an accessible floor plan with enough space for Gabriel to maneuver his wheelchair.

"I also think we need an extra room for my toys!" says Gabriel. Marilyn smiles and adds it to the needs column.

Marilyn and Gabriel are mother and son, but in many ways, they are also a team. After Marilyn had Gabriel in her early teens, both mother and child entered into the foster care system. Though Marilyn had many challenges in front of her with being a teen mom and few family members to lean on for support, she made a decision at a young age to do her best for her child; to give him something better than she had.

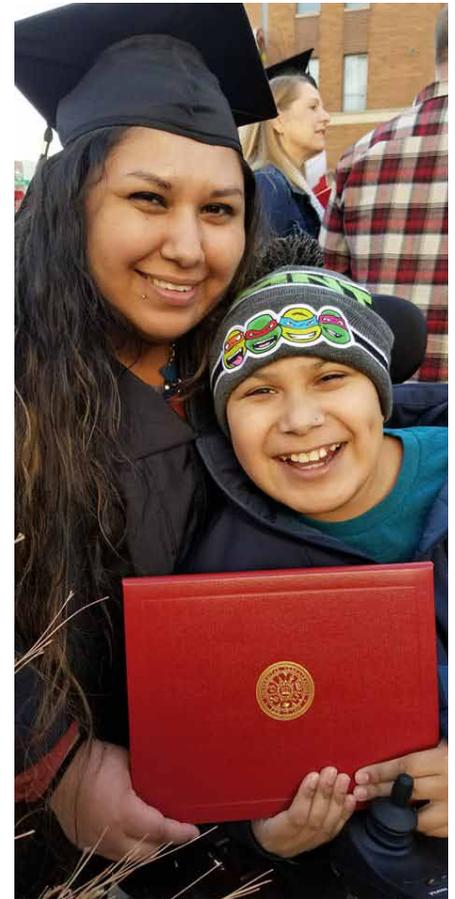
While Marilyn studied hard and got through high school, aging out of foster care brought about significant challenges. She and her son were on their own.

"It was hard," says Marilyn. "I really had to lean on resources available in the community to make that transition."

Among the community resources Marilyn leaned on was Opportunity Passport™, a Community Action program sponsored by the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. The program provided Marilyn with the support she needed to gain greater financial stability. She worked on building her credit, she started saving, and most of all, she regained a sense of hope for the future.

After years of hard work, Marilyn graduated with a bachelor's degree from UNL in December, becoming the first in her family to graduate from college. She's recently been hired full-time by Lincoln Public Schools as a first grade teacher. Teaching, Marilyn says, is something she's wanted to do since childhood and looks forward to the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of her students.

"I feel like I will be able to relate to them on a different level just based on what I've been through," says Marilyn. "I



Marilyn and Gabriel at Marilyn's graduation from UNL.

look forward to learning with them."

And as for Gabriel...he says he wants to be a teacher someday, too. Like his mom, his hero.

Your financial support of Community Action provides opportunities for people like Marilyn to reach their potential and build the best possible life for their families. Thank you for your important investment in our community and those in it.

Celebrating another Give to Lincoln Day record

Thank you so much for your incredible support!

Dear Friend,

As you can probably imagine, May 31st was a very exciting day for us here at Community Action. We once again participated in Give to Lincoln Day, a day of giving sponsored by Lincoln Community Foundation and several other partners. This year, over \$4.6 million was contributed to kind people like you to over 400 nonprofits across the city. Thanks to your incredible generosity, Community Action raised \$34,441 of this total, far surpassing our previous record from the year before.

Your incredible showing of support is telling of your care for the people in this

community – *your neighbors* – who need your kindness now more than ever.

In this newsletter, you will read about a few success stories of our participants, both past and present, whose successes and paths toward better futures have been made possible because of your care and investment. You'll read about Marilyn – a former foster child and teen mother who has recently been hired as a first grade teacher at LPS. You'll read about Kortnie, a young woman we served several years ago who is now in graduate school studying to become a nurse practitioner and getting ready to purchase her very first home. And you'll read about Mariah, a single mother who has not only been able to move out of shelter and into permanent housing,

but also has a newfound sense of self-confidence and hope for the future. These stories represent few of the thousands of successes – big and small – we get to witness every day here at Community Action because of your support. Words cannot describe the magnitude your continued generosity is having on people right here in our community. And on behalf of each person we serve working hard every day toward a better future, I want to thank you.

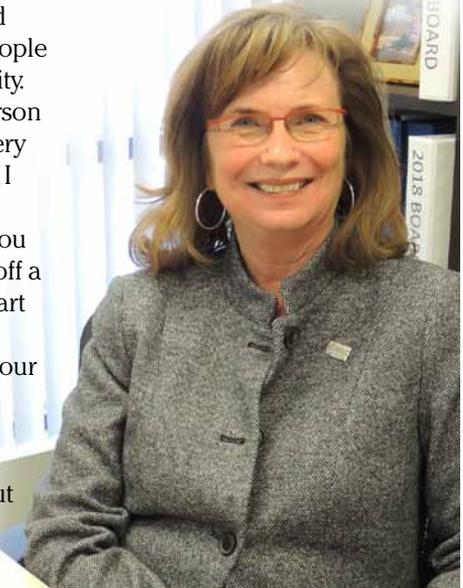
In closing, I want to let you know that we are kicking off a campaign for our Head Start programs, offering you the chance to sponsor one of our baby/toddler or preschool classrooms for the year. Please see the back panel for more information about this opportunity and don't

hesitate to reach out if you have any questions!

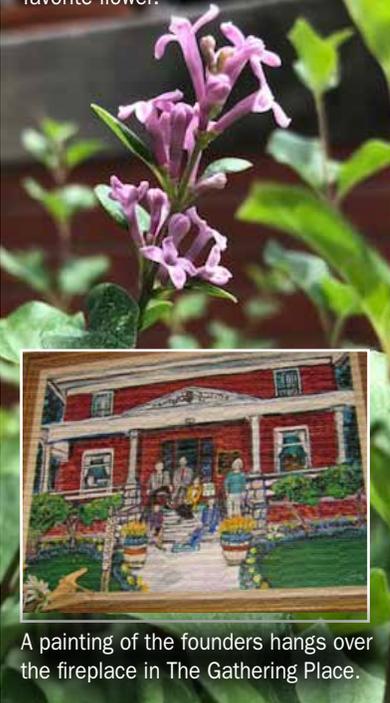
Thanks for being you.



Vi See
Executive Director



Gathering Place founders Dick and Linda Peterson, Don Tilley, and Joyce Sturdy met at The Gathering Place to plant a lilac bush in memory of Ruth, who passed away on May 3rd, 2018. A short time later, it started to bloom! Lilacs were Ruth's favorite flower.



A painting of the founders hangs over the fireplace in The Gathering Place.

Remembering Ruth Thone

An individual whose vision for a kinder, more inclusive community brought The Gathering Place to life.

If you didn't have the pleasure of knowing Ruth Thone personally, you likely knew of her. A Nebraska native, Thone held many roles in her 86 years of life, from Nebraska first lady, to activist, to author, and more. Indeed, Ruth had many accomplishments to her credit, including partnering with five other like-minded individuals (Naomi Hull, Dick and Linda Peterson, Don Tilley, and Joyce Sturdy) to bring The Gathering Place to Lincoln in 1982.

The Gathering Place, as the founders envisioned, would fill a spiritual void in Lincoln. It would be a place of hospitality – a place that didn't try to change people, but one that would provide the opportunity for change to happen. It would serve lunches and coffee and dessert. It would offer classes, workshops, and counseling to anyone who might benefit. And most of

all, it would serve as a space to just be – to be alone to self-reflect, to converse with others, and to discover one's talents and place in the community. "A ministry of hospitality," as it was referred to in a May 1982 *Lincoln Journal Star* article. And so it became.

As hunger became a growing issue in Lincoln, The Gathering Place evolved into its present status as a soup kitchen. But its beginnings as a ministry of hospitality brought to life by Ruth and her fellow founders can be felt at The Gathering Place to this day. When you walk through the front door, you immediately feel welcomed. You feel invited and encouraged to be who you are. And you feel like you matter.

We all know The Gathering Place as a very special institution in Lincoln. And it's special because of the love and care Ruth and her partners put into it 36 years ago. Ruth will be greatly missed, but because of your incredible support, her legacy will live on now and in years to come at The Gathering Place. We wish the Thone family and all who knew her condolences during their time of loss.

Thanks to you, Mariah has a home, but she has so much more...

For the first time in her life, she believes in herself

You can do it." "You've got this." "I believe in you."

If you have positive people in your life, you have probably heard these encouraging words many times before. Life is often overwhelming and scary and sometimes seemingly impossible. But it's often the people we surround ourselves with – our family, friends, and neighbors – who get us through those difficult times...who remind us of our capabilities and worth. There is great power to having positive relationships and support systems. And there is great opportunity that comes from being empowered by a fellow human being.

We serve many people who have seldom had an encouraging word spoken to them. People who have low self-esteem and self-worth...who feel hopeless. Mariah was one of them.

When Mariah was housed through our Supportive Housing Program, she had just given birth to her daughter and had

been living in an emergency shelter. Pregnant, she had become homeless after escaping a domestic violence situation...another person in a string of people in her life who should have cared about her, but didn't.

"When I first met Mariah, she kept thanking me for doing this for her...for getting her to this place where she could raise her child," said Aleah, Mariah's Supportive Housing Family Advocate. "But I told her 'Mariah, I didn't do anything – you did this, you made a decision to be in our program, you got here, and you're worth it.' And it's been amazing to see how far she's already progressed in the program."

With the empowering support provided by Aleah, and motivated to be the best mother possible to her daughter, Mariah has been working hard toward goals for herself. She's beginning counseling to focus on improving her mental health and is in the process of getting a driver's license – another thing she will need to achieve greater independence.

"I want to tell Mariah how proud I am of her, but that would be taking her power away," said Aleah. "I tell her instead that she should be proud of herself."



Kortnie with the vehicle she purchased in 2015 with savings and match provided through the Opportunity Passport™ program.

Remember Kortnie, our very first Opportunity Passport™ graduate?

She is still doing great! Here's an update on her success.

Do you remember the video we created to celebrate our 50th anniversary in 2015? One of the stories highlighted in it was that of Kortnie, a young woman who was working and going to school full-time and had become the first participant to make an asset purchase – a safe, reliable vehicle to drive to and from work and school – through our Opportunity Passport™ program. Three years later, Kortnie is continuing to thrive.

Since 2015, Kortnie has finished her undergraduate education and has been working as a nurse in the neuroscience division at a hospital in Lincoln. On top of working long hours as a nurse, Kortnie is in graduate school studying to become a family nurse practitioner. She is excited about things to come and has plans to purchase her very first home in the near future, a home she plans to stay in as she builds her career in Lincoln's healthcare industry. We celebrate Kortnie's incredible success, and thank you for making amazing long-term success stories like



Thanks for your investment, Kortnie is still thriving. She's now a nurse and studying to become a nurse practitioner!

hers possible through your continued financial support.

Oh yeah – she still has the car and uses it every day to get to and from work!



New playground at **Health 360 Head Start Center**

Thank you to the donors and volunteers who made it possible!

The 58 children enrolled at our Health 360 Head Start Center have a new playground – a Nature Explore outdoor classroom – thanks to a number of donors and volunteers. In 2017, Dimensions Educational Research Foundation wrote a grant proposal to Community Health Endowment of Lincoln to design a Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom at our Health 360 Head Start Center intended to connect children with nature as a way to enhance their health and well-being and support their development. The grant

was funded by CHE, allowing us to transform a previously pretty barren space into an immersive and interactive area that children have already begun to enjoy. Additional funding committed by Apples Way also supported development of the new playground, including the addition of a new shade structure to keep children protected from the sun during the hot summer months. Other generous donors also contributed to the project, including Campbell's Nursery, which donated some of the plants that have been incorporated into the design.

Our new outdoor classroom is lush with an array of plants and trees, has nature art and

music and movement sections for children to express their creativity, and has raised bed gardens that will be used to conduct gardening activities with children.

Earlier this month, volunteers from several area businesses – Union Bank & Trust, Inspiro Insurance, NRC Health, Indigo Bridge Books, Children's Hospital and Medical Center – and other kind individuals helped to install the new outdoor classroom. We thank them so much for taking the time to help us out – we couldn't have done it without them! We would like to thank United Way for assisting with the recruitment of great helping hands, too!



You can put your name on the future of our community by sponsoring a Head Start classroom.

Your gift for the year will provide a classroom with all of the supplies and resources needed to care for and support the developmental needs of children. As a classroom sponsor, your name will be placed on a plaque outside of the classroom of your choosing, and you will have the opportunity to hear from the children you're impacting throughout the year. If your family, business, or group is interested in investing in the lives of our community's children via classroom sponsorship, contact Heather at (402) 875-9339 or hloughman@communityactionatwork.org. We'd love to talk to you!



Two of the groups that helped out with installation – Inspiro and UBT. We can't thank you enough!

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 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, Supportive Housing Program)

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:

Heather Loughman, *Communications and Development Director*
 (402) 875-9339 | hloughman@communityactionatwork.org



210 O Street
 Lincoln, NE 68508
www.communityactionatwork.org