



# Hope Inside



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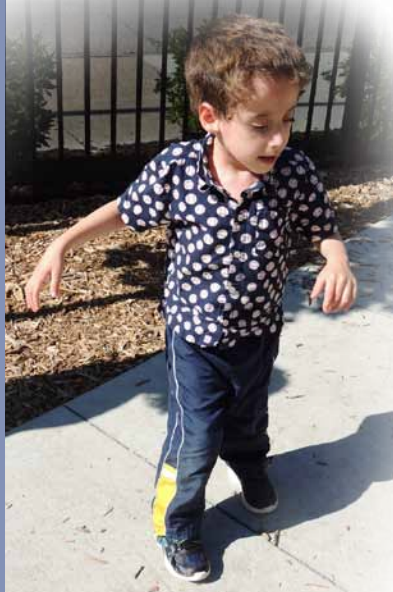
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## Walking on his own

*An incredible account of how your investment in Head Start is helping Elijah to gain confidence on his own two feet.*

To meet Elijah is to see all the love in the world reflected in one small being. Each time you see him, you feel inexplicable joy as he greets you with a smile... a hug... a request to take a picture with your camera, should you happen to have one. Your happiness cannot be contained as he tells you about some of his favorite things, like cooking pancakes with his dad or playing wheel chair tennis (a newly discovered activity). To interact with Elijah is to forget about workloads, deadlines, news headlines, and the humidity of a summer afternoon. For a moment, you



are able to just be. A sense of peace washes over you as you are taken back to the feeling of being a child... the wonder, the magic, the sweet innocence.

What you would never guess when you meet Elijah, however, is how many obstacles he has had to overcome in his short time on earth. You would never guess that within 10 days of birth, he had to undergo two surgeries – one on his spinal cord and one on his brain – to treat Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus, conditions affecting his central nervous system. You would just see a spirited five-year-old boy... one who is excited about life and happy to be doing whatever it is he is doing.

Elijah's Spina Bifida has made it difficult for him to walk on his own. He has used walkers and wheel chairs to get around, but with each passing day, he has been using them less and less. Elijah's Head Start teacher, Miss Heather, has observed tremendous progress since he enrolled at our Health 360 center in October.

"When Elijah first started at our center, he was almost exclusively using a walker to get around the classroom and playground," said Miss Heather. "Now, he hardly ever has to use a walker and is able to stand and walk on his own. I am so impressed with how far he has come."

Elijah has also made tremendous progress in other



Elijah (center) poses happily with his siblings and mom and dad.

areas of development as a result of his participation in Head Start. "Elijah has grown so much since the beginning of the school year," said Miss Heather. "He now uses his words to communicate when he's upset, and loves to engage in classroom activities – especially if they involve art!"

Elijah's mom, Kathryn, has also observed this positive developmental progress. "His creativity has really blossomed since he first began the program," she said. "He likes to create picture books with stories, and has really developed a love for books! And to know that he is walking now – it's something I've dreamed about since he was born. It's so comforting to know that he is in such a supportive environment while my husband and I are working to secure our family's future."

To meet Elijah today – coming into his own – is to see the impact of your investment in Head Start. To look in his bright little eyes is to see not where he's been, but where he is going. Thank you for your belief in and support of children like Elijah.

# Children living in poverty face increased risk for obesity and unfavorable health

## We are working to change this, and so can you!

### Summer Greetings –

When you were a child, did you ever garden with your family? For me, this was one of my favorite memories. Each spring, my mother anticipated the arrival of the seed catalogs. I remember leafing through to help her pick out our seeds and plants to be delivered by mail. I grew up on a cattle ranch, so our garden was huge. My mother used the daily garden watering as a lesson in making seeds sprout, and also in physics because we syphoned water out of the pasture's water tank. Our vegetables to be eaten year-round were grown in the summer. My favorite garden snack was, and still is, a shiny green pepper.

At Community Action, we love to garden with the children and families enrolled in our Early Head Start and Head Start programs. And not just because it's fun, but because research demonstrates that children will be more likely to try a vegetable/fruit if they have had a part in the production process.

Gardening is just one of the activities we conduct with children and families to encourage their development of healthy habits. It is part of a larger nutrition education/obesity prevention project within our Early Head Start and Head Start programs called Growing Great Beginnings, made possible with grants from the Community Health Endowment of Lincoln and Partnership for a Healthy Lincoln. Sheila Stratton,

our Nutrition and Wellness Coach, leads us in carrying out this work. In addition to developing gardening activities, Sheila meets regularly with families to help them set and work toward nutrition/physical activity goals. These range from cooking more meals at home, to establishing mealtime routines, to increasing daily consumption of fruits and vegetables. The goals families set and work toward have a direct impact on their children's health, which is so important to their overall development. We are so proud of our families' efforts to create positive changes.

This work will continue to be an important component of our work within Early Head Start and Head Start,



Me with Sheila near our raised bed gardens. Haven't our children done a great job keeping them looking beautiful?

### **but we cannot do it alone.**

There are some great ways you can help children and families "Grow Great Beginnings", too – just see our wish list on the right-hand side of this letter! Thank you for your continued support of our work to fight the causes and conditions of poverty. I appreciate you, and look forward to talking soon. Enjoy summer!

With gratitude,

Vi See  
Executive Director

## Filling stomachs and warming hearts



### Thank you for bringing the comforts of home to Gathering Place guests.

What is it about a cup of coffee or tea that encourages people to come together to visit? We've been using these beverages as an excuse to get together for centuries, and their unifying powers are definitely evident at The Gathering Place. Each evening before meals, guests

congregate on the front porch, in the foyer, or around tables and converse with coffee/tea in-hand. It is one of the many ways our guests feel comforted – like they are at home.

As a dedicated Gathering Place donor, you understand the power of your contributions – **that you are doing much more than filling stomachs; you are warming hearts.**

Need for meals at The Gathering Place continues to be high. In May, we served 2,505 meals – up significantly compared to the same period of time in 2015 and 2016. It is only because of your continued financial support that we are able to keep pace with this demand. We are so thankful for the many ways you contribute to the important work of The Gathering Place.

### New beverage counter/coffee and tea machines needed at The Gathering Place. You can help.

The beverage counter at The Gathering Place, where guests get their coffee and tea each night, is in need of an upgrade.

An upgraded counter with new coffee and tea machines will increase our efficiency and ability to best serve guests. The total estimated cost of this upgrade is approximately \$4,000. If you are interested in contributing, please use the rely form on the back of this letter and designate "Gathering Place – beverage counter." We would love to discuss with you a way to honor your gift as well. For more information, contact Heather at [houghman@communityactionatwork.org](mailto:houghman@communityactionatwork.org) or (402) 875-9339.



# Our community's youngest are Growing Great Beginnings

Syllas first developed a love for gardening and cooking during the pilot year of our Growing Great Beginnings project back in 2013. She delighted in harvesting produce and chopping it up with her tiny butter knife, cracking eggs into a bowl, and stirring all ingredients together to create something healthy and tasty. Now seven, these passions have not faded. Syllas loves to help her mom pick out and prepare fruits and vegetables. She and her family have even planted their very first garden this year, and Syllas has taken great pride in tending to the plants. She looks forward to the end of summer when she will have tomatoes, green beans, corn, and other favorite veggies to help her mom incorporate into meals. For ideas how you can help children like Syllas develop lifelong healthy habits, check out our wish list!

*Syllas hard at work tending to her family's newly constructed raised bed garden!*



## Want to help children Grow Great Beginnings? Here are some great, fun ways to do so!

**\$25** – provides five pairs of children's gardening gloves and five packages of seeds

**\$50** – provides five children with sets of children's gardening tools

**\$75** – provides five families with ingredients to prepare healthy meals with our Nutrition and Wellness Coach

**\$100** – provides five families with cook books full of healthy, affordable meal ideas

To designate a gift to the Growing Great Beginnings project, use the reply card on the back of this letter. Other ideas? Contact Heather at (402) 875-9339 or [houghman@communityactionatwork.org](mailto:houghman@communityactionatwork.org). Thank you for your support!



# 421 babies, toddlers, and preschoolers – who would otherwise go without – to receive five brand new books.

**Thank you for your tremendous support of this effort!**

It is with great excitement that we share that **we have officially met our Book Campaign goal!** Thanks to you, **all 421** of the babies, toddlers, and preschoolers enrolled in our Early Head Start and Head Start programs in Lincoln and Wahoo will get five brand new books to keep. Some already have – these are pictures of just some of the children enrolled in our centers who have

been so happy to get brand new books. One child even exclaimed, "you mean I get to take these home?!" And we got to say "yes" because of your generosity. We thank you so much for your contributions to this campaign, which was inspired and lead by our friend, Sue Quambusch. You should be proud of your role in ensuring successful futures for some of our community's most at-risk children. Lincoln is better today – *and will be tomorrow* – because of you.

*These toddlers took a break from lunchtime to check out their new books: "Pocket Piggies: Opposites!" by Richard Austin.*



*She was SO happy to receive "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" by Caroline Jane Church. She loved the sparkly cover!*

# Your support has given **Malik the opportunity to fulfill his dream**

We are proud to share that Malik has become the most recent participant to complete our Individual Development Accounts (IDA) program, which provides 4:1 savings match for postsecondary education, small business start-up/ expansion, or a first-time home purchase. Malik, an Iraqi refugee, is utilizing his savings and match to pursue a master's in education. This is something he has dreamed of since he first settled in the United States. He is excited about the opportunity to continue growing – to provide the best life possible for his family.

The savings match and financial education services provided through our IDA and other Financial Well-being programs is only possible because of the support of friends like you. Thank you for providing Malik – and so many others – the opportunity to work toward long-term economic stability.



Community Action's Alfred Pettinger (right) presents Malik with his hard-earned savings and match



**Heather Loughman named Community Action's Communications and Development Director**

Heather Loughman, who previously served as Community Action's Development Manager, has accepted a promotion to the position of Communications and Development Director. Heather has been employed with Community Action for nearly six years and has demonstrated great success in building relationships with the community, securing funding, and developing the agency's written/ social communications. She is excited about the opportunity to work with you, and would love to hear any ideas you may have about how to help. She can be reached at (402) 875-9339 or [houghman@communityactionatwork.org](mailto:houghman@communityactionatwork.org)



Over \$15,600 raised for Community Action's poverty-fighting efforts on Give to Lincoln Day 2017 – another record! Thank you so much for your contributions!

2017 was a record year for Give to Lincoln Day – not just overall (over \$3.6 million raised total), but for Community Action, too! We thank you so much for your incredibly generous contributions to

support our efforts to feed those facing hunger, to prepare our community's youngest for kindergarten, to prevent homelessness, and to otherwise fight against the causes and conditions of poverty in Lincoln.

With over 40,000 people living in poverty in Lincoln alone, you understand the need and your ability to make a difference. We thank you for bringing us such joy – on Give to Lincoln Day and throughout the 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
- I would like to designate my gift to the following program  
(e.g. The Gathering Place, Growing Great Beginnings)

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 | [houghman@communityactionatwork.org](mailto:houghman@communityactionatwork.org)



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