



# Hope Inside



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## “I feel like one of the lucky ones.”

*Lindsey reflects on his past, the power of a big brother, and comic books.*

Lindsey was seven when he was removed from his home. His parents moved him and his siblings to Lincoln hoping to escape a world they so desperately wanted to leave behind... a world defined by addiction to crack cocaine. But moving wasn't enough to break the hold that drugs had on Lindsey's parents. And Lindsey and his brothers lost everything they had ever known in the blink of an eye. "I don't blame my parents," Lindsey says, now in his mid-twenties and working toward his degree to someday become a high school physical education teacher and coach. "Whether or not I reach my goals is my responsibility."

Lindsey is wise beyond his years. His refreshing outlook on life makes you believe he's never been hurt... like he didn't spend his childhood bouncing between countless foster families and group homes. But he is quick to say that he didn't get to be that way on his own. He owes everything, he says, to his older brother.

"I really couldn't have gotten to this place without my big brother," he says. "He is such a role model, and he's helped me black out the stuff that I couldn't handle."

But there's another, somewhat unusual thing that had a tremendous impact on Lindsey's life: comic books. Lindsey went through school without the ability to read. But he wanted more than anything to learn. In eighth grade, Lindsey picked up a comic book for the first time. He was intrigued by the colorful illustrations, and he'd ask his friends to help him understand what the characters were saying.

"Learning how to read was my number one goal growing up," he says. "I'd read and read and I just didn't understand. But I kept at it, and then all of a sudden it just clicked."

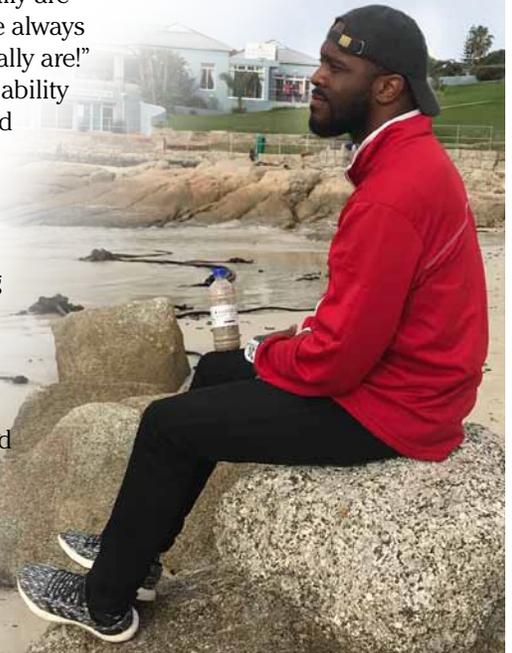
Lindsey says learning how to read has literally opened him up to a whole new world. One of the things he enjoys most is being able to read books that movies are based on to see if they really are better like everyone always had said. "They usually are!" he says. Having the ability to read also enabled him to try college again, which he struggled with the first time around. And now, he's acing his classes, just weeks away from completing his associate's degree and looking forward to completing his bachelor's.

Lindsey is currently a participant of our Opportunity Passport™ program, which, he says, has changed his life in unimaginable ways. He says that the program not only helped him pay off his debt and learn the importance of maintaining personal finances, it has helped him to discover himself and feel like he's not alone.

"The program has really started to help me think about my future and what's realistic," he says. "I can't put into words how much it has helped me, and I am grateful to all who make it possible."

Lindsey is just one of over 150 youth preparing for successful futures through Opportunity Passport™. Without you and the generosity you display through your giving, it simply wouldn't be possible. Thank you.

*You've given Lindsey the opportunity to keep looking forward.*



# I have been waiting all summer to share this news with you...

**Community Action and Food Bank of Lincoln are the recipients of a \$971,993 20th anniversary legacy grant from Community Health Endowment of Lincoln to increase access to healthy foods.**

Dear Friend –

You may have already seen this exciting announcement in the news, but in case you haven't, let me fill you in on the details!

On September 18th, Mayor Beutler joined Community Health Endowment Board Chair, Dr. Michael Molvar and President/CEO, Lori Seibel to share exciting news about their 20th anniversary legacy projects. One of these

projects is a collaboration between Community Action and Food Bank of Lincoln to increase access to healthy foods in Lincoln. Specifically, Community Health Endowment has committed \$971,993 for Community Action to construct a 5,000 square-foot commercial kitchen at our main agency location and for the Food Bank to purchase a healthy food access vehicle to deliver free fresh produce to high poverty Lincoln neighborhoods.

So what can you expect to see over the next year? Here are the specifics:

- A full commercial kitchen will be constructed at Community Action, which is scheduled to be completed by late spring 2019. Once operational, hot, healthy meals will be prepared for the 255 children in our

Head Start programs, the 2,000+ children receiving meals from the Food Bank's Summer Food Service Program, and 1,000 others participating in early care programs across the city. Kinder Bites will lease the space to prepare these meals. Lone Tree Foods, which works with over 40 local farmers, will lease the space to process locally grown produce for distribution to larger markets.

- Food Bank of Lincoln will purchase and fabricate a healthy food access vehicle (imagine a food truck!) that will be used to transport fresh produce into high poverty neighborhoods. Residents will be able to visit the truck to fill their bags with fresh fruits and veggies at no cost to them.

*Me with CHE President/CEO, Lori Seibel, holding up a sketch of the kitchen!*



This project is, in every respect, a dream come true. Access to healthy food is integral to our ability to reach our full potential...regardless of our income or the place we live. We thank Community Health Endowment for their belief in and support of this work. I look forward to keeping you updated as this exciting project continues to unfold!

With gratitude,

Vi See  
Executive Director

## An early childhood education program and so much more...

**Your support of Head Start gives children like Riah, and his family, the opportunity to succeed.**

When you walk into the "Happy Hedgehogs" classroom, Riah will immediately want to meet you. He'll take you over to the music corner where he'll show you how well he can play the tambourine. He'll crawl through the big red tunnel and smile when you happily greet him on the other side. And he'll laugh and wave his hands back and forth with excitement when you show him a picture of himself. He loves pictures of himself.

Riah is almost four, but a number of developmental and genetic disorders cause him to function at the level of an 18-month-

old. This made finding an early childhood program difficult at first.

"It wasn't that other programs were bad; I just don't think they knew how to handle his needs," says Riah's mom, Cassie. "It was a relief to find Head Start."

Cassie says that Community Action Head Start has become a home for her and her children. It's a place where people know her family by name, a place she can be involved, a place where she has a voice...where her children are safe and loved, like all parents hope for.

Without you, children like Riah and his family wouldn't have this place...this chance to begin a lifetime of learning on the right foot. Thank you for all the dreams you make possible by supporting Head Start.

*Ezeriah (Riah) is getting a chance to succeed because of you.*



**Shop Altar'd State on Mondays, Support Head Start!**

Need great new fall clothing, accessories, and/or home décor? Check out Altar'd State at Village Pointe Mall in Omaha! Each Monday through October 8th, they will be donating 10% of net proceeds to our Head Start programs. Look great for fall, support the cause you love. It's a win-win!

## Gathering Place Volunteer Spotlight:

*Celebrating Southwood Lutheran Church and the people who make The Gathering Place home.*

You know and love The Gathering Place as something much more than a soup kitchen. You know it as a place that brings comfort and sense of belonging to all who visit. You know it as a place that welcomes... a place where the only question you're asked is akin to "how are you doing today?" You know it as a home.

But like any home, it's not the brick siding or the front porch or the wood floors that make it such; it's the people inside.

Each year, The Gathering Place works with over 1,500 community volunteers represented by churches, community groups, businesses, and families to make

nightly meal service possible. You may be among them. Volunteers are the heart of the home that is The Gathering Place. They serve nightly meals, and sometimes even prepare them. They clean and wash dishes. They help with yard and building maintenance projects. And most importantly, they are friends – *family* – to our guests.

Southwood Lutheran Church is one of our dedicated volunteer groups. Members volunteer twice a month and host additional special meals throughout the year including Saturday night summer cookouts and a holiday meal in

December. Southwood goes above and beyond to make these special meals enjoyable for guests. They donate all of the food and even decorate to make the occasions like big family gatherings. For longtime Southwood volunteer, Cheryl Mayer, volunteering and helping to host these special meals is near and dear to her heart.



*Southwood pulls out all of the stops to make their holiday meal extra special...and tasty!*

"Over the years, I have gotten to know many of the people who enter the doors of The Gathering Place, both fellow servers and the guests who come in needing a meal," she said. "I see The Gathering Place as a place I look forward to attending, where I get to greet friends and acquaintances, have fun, and share some of the gifts God has given my family."

Each year, The Gathering Place serves over 27,000 hot, nutritious meals to those who need them. Need for meals is especially great this time of year. Many will be at The Gathering Place during the upcoming holiday season to get a meal and feel that sense of belonging, acceptance, and love that *we all* need.

*Southwood volunteers during the annual holiday meal they host for Gathering Place guests.*



## Match sponsors for year-end campaign for **The Gathering Place** needed!

*Are you or your business/group interested in supporting The Gathering Place this holiday season? Consider becoming a match sponsor!*

As you know, each holiday season we conduct a year-end fundraising campaign to raise much-needed funds for The Gathering Place. We plan to kick this campaign off in late October, but we need your help!

We are currently seeking individuals, businesses, and community groups to commit to being match fund sponsors for our 2018 campaign. As a match fund sponsor, your generous gift will motivate additional contributions to The Gathering Place. Last year several donors sponsored a match fund of \$30,500, which was leveraged by donations of over \$51,000 from donors like you!

As a match fund sponsor, you will be recognized as such on our campaign letter (which will be sent to over 5,000 households), our website and social media, and all press related to the campaign. Sponsorship opportunities begin at \$1,000. **The deadline for commitment/inclusion is October 10th.**

For more information, contact Heather Loughman at (402) 875-9339 or [hloughman@communityactionatwork.org](mailto:hloughman@communityactionatwork.org). You can also fill out the attached reply card and indicate "Gathering Place match sponsorship".



# So much to explore!

*Head Start enrolled children have a new playground thanks to great generosity of the community.*

The sun finally came out on Thursday, September 6th after days of clouds and rain. It was meant to be, as this was the day Community Action board members, staff, donors, partners, and volunteers celebrated the completion of our beautiful new playground (a Nature Explore® Outdoor classroom, to be exact) at our Health 360 Head Start Center. The space contains lush raised bed gardens where children are able to get hands-on experience growing fruits and vegetables, as well as numerous themed sections. Nature Explore® outdoor classrooms are designed to support children's learning in science, technology, engineering and mathematics; as well as language/literacy, the arts, and social/emotional development.

Celebrating a new playground would not be possible without tremendous contributions from the community. The playground is named "Apples Way

Playground" in recognition of a generous lead gift contributed by the business. Apples Way partners Bennie McCombs, Bill Langdon, and Mark Hunzeker were presented with a finger painting made by the Peaceful Puffins toddler classroom as a thank you for their generosity.

Dimensions Educational Research Foundation led the design and construction of the new playground, dedicating

*Vi with Apples Way partners during playground dedication ceremony.*



many hours consulting with both teachers and children regarding what they would like to see in their space. Dimensions brought additional partners, Community Health Endowment of Lincoln and Campbell's Nurseries and Garden Center, which also generously contributed. And many volunteers spent some of the hottest days in June installing all of the playground elements.

The celebration was capped off with popsicles enjoyed by guests and children alike – the perfect way to celebrate the perfect playground!

# You can help Head Start, by sponsoring a classroom!

It's the beginning of a new school year, and children in Community Action Head Start need you. Consider investing in them today by sponsoring a classroom for the year! Classroom sponsorship begins at \$1,500. Your dollars will provide a classroom with everything needed throughout the year to support the unique developmental and learning needs of our children.

A plaque recognizing your generous sponsorship will be placed outside of your chosen classroom. And you will get numerous opportunities to interact with the children in your classroom throughout the year.

To inquire, call Heather at (402) 875-9339 or email [hloughman@communityactionnetwork.org](mailto:hloughman@communityactionnetwork.org).

**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, Head Start)

\_\_\_\_\_

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:**

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