



215 Centennial Mall South, Suite 200
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Nebraska Children
and Families Foundation

Donate your way

*Every donation you make has an impact.
Now there are more ways than ever to give.*

1. Go to NebraskaChildren.org and select Donate to contribute online.

2. Call Jen Thielen at 402-476-9401 to set up a one-time or monthly gift.

3. Mail a donation to: 215 Centennial Mall South, Suite 200, Lincoln, Nebraska 68508

4. Talk to your estate planner about leaving a lasting legacy to Nebraska Children.



Nebraska Children is a proud member of Community Services Fund, a federation of nonprofit agencies improving the quality of life throughout Nebraska by preserving resources, expanding knowledge, encouraging creativity, and protecting rights. Learn more at www.CommunityServicesFund.org.

Board of Directors

Jaime Hemmerling, Chair, Lincoln
Sara Woods, Vice Chair, Omaha
Gaye Lynn Schaffart, Secretary, Omaha
Michael J. McQuillan, Treasurer, Ogallala
Dr. Doug Christensen, Past Chair, Lincoln

Brad Bauer, Grand Island
Liliana Bronner, Bellevue
Linda Daugherty, Omaha
Joyce Davis, Omaha
Connie Duncan, Lincoln
Tammy Eagle Bull, Lincoln
John W. Ewing, Jr., Omaha
Sally Ganem, Fremont
Dr. Max Larsen, Lincoln
Kyle McGowan, Crete
Todd Ogden, Lincoln
Sandy Parker, Omaha
Jessica Pate, Omaha
Dr. Helen H. Raikes, Ashland
Deyna Rouse, Omaha
Carol Russell, Omaha
Barb Schlothauer, Gering
Will Scott, Lincoln
Dr. Roger Wess, Chadron
Mike Wortman, Lincoln
Mark Zimmerer, Norfolk

Spout

Cultivating the good life for all of our children

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation | August 2016



Youth represent
Nebraska well
2016 National Citizen
Review Panel Conference

Victor Rivas Rivers
Learn more about our
Changemakers keynote speaker

Truck Brigade
Helping unconnected youth
in Omaha

Kyle McGowan
Your newest Nebraska Children
board member

“I Am the Child the Village Helped Raise:
How Teachers, Coaches, and Schools Saved and Transformed My Life”



Keynote Speaker:
Victor Rivas Rivers

nebraskachildren
AND FAMILIES FOUNDATION
Changemakers

Join Nebraska Children for
a celebration of the heroes
working to create positive
change for kids in our state.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2016

11:30 AM
TO 1:00 PM

EMBASSY SUITES
LA VISTA

The luncheon will feature Keynote Speaker Victor Rivas Rivers, who will highlight the importance of communities structuring themselves to wrap around children who are experiencing abuse, neglect, poverty, and hardship. The Cuban-born, best-selling author and activist helps shine a light on the work of advocates and educators who care for our children.

ORDER YOUR TICKETS NOW AT
NCChangemakers.org

Honorary Chairs: Connie and Todd Duncan | Duncan Family Trust

Event Committee:

Joyce Davis
Viv Ewing
Sally Ganem
Kareen Hickman

Jodie Mackintosh
Kelly Medwick
Sandy Parker
Jen Thielen

Carol Russell
Teri Teutsch

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Mary Jo Pankoke

Dear Friends,

For many organizations, summer is a slower time – a time to reflect and plan. But not at Nebraska Children!

The summer months are always full steam ahead for us, and this summer has been no exception. Summer learning programs gave hundreds of young people hands-on educational opportunities in a safe space. Our early childhood partners continue to help our youngest Nebraskans and their families start with the best foundation for learning and success.

Our Project Everlast Councils have also been busy this summer, and the work for our Connected Youth Initiative communities is ramping up. And as it has been for many years, many young people across the state had the opportunity to reconnect with their brothers and sisters at Camp Catch-Up.

This summer also meant several conferences that provided opportunities for our partners, our staff, and even some of the young people we work with to pass along the important lessons they've learned to help others working toward better outcomes for children in Nebraska. One of Nebraska Children's core values is collaboration, and *Spout* is one way we try to acknowledge all of the partners and supporters who help us in our journey. We can't do any of it without YOU.

In this issue, you'll read about the latest developments in expanded learning programs, the conferences where Nebraska Children was represented this summer, our local Truck Brigade, and more.

I'm always amazed at what can happen when communities get involved. Be proud. You did this.

Thank you for everything you do to make the good life happen.

Mary Jo

Mary Jo Pankoke
President and CEO



CONTENTS

News to Know	2-3
Victor Rivas Rivers	4-5
Truck Brigade	6
Youth Employment	7
Friends of Nebraska Children	8
Board Member Profile: Kyle McGowan	9
Intergenerational Poverty	10
Summer Learning	11

STAY CONNECTED

facebook.com/nebraskachildren

Twitter: @NE_children



CYI panel members represent Nebraska well

by Cassy Blakely, MA, PLMHP,
Assistant VP of Youth Policy

For many, turning 22 means relaxing and having fun with friends. But for Rosetta Judd, a member of the Connected Youth Initiative (CYI) Citizen Review Panel (CRP), it meant a trip to Arizona with fellow CYI-CRP members Raevin Bigelow, 21, and Lacey Combs, 20, to represent Nebraska at the 2016 National Citizen Review Panel Conference. Together, these young women spent three days listening to presentations on data and policy change, voicing their opinions on how to improve child welfare, and networking with professionals and advocates from across the country.

Tackling important issues together CRPs exist due to a federal bill called the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, which gives states dollars to prevent child abuse and neglect and strengthen the systems that serve those who have been affected. In order to receive these

dollars, states must have at least three CRPs, and Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) decided one of these should consist entirely of youth with current or former involvement in Nebraska's system.

The group reviews and makes recommendations for DHHS policies on child welfare. They also offer ideas to help ensure policies are implemented in effective and meaningful ways. And they don't shy away from the tough discussions, either: CYI-CRP members have tackled issues from normalcy to foster parent training to youth missing from foster care. Each year, they cap off their work by sitting down with DHHS representatives to share their recommendations and how to make them a reality.

Paving the way to a better future

For all their hard work in Nebraska, the CYI-CRP was selected to present at the conference. Their presentation, "Youth Voices in Action: Strategies for Engaging Older Youth with System Involvement in CRPs," drew more than 40 attendees and offered tips for pulling in youth as CRP members. After the presentation, they were practically celebrities. Lines of people waited to talk, ask questions, and take selfies.

As their adult supporter, I was really along for the ride. Their fire burned via questions during presentations and discussions by the pool with youth CRP members from other states. They exchanged strategies. They hugged and offered support. In those three days, I watched as three young adults who had once joined our youth councils while overcoming trauma and looking for connections, stepped up to become advocates leading policy change that won't benefit them. They want more for their siblings and others who struggle through state systems as they did.

Perhaps the most powerful thing for me was the responses they gave when asked why they do what they do. Raevin said, "When labels are put on you, your world becomes limited. We have stepped up and became more than our limits." Rosetta said, "I'm advocating for part of the world that raised me, and now I get to be part of the rapid change." I think Lacey spoke for us all: "What they said!" 🙌

Nebraska Young Child Institute Conference

by Jen Gerdes, PhD, Assistant Vice President,
Early Childhood Programs

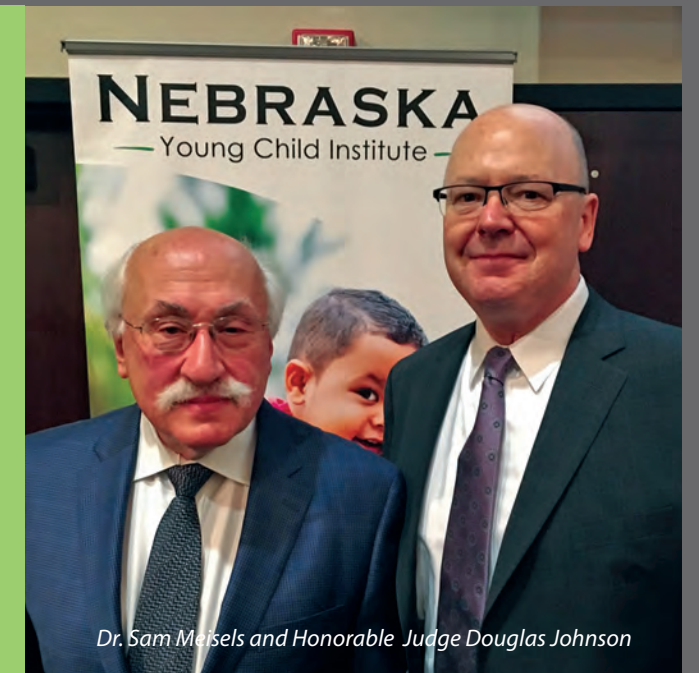
The first-ever Nebraska Young Child Institute (NYCI) conference is in the books, and we couldn't be happier with how the event unfolded. More than 500 people gathered in Kearney on June 27-28 to highlight the existing early childhood efforts underway as well as discuss where there are still gaps and barriers for our youngest citizens and their families. Collaboratively planned by Nebraska Children and seven other sponsoring agencies, the conference featured 40 breakout sessions and counted judges, attorneys, caseworkers, home visitors, mental health providers, and other early childhood professionals among its attendees.

A strong start

Day one opened with a welcome from Judge Douglas Johnson of Douglas County Separate Juvenile Court, followed by comments from Nebraska First Lady Susanne Shore, Department of Education Commissioner Dr. Matt Blomstedt, and Department of Health and Human Services CEO Courtney Phillips.

For the first keynote presentation, Dr. Brenda Jones-Harden from the University of Maryland took the stage to speak about the prevalence of trauma in the lives of young children and their families. Dr. Jones-Harden discussed how traumatic experiences like child abuse and intimate partner violence can have unwanted effects on children's brain development and families' mental health. She also presented evidence-based methods for protecting children from adverse effects and shared strategies for developing trauma-informed systems for identification and intervention.

After Dr. Jones-Harden's address, the conference split into breakout sessions for the rest of the day. Over the course of two days, conference-goers were able to choose breakout sessions from six tracks: Impact of Trauma on the Developing Child, Young Child Development, Legal Representation,



Dr. Sam Meisels and Honorable Judge Douglas Johnson

Maximizing the Juvenile Court System for Young Children, Evidence-Based Practices for At-Risk Young Children, and Early Education. The schedule also included time for networking and bonding with other attendees over shared goals.

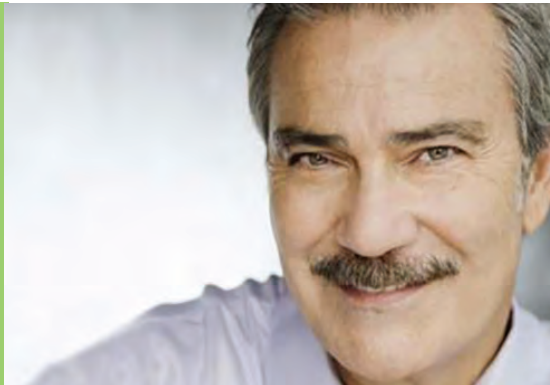
Day 2 highlights

The morning session on day two featured a keynote talk by Dr. Sam Meisels, Founding Executive Director of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, as well as a policy panel hosted by Jen Goettemoeller, Senior Policy Associate at First Five Nebraska.

Over lunch, conference-goers watched a panel discussion across state systems and public/private lines that focused on early childhood from a policy and systems perspective, highlighting the importance of the early years (ages 0-5) in improving outcomes among children as well as how agencies and the private sector are making early childhood a priority. The panel included Speaker of the Legislature Galen Hadley, Buffett Early Childhood

continued on page 5

Changemakers 2016



Get to know the Keynote: Victor Rivas Rivers

We're eagerly anticipating this year's Changemakers luncheon, not least because this year's keynote speaker is author, social activist, and actor Victor Rivas Rivers! Learn a little more about Victor below, then be sure to join us September 12 to hear his whole story.

Nebraska Children: Why is a strong community so important to a child?

Victor Rivas Rivers: I grew up in a home where violence took place on the level of torture by my father, at a time where there were no shelters or hotlines that my mother could turn to for help. Domestic violence and child abuse training for law enforcement was almost non-existent. Educators and school administrations didn't get involved in personal family issues. But there were exceptions in my personal journey: a teacher who secretly paid for a school cafeteria meal ticket when my father was starving me; a Little League coach who gave me the confidence to excel in athletics; a vice principal who chose a tough-love approach instead of expelling me; the numerous families who opened their homes to a troubled, violent kid. I'm the end result of a coordinated response by a loving, protective, and humane community, [and] there are a lot of children like me in all of our communities – even the most affluent – who need to be rescued, redirected, and given the chance to reclaim their lives.

NC: Do you think people still view abuse as "a private family matter"? How can communities change that perception?

VRR: Yes and no. We have come a long way to further the conversation on domestic violence/abuse so that it's not seen as "a private family matter." There's training for law enforcement and healthcare providers [as well as] public awareness campaigns. That's the good news! The bad news is that domestic violence/abuse continues to be the most underreported crime. It's often called "the quiet crime" because it thrives in an atmosphere of silence, denial, and shame. I also think there's still a reluctance to get involved in somebody's business, especially family issues. [But] abuse, on any level, is not "a private family matter" because it will impact the whole community. So we all have to get involved in creating a more humane and peaceful world.

NC: What lessons did you learn on the football field that you've applied to your advocacy?

VRR: [In] college football history, Nebraska is [recognized] for its National Championships, coaches, and players. Over the past 40 years, Florida State University has [joined Nebraska in] the conversation of storied teams, legendary coaches, and exceptional players. I was fortunate to be a starting offensive guard on Bobby Bowden's first team at FSU. I learned so much from Coach Bowden about team unity, preparation,

dedication, and what it takes to be a winner – but it was my first three seasons where I learned about life. You see, Coach Bowden was my third head coach – [because] we stunk! My freshman year, we went 0-11. By my senior year, only a handful of us had stuck it out. I learned that sports, like life, doesn't always go your way and you learn as much, if not more, from adversity. In my advocate/activist journey, I've learned the odds are usually stacked against the victims and survivors – [and that] the domestic violence and child abuse advocates that work in the trenches approach their work with same dedication, preparation, and unity that I learned on the gridiron. They are the true heroes in the movement to end all abuse.

NC: What do you hope Changemakers attendees take away from your talk?

VRR: My ultimate goal whenever I speak is that I will have inspired one person to look at the issues of family violence differently, to help someone break their own silence, to encourage someone to get involved locally, or if they're able, to write a generous check. I hope that I represent the "end result" of the life-changing and life-saving work that organizations like Nebraska Children and Families Foundation are doing all across America. My high school community saved and rescued a homicidal, suicidal gang member: ME. Your community needs to know that they can and will make a difference.

NC: What's been your favorite role as an actor?

VRR: I've been in a lot of fun and memorable films, but the film that changed me in so many ways was "Blood In/Blood Out." It's a Taylor Hackford film that follows the lives of three Chicano boys from East L.A. One of the boys takes the wrong path and ends up in San Quentin, the maximum security prison in Northern California. The prison scenes were shot in San Quentin in the prison population. We were not protected or guarded. The men in the scenes with us are the real convicts serving their time. As I walked around San Quentin, I realized "there but for the grace of God." That could have and should have been me! The overwhelming majority of the men incarcerated in our prison systems started out as witnesses and victims of family violence. The other common denominator is literacy; 7 out of 10 inmates have trouble reading and writing. That's why we need to reach these men and women before they get there, like my community did with me. 🙏

Register now to save your seat at Changemakers on September 12 at NCChangemakers.org.

NYCI continued from page 3

Fund President Jessie Rasmussen, State Board of Education President Dr. Rachel Wise, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids' Tom Casady, and DHHS Division of Children and Family Services Director Doug Weinberg.

The conference concluded with a final block of breakout sessions, after which attendees took what they learned and started thinking of ways to put it into action.

Conference tidbits

Of the 40 breakout sessions offered, Nebraska Children staff and contractors presented 14 sessions on a variety of topics including attachment, early childhood screening and assessment, Sixpence, statewide home visiting initiatives, quality child care, Circle of Security-Parenting, social-emotional development of young children, parents interacting with infants, and Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT). In addition, Nebraska Children brought in two individuals to provide reflective consultation sessions to attorneys and home visitors.

Highlights for attendees included the panel of parents and foster parents who shared their experiences with the child welfare system, learning about evidence-based practices that can support young children and their families and how to access them, and networking with other professionals. As one attendee commented, "Having multiple agencies and systems attend and present was amazing! We can learn so much from each other and work together on issues our families are facing."

For more information about the Nebraska Young Child Institute, visit www.neyoungchildinstitute.com. 🙏



More than just furniture: Meet the Truck Brigade

It all started about two years ago, when Adam Gaines toured the Youth Mart at Omaha Home for Boys and noticed items that had been tagged for pickup months before but had been left behind. He learned that young people transitioning out of foster care needed those items but often lacked a way to get things – especially larger furniture – from point A to point B. And thus, the Truck Brigade was born.

“The idea was to create a volunteer group whose mission was to serve the youth of Project Everlast by delivering furniture and household items, as well as collecting donations from around the Omaha Metro for the Youth Mart,” Gaines says. “[Co-creators] Keenan Page and Jim Hubbard had dreamed of having a delivery system, so the concept of the Truck Brigade took form and we were off and running – or driving, as it were!”



From there, Gaines says, Page and Hubbard worked on promoting the Truck Brigade to other local agencies while Gaines recruited volunteers, and in November 2014, the Truck Brigade went on its inaugural run. Since then, the group makes at least one run per month, often making multiple donation pickups and deliveries – meaning youth typically wait less than a few weeks for their items.

Be a part of the Brigade

If you're interested in helping the Truck Brigade's mission, they welcome volunteers on an as-needed or as-available schedule. They typically make a run on the second Friday of each month, but will occasionally operate on other days. Volunteers don't need a truck; the group coordinates volunteers and often an SUV, crossover, van, or minivan works fine.

“The youth served by Truck Brigade are always so gracious and appreciative of the volunteers and thrilled to get their items to their home,” Gaines says. “The volunteers are also filled with the joy of giving these youngsters a hand and showing them they are cared for!” 🍷

If you have items to donate or would like to volunteer, contact Adam Gaines at adamfgaines@gmail.com or call the Youth Mart at 402-457-7002.

A day dedicated to youth employment success

More than 40 people attended the 2nd Annual Youth Employment Community Capacity Building Event on June 16 at the Lincoln Community Foundation. Together, the group spent the day taking an honest look at the successes, barriers, and possibilities surrounding employment and employment retention for unconnected youth.

Organized by the Lincoln Education/Employment Committee and facilitated by CommonAction Consulting, the work of the day built on the previous year's event, which laid out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of our system of support for young people around employment. Recognizing that human services support agencies could not address the issue of youth employment alone, the group brought business and human resource representatives to the table, along with youth themselves, for this new discussion to determine how the community can work together.

Collaboration is key

Prosper Lincoln Employment Skills Developer Bryan Seck called the group to action and collaboration and facilitated a panel of employers to highlight the perspective of the business world. Sharing this perspective not only showcased the efforts of employers in Lincoln but served to begin an open and focused dialogue between businesses and

those who may have a better understanding of the barriers faced by unconnected youth. The group had honest conversations about how simple things like not having the correct legal documentation can be a significant barrier to employment for unconnected youth. These discussions helped move the effort forward, with business and human services agencies outlining ways to support one another on behalf of the youth.

Building on these informative conversations, the group worked together across systems to identify specific next steps, lay out tasks to accomplish these steps, and hold each other accountable by determining dates for completion. These next steps, tasks, and action dates will be taken to the Lincoln Transition Team and Education/Employment Committee to be carried out over the next year. Business and human resource representatives have joined these teams to continue the partnership across systems.

Although we don't yet have the perfect solution for helping unconnected youth find employment success, the connections made across systems and the shared dedication to these young people and to improving Lincoln's workforce allowed the Lincoln community to take a significant step forward toward the greater good. 🍷

Dear Friends,

What an eventful spring and summer the Friends have had! On July 7, the service committee hosted a Christmas in July kickoff event at The Tavern to spread the word about the Holiday Care Package Drive benefiting Project Everlast. The event had a fun holiday theme, and it was a great opportunity to spread the word about the work the Friends are doing to support Nebraska Children's valuable programming.

We'd like to take an opportunity to thank the local organizations who have hosted donation sites or helped provide support in other ways: Community Covenant Church, Walnut Creek Veterinary Clinic, Ridgeview Animal Hospital, Omaha Chico's locations, Kiwanis Club of Omaha, Fox 42 KPTM, Learning Headquarters, OBI Creative, First National Bank of Omaha, CHI Health Lakeside, the Brookside Community Church Bible Study Group, Physicians Mutual, Junior League of Omaha, Alley Poyner & Co-Lab, Together A Greater Good, Fiona Sullivan, Lamson Dugan Murray, Silverstone, Gavilon, Simply Pure Salon and Spa, and many more. Thank you! Your support is incredible, and so appreciated.

We are also in membership mode, as we are actively seeking new members to join us in our work supporting Nebraska Children. Becoming a Friend is easy – simply check out our webpage at FriendsOfNebraskaChildren.org to get more information and to register. We are so excited to continue our part in furthering the mission of Nebraska Children – we hope you'll join us!

Sincerely,

Deyna Rouse

President, Friends of Nebraska Children

JOIN THE FRIENDS!

Membership in Friends is open to all those interested in partnering with Nebraska Children.

FriendsOfNebraskaChildren.org



Executive Committee

President – Deyna Rouse
 Vice President – Nick Thielen
 Secretary – Jamie Ryder
 Membership Chair – Jessica Covi
 Fundraising Chair – Katie Triplett
 Service Chair – Katy Spratte

Board Members:

Brenda Beasley
 Melissa Carlberg
 Tina Dunham
 Adam Gaines
 Amber Gard
 Melissa Glenn
 Ann Hadfield
 Sarah Hanify
 Kyle Hofeldt
 Jessica Kozel
 Kristin Lowrey
 Sarah Macdissi
 L.J. McElravy
 Jeremy Maskel
 Adam Morfield
 Amy Parks
 Jina Picarella
 Alysia Radicia

Board Spotlight



Kyle McGowan

Kyle McGowan is a passionate educator who is now working with Nebraska Public School Advantage after retiring in June following 35 years in education, including the past 10 years spent as the Superintendent of Crete Public Schools. Under his leadership, Crete's school system has built a reputation of excellence in both academics and sports, as well as a growing reputation of serving a diverse community through education and outreach. With an increase in non-English-speaking citizens, the changes in Crete's demographics have given Kyle a profound understanding of the shifting landscape taking place in many rural communities. As superintendent, Kyle led Crete Public Schools to embrace preventive programs that reach out and support the whole family, such as early childhood services, afterschool programs, adult education, and more. Kyle is a strong supporter of Nebraska Children's mission.

1. Why did you want to serve on the board of directors for Nebraska Children?

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation understands the importance of working with

the whole family. You can't help children if you're not going to take a look at the needs happening within the family. [Nebraska Children is] an action-orientated group who focuses on prevention as well as support for struggling families.

2. What have you found to be the biggest challenges for children and families in the Crete area?

Crete's poverty is most aligned to our newcomers to the community. Our new arrivals tend to be Latino and not as familiar with the resources available to assist and support their families. What has been very positive is our new families often come to Crete because they hear of the welcoming support from the schools and community. The biggest problems generally are associated with finding a permanent home, securing jobs, and taking care of the children when heads of the household are all working 12-hour days.

3. As a longtime educator/administrator, how do you think communities can partner with schools to help ensure all kids have the opportunity to reach their potential?

I place a lot of responsibility upon the local school. Every child comes to the school. The schools receive public dollars to run a variety of programs relevant

continued on page 13

Sixpence's role in fighting intergenerational poverty

This summer, Nebraska Children's Associate Vice President of Early Childhood Programs Amy Bornemeier had the opportunity to speak to the Intergenerational Poverty Task Force about early childhood programs like Sixpence and their role in the task force's goal of breaking the cycle of poverty.

Her message was one of empathy, inviting attendees to put themselves in the shoes of a parent who can't make ends meet. Where would they find support? How would they know it was the right kind of support? And what if their only source of good information and support was in another county, city, or state?

It's easy to see how living in poverty can perpetuate a cycle of children starting life further and further behind the curve compared to more affluent families.

But what if those families had access to a child development expert that they could see daily or call anytime? A person who not only knows the ins and outs of child development, but gets to know them on an individual basis. A person who is invested not only in their success as parents but in their personal success, too. A person who helps them access services they didn't know exists and provides them with the knowledge and tools to support their role as parents. How much better of a parent could they be? That's where the Sixpence Fund comes in.

Identifying the problem

Science has shown that during the first 5 years of life, 700 neural connections are being formed every second. Each of those connections form a circuit of neurons on which electrical impulses travel – creating the roadwork that brainwaves will travel on for the rest of the child's life. When those neural circuits are strong and robust, children are better able to acquire and master the skills they'll need to thrive in school and in life. According to neuroscientists, the strength and resiliency of these connections depends on the quality of children's early learning experiences. For example:

- Infants and toddlers who experience strong, loving relationships with adults and stimulating, supportive early environments are more likely to develop the foundational skills that support a lifetime of learning.
- At-risk children who lack quality early learning opportunities are more likely to begin school behind their peers developmentally and remain behind throughout their time in the K-12 system. These children are statistically less likely to graduate from high school and more likely to enter the criminal justice system later in life.
- Approximately 30,000 of Nebraska's infants and toddlers are at-risk – living in households where parents struggle to provide consistent, high-quality learning experiences during this crucial developmental stage.

continued on page 12

A wrap-up of summer learning in Nebraska

by Jeff Cole, Beyond School Bells

In Nebraska, we are blessed with one of the nation's best public school systems, thanks to long-term investments by generations of Nebraskans in the future of our state and our most precious resource: our youth. While we at Nebraska Children are driven by our mission to provide all youth with the support they need to reach their full potential, as we look at school systems in other states, our appreciation of the public education system we have in Nebraska only grows.

However, we also know from our work in support of early childhood care and education that learning doesn't start on the first day of kindergarten – nor does it stop when each school year ends. And although summer lasts only three months, when you add up each summer over a child's K-12 years, it equals more than three years of time that could be used on additional learning opportunities.

Unfortunately, those hours of opportunity are not utilized in the same way by all Nebraska youth. While some children's summers are full of days jam-packed with creative play, books, vacation trips, and camps, many low-income kids across our state don't have access to the same learning opportunities as their more affluent classmates. Research shows that when they return to school at the end of summer, these two groups' difference in access to summer learning opportunities has a dramatic impact on their readiness to learn and their ability to take advantage of the new educational opportunities that come with each new year.

That's why we believe summer learning programs are so important in our efforts to bridge the opportunity gap that causes a pernicious achievement gap between low-income youth and their more affluent classmates. Lt. Governor Mike Foley recently recognized the importance of summer learning by issuing a proclamation signed by Governor Pete Ricketts that identifies July 14 as Summer Learning Day in Nebraska.



Besmir Gjoka and Jeff Cole with Lt. Governor Mike Foley

How we can help

Increasing support for and broadening access to high-quality summer learning opportunities is a priority of Beyond School Bells, Nebraska Children's statewide expanded learning network. Fortunately, it is a priority that is shared by a growing number of communities. Indeed, many Nebraska communities are providing hands-on, engaging summer learning activities for thousands of high-need youth through collaborative efforts that bring together the talents of schools and community-based organizations. These include communities that are part of Beyond School Bells' 10-city coalition of expanded learning programs, including:

- **Kearney**, where youth have access to a wide variety of programming, including hands-on projects using the Beyond School Bells-supported "Think. Make. Create." mobile maker space
- **Columbus**, where a BSB mini grant provides opportunities for youth to engage in classic summer activities like fishing and gardening through partnerships with 4-H Extension

continued on page 13

Intergenerational Poverty continued from page 10

Building on what we knew about brain research and the opportunity gap, Nebraska state legislators did something innovative, something remarkable, and established the Sixpence Early Learning Fund in 2006.

Here's how it works: Every \$1 private contribution is matched by \$2 from the public sector. That \$3 investment is then matched by the local community that receives the grant, resulting in a \$6 investment for every \$1 of private donations. This public-private partnership is a sustainable model funded with \$40 million from the state and an additional \$20 million from the private sector. The earnings generated from the public-private dollars are deposited periodically throughout the year into a cash fund and are used primarily for grants to school districts to provide high-quality early childhood services for infants and toddlers who are most at risk of school failure.

Sixpence in action

A Sixpence program features both home- and center-based support for parents through a variety of methods:

- Proactive home visitation
- High-quality early childhood education
- Parenting classes and Circle of Security Parenting®
- Community-based socialization and education opportunities
- Access to health services, including mental health

To qualify for the Sixpence program, children must be between the ages of birth to three years, with at least one of the following risk factors: low family income, premature birth or low birth weight, primary language other than English, teen and/or single parents, and additional risk factors as appropriate.

Individual Sixpence programs represent a strong partnership between school districts, early childhood service providers, and most importantly,

parents of at-risk infants and toddlers. Sixpence funds support combinations of center-based child care, voluntary home visitation programs, and other services that are designed to strengthen parents as their children's first and most important teachers, individualized to the community's needs. Additionally, Sixpence programs are built on evidence-based models known to improve parent-child interactions and create stronger early learning environments in and outside of the home.

Think of how much better children's outcomes could be with these kinds of support systems in place for parents! That's Sixpence's goal – to lift up families struggling with poverty and give them a chance to level the playing field for their kids, so that they can break the cycle of poverty that holds them back. And thanks to your help, outcomes are improving every day – but there's always more to do. If you would like to help us keep moving forward, visit www.singasongofsixpence.org. 🍷

Fast Facts:

- Trauma plays a role in the lives of 46% of Sixpence children.
- 68% of Sixpence children had three or more risk factors.
- Parents with three or more risk factors had significantly lower parent-child interaction and family resiliency scores.
- More than 85% of Sixpence classrooms consistently demonstrate high-quality social-emotional support.
- 75% of home visitors consistently used best practices to support families.
- Participation in Sixpence resulted in significant improvements in initiative, attachment, and self-regulation.
- Children's protective factors improved significantly while in Sixpence.

Kyle McGowan - continued from page 9

to their community. As a longtime administrator, I felt our district should serve as the center to coordinate/partner services with other groups having corresponding missions. There are many great people in Nebraska who want to help children and families; however, some have more limited access to their clients. Partnerships seem to be an easy answer, as long as the decision-makers within these groups can be flexible.

4. What is one change that you would like to see for Nebraska kids in your lifetime?

I still believe education is the great equalizer. Every child needs free access to a quality preschool experience as well as a quality K-12 education. However, it's tough to learn if you're hungry. There's no reason any child should ever be hungry and that mission begins at birth. 🍷

Summer Learning continued from page 11

- **Sidney**, where our support allows youth to participate in a summer entrepreneurship program that includes pitching their ideas to local banks, developing their own t-shirts, and promoting their projects on local radio

Your support matters

We can't provide this support in isolation. We are very grateful to our partners at the Sherwood Foundation, the William and Ruth Scott Family Foundation, the Anne Hubbard Foundation, the Robert Daugherty Foundation, and other key partners for their support of this important work. However, much more needs to be done. For every youth in one of Nebraska's high-quality afterschool or summer programs, there are two more who would like to

participate but are unable to do so because of costs, lack of space, or scarcity of high-quality programs in their communities.

Please consider supporting this important work in your communities and our efforts to build the statewide systems that ensure all youth have the same opportunities to enjoy the good life – during the school year as well as the afterschool and summer months.

For more information, visit beyondschoolbells.org or contact Jeff Cole, Network Lead and Associate Vice President of School-Community Partnerships for Beyond School Bells, at jcole@nebraskachildren.org 🍷