



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](http://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](http://www.CommunityServicesFund.org).



Nebraska Children and Family Foundation's sound fiscal management practices and commitment to accountability and transparency have earned it a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest independent Charity Evaluator. [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)

### Board of Directors

Jaime Hemmerling, Chair, Lincoln  
Sara Woods, Vice Chair, Omaha  
Brad Bauer, Secretary, Grand Island  
Gaye Lynn Schaffart, Treasurer, Omaha  
Dr. Doug Christensen, Past Chair, Lincoln

Liliana Bronner, Bellevue  
Joyce Davis, Omaha  
John W. Ewing, Jr., Omaha  
Kyle McGowan, Crete  
Michael J. McQuillan, Ogallala  
Todd Ogden, Lincoln  
Sandy Parker, Omaha  
Jessica Pate, Omaha  
Dr. Helen H. Raikes, Ashland  
Carol Russell, Omaha  
Barb Schlothauer, Gering  
Rita Stinner, Scottsbluff  
Nick Thielen, Omaha  
Dr. Roger Wess, Chadron  
Mike Wortman, Lincoln

# Spout

*Cultivating the good life for all of our children*  
Nebraska Children and Families Foundation | September 2017



Changemakers 2017  
Keynote Speaker Wes Moore  
to deliver powerful message

Sixpence  
10 years of improving the odds  
for young children

Dr. Helen Raikes  
Learn more about our 2017  
Grace Abbott Award winner

Join Nebraska Children for a luncheon celebrating 20 years of coming together to create positive change for kids in our state.

# Changemakers

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: WES MOORE



TUESDAY  
OCT  
10

11:30AM-1PM

EMBASSY SUITES - LA VISTA

\$75/TICKET

\$100/TICKET +  
VIP RECEPTION

\$750/TABLE  
(TABLES OF 10)

\$1000/TABLE +  
VIP RECEPTION

VIP RECEPTION HONORING DR. HELEN RAIKES  
AND THE LATE SEN. RON RAIKES | 10-11AM

Honorary Chairs  
Diane and Governor Ben Nelson

Anniversary Committee  
Doug Christensen  
Mary Colacurci  
Max and Lillie Larsen  
Jodie Mackintosh  
Kyle McGowan  
Sandy Parker  
Cathie Petsch  
Max and Linda Steinman  
Rita Stinner  
Teri Teutsch

Changemakers Advisory Committee  
Joyce Davis  
Connie Duncan  
Sally Ganem  
Suzanne Kotula  
Kristin Lundgren  
Jodie Mackintosh  
Sandy Parker  
Carol Russell  
Rita Stinner  
Teri Teutsch  
Jen Thielen

PURCHASE YOUR TICKETS NOW AT  
[NCCHANGEMAKERS.ORG](http://NCCHANGEMAKERS.ORG)



## FROM THE PRESIDENT



Mary Jo Pankoke

Dear Friends,

This issue of Spout is a really special one to me, because we're taking time to celebrate 20 years of Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. I've been with Nebraska Children from the very beginning, and it's been an honor and a privilege to watch this organization grow, evolve, and do good for all of our state's families and children. You can read all about our history on pages 6-7 of this issue.

As I reflect on the past 20 years, I can't help but think of all the wonderful people who have come together to roll up their sleeves and do some truly heavy lifting to create positive change in our communities – and the amazing supporters who make it all possible through their generosity. Our greatest asset is without a doubt our people.

This year also marks the 10-year anniversary of the creation of the Sixpence Early Learning Fund, which you can read more about on page 10. The passage of the legislation and constitutional amendment was the first time a public/private partnership of this nature had been created anywhere in the United States and was considered to be very innovative – and more importantly, it's helped many children and families get off to a good start in the early months and years. And the driving force behind that legislation was Dr. Helen Raikes and her late husband Senator Ron Raikes, who are our Grace Abbott Award winners this year. They'll be honored at a special reception at this year's Changemakers luncheon on October 10, and you can learn more from Helen on page 9. I hope you can join us for this special event.

This fall is an exciting time for Nebraska Children, and as always, I'm so thankful to have all of YOU in our corner. Without you, we couldn't be celebrating 20 years of positive change for Nebraska's children. Thank you for all you do.

With gratitude,

Mary Jo Pankoke  
President and CEO



Our mission is to create  
*positive change*  
for Nebraska's children  
through *community*  
engagement.

## CONTENTS

News to Know	4
Conservation Internship	5
20 Years of Nebraska Children	6-7
Changemakers	8
Profile of Helen Raikes	9
10 Years of Sixpence	10
Friends of Nebraska Children	11

## STAY CONNECTED

- [facebook.com/nebraskachildren](https://facebook.com/nebraskachildren)
- Twitter: @NE\_children



### Anniversary celebration for older youth programs

In August, former youth council members, past and current employees, advisory members, and current Project Everlast participants gathered at Mahoney State Park to celebrate the 15th anniversary of work on behalf of unconnected youth through the Omaha Independent Living Plan, the Nebraska Foster Youth Council, Project Everlast, and the Connected Youth Initiative. Thanks to all who attended and who have supported this important work over the years! 🍀



### Camp Catch-Up 2017 brings siblings together

Thank you to all of the compassionate volunteers, generous supporters, and energetic campers for another great summer of Camp Catch-Up. This year, there were two camps, one in June at the Nebraska State 4-H Camp near Halsey and the second in July at the Eastern Nebraska 4-H Center near Gretna. Campers and staff alike enjoyed a unique and important camp experience, creating memories for siblings separated by out-of-home placements to remember forever. 🍀



### Rooted in Relationships communities offer free parent training series

Three Rooted in Relationships communities – Dakota, Dodge, and Saline – have begun offering the Pyramid Parent Module Series, a free six-session parent training series designed to provide information to families on how to promote children’s social and emotional skills, to understand their challenging behaviors, and to use positive approaches to help children learn social-emotional skills. The communities provide dinner and free childcare to those

families participating in the training modules. Dakota County completed their first round of parent trainings with attendance of as many as 16 parents, and the trainers received positive feedback from those who attended. They will be offering their second round of trainings in October, while Dodge and Saline counties will offer the training modules for the first time also starting in October. **Learn more at [RootedinRelationships.org](http://RootedinRelationships.org).** 🍀



# Conservation Internship

by Anna Wishart, Director of Partnerships Beyond School Bells

***This summer, Beyond School Bells, an initiative of Nebraska Children, worked with a coalition of partners to design and implement an internship program in conservation management.***

The conservation management internship had multiple goals:

- to expose high school students to careers in the field of conservation management through hands-on work
- to introduce youth to the diverse natural beauty that makes up our great state
- to support the efforts of our partners to develop and field-test meaningful, hands-on learning experiences that Nebraska’s young people need to become citizens prepared to support our state’s future prosperity

We partnered with Native Futures and Omaha’s Girls Inc. to recruit young people to participate in a two-week program of hands-on work experiences. Two teams of three students – one female group and one male group – were supported by mentors who worked alongside the youth and helped facilitate the logistics of moving across the state and working and living in a variety of settings.

Among the group’s hands-on work were tasks like collecting wildflower seeds at Glacier Creek Preserve, helping clear a trail at Fontenelle Forest, landscaping work at the Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary, and even helping with cattle roundup at the Abbott Ranch near Hyannis.

This internship would not have been possible without the active support of our partners and

the generous support from the Claire M. Hubbard Foundation. Key partners include Girls Inc. and Native Futures – and a host of essential program partners, including Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the Arbor Day Foundation, Abbott Family Ranch, Audubon Society/Rowe Sanctuary, the Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium, Fontenelle Forest Nature Center, and the University of Nebraska.

State Senator Anna Wishart, who represents District 27 in Lincoln, served as a mentor for the female students who participated in the program. Anna is also a Director of Partnerships for Beyond School Bells, and she was able to summarize the girls’ adventures in a series of posts that you can read at [blog.nebraskachildren.org](http://blog.nebraskachildren.org). 🍀





# LOOKING BACK AT 20 YEARS OF PROGRESS

*This year, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation is celebrating its 20th anniversary! On this momentous occasion, we decided to take a look back at where we got our start.*

## 1998

Nebraska Children began working with communities statewide to help them work collaboratively to develop supports and services for children and families.

## 1993

The U.S. Congress passed the Family Preservation and Support Act to make funding available to each state to build community-based prevention services aimed at keeping families together and keeping kids out of the foster care system.

## 1994

Governor Ben Nelson asked the Commission for the Protection of Children to develop a plan for the development of prevention services.

## 2001

A network of statewide child abuse prevention councils called Prevent Child Abuse Nebraska was created. PCAN became a state chapter of PCA America in 2003.

## 1997

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation was established as a nonprofit corporation to serve as a public-private partnership to bring innovative solutions to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect.

## 1995

The Commission held town hall meetings across the state. Input from these meetings formed the basis of the plan, which included the creation of a nonprofit that would serve as a public-private partnership.

## 2007

Nebraska Children convened older youth in foster care as well as service providers and community stakeholders to develop what is now known as Project Everlast. This groundbreaking model for helping unconnected youth is now expanding statewide.

## 2002

With assistance from Jim Casey Youth Opportunities, Nebraska Children formed Foster Youth Councils across the state to give young people a voice in the policies that affect them.

Nebraska Children's work to develop Expanded Learning Opportunities outside the traditional school day begins as a means to help close the achievement gap. Today this initiative is called Beyond School Bells.

## 2013

Nebraska Children added early childhood mental health work to the prevention portfolio with Rooted in Relationships, working with communities to train early childhood caregivers on helping children meet social-emotional development milestones.

## 2015

A Social Innovation Fund grant made it possible to expand our successful older youth work to rural communities across Nebraska.

## 2016

After a Lincoln Vital Signs report detailed the city's strengths and challenges, Early Childhood became one of the focuses for improvement. Nebraska Children becomes the backbone organization for this work.

Nebraska Children also becomes a partner in implementing a behavioral health System of Care.

## 2006

Nebraska Children played a key role in the creation of the Sixpence Early Learning Fund, a public-private endowment that funds statewide early childhood education experiences for babies and toddlers at risk.

## 2017

Nebraska Children is celebrating 20 years of positive change by working closely with national, state, and local partners to implement Nebraska's new prevention initiative – Bring Up Nebraska.

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation was created in a series of town hall meetings in 1997, using funds given to states through the Family Preservation and Support Act. Its founders were Nebraska citizens focused on a common goal: strengthening families so that children can reach their full potential in life.

Nebraska Children's role was to partner with state agencies and facilitate the grant-making process to develop collaborations in communities and help those collaborative groups conduct needs assessments and put plans in place. The more we worked within communities, the more we realized that the communities themselves were the key to creating permanent change. We emphasized building and supporting community prevention systems that bring together all the critical players – from service providers to government agencies to educators to parents and children – to create supports that keep families together and strong.

Today, we are a nonprofit organization that invests in, sparks, and advances community solutions that create positive change for children. We collaborate with community, state, and national partners to identify gaps in services, develop research-backed plans, coordinate activities, and prevent problems that threaten the well-being of our children.

Through public-private sponsorship, Nebraska Children is able to promote the importance of providing families with opportunities, services, and support that nurture a child's healthy growth – particularly at the critical milestones between birth and adulthood.

In this time of celebration and thankfulness for 20 incredible years, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation is especially grateful to YOU, our partners and supporters, for giving so freely and generously of your time, talents, and funds to help make this work possible. 🍃



# Changemakers

## Keynote Speaker Wes Moore to share his story at luncheon

*Nebraska Children and Families Foundation's annual Changemakers luncheon event is a wonderful opportunity to gather together each year and celebrate the good that's been done in the past 12 months. This year's event is especially significant because we'll be celebrating both Nebraska Children's 20-year anniversary and the 10-year anniversary of the Sixpence Early Learning Fund. (You can read more about both of those milestones within this issue of Spout on pages 6-7 and 10!)*

We're also looking forward to Changemakers this October 10 for another reason: the chance to hear Keynote Speaker Wes Moore tell his remarkable story.

Wes Moore is a best-selling author, decorated Army combat veteran, youth advocate, and CEO of the Robin Hood Foundation, one of the nation's largest foundations with a sole focus on alleviating poverty. He is also founder of BridgeEDU, an organization that provides support to students as they navigate to higher education.

Wes is perhaps most widely known for his best-selling books, "The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two

Fates" – which is currently being made into a major motion picture from Executive Producer Oprah Winfrey – and "The Work."

In his Changemakers remarks, Wes will tell the story of "the other Wes Moore," a man with the same name who lived just a few blocks away from Wes but whose life took a tragically different path that eventually led to prison. Wes's story is about how educational opportunities, community support, and other factors helped him transcend the fate of the other Wes Moore.

It's sure to be a fascinating look at how community involvement can



PHOTO: AMUN ANKHRA HOUSE, LTD.

help keep kids from falling through the cracks – which is especially near and dear to our hearts as we reflect on 20 years of community work.

Tickets are still available for the Changemakers luncheon, which will be held at the Embassy Suites in La Vista on October 10, 2017, beginning at 11:30 a.m. following a pre-luncheon reception honoring Helen Raikes and the late Senator Ron Raikes, this year's Grace Abbott Award winners. 🍷

***If you'd like to join us and hear Wes Moore's incredible story for yourself, visit [NCChangemakers.org](http://NCChangemakers.org) to purchase your ticket.***

## An interview with Dr. Helen Raikes

*At this year's Changemakers luncheon on October 10, we're honoring Dr. Helen Raikes and her late husband, Senator Ron Raikes, as the recipients of the 2017 Grace Abbott Award. The Raikes were instrumental in the creation of the Sixpence Early Learning Fund (learn more about Sixpence on page 10). We recently asked Helen about her experiences and the state of early childhood education in Nebraska.*

***You are one of Nebraska Children's longest active donors and a current board member. Tell us about your history with Nebraska Children.***

I became involved with Nebraska Children and Families Foundation in the 1990s when I was at the Gallup Organization and we completed a representative sample survey of Nebraskans to determine their attitudes toward children and families for Nebraska Children. I so admired Mary Jo Pankoke's style and commitment as Executive Director. A few years later, she asked me to be on the board. My efforts at Nebraska Children have tended to concentrate on early childhood programs and on work to establish data indicators for measuring our progress as a state.

***What have you found to be one of the biggest challenges facing children and families in Nebraska?***

Early challenges were around awareness, will, and state commitment. Today, I would say our challenges are creating synergies so programs and policies are linked and build on one another. Someone once said that Nebraska early childhood has a lot of gears but not so many belts. We still have enormous disparities between the "haves" and "have nots" even at the earliest ages, despite our progress – but we have made progress.

***Through your work with the UNL College of Education and Human Sciences and your involvement with organizations such as Nebraska Children, what is one change you would like to see for Nebraska kids in your lifetime?***

I'm about scale. I'd like to see us at scale in making available needed services for every child before birth to grade 3. That means prenatal care beginning in the earliest trimester, supported birth, supported breastfeeding, immunizations, parenting support through home visits or in other ways, highest-quality early childhood education programs for working parents and pre-K, support in transitioning to formal



education, reading support during the earliest years, and quality out-of-school programs. Then, I'd have us measuring and reporting every year . . . and making continuous improvements.

***You are an advocate for quality early childhood education. Why is that so important?***

It's hard NOT to be convinced about the importance of the early years. Everything that follows builds on these early beginnings. Children lacking the experiences (stimulation, nutrition, and emotional support) during these early years show up to kindergarten significantly behind their peers, and most studies show they do not catch up. Moreover, it seems most moral to remove barriers to give children a chance to fulfill their genetic potential. Shouldn't every child have this opportunity?

***What do you think your late husband would think of where we're at today?***

I think he would be very pleased to see how our programs have grown. He would be pleased to see that our early childhood programs are doing well in schools, that Sixpence is growing and thriving, that the Omaha learning community is still in place. I think he would be encouraging us to keep working for low-income children at risk. We've done a lot, but there's still plenty ahead of us. 🍷



# Sixpence



## 10 years of improving the odds for children

**Have you ever stopped to think about how much children learn in the first years of their lives? Science has shown that in the first five years, 700 neural connections are being formed every second. This is when they form key relationships, develop trust, and explore the world around them. And the experiences of these first few years, whether positive or negative, will determine how well their brains are wired for social interactions, emotional growth, academic success, and more.**

This year, we're celebrating 10 years of the Sixpence Early Learning Fund, a groundbreaking blend of public and private dollars that grants funding to early learning and development services for infants and toddlers throughout Nebraska. Sixpence was created to shift the odds of lifelong success in favor of Nebraska's littlest citizens who are at risk – and after 10 years, we're proud to say it's working.

### How Sixpence came to be

In the early 2000s, the importance of early brain development started to gain traction in Nebraska and across the country, especially with the Head Start and Early Head Start programs. A lot of funding had been secured for pre-K programs that especially helped children in the 3- to 5-year-old range, but a group of senators led by the late Senator Ron Raikes – Chair of the Education Committee – thought, what about babies and toddlers?

With some creative thinking, the senators realized that a pool of state-funded money called the Educational Lands and Trust Fund could be used to establish an endowment for early learning through a constitutional amendment, but they felt it needed additional support from the public. Thus, they proposed a public-private endowment that used \$40 million from the Educational Lands and Trust Fund and \$20 million in private donations.

In 2006, the Nebraska Legislature passed Amendment 5, establishing the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Endowment Grant Program. The Endowment was built upon an innovative system of matching public-private investments: every \$1 private contribution is matched by \$2 from the public sector, and that \$3 investment is then matched by the community that receives the grant. In this system, each \$1 in private contributions ultimately yields \$6 in blended funds – hence the name Sixpence, from the beloved nursery rhyme.

### How it works

The grant process for the Sixpence Early Learning Fund follows three grant models:

- **Family engagement/home-based services:** These programs match families with professionals trained to coach parents in developmentally positive interactions with their children.

- **Center-based early care and education services:** In close partnership with local schools, centers receiving funds follow proven curricula, emphasize parent involvement, maintain ideal adult-to-child ratios, and follow professional requirements for staff.
- **School-child care partnerships:** Partnerships between schools and local community child care providers increase the availability and accessibility of high-quality, year-round child care.

"What Sixpence is doing in the communities is phenomenal," says Helen Raikes, wife of the late Senator Ron Raikes and recipient of this year's Grace Abbott Award. "They are providing support for early development of infants and toddlers to begin with, providing support for parents, helping them to see the opportunities they have for children's early development and their central, most important role as children's first teachers."

Currently, Sixpence is funding high-quality early childhood services reaching more than 1,500 infants and toddlers in 34 communities. "Many people will say, oh, you have a chance to do all right in Nebraska because you are small," Helen says. "But we have a chance to do it right because we've thought about it right and because we have the players here to do the work."

### Progress for the most vulnerable

- 76% of children served by Sixpence-funded programs met the target benchmarks for social-emotional development by end of the evaluation year.

Dear Friends,

The Friends of Nebraska Children continue to make great progress in their support of Nebraska Children's mission. Our annual Christmas in July drive was a big success, collecting gifts for Project Everlast's youth holiday packages – and our Amazon wishlist is still active if you would like to contribute. (You can find it at <http://amzn.to/2o7S44G>.) These items will go to unconnected youth during the holidays and help them transition into their first apartments. The Friends are happy to contribute to such a meaningful cause.

Our 2018 membership drive begins this month. You can learn more about the benefits of membership or join at our webpage [FriendsOfNebraskaChildren.org](http://FriendsOfNebraskaChildren.org).

Lastly, our fundraising committee is busy planning Perfect Pour 2018, which will take place on February 24 at the Slowdown in Omaha. The event will feature a 1960s London nightclub theme and the craft cocktail competition will be sponsored by Plymouth Gin. Be sure to save the date as tickets will be available soon. As always, if you are interested in more information about the Friends, please email us at [omahafriends@nebraskachildren.org](mailto:omahafriends@nebraskachildren.org).

Warmly,

*Nick Thielen*

President, Friends of Nebraska Children



- 94% of infant and toddler groups served in center-based programs met the quality benchmarks that reflect high levels of responsiveness, positive emotional reinforcement and behavioral support on the part of the professionals who worked with the children
  - 30% of children met or exceeded language production goals, 35% met or exceeded vocabulary goals, and 46% met or exceeded language comprehension goals
  - During the 2015-16 evaluation year, families participating in Sixpence-funded programs demonstrated strong protective factors in all areas relevant to child outcomes - nurturing and attachment, child development knowledge, social supports, concrete supports, and family resiliency.
- Cheers to 10 years of improving the odds – and thank you to all of our supporters whose generosity made Sixpence what it is today. 🍷