

IGNITING
EARLY LEARNING

SPEAKING UP FOR
CHANGE

LEAVING A
LEGACY

CONNECTING WITH
PARENTS

Spout

Drops of Change for Children

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation Spring 2012





Mary Jo Pankoke

Dear Friends,

Some people believe that the only way to fix the problem of child abuse and neglect is within the legal system. At Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, we believe that prevention is one of the best ways to keep children out of the welfare system. It is one of our core values and a driving force to create positive change for children.

The beauty in our mission is that we are charged with improving the landscape of services impacting the lives of children. Our role is to encourage true partnerships by providing guidance, technical assistance and funding to communities as they help their children to grow into resilient, connected adults.

Our work is broad at times, influencing policy and convening big thinkers to solve complex problems—like our efforts within the Legislature to extend care for youth in the foster care system until age 21. It can also be laser-focused—like our partnership which provides hands-on training of early childhood educators and parents of young children. I invite you to read more about how we look at our investments of time, research and resources to create opportunities and connections for families.

Thanks to you, our supporters and partners, we are able to encourage a braided system of support and safety for children in Nebraska—stopping problems before they start. Your partnership truly makes a difference.

Thank you.

Mary Jo Pankoke, President

Play a Part in Prevention

Prevent Child Abuse Nebraska invites you to play your part in protecting children. This April, communities across the nation will participate in Pinwheels for Prevention®, a Prevent Child Abuse America campaign.

All children need safe, nurturing places to grow. The focus of the campaign is to increase awareness of the role we all play in helping children grow up to be healthy, resilient adults. Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Councils can provide information on what works to prevent child maltreatment before it ever occurs.

This April, Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Councils will be displaying more than 10,000 blue pinwheels statewide and providing opportunities for community members to get involved. If you are interested in learning more about effective ways to connect with and support children and families in your community, please contact your nearest prevention council or go to NebraskaPinwheels.org today!



Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Councils

Beatrice: Pat Timm
pattimm@charter.net

Custer County: Jeanette Birnie
jbirnie@cennecs.org

Columbus: Tammy Bichlmeier
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Grand Island: Verna Haberman
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Garfield, Loup, and Wheeler Counties
Trisha Crandall, tlc@nctc.net

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Sixpence Ignites Early Learning



A caregiver nurtures children at the Northeast Nebraska Santee Public Schools' Growing Together Program.



Children learn and thrive in the newly expanded center.

The Sixpence Early Learning Fund, a public-private partnership, was created to help provide quality early childhood environments for Nebraska's most vulnerable children. The partnership focuses on children, birth to three, at risk of not reaching their fullest potential.

Stories like Alex's, on the next page, are proof of the progress happening within the Northeast Nebraska Santee Public Schools' Growing Together Program, one of the 11 Sixpence grantee sites.

The Sixpence Early Learning Fund enabled the Growing Together program to expand from a small home to a larger space that better supports children in a group setting. Today, the program serves eight infants and toddlers. Parents are invited and encouraged to spend time with their children, to see firsthand how developmentally appropriate activities can spark a child's imagination and learning. The program's focus on helping parents understand the benefits of quality early education has led to a measurable increase in daily attendance.

Additional program evaluation shows:

- Overall quality environments increased by 33%.
- Teacher interaction and language support usage increased by 21%.
- 100% of families evaluated reported understanding the importance of creating and maintaining supportive, nurturing home environments.

The positive increase in the Santee children's social and emotional well being factors is significant. Through hands-on support, funding and quality evaluation, the Sixpence program has enabled caregivers and parents to provide safe, stimulating environments that help young people grow into healthy, smart, resilient adults.

To learn about other Sixpence sites go to singasongofsixpence.org, and click on the Grantee Site Map.

Meet Alex

Alex never showed happiness or joy. While at daycare, his teachers at the Growing Together Program in Santee smiled, talked to him and engaged him without success. He played by himself and became aggressive if other kids tried to play with him.

Alex was struggling with serious social and emotional deficits. His teachers started by slowly building a relationship. They began creating an environment for him to flourish: making time for one-on-one interactions; teaching social skills and working with his parent to assist in the transition of care.

One day Alex smiled and giggled for the first time—what a joyful moment! By reading Alex’s cues and working with him at his level, his caregivers were able to meet his needs of feeling safe and comfortable. Today, Alex smiles, plays with peers and readily shows affection.



The Growing Together Program creates an environment where children can flourish.

Reframing Education Reform

The national debate about education reform has centered on school management issues. Instead, what would it look like if we used issues associated with poverty to address needed change?

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation’s initiatives focus attention on what happens during time outside of school, where more than 80% of a child’s time is spent. Early care and learning, summer and afterschool provide hours of opportunity which can change the course of a child’s life.

Studies show that low-income children start kindergarten at an educational disadvantage, and by the time they graduate from fifth grade, this gap is even greater. However, additional studies have shown that low income children actually grow and achieve at similar, or even higher rates, than other children when they are in school. When you measure the academic growth of children before entering school or during the non-school hours, you begin to see where the gap really lies.

Our approach is to build engaged communities that support children and family development during these hours of opportunity. Together, schools and communities must provide the opportunities for children to thrive.

GAINS DURING SUMMER VACATION

After Grade	Low Income	Medium Income	High Income
1	-3.67	-3.11	15.38
2	-1.70	4.18	9.22
3	2.74	3.68	14.51
4	2.89	2.34	13.38
Total	.26	7.09	52.49

Academic disparities expand during summer vacation for kids in poverty

Source: Karl Alexander, John Hopkins University. "Schools, Achievements and Inequality: A seasonal Perspective"



Camp Catch-Up Reunites Siblings



Siblings take to the water at Camp Catch-Up.

Every year, Project Everlast hosts Camp Catch-Up, a weekend-long camp that reunites siblings that have been separated due to foster care placements. Camp Catch-Up is made possible by generous donors like you who value children and families. This year, we are planning on even more campers—almost 150. Any way you can help is greatly appreciated!

In-kind donation needs include camping supplies, art supplies, snacks and other items. In-kind donations are being accepted in Lincoln and Omaha.

Donations can be sent to Nebraska Children and Families Foundation 215 Centennial Mall South, Suite 200 Lincoln, NE 68508 Attn: Camp Catch-Up. For more information on how to support this event, please contact Alana Pearson at 402.380.4552 or apearson@nebraskachildren.org.

Adolescent Brain Development

Studies suggest the adolescent brain has a period of major development comparable to that of early childhood. Adolescents must achieve distinct cognitive developmental tasks in order to move through emerging adulthood and become healthy, connected and productive adults. Unfortunately, young people in foster care often lack the supports needed to complete these tasks.

Unlike younger children in foster care, for whom safety and protection are the greatest need, older youth are in the process of developing greater autonomy and practicing adult roles and responsibilities. It is during early adulthood that we develop a personal sense of identity; establish emotional and psychological independence; establish adult vocational goals; learn to manage sexuality; adopt a value system; and develop behavioral maturity. Chemical changes in the brain that prime adolescents for risk-taking, present rich opportunities for them to learn from experience. With adult support, youth may obtain greater self-regulation, coping and resiliency skills.

Excerpt from the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative ©2011. To read the full report, go to jimcaseeyouth.org

Extending Foster Care to Age 21

The life circumstances are of sharp contrast—an older teen aging out of the foster care system with an uncertain future and no resources, and a youth with family support graduating from high school and preparing for the future. These differences were clearly illustrated in a joint presentation by Project Everlast Council members and Governor’s Youth Advisory Council (GYAC) members.

The December 7 panel was part of Legislative Resolution 305, a study of the public benefits and support services for older youth who are aging out of the foster care system. One of the goals of LR 305 is to hear directly from current and former youth in foster care about the needs and hurdles they face in accessing support.

To better understand what a youth goes through as they prepare to age out of care, at age 19, the young people led senators through an activity, gave personal statements and answered questions. Speakers included Janteice Holston (Grand Island council), Amy Peters (Lincoln council), Jessica Paul (Norfolk council) and Spencer Lowe (GYAC). The points made were clear; there is tremendous need for permanency and for a support system that goes beyond financial assistance.

Project Everlast youth spoke up again February 2, testifying before the Health and Human Services Committee in support of Legislative Bill 1150. The proposed legislation would extend services for youth in foster care to age 21.

Youth explained that the continuation of support would create opportunities for older youth in foster care to achieve success in their careers, in their relationships and in being productive members of their community.

Nadia Draper is one of the youth who testified in favor of the bill. Adopted from Russia at age 12, she entered the foster care system at 17 and aged out at 19. Nadia shared her story of shuttling between homes, staying with friends and a youth pastor as she struggled to find stability after leaving the system. She received some monetary assistance as a former ward, but would have benefitted from having a caseworker to help her make decisions.

Extending services for youth in the foster care system to age 21 would help young people realize a smooth transition to adulthood.



Amy



Nadia

Leave a Legacy Gift for Nebraska's Children

Thank you for your support of our mission to create positive change for children through community. Together, we can help children in Nebraska reach their fullest potential.

Will or Living Trust: A bequest is one way to help to your favorite cause. This gift allows you to retain full use of your gift during your life. It's also possible to make a gift at death, but reserve lifetime income for a spouse or other family member. Your bequest can ensure your thoughtful annual contributions in perpetuity.

As a minimum bequest, you may want to consider using the table below

IF YOUR ANNUAL GIFT IS:	YOUR BEQUEST COULD BE:
\$100	\$5,000
\$200	\$10,000
\$300	\$15,000
\$500	\$25,000
\$1,000	\$50,000
\$2,000	\$100,000
\$5,000	\$250,000

Life Insurance: You can name your favorite cause as the beneficiary of your life insurance; simply contact your insurance company. This gift entitles you to an income tax deduction, and future premium payments will be tax deductible.

Financial Accounts: Charitable organizations can be named as the beneficiary of most financial portfolios. Ask your financial advisor how you can designate a gift.

Benefits from IRAs and Pension Funds: Your estate can save both income taxes and estate taxes if you make a charity the beneficiary of your IRA or other savings plan. You can also arrange for lifetime income for a family member with the charity's benefit coming later.

For more information on how to plan a gift, please contact Wendy McCown at 402.817.2002 or wmccown@nebraskachildren.org.

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