

**MAKING RAIN
TO AN UPOUR**

**BETTER TOGETHER
AT CAMP CATCH-UP**

**PERMANENCY
AFTER FOSTER CARE**

**LEVELING THE
PLAYING FIELD**

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Drops of Change for Children

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation Fall 2011





Mary Jo Pankoke

Dear Friends,

Fall is an exciting time at Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. It is a time when we celebrate the great work of individuals dedicated to preventing child abuse and keeping kids out of foster care—two of the strongest indicators of our work. When we choose people to be honored with the Grace Abbott Award, it inevitably causes us to reflect on the collective work and passion that really makes a difference for Nebraska's kids.

In this issue, you'll see how Bill White and his late wife Jean dedicated their lives to working behind the scenes to help children. We hope you see yourself in their acts, big and small. The sense of working together toward a common cause builds bridges, creates relationships and ultimately makes our communities great places for children and families.

Fall is also the time we hear back from the kids who attended Camp Catch-Up this summer. These brothers and sisters look forward each year to re-connecting to the family they feel bonded to, but cannot live with.

So as we hunker down to watch the quality early childhood and afterschool programs flourish and we prepare to face the winter months ahead, we here at Nebraska Children and Families Foundation are grateful to the larger family of caring individuals, foundations and organizations who believe that every child deserves a chance to thrive and succeed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Jo". The script is fluid and cursive.

Mary Jo Pankoke, President



Making Rain to an UpPour

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation recognizes there are those who do good works, and those who make rain. Bill White and his late wife Jean have dedicated their lives to being Rainmakers for children.

On a beautifully warm day in August, special friends and supporters gathered at Riverside Country Club in Grand Island to honor the Whites as the 2011 Grace Abbott Award recipients at the third annual UpPour event. This event celebrates the many individuals and organizations who work each day to enhance and support programs and policies that make real change.

Bill and Jean always believed in working behind the scenes for children. Tim White, Bill and Jean's son said, "They always said they felt you could accomplish more by focusing on the problem at hand rather than drawing attention to themselves."

As Bill took the podium to accept the award, it was apparent he felt the honor belonged to many and not just to him. His words were heartfelt and thoughtful as he said "Our conscience is a law written on our heart." He believes the conscience of the heart is what inspires people and communities to do amazing things. He related this to the power of philanthropy, the work of Grace Abbott and Nebraska Children and Families Foundation.

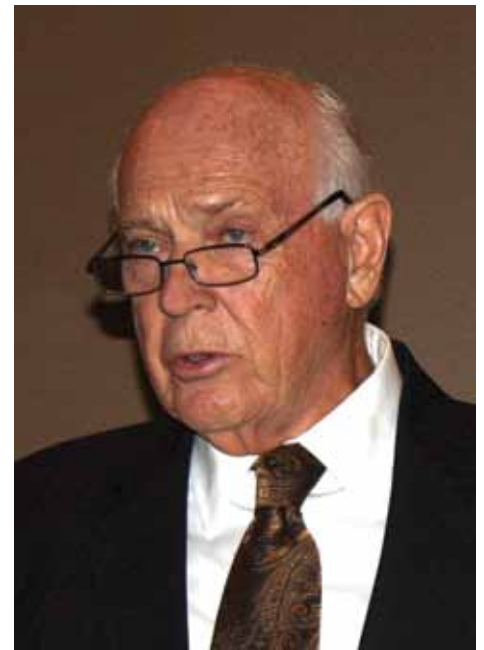
The event, hosted by Kim and Tom Dinsdale, was attended by Governor Dave Heineman, First Lady Sally Ganem and more than 90 others who traveled from all across the state and nation to honor the Whites.

Past recipients of the Grace Abbott Award include: Dick Holland; Dr. Doug Christensen; A. Mike Alesio; Senator Kathy Campbell; Donna Tubach Davis; JoAnn LeBaron; Ally Milder (posthumous); Bryan LGH Medical Center; Cabela's; ConAgra Foods; Duncan Aviation and First National Bank.

Learn more about how you can become a Rainmaker by contacting Wendy McCown at 402.817.2002 or wmccown@nebraskachildren.org.



Bill and Jean White with grandson Tyler



Bill White



Better Together at Camp Catch-Up



Brothers dancing together in the talent show



Camper on the climbing wall

Summer camp. I bet you can still hear the crickets, remember the lazy floats down the river, the campfires, goofy skits, water fights and giggle fits. Camp memories can last a lifetime. Camp Catch-Up, a program of Project Everlast, adds one more element—it brings siblings, living in separate homes, together for three solid days of fun. This year over 150 children attended the two camps held in Eastern and Western Nebraska.

“For many of these kids, three days with their siblings is just not a reality,” says Alana Pearson, of Project Everlast. “So to be together having outrageous amounts of fun while establishing lifelong relationships and memories makes camp magical.”

Youth in foster care often move from home to home and sleep in strange beds with nothing to really call their own. Campers get a brand new pillow, sleeping bag, duffle bag and other items that are theirs to keep. Each sibling group wears the same color t-shirt, signifying that they belong together. The activities at camp are simple, yet have profound impact. Campers create memories, have family photos taken and deepen relationships with the people who will potentially be in their lives forever.

By far, one of the favorite activities this year was the camp talent show. Finest and Lazell stole the show with their creative and energetic break dancing. The boys have had difficult lives, and have been in many foster homes, but at camp, they were reminded that they belong to each other. “It was probably the first time since they were removed from their home that they were able to spend more than a few hours together,” says Karen Ashby, Lazell’s guardian. “I can’t imagine how difficult it must be to be separated from the siblings you used to take care of. Camp Catch-Up is a great way to help children retain the bond that was so close so many years ago.”

It costs \$350 to sponsor a camper for next year. If you are interested, visit NebraskaChildren.org to donate.



Permanency After Foster Care

So what does it take to really support youth aging out of the foster care system? What does permanency mean? Nearly 250 youth, human service providers and policy makers gathered to discuss exactly this with inspiring results.

Approximately 200 youth age out of foster care each year in Nebraska. These are teens with little access to permanent housing options and not nearly enough connections to supportive relationships.

But the Summit for Youth Permanency this summer was about hope. The event sought to bring together the brightest minds in the child welfare system and fuel them with ideas and experiences of the youth themselves. The results were motivational, and will be developed into a permanency plan to be submitted to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

“Permanency, safety and well being are the three pillars we look at in supporting youth,” says Jessica Hilderbrand of Project Everlast.

“Permanency is not about teaching youth to live independently, if you think about it, none of us live that way. We rely on supportive lifelong relationships to help us navigate our adult lives. Our goal is to teach youth how to do just that. By creating genuine family-like relationships it allows youth to prepare for life and learn how to be loved.”

But don't take it from us. To hear it in their own words, check out the video at <http://bit.ly/rs3KzB>.

Youth need our support in finding their voice and forever families. Learn more about making a contribution to Project Everlast by contacting Wendy McCown at 402.817.2002 or wmccown@nebraskachildren.org.



Derek and Jantiece define permanency in the “what does it mean?” video

“Each of the youth who participated in the Summit for Youth Permanency received a gift card intended to help them treat a supportive or potential supportive person in their lives to a meal. One young woman told me she took her new foster sister out with her gift card. She thought building that relationship would mean two teens in care would have someone to help them become more like a family. Wow!”

—Cassy Blakely, Project Everlast Youth Engagement Coordinator



A Fond Farewell and a Welcome Hello

After ten years of service, Mary Colacurci retired on August 31st as Nebraska Children and Families Foundation's Executive Vice President. She and her husband Barry plan to move to Boerne, Texas by January.

Mary's legacy to Nebraska Children and Families Foundation will be felt for generations, as her knack of inspiring and gathering top notch individuals helped make the dream a reality.

She has been instrumental in growing the scope and reach of the organization through her pure passion for serving families and children (not to mention her contagious laugh). When she started there were just a few staff members, and today the organization is impacting kids all across the state in over 48 counties. Mary's contribution to the work we do will be dearly missed. We wish her all the best in the next stage of her very busy and very full life!

As we say goodbye to Mary, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation welcomes Wendy McCown, CFRE as Vice President of Development. Wendy has 12 years of experience in several non-profit organizations as a fund development officer and has 20 years of experience in interpersonal communication and public relations.

We are thrilled to introduce Wendy to all of our wonderful supporters and advocates. Feel free to give her a call with any questions about ways to get involved with Nebraska Children and Families Foundation or to share ideas on how we can continue to build relationships to sustain the great work of the organization.



Mary Colacurci



Wendy McCown



Leveling the Playing Field

Child development research has an answer to every ask.

At Nebraska Children and Families Foundation we put this principle to work in everything we do when it comes to the social and emotional well being of Nebraska's kids.

Whether it is in early childhood education, child abuse prevention, afterschool programs or supporting youth in foster care, we work hard to implement evidence-based practices that are proven to provide the best possible environments for children.

You can be assured that a contribution to our organization is put to great use and leveraged with state, federal and private dollars. This effort inspires partnerships, provides training and builds collaboration which ultimately transforms communities.

Won't you join us in our belief that all children deserve a level playing field to find their way to successful, happy, productive lives? Please consider a gift and become one of our partners in making lasting change for Nebraska's children.

Visit NebraskaChildren.org and click donate to make a tax deductible gift or mail to:

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
215 Centennial Mall South, Suite 200
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508



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Lifetime giving of \$25,000 or more, a pledge that brings lifetime giving to \$25,000, or a deferred gift of \$50,000 or more.

Benefactor With Distinction

Lifetime giving of \$50,000 or more, a pledge that brings lifetime giving to \$50,000, or a deferred gift of \$100,000 or more.

To learn more about how to become a Nebraska Children and Families Foundation Giving Society member, contact Wendy McCown at 402.817.2002 or wmccown@nebraskachildren.org.



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