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Cultivating the good life for all of our children
Nebraska Children and Families Foundation | May 2018



Bring Up Nebraska
Nebraska Children promotes community-based prevention

Perfect Pour 2018
300+ "Come Together" for a good cause

Innovation Fellows
UNL students chosen to bring creativity to afterschool



What are **you** doing this summer?

How about channeling your inner camp counselor? Camp Catch-Up is seeking **dedicated, compassionate staff** to work alongside our campers: youth who have been separated from their siblings due to out-of-home care.

Central NE Camp: Timberlake Ranch Camp, Marquette, NE

Staff arrive the evening of Wednesday, May 30, and depart at 1 p.m. on Sunday, June 3.

Western NE Camp: Nebraska State 4-H Camp, Halsey, NE

Staff arrive the evening of Wednesday, June 20, and depart at 1 p.m. on Sunday, June 24.

Eastern NE Camp: Eastern NE 4-H Center, Gretna, NE

Staff arrive at 1 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 2, and depart at 1 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 5.

Learn more about Staff requirements and apply at campcatchup.org.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

As we observed Child Abuse Prevention Month in April, it's the perfect time to reflect on Nebraska Children's deep roots in prevention. Prevention has always been a core value guiding our work – and in fact, it was the catalyst for the creation of Nebraska Children.

In 1995, a series of focus groups held across the state revealed that children had to enter the child welfare system before they and their families could receive services.

This scarcity of funding for primary prevention led to the idea for a nonprofit organization that could serve as a conduit for public/private partnerships, thereby increasing funding for prevention. The thinking was that there are individuals, businesses, and foundations that would be willing to invest in strategies to improve the well-being of children, but preferred not to donate to a state agency. This concept led to Nebraska Children's creation in 1997, and although public funding for primary prevention remains low, we have had tremendous success in leveraging private dollars through public/private partnerships.

The prevention efforts underway in Nebraska through the Bring Up Nebraska initiative have been getting attention on a national level and led to a recent visit by Jerry Milner, Associate Commissioner of the Children's Bureau. During his visit, Commissioner Milner attended a Dakota County Connections meeting to see how our collective impact model of prevention works in a community. The Commissioner was very impressed by what he saw.

Commissioner Milner is a strong advocate for primary prevention and is committed to working to increase its federal funding. In his remarks at the Dakota County meeting, he asked what would've happened if our approach to combatting polio had been to invest in wheelchairs and crutches for patients after they fell ill. This is essentially the approach that's been taken to keeping children safe, protected, and emotionally healthy. Nearly all of the current funding is invested in placing children in foster care and in therapy to fix the trauma *after* they have been abused or seriously neglected rather than investing in helping their parents care for them safely before they are abused or neglected.

Data from the 11 communities that are part of the Bring Up Nebraska initiative prove that community-based prevention works. I encourage you to visit BringUpNebraska.org to learn more about this important work and how we can all play a role in better outcomes for our children.

With gratitude,

Mary Jo

Mary Jo Pankoke
President and CEO



Mary Jo Pankoke

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

Cover photo by Ryan Fields on Unsplash

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Nebraska Children Welcomes New Board Members



Sarah Teten Kanter



Anne Steinhoff



Lisa Taylor-Jones



Nick Thielen



Katie Triplett



Ben Watson

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

May has once again been set aside to recognize the importance of mental health and to draw attention to the many people who are directly affected by a behavioral health challenge. In Nebraska's System of Care, we particularly draw attention to children and young people with a behavioral health challenge, who often have trouble finding help and often feel ostracized.

Nebraska System of Care is proud to help support the Eagle Riders as they begin their 11th Annual Pony Express Ride Across Nebraska - Benefit Ride for Children's Mental Health Awareness. From May 16-19, 2018, the motorcyclists will reenact the mail-delivery service of the Pony Express to raise awareness for children's mental health, picking up advocacy letters about children's mental health written by youth, their families, and other children's mental health supporters from across the state so they can hand deliver them to government officials at the State Capitol. 🍃

2018 PONY EXPRESS RIDE LETTER PICK-UP SITES/EVENTS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16 6:30 p.m. – Scottsbluff, Cirrus House, Kick-off Carnival and Block Party	12:05 p.m. – York, location TBA
THURSDAY, MAY 17 9:00 a.m. – Sidney Community Center/ Kids Korner	1:45 p.m. – Columbus, Columbus Aerie
1:30 p.m. – North Platte, Connections Homeless Shelter (414 E 6th St)	4:00-7:00 p.m. – Norfolk, Ta Ha Zouka Park, Family Organization Event
3:05 p.m. – Gothenburg, LaFayette Park	SATURDAY, MAY 19 10:00 a.m. – Omaha, Boys Town Main Campus
4:00-7:00 p.m. – Kearney, Buffalo County Extension Building, SPARKS Festival	12:00-2:00 p.m. – State Capitol, Family fun activities and letter presentation
FRIDAY, MAY 18 9:40 a.m. – Grand Island, Boys Town Shelter	

For more information:
www.FamiliesCare.org



Beyond School Bells and UNL announce Innovation Fellows

UNL Chancellor Ronnie Green helps introduce the Innovation Fellows. To his right are Jeff Cole, Beyond School Bells Network Lead, and University of Nebraska Regent Bob Whitehouse

On February 12, 2018, Beyond School Bells partnered with Nebraska Innovation Studio to announce the selection of four University of Nebraska–Lincoln undergrads as the first-ever Innovation Fellows. Dana Hoppe, Alison Cloet, Caleb Kowalski, and Mickey Tran will partner with BSB to design and develop more of its Think, Make, Create Labs using their knowledge of science, engineering, math, technology, and art. BSB's mobile maker spaces are quickly gaining traction in communities across Nebraska, and we're excited to partner with these brilliant young minds to bring even more creativity and innovation to offering expanded learning opportunities to school-aged youth. 🍃

Read more at: https://news.unl.edu/newsrooms/today/article/innovation-fellows-excited-for-incredible-outreach-opportunity/?blm_aid=0



(from left): Alison Cloet, Caleb Kowalski, Mickey Tran and Dana Hoppe



Connected Youth Initiative hosts Hackathon to #HackFosterCare

On the morning of October 30, more than 100 people gathered at Metropolitan Community College to launch something truly special: a 24-hour Hackathon. So what the heck is a Hackathon? A Hackathon is an event in which coders, hackers, and developers meet to engage in collaborative computer programming. For 24 hours, the teams come up with creative tech solutions to assigned problems. For this event, the teams had one challenge: hacking foster care. To do this, the Connected Youth Initiative teamed up with an organization called Think of Us (www.thinkof-us.org), which is developing an app for young people who are in or aging out of foster care. The goal is to make it easier for young people to access vital information, communicate with case workers or other service providers, and find resources.

The 24-hour event kicked off with a welcome from Nebraska Children’s Jason Feldhaus, followed by remarks from First Lady Susanne Shore and Think of Us CEO Sixto Cancel. Then, a panel of foster alumni shared their stories, gave insights on what is needed for system-involved youth, and offer suggestions for Hackathon goals. After lunch, the crowd broke into groups to start designing. From young people to case workers to web developers, all worked on identifying problems and proposing solutions. Susanne Shore participated in the technology testers session where youth were introduced to the technology platform. The group came together again in the evening for a supper and a talent show. Later, groups explored the virtual reality and 3-D printing labs at MCC, and worked with web developers to brainstorm ideas.

Next Step: Beta Testing

Think of Us was in Omaha on March 21 to conduct beta testing with youth, their families and informal supports, and case workers/coaches/IL specialists. This was the first time Nebraska stakeholders were able to download the Think of Us app and explore the new platform! With all of the feedback received through the test, we are now a big step closer to launching the app later this year!

The event wrapped up the next morning with developer presentations and a video from the event. The Hackathon was a huge success thanks to our sponsors: Metropolitan Community College, HyVee, Pepsi, Concentric Corporation, AIM Institute, Omaha Print Shop, and more. Nebraska is leading the way in innovation for unconnected youth through the Think of Us technology. We’re excited to see what new developments arise following all the hard work participants did to #HackFosterCare. 🌱

Check out the Hackathon video at <https://youtu.be/eRksirb1-uo>.

2018 Legislative Days: What did GYAC do?

by GYAC members Ina Bhoopalam, Tanya Wasson, and Jennifer Wang

The Governor’s Youth Advisory Council, or GYAC, consists of a diverse group of passionate, enthusiastic, and intelligent Nebraska youth who are committed to voicing our opinions and taking a stand on public issues that affect our community. Members work to expand their horizons by listening to the viewpoints of youth around them and discussing youth issues with experts on the topics of education, finance, agriculture, careers and employment, drug and alcohol abuse, and foster care. On Friday, February 3, members of GYAC, the Learn and Earn to Achieve Potential (LEAP) initiative, the System of Care Youth Advisory Council, and the Connected Youth Initiative arrived in Ashland, Nebraska, to participate in an immersive experience about government and leadership.

What is Legislative Days?

Legislative Days is a two and a half-day experience in which GYAC members connect with other members of their community, listen

to speakers talk about government, and research and present their opinions on current Nebraska legislation. This year, GYAC members interacted with members from the LEAP initiative, Boys Town, Project Everlast, Voices of Hope, and many more.

The experience began with a day of icebreakers, where members were encouraged to interact with participants from other organizations and expand their network of friends. On Sunday, several speakers were invited to give presentations about issues youth in our state are facing. Among them was Thomas Burns, Bellevue council member and second youngest elected official in the state, who conducted a Q&A session about various issues in politics, government, and his personal experience running for office.

After listening to several intriguing and passionate speakers, a brainstorming session was conducted, and the group



researched the four bills members had voted on prior to arriving. Members broke up into groups to research individually and form presentations advocating for specific bills. Later, they came together to relax and watch the Super Bowl.

On Monday, members arrived at the State Capitol to tour the historic building, speak with various senators at a luncheon, sit in on bill hearings, and meet Governor Pete Ricketts. They also each presented their research on bills to the senators and the Governor.

What did we advocate for?

The group selected four bills to focus on for this year’s Legislative Days:

LB836: This bill provides that minors may consent to outpatient mental health treatment without the permission of a parent or guardian under certain circumstances.

LB870: This bill provides guidance and stipulations for the usage of room confinement, including when it’s acceptable, under what conditions, and who must be made aware.

LB1041: This bill requires specific training on sexual abuse before



Bring Up Nebraska Launched

Last September, Nebraska Children, in partnership with community collaboratives and state and national partners, has been proud to announce Bring Up Nebraska, a statewide prevention initiative designed to give local community partnerships the ability to develop long-term plans using the latest strategies and data to prevent life's challenges from becoming a crisis for many Nebraska families and children.

Keeping families from becoming involved in state systems such as child welfare or juvenile justice is the reason why so many concerned partners gathered on a rainy day in September to celebrate the launch of Bring Up Nebraska with a press conference at the State Capitol.

Nebraska first lady Susanne Shore brought attention to the community partnerships helping prevent life challenges from becoming a crisis for Nebraska families.

"Any child in need is not the state's problem, or Washington's problem, or some nameless, faceless agency's issue to deal with," she said. "They're our kids. These are

Nebraska kids. And each one of us needs to be part of the solution."

Shore and her husband, Governor Pete Ricketts, have championed the Bring Up Nebraska because it's community-driven and focuses on prevention.

"The reason I'm supporting it is because I believe it's the most effective way to get long-term change for our kids and our families in need," she said.

Ashley Ulmer Schmit, a single mom from Lincoln, spoke at the news conference about the help she got from a visiting nurse.

Ongoing weekly visits from the nurse helped Ulmer Schmit and her

children by connecting her with community resources and classes.

"She ended up being this invaluable resource to my family," the mom said. "She's amazing. I'm glad she'll be visiting for another two years."

Bring Up Nebraska believes local communities are best situated and most motivated to understand their own needs and strengths as they relate to families in their community.

"What we're trying to do is bring a new light to what they're going to accomplish," she said. "The big point for me is that this focuses on prevention. And the best way to do that is for the local communities to assess what they need, and for us, at the state level to help them succeed." 🍃

If you'd like to learn more about community-based prevention, visit BringUpNebraska.org

Milner Visit Signals Federal Interest in Nebraska's Prevention Model

On April 11-12, Associate Commissioner Jerry Milner of the Children's Bureau (an office of the Administration for Children & Families) – one of the top federal officials overseeing child welfare – visited Nebraska to learn more about the prevention work being done in the state, especially the Bring Up Nebraska initiative led by Nebraska Children and Families Foundation.

"We're very interested in the work that is going on here with Bring Up Nebraska. The concept behind Bring Up Nebraska is just so consistent with the direction we're trying to move child welfare across the country, which is a real focus on preventing the occurrence of child abuse and neglect and helping to strengthen families before bad things happen. We're excited about the information we've heard about Bring Up Nebraska and being here only confirms that this is the right place to visit."

During his visit, Milner met with Governor Pete Ricketts; several state senators; Courtney Phillips, DHHS CEO; Matt Wallen, Director of Children and Family Services, DHHS, as well as other staff of the Department of Health and Human Services.

In his role overseeing child welfare, Associate Commissioner Milner also held a listening session with young adults about what is working and what challenges remain within the child welfare system.

On Thursday, April 12, Associate Commissioner Milner addressed a meeting of the Dakota County Connections collaborative. He championed his own vision for prevention work and how Bring Up Nebraska, the statewide prevention initiative led by Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, aligns with that vision. He also recognized the prevention efforts and successes taking place in Dakota County.

"...that's why I applaud you for your interest, for your understanding that we have to support families, we have to bring them up, we have to give them the kinds of supportive environments where they can be resilient, they can

be strong, they can have very basic needs for wellbeing met. I am convinced that the only way that can happen is at the community level. I can't make that happen from sitting in Washington, D.C. People in state capitols can't make that happen. We can only facilitate it. But the only way that those kinds of needs can be met is when communities come together, organize themselves around the needs of the families in their community, and act on that information." 🍃



Associate Commissioner Jerry Milner of the Children's Bureau addresses the audience at the Bring Up Nebraska event in Dakota County.



Associate Commissioner Jerry Milner (far left) and his colleague David Kelly (far right) and met with foster care alumni.



Perfect Pour 2018: 300+ “Come Together” for a good cause



Photos: Pine & Forge

On a cold, blustery Saturday in February, more than 300 guests were transported to 1960s London for the third annual Perfect Pour Craft Cocktail Competition benefiting Nebraska Children and Families Foundation.

This year’s event transformed the Slowdown in Omaha into a groovy party featuring authentic British pub fare, beloved Beatles tunes performed by the Come Together Band, and a plethora of creative cocktails dreamed up by our top 8 qualifying bartenders featuring Plymouth Gin.

Attendees were able to vote for their favorite bartenders; bid on silent auction items including Omaha period prints, custom

artwork, and photography from local artists; and throw their hats in the raffle ring to win one of four fabulous prizes, including an English-inspired tea cart filled with essentials for a British tea party.

The craft cocktail competition was especially fierce this year. The finalists included Michael Stelzner from Lincoln’s The Other Room, Toni Weixelman from Jake’s Cigars in Lincoln, Paul Zahn from Le Bouillon in the Old Market, Linda Lichtenwalter from Omaha’s Trap Room, Darrell Loo from Repeal 18th in Kansas City, Deion Bass and Brian Heese from Omaha’s Monarch Prime & Bar, and Christen Kotschwar from Trio: Cocktails and Company in Omaha.



Photos: Pine & Forge



Kelly Nyberg of KMTV’s *The Morning Blend* served as emcee. Photo: Pine & Forge

The Judges’ Choice award, selected by judges from the Nebraska Chapter of the U.S. Bartenders’ Guild, went to Darrell Loo for his delightful, refreshing “Winter Blossom” cocktail. The People’s Choice award was bestowed upon Christen Kotschwar for her innovative, unexpected “Sweet Pepper Skiffle” cocktail.

From the creative cocktails to the delicious food – which included made-to-order bangers and mash! – to the packed dance floor, Perfect Pour 2018 was full of fun, laughter, and generous support of Nebraska Children’s mission to cultivate the good life for all children in our great state.

And of course, none of it would’ve been possible without the tireless efforts of the Friends of Nebraska Children group, a long list of generous sponsors, and the faithful supporters who keep Nebraska Children’s work moving forward every day. Thank you all! 🍷



Thank you to our generous sponsors:

Lift Up Sarpy County launches 100-Day Challenge

144,000 minutes, 2,400 hours, 100 days: that's the amount of time that it can take to drastically transform the lives of vulnerable young people or families.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative is committed to providing all young people who have experienced foster care with the resources, relationships, and opportunities they need to thrive and has identified a unique, robust program that stimulates measurable, sustainable changes in just 100 days.

In March 2018, The Jim Casey Initiative will help Lift Up Sarpy County join the likes of sites in California, Ohio, and Texas by championing a 100-Day Challenge. The 100-Day Challenge is a capacity-building, large-scale creative change approach,

pioneered by the Rapid Results Institute, which prompts the community to engage and invest in bold and creative ways to build a system response to challenges.

The 100-Day Challenge is a project designed to stimulate intense collaboration, innovation, and execution to achieve a wildly ambitious goal in 100 days.

As a testament to the transformative power of the 100-Day Challenge, in September 2017, A Place 4 Me, the Jim Casey site in Ohio, exceeded its goal of finding housing for 100 homeless youths in 100 days, proving that a short-term intensive approach can create long-term benefits for young people transitioning from foster care to adulthood. The results concretely demonstrate the urgency and importance of this program.

The 100-Day Challenge is an inclusive results-producing project intended to not only make change at the community level but also to help inform and promote a national dialogue that will ultimately lead to positive and sustained policies.

"This is a huge opportunity to further the collaboration and strategies needed to get to financial stability for this group of youth and families." –Gayle Christensen

The 100-Day Challenge will help Lift Up Sarpy County, in partnership with Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, to develop new solutions to address challenges affecting young people who have experienced foster care and other vulnerable young people and families. Over the course of 100 days, all partners will work to develop innovative ways to align public and private resources in Sarpy County to create new economic avenues for 50 families and young adults already accessing community response.

"This is a huge opportunity to further the collaboration and strategies needed to get to financial stability for this group of youth and families," said Gayle Christensen, Community Response Coordinator for Lift Up Sarpy County. "All partners involved have already brought a



deep commitment, focus on new solutions, and energy to addressing the needs of youth and families in Sarpy County. As with all ambitious plans, the more people we can bring to the table, the better the outcome will be. We encourage anyone who is interested in being a part

of the 100-Day Challenge to contact Lift Up Sarpy County."

The Challenge will deepen the relationship between state and federal economic assistance, youth/family providers, and financial institutions to create and strengthen strategies to alleviate poverty.

It will also aim to expand the reach of The Opportunity Passport™, a financial literacy and matched savings program for young people ages 14 to 26 who have experienced foster care, by mobilizing additional corporate and public partners.

With the 100-Day Challenge, there will be a concentrated effort between public and private sectors positioned to change mindsets, shift behaviors, forge new relationships, and create brighter futures for many young people and families. 🍀

To learn more, visit <http://www.aecf.org/work/child-welfare/jim-casey-youth-opportunities-initiative/>.



Beyond School Bells hosts ELO Day at State Capitol

On February 8, Beyond School Bells hosted a breakfast briefing at the State Capitol on the role of law enforcement in Nebraska's Expanded Learning Opportunity (ELO) programs. A panel representing law enforcement

/ ELO partnerships from Sidney, North Platte, and Omaha shared examples of how engaging youth in afterschool and summer programs provides law enforcement with a valuable tool to connect with youth and to help keep communities safe.

Senators and staff attended and noted their support for Nebraska's growing ELO programs.

The briefing was the first event in a two-day meeting hosted by Beyond School Bells for representatives of nearly 20 ELO partner communities. The meeting focused on innovations that are changing afterschool and creating more opportunities to engage community partners, like law enforcement, in this work. Other topics included gardening and entrepreneurship in ELO programs and, in a discussion with leaders from Gallup, how to take a Strengths-based approach to ELO programs. **Learn more at BeyondSchoolBells.org.** 🍀



Community-Based Prevention

(continued from page 10-11) Eleven communities in Nebraska are already part of the Bring Up Nebraska initiative and several have hosted special events to draw attention to the need for prevention and how their community is working to strengthen families.



North Platte Mayor Dwight Livingston declared April as Child Abuse Prevention Month as part of the Bring Up Nebraska celebration on April 5, 2018.



On March 15, 2018, Lift Up Sarpy County hosted a data walk to show the need for prevention in Sarpy County as well as the progress being made.

(above) Georgie Scurfield, Executive Director of Lift Up Sarpy County, leads a discussion about the data walk.

(at right) First Lady Susanne Shore and other attendees discuss Sarpy County community well-being data.



GYAC, continued from page 7

individuals can become licensed foster parents.

LR293CA: This is a constitutional amendment providing the right to use or consume medical cannabis subject to laws, rules, and regulations. If passed, the issue would be put on the ballot for Nebraska voters to decide.

Participants put together presentations on each bill, whether for or against, to present to the senators and the Governor. It was a great learning experience for all!

"I am so grateful to have been part of this experience," said new GYAC member Ellie Roselius. "I was exposed to so many new perspectives and opinions. It was enlightening."

Sarah Smith, another new GYAC member, added, "The multitude of perspectives from youth around the state truly opened my eyes to the diversity of problems young people face today. I was inspired by the passion of my fellow GYAC members, one of whom testified before the Education Committee on an issue that truly mattered to him."

And Alexander Keck, a previous Legislative Days participant, shared, "This year, I was fortunate to have conversations with youth about their experiences within the foster and penal system."

Participants all agreed it was an honor to help reform our state for the better. 🙌

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