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.

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

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System of Care
What it means for Nebraska families

Coming Together
Victor Rivas Rivers highlights a successful Changemakers 2016

Liliana Bronner
Welcome addition to Nebraska Children board
Mary Jo Pankoke

Dear Friends,

The days are getting shorter, and there’s a chill in the air – fall is finally here, which means the holidays are fast approaching.

For many of us, holidays are times of togetherness, gifts, and full tables. For many others, though, the holiday celebrations and chilly weather can be harsh reminders of what’s missing: a home base, a hot meal, a chance to spend time with loved ones.

With your help, Nebraska Children has been able to accomplish so much this year, from expanding our Connected Youth Initiative to implementing Sixpence Early Learning in more early childhood environments to advocating for more extended learning opportunities. But as 2016 comes to a close, I challenge you to help us make the holidays a little happier for young people in Nebraska by contributing to the Holiday Care Package Drive. You can learn more about the Drive and what items are needed on page 11.

Also in this issue is a recap of our Changemakers luncheon that took place in September. I was so encouraged to see more than 400 people gathered in support of our state’s children, and the message delivered by Victor Rivas Rivers was a powerful one, highlighting the importance of active, involved communities serving as the proverbial “village” that helps raise strong children and families.

There’s lots more to catch up on in this issue, and none of it would be possible without the help and support we get from YOU. Our partners and supporters are blessings that we’re thankful for year-round, not just at the holidays.

It’s been a great year, and I look forward to what we can accomplish together in 2017. Thank you, and warmest wishes for a beautiful winter.

Mary Jo Pankoke
President and CEO
Investment Connection Nebraska

Nebraska Children was selected as 1 of 8 organizations to present at a unique funding event on September 21. Similar to “Shark Tank,” Investment Connection Nebraska brings together the banking industry and community services sectors for partnership and funding opportunities. Nebraska Children’s Jason Feldhaus presented the Nebraska Youth Economic Success (YES) framework, which would allow Nebraska Children to expand Opportunity Passport™ statewide and embed financial coaching into existing independent living services. Following the presentation, Investment Connection Nebraska will identify financial institutions interested in funding the proposal.

Askable Adults Matter

On August 17, seven Nebraska Children Connected Youth Initiative staffers participated in Askable Adults Matter training provided by Planned Parenthood. The goal of the training is for youth-serving professionals, community members, and volunteers to become more approachable and knowledgeable in order to point youth in the right direction for sexual and reproductive health care. CYI staff members learned about how to recognize the need for “Askable Adults” to help youth make healthy decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and how to do so in a professional, ethical, and data-informed way. The training offered a chance to identify ways in which Nebraska Children staff can implement strategies in our communities to help young adults connect to the resources they need and receive appropriate support and services.

Legislative update

On August 8 and 9, Nebraska Children staff and a young person from Omaha had the opportunity to attend the kickoff of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative’s (JCYOI) Policy Council in Baltimore, Maryland. Alongside youth and representatives from six other states, they learned about bills in front of Congress that would impact youth with foster care experience, shared the work being done in other states, and identified policy priorities for JCYOI to consider. Issues discussed included expanding foster care, better supporting pregnant and parenting youth, easing access to Medicaid, and promoting tuition programs for alumni of foster care. Our staffers are excited to have Nebraska youth voices being heard.

Report finds Nebraska still has room for growth

According to the “Investing in Possibilities: The 2016 Nebraska Children’s Budget” report from the Holland Children’s Institute, Nebraska’s spending on children’s health and early learning is down 4.6%, or $12.7 million, from 2014. You can read more at http://bit.ly/2eqYaat.

System of Care explained

Earlier this year, Nebraska Children welcomed Nathan Busch to serve as point person for implementing the new System of Care. We had a conversation with Nathan to learn more about the Nebraska System of Care (NeSOC).

Can you explain the System of Care for those of us who aren’t sure what it entails?

As a trained (and recovering) attorney, I like to tell stories. So, here is one that can help explain NeSOC. In 1904, the city of Baltimore caught on fire. Fire companies rushed in from as far away as Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., New York City, and Virginia. In many cases, firemen traveled with their own horse-drawn pumps. When they arrived, they found their hose couplings did not fit the Baltimore hydrants. These frustrated firemen watched as 1,500 buildings burned, impacting 35,000 families. This fire led to standardized couplings across the United States. Now a firefighter can use a truck from San Diego to help fight a fire in Denver.

This is similar to the Nebraska System of Care. Right now, children and families receive behavioral health services from multiple sources (probation, education, behavioral health regions), funded through multiple sources, and with targeted multiple outcomes. The environment currently consists of many “hoses” that do not connect for families. Like the firefighters, professionals want to help, but sometimes regulations, policies, funding restrictions, etc., prevent service “hoses” from connecting. The implementation of NeSOC will make sure children and families can more easily access a more diverse range of services.

Over time, communities diversified construction materials and developed strategies to prevent fires from starting or spreading. They improved upon methods for quick and effective response to address the threat of fire and avoid the trauma and expense of rebuilding a community. Likewise, families should be able to access behavioral health services and supports without waiting for a crisis. There must be quick and effective responses to avoid the trauma and expense of children being placed outside the home or losing custody of the child in order to obtain needed services. By looking closely at systems serving children and families, this initiative hopes to avoid the challenges of reuniting families when separation might have been prevented in the first place.

A System of Care connects the work of state agencies, nonprofits, local governments, behavioral health care providers, families, and patient advocates. It helps children and families function better at home, in school, and in the community.

What do you hope the NeSOC will accomplish?

With NeSOC, we hope to increase school attendance and performance, decrease the average age of first system contact, decrease the cost per youth receiving services, and increase the percentage of youth and young adults living in home settings. At the end of the day, we’re all about keeping families happy, healthy, and together.
His story was one of heartbreak and hope, of trial and triumph, and of how a strong “village” can be what saves a child from going down the wrong path. He spoke of growing up with a severely abusive father, of scars that affected not just his body but his soul, and of turning to gang life in his teen years to find a place to belong and an outlet for his anger. Victor’s life could’ve easily gone too far down the wrong path, but thanks to some special “angels” around him, he went from gang member sophomore year to class president as a senior. His teachers, coaches, and other concerned adults were able to recognize that Victor needed help and they rose up to catch him before he slipped through the cracks. Victor now calls himself the child the village raised. Since then, he has dedicated his life to shining a light on domestic and child abuse, sharing the importance of community in lifting up those who are vulnerable and wrapping them in support.

On September 12, more than 400 people gathered together at the Changemakers luncheon to celebrate victories, reflect on the fight to protect Nebraska’s children, and renew their motivation to keep working for change. To say that it was inspiring would be an understatement! The event began with a gathering Sunday evening at Omaha’s Bike Union (www.thebikeunion.org), where keynote speaker Victor Rivas Rivers spent time with young people from Project Everlast Omaha. Victor spoke to nearly 20 young adults, sharing his story of growing up in an abusive environment but triumphing thanks to the power of his community. Each young person received an autographed copy of Victor’s book, “A Private Family Matter,” and had the opportunity to talk with him and ask questions while sharing some pizza.

Monday’s events began with a small reception for Ruth and William Scott, who were awarded Nebraska Children’s Grace Abbott Award. The Scotts are Nebraska natives who have committed countless hours and dollars to where they’re needed most: with our state’s children. Specifically, their Nebraska Children investments have included support for Community Well-Being communities, Project Everlast, Beyond School Bells, Connected Youth Initiative expansion, Sixpence Early Learning, and Early Childhood Services. Helping to present the award were a handful of speakers whose lives had been touched by the Scotts’ generosity. Thank you again, William and Ruth!

Following the reception was the main event, which started with remarks from emcee Jeremy Maskel of KETV NewsWatch 7, honorary event chair Connie Duncan of the Duncan Family Foundation, and Nebraska Children President and CEO Mary Jo Pankoke. Then, Victor Rivas Rivers came onstage to speak to a captive audience.

His story could’ve easily gone too far down the wrong path, but thanks to some special “angels” around him, he went from gang member sophomore year to class president as a senior. His teachers, coaches, and other concerned adults were able to recognize that Victor needed help and they rose up to catch him before he slipped through the cracks. Victor now calls himself the child the village raised. Since then, he has dedicated his life to shining a light on domestic and child abuse, sharing the importance of community in lifting up those who are vulnerable and wrapping them in support.

continued on page 6
Why did you want to serve on the board of directors for Nebraska Children?
I wanted to serve on this board because I want to be involved in an organization that makes a positive impact in children's lives and their future.

What have you found to be the biggest challenges for children and families in the Omaha metro?
Problems that:

- threaten the lives of children and families (child abuse, substance abuse, infant mortality)
- create severe social harm, which, while not necessarily life-threatening, hurt children and endanger their health or welfare in serious and unacceptable ways (mental health, child abuse/neglect, foster care)
- endanger economic productivity, which impair the ability of children to become productive members of society or cause current unnecessary social costs (early childhood education, childcare, adolescent pregnancy)

What role do you think the healthcare industry should have in improving outcomes for children and families?
As providers distribute services in the care cycle across locations, they must learn to tie together the patient's care across these sites. Integrating mechanisms, such as assigning a single physician team captain for each patient and adopting common scheduling and other protocols, help ensure that well-coordinated, multidisciplinary care is delivered in a cost-effective and convenient way.

What is one change that you would like to see for Nebraska kids in your lifetime?
I would like to see each and every child in Nebraska graduate high school and have a caring adult in their life (parent, family member, friend, or neighbor) that can help them get there. I think more could be done to give students the long-term support required to raise the graduation rate for real.
Happy Fall, supporters of Nebraska Children!

A turn toward cooler weather has all of our minds on the fact that the holidays will be here before we know it. To that end, the Friends Service Committee is continuing to coordinate donation drives for holiday gift packages for the young people of Project Everlast/Connected Youth Initiative. Several drives have already occurred over the summer, but more support is needed. If your book club, office, church group, or any other part of your network is interested in helping us provide much-needed items to the Project Everlast youth at the holidays, please contact Kareen Hickman at khickman@nebraskachildren.org for more information.

We’re also looking ahead to our annual meeting for our Friends members, which will be held at Crave in Midtown Crossing on November 18. This will be a great opportunity for us to share more about our work and to make our first financial gift to Nebraska Children. This will be a fantastic culmination to our first full year!

Finally, please make sure to mark your calendars for our second annual Perfect Pour event on February 25, 2017, at the Living Room at Mastercraft in Omaha. Just like last year, this amazing event will feature local mixologists’ original concoctions, with this year’s featured libation, Brugal rum. The unique cocktails will correspond with our pre-embargo Cuba theme, and the event will also feature gourmet Caribbean canapes, live music, a historical photography auction, and a cigar tent. It’s going to be a great time! We hope to see you there!

Sincerely,

Deyna Rouse

JOIN THE FRIENDS!
Membership in Friends is open to all those interested in partnering with Nebraska Children.
FriendsOfNebraskaChildren.org

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L.J. McElravy
Adam Morfield
Amy Parks
Jina Picarella
Stephanie Sands

Holiday Care Package Wish List

* Please make sure all items are new and unused

- Clothing
  - hats/gloves
  - socks
  - winter coats
- Household items
  - pots/ pans
  - kitchen utensils
  - plate/bowl sets
  - glass sets
  - silverware sets
  - towels
  - kitchen or bath
- Personal hygiene items
  - deodorant
  - soap/body wash
- Non-perishable food items
  - granola bars
  - soup
  - trail mix
  - fruit snacks
- Art supplies
  - sketchbooks
  - journals
- Gift cards
  - Walmart/Target
grocery stores
  - entertainment
  - restaurants
- Babies ‘R’ Us, Toys ‘R’ Us, Carter’s
- Baby items for young people with kids