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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Sixpence Early Learning Fund awards 11 new grants**

(Lincoln, NE) The Trustees of the Sixpence Early Learning Fund announced last week that 11 early childhood partnerships throughout Nebraska will receive grant awards totaling approximately $2.5 million, beginning September 1, 2021. The Sixpence grants will make it possible for high-quality early childhood programs throughout the state to serve more of Nebraska’s most vulnerable infants and toddlers.

The new grants were made possible through a funding increase for Sixpence proposed in LB342 by Senator John Stinner of Gering, Appropriations Committee chair. The proposal was subsequently incorporated into the state's mainline budget bill, allocating an additional $2.5 million per year to Sixpence for the next two years.

“The pandemic has put enormous pressure on our state’s early childhood system,” said Senator John Stinner (District 48) of Gering. “In turn, that puts enormous pressure on the families who are responsible for raising the next generation of Nebraskans. Sixpence offsets some of those pressures by making quality child care and family engagement services more available to help parents guide the early development of their youngest kids.”

The funding increase is, in part, a response to the upheaval caused by COVID-19 in child care and other early childhood systems. “It’s hard to overstate the pressure that the pandemic has put on parents who are trying to guide the development of their children while providing for their families,” said Stephanni Renn, who serves as Sixpence Administrator at Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. “The new Sixpence grant awards will help offset at least some of those challenges so more of our youngest kids are getting a stronger start in life.”

The Sixpence Early Learning Fund is Nebraska’s signature public-private initiative to promote community-based programs focused on the developmental needs of children prenatal-to-age-three (PN-3), especially those most likely to encounter obstacles to their healthy cognitive, social-emotional and physical development. Sixpence grantees are local school districts and cooperatives of school districts that include at least one community-based organization. With these additional grants, Sixpence now funds 43 grantees in locations throughout the state, delivering services through home visiting programs, center-based child care programs and school-community child care partnerships. Sixpence-funded programs served approximately 1,800 children PN-3 in 2020.

The following school districts are recipients of the August 2021 Sixpence grant awards:

* O'Neill Public Schools – Center-Based
* North Platte Public Schools – Home-Based/Family Engagement
* Bancroft-Rosalie Community Schools – Center-Based and Family Engagement
* Walthill Public School – Center-Based
* Red Cloud Community Schools – Center-Based
* Kearney Public Schools – Center-Based
* Weeping Water Public Schools – Center-Based
* Conestoga Public Schools – Center-Based
* South Sioux City Public Schools – Home-Based/Family Engagement
* Blair Community Schools – Home-Based/Family Engagement
* Beatrice Community Schools – Home-Based/Family Engagement

**About Sixpence**: Sixpence is the public name of the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Endowment Fund,   
a public-private mechanism established in 2006 to generate sustainable funding for high-quality programs serving children at risk and their families, prenatal-to-age-three. Sixpence issues grant awards and offers technical assistance to locally controlled early childhood partnerships under the supervision of a governor-appointed Board of Trustees. Sixpence is administered by Nebraska Children and Families Foundation   
which serves as the private endowment provider required by state statute. For more information, visit [www.SingaSongofSixpence.org](http://www.SingaSongofSixpence.org).

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