

# Together For Good



Lincoln  
Community  
FOUNDATION

FALL 2024



LINCOLN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION  
BARBARA BARTLE GARDEN



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## Greetings:

Each year as December approaches, I like to reflect on the moments and events that embody the year prior. It's often astonishing to consider how much can change within the course of a few months. At the start of 2024, I would have not anticipated that I would be here, addressing you as President of the Lincoln Community Foundation. It is truly the professional honor of my lifetime.

I was reminded of my journey to this moment by an email I received from a fellow nonprofit professional on my first day in this new role back in August. In his note of congratulations, John Mabry of the Lincoln Food Bank included the original email I had sent more than eight years ago when I first came to the Foundation as Vice President of Philanthropy Services.

My note from 2016 referred to the completion of our 60th anniversary campaign, where the community raised more than \$60 million in unrestricted support for our local nonprofits. I also described the results of the fifth annual Give to Lincoln Day, celebrating contributions of more than \$3 million in one day. I'm not sure at that time we would have dared to dream that the 13th Give to Lincoln Day would raise more than \$8.5 million for 463 organizations!

Beyond Give to Lincoln Day, the Foundation has continued to grow in our role as a community leader. From our partnerships working to provide affordable housing, to raising support and awareness for Lincoln Littles and the importance of early care and education, to addressing the data in Lincoln Vital Signs with action through the Prosper Lincoln agenda – you'll read stories of these community-wide efforts throughout these pages.

With a clear view of the past and a vision for the future, community remains at the heart of everything we do. And this work would not be possible without you – donors with a love for Lincoln who are creating lasting legacies of giving. Whether it's locally or across the globe, thank you for partnering with Lincoln Community Foundation to support the causes that are near and dear to you.



Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tracy Edgerton,  
President/CEO





# Welcome to the team

*LCF is pleased to welcome three new folks to our team of professionals who are committed to building a better, stronger community for people today and generations to come.*



As a dedicated public servant, **KATE BOLZ** brings nearly 20 years of experience in economic and community development to the role of Community Leadership and Belonging Manager. Kate supports LCF's community leadership and grantmaking functions by facilitating collaborations across all sectors of the city. She designs and implements strategies to address inequities in our community and leads belonging, equity, and inclusion efforts. Kate is a proud new parent and sixth-generation Nebraskan.



Also joining the team earlier this year is **JUSTY GORTEMAKER**. In the new role of Events & Communications Manager, Justy designs and executes LCF's events and supports internal and external marketing efforts. Justy is a passionate storyteller with nearly 10 years of experience in producing events. Originally from Mullen, Nebraska, she now enjoys calling Lincoln her hometown.



**PHIL TRUONG** brings more than five years of experience to the Finance & Operations Team as LCF's new Staff Accountant. In this role, Phil is responsible for grant processing, accounts payable, fiscal sponsorship fund management, and data analysis. Outside of the office he enjoys spending his free time cycling the many trails Lincoln has to offer.



# Some enchanted evening

## *Garden celebration honors LCF Legacy Society, Benefactors and Trustees*

The Lincoln Community Foundation Barbara Bartle Garden made for a beautiful setting to honor the generosity of LCF's Legacy Society, Lincoln Benefactors and Board of Trustees. Fountains bubbled in the background as guests mingled in the downtown respite and enjoyed live music from Bobby Gadoury. The group was welcomed by Lauren Pugliese, vice chair of the LCF board of directors. Lauren introduced new President, Tracy Edgerton.

"When the search committee was tasked with tapping the next leader of the Foundation earlier this summer, we knew the role required someone who loved Lincoln and whose vision, passion

and leadership could build on the current momentum of the organization," said Lauren. "Luckily, we did not have to look far."

Tracy acknowledged her longstanding relationships with these esteemed groups through her previous role as Vice President of Philanthropy Services and General Counsel.

"I have had the privilege of working with many of you throughout the years to connect your generosity to the causes and organizations that are meaningful to you," she said. "Tonight is a special moment where we honor and thank you for your generous gifts to our community."



*New LCF President Tracy Edgerton mingles with donors on September 12.*

**LCF'S LEGACY SOCIETY** recognizes forward-thinking donors who make a lasting commitment to the community by naming the Foundation as a beneficiary through a will, trust, or other future gift. Such gifts may be of any size. As a member of the Legacy Society, you join a distinguished group of people who share a common vision for the future of Lincoln.

### **LINCOLN BENEFACTORS**

The establishment of our generous Lincoln Benefactors many years ago formed the backbone of the Lincoln Community Foundation. These gifts have provided long-term stability for the Foundation and significant benefits to our community nonprofit organizations. With a current or a planned estate gift, you can become a Benefactor three ways:

- › Individual gifts of \$50,000 or more to the Lincoln Community Foundation Fund, our operating endowment
- › Gifts of \$500,000 or more to any endowed fund held at LCF
- › Gifts of \$1,000,000 or more to any LCF fund made during a 12-month period

**LCF'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES** serve as our ambassadors in the community and share with others how we can be a resource for all things charitable.

### **NEW BENEFACTORS**

Susan Sehnert Stuart  
Dohn J. Theobald\*

### **NEW LEGACY SOCIETY MEMBERS**

Ryan & Christy Beckman  
Anne & Brad Brandt  
Kenneth J. Donlan &  
Margaret L. Donlan  
Nancy L. King & John M. Grady  
Sally R. Johnson  
Patrick Kreifels & Kevin Zubrod  
Sherry Lawton  
Robert L. Nefsky\*  
J. Hugh Rogers & Joan Kruse Rogers  
Susan Sehnert Stuart  
Dr. Julia M. Wershing\*

*\*recognized posthumously*

As you develop your financial and estate plans, remembering your community can provide a lasting and meaningful legacy. For more information, contact Chip DeBuse at 402-474-2345 or [chipd@lcf.org](mailto:chipd@lcf.org).





## LEAD DONOR PROFILE

Jim Krieger draws on his business background to advocate for early childhood

By Mary Kay Roth

Jim Krieger grew up with a mother who believed in quality early childcare, a woman far ahead of her time. What's more, she talked the talk and walked the walk – working in Lincoln's high-poverty schools during the early 1960's.

His mother's beliefs have helped shape Jim's life, professionally and personally. As a young man he landed a job with Don Clifton at SRI Research Center, which eventually led to an opportunity to support one of the first businesses in Lincoln to facilitate early childcare for its employees.

Today Jim is retired but has become a lifelong advocate of early childcare and continues to preach its merits.

He explains that after majoring in business administration and finance at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, he left his first accounting job when given a chance to work for Don Clifton and SRI, a company that would eventually merge with Gallup.

He started at the company in 1978 and watched the business grow, move into bigger buildings, eventually constructing an entire campus at 70th and O streets. And as the company exploded in size, Jim

worked his way up to Vice President and Chief Financial Officer.

In 1981, the company had the notion of an on-site early childcare center. Jim had the perfect background to support the initiative.

"Jim lost his dad in 1967 when he was only 14 years old, and his mom was left with two children to support," Jim's wife, Penny, reflected. "She was a school nurse and became very involved with Head Start."

"Years later, when Jim was at Gallup, he was very much aware of how employer-supported childcare benefited both the families and the businesses where they worked."

Jim described his mom as an early pioneer and champion of nurses and early education in public schools, as well as a powerful leader in supporting healthcare and childcare for families in poverty.

"If there was a health initiative proposed for kids or infants, mom was always the first one to set it up," he said. "She kept medical equipment in the back of her car and after dinner I'd go with her when she would go into homes to test children for things like hearing problems."

In 1962 his mom was offered the opportunity to help set up and work the health care component of Head Start centered at Elliott Elementary and five other public schools, one of the very earliest national childcare programs in the country.

"So, you can imagine when people in the Gallup office started talking about establishing a fulltime early childcare center and I had grown up learning about the value of quality childcare," said Jim. "I had positive memories of the support it could give children and families."

Eventually Jim took on the financial end of the Gallup childcare center and was responsible for ensuring the company was fiscally responsible in their childcare operation – and he credits much of that early success to bringing in fierce local childcare advocates such as Jane Ericson, Helen Raikes, Connie Rath and Mary Reckmeyer.

"Jim made it happen, his voice was huge," said Mary.

"Back in the day, companies may have believed that providing childcare was a good idea, but they would look at the upfront costs, not the potential benefits and outcomes," she continued.

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## Jim lends his time by helping us dive deeper into future strategy for businesses. His professional background coupled with past involvement in on-site childcare at Gallup are invaluable.

- Anne Brandt, Executive Director of Lincoln Littles

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“Jim, however, was the financial guy and he believed childcare was the right thing to do. He always said, ‘Let’s figure it out.’ He gave us credibility.”

Although Jim is retired, he continues to believe childcare is a unique employee engagement and recruitment tool.

“When we were recruiting and trying to attract business leaders to Gallup, childcare gave us something extra to offer,” he said. “And there were additional benefits, as it also cut down on employee loss, so our business didn’t have to rehire and retrain.”

Anne Brandt, executive director of Lincoln Littles, is honored that Jim now brings this perspective as he works closely with their organization.

“Jim is an incredible partner to Lincoln Littles serving on our Champions of Early Childhood, our Board of Advisors, and Executive Team,” said Anne. “In addition, Jim lends his time by helping us dive deeper into future strategy for businesses. His professional background coupled with past involvement in on-site childcare at Gallup are invaluable.”

These days Jim continues to champion the advantages of

offering employees childcare.

“It’s great for employees and their families, but also for a company’s return on investment,” he said.

Jim understands that access to early care and education goes beyond a family or women’s issue – it impacts the entire community. He still attributes his philosophy back to his mother and to what he calls, “an accidental form of education due to what I experienced in those early, important years. That never goes away.”

Jim said his mother trusted people. “Trust your employees and they will do right by you. Honor and support them.”

That’s the way he has lived his own life, and he hopes his story will inspire other businesses to find innovative solutions while keeping their employees top of mind. He recognizes that our community is lucky to have a partner in Lincoln Littles which supports both employees and businesses with their childcare needs.

“I believe in doing whatever you can to take care of your employees,” he said. “I’m so blessed to have been given some very unique opportunities in life. I’d like to make sure others have the same opportunities.”

**Jim and his wife, Penny, operate the Krieger Family Foundation established in 2011, focused on the importance and relevancy of learning entrepreneurial skills, supporting and helping develop related programs. The Jim & Penny Krieger Family Foundation is a Lincoln Littles lead donor.**



Helen Krieger

### First State School Nurse of the Year Has Helped LPS Students for 30 Years

“I can truthfully say I’ve looked forward to coming to work every day for the last 30 years,” Helen Krieger said.

While the days haven’t always turned out just like she would have planned, she said she has always loved her job. The extra effort she puts into her position as a school nurse has earned Krieger the distinction of being chosen the first School Nurse of the Year by the Nebraska School Nurses Association at a meeting in Omaha, Oct. 23. When she started with the Lincoln Public Schools in 1957, Krieger already had a long list of accomplishments under her nurse’s cap. She graduated from the Lincoln General School of Nursing, worked as a private duty nurse and later she was head nurse at Lincoln General Hospital and Executive Director of the District Nurses Association.

Krieger left the District Nurses Association to become a school nurse.

“My colleagues said it would be too slow paced,” Krieger said with a smile. She knows otherwise.

She started at Bethany and Hunting-

ton Schools. She worked at Dawes and at Meadowlark when there were over 1400 students there. Now Krieger works at Saratoga, Elliott, Park, Clinton and Huntington.

When asked to describe her duties, she said her primary responsibility is to screen the students to determine and meet their needs. Making sure that all the health laws are followed is another of her responsibilities, Krieger said. She also serves as a resource person for health activities in the classroom.

In 1965 she began working with the Head Start Program and later worked with other federal programs as a health coordinator.

Krieger said her work with the various organizations over the last 30 years probably led to her selection as the first School Nurse of the Year. In addition to her work with the School Nurses Association, she is a member of the State Nurses Association. She is the only school nurse who has served on the Board of Directors for the Nebraska State Education Association.

EDLINES

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*Helen Krieger’s legacy of helping children and families is reflected in her son Jim’s career and philanthropy.*

# Ways Lincoln Littles can support your business and employees

- Answer questions about childcare, childcare benefits and early childhood.
- Administer & analyze a childcare needs survey to distribute to employees.
- Connect families to Lincoln Littles scholarships, childcare subsidies, and nearby providers.
- Share Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit fliers for employees as well as information on Nebraska's non-refundable Child Care Tax Credit for Employers and Other Contributors which encourages private sector contributions that create, expand or enhance the childcare options in the state.

This fall, Lincoln Community Foundation is raising funds and awareness for the important work of Lincoln Littles. Visit [LincolnLittles.org](https://LincolnLittles.org) or use the inserted envelope to make a gift in support of access to early care and education.

Together, we can create a brighter future for children and families in Lincoln. For more information, visit [LincolnLittles.org](https://LincolnLittles.org).



Executive Director Anne Brandt (front center) and the team at Lincoln Littles.

## Big thanks to our 2024 Lead Donors

ABC Electric  
Abel Foundation  
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Bettenhausen Family Foundation  
Drs. Bob & Stacie Bleicher  
Becky & Gale Breed  
Buffett Early Childhood Fund  
Candy & Bob Campbell  
Rosalind K. Carr  
*in memory of Professor James D. Carr*  
Community Health Endowment  
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Larry Frederick & Robyn Sitzman  
Harbor of Dreams, Inc.  
Barb Hoppe Johnson & Bruce Johnson  
Kile & Cuz Johnson  
Jim & Penny Krieger Family Foundation  
Lincoln Chamber of Commerce  
Drs. Marilyn & David Moore  
Mike Munro & Susie Keisler-Munro  
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Drs. Bob & Lisa Rauner  
Sue & Al Saathoff  
Rhonda Seacrest  
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Dr. Bob & Dottie Shapiro  
Tom & Sue Tallman  
Sue & Ed Tricker  
Dr. Eileen & Richard Vautravers  
Bill & Mae Whitmer Family Fund  
Woods Charitable Fund





# From the Blog

## LINCOLN LITTLES ANSWERS THE CALL

No two days are alike in my role as Associate Director with Lincoln Littles. There is one certainty within my day-to-day, however. The phone will ring. A LOT.

The calls cover a variety of things, most are early childhood related, with the exception of an occasional call from my own children still navigating young adulthood.

Here's a look at an average day addressing the needs for quality and affordable childcare in our community.

At 8 am, there is a call from a single dad who lost his job and needs help with childcare costs while he interviews for a new position and waits for his first paycheck.

Next an email and call with a community member that wants to start her own childcare and needs help with all the processes, there are so many to navigate.

Then the call from a new childcare director that needs support and asks about joining the Lincoln Littles Peer Mentor Program.

Next up, a mom and baby stop by our office, they just moved to Lincoln so mom can attend grad school at the University.

*“Are there any programs to help me with childcare while I work to better my family?”*

As soon as she left, I received a call from a teacher at one of our local middle schools.

*“I don't want to leave my teaching career but if I don't find help paying for childcare, I won't have an option.”*

Then the call from a director of a childcare center who wants to increase the quality of her program.

*“To raise quality, I need to make some improvements to the infant classroom. Can you help? Are there any grants available?”*

Another director calls saying she needs staff. She has families waiting to start but can't enroll them if she doesn't get some teachers hired.

Over the past several months there were the calls from childcare programs struggling to stay open:

*“Can you help us stay open?”*

*“Can you help us close gracefully?”*

*“Can you help us find places for the kids and staff to go?”*

At 6 pm, I host an informational session for childcare staff to help them understand the new school

readiness tax credit so they can claim anywhere from \$2,300 up to \$3,500 and increase their income.

After that, I call it a day. A good day. These are just a few of the calls that come into our office. You may have noticed we've changed the timing of our annual fundraising campaign so that we can keep helping the folks who know they can pick up the phone and call Lincoln Littles. The need is as urgent as ever.

When you give, you make more stories like these possible. Will you join me and all of us at Lincoln Littles in answering the call?

**Suzanne Schneider is the associate director for Lincoln Littles. To support access to quality and affordable early childcare with a gift to Lincoln Littles visit [LincolnLittles.org](https://LincolnLittles.org).**





# Community conversations inform Lincoln’s latest data report

More than 120 community members attended a gathering at Auld Pavilion Recreation Center on October 3 to hear the latest findings from Lincoln Vital Signs and learn how our community is coming together to address persistent disparities.

Since 2014, Lincoln Vital Signs has been a community-wide data resource. The data is used by organizations and individuals to inform decisions, spark connections, and spur collaboration. Lincoln City Councilwoman and LCF Board Member Sändra Washington opened the program and shared how the Race Equity Trends 2024 report is a first for our community.

The focus issue continues the tradition of providing credible, reliable information about Lincoln while highlighting the diversity of our community and identifying opportunities to increase prosperity for all residents.

Dr. Janell Walther from the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center provided background information on how Lincoln identified the need for more focused and comprehensive data on race equity.

“One of the biggest questions folks kept coming back to was, ‘How can we explain what these disparities look like and the impact of those disparities?’” she shared.

With that, Lincoln Community Foundation and the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center sought to establish a process to not only gather and evaluate data based on racial and ethnic diversity, but to also do so with input from our community.

Dr. Walther explained that central to this process was hearing from our neighbors.

“We didn’t want to tell a story about our community without

their voice at the table,” she said. “As a result, we planned four “Data Walks” where we invited community members to review eight preliminary data indicators.”

The events were hosted at Educare in the Belmont neighborhood, F Street Community Center in the South of Downtown neighborhood, Hartley Elementary School in the Hartley neighborhood, and Willard Community Center in the West A neighborhood. Interpreters, childcare, refreshments, and a stipend were provided to make these data walks accessible.

“People shared whether the data felt true to their experience, what they wished they knew, how the disparities might be addressed, and when the data felt surprising or not,” said Dr. Walther. “This community input reshaped the report and the indicators.”

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## We didn't want to tell a story about our community without their voice at the table.

- Dr. Janell Walther, University of Nebraska Public Policy Center

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Lincoln Vital Signs: Race Equity Trends 2024 presents data in chapters covering: Community Profile, Financial Well-Being, Housing and Neighborhoods, Education, and Health. Dr. Stacey Hoffman, one of the authors of the report and senior research manager at the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center, presented key findings.

“Lincoln is growing more diverse,” she said. “As the size of our overall population grows, the proportion of residents who identify with racial or ethnic groups other than white or Caucasian is also increasing.”

Dr. Hoffman shared that Lincoln does well in a number of areas when considering racial equity. The majority of Lincoln's population, across all racial and ethnic groups, have achieved some education after high school. People serving on City Boards and Commissions, who are appointed by the mayor, are representative of the racial and ethnic make-up of the city. Workforce participation and employment rates are higher for some racial and ethnic groups than the city-wide average.

However, the data shows that while diversity is increasing, persistent disparities exist. Black or African American residents, and Native American residents, experience lower employment

rates than the Lincoln city-wide average. Median household incomes are lower for most non-white households with only white and Asian households having average incomes higher than the Lincoln city-wide average. Severe housing cost burden is disproportionately experienced by non-white households. Disparities in educational attainment exist and financial factors are related to children's educational outcomes.

Selina Martinez, administrative director of student engagement and inclusion at Southeast Community College, followed Dr. Hoffman's presentation and shared her perspective with the crowd.

“For individuals with lived experience like myself and others in the room, this data is not surprising,” she said.

Prior to her role at Southeast Community College, Selina served in a dual capacity at Community Health Endowment and the Lincoln Community Foundation. Much of her time was spent developing the Race Equity report by engaging with the Public Policy Center, the funders of the report and the Lincoln Vital Signs Advisory Committee.

“Part of our discussions included our intentional effort with how this data would be both displayed and communicated so we could highlight the benefits of our diverse communities and prevent further harm to communities experiencing these inequities,” she shared.

From surveys to meetings, the process spanned several months, ensuring the data was reported in a thoughtful and inclusive way.

To conclude the event, participants were encouraged to personally explore the data by visiting key findings presented on posters throughout the room. Representatives from the Public Policy Center, as well as community members whose work represents some of the many ways Lincoln is responding to persistent disparities, were available next to each data point to facilitate conversation.

“The Public Policy Center compiles this data for our community to be informed,” said Selina. “And through the robust networks of the folks gathered here today, the Lincoln Community Foundation invites you to take the next step and get involved.”



To explore the data and view the full Lincoln Vital Signs Race Equity 2024 report, visit [LincolnVitalSigns.org](https://LincolnVitalSigns.org).



*Students tour Atlanta's Historically Black Colleges and Universities this summer with ROSS Leaders.*

# Open Door Grant opens new possibilities to students

**By Liz McCue**

*Photos courtesy of ROSS Leaders*

Navigating the path to college in the United States is challenging enough as is, but even more so for students who are the first to travel that path in their families. That's why, since the organization's founding in 2019, ROSS (Republic of South Sudan) Leaders has taken high school juniors and seniors on college tours and offered college preparation programs.

"Most of our students are first generation, whether that be first-generation student, as well as first-generation American," said Nyagosa

Deng, who serves as both program facilitator and one of the college tour coordinators for ROSS Leaders' Lincoln chapter.

ROSS Leaders offers mentorship, academic support, community and cultural engagement, and health and wellness programs to the children of South Sudanese immigrant and refugee families in multiple communities across the United States, including Lincoln. For its first few years, the organization took students on tours of local institutions, including the

Universities of Nebraska at Omaha and Lincoln. More recently, ROSS Leaders has been helping students dream even further, starting with a trip to Chicago in 2022.

This year, with the help of an Open Door Grant from the Lincoln Community Foundation, ROSS Leaders took around 50 high school juniors and seniors from Lincoln and Omaha to Atlanta. They visited institutions including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) like Spelman College and Morehouse College, as well as

universities like Emory University and Georgia State University.

Open Door Grants support Lincoln nonprofits with grants available on a rolling basis with monthly review and a simplified application. For ROSS Leaders, that made it easy to obtain financial support that would help cover operational costs and, with additional grants and donations, make the trip free to all students. In fact, all the organization's youth programs are available at no cost, said Flora Mondì, interim executive director, to ensure money isn't a barrier to participation.

Students were split into two groups for the trip. Around two dozen girls traveled to Atlanta first, from July 30

to August 3, and another two dozen boys went from August 4 to 8.

"I honestly can without a doubt say that the college tour was life-changing to some of our students," Nyagoa said.

She was one of several members of ROSS Leaders' leadership who accompanied students to Atlanta. Visiting colleges is an important part of the trip, but so is the travel itself.

For some students, this may be their first time traveling out of Nebraska, or even outside of their hometowns. Even as some South Sudanese families mark 20–25 years of living in the United States, immigrants and refugees face language and

educational barriers in Nebraska's job markets that limit their income. In a 2020 report published by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, 63.9% of South Sudanese or Sudanese refugee survey respondents reported an annual income of \$20,000–\$35,000.

That's also why the college tours are so valuable – students can view another path for their future that they may not have known existed from seeing their parents' or family friends' experiences.

"I always like to say it's just getting the opportunity to them, because students don't know what they don't know," Nyagoa said.

*Continued on page 14*



## Open Door Grant

*continued from page 13*

In Atlanta, students went to the Coca-Cola factory, the Georgia Aquarium, the National Center for Civil & Human Rights and the Apex Museum. They also visited The Black Man Lab and the Southern Center for Human Rights, where they met with Black men and women in a variety of careers.

Seeing successful Black professionals was another important part of the trip, said Anger Dok, ROSS Leaders' communications director.

"A lot of the students, after they went to the Lab, were talking about how they had never seen so many successful Black men in their 30s, 40s, 50s and being able to talk to them," Anger said. "And they also felt like it was a vulnerable space where they could talk about how they felt."

At the Southern Center for Human Rights, the girls met with leaders and attorneys, including the executive director, Terrica Ganzy.

"It was beautiful for our students to see women of color in those positions and hear their amazing words of wisdom, as well," Nyagoo said. And not just students – one of her colleagues also found a new interest in law, and the experience assured Deng of her desire to pursue a law degree.

For both Nyagoo and Anger, seeing students get excited at new



possibilities is one of the greatest parts of their jobs. They also faced barriers to getting into college and see a lot of themselves in the students they work with.

"I want to help students the way I wish I had been helped," Nyagoo said. "I hope to be able to aid my students so that they don't have to face these same barriers, students who share virtually all the same identities as me."

Her mom was a major proponent in Nyagoo's higher education journey, hoping that she and her siblings could have a life and jobs that weren't as labor intensive. That mindset is held by many parents who send their children to ROSS Leaders' programs, too – they want to see their children attain college degrees and fulfilling and impactful jobs.

The number of role models who can speak about college and their professional journey is growing, as previous ROSS

Leaders participants return to the organization as mentors. Anger herself didn't learn about it until she was in college, but in the years she's been a mentor or program coordinator for ROSS Leaders, she's enjoyed seeing students grow over the years, both as people and inches in height.

The organization has growth in its future, too, with goals of eventually offering free ACT testing and taking students on trips abroad. Starting with just five students in 2019, programs now serve dozens, driven in no small part by word-of-mouth – students bring their friends, who bring their siblings, who then bring their friends to events or talk about programs. Excitement for the college tours for juniors and seniors has grown year after year this way, too.

"I'm looking forward to seeing that twinkle in their eye continue through multiple generations of students," Anger said.

# New online platform offers innovative way to get involved

As we enjoy the season of giving thanks and giving back, the old adage of giving your “time, talent, and treasure” still rings true.

One resource we all have available to give is time, however, it can be hard for individuals to know where to start and how to connect with the causes and organizations they care about – a challenge that the United Way of Lincoln and Lancaster County set their sights to solve through their new online platform, VolunteerLNK.org.

The user-friendly platform which debuted in April 2024, simplifies the process of finding meaningful volunteer possibilities and is tailored to each user’s unique interests, skills and availability.

“Our hope is to empower individuals to take an active role in building a stronger, more vibrant community,” said Meagan Liesveld, executive director for United Way of Lincoln and Lancaster County. “We want the community to know that the time is right to step back in if they haven’t already.”

Within the first several months of the platform, there were more

than 750 volunteers registered to fill the nearly 90 agencies’ posted positions. Volunteer opportunities can be filled by individuals, families, church groups, companies, retirees. The site also offers options for high school and college students to get involved.

Andrew Brown, assistant director of community engagement at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, shared how students can easily find upcoming volunteer opportunities and document their impact through the new platform.

“VolunteerLNK has enabled students to come together with nonprofits in the Lincoln area to leverage their collective capacity and make change in our community,” said Andrew.

Additionally, UNL has utilized VolunteerLNK.org to support their Engage Lincoln program which connects more than 100 students to five different nonprofits each month. The Student Leadership, Involvement, and Community Engagement team sources

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Are you looking for ways to give back and create positive change in our community? Visit [VolunteerLNK.org](https://www.volunteerlnk.org) and learn more.



data from Lincoln Vital Signs to identify community needs, then uses information hosted on VolunteerLNK.org to locate nonprofit partners and connect students to their volunteer opportunities.

The centralized platform also benefits the organizations with their search for volunteers. Some opportunities are for a specific day and time, while others are ongoing, such as being a tutor for Lincoln Literacy or a CASA volunteer advocate. The goal is to help volunteers and organizations find each other through commonalities.

“VolunteerLNK.org is making it faster and easier than ever to connect donors to the needs and opportunities in our community,” said Michelle Paulk, LCF’s vice president of grantmaking and community outreach. “LCF is proud to support this important platform through our Open Door Grant program and we hope it inspires folks to take the next steps to get involved.”

## LCF nationally recognized for public-private partnerships

Earlier this year, LCF received the 2024 HUD Secretary Award for Public-Philanthropic Partnerships. The award is a national partnership between the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Council on Foundations, now in its 11th year, and calls attention to philanthropy's work with government partners.

The Foundation received the award for its partnership with the City of Lincoln Mayor's Office to increase affordable housing in Lincoln.

"Collaboration is one of our core values here at the Foundation and this award is a testament to how we live out those values every day," said President Tracy Edgerton. "We are grateful to be recognized for our strong partnership with Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird and her team as we work together to make housing more affordable for our community."

Lincoln Community Foundation convened more than 20 private



and public stakeholders from the community to create a task force that provided a recommendation to the mayor that addressed the community's affordable housing shortage. As a result of this collaboration, the Foundation and the City of Lincoln Mayor's Office co-created a new affordable housing loan fund within an existing, but defunct, Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) called Community Development Resources (CDR).

In just two years, CDR has financed more than 300 affordable housing

units for low- and moderate-income residents of Lincoln. The plan has stated a goal of 9,000 affordable housing units over a ten-year period.

The award ceremony took place on July 11 in Washington D.C. LCF Board Member and retired Urban Development Director for the City, Dan Marvin, accepted the award on behalf of the Foundation.

Other winners this year are Rochester Area Community Foundation; Seattle Foundation; The Dayton Foundation; John T. Gorman Foundation and Yampa Valley Community Foundation.

## YOUR PARTNER FOR YEAR-END GIVING.

As 2024 draws to a close, there's still time to make a difference! The Lincoln Community Foundation is here to assist you with your year-end giving.

