

HomeTalk

SPRING 2016

A magazine of the Nebraska
Children's Home Society

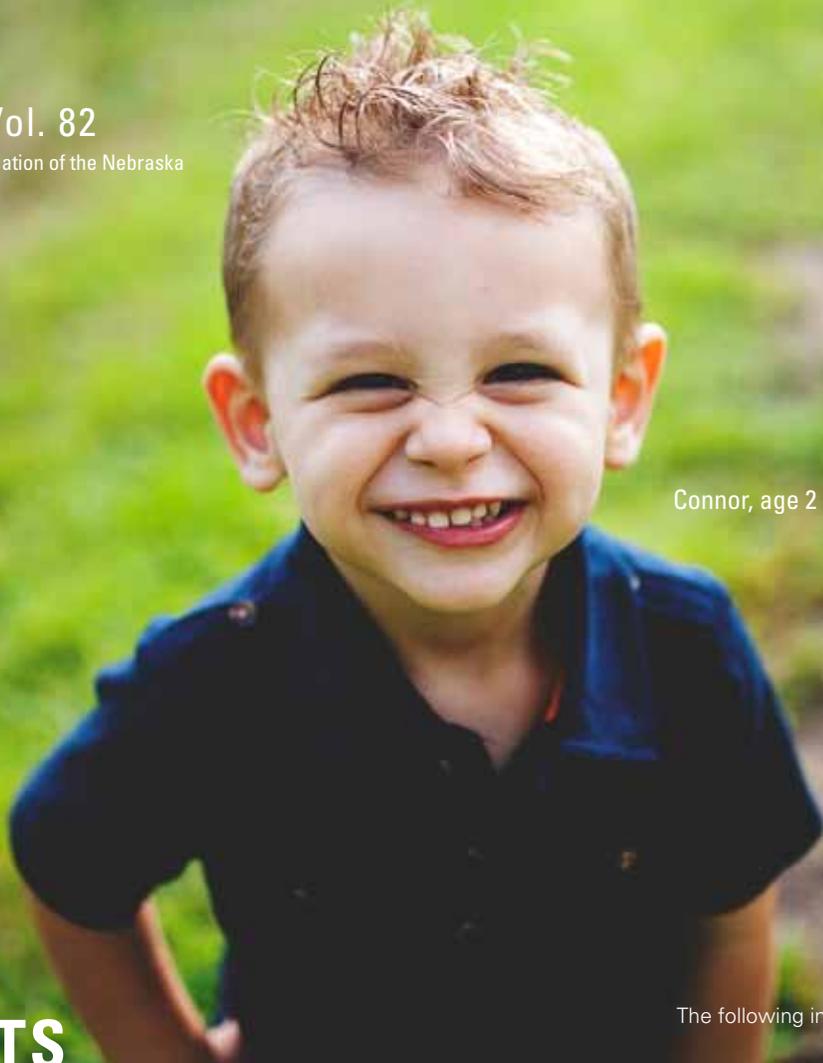


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HomeTalk magazine is a publication of the Nebraska Children's Home Society.



Connor, age 2

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The mission of Nebraska Children's Home Society is to provide safe and loving care to children of all ages.

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Dear Friends of the Nebraska Children's Home Society,

"How are the children?" I have read that this is the traditional greeting in some tribal communities in Africa—equivalent to our "Hi, how are you?" What a lovely custom! To me, asking first and foremost about the well-being of the children in our communities and our society as we encounter friends, acquaintances or even strangers sends a powerful message about priorities.

At Nebraska Children's Home Society, the question, "How are the children?" is always on our minds and at the top of our priority list. In this issue of HomeTalk you will read stories about the impact of our work on the lives of children and families across Nebraska, stories about real people told from their point of view, stories about the importance of connectedness to the well-being of children. Turn the pages to:

- Understand the important role we play in supporting women experiencing unplanned pregnancies as they make the difficult decision to parent or develop an adoption plan. That support continues long after the decision is made.
- Learn about the amazing courage and strength of grandparents who become "second time" parents as they take on the responsibilities of raising their grandchildren and how they connect with each other and community resources through groups tailored to their very special circumstances.
- Celebrate with a young woman who makes a connection with a loving adoptive family after experiencing an uncertain future as a foster child.
- Marvel at the tenacity of a young man whose connection to Nebraska Children's Home through adoption inspires him to focus his efforts on giving back to other children through his Eagle Scout project.

These stories are only a sample of the ways in which Nebraska Children's Home connects with, assists and supports children and families in their life journeys. From conception through the life span, connections to each other provide protective layers of support, comfort, and encouragement as we reach toward our goals and cope with difficulties we experience along the way.

So if you ask me, "How are the children?" I will reply: With your help and support, our children will thrive in their families and communities. I thank you for making a difference in the lives of children by connecting to Nebraska Children's Home through your gift.



Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Authier".

Karen Authier, Chief Executive Officer, Nebraska Children's Home Society



Pictured: Lisa and her birth daughter on the shores of Lake McConaughy in Ogallala, Nebraska (Courtesy photo)



March 28, 2015
Weaving Families Together—Grand Island
Over 120 friends and families gathered at Riverside Country Club to share the NCHS mission, bid on silent auction items and enjoy a delicious meal together. The event raised over \$13,400. *Pictured are Susan Christensen (right) and Right Turn Supervisor Sara Sanson.*

April 26, 2015
Stories of Inspiration—Lincoln
Quilt artist Dianne Gubbels shared the work of her hands and unfolded stories from her heart at St. Mark's United Methodist Church. The afternoon included a raffle and silent auction. Over 100 supporters raised close to \$10,000 for NCHS.



BECOMING A BIRTH MOTHER

It was Thanksgiving 2008, and Lisa Finley was with her family celebrating the holiday. Part of the tradition was passing shots, and Lisa declined them this year. "Something inside me knew I was pregnant," she recalls. A month later a nurse would tell her, "You're not just pregnant, you're PREGNANT pregnant." The pregnancy test immediately turned positive. Her inkling was true.

"Reality started to set in," Lisa said when she found out. "In my head adoption was the only option." Lisa was nearing her forties and had already been parenting for 22 years. "Sometimes I felt selfish that I couldn't parent, but I didn't see it as a part of my life. I knew I was not prepared to have a baby." For Lisa, abortion was not an option.

Lisa's family was supportive as she journeyed through the process. Lisa's daughter was her sounding board. Her daughter offered to parent the child. Lisa's father offered to parent the child. Lisa thought that maybe her brother and sister-in-law, who were trying to start a family, could raise the baby. Lisa knew she was about to make the toughest decision of her life.

As she was driving down the street in Kearney, she spotted the baby face image. "I recognized the logo on Central Avenue and called Briana." She started a journey with the Nebraska Children's Home Society that would change her life and the lives of so many. Lisa met with Briana Woodside, NCHS Pregnancy, Parenting and Adoption Assistant Program Director, every couple of weeks. "I was so new to the process and I wanted to be educated and learn," Lisa said. "NCHS provided me personal support as I waded through this huge decision."

As she met with Briana and created an adoption plan, Lisa was in charge every step of the way. "I didn't realize how much control I would have in the process," Lisa said. "I was so naïve about adoption. I thought the baby would be whisked off to a new life."

She recalls learning about open adoption. She remembers thinking about what she wanted the hospital experience to be like. And she will never forget the emotional process of selecting a family. "I wanted a family that had the same background as I do, from a small town and hard working," Lisa said. "A family that looks like they had fun together." After receiving the first round of possible adoptive families from NCHS, nothing jumped out at her. The second batch included a family that caught Lisa's attention. After learning more she made her selection. "It reflected how I wanted her to be raised," she said after reading their profile.

Lisa and the couple she selected agreed to meet in York before her daughter was born. They spent an evening together having supper and getting to know each other. Shortly thereafter, Lisa created her hospital plan. She decided to spend some time with her daughter after birth before placing her with the couple that would become her forever family. "It was a dream come true," Lisa said. "It was important for me that my daughter's first home be my home, that's why I chose to take her home from the hospital. While a complete blessing, the time helped assure me that adoption was the right plan."

Lisa continues to see her birth daughter twice a year. She also receives pictures and texts and calls her every month.

She and those who are closest to her continue to learn about open adoption and learn through other people's stories of open adoption. "I hear stories that have been extremely healing."

"Open adoption, alongside open communication and feelings, is a successful journey if birth families and adoptive families are honest about their needs and expectations," Lisa shared. She wants others to know that this process doesn't end with placement.

"We can't forget about the birth parents," Lisa said. "Even though they placed their child and are out of crisis, they still need ongoing support. My journey is not over just because my child has a safe and loving home."

"The ongoing support that I have gotten from NCHS has helped me get to the place where I am okay with my open adoption," Lisa said. "I know I can pick up the phone and there will be an ear to listen. They are a reasonable voice in my storm, some days," Lisa laughed.

The Nebraska Children's Home Society offers a Birth Mother Retreat that is held every other year. Lisa looks forward to attending. She also is active in the NCHS Birth Mother Support Group that meets quarterly in central Nebraska. She values spending time with others who have shared experiences.

Lisa wants to encourage other women who are facing an unplanned pregnancy to pick up the phone and make that call. "For me this journey was completely different and better than I ever expected it to be."

Pregnant? 24/7 Free & Confidential Support
1-877-420-4747



June 10, 2015
NCHS's Sand in the City®
Over 23,000 attendees saw downtown Omaha transformed into a sand-sculpture wonderland during the 12th annual event which brought in over \$130,000 in proceeds and donations.



July 12, 2015
Kids & Dreams Dinner—Kearney
Retired NCHS caseworkers Sheri Jelinek and Jan Gill were reunited at Younes Conference Center during the NCHS fundraising banquet which raised \$5,250 for the safe and loving care for children of all ages.

PARENTING, TAKE TWO.

When you enter the historical brick building on Fontenelle Boulevard after a *Raising Your Grandchildren* session, the lunch room is buzzing with good food, laughter and a deep connection between the participants who just spent the morning supporting each other.

Raising Your Grandchildren (RYG), is a program offered at the Nebraska Children's Home Society Children & Family Center in Omaha. The goal is to provide support and education to caretakers raising kin. In Nebraska, 28,316 children under the age of 18 live with grandparents or other relatives.

"We want to put a face on this diligent, committed group of individuals," said Glendora Patterson, Ph.D. Patterson, who recently retired from NCHS, was instrumental in the creation of the Children and Family Center (CFC) and the programs they offer.

She and Janet Stibor, LMHP, facilitated the group together for three years. Stibor was connected to NCHS through Ignatian Volunteer Corps in 2013. Stibor and Patterson started meeting frequently and the idea of a group for grandparents was introduced. The two bring a wealth of knowledge to the table. Patterson raised her granddaughter who is now 22 years old. Stibor is a retired mental health therapist. NCHS recently hired Melissa Godfrey, LIMHP, who will facilitate the group with Stibor.

The RYG group meets for six consecutive weeks and covers topics including:

- Blessings
- Losses and challenges
- Nurturing self and grandchildren
- Child growth and development
- Appropriate behavioral expectation
- Managing misbehavior
- Keeping children secure and safe

"They don't go out seeking the arrangement. Most of them are parenting children because of some crisis in the family," Stibor says of grandparents and caretakers who participate in the group. "Some of them don't have the resources, have quit jobs, lost their homes, made significant sacrifices and they need to care for the child that stands in the middle of all this."

The RYG facilitators work to make every participant feel absolutely welcome and to value every word and feeling. "I had no idea what a powerful bonding experience it is," said Stibor of each group that goes through the program. They also have an ambassador's group that meets twice a month, comprised of RYG graduates. Marilyn Langford has benefited immensely from not only the support of the RYG group, but from all the services provided at the NCHS Children & Family Center.



July 13, 2015
**Kids & Dreams Dinner
Golf Tournament—Kearney**
Mike Anderson, Bill Boyd,
David Gappa and Dave Roseberry
were the 2015 Fairways &
Greens for Kids & Dreams Golf
Tournament winners.

August 21, 2015
Night at the Ballpark—Lincoln
Friends and families gathered at
Haymarket Park to cheer on the
Saltdogs and raise close to \$9,000
for NCHS. Calvin, son of Brian and
Nancy Harter, represented NCHS
and threw the first pitch!





“One day my nine year-old granddaughter was dropped off at my door and I didn’t know what to do,” Langford said. She heard about the RYG group from her sister who is a teacher. “I called and I expected some help. It was so much bigger than I could have ever imagined. It was wonderful, wonderful.”

She recalled a particularly challenging day when her granddaughter had been sent home from school. She was still in the newness of parenting again, and she turned to the Children & Family Center.

“I showed up here, no warning, with my granddaughter in tow and said I’m about to bust or lose my mind. In the next five minutes my granddaughter was playing with other children. I was sitting down able to release and try to get tools to get it together on what to do with a troublesome child,” Langford said. “Within five minutes. And then they fed us both lunch. It doesn’t get much better than that.”

Fifty-five grandparents have completed an RYG six-week series. Eighty percent of grandparents supported through the program reported improved and enhanced capacity to understand children’s behavior. Eighty-eight percent can also prioritize their emotional well-being.

“It’s good, it’s really good,” said Langford of the services provided at the Children and Family Center. “This is an awesome place.”

To learn more about Raising Your Grandchildren contact [Melissa Godfrey at mgodfrey@nchs.org](mailto:mgodfrey@nchs.org) or 402-451-0787.

Pictured: Raising Your Grandchildren graduate Jeanne Patterson with her grandsons, Jabray, 11, and Stephan, 7.

The Raising Your Grandchildren program is generously funded in part by the Kim Foundation, Sherwood Foundation and Women’s Fund of Omaha.



August 26, 2015
Dick Stoll Retires
 After 28 years at NCHS and over 44 years of serving children and families throughout his career, Dick Stoll celebrated his last day at NCHS with family, friends and his NCHS family. Thank you for your dedication to children & families Dick!



September 17, 2015
Inspiring Greatness—Omaha
 Over 150 attendees welcomed sports journalist and author Don Yaeger to Hilton Omaha and learned the four threads of greatness, while raising over \$17,000 for NCHS.



FOREVER CONNECTED TO FAMILY

Jasmine was glowing in a mint green sweater atop a black dress with colorful stars. A string of pearls hung around her neck. "I'm going to wear these to prom," she shared. The stars on the bottom half of her dress danced in the gust of her movement and excitement. Family and friends filled the 6th floor waiting area of the Douglas County courthouse in anticipation of the finalization of Jasmine's adoption.

The ten year-old had been a state ward since May of 2012 and today she would join her forever family. Her guardian ad litem and caseworkers invited her to sit on a waiting room bench and explained what was going to happen in few minutes inside the courtroom. Shortly after, it was time for the "magical moment" her guardian ad litem had just described.

"Ooooooh yea, yea, yea," she cried out. "It's time, it's time!"

Judge Christopher Kelly entered the room and after getting settled back in her oversized blue chair Jasmine asked Judge Kelly, "Hi, Remember me?" "How could I ever forget you?" referring to their time together at Kids and Judges Day. "This is your day today," Judge Kelly said.

A few minutes later, Mick and Beth Goslin, NCHS foster parents, took the stand and shared how much they loved Jasmine and were ready to welcome her into their hearts and homes, forever. "Jasmine has made herself the fabric of your family," Judge Kelly said. And with that, he declared it to be in Jasmine's best interest to officially join the Goslin family.

The Nebraska Children's Home Society Family Finding program reconnects children in foster care with birth family members and other important adult influences. Our Permanency Services program takes this one step further. Because Jasmine's biological family wasn't ready to parent her full-time, NCHS was able to find a permanent home with the Goslins through child-focused recruitment.

The Goslins have seen the benefit of Family Finding and made it a priority to keep Jasmine connected to her birth family with the support of NCHS, whose services are contracted in the Omaha area by Nebraska Families Collaborative. Because of our expertise in the Family Finding model and because of our statewide existence, NCHS was recently awarded the Family Finding contract by the Department of Health and Human Services for the Central, Northern and Western service areas. NCHS Permanency Specialists will join the offices in North Platte, Grand Island and Norfolk, increasing NCHS programming and presence across the state.

NCHS Family Finding Outcomes include:

- An average of 40 family members identified for each child.
- Functional family members work together to take responsibility and develop realistic plans for the child's safety, permanency and well-being.
- Permanent home with family whenever possible.
- Youth learn their family story and develop a stronger sense of identity.
- Youth have a higher probability of safety, permanency and well-being into adulthood.

To learn more about Family Finding, contact Kim Arkfeld, karkfeld@nchs.org or call 402-451-0787.

Top left: Preparing for finalization are (from left) Nebraska Families Collaborative Family Permanency Specialist Callie Getzschman, Guardian Ad Litem Maureen Monahan, Jasmine and Nebraska Children's Home Society Permanency Specialist Tracy Schaffer. Top right: Judge Christopher Kelly joins the Goslins for their first family photo.



October 9, 2015
Homegrown-Omaha
 BRANCH board members organized an evening of food, drinks and an exhibit by Kathy Rae Photography featuring families served by NCHS at Regency Court. Over 150 people attended and raised over \$17,000 for NCHS.



November 15, 2015
Thankful Hearts-North Platte
 A celebration of sweet indulgence was had by all during the dessert extravaganza and auction at the Holiday Inn Express. The event was made possible by NebraskaLand National Bank.

THE GIFT

Fourteen year-old Matthew Wagoner and his three buddies stood on a street corner in the Old Market playing Van Halen's JUMP on their trombones, trumpet and french horn. Over two nights, decked out in their Boy Scout uniforms and their instrument cases open for anyone willing to toss a shiny coin into, they raised \$800 for Matthew's Eagle Scout project.

Matthew decided to construct four benches that convert to two picnic tables for use in the outdoor playgrounds of the Nebraska Children's Home Society's Early Childhood Education Centers. "It's giving back to what you have given me," Matthew said. "NCHS has given me a family and a home."

The project took over 48 hours total to complete over the span of three months with four adults assisting Matthew. "It's a good place for adults to relax while the kids have fun," Matthew said. And because he purchased the materials on sale, he also made outdoor planters that he will fill with flowers when the weather gets nice.

The best part of the whole project was delivering them to the Children's Home. "It was good to turn them in and see all the faces," Matthew said. "It was pretty nice to get recognized!" When asked what he wants other people to know about NCHS he replied, "It's a great place."

Top: Preschoolers at the NCHS Early Childhood Education Center enjoy the new picnic table. Bottom: Matthew and his father Howard get comfortable after delivering his Eagle Scout project.



GIFTS take many forms. Whether it is a box of diapers, \$500, educating someone about open adoption, connecting individuals to our services or volunteering in our community garden, each gift matters.

Thank you for your generous support.

December 1, 2015

Project Elf

Over 1,400 children received gifts valued at over \$70,000 from over 30 community partners during the Project Elf gift drive benefiting children and families across the state.



January 13, 2016

Glendora Patterson Retires

Instrumental in the creation of the NCHS Children and Family Center in north Omaha, and for her work with the Raising Your Grandchildren program, NCHS wished Dr. Glendora Patterson all the best in her retirement at the end of January. Thank you for your faithful service Glendora!



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PLANNED GIVING

IRA CHARITABLE ROLLOVER

As of December 18, 2015, the IRA Charitable Rollover was passed by Congress and signed into permanent law by President Obama.

The IRA charitable rollover allows individual taxpayers older than 70 ½ years to donate up to \$100,000 from their individual retirement accounts (IRAs) and Roth IRAs to charitable nonprofits like NCHS without having to treat the withdrawals as taxable income.

The IRA rollover offers older Americans the opportunity to give back to the causes they support without suffering adverse tax consequences. The giving incentive is of particular value to individuals who do not claim itemized deductions on their tax return because the funds are sent directly to nonprofits from IRA accounts and are never counted as income.

JOIN THE NCHS SOCIETY CIRCLE

Currently there are over 275 members of the NCHS Society Circle. Are you one of those members?

Society Circle is a recognition group for donors who support the mission of the Nebraska Children's Home Society with a future planned gift. Membership is open to all who have included the NCHS Foundation in their will, trust, gift annuity or other estate plans. These plans can include beneficiary or ownership designations on life insurance policies, retirement plans, CD's, saving accounts or other investments gifted to the NCHS endowment.

If you have questions about the IRA charitable rollover or NCHS Society Circle contact your financial advisor or NCHS Planned Giving Manager, Gary Nelson, gnelson@nchs.org or 402-451-0787.

SAVE THE DATE

May 3 – Go Big Give, Grand Island

May 22 – Omaha Gives

May 26 – Give to Lincoln

June 10-12 – NCHS 's Sand in the City®

July 28 – A Night at the Ballpark, Lincoln

August 20 – Weaving Families Together, Hastings

September – Stories of Inspiration, Kearney

October 14 – HomeGrown, Omaha

November 6 – Thankful Hearts, North Platte

December 1 – Give Where You Live, Kearney

NCHS's 13th Annual Sand in the City® is moving to BAXTER ARENA this year. Join us June 10-12!

NCHS Children & Family Center

Brisa and her son Angel, 5, participate in programming at the Nebraska Children's Home Society's Children & Family Center. The CFC is housed in the original NCHS receiving home at 3549 Fontenelle Boulevard in Omaha. The CFC experienced a 44% increase in the number of clients served last fiscal year. Programming includes: Healthy Pregnancy, Birth Suite, Toddler Talk, Parents Interacting with Infants, Real Talk for Parents, Parents Supporting Parents, Circle of Security, Teen Chat, Center for

Support and Success, Self Sufficiency, Mental Health Services, Raising Your Grandchildren, Raising Your Grandchildren Ambassadors, Healthy Families America, Early Childhood Services, Doula Services, Lactation Consultant, Early Childhood Education Center and Operation Dad.

To learn more about the NCHS Children & Family Center, or to schedule a tour, contact Katie Konold, kkonold@nchs.org or 402-451-0787.





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Jason and Rye with their children Kai, 3 and Mei, 6



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