WCF awards first Breakthrough grant to Collective Impact Lincoln

Woods Charitable Fund awarded its first Breakthrough Initiative Grant to Nebraskans for Civic Reform as the lead agency on a collaborative project called Collective Impact Lincoln. The initiative is intended to benefit low-income, working Lincolnites through actions including neighborhood revitalization, engagement and advocacy. The initiative centers on six targeted neighborhoods affected by poverty and will seek input from community members on their needs and opportunities, and advocate for policies or changes to meet those needs.

The grant, approved by WCF’s board at its May meeting, is pledged for $1.175 million over three years. The nonprofits collaborating with Nebraskans for Civic Reform are Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest and South of Downtown Community Development Organization.

The initiative has started with a community assessment through deep canvassing. Six staff members have knocked on more than 1,000 doors, connecting with residents to better understand issues facing each neighborhood. In February, Collective Impact Lincoln will offer a Neighborhood Leadership Academy for residents interested in civic leadership. The initiative also will conduct legal analysis and advocacy on issues that residents determine can help their quality of life.

“Woods Charitable Fund is excited to partner on this transformative project,” said WCF President Tom Woods. “We look forward to advancing our shared vision of a community that offers a promising future for all, where everyone has the opportunity to participate and thrive.”

To learn more about Collective Impact Lincoln, visit [www.nereform.org/cil](http://www.nereform.org/cil) or email Liz Codina at liz.codina@nereform.org.
Ernie Castillo departs WCF board, Michelle Suarez begins term

This year marked the end of Ernie Castillo Jr.'s term on the WCF Board of Directors, which began in 2012. Ernie is a Planner II for the City of Lincoln's Urban Development Department and is a board member for the Nebraska Literary Heritage Association and a subcommittee member for the Community HOPE Federal Credit Union. More than 300 grants totaling more than $9 million were awarded during Ernie's six-year term. For his parting allotment in director-designated grants, he awarded $25,000 to the Malone Community Center.

Michelle Suarez was elected at WCF's November meeting to serve as its newest board member. Michelle is the Early Childhood Developer with the Prosper Lincoln initiative and was a principal, administrator and teacher in Lincoln Public Schools for more than 30 years. She serves on the boards of the Food Bank of Lincoln, Nebraska Appleseed and Men With Dreams and is a member of the Board of Trustees for the Nebraska State College System.

Nicole Juranek joins WCF staff

Nicole Juranek has joined the WCF staff as a Community Investment Director. She started with the Fund in June and participates in grants management and program review. Before joining WCF, Juranek worked for Heartland Big Brothers Big Sisters, developing, managing and monitoring grants and communications and coordinating events. She has worked and volunteered at several local nonprofit organizations since 2001 and received a bachelor's degree from Nebraska Wesleyan University.

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Kathy Steinauer Smith, Senior Community Investment Director
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