Woods Charitable Fund awarded its 2021 Breakthrough Initiative Grant to the Family Violence Council for the Safe and Healthy Families Initiative, which provides a coordinated response to child abuse cases in Lancaster County in which domestic violence also occurs. It supports staffing, evaluation, operating and related expenses for the Council and five community partners: Voices of Hope; Friendship Home; CASA for Lancaster County; Child Advocacy Center; and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Center on Children, Families and the Law. Support is pledged for $900,000 over three years.

The project's goal is to improve child safety through a more domestic abuse-informed coordinated response by agencies that work with families. Through this response, it seeks to improve partnerships with parents, educate those engaging with these families, and hold perpetrators more accountable. It collaborates with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services’ Children and Family Services and the Lancaster County attorney, and bolsters the Separate Juvenile Court of Lancaster County’s Safe and Healthy Families Court, which is applying to become the state’s first domestic violence-centered child welfare problem-solving court. The partners have begun cross-training staffers at all agencies and established baseline evaluation.

To date, WCF has awarded $3,175,000 for four Breakthrough Initiative Grants, which support promising and groundbreaking collaborations, programs or organizational best practices in Lincoln’s nonprofits. The first grant, for Collective Impact Lincoln led by Civic Nebraska, works to create resident-led change and leadership in six Lincoln neighborhoods. It has received renewal grants totaling $900,000 since its initial three-year $1.175 million grant in 2017. The 2018 Breakthrough grant to Legal Aid of Nebraska and the Center for Legal Immigration Assistance provided $600,000 over three years to offer civil legal services in Lincoln's cultural centers. It was awarded renewal grants in 2021 totaling $370,000. Lincoln Literacy received the third Breakthrough grant in 2020 to provide job-skills training, mentorship and classes to help people acquire well-paying jobs and build careers through a project called Bridgeway to a Better Life. Three years of support is pledged for $500,000.

The year 2021 marks the 80th anniversary of Woods Charitable Fund. The Fund was incorporated in Nebraska in 1941 by Frank H. Woods and Nelle Cochrane Woods and their three sons: Thomas C. Woods, Henry C. Woods, and Frank H. Woods, Jr. Gifts made to the Fund in its early years came from business interests in the telecommunications and coal industries in Nebraska and Illinois, namely Lincoln Telephone & Telegraph and Sahara Coal Company. In 1994, the Fund split into two philanthropic organizations to better serve Lincoln’s and Chicago’s local opportunities and needs. Woods Charitable Fund will feature much more about this landmark year and the organization’s remarkable history in Lincoln in upcoming publications and its 2021 annual report.

Frank H. Woods holds his great-grandson, Thomas C. Woods III, with Thomas C. Woods at left and Thomas C. Woods Jr. at right, in this picture from 1946.
**Grant-making at a glance**

- **Education**: 20%
- **Human Services**: 44%
- **Arts & Culture**: 5%
- **Civic & Community**: 31%

**2021 Grants paid to date**: $1,515,000

**Grants cycles completed**: 2 of 2

**Average number of proposals reviewed per grant cycle**: 18

**Number of grants paid in 2021**: 39

**Average size of grants paid**: $38,846

**Smallest grant paid in 2021**: $10,000

**Largest grant paid in 2021**: $300,000

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**In memoriam**

Woods Charitable Fund has mourned the passing of three previous Board members in the past year.

Lucia Woods Lindley was a Board member from 1980-93 and served as Board chair from 1990-93. She was key in the restructuring of Woods Charitable Fund into two separate foundations and became chair of the Woods Fund of Chicago in 1994. She was the granddaughter of Frank H. Woods Sr. and Nelle Cochrane Woods, who established Woods Charitable Fund. She died Dec. 14, 2020, at age 83.

Tom Potter was a Board member from 1997-2002 and chair from 2000-02. He was the first non-family member to serve in that role. Potter was president, chairman and chief executive officer of Lincoln Mutual Life Insurance Company when he was elected to the WCF Board and held positions on many business and nonprofit boards in Lincoln. He died Nov. 8, 2020, at age 81.

Rev. Dr. Joel Gajardo served on the WCF Board from 1994-98. He was executive director of Lincoln's Hispanic Community Center and a consultant with the United Methodist Church’s Board of Global Ministries during his Board service and volunteered with many nonprofit organizations. He died June 24, 2021, at age 87.