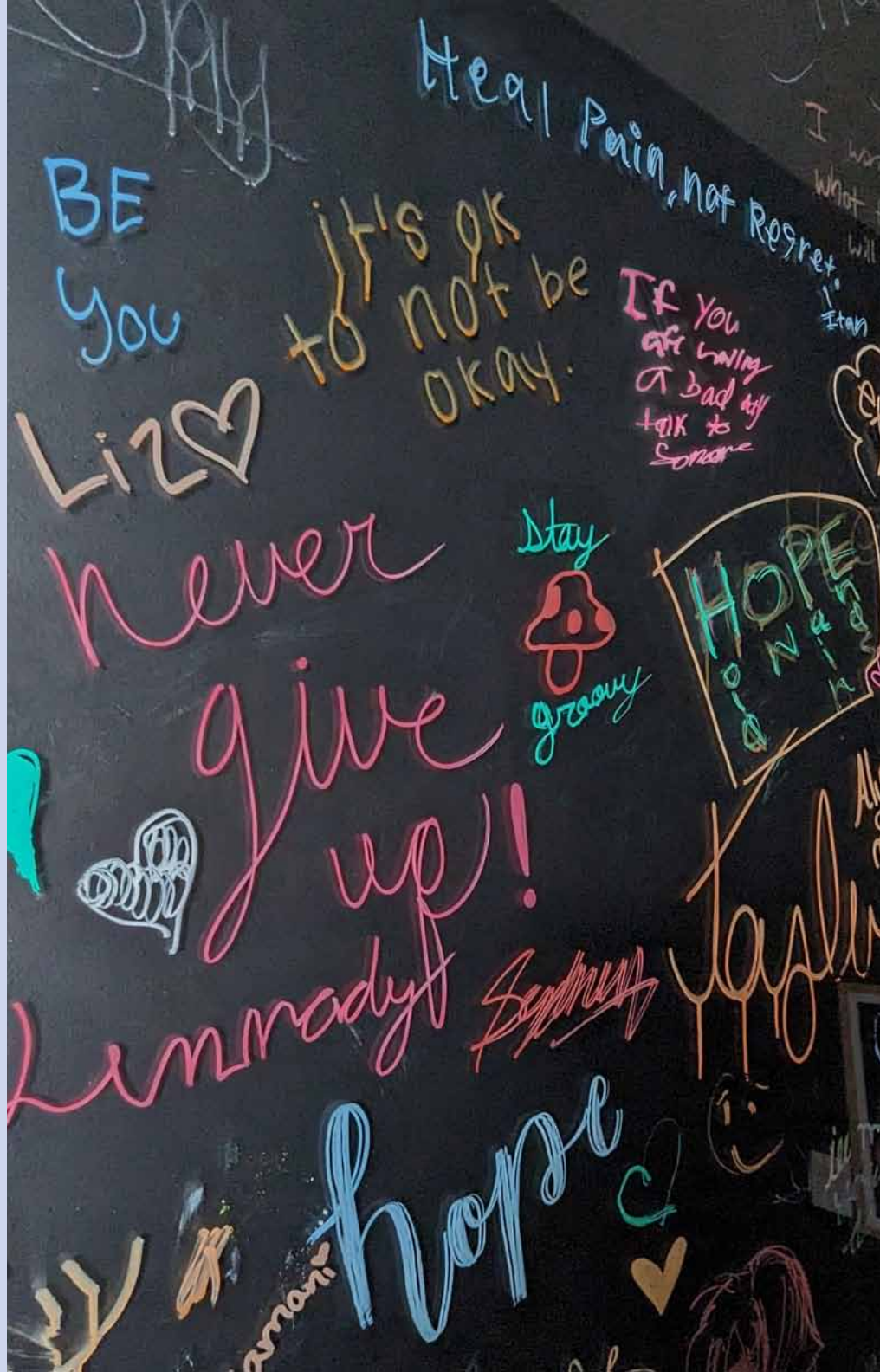
Woods Charitable Fund

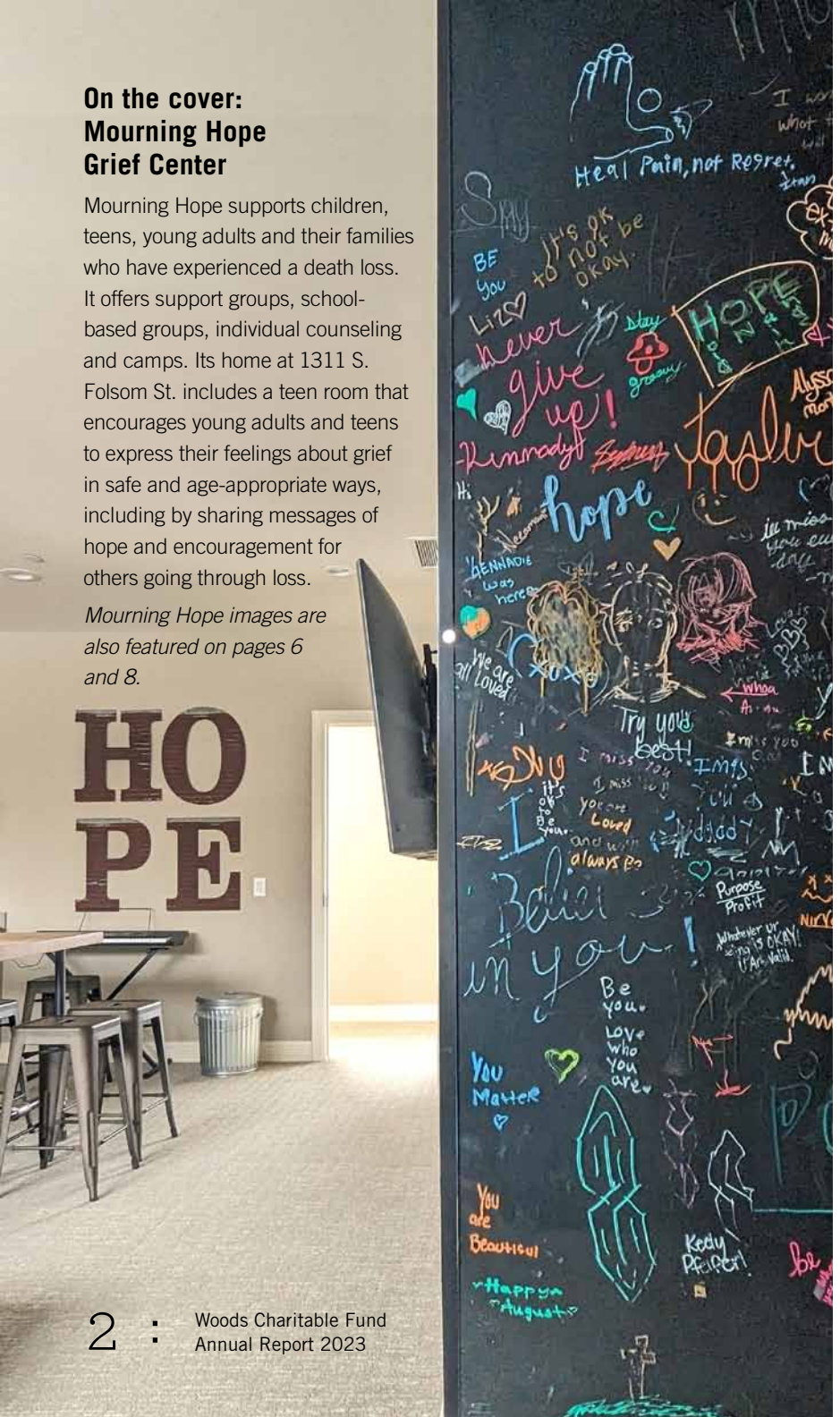
Annual Report 2023



On the cover: Mourning Hope Grief Center

Mourning Hope supports children, teens, young adults and their families who have experienced a death loss. It offers support groups, school-based groups, individual counseling and camps. Its home at 1311 S. Folsom St. includes a teen room that encourages young adults and teens to express their feelings about grief in safe and age-appropriate ways, including by sharing messages of hope and encouragement for others going through loss.

Mourning Hope images are also featured on pages 6 and 8.



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Community Volunteer

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(term ended 2023)
Community Volunteer

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Affordable Housing Investor
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Arbor Day Foundation

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Employee Assistance Program
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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ICTNews.org

Donna W. Woods
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Michelle Suarez

Kevin Abourezk

Letter from the President

"Youth is the opportunity to do something and to be somebody." – Walter Raleigh

Woods Charitable Fund is fortunate to support, collaborate with, and nurture Lincoln's remarkable nonprofit community of change agents, and 2023 brought another year of progress. This year's annual report spotlights agencies dedicated to assisting Lincoln's young adults, particularly a subset known as opportunity youth, who find themselves disconnected from school, society and/or employment. This phase represents a crucial opportunity for these young adults, ages 16 to 24, to access services that can lay the groundwork for their independence, career paths and life opportunities.

WCF commends The HUB Central Access Point for Young Adults, Mourning Hope, CASA for Lancaster County, HopeSpoke and Visionary Youth for implementing comprehensive strategies that support these youth in various ways, including education, employment, housing, mental-health care and social services. Their efforts dismantle barriers that could hinder these youth from realizing their potential "to do something and to be somebody," due to their life circumstances.

This year marked the conclusion of Michelle Suarez's board term. Michelle joined the WCF board in 2018 and was elected vice chair in 2022. Before her retirement in December 2019, she served as the Early Childhood Developer for the Prosper Lincoln initiative. Prior to that, she dedicated 34 years to serving children and families as an elementary school principal and teacher with Lincoln Public Schools. Michelle has also been active on various local and state boards. In January 2023, she was appointed to the Lincoln City Council to fill an open position representing District 3. During her tenure on the Board of Directors, WCF disbursed 310 grants totaling $10,218,250.

With Michelle's departure, WCF extends a warm welcome to Kevin Abourezk, a citizen of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. Kevin is a journalist and Deputy Managing Editor of ICTNews.org, which covers Native American news and information. He previously served on the boards of the Indian Center, Intertribal Spiritual Lodges, and the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights.

Woods Charitable Fund is grateful for the invaluable contributions of the featured nonprofits and Michelle Suarez, who collectively enrich the Lincoln community and make it a wonderful city in which to live.

Thomas C. Woods, IV, *President*

About the Foundation

Woods Charitable Fund is a private philanthropic foundation located in Lincoln, Nebraska, founded in 1941 by Frank H. Woods, Nelle C. Woods and their three sons, Thomas, Henry and Frank Jr. The Fund's resources resulted from business interests in the telecommunications and coal industries in Nebraska and Illinois, namely Lincoln Telephone & Telegraph and Sahara Coal Company. For more than 50 years, the Fund made grants in Lincoln and Chicago, and until the early 1980s, it operated as a family foundation under the leadership of trustees Thomas C. Woods Jr. in Lincoln and Frank H. Woods Jr. in Chicago. At the end of 1993, Woods Charitable Fund restructured into two separate foundations to better serve their communities' needs, with Woods Charitable Fund continuing in Lincoln.

The Fund's vision is to help build a community that offers a promising future for all, where everyone has the opportunity to participate and thrive. It supports a broad range of activities that include, but are not limited to, these special interests: Human Services, Education, Civic & Community and Arts & Culture. More details about WCF's history, grant-making and review of financial statements can be found on its website, www.woodscharitable.org.

To make a gift to Woods Charitable Fund, please contact President Tom Woods at 402.436.5971 or twoods@woodscharitable.org.

CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

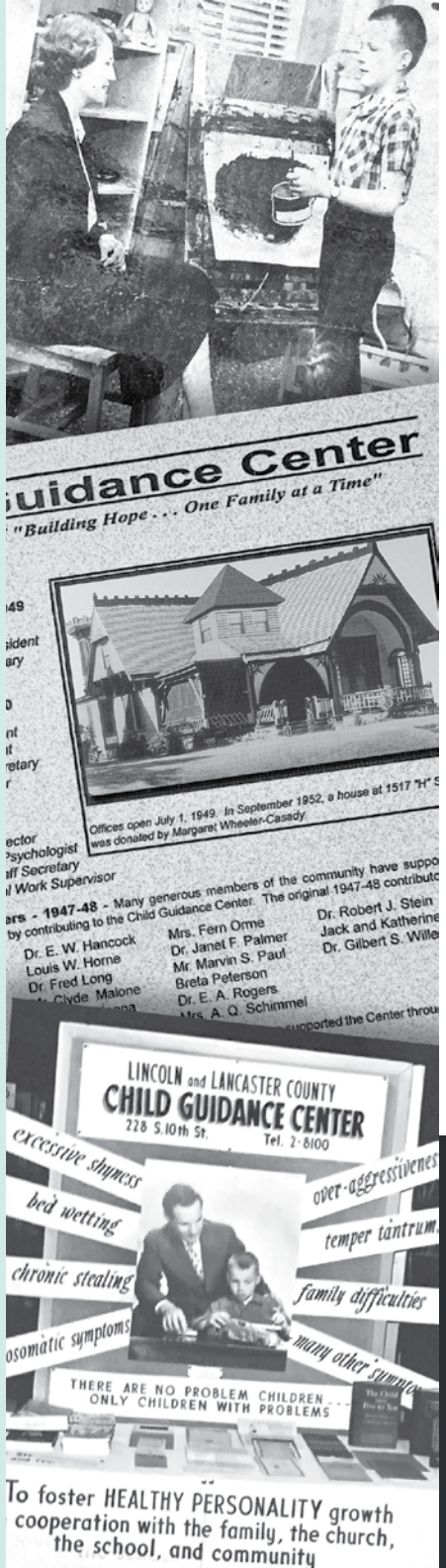
CASA FOR LANCASTER COUNTY

CASA, which stands for Court Appointed Special Advocates, provides a voice for abused and neglected children who are in the Lancaster County juvenile court system through no fault of their own. Volunteer advocates get to know each child and help determine and communicate to the court their needs and wishes, helping move cases forward so children do not linger in foster care. CASA's advocates complete dozens of hours of training and continuing education under the supervision of a staff member and become a positive role model that helps youth gain a voice, achieve safety and stability, and develop their sense of self-worth. In 2023, 30% of the 316 youth who were helped by a CASA volunteer were 13-19 years old.

HopeSpoke

Inspiring Children & Families to Move Forward

For 75 years, HopeSpoke, formerly known as Child Guidance Center, has served the mental-health care needs of Lincoln's children and youth through crisis and residential services, extended day treatment programs, outpatient services and school programs. Its expertise is provided to those in state care at the Lancaster County Youth Services Center, and it operates the only therapeutic group home in the state providing teen boys who have demonstrated sexually abusive behaviors a holistic, trauma-informed, strength-based approach to address their treatment needs and goals. HopeSpoke provides on-site therapy services at Lincoln Public Schools for students who would find it difficult to seek services outside the school setting, including specialized services for immigrants and refugees. Through the schools it also provides programs for those at risk for substance-using behavior, including group and individual therapy. No one is denied services due to inability to pay. In 2023, 63% of its clients were 13 or older.



To Apply for a Grant

Woods Charitable Fund offers two grant cycles per year to support nonprofit organizations with missions and projects serving Lincoln. Before applying, grantseekers are required to complete a letter of intent, available at https://woodscharitable.org/forms/, to determine if an application is appropriate. If the Fund requests a full proposal, the applicant will be asked to complete WCF's web-based application, accessible only to those invited to apply. The staff at Woods Charitable Fund, Inc. is pleased to consult with applicants at any time during the process to help strengthen their proposals and reports. More information about the application process including timetables, limitations, samples of applications and report forms and what is not funded can be found at www.woodscharitable.org/apply/.

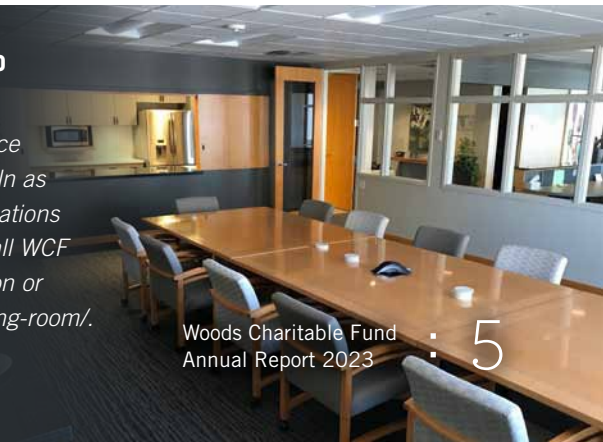
To inquire, contact Tom Woods, Kathy Steinauer Smith or Nicole Juranek at info@woodscharitable.org, or call 402.436.5971.

TIMETABLE

Inquiry Deadline	Submission Dates (if invited)	Notification Dates
August 15	August 15-31	November
February 15	February 15-28	May

Free meeting space available to nonprofit organizations:

Woods Charitable Fund offers its office conference room in downtown Lincoln as a meeting space to nonprofit organizations during its regular business hours. Call WCF at 402.436.5971 for more information or visit www.woodscharitable.org/meeting-room/.



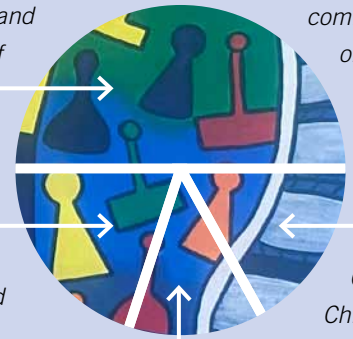
Breakthrough Initiative Grants

Woods Charitable Fund launched its Breakthrough Initiative Grant program in 2016 to support promising and groundbreaking new programs, collaborations and/or organizational best practices at nonprofit organizations serving Lincoln. More details on this grant program are available at www.woodscharitable.org/breakthrough-grants/.

To date, WCF has awarded $5.225 million to four Lincoln nonprofit organizations for Breakthrough Initiative grants and continued support. Beyond the initial Breakthrough grants of $3.175 million, three of the projects have been awarded an additional $2.05 million. In 2023, Woods Charitable Fund provided an additional $700,000 for continuing support of Collective Impact Lincoln and Lincoln Literacy.

$2,625,000 (50%) for **Collective Impact Lincoln** *(lead agency: Civic Nebraska), empowering resident-led change in six Lincoln neighborhoods. This project was awarded a three-year Breakthrough grant of $1.175 million in 2017, continued three-year support of $900,000 in 2020, and a three-year grant of $550,000 in 2023.*

$1,050,000 (20%) for the **UPLIFT project** *(lead agencies: Legal Aid of Nebraska and the Center for Legal Immigration Assistance), providing legal services and education through three Lincoln cultural centers. This project was awarded a three-year Breakthrough grant of $600,000 in 2018 and additional grants for three years of support totaling $450,000 in 2021 and 2022.*



$900,000 (17%) for the **Safe and Healthy Families Initiative** *(lead agency: Family Violence Council), providing a collaborative, coordinated response to child abuse cases in which domestic violence also occurs. A three-year Breakthrough grant was awarded in 2021 and supports five community partners: Voices of Hope; Friendship Home; the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Center for Children, Families and the Law; CASA for Lancaster County; and BraveBe Child Advocacy Center. This project also works in collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services and the Safe and Healthy Families Court in Lancaster County, the state's first domestic violence-centered child welfare court, which was established in 2022.*

$650,000 (13%) for **Bridgeway to a Better Life** *(lead agency: Lincoln Literacy Council), expanding job-skills and training for careers with specific hiring needs. After its initial $500,000 three-year Breakthrough grant awarded in 2020, Lincoln Literacy received continued two-year support totaling $150,000 in 2023 for general operations and adult-skills classes.*

2023 Grant Payments

December 31, 2023

ARTS & CULTURE

Lincoln Arts Council	15,000
LUX Center for the Arts	10,000
Subtotal	**$ 25,000**

CIVIC & COMMUNITY

Center for Legal Immigration Assistance (aka CLIA) (general operating)	20,000
Center for Legal Immigration Assistance (aka CLIA) (UPLIFT project)	40,000
City of Lincoln-Lincoln Police Department	35,000
Civic Nebraska	200,000
Family Service Association of Lincoln (aka Family Service Lincoln)	10,000
Leadership Lincoln, Inc.	10,000
Legal Aid of Nebraska (Housing Justice project)	20,000
Legal Aid of Nebraska (UPLIFT project)	110,000
Lincoln Community Foundation, Inc.	10,000
Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest, Inc.	20,000
Outlinc, Inc. (aka OutNebraska)	15,000
Subtotal	**$ 490,000**

EDUCATION

Educare of Lincoln, Inc.	15,000
History Nebraska Foundation	20,000
Lincoln Literacy Council (aka LLC)	75,000
**Lincoln Littles (Wellness Workforce Navigator's salary)	10,000
Lincoln Littles (Wellness Workforce Navigator's salary)	61,500
Northeast Family Resource Center	12,500
Subtotal	**$ 194,000**

HUMAN SERVICES

Asian Community and Cultural Center	55,000
Big Brothers Big Sisters Lincoln	30,000
CASA for Lancaster County	15,000
Center for People in Need, Inc. (aka CFPIN)	20,000
Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties (aka Community Action)	10,000
County of Lancaster, Human Services	600
El Centro De Las Américas (general operating)	60,000
** El Centro De Las Américas (general operating)	15,000
Family Violence Council	150,000
Food Bank of Lincoln, Inc.	10,000
Good Neighbor Community Center, Inc.	30,000
HopeSpoke	30,000
HUB Central Access Point for Young Adults	25,000
Indian Center, Inc.	25,000
Lincoln YWCA (aka YWCA Lincoln)	10,000
Malone Community Center	25,000
Mourning Hope (aka Mourning Hope Grief Center)	15,000
Planned Parenthood of the Heartland, Inc. (aka Planned Parenthood North Central States)	10,000
St. Monica's Home (aka St. Monica's)	30,000
The Set Me Free Project	10,000
Visionary Youth	15,000
Yazda	7,500
Subtotal	**$ 598,100**

MISCELLANEOUS

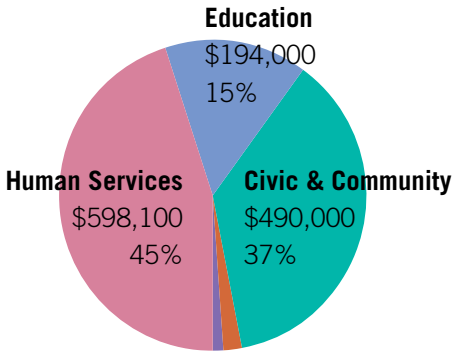
Cause Collective	15,000
Subtotal	**$ 15,000**
TOTAL GRANTS PAID	**$ 1,322,100**

*** Indicates Directors/Officers/Staff/Honorary Awards*

2023 Grant Payments

December 31, 2023

Summary of 2023 Grants Paid by Special Interest Area



More information about each 2023 grant is available at https://woodscharitable.org/grants-awarded-2023/

Featured Organization:

The HUB

central access point for young adults

The HUB Central Access Point for Young Adults, better known as The HUB, partners with determined young people ages 14 to 24 as they become productive, independent, active members of our community. In 2023, Woods Charitable Fund provided the organization a $25,000 general-operating grant.

The HUB supports youth who are currently or who have formerly been in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems, pregnant and parenting teens, and young adults who are unhoused or are at imminent risk of becoming homeless. Last year, the agency assisted over 1,000 youth, filling a critical gap in services for young adults who lack family or other personal connections that provide social, emotional and financial support as they transition to adulthood. The organization provides on-site

Since moving to its location at 1037 S. 12th St. in 2010, The HUB has made several improvements, keeping its services accessible and relevant to young people. In 2023, it transformed its small workroom into a kitchen, a perk that The HUB's youth requested during the agency's strategic planning. The kitchen hosts cooking classes, holiday gatherings, GED graduation celebrations, shared meals, and offers a comfortable place to hang out and study.

GED classes and in-school programming, in partnership with Lincoln Public Schools, for those facing barriers to attending school. Two projects — Project Everlast and Learn and Earn to Achieve Potential — provide leadership opportunities, independent living skills, chances to advocate for systems change, career exploration and post-secondary education preparedness. The HUB also offers Project H2O (Here to Overcome), to help young adults who are pregnant and/or parenting, and housing support.

"The HUB is one of the few agencies in Lincoln that solely serves transition-age youth," said Executive Director Rose Hood-Buss. "System-involved youth can have 8-15 placements during their teen years, which results in zero consistency. The HUB can provide consistency. These young people need and deserve someone who sees and believes in them."

Without a reliable support system, disconnected young adults face a variety of challenges to their independence such as barriers to education, employment and opportunity. For example, youth at The HUB often have trouble accessing vital documents like their Social Security card or birth

certificate, and many have either no credit or poor credit and don't have adults in their lives who can cosign for them. These factors alone can make it hard to apply for jobs or find safe and affordable housing. To help young adults navigate these and other obstacles, the HUB offers youth-led programming with flexibility, respect and understanding.

The agency's approach allows young adults to set the priorities for their lives and access services when they need to, when they are ready and when they are interested. "This open approach fosters the opportunity for unconditional support along each young adult's path to independence," Rose said. "We recognize that there will be bumps and twists on this path, and providing support unconditionally is what we feel makes a difference."

A young adult who formerly received services from The HUB said, "The HUB is one of the few places where I felt safe, fully supported and also enjoyed the company. It's like a place of hope too, that no matter what roadblocks show up in life, that it's OK to stumble but it's not OK to give up."

Rae's Story

The HUB seeks to walk alongside young adults on their path to independence and serve each person's unique journey. Here is the story of one young woman The HUB has accompanied.

Rae's first interaction with the child welfare system was at 2 years old. She was adopted at age 8 and at age 12, she was placed back into foster care and remained in the custody of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services until she aged out of the system when she turned 19.

Rae became a mother at a young age and lived in a group home while pregnant, but the program closed within weeks of Rae becoming a new mom. The challenges of finding a foster care placement for a teenager became even harder with a baby involved, so the state's best option for 15 year-old Rae and her baby was for her to live independently. "That was a horrible disaster," Rae explains. "I didn't know how to live on my own, let alone live on my

In 2023, Rae began serving on a neighborhood advisory council regarding a housing project south of downtown Lincoln. Through this opportunity, she shared insights on the challenges of securing affordable housing. For these efforts, Rae received the 2023 Engaged Youth Award at the NeighborWorks Lincoln Spirit of Lincoln Neighborhood Awards.

Rae's Story (continued)

own and take care of a baby. I had never learned how to cook or clean. I wasn't even old enough to have a job."

Rae took the obstacles she faced as an opportunity to learn and grow. Through a partnership with the Lincoln High School student parent program, she was connected to The HUB and staff member Jordan, and has stayed engaged with The HUB ever since. "When I have had nothing I could turn to, The HUB and staff always had a connection to help me and the kids," she said. Rae has been involved in educational programming at The HUB and is an active member of the Project Everlast Youth Council. In February 2023, Rae used her Project Everlast skills and overcame her fear of public speaking to testify in front of the Nebraska Legislature in support of funding for a program for pregnant and parenting teens. She shared her personal journey and the importance of support for parenting young adults and their children.

"The staff at The HUB honestly care about the people they're helping. It's not just a job," Rae said. "I always feel comfortable reaching out and asking for help or just sharing what is going on; they are like my family. It is what makes The HUB unique. The HUB truly cares personally about each and every young person they work with."

MIND was featured in this Nebraska Public Media story in 2023: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Du9cZcUjRY

VISIONARYOUTH

Led by Founder and Executive Director Kwabena (KB) Mensah (pictured above), Visionary Youth has built on the barbershop environment as a way to provide culturally relevant programming to youth and families in need. It offers back-to-school and holiday events to give families backpacks, school supplies, food, gifts, and free haircuts provided by volunteer barbers and stylists. In 2023, Visionary Youth expanded its programming to include the MIND (Mentoring in New Dimensions) Mobile Barbershop, which expands on the informal mentorship and positive impact of the barbershop experience in a 36-foot customized bus that houses four barber chairs. Barbers trained in trauma-informed youth mentoring and minority therapists work with various community partners and LPS Community Learning Centers to serve youth, namely middle and high school age boys of color. In 2023, 24 youth completed MIND, with a new cohort of eight currently under way at two LPS middle schools.

The HUB

GED

Graduates

To make a gift to
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President Tom Woods
at 402.436.5971 or
twoods@woodscharitable.org.

Woods
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Setting Ideas In Motion

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