Woods Charitable Fund | Annual Report 2024

Letter from the President

"Helping others is not limited to providing food, shelter, and so forth, but includes relieving the basic causes of suffering and providing the basic causes of happiness."
– The 14th Dalai Lama

Woods Charitable Fund is deeply committed to this philosophy and believes that supporting our community means addressing immediate needs and investing in long-term solutions that enable individuals and families to thrive. As we reflect on our work in 2024, we are proud to highlight Lincoln Public Schools' Family Literacy program, an outstanding initiative that aligns with our mission to remove barriers and empower families.

Pablo Cervantes

This program provides critical support to New American families, helping parents and children strengthen their language and literacy skills and navigate the challenges of life in a new country. But its impact goes far beyond the classroom. Parents take part in sessions that introduce them to resources in their neighborhood and city — everything from healthcare to nonprofit organizations. They also engage as families in enriching activities like music, art and community gardening to foster learning, creativity and connection.

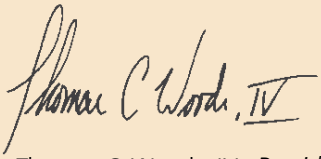
We commend Lincoln Public Schools and its partnering agencies — the Lincoln Children's Museum, Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra, LUX Center for the Arts and Community Crops — for making this program such a success. Together, these organizations are helping families grow their potential while also offering opportunities for happiness and inclusion.

In this year's report, we also bid farewell to Pablo Cervantes, who advocated and supported Latino youth and families through his work as a Migrant Education Coordinator at Lincoln Public Schools. During his 6-year term on Woods Charitable Fund's board, Pablo was instrumental in helping disburse nearly $9.4 million through 297 grants to support nonprofit organizations and initiatives like the Family Literacy program. We are grateful for his leadership, passion and dedication.

Peter Ferguson

As Pablo moves on, we are excited to welcome Peter Ferguson to our board. Peter brings with him a wealth of experience in education, leadership and community service. His career has spanned a wide range of sectors, from K-12 and postsecondary education to nonprofit organizations, and he continues to serve as a strong advocate for youth development and empowerment. We look forward to working with Peter to continue our mission of building a stronger, more vibrant Lincoln for all.

We are grateful for the invaluable contributions of the featured nonprofits, Pablo Cervantes, and our 48 grantees in 2024. Together, we are helping to create a community where every family has the opportunity to thrive, and where happiness is not just a goal, but a shared reality.



Thomas C. Woods, IV, *President*

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Community Volunteer

Pablo Cervantes
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(term ended 2024)
Affordable Housing Investor
Community Volunteer

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Inclusion and Scholar Development
Assistant Supervisor of Recruiting
Lincoln Public Schools

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Nicole Juranek
Community Investment Director
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WCF staff thanks the Family Literacy program and the nonprofit partners for allowing us to photograph events in fall 2024 and spring 2025. We also thank Son Tran and Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra for courtesy photos pictured on the front and back covers, and Humanities Nebraska for its Prime Time Family Reading photos.

Support for Lincoln Public Schools

Public schools are the backbone of educational programs and support for our youth, and a fundamental tenet of American life. They form a solid, accessible foundation on which to build a society that offers opportunities and positive life outcomes for all, the core of Woods Charitable Fund's mission and vision. **Lincoln Public Schools** provide high-quality education and bring together students from diverse backgrounds to learn and grow. LPS' buildings, programs, teachers and staff members naturally create welcoming community hubs and gathering places for our children, families and neighborhoods.

Woods Charitable Fund has granted just more than $700,000 to Lincoln Public Schools dating back to 1973. Funded projects and programs have supported arts education, curriculum and program development, behavioral health, and other projects especially to benefit under resourced students. Additionally, WCF has granted nearly $450,000 since 1991 to the **Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools**, primarily for youth programs and organizational support. The majority of those grants funded the launch in 1999 of **Community Learning Centers** (CLCs), which provide critical before- and after-school programs, clubs and enrichment options for thousands of students, their families and neighborhoods at 30 LPS elementary, middle and high schools. Continued support of the CLCs has totaled more than $300,000 since 2012, including a two-year grant of $100,000 approved in 2024.

Woods Charitable Fund also provides grants to a wide range of nonprofits that regularly partner with Lincoln Public Schools. These include a variety of arts and culture programs bringing in visual art, music, theatrical and poetry education and performances; mentoring programs; and nonprofits that provide programs for CLCs. WCF also has supported civic, theater and even nature programming for LPS students such as Capitol Experience Days with Civic Nebraska, events at the Lied Center for Performing Arts, and trips to Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center.

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. Woods Charitable Fund also has a special interest in supporting programs and initiatives that serve Lincoln's refugee and immigrant communities. More details about WCF's history, grant-making and review of financial statements can be found on its website, www.woodscharitable.org.

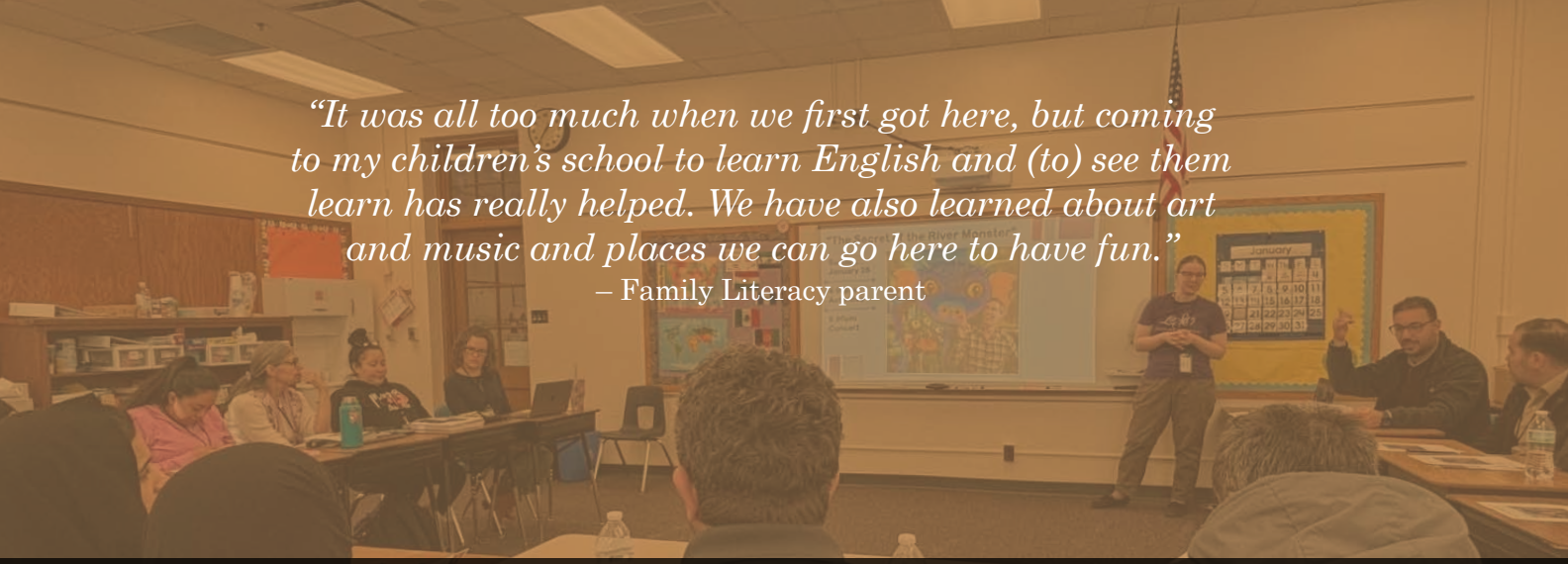
To Apply for a Grant

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 submit 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/.

Direct inquiries to Tom Woods, Kathy Steinauer Smith or Nicole Juranek at info@woodscharitable.org, or call 402.436.5971.

TIMETABLE

Inquiry Deadline	*Submission Dates*	*Notification Dates*
August 15	August 15-31	November
February 15	February 15-28	May



"It was all too much when we first got here, but coming to my children's school to learn English and (to) see them learn has really helped. We have also learned about art and music and places we can go here to have fun."

– Family Literacy parent

Lincoln Public Schools | Family Literacy

Lincoln Public Schools' Family Literacy is a holistic educational program for qualifying New American students and their parents that brings them to schools together to develop their language and broader literacy skills. While their children are in school, parents learn together in another classroom for several hours every week, improving their English skills and identifying their own education and career goals. They also hear from guest speakers from government, health care, nonprofits and other systems to learn more about their school, neighborhood and community while they get to know other families in the program. Family Literacy started in 2009 at three elementary schools funded largely by federal, corporate and private donors. It now serves 157 families at nine schools: Belmont, Campbell, Clinton, Elliott, Everett, Hartley, McPhee, Prescott and West Lincoln elementaries.

But the education goes beyond the classroom. Each year, site coordinators ask LPS Family Literacy parents and families what opportunities they would like to explore outside of school, to help them engage more in their communities in ways that go beyond meeting their basic needs. Activities featuring music and art are often high priorities, as are museums, parks, gardening and food. Families are eager to try new things that educate – but are also fun for everyone.

With those interests in mind, Family Literacy and several Lincoln nonprofits have collaborated to provide activities that nurture family learning and exploration, and two grants from Woods Charitable Fund since 2022 totaling $90,000 have supported these partnerships. Family Literacy coordinates events and provides transportation, and surveys have shown that more than 90% of the families taking part said they were satisfied with the opportunities, events and organizations.

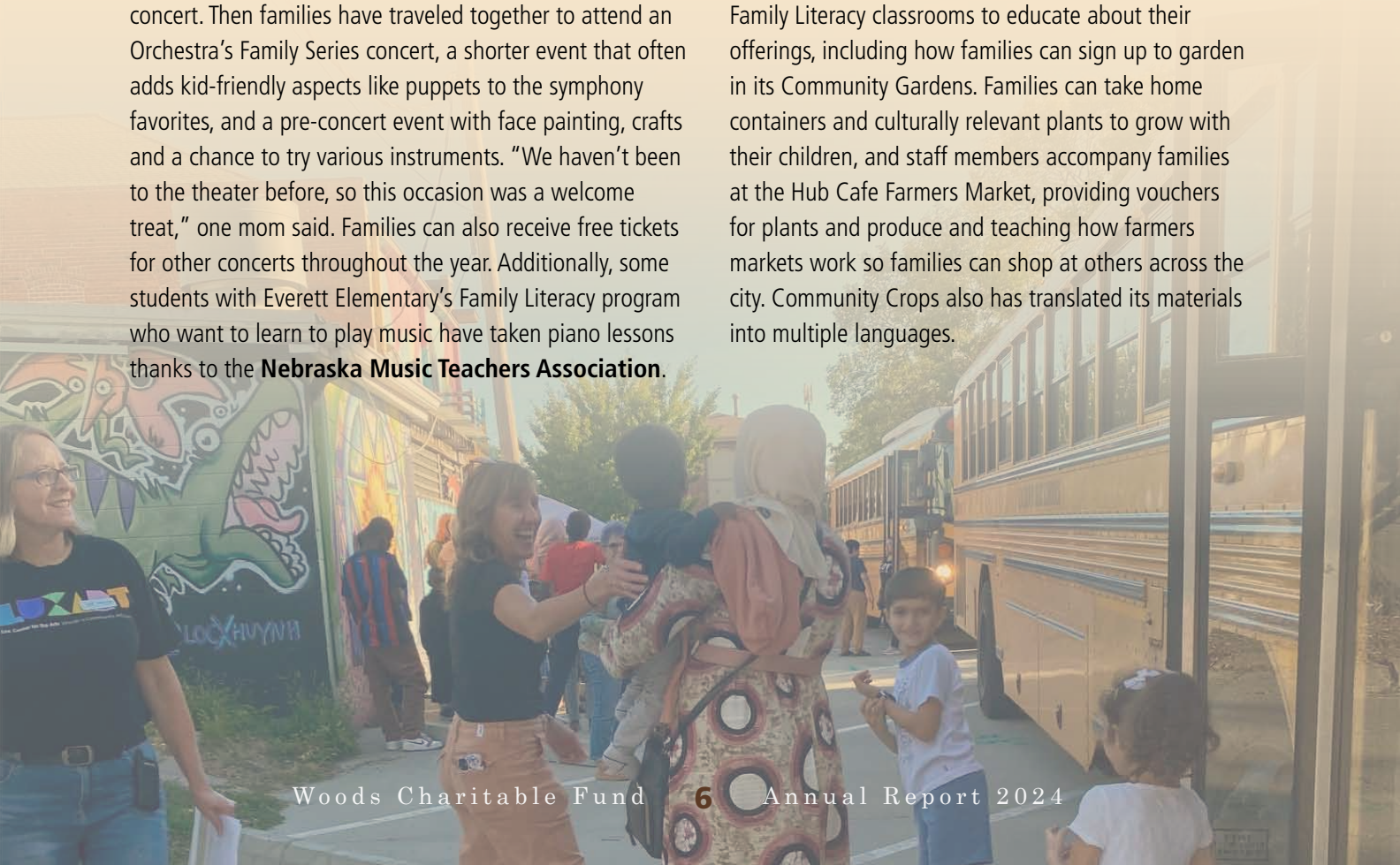
Family Literacy Event Partners

– **Lincoln Children's Museum** has offered private evening events for Family Literacy participants each school year, and hundreds have attended to share a meal and get special access to all the Museum provides to discover the value – and fun – of active play and imagination together. Families also receive annual Museum memberships, and they learn how to navigate downtown Lincoln, parking options, and about other downtown family activities.

– Representatives of **Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra** have visited Family Literacy classrooms to share about music, instruments, and what to expect at an orchestral concert. Then families have traveled together to attend an Orchestra's Family Series concert, a shorter event that often adds kid-friendly aspects like puppets to the symphony favorites, and a pre-concert event with face painting, crafts and a chance to try various instruments. "We haven't been to the theater before, so this occasion was a welcome treat," one mom said. Families can also receive free tickets for other concerts throughout the year. Additionally, some students with Everett Elementary's Family Literacy program who want to learn to play music have taken piano lessons thanks to the **Nebraska Music Teachers Association**.

– **LUX Center for the Arts** has opened its doors for hands-on arts events that explore the fun of creating and being creative. Its Artists in Residence have guided students and parents through different art stations such as spin art, screen printing, even painting in the LUX community art alley and chalking its parking lot. The LUX also has hosted arts events at partner sites such as Lincoln's Eiseley Branch Library over the winter holidays to offer fun family activities during the two-week school break.

– **Community Crops** staff members have visited Family Literacy classrooms to educate about their offerings, including how families can sign up to garden in its Community Gardens. Families can take home containers and culturally relevant plants to grow with their children, and staff members accompany families at the Hub Cafe Farmers Market, providing vouchers for plants and produce and teaching how farmers markets work so families can shop at others across the city. Community Crops also has translated its materials into multiple languages.



Humanities Nebraska | Prime Time Family Reading

Humanities Nebraska provides its own family literacy program: Prime Time Family Reading. Led by a storyteller and discussion leader, children and their families meet weekly for six weeks to read and discuss award-winning children's books. The discussion encourages critical and analytical thinking, builds reading and comprehension skills, and models reading together as families. Prime Time is offered in formats specifically designed for African-American families, Native American families, bilingual for Spanish-speaking families, and English-only for a multicultural group of families; an offering for families with preschool children is also an option. Programs include a meal, so Prime Time provides a dedicated time for families to bond over food, reading, sharing stories and lessons, and a chance to meet other families in their community. Pictured is a bilingual Prime Time program at Lincoln's Everett Elementary School, where a translator also attended to assist Karen families. Humanities Nebraska received a two-year WCF grant of $40,000 in 2024 to support Prime Time Family Reading in Lincoln.

ARTS & CULTURE

Lincoln Arts Council	$ 15,000
Lincoln Community Playhouse, Inc.	10,000
Meadowlark Music Festival	5,000
Nebraska Writers Collective	10,000
Woods Hall Craft Shop	30,000
Subtotal	**$ 70,000**

CIVIC & COMMUNITY

ACLU Nebraska Foundation, Inc.	$ 20,000
Asian Community & Cultural Center	50,000
Center for Legal Immigration Assistance (general operating)	20,000
Center for Legal Immigration Assistance (UPLIFT project)	40,000
Civic Nebraska (Capitol Experience Day)	10,000
Civic Nebraska (Collective Impact Lincoln)	200,000
Justice for Our Neighbors-Nebraska (dba Immigrant Legal Center) (CIRA)	10,000
Legal Aid of Nebraska	110,000
Lincoln Bike Kitchen	10,000
Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest, Inc.	20,000
Nebraska Civic Engagement Table	10,000
Nebraska Journalism Trust (Flatwater Free Press)	10,000
OutLinc, Inc. (aka OutNebraska)	15,000
Sunrise Communications, Inc. (KZUM Radio)	15,000
The Nebraska Lawyers Foundation	40,000
Subtotal	**$ 580,000**

EDUCATION

Belmont Community Center, Inc.	10,000
Educare of Lincoln, Inc.	20,000
Good Life Community Development (Ybor)	10,000
Lincoln Community Learning Centers	50,000
Lincoln Literacy Council	75,000
Lincoln Public Schools	50,000
Nebraska Humanities Council (dba Humanities Nebraska)	20,000
Northeast Family Resource Center	12,500
Rabble Mill (The Bay)	20,000
Stand in for Nebraska	5,000
Subtotal	**$ 272,500**

(continued)

2024 Grant Payments | December 31, 2024

HUMAN SERVICES

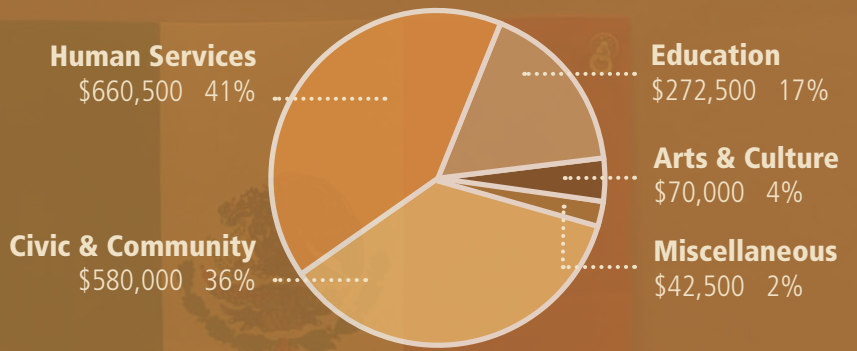
Boys & Girls Clubs of Lincoln Lancaster County (CLC program at Lincoln High School)	10,000
Boys & Girls Clubs of Lincoln Lancaster County (general operating for CLCs)	15,000
Bridges to Hope	20,000
Center for People in Need, Inc.	20,000
Family Violence Council	150,000
Fresh Start, Inc.	25,000
Friendship Home of Lincoln	40,000
HopeSpoke	30,000
Malone Community Center	25,000
MENTOR Nebraska	8,000
Mourning Hope	10,000
Planned Parenthood of the Heartland, Inc.	10,000
Poverty Impact Network, Inc. (Lincoln Hygiene Network)	10,000
Republic of South Sudan Leaders (dba ROSS Leaders)	10,000
University of Nebraska-Lincoln Center on Children, Families and the Law.	225,000
Visionary Youth	25,000
Voices of Hope of Lincoln, Inc.	20,000
Yazda	7,500
Subtotal	**$ 660,500**

MISCELLANEOUS

Cause Collective	15,000
**Lincoln Community Foundation, Inc.	2,500
**Pickleball Lincoln, Inc.	25,000
Subtotal	**$ 42,500**
TOTAL GRANTS PAID	**$ 1,625,500**

** Indicates Directors/Officers/Staff/Honorary Awards

Summary of 2024 Grants Paid by Special Interest Area



Breakthrough Initiative Grants

Woods Charitable Fund began 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/.

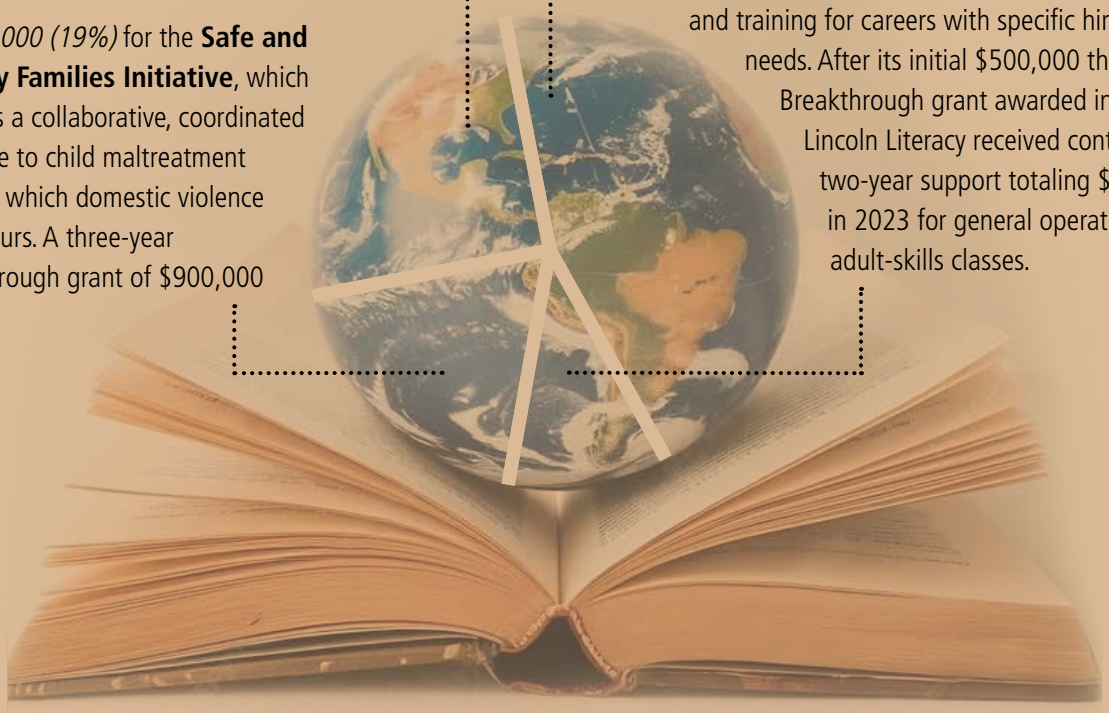
WCF has awarded $5.840 million to four Lincoln nonprofit organizations for Breakthrough Initiative Grants and continued support. Beyond the initial Breakthrough grants of $3.175 million, all have been awarded an additional $2.665 million. In 2024, Woods Charitable Fund awarded an additional $615,000 for continuing support of the UPLIFT Project and the Safe and Healthy Families Initiative.

$2,625,000 (45%) 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.

$1,440,000 (25%) 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, additional grants for three years of support totaling $450,000 in 2021 and 2022, and additional three-year grants of $390,000 in 2024.

$1,125,000 (19%) for the **Safe and Healthy Families Initiative**, which provides a collaborative, coordinated response to child maltreatment cases in which domestic violence also occurs. A three-year Breakthrough grant of $900,000 was awarded in 2021 to the Family Violence Council and supported five community partners: Voices of Hope; Friendship Home; the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Center on 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. In 2024, the project received a one-year continuing grant of $225,000 with UNL's Center on Children, Families and the Law as the project director.

$650,000 (11%) 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.



Lincoln Public Schools

WELCOME TO LPS

Our Students Reach Around the World

Woods Charitable Fund

Setting Ideas In Motion

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