

Finding Purpose Through Philanthropy

WINTER 2023

# LINCOLN

F O R E V E R

## LINCOLN LITTLES

Building Relationships to  
Elevate Early Childhood

LINCOLN COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION



# Greetings:

The start of the year tends to bring about commitments to do more and to do better. Whether it's a new fitness routine or eating out less – resolutions can be good for our mind, body, and soul. They not only produce physical results but more importantly, they offer hope for the future. We have hope that with some intention and effort, the change we expect will be realized.



Another source of hope for 2023 can come from extending the focus past ourselves. Generosity, or sharing our gifts with others, just makes us feel good. When we are generous with our time, our talents, and even our treasure – we feel pride and a sense of purpose in our ability to do something good for someone else.

What can be more hopeful for the future than extending that generosity to Lincoln's littlest residents? Currently, LCF is raising funds and awareness for Lincoln Littles and their efforts to lift up working families and provide quality early education and care for our little ones.



We hope you enjoy reading the stories surrounding Early Childhood in our Winter magazine. If you feel inspired to join the community-wide effort creating positive change for our little ones, you can donate using the enclosed envelope or visit [LincolnLittles.org/donate](https://LincolnLittles.org/donate) now through March 20.

With Gratitude,

Alec Gorynski

## EDITOR



### JENNY CHAPIN

Jenny is the Vice President for Marketing and Communications at LCF. A Lincoln native, she returned home in 2015 after a decade working as a television booker in New York City. In her free time, Jenny is a teacher at Pure Barre Lincoln and enjoys spending time with her nieces and nephew and puppy, Patch.

## CONTRIBUTORS



### KELLY BURKEN

Kelly is LCF's Creative Manager as well as our resident photographer. She specializes in wedding, family and senior portraits and lives with her husband Kurt, their baby Rye and standard poodles, Banks and Birdie.



### CARLY GRUTEL

Carly recently joined LCF's Marketing and Communication's team as our new Brand and Content Manager. She is a Lincoln native who is passionate about our community. Carly is currently pursuing her master's degree in Public Administration while raising two elementary aged boys, Larry IV and Charlie, with her husband Larry.

# Save the Date

## NOW – MARCH 20 *Support Lincoln Littles*

The Lincoln Community Foundation is currently raising funds and awareness for the important work of Lincoln Littles.



An investment in Lincoln Littles means more children in our great community will receive the quality early care and education they deserve. It means a more available workforce today and a smarter workforce tomorrow. It means elevating opportunities for all families in Lincoln to thrive.

Read more in our cover story on pages 4-5, then go to **LincolnLittles.org** to make a difference for Lincoln's littlest residents.

## MAY 24 *Give to Lincoln Day*



Lincoln's One Big Day of Giving is Back! The 12th annual Give to Lincoln Day is set for Wednesday, May 24th, and you can choose from more than 450 nonprofits to support.

Every donation makes a bigger impact on Give to Lincoln Day because nonprofits receive a proportional share of a \$500,000 match fund made possible by LCF and generous sponsors including Presenting Sponsor, West Gate Bank. Since we launched the event in 2012, our community has raised nearly \$50 million for local nonprofits.

## Staff Shares



EMILY ASBOE

LCF is excited to welcome two new staff members – **Emily Asboe** and **Karlene Behlen**.

Emily joins our Philanthropy Services team as Research and Database Manager. She is a Lincoln native with more than 10 years of experience in the nonprofit sector and higher education. Karlene is working with our Finance team as Gift Processor. Previously Karlene was the Firm Administrator at Mueller Robak LLC.



KARLENE BEHLEN

We are also pleased to announce the promotion of **Tracy Edgerton** to Vice President of Philanthropy Services and General Counsel. In this role, Tracy leads the Philanthropy Services team and works with donors and their professional advisors to design and implement charitable gift plans that reflect their philanthropic passions.

## LCF WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

LCF is pleased to announce that four new community members recently joined our board of directors: Mike Boyle, Kawasaki; Juan Carlos Huertas, First Plymouth Church; Ben Kiser, Nelnet; and Makenzie Rath, Talent Plus. Steve Schaffer, Lutz, joins the board as the incoming president of NextGen Lincoln.



TRACY EDGERTON



MIKE BOYLE



JUAN CARLOS  
HUERTAS



BEN KISER



MAKENZIE  
RATH



STEVE  
SCHAFFER





*From left to right: Suzanne Schneider and Anne Brandt of Lincoln Littles*

## LINCOLN LITTLES

### *Building Relationships to Elevate Early Childhood*

The office of Lincoln Littles is bright and bustling, overlooking the skyline of downtown Lincoln. On the wall, a whiteboard notes the magnitude of work and collaboration being done to enhance Early Childhood Education in our community via meetings, projects, and to-do lists.

What might feel inundating to some – especially as an office of two – energizes Anne Brandt and Suzanne Schneider. As they speak about their work, their passion is palpable. After two years of helping Lincoln childcare providers navigate the pandemic, Anne and Suzanne are back together and working full steam ahead on complex issues surrounding early childhood.

“In many ways it feels like we are starting over,” said Lincoln Littles Executive Director Anne Brandt. “We’re

getting back to the broader work of affordability and quality. It’s great because we know so much more now than we did before.”

Associate Executive Director Suzanne Schneider agreed.

“So much of our work has been supporting childcare providers through the challenges of the pandemic,” said Suzanne. “How could we build quality when folks were struggling to keep their doors open? Now we feel that we can dig in and strengthen that focus.”

The mission of Lincoln Littles is to provide opportunities for all children to have access to high quality early care and education, ensuring they are ready for school and a life of learning. Lincoln Littles is transforming the landscape of early childhood by expanding high-

quality choices and supporting families, early childhood providers, teachers, businesses, and our community.

One way Lincoln Littles plans to deepen their focus on quality early childcare is by adding a new position to the office. Thanks to funding from the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, Community Health Endowment and Woods Charitable Fund, a full-time Wellness and Workforce Navigator position will focus on assisting childcare providers with staff retention and recruitment.

“Childcare providers are the workforce behind our community’s workforce,” said Anne. “If we don’t have places for children to go, we can’t work, and ultimately our community isn’t as vital. This position will wake up every single day and think about how they can help the childcare workforce.”



“

We connect folks to resources,  
much like a district office or  
a chamber of commerce for  
early childcare.

- Anne Brandt

”

For Anne and Suzanne, addressing the issues of quality and affordability doesn't stop with providers. They also consult with local businesses on how they can include childcare as an employee benefit through their Employee Engagement program, a partnership with First Five Nebraska. They work with employers to survey their employees and determine their needs.

“Businesses might not be aware their employees are struggling with childcare,” said Suzanne. “There are many options available for employers to help, including subsidizing the cost of childcare, starting a new on-site program or connecting employees with a current local provider.”

Anne and Suzanne's efforts throughout the past two years have embedded their role as a key collaborator.

“We connect folks to resources, much like a district office or a chamber of commerce for early childcare,” said Anne.

The outcomes of their relationships have been life changing for the people Lincoln Littles has helped.

“Recently we had a father call who suddenly found himself in a situation where he was a single parent. This left him in need of childcare so that he could continue working,” said Suzanne.

“We were able to contact a provider, who made an adjustment to get the family in. And with the help of our tuition assistance program, the provider could cover their tuition while the family waited to receive state subsidy. We also worked with his employer to let them know this family had support during such a difficult transition.”

As reflected on the office whiteboard, the vision for Lincoln Littles is to continue supporting our community's early childcare landscape while ultimately building capacity for a more robust organization.

“When it comes to ages zero to five, we want to be the focal point,” said Anne. “With community investment, we can certainly grow this work.”



## Lifting Up Lincoln's Little Ones

This month, LCF is elevating the important work of Lincoln Littles. Lincoln Littles is transforming the landscape of early childhood by expanding high-quality choices and supporting families, early childcare providers, teachers, businesses, and our community.

Visit [LincolnLittles.org/donate](https://LincolnLittles.org/donate) to lend your support online. Checks may also be mailed to LCF using the enclosed envelope. Checks must be made out to “Lincoln Community Foundation” with “Lincoln Littles” in the memo line.

### Big Thanks to our Lead Donors

Acklie Charitable Foundation  
Robert & Barbara Bartle  
Bettenhausen Family Foundation  
Drs. Bob & Stacie Bleicher  
The Buffett Early Childhood Fund  
Rosalind K. Carr in memory of  
Professor James D. Carr  
Shirley & Jerry Daugherty  
Bob & Jan FitzSimmons  
Larry Frederick & Robyn Sitzman  
Harbor of Dreams, Inc.  
Barb Hoppe Johnson & Bruce Johnson  
Kile & Cuz Johnson  
Kawasaki  
Jim & Penny Krieger Family Foundation  
Drs. Marilyn & David Moore  
Mike Munro & Susie Keisler-Munro  
Nebraska Children and Families  
Foundation  
Pinnacle Bank  
Drs. Bob & Lisa Rauner  
Sue & Al Saathoff  
Rhonda Seacrest  
Dr. Bob & Dottie Shapiro  
Susan Sehnert Stuart  
Tom & Sue Tallman  
Temme Family Foundation  
Art & Carol Thompson  
Sue & Ed Tricker  
Dr. Eileen & Richard Vautravers  
Mae Whitmer  
WRK Family Foundation





# Making a Difference

## KILE AND CUZ JOHNSON CREATE ENDOWMENT SUPPORTING EARLY CHILDHOOD

Sitting across from Kile and Cuz Johnson, you can feel their great affection for our community. The couple met during their junior year at Lincoln Southeast High School, married, began and grew their family and their businesses, all in Lincoln. Their fondness for one another and for the place they call home is a ‘forever’ kind of love – so much so that they’ve made an extraordinary investment supporting Lincoln’s youngest residents beyond their lifetimes.

Kile and Cuz worked with Lincoln Community Foundation to create an endowment that will prioritize early childhood education and care. The mission behind the Lincoln Early

Childhood Education Support Fund is to support the work of Lincoln Littles as the organization tackles the complexities surrounding early childhood.

The forever nature of an endowment fund made sense to Virginia “Cuz” Johnson. “It was my parents who influenced my thinking on endowments,” she said. “When you’re interested in making a difference, an endowment gives back much more than the initial investment, and it’s there in perpetuity.”

Kile agreed. “Endowments guarantee that your gift will continue and grow over time,” he said.

The Johnsons’ philanthropic passion

for early childhood peaked when they learned more about the work of Lincoln Littles. With three children and seven grandchildren of their own, they understand the difference that quality early education and care can make in a person’s life.

“It is so important that everyone has that opportunity,” said Cuz.

“The early years are critical for future success,” continued Kile. “One of the things we hope to do is help these kids and their parents and make a true difference in their lives.”

Both Kile and Cuz hope that their endowment will inspire others to contribute and support Lincoln Littles or start their own fund that is meaningful to them. The Johnsons’ also supported LCF’s current fundraising efforts as Lead Donors for Lincoln Littles.

“The endowment will help the children of the future,” said Kile. “But we don’t want to lose track of the families going through this now.”

Anne Brandt, executive director of Lincoln Littles, reflected on the Johnsons’ generosity and what it means for children and families in Lincoln.

“We are so fortunate that Kile and Cuz see why this work is vital to our community,” said Anne. “They understand the return on this type of investment. Their gifts will have the power to change lives now and into the future.”



**Are you interested in a Forever gift to Lincoln? Contact Vice President for Philanthropy Services Tracy Edgerton at 402-474-2345 or [tracye@lcf.org](mailto:tracye@lcf.org).**



# Paula Metcalf Honored with the J. Robert Sandberg Distinguished Service Award

LCF's former Vice President for Gift Planning and General Counsel, Paula Metcalf, was honored with the J. Robert Sandberg Distinguished Service Award at the 2022 Charitable Gift Planners of Nebraska's luncheon on December 2nd.

"Paula's leadership and efforts were essential to the Foundation's growth in the last decade," said LCF President Alec Gorynski. "She is so deserving of this award, which celebrates distinctive service within the planned giving profession."

Paula worked with donors and their advisors during a period of tremendous growth for LCF, as contributions increased from \$800,000 in 2010 to \$25 million in 2019, and funds increased during this same timeframe from 284 to 1,132. Paula retired from the Foundation in 2020.



*From left to right: Chip DeBuse, Rhonda Page, Tracy Edgerton, Paula Metcalf, Scott Lawson, Alec Gorynski and Diane Mendenhall*

## NextGen Selects 2022 Nonprofits

NextGen Lincoln recently granted a total of \$15,000 to three nonprofit organizations serving our community. Representatives from the nonprofit finalists gathered with NextGen members in October 2022 and gave pitches to share more about the great things they do for our community.

Lincoln Parks Foundation was selected to receive \$7,500. The grant will go towards a new entrepreneurship program for middle and high school youth at the F Street Community Center.

NextGen is LCF's affiliated giving circle of young professionals who donate their time and treasure to local nonprofits. To learn more, visit [Facebook.com/NextGenLincolnNE](https://www.facebook.com/NextGenLincolnNE).



*From left to right: NextGen Board Members Joe Hobelman, Max Rodenburg and Steve Schaffer; F Street Community Center Assistant Director Jerry Taylor; Susan Larson Rodenburg and Randy Gordon of Lincoln Parks Foundation*



## Big News for Lincoln's Littlest Residents

### *Lincoln Littles Giving Day Expanded to Month-Long Campaign*

Lincoln Community Foundation recently announced that the annual Lincoln Littles Giving Day has been expanded to a month-long campaign raising funds and awareness for Lincoln Littles' work in early childhood education. Launched in 2019 and inspired by the Prosper Lincoln community agenda, the giving day has raised \$3.1 million for tuition assistance to date, providing affordable and quality early childcare to nearly 600 children.

"An investment in the important work of Lincoln Littles means more children will receive the quality education and care they deserve at a level their families can afford," said Alec Gorynski, LCF president.

"As the complexities surrounding early childhood continue to affect our community and our workforce, it is a

natural fit to expand Lincoln Littles Giving Day to a month-long effort that will provide much needed relief to working families."

According to Lincoln Vital Signs, the average annual cost of childcare increased 87% between 2019 and 2021. Currently the cost of care for an infant in a childcare center is nearly twice as expensive as resident tuition and fees at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. In response, Lincoln Littles' work focuses on solutions to four key challenges related to early childhood: increasing quality in early care and education, increasing affordable childcare options, engaging businesses and the larger community, and influencing policy change to meet the needs of children and families.

"The current economic climate and rising costs at the grocery store make it difficult

for families to stay afloat," said Anne Brandt, executive director of Lincoln Littles. "Access to quality, affordable childcare is life-changing for children and families and ultimately, good for business and our community."

The community can make online donations now through March 20 at [LincolnLittles.org/donate](https://LincolnLittles.org/donate). Donations may also be mailed to the Lincoln Community Foundation using the enclosed envelope on page 6. Checks must be written to "Lincoln Community Foundation" with "Lincoln Littles" in the memo line.

**Read more about the important work of Lincoln Littles in this issue's cover story on pages 4-5.**

#### Big Thanks to our Lead Donors

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Bob & Jan FitzSimmons • Larry Frederick & Robyn Sitzman • Harbor of Dreams, Inc. • Barb Hoppe Johnson & Bruce Johnson  
Kile & Cuz Johnson • Kawasaki • Jim & Penny Krieger Family Foundation • Drs. Marilyn & David Moore • Mike Munro & Susie Keisler-Munro  
Nebraska Children and Families Foundation • Pinnacle Bank • Drs. Bob & Lisa Rauner • Sue & Al Saathoff • Rhonda Seacrest  
Dr. Bob & Dottie Shapiro • Susan Sehnert Stuart • Tom & Sue Tallman • Temme Family Foundation • Art & Carol Thompson  
Sue & Ed Tricker • Dr. Eileen & Richard Vautravers • Mae Whitmer • WRK Family Foundation

# Give to our littles.

Visit [LincolnLittles.org](https://LincolnLittles.org) to donate now  
through March 20.

## Help a lot!

