

HomeTalk

SPRING 2014

A magazine of the Nebraska Children's Home Society



nebraska
children's home
SOCIETY

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HomeTalk magazine is a publication of the Nebraska Children's Home Society.



NCHS Board of Directors. Not Pictured: Patrick Boler, Jason Fisher, Sharon Martin, Karen Rolf

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Cover photo of Aiden, age 4, and Patrick, age 6, sons of Kyle and Alma Drage. Cover, page 6 and back page photo by Kathy Byers of Kathy Rae Photography.

The mission of Nebraska Children's Home Society is to provide safe and loving care to children of all ages.



Dear Friends of the Nebraska Children's Home Society,

Each of us has a preferred learning style. Some learn by listening, some by doing, others by reading or observing. My preferred mode is visual; so the centerfold of this issue of HomeTalk, a beautiful and creative visual depiction of the first 120 years of Nebraska Children's Home Society (NCHS), is especially meaningful to me. This timeline illustrates that community support has been a constant in the development and sustainability of our mission. The timeline itself represents community support. It was created as a gift to NCHS by Swanson Russell. This issue of HomeTalk highlights the importance of engaging communities in our work and our success in accomplishing our goals with the strength of the community behind us.



What is community? A simple dictionary definition from Webster's Pocket Dictionary is "those who share a common interest." We can draw lines around a community to provide geographic boundaries. Sometimes that helps us focus on the needs of a specific community. We have done that to provide focus for our Children and Family Center in North Omaha. But for Nebraska Children's Home Society a broader definition of community makes sense. Our community extends from the Missouri River to the Wyoming/Colorado borders and from South Dakota to Kansas and includes all who are passionate about the well-being of children. In this HomeTalk you will learn about just a few of those people: members of the NCHS Board of Directors who contribute their time, talent and resources to support the mission; families who open their hearts to provide adoptive homes for children in foster care; the many volunteers who help with fundraising at events across the state; Project Elf donors who confirm our belief that there is a Santa Claus; the amazing NCHS staff who carry out the mission by providing quality services day after day.

If you donate to Nebraska Children's Home, you join an NCHS community of support that dates back to 1893. Gifts, small and large, brought NCHS into existence in 1893 and have sustained us through very difficult times. On the timeline, you will find a reference to the farmers from across the state who donated potatoes, eggs and milk to provide for children during the dark days of the Depression. In 1996, our leaders realized that by creating a foundation to protect and manage the endowment they could reduce some of the financial uncertainties of periodic hard times. The wisdom of that decision protects our mission and assures donors that a gift to the Children's Home is a long term investment in Nebraska's children. Each year a portion of the funds in the endowment is used to support NCHS services that exist because there is an endowment.

In addition to support from the NCHS Foundation, our community support also includes generous gifts from foundations that provide support for our general operating expenses as well as support for special projects or initiatives. Our partnerships with those foundations allow us to grow and enhance our services.

Thank you for being part of the Children's Home community. Thank you for believing in the power of families to nurture and prepare children for the future. Thank you for investing in Nebraska's future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Authier". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'K'.

Karen Authier, Chief Executive Officer, Nebraska Children's Home Society

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ENGAGING COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTHY BEGINNINGS

Helpers Partner to Create Healthy Beginnings for Children 0-5 Years of Age

Children In NCHS Early Childhood Services To Get STEMstart

This spring, children enrolled in NCHS's early childhood educational programs will gain from innovative learning opportunities and get a STEMstart. STEM is an acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. New telescopes, science kits, and learning experiences will be augmented by activities in the community such as visits to the Omaha Children's Museum and Henry Doorley Zoo. Thanks to funding provided by the **Opus Foundation**, assessment and observation tools for staff and training in Creative Curriculum and the Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines for teachers,

will ensure that children are reaching and surpassing goals for kindergarten readiness. Nebraska-based **Fat Brain Toys** is donating some of the science-based toys the children can use for learning through play.

NCHS Expands Its Reach To Low-Income Pregnant Women Through New Contracts

Nebraska Children's Home Society (NCHS) has been a resource to pregnant women of all socio-economic backgrounds for decades. Every day, across the state, we assist women with the choice of making a parenting plan or an adoption plan. Two new contracts will provide funding for NCHS to work with low-income pregnant women in Douglas, Jefferson, and Gage County.

NCHS will provide services through the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program. The program in Douglas County uses the evidence-based Healthy Families America model as they visit with soon-to-be and new moms in their homes. "These contracts provide us with the ability to work with parents during their pregnancy up until the child is 5 years of age," said Chief Program Officer Lana Temple-Plotz. "Moms learn how to care for themselves both prior to and following the birth of their child, as well as, how to care for and meet the needs of their infant as they grow into a young child."

In Jefferson and Gage Counties, NCHS is partnering with Public Health Solutions to conduct a community-wide planning process to determine unmet needs. Following a needs assessment, home visitation services will begin.



Interested in learning more about enrolling a child in one of our Early Childhood Educational Programs? Contact us at 402-451-0787.



Main Photo: Children enrolled in Nebraska Children's Home Society's early childhood education programs learn through play, exploration, and hands-on experiences, including a visit from local firemen. Photo Above: Caseworker Kathy Hoyt interacts with children at the Children and Family Center Neighborhood Celebration.



PATHWAYS TO THE FUTURE

8-Week Teen Chat Series Proves Successful In Omaha, Expands To Kearney

From a single focus group in 2008, NCHS's Teen Chat pregnancy prevention program has grown into a wide-ranging program that serves nearly 100 Omaha-area youth per year. "We are improving the ability of young women to lead productive and fulfilling lives by educating, strengthening and supporting them and their families," said Lana Temple-Plotz, Chief Program Officer. "We are equipping teen girls to make healthy decisions about relationships, sexuality, and pregnancy; prepare for their future by completing high school and attending college; and increase self esteem." The program is seeing significant results. 86% identified abstinence as the best way to prevent pregnancy and STDs, and 88% showed positive change in healthy behaviors.

Thanks to funding provided by The **Kearney Area Community Foundation**, Teen Chat has been expanded to Kearney with 8-week sessions in the spring and 2 full-day sessions in the summer.

If you know a teen girl who could benefit by participating in Teen Chat, contact Sara Sanson in the Kearney office at 308-237-2304 or Tonya Moore in the Omaha office at 402-898-7762.

BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

NCHS Children And Family Center Now Offers Behavioral Health Services

Life for Rochelle was unfair.

Years of sexual abuse. An adolescence spent in foster care. An unplanned pregnancy at age 19.

Rochelle wanted a better life for her baby. But, for a young parent who hadn't known better, how could she be capable of giving better?

The Nebraska Children's Home Society Children and Family Center (CFC) is a safe place for young women like Rochelle. Since its inception in 2008, the center has become a source of hope, inspiration, and healing. It helps low income youth and young parents stay in school, learn how to become nurturing parents, and how to develop healthy relationships. The center offers the opportunity for the "better" that Rochelle and others so desperately seek.

No-cost services are available just for the asking to all who want help.

- Young fathers find the strength to become the role models that their children need;
- Young women are supported in nurturing their children and striving for a better future;
- Grandparents parenting grandchildren become part of an educational and support group on parenting the second time around;
- And parents and their children meet with mental health professionals to get the care they need to move forward and meet their goals.

The help is a life changer, especially for young parents. Support from therapists has been vital to the success of parents with young children- like Rochelle who didn't know how to be there emotionally for her daughter until working through the trauma from her own childhood.

With the support of **The Kim Foundation** and **The Mutual of Omaha Foundation**, this year over 50 parents have received therapy services that are strengthening their relationships with their children, improving their emotional health, and enhancing their relationships with their partner. Staff at the Center take a unique approach where therapists and home visitors work hand-in hand providing ongoing support to encourage participation and eliminate practical barriers to follow through-- transportation, time management, child care, and lack of family support. Recovery for individuals is inspirational as client's mental health improves and their children thrive.

Soon after Rochelle began seeing a therapist at NCHS's Children and Family Center, she formed a trusting relationship with her therapist and felt safe to share and confront her abusive experiences as a child. Knowing the birth of her child could re-traumatize Rochelle, her

therapist recommended a home visitor at the Center who is also a Doula who provides labor support.

Rochelle had a healthy birth, has a healthy baby, and is now a mother who believes she is a good mother, and she can give her daughter a better life.

Rochelle continues to see her therapist as she works through her past trauma, but she continues to move forward, caring for her new baby with the love and physical affection that was lacking in her own life for so long. She is continuing her education and working with a home visitor on life skills and parenting. Rochelle has hope for her future. Rochelle has hope for "better."

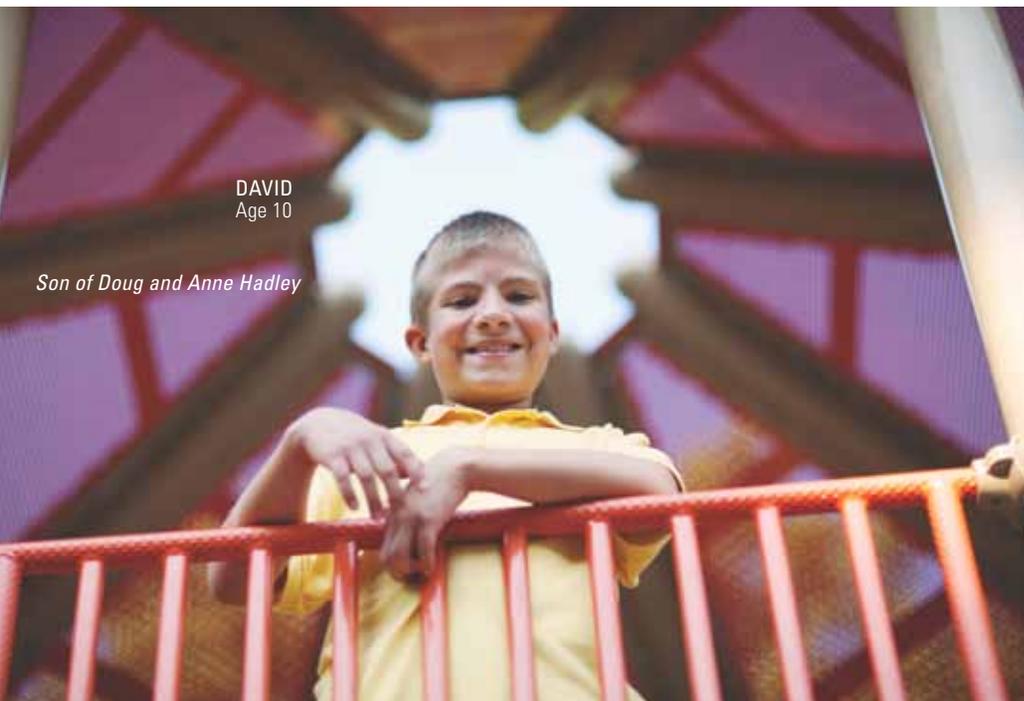
To access or refer for services please contact The Children and Family Center by calling 402-898-7762 or emailing familycenter@nchs.org.

Caregivers & Foster Parents of Medically Fragile Children Need Help. New Training Provided Through NCHS Offers Hope.

Many children come into the child welfare system because they have complex medical needs and parents have difficulty caring for those needs. Through new funding provided by the Metro **Omaha Medical Society Foundation**, NCHS will offer specialized training to help parents and extended family members, foster parents, & professionals associated with the child welfare system learn practical skills to care for and support children with special health care needs.

"Research shows 80% of children in foster care have at least one chronic medical condition. Foster parents, birth parents and other caretakers receive valuable information from medical professionals while in healthcare settings, but after bringing the child home, they often become overwhelmed and have additional questions and concerns," said NCHS Foster Care Caseworker Kathi Plato, who is also a registered nurse.

Quarterly workshops will offer multiple trainings targeted to specific medical needs and conducted by a community of professionals from the medical field, as well as, families who have experienced daily life with a child who has special healthcare needs and can offer suggestions, tips and resources.



DAVID
Age 10

Son of Doug and Anne Hadley

Couple finds calling in adoption, advocacy

by Laura Bernero

RURAL KENESAW—1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Any time their family goes out in public—to a restaurant, an event, or even to church—Aaron and Kerri Bly find themselves counting to five. It's the number of buzzing, blond little ones who fill the couple's rural Kenesaw home with laughter and activity.

It's the number of times the couple has welcomed a child in need over the threshold of their hearts and their home and invited them to stay for good.

It's the number of rookies under five feet tall who the couple has lovingly recruited to their roster.

It's the lineup of "Team Bly."

"That's what we're known by now, 'Team Bly,'" Kerri said.

"When we go out in public, we're constantly counting—1, 2, 3, 4, 5. And as soon as we're done, we count again. We're counting those little ones. You miss what you're supposed to be doing sometimes," Aaron added with a good-natured laugh.

Team Bly is a family that has been more than a decade in the making and has both blessed and challenged Aaron and Kerri to walk a lifelong journey of perseverance, faith and love.

The Nebraska natives met at Nebraska Christian College and knew early in their courtship that they wanted to adopt kids someday. So, about five years into their marriage when they found out that they



Photo by Laura Bernero of the Bly Family

couldn't have biological kids, Aaron and Kerri felt that God was affirming their calling.

"That's what we are known by now, Team Bly."

-Kerri Bly

"Her doctor asked if we had ever thought about adoption, and that's all it really took," Aaron said. "We felt assured that this was the right thing for us."

In the early 2000s, the Blys attended classes and support groups for parents waiting to adopt through the Nebraska Children's Home Society, a statewide network of resources for families in the process of fostering or adopting kids, and the only adoption agency in the country that doesn't charge any fees for their services.

Knowing that they wouldn't have to go into large debt in order to adopt, the couple completed the lengthy paperwork process for adoption and waited for two

years. In September 2004, they finally got a call to participate in an infant adoption process with their first son Trae, who is now 8. "We got to be in the delivery room, which was pretty special," said Aaron, explaining that they had communication with Trae's birth mom for several months before his birth.

"We also let his birth mom pick the spelling of Trae's name, to honor her."

After bringing home their first son, they were "over the moon," Kerri said. "After waiting so long, you just can't contain your excitement. From that point on, when we'd attend events or support groups, our story just started spilling out of us."

The Blys were asked several times to speak about the adoption process to schools and other groups, and they soon developed a rhythm of speaking and volunteering actively for the Nebraska Children's Home Society. "When we were looking to adopt, we got to hear the stories of adoptive parents, foster parents and birth parents. And that really helped us, so we wanted to help other families, as well," Kerri said.

FOSTER CARE SERVICES

"When you go to some of those panels, there's already Kleenex on the tables. Because the stories you hear are just incredible. It's all about the stories," Aaron added.

After Trae came into their life and they became more involved in the area adoption network, the Blys spent a little over a year providing foster care to several groups of kids, always with the intention to adopt more kids in the future. Siblings Gabby, Christian, and Seth entered their lives in that time, and the couple felt that sense of calling again.

"They came on a Tuesday, and I think by Saturday we knew they were it," Kerri said, explaining how well the kids got along with Trae, who by then had been diagnosed with Moebius Syndrome and Autism.

"The kids were so good with him, especially Christian. The boys would play cars together and Christian would really encourage Trae, and that's exactly what he needed," Kerri said.

It felt like a new family was forming, but it wasn't quite the end of the story for the new siblings. After staying with Aaron and Kerri for 13 months and steadily nesting into the hearts of their new parents, the kids were allowed to return to their birth parents.

But, as Aaron and Kerri had been learning throughout the process of fostering and adopting, the door isn't always closed. God can heal all things, and it was his plan to restore the family that had been forming. Gabby, Christian and Seth were in need of a new home again six months later, and another sibling—EJ—was now in the picture, as well.

The Blys welcomed the four siblings, and finished fostering another girl they had cared for in the siblings' absence.

The roster was at five, and there it would stay.

"They've had a big impact on our organization in a lot of ways."

-Brian Osborne

Now, the Bly's daily schedule is nothing short of full. Trae, 8, and Christian, 10, are attending grade school and Kerri homeschools 13-year-old Gabby. Seth, 5, and EJ, 4, are just entering preschool age. Aaron works for a bank in Kearney while Kerri maintains a full-time job caring for the kids.

For the past five years, Aaron and a committee of NCHS volunteers have organized the "Fairways and Greens for Kids and Dreams" charity golf tournament in Kearney to benefit the children's home society that facilitated the adoptions in the Bly family and so many others.

Aaron said that 40 teams signed up for the tournament this past July and he anticipates that there will be enough interest to expand the event to two golf courses and add a dinner to the lineup next year.

"We've gotten a great response from it, and worked with a lot of adoptive families who we already knew from the children's home," Aaron said. "This next year we're hoping to get a lot of people who aren't as familiar with the children's home to let them know what programs and services that they provide."

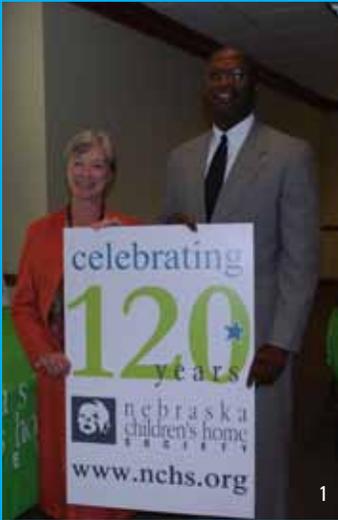
Aaron and Kerri were honored Dec. 14 as the Nebraska Children's Home Society's Volunteers of the Year at the organization's 120th anniversary banquet in Omaha, a recognition that surprised the couple but that organization advocates said was "a no-brainer."

"Besides being great volunteers and being very community-minded, the Blys are also great examples of what our organization stands for. They are great parents. They put the needs of their kids above everything else in their lives," said Brian Osborne, chief development officer for the NCHS. "They've had a big impact on our organization in a variety of ways."

To Aaron and Kerri, though, their story doesn't feel award-winning or glamorous.

It feels like everyday life with five kids. It feels like messy meals around their eight-seat dining table. It feels like driving to appointments and corralling everyone into their Sunday School classrooms and telling stories.

It feels like five faces, filling their lives to the brim, and forever having a place on the roster of Team Bly.



1 Karen Authier and Board President Ed Cochran
2 A photo hanging on the wall in the NCHS Children and Family Center shows three toddlers, adopted through NCHS, sitting together. Danielle Fumagalli, who attended a Gratitude Tour event with her brother, Ryan, and parents' Kevin and Annette, points to the photo- "That's me!".
3 Steve & Bev Aerts, Harris VanOort, and Becky Crofoot share stories and family photos.
4 Tim & Jennifer Bowes and their family share their family testimonial at the 120th Celebration Awards Banquet.



To Start The Celebration, Call A Family Gathering

The Children’s Home Celebrates 120 years of serving with an employee, trustee, board of directors kick-off; statewide gratitude tour; anniversary-themed events; and end-of-year awards banquet

Isn’t it amazing to think of all the children that have walked or been carried through the doors of a charity in continuous service for 120 years?

Roughly 150 businesses and organizations that started in Nebraska more than a century ago still survive and thrive today. It is something to celebrate—and for the Children’s Home, the celebration requires a “family gathering.”

Family gatherings started in June, with Nebraska Children’s Home Society employees, trustees, and board members donning sports-themed and NCHS apparel, assembling for the celebration kick-off and a history lesson. An emotional highlight of the event was when each department took turns sharing stories of a child and their family who is currently gaining a new life and skills through NCHS services.

Development and leadership staff members took to the road to embark on a statewide Gratitude Tour, spanning from Scottsbluff to Omaha. The tour was an opportunity during the anniversary year to say thanks, share about the current state of Nebraska’s children, and share a vision for the future. NCHS long-standing and devoted supporters were invited to intimate gratitude events, joining to watch a brief historic video on the founding of the organization, learning more about the history of service to children, and meeting local staff serving their community. Each family member was presented with a small gift of thanks. In addition to the more intimate gratitude tour events, statewide development events were an opportunity to invite all friends, and the larger “NCHS family” to join the celebration. Check out the event highlights on page 12-15.



1893

Dr. Elmer P. Quivey founded the Nebraska Children's Home Society with a commitment to placing children with families rather than orphanages.



1924

Fontenelle Receiving Home built.

**To know where you're going,
you have to know where you've been.**

Thanks to all who have helped us stay strong through the years.



1930s

Farmers donate potatoes, eggs and milk to feed children at the Home through the Depression era.



1953

Scottsbluff office opens



1950s

Children in foster care outnumber those in institutions for the first time in national history.

1978-1996

The agency began expanding across the state, opening offices in Grand Island, Lincoln, Norfolk, Fremont, Kearney, Gothenburg, and North Platte.

1996

NCHS Foundation established to sustain services for generations of children to come.

2004

NCHS Margre Durham Center opens as second Omaha location.



2012

The largest gift in NCHS history is received from the Nellie M. Cole Trust, over 1000 acres of farmland valued at \$4.1 million.



120 years



2013

NCHS celebrates the individuals, organizations, and partners that support the mission of safe and loving homes for children.



ENGAGING COMMUNITIES
2013 STATEWIDE DEVELOPMENT EVENTS



WEAVING FAMILIES TOGETHER | Grand Island

March 23, 2013

You know the saying, “If you don’t like the weather in Nebraska, just wait a day, it will change”? Well, this year weather changed for the worse. Despite having to cancel the annual tri-city event due to the threat of severe weather, the pre-event fundraising efforts and the hard-work of the event committee was a great success. The event committee including Glenda and Dave Buss, Amy Erie, Becky Hermann, Stephanie Kissler, Buffy and Daren Niemeyer and Jen and Steven Scott were able to raise over \$27,000.

Major supporting sponsors included Gaurantee Electric Company, Alan and Angie Brennan, Dave and Glenda Buss, Chances “R” Restaurant, Cyclonaire Corporation, DBN Farms, Gartner Farms, Great Western Bank, Jerrad and Angela Karr, and St. Francis Medical Center.



PLAN TO JOIN THE FUN!

NCHS’s Sand in the City® 2014 – June 6–8, 2014

Does your workplace have visitors? Ask if you can sell NCHS’s Sand in the City® Paper Sand Pails to customers at your workplace.

We supply the paper sand pails. Contact Ryan Rourke at rourke@nchs.org or (402) 451-0787.



NCHS’S SAND IN THE CITY® | Omaha

June 7 – 9, 2013

Nebraska Children’s Home Society kicked off its 10th annual NCHS’s Sand in the City® event downtown at the CenturyLink Center on June 7-9. NCHS’s signature event and largest fundraising event raised over \$108,000. Picture-perfect weather set the stage for competition day with 20 corporate and community group teams participate in the sand sculpting competition. Seventeen of those teams were returning from the previous year, with three new teams joining the fun. The 2013 teams included Avenue Scholars, ConAgra Foods, Creighton University, First National Bank, Gallup, Gavilon & Opus Group, Grace University, HDR & Nebraska Humane Society, Hilton Omaha & MECA, Kiewit Engineering Co., Kiewit Underground District, Leo A Daly & SAC Federal Credit Union, LinkedIn, Lund Company & Olsson Associates, Millard Rotary, Sheppard’s Business Interiors, Travel and Transport, TSYS Merchant Solutions, Walmart and West Corp. & Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Architects, Engineers and Team Designers volunteered their time from Army Corps of Engineers, BCDM Architects, Bruce Frasier Architects, Calvin L Hinz, Carlson West Povondra Architects, Creighton University, DLR Group, HDR, Inc., Holland Basham Architects, Kathol Drywall Service, Kiewit Engineering Co., Kiewit Underground District, Leo A Daly, Offutt Air Force Base, Olsson Associates, UNO Engineering, Prochaska & Associates, RDG Planning & Design, Schemmer Associates.

The presenting sponsor for the 5th consecutive year was Millard Drywall Services. Kiewit Engineering Group, Kiewit Underground District, Hilton Omaha and Travel and Transport not only had teams, but were also event sponsors. Duffy Fischer sponsored the Avenue Scholars’ team. Additional sponsors included Distribution By Air, Omaha Marriott, KETV, 101.9 The Big O, Metro Magazine, Heimes Corp., Mutual of Omaha Bank, Two Rivers Sand & Gravel, The Nebraska Medical Center, CRAVE, City of Carter Lake, Nothing Bundt Cakes, Boler, Wood & Associates, Omaha Camera Club, CVS Pharmacy, Gourmet Threadz, The Digz, Ideal Pure Water, Lutz & Co., Enterprise Rental, Walmart, and Weststar Foods Inc.

More than 200 people signed up to volunteer over the three-day event and 11 out-of-town sand coaches traveled to Omaha to assist teams and to build the grand display celebrating NCHS’s 120th Anniversary.

AND THE SAND SCULPTING COMPETITION WINNERS ARE...

- 1st Place – Kiewit Engineering Co.
- 2nd Place – TSYS Merchant Solutions
- 3rd Place – Millard Rotary
- Rookie Team Award – Creighton University
- Push It To The Limit Award – Travel and Transport
- Most Creative Award – Sheppard’s Business Interiors
- People’s Choice Award—Walmart

**FAIRWAYS & GREENS
FOR KIDS & DREAMS | Kearney**

July 15, 2013

Raising more than \$30,000, the 5th annual golf tournament took place on a gorgeous summer day at Meadowlark Hills Golf Course in Kearney. 144 golfers came out and enjoyed plenty of challenging contests and a live and silent auction along with a dinner. The event is chaired by NCHS's 2013 Volunteer of the Year, Aaron Bly. Tim Valleau, Kerry Carpenter, Nick Erdman, Greg Ernst took home the coveted trophy.



Teams played in foursomes



Organizers Aaron and Kerri Bly



The golf winners are: Tim Valleau, Kerry Carpenter, Nick Erdman and Greg Ernst



The BRANCH Board is: back row: Jen Bartelt, Mark Spotanski, Beth Pantano, Karen Weinhold, Beth Benton; front row: Tracy Fisher, Ellie Steinbrink, Megan Storm, Don Hansen, John Hertzler, Courtney Holub

HOMEGROWN | Omaha

October 10, 2013

NCHS's young professionals' group, the BRANCH Board, hosted the 7th annual HomeGrown event at Brix at Village Pointe. HomeGrown is a casual, fun evening featuring a stunning photography exhibit of children and families served through NCHS. The photography was the work of Omaha photographer, Kathy Byers with Kathy Rae Photography. Guests enjoyed a variety of wine and beer samples and dined on local cuisine from Brix's Executive Chef. The event raised over \$14,000.

Save the Date

NCHS's Sand in the City® – Omaha

Sand Sculpting Competition – June 6, 2014

Family Fun Days – June 7 & 8, 2014

Fairways & Greens for Kids & Dreams – Kearney

Dinner – July 13, 2014

Golf Tournament – July 14, 2014

2013 STATEWIDE DEVELOPMENT EVENTS



1 Dr. Peter and Ruth Diedrichsen accept the Harris Van Oort Friends of Children Award from Harris Van Oort

2 NCHS 120th Anniversary Cake

3 The Kiewit Table is: starting in front left Brad Cameron, Kristi Cameron, Jeff Petersen, Sarah Petersen, Alysia Coit, James Coit, Gary Pietrok, Cassandra Pietrok, Ashley Dudzinski & Josh Dudzinski

4 Aaron and Kerri Bly accept the Volunteer of the Year Award from Brian Osborne

120TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION & AWARDS BANQUET | Omaha December 14, 2013

The 120th Anniversary Celebration & Awards Banquet on December 14th at Omaha Marriott and was a joyous evening, raising over \$62,000. Three hundred guests, including longtime and new friends, gathered to celebrate NCHS's 120 years of service to children and families and its mission of providing safe and loving care to children of all ages. The event was an opportunity to recognize individuals and organizations for their commitment to children and strong support of NCHS's mission. Three special awards were presented: Randall Biart Philanthropy Award to Kiewit, Volunteer of the Year Award to Aaron and Kerri Bly, and the Harris Van Oort Friends of Children Award to Dr. Peter and Ruth Diedrichsen.

The Event Sponsors included Randy & Darlene Mueller, Dr. John & Ruth Sage, Mutual of Omaha Bank, Baird Holm LLP, Mike & Katie Beacom, Pat & Merrily Boler, Boler, Wood & Associates, BRANCH Board, Blake & Kathy Collingsworth, Dr. Peter & Ruth Diedrichsen, E & K Construction,

First National Bank, First National Wealth Management, First Westroads Bank, The Fischer Family, Lund Company, Dr. James & Tracy Mathisen, Millard Drywall Service, Moylan Kropp Retirement Planning, Security National Bank, Travel and Transport, The Skinner Family, Tom & Sue Weidner, Widman Motors, Nelnet, Simmonds Family Foundation, Access Bank, and Robert Frazer.

John Knicely, WOWT, Ch. 6 News Anchor, served as the master of ceremonies for the evening which began with a cocktail reception and silent auction. Dinner and the program followed with an inspiring message from Chief Executive Officer Karen Authier and a motivational testimonial by Tim and Jen Bowes who have adopted three children out of foster care.

NCHS's Resource Specialist, Kat Jarvis, and her band provided beautiful music during the dinner service.

Holiday Joy for Children

Project Elf Fulfills Christmas Wishes for more than 1,200 Children “The power of kindness, caring and energy resulted in wishes fulfilled for children across the state,” said Chief Executive Officer Karen Authier. “I marvel at the outpouring of generosity from the Omaha Community, the organizational skills of our ‘Elf leaders’, the positive attitude of the entire ‘Elf’ community, and the overall spirit of generosity and good will that permeated the effort.”



Many companies and their employees who shopped for Project Elf delivered holiday gifts, while taking some time to enjoy holiday treats and trade stories with NCHS staff. Omaha and Lincoln businesses including Hardees, A Street Pharmacy, Amigos, Custom Auto, The Clock Tower Merchants, The Egg & I, and A Street Market sold Little Red Stockings to their patrons for \$1 during the month of December.



Continuing the joy in May, NCHS prints paper sand pails for businesses to sell and help support NCHS and the annual NCHS’s Sand in the City® event. Contact Ryan Rourke, rrourke@nchs.org, to get your bundle of sand pails to sale and display.



Many employees at area businesses, including First National Bank, purchased and donated toys.



Omaha-based Fat Brain Toys partnered with NCHS to donate a portion of toy sales and set up a drop of station for Project Elf donations.



Seldin Company employees used team-building skills to piece together 12 bikes to donate to children served by NCHS’s Project Elf.



Project Elf Dropoffs



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