



Quarterly Connection

BLUE VALLEY COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP ANNOUNCES SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Our Mission

We overcome poverty by meeting basic needs, helping people grow, and collaborating in our communities.

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Blue Valley Community Action (BVCA) Partnership is now accepting applications for our 2023-2024 scholarship opportunities. All scholarships will be in the amount of \$1,000 and can be used for tuition, books and fees associated with enrollment. Three scholarships will be awarded. BVCA Partnership will offer the following scholarships this year:



- The “BVCA Partnership Scholarship” will be awarded to an individual planning to attend or currently attending a 4-year college.
- The “BVCA Partnership Vocational Scholarship” will be awarded to an individual planning to attend or currently attending a 2-year or less program at a vocational college.
- The “BVCA Partnership Southeast Community College Scholarship” will be awarded to an individual planning to attend or currently attending Southeast Community College.

Applicants must reside in BVCA Partnership’s service area, which includes Butler, Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Polk, Saline, Seward, Thayer and York Counties in Nebraska. Scholarship applications, guidelines and a listing of eligibility requirements may be obtained from area high school administrative or guidance counselor offices, or by contacting the BVCA Partnership Center in your area. Applications can also be downloaded from our website: www.bvca.net. For more information, contact Heather Lytle, BVCA’s Administrative Director, at (402) 729-2278 ext. 122. All applications must be received or postmarked on or before March 1, 2024.

Individuals or businesses wishing to donate to BVCA’s Scholarship Fund are asked to contact Shari Weber, BVCA’s CEO.

COMMUNITY FOR KIDS (C4K) LAUNCH & LEARN

On August 29, 2023, BVCA’s CEO, Shari Weber had the opportunity to be a part of a Launch & Learn panel at a Beatrice community event that was hosted by Gage Area Growth Enterprise (NGage). NGage is a county-wide economic development group that works to create opportunities for businesses to start, grow or move to Gage County. NGage created an initiative called Communities for Kids (C4K) in response to community requests for assistance with shortages of high-quality early care and education programs.



Communities for Kids

nebraskachildren

Gage County

The Launch & Learn brought community members and local businesses together to network and learn more about the childcare issues and efforts happening in Gage County. Shari had the pleasure of being on the panel with Senator Dorn, Mike Feeken from First Five Nebraska, Missy Jobman from Little Giggles, and Rachel Sissel from Nebraska Children & Families Foundation.

BVCA WIC PROGRAM NAMED RECIPIENT OF NATIONAL GRANT

Blue Valley Community Action Partnership is pleased to announce it is one of 36 national recipients of WIC Community Innovation and Outreach Project funds. WIC CIAO is supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service and aims to support efforts to develop, implement, and evaluate innovative outreach strategies to increase awareness, participation, and benefit redemption in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and reduce disparities in program delivery.

BVCA Health Department Director, Danielle Meade said, “Our activities focus on outreach into our communities. We are going into doctor’s offices, daycares, different points of food access like churches and food banks. Anywhere somebody is going to look for food or help in anyway. We’re working with these partners to educate them on what we do, how we can help, and how they can bring people needing assistance to us.”

Reaching out to new partners has already demonstrated a marked increase in BVCA WIC’s program numbers. Meade said prior to these efforts, the average number of WIC participants was 850 per month. Now that number is closer to 1,100.

BVCA WIC is the only program in the state of Nebraska to receive these funds, and the results of the program could potentially help other WIC programs, particularly those serving rural client bases like BVCA, in their own outreach efforts.

WIC provides healthy foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding counseling and referrals for to pregnant and postpartum individuals, infants up to 12 months, and children up to age 5.

In 2020, only 50 percent of all eligible individuals nationwide participated in WIC, equating to a shortfall of almost 6 million individuals. The WIC CIAO Project aims to change that by expanding partnerships with community organizations and using community-level data to develop and implement innovative WIC outreach efforts.

Reaching more families with WIC will have positive impacts on the community. WIC has been shown to provide wide-ranging benefits, including longer, safer pregnancies, with fewer premature births and infant deaths; improved dietary outcomes for infants and children; improved maternal health; and improved performance at school, among others. In addition to health benefits, WIC participants showed significant savings in health care costs when compared to non-participants.

WIC CIAO is administered through a USDA cooperative agreement with the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), in partnership with the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition, the Native American Agriculture Fund, and UnidosUS. WIC CIAO is part of USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service broader initiative to modernize WIC. Visit hellowic.org to find out more about the WIC CIAO Project and awardees, and sign up for updates on WIC CIAO events and announcements.



Pictured from Left to Right: Jamie Vyhnaek, WIC Manager; Danielle Meade, Health & Nutrition Services Director; Carla Walters, WIC Nurse; Staci Thompson, WIC Nurse; Marisela Rodriguez, WIC Clerk; Amy Schroeder, WIC Nurse; Martha Mendoza, WIC Interpreter



GAGE COUNTY UNITED WAY CARNIVAL

BVCA staff Sonja Workman and Celena Choate both participated in the annual Gage County United Way Carnival on August 19 at Chautauqua Park in Beatrice. This event is held every year as a way for the Gage County United Way to give back to the community and provide a safe and family friendly event for families. All agencies who are supported by the Gage County United Way get to participate in this event each year. There are several different fun activities for kids and families including games, crafts, bounce houses, music, and food. It is truly an inclusive event. This year, the BVCA staff created two fun crafts for activities at our tables. Grandmas Sharon and Helen were on hand as well with Sonja and Celena, and worked one on one with the kids on their crafts. Approximately 100 children visited the BVCA craft tables and created “Star Wands” and bean tambourine instruments. The kids all had a great time, and the staff and Foster Grandparents enjoyed the opportunity to engage with the community in such a fun way! Big thanks to Gage County United Way for the support they provide to BVCA and to the community!



BVCA RECOGNIZES EMPLOYEES FOR MULTIPLE YEARS OF SERVICE

During Blue Valley Community Action Partnership’s Annual All Staff Meeting & Wellness Day on October 4, 2023, the following employees were recognized for their service to the organization:

- ★ **35 Years: DeAnn Huls**
- ★ **25 Years: Alberta Slater**
- ★ **15 Years: Christina Jurgena**
- ★ **5 Years: Madison Jordan, Joshua Nincehelser, Marisela Rodriguez, Teresa Sammartano, Shane Schall and Jennifer Tyrrell**

Congratulations and thank you! Your hard work and dedication is truly appreciated.

JOIN OUR TEAM | BEGIN YOUR CAREER OF HELPING PEOPLE & CHANGING LIVES

BVCA has several positions available! Visit www.bvca.net and select “Careers” to find out more about our career opportunities and benefits. Visit <https://bvca.hireclick.com/jobboard> to apply.



50-YARD CHALLENGE

BVCA would like to recognize two outstanding young people, Ethan and Evelyn Rinaker of Hebron!

Ethan and Evelyn helped BVCA staff members clear out weeds that had infested the playground area at Trailview Apartments in Hebron. The kids volunteered their time and effort for approximately an hour and a half, and made a big job go much quicker.



Ethan and Evelyn's mother, Erin, said the pair are participating in the 50-yard Challenge. This challenge is a viral sensation from Raising Men Lawn Care that has spread across the country in recent years. Young people who volunteer their time to mow and maintain 50 lawns for elderly, low-income or disabled people can earn a free lawn mower and weed whacker. The challenge also extends to clearing sidewalks and driveways in the winter, and young people can also earn a snow blower. Erin said her children are motivated to help and are looking for more "customers" in Hebron! To inquire, email her at rinakererin@gmail.com.

We're so grateful for the Ethan and Evelyn, thank you for making Trailview a better complex for its residents. Good luck on the 50-Yard Challenge!

HEAD START SERVICES FOR CHILDREN



EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

In Head Start and Early Head Start programs, we serve expectant parents and families with children ages birth to 5 from diverse cultural backgrounds and who speak different languages. Children's early learning and development services include:

- Building strong relationships as the foundation of early learning
- Supporting learning through play, creative expression, and guided activities
- Supporting children's social and emotional development
- Promoting early math and science concepts in children's home languages and in English
- Promoting language and literacy development in children's home languages and in English

CONTACT THIS LOCAL PROGRAM TO SEE IF
YOUR FAMILY IS ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES TODAY!



#GetAHeadStart

www.bvca.net

Blue Valley Community Action Partnership's 4th Quarter Outreach

Case Management	167	Individuals
Childcare Services	23	Individuals
Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)	435	Individuals
Compassionate Projects	75	Individuals
COVID-19 Vaccines	5	Vaccinations
Digital Navigation This program ended 12/31/22.		
Early Head Start Child Care Partnership	38	Individuals
Early Head Start Home Based Services	65	Individuals
Early Head Start & Head Start Childcare Food Program	7791	Meals & Snacks
Emergency Assistance	94	Households
Family & Youth Involvement Center (CASTLE)	0	Individuals
Financial Coaching	112	Individuals
Food Rescue/Security	401	Households
Foster Grandparent Program	30	Individuals
Friends of Blue Valley Volunteer Program	288	Individuals
Head Start	187	Individuals
Homeownership Opportunity Program	2	Households
Housing Counseling	112	Individuals
Immunization Program	345	Shots
Infant Quality Initiative Program	12	Individuals
Lease-to-Own	49	Households
Mortgage Assistance This program ended 9/30/22.		
Nebraska Homeless Assistance Program (Shelter)	4	Households
Opportunity Passport This program ended 10/1/22.		
Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation	0	Households
Project FIRST TH/RRH (Families In Residence with Support in Transition/Rapid Re-Housing)	5	Households
Project FYRES (Focused Youth on Rehousing, Empowerment & Stability)	9	Households
Rental Apartments/Duplexes	97	Households
Rental Elderly Apartments	29	Households
Rural Southeast Nebraska Connected Youth Initiative This program is no longer administered by BVCA.		
SNAP Outreach (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)	28	Applications
Southeast Nebraska Collaborative Community Response This program is no longer administered by BVCA.		
SSI-SSDI Outreach, Access & Recovery (SOAR)	5	Individuals
Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)	88	Individuals
Thrift Stores	800	Individuals
Transportation	1559	Rides
Weatherization	14	Households
WIC Peer Counseling	16	Individuals
Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	988	Individuals



WE ARE HERE TO HELP

Visit us at www.bvca.net for more information about the programs we offer and how to apply.

The Promise of Community Action

Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.