



# Building Connections that Count

Community Report 2023

# Our Leadership



Left to Right: Denise Zwiener (Executive Director),  
Amanda Applegate (Secretary), Diane Duffin (Vice Chairman), Kathy  
Gifford (Chairman), Nadia Saadi, (Past Chair)

Not pictured: Jon Brandt (Treasurer)

## Dear Friend,

Today we reflect on lessons learned and how they have shaped us, our work and organization, especially after a difficult journey through a global pandemic. You and I are survivors who are here today to learn from our history and use our lived experience to help our friends.

We learned our friends need a helping hand from time to time and we are their greatest champion.

We learned our friends need to have access to healthy food and a place to call home that is safe.

We learned our friends connect friends to mental wellness supports.

Our organization is diving deeper today, deeper than we were yesterday. We start with supporting the coordination of community agencies that help serve a person's basic needs. When our community has a strong backbone, a connected network of services, programs, and trainings we can build a lasting foundation of trust and efficiencies.

When your friend is safe and food secure, we can then begin to build the next layer of coordinated services around children and families to support our friends' mental health, their child's development, and youth connectedness to caring adults.

Daily, we step into our community to live, work, play, and serve our family, neighbors and friends. Today, step with faith into an investment in our work.

We are the organization you can invest in to build a legacy for your family, neighborhood and friends. Donate today to build layers of trusted community connections leading to solutions for our communities most complex, preventable, needs.

Join us to build a legacy in your community.



## **Denise Zwiener,**

Executive Director, Buffalo County Community Partners

Suicide Survivor, Brain Injury Advocate, Wife,  
Mother of Three Adult Children, Grandmother



# We believe in connections

Buffalo County Community Partners is:

**Building connections among community members who share the passion to measure, promote, and strengthen well-being in Buffalo County.**

## BY 2030 OUR COMMUNITIES'...

Will have resources that are easy to understand and accessible for all.

•

Will have access to basic services for all.

•

Will thrive when partners work together to coordinate services.

•

Will value all people and their voices will inform the work.

•

Visit [bcchp.org/2030vision](http://bcchp.org/2030vision) for more information.



## WE BELIEVE...

Everyone in Buffalo County should have opportunities to be healthy.

•

Our Community will discover the prevention solutions to today's problems.

•

We are a community of people who desire a better outcome for all children and families.



# Invest in Building Connections that Count

## YOUR COMMUNITY IS BUILDING...

**COMMUNITY RESPONSE** is the collective actions a community takes to develop a coordinated system of resources and services to strengthen families and enhance family well-being.

"When we collectively focus on the resource gaps in our community, we can unite to solve those issues in innovative ways. This program uncovers our communities hidden gaps. When a single mom was hired by a company in Kearney, she was unable to pay in advance for **two weeks of childcare until she received her first paycheck**. This program provided a scholarship for two weeks of childcare. She continues to be employed today."

— Denise Zwiener, Executive Director,  
Buffalo County Community Partners.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Many in our community are 1 or 2 setbacks or illnesses away from financial disaster. US News and World Report state that 64% of our community members are living paycheck to paycheck.

When families are able to meet basic needs such as food, housing, and medical care, parents and other caregivers experience less stress, which allows them to provide the critical support that children need to grow into healthy, productive adults.

A single parent in Buffalo County works 73 hours per week at minimum wage to afford a two-bedroom home, leaving few precious hours for quality time with their children. We are a community where 4 in 10 children experience hunger and rates of poverty are increasing for our youngest and oldest members of our community.





## HOW DO WE COLLECTIVELY RESPOND?

Investing \$2,000 per family to support their basic needs when all other community resources have been exhausted is a promising strategy in your community.

9 out of 10 families served by Community Response have not returned for services. Of those returning to helping agencies in your community 90% accept coaching to work towards goals to achieve self-sufficiency.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Donating \$2000 today will grow this model with connections to child care centers and employers to support employee retention. Employees whose basic needs are met, will be more productive and motivated. Your donation will uncover community gaps for broader discussion. Your donation will wrap community stakeholders conversations together creating innovative ways to solve local problems.

## HOW ARE PEOPLE BETTER?

2.85% of the populations of Buffalo County has been served by this program. This work is achieved through coordinated agency conversations with those who provide basic need services and those receiving services.

**"Most often our funding runs out by mid-month, when the money is gone we would be faced with the option to turn people away until the next month. Instead, the team effort working with other community partners to assist with financial requests is critical to maintaining our community members' independence and dignity. I get to see the smiles on the faces of families every day and share with them that there are people in their community working hard to give everyone an opportunity to succeed."**

— Cheri Clark, Executive Director,  
Kearney Area Jubilee Center



# Invest in Building Connections that Count

## YOUR COMMUNITY IS BUILDING...

**PHOTOVOICE** is a program that engages adult mentors with area youth and provides a safe place to gather and express creative and constructive communication through photography.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

By exchanging concepts through photography, participants learn about their world, each other and themselves.

In 2016, 9 of 10 Buffalo County youth reported having an adult other than their parent to talk too. Today, 7 of 10 youth report having other adults in their lives. This represents a 16% decline in youth and adult relationships in your community.

## HOW DO WE COLLECTIVELY RESPOND?

By investing \$1,000 per youth to support adult and youth mentorships through PhotoVoice; you are investing in a community who values youth and builds a place where youth feel valued and surrounded by people who love, care for, appreciate, and accept them.







## HOW ARE YOUTH BETTER?

"My child recently received a disability diagnosis and was regularly getting into trouble at school. We worked to get her involved in multiple extra-curricular activities and programs, but so far, our efforts had not been successful for several reasons; behavior issues, loss of interest or support, expense, etc.

This is the first time I've seen her so excited about a program. This is the first time she has ever stuck with an activity she was not forced to participate in. Now, she is asking me to give other youth rides to PhotoVoice sessions and inviting her friends to join in."

— PhotoVoice Parent



# Invest in Building Connections that Count



Rachel Pierce  
Creative Kids Child Care

## YOUR COMMUNITY IS BUILDING EARLY CHILDHOOD SUPPORTS

Rooted in Relationships is a program that emphasizes loving, stable and responsive relationships which are fundamental to your child's development. Through relationships, children learn how to think, understand, communicate, behave, express emotions and develop social skills. Playing with your child strengthens your relationship and encourages your child to explore, observe, experiment and solve problems.

Implementation began with four childcare coaches and 30 providers in center based and home childcare in 2016. Today over 100 childcare providers are receiving coaching to support providers and parents in building relationships that are fundamental to a child's development.

**"I am grateful beyond belief to be a part of Rooted. The coaching is stress relieving and the trainings are resourceful. Not only have my kiddos benefited from a better environment, but I have gained friends during our collaboration meetings. This program is personally just what I needed to continue providing quality childcare in our community."**

— Rachel Pierce Creative Kids Child Care



## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

In their first few years of life, young children acquire social and emotional skills, such as regulating emotions, sharing with others and following instructions. These skills lay the foundation for developing cognitive abilities that are critical for success in school and life.

However, children in Buffalo County are more likely, than other Nebraska communities, to be expelled from childcare.



## WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

Young children who are suspended or expelled from childcare/preschool are 10 times more likely to:



Drop out of high school



Experience academic failure and grade retention



Have negative feelings about school



Face incarceration



## HOW DO WE COLLECTIVELY RESPOND?

"Investing \$1000 prevents five children from being expelled and provides tools to teachers, providers, parents and coaches to support child wellbeing.

## HOW ARE THEY BETTER?

IN SIX YEARS, THIS PROGRAM HAS REACHED

# 17.8%

OF CHILDREN <sup>(0-5 YEARS OF AGE)</sup> AND THEIR PARENTS IN BUFFALO COUNTY

— PROVIDING TOOLS AND SKILLS FOR —  
LOVING, STABLE AND RESPONSIVE RELATIONSHIPS.

## CHILDREN AND THEIR INSTRUCTORS ARE BEING SUPPORTED

IN THE CLASSROOM TO PREVENT DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIORS, THAT REMOVES CHILDREN FROM CLASSROOMS.

IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, BUFFALO COUNTY HAS STARTED TO SEE A

# SLIGHT DECREASE

IN THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN EXPELLED FROM CHILDCARE AND CHILDCARE CLASSROOMS.



# Your Donation will be Invested Locally

## LAST YEAR, 1 MILLION DOLLARS IN GIFTS WERE INVESTED.

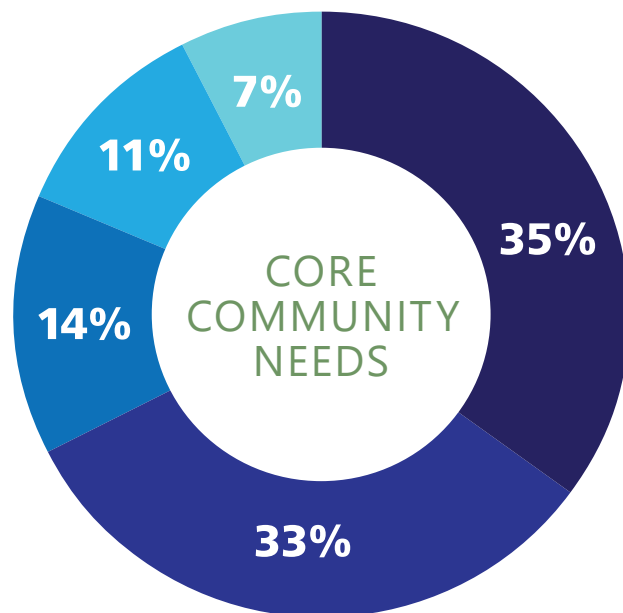
This organization facilitates 500+ community meetings annually to lift up community needs, gaps and challenges for others to see and work together to solve our most complex issues.

This graph illustrates how private and public funds are invested in the core needs of the community.

**10% OF NEEDS** in the community are supported by local donors which leads to matching grants.

**90% OF NEEDS** in the community are financially supported by local, state and federal grants.

*Invest \$1 today to raise \$6 in matching grant funds.*



## WHY INVEST IN CONNECTIONS

Your donation will build your communities' capacity to:

- 1) Ensure access to basic services, while
- 2) building community resources that are easy to understand and accessible, while
- 3) building solutions with community experts; agencies, youth, parents, and others with lived experience, while
- 4) building trust and coordination in the community to be more efficient with our limited resources.

- Capacity Building 35%
- Early Childhood Development 33%
- Access to Services, Programs, Resources and Education 14%
- Building Youth and Adult Partnerships 11%
- Mental Health Promotion 7%





# DONATE TODAY

1  
Donate online at  
[bcchp.org/donate](https://bcchp.org/donate)

2  
Or mail a check payable to  
Buffalo County Community Partners,  
PO Box 1466, Kearney, NE 68848

# Staff and Board Members

## STAFF MEMBERS

Denise Zwiener .....Executive Director  
Alex Hehnke..... Executive Assistant  
Renaee Altmaier.....Finance Director  
Michelle Toukan ..... Marketing Director  
Matt Morris .....Data Coordinator  
Tana Miller ..... Behavioral Health Coordinator  
Wanda Fedorchik..... Prevention Coordinator /Central Navigator  
Martha Marfileno.....Wellness Coordinator /Bilingual Central Navigator  
Ellery Butterfield.....Youth Coordinator  
Eduardo Tecla ..... Community Response Assistant  
Ashley Laurie ..... Social Media Assistant  
Genesis Acosta..... Youth Intern



## BOARD MEMBERS

Kathy Gifford (CHAIRMAN)  
School Board Member, Kearney Public Schools  
  
Diane Duffin (VICE CHAIRMAN)  
Professor Political Science, University of Nebraska at Kearney  
  
Amanda Applegate (SECRETARY)  
Buckle, Kearney Community  
  
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Cindi Coulter  
Graphic Artist, Ravenna Community  
  
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Associate Dean College of Education and Assistant Professor in Teacher Education,  
University of Nebraska at Kearney  
  
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MD, Retired Physician  
  
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Executive Director, S.A.F.E. Center  
  
Nichole Hersh  
Children and Families Supervisor, Department of Health and Human Services  
  
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Retired, Hospital Industry, Kearney Community  
  
Tammy Jeffs  
Director of Community Services, Community Action Partnership of Mid-Nebraska  
  
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Employment Specialist, Vocational Rehabilitation Services

