

Families – The Backbone of Neighborhoods

LaDeane Jha
Extension Educator

Look around your neighborhood. Is it a good place for young people and families to live? Do you cross the street when you see a group of young people headed your way or does the sight of children playing in the park bring a spark of happiness to your day? Do you wonder if the children you see are being well fed? Educated? What about the senior citizens? Do they have a sense of belonging and well-being? Does everyone feel safe? Is there access to health care? Are essential services accessible? Do the generations interact with one-another? How well do you know the children in your neighborhood?

We all know that there are difficult problems facing families.

- There are more single-parent homes.
- In two-parent homes, both parents work full-time or even more.
- Some families don't have much money.
- There may be a lack of good child care and relatives may not be around to help.
- Parents can't help out in school when they work all the time.

The list could go on. The good news however, is that more and more neighborhoods are trying new ways to support families. Neighbors are helping each other



Members of the South Salt Creek Community Organization, (L-R) John Spencer, Steve Larrick, Omadeane Talley (President), and Steve Sim (Vice President), stand next to a bronze statue of Dorothy and Toto which the group worked to have installed in Cooper Park.

and numerous people are finding new ways to interact with schools, police and other agencies. In many neighborhoods people are

talking and planning together.

Two local initiatives that build capacity, enhance community vitality and focus on local strengths are the Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) and the Community Learning Center (CLC) initiatives. Both projects use creative methods to address child, family and neighborhood issues such as building social capital, creating a sense of community, examining youths' perceptions about out-of-school activities and making schools the center of neighborhood activities.

The COPC program's focus includes three areas: education, community organization, and neighborhood revitalization. Their outreach efforts are coordinated with

see *NEIGHBORHOODS*
on page 12

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home — the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."

— Eleanor Roosevelt, from a speech to the United Nations, 1958.

Community Partnerships Help Build Strong Families & Neighborhoods

Maureen Burson
Extension Educator

Newcomers to Lincoln often comment that people are friendly, compassionate and supportive of one another. That spirit of "let's work together" found in many of Lincoln's neighborhoods helps families prosper and neighborhoods thrive.

Partnerships among agencies support this "work together" ethic by combining creative talents and financial resources to identify needs and create solutions for families and the larger community. Similar to local neighborhood organiza-

tions, UNL Cooperative Extension's Nutrition Education Program (NEP) cultivates partnerships to benefit families and neighborhoods.

Families enrolled in the NEP benefit when partners provide comprehensive approaches to meeting their needs. Thus, NEP values the partnerships that help them serve families with limited resources in Lincoln. Some NEP partners include, Lincoln Housing Authority (LHA), Lincoln Action Program Early Head Start and Head Start, Lincoln Public Schools Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program Project, and Women, Infants and Children.

Since 1992, LHA and the UNL Cooperative Extension in Lancaster County have

jointly funded programs to teach families how to prepare safe, nutritious meals on a limited income. LHA provides affordable, safe housing and LHA families participate in NEP at senior sites, LHA-owned family resource centers and child development centers. Some clients receive individualized education in their home.

Doug Marthaler, LHA Tenant Service Manager says, "Through partnerships and collaborations with other community agencies, LHA is able to provide more than housing to its

see *COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS*
on page 12

Note: This is a combined November/December issue. The next NEBLINE will be January 2003.

In this issue...

-  **Horticulture** —page 2
-  **Environmental Focus** —page 3
-  **Farm Views** —page 4
-  **Urban Agriculture** —page 5
-  **Food & Fitness** —page 6
-  **Family Living** —page 7
-  **4-H & Youth** —pages 8-9
-  **Community & Home Living** —page 10

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