

## Center for People in Need's 'Truckloads of Help' Program Distributes Nearly \$22 Million Worth of Donated Products

**Beatty Brasch**  
*Executive Director of the  
Center for People in Need*

The Center for People in Need is a Lincoln-based, non-profit human service agency. Our mission is to increase resources for families and individuals to help them overcome socio-economic barriers that limit their paths to success. Central to our operations is to carry out our work with minimal staff, large numbers of volunteers, by working in collaboration with other agencies and organizations and by leveraging our resources.

Our most comprehensive program is 'Truckloads of Help' which is unique in Nebraska and throughout the nation. We obtain products through 'Gifts-in-Kind,' a national clearinghouse for companies and corporations contributing new products for donation to charities throughout the country. Semi-trucks regularly deliver to our warehouse a variety of products, including office furniture, supplies and equipment, clothing, bedding, toys, small appliances, cleaning supplies and household and personal care items. Businesses donating merchandise include Sears, GAP, Old Navy, Office Depot, Nike, Gillette, Oral B, Mattel, Hallmark and Bed, Bath and Beyond.

With donations and grants, the Center pays administrative and transportation costs. For every dollar expended, we receive \$100 worth of merchandise that, in turn, we give to human service agencies who serve low-income/high-need populations. In 2006, the



As part of the Truckloads of Help program, volunteers help sort and prepare donated products for distribution.

Center expended \$220,000 to obtain and distribute approximately \$22 million in free products to agencies across the state.

Over 180 Nebraska agencies statewide currently participate in the program, the majority being in Lincoln and Lancaster County. These include Voices of Hope, Friendship Home, YWCA, Cedars and Lincoln Action Program.

Feedback confirms the program is a success. Participating agencies tell us the office products they receive help them administer their programs and frees up dollars for client services. They say the program helps their clients by providing for their basic needs, assisting with employment, supporting their work toward self-sufficiency and helping families stretch limited budgets. The products also serve as incentives for people to obtain their GED, learn English or to attend self-help classes. Less tangible, but of great value, the program serves to build their clients' self

esteem and increase people's sense of dignity.

Agencies have related a variety of examples of individuals and families who have benefitted from 'Truckloads.' We heard about a developmentally disabled man who received an electric razor and new shirts. His whole demeanor changed as did his appearance—he began to go to work looking well groomed and happy. There was a disabled woman in her late 50s who had requested only two pillows. She cried when the agency working with her gave her a bedspread, sheets and an electric blanket so she could stop warming her bed with two small heating pads. Many stories are those of victims of domestic violence; women who flee their homes with their children. Upon leaving a shelter for a new home, they have nothing. 'Truckloads' helps them get on their feet by providing clothing and household items.

Merchandise we secure through Truckloads' also is used for other Center programs,

including our 'Neighborhood FOOD' program. In collaboration with the Lincoln Food Bank, we take food to five different Lincoln sites each week in low-income Lincoln neighborhoods. Weekly, over 700 families receive approximately 20 pounds of food at no cost. We also distribute personal care products obtained through 'Truckloads.'

Toys obtained through our 'Truckloads' program have made our 'Toyland for Kids' project possible. In collaboration with other organizations, we provided gifts to approximately 4,000 low-income children this past holiday season. In 2007, we plan on giving holiday gifts to nearly 6,000 children. Each year we have special distributions for Mother's Day and Father's Day through agencies across the state.

We are implementing two new projects again, using merchandise obtained through 'Truckloads.' This August, in collaboration with other Lincoln area agencies, we will launch 'Tools for Education.' We will give at least 3,000 low-income children backpacks filled with school supplies and new clothes. Soon we will begin our 'Emergency 24/7' project in partnership with the Lincoln Police Department and the Rape/Spouse Abuse Center. They will have 24-hour, seven-days-a-week access to the Center's warehouse to pick up items when they encounter a family in crisis.

'Truckloads' is a success because of our dedicated staff, our donors, our volunteers and our partners. The 'Truckloads' warehouse and distributions are managed by only two full-

time employees. Our donors provide the funds needed to secure the merchandise. Our volunteers make it possible for the program to function. Every month, volunteers donate anywhere between 400 and 800 hours to the 'Truckloads' program. By working in partnership with other agencies and organizations, we more effectively reach families needing services and pool efforts.

At the end of May, the Center for People in Need will move to a new location at 3901 North 27th Street. We have been operating out of multiple locations and staff has been working in cramped quarters. Our new site provides for all staff and our 'Truckloads' warehouse to be under one roof. The additional space will make it possible for us to bring in more goods and expand our reach to serve more families and human service agencies. Our goal is to increase the number of agencies participating in our 'Truckloads' program from the current 180 to at least 300.

We are seeking donations to help remodel the site. We need to raise \$150,000 by June 1 in order to receive an \$80,000 matching grant from Woods Charitable Fund. Pledges, which need to be paid by December 31, 2007, count toward the goal.

I invite you to partner with us with your donations, your volunteer hours and, if involved with a human service agency, to use our programs to help the people you serve.

For more information about the Center for People in Need or its programs, go to [www.centerforpeopleinneed.org](http://www.centerforpeopleinneed.org) or call 476-4367. To volunteer, call 476-4357.

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### LEAD

**Nebraska LEAD Program**  
Nebraska Agricultural Leadership Council, Inc.

**(LEADERSHIP EDUCATION/  
ACTION DEVELOPMENT)**

Applications are now being accepted for Nebraska LEAD Group XXVII, which begins in the fall of 2007. Thirty highly motivated individuals with demonstrated leadership potential will be selected

**Application deadline is June 15.**

The Nebraska LEAD Program is specifically designed for both males and females involved in production agriculture or agribusiness, in the general range of 25-50, who are intent on making a difference by providing quality leadership for the future of the industry of agriculture and the state of Nebraska.

For application or re-application materials and/or further information, call the Nebraska LEAD Program at 472-6810 or e-mail [ablezek1@unl.edu](mailto:ablezek1@unl.edu).

**On the Web at  
[www.ianr.unl.edu/lead](http://www.ianr.unl.edu/lead)**