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LHA Today

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Focused on the *future*

Erik Delaney is accustomed to being busy.

But thanks to his determination, time management skills and willingness to assume responsibility, the complexity of his life the past five years has paid off for him and his family.

One of the cornerstones of his success has been the Lincoln Housing Authority's Family Self-Sufficiency program, which he completed last spring after participating in the program for about three years.

In late 2008, three of Delaney's children were living with their maternal grandmother in a small town south of Lincoln. Then one day, just after Christmas, his children found their grandmother had died in their home.

At the time, Delaney had spent the previous few years turning his life around, distancing himself from the drugs and criminality that had spotted his younger years. Without hesitation, he stepped in and took custody of the children, all of whom were 13 and younger.

At the time, Delaney shared an efficiency with a friend, so finding a bigger place for him and his children was a priority.



From left, Anthony, Claire, Erik and Sophia Delaney have benefited from Erik's involvement in the Family Self-Sufficiency program.

He has just transferred to Nebraska Wesleyan University from Southeast Community College, and was working two or three part-time jobs. He also served on the board of the Nebraska Writers Collective, which he had helped start with a group of

Continued on page 3



FSS graduate, sons continue to excel

For Sharon Anderson-Towery, hard work always has been a mainstay in her daily routine.

Her habits and work ethic have rubbed off on her sons, who recently have been enjoying success in the classroom and in the sports arena.

Anderson-Towery graduated from the Family Self-Sufficiency program in 2011, receiving help and encouragement in all facets of her life as a participant. Thanks to the program, she said, her family is reaping the benefits.

"We are just blessed," she said.

Trey Anderson III, her eldest son, recently received a NLHA/AIMCO Cares Scholarship of \$2,000. Established in recognition of AIMCO's role as a leading provider of affordable apartments throughout the country and its role of helping improve the lives of low- and moderate-income families, the AIMCO Cares Scholarship is a merit-based scholarship offered to graduating high school seniors planning to continue their education.

Continued on page 3

From left, Jason Towery, Sharon Anderson-Towery and Trey Anderson III



From left, Burke Plaza residents Maryjane Bonebright, Karen Schamp and Anna Gimelshytn pick out produce in early August as Bryn Matulka of Page's Produce, foreground, helps.

From left, Mahoney Manor residents Diane Chapman and Eva Wells select some cucumbers from Page's Produce.

Fresh from the farm

It doesn't get much better than having fresh, summer produce brought right to your door.

Residents at Burke Plaza and Mahoney Manor have been enjoying that amenity for years, thanks to Page's Produce.

Located just outside Valparaiso and owned by Leon and Helen Page, the farm's employees bring fresh fruits and vegetables to Burke Plaza and Mahoney Manor once a week for most of the summer, offering residents of the two LHA high-rises the chance to purchase fresh-from-the-farm food.

Page's Produce has been making the summer runs to Burke and Mahoney the past six years.

"The residents really enjoy it, and some of them can't get around easily to go elsewhere to buy their produce," Leon said. "I'm glad to be able to help."

Eva Wells, Mahoney Manor resident, said she enjoys the weekly visits from Page Farms.

"I always come and buy something, because they have such good produce," she said. "And the convenience of it being right here is nice."

Linda Hecht, resident services manager at Mahoney Manor, said residents eagerly anticipate the deliveries every week.

"This is a very small market for Leon, but he knows how important it is to some of our residents," she said.



From left, Diane Chapman chats with Bryn Matulka of Page's Produce.

Eviction prevention tips available online



Information and resources on how to prevent eviction are available online, thanks to a new website offered by the Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties.

The free website is designed to help educate tenants and landlords in Nebraska about their rights and responsibilities, with the goal of preventing eviction from a house or apartment.

The website is made possible through partnerships between Community Action, Nebraska Legal Aid and the Lincoln Homeless Coalition, and a grant from the Keno Human Services Prevention Fund.

The website — www.tenantservices.org — complements Community Action's efforts to help Nebraska tenants and landlords alike devise solutions based on information and resources available in a user-friendly format.

The website is a service of Community Action's Tenant Support

Services program, which provides education, mediation and early crisis intervention to both tenants and landlords to help prevent eviction.

According to the 2011 U.S. Census, more than 18,000 families rent their homes in Lancaster County. The tenant population is even higher for those living below the federal poverty level, with 77 percent renting their homes, according to the same data.

If tenants or landlords have a question about their rights and responsibilities, they can either call or meet in person with Andrew Ritta, Community Action's tenant support services specialist.

"Many of the questions I receive on a day-to-day basis are those that can be more easily addressed on an always-available and immediately accessible Web page," Ritta said. "Having this website resource will allow our program to increase efficiency and help more people facing potential

crisis situations."

For more information, please contact Community Action's tenant support services specialists at 402-875-9353.



Andrew Ritta, tenant support services specialist at Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties, works with tenants and landlords to prevent evictions.

SNAP helps take a bite out of hunger

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps millions of low-income Americans put food on the table. The program focuses on helping the most vulnerable citizens, predominantly serving households with children, elderly and disabled members.

As participants get back on their feet, SNAP benefits phase out. On average, most households remain on the program for less than a year.

SNAP benefits are delivered monthly

to eligible participants through electronic debit (EBT) cards, which can be used to purchase groceries. SNAP EBT cards are programmed to only allow the purchase of food. Other items sold at authorized retailers are prohibited, including vitamin supplements, hot or prepared food, non-food grocery items, alcoholic beverages and cigarettes.

Food Bank of Lincoln and Food Bank for the Heartland are providing SNAP application assistance in-person

and by phone.

To determine if you are eligible for the SNAP program, call the SNAP outreach hotline at 1-855-444-5556.



Focused on the future

Continued from page 1

local poets, and was preparing for a New Year's Eve performance with the rock cover band he helped start.

On Dec. 31, 2008, Delaney picked up his children and took them to his eldest daughter's house, played in his band's New Year's Eve gig that night, then began 2009 with the mission of enhancing his life and those of his children.

Delaney soon learned of LHA's FSS program from a friend with whom he worked at Matt Talbot Kitchen. After talking to Elizabeth Redhage, FSS caseworker, he began three years in the program — a decision, he said, that changed his life.

"I just kept putting one foot in front of the other, and Elizabeth played a big role in helping me do that," Delaney said.

As an FSS participant for about three years, Delaney and his family received a variety of help, including housing, car repairs and even Delaney's continuing education.

Delaney graduated from Nebraska Wesleyan, earning his bachelor's degree in organizational communication with an emphasis on project management, and a minor in marketing.

"I'm just continuing to build a life, and FSS is another piece of the overall puzzle that allows all of us to get to where we are today," he said.

Delaney recently earned a scholarship from the Nebraska State Bar Association to apply toward preparatory courses for the Law School Admission Test, or LSAT.

"Law school has been a dream of mine for years, so that is definitely in my near-future plans," he said.

Thanks to his positive experience, Delaney has recommended FSS to others, stressing how it helped him and his family.

"Elizabeth was so helpful with the whole process," he said. "It really helped me turn my life around."

FSS graduate, sons continue to excel

Continued from page 1

Trey begins college this fall at Concordia University in Seward, where he will play football and basketball while studying exercise science and sports science studies. A three-sport athlete throughout high school, he received 14 scholarship offers and is focused on becoming an athletic trainer or chiropractor.

Meanwhile, his brother, Jason Towery, begins his junior year at Lincoln High School, where he plays on the Links' varsity basketball team. His summer was filled with basketball as a member of the Nebraska Bison all-star select team — his second consecutive year on the squad.

As one of only two juniors-to-be on this summer's Bison Red Team, Jason traveled to tournaments throughout the country, including Omaha, St. Louis, Los Angeles and five tournaments in Las Vegas, where the nation's top high school basketball talent competes under the close watch of college coaches and scouts from all over the country.

During one game in Las Vegas, the top player for the California Supreme team scored 26 points in the first half against Bison. Second-half adjustments had Jason covering the player, holding him to only 3 points the rest of the game.

Jason and his Red Team teammates played almost 70 games from June 1 to the end of July.

Anderson-Towery is a licensed and ordained pastor with a master's degree in theology. Along with preaching from the pulpit the past 11 years, she also has remained busy as a board member of the local Boys & Girls Clubs of America chapter and serves as a parent representative for Lincoln High School sports teams.

Originally from Lincoln, Anderson-Towery earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and her master's from Grace University in Omaha.



Faith McCullaugh, Wood Bridge Apartments



Michaella McCullaugh, Wood Bridge Apartments



Cheyenne Barnes-Heyward, Summer Hill Apartments

'What Home Means to Me' 2013

Local participants doing well in the annual "What Home Means to Me" poster contest has become a yearly tradition.

Three local residents won their respective categories in this summer's contest, and the creations of two of them now move on to the national finals.

Sponsored by the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, the "What Home Means to Me" contest requires participants to create a poster illustrating their home and how important it is to them and their families. They also write an accompanying essay on the subject.

This year's competition added two senior levels: ages 19-62 and over 62.

The three winners were:

- Elementary (grades K-5): Faith McCullaugh, 9, of Wood Bridge Apartments

- Middle (grades 6-8): Cheyenne Barnes-Heyward, 11, of Summer Hill Apartments
- Senior (ages 19-62): Michaella McCullaugh of Wood Bridge Apartments, Nebraska's overall winner

Each of the three local winners received \$50, and the entries of the elementary and middle winners advance to the national level — the senior winner's work does not advance past the state level.

Twelve national honorees will be selected from the pool of national finalists, and will each receive a \$100 savings bond and a framed certificate.

National honorees are eligible for the national grand prize, which includes a \$500 savings bond and a trip to NAHRO's March 2014 National Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C.

This was the third year of local participation in the contest.

Resident Advisory Board needs you



The Lincoln Housing Authority is seeking individuals interested in becoming a Resident Advisory Board member. The board reviews, plans and influences the programs and policies of LHA. It is an opportunity to provide input on these programs and policies.

Participants in any LHA rental assistance program are eligible to become members.

The board is scheduled to meet Nov. 7 and Nov. 21 from 3-5 p.m., with a possible third meeting Dec. 5, if necessary.

LHA does compensate for childcare and transportation costs related to the meetings.

If you are interested in becoming part of the LHA Resident Advisory Board, please contact Amy Wagner at 402-434-5527 for more information and an application form.

LHA Resident Advisory Board members provide input on LHA policies and programs.

Back-to-school BBQ

Summer's end can be a tough time for students as they trade in going to pools, parks and having other outdoor fun for heading back to the classroom.

But back-to-school barbecues at Prairie Crossing, Summer Hill and Wood Bridge helped ease the transition with some good food among good friends.

Resident children and their parents enjoyed hot dogs, potato chips, desserts and lemonade, along with some outdoor fun in the sun to start the new school year off right.

Prairie Crossing and Wood Bridge residents enjoyed their cookouts Aug. 13, while Summer Hill's event was Aug. 17.

Laura Fuller, leasing clerk at Wood Bridge Apartments, said the event was popular, with dozens of children and their families joining in the fun at each location.

"We always try to get people involved and try new things, so we thought this would be nice," Fuller said. "Everyone had a good time."



Smiles abound at Wood Bridge Apartments during the back-to-school barbecue Aug. 13.



Students and their families enjoy good food and good weather at Prairie Crossing Apartments' back-to-school barbecue.

Know your rights on debt collections

Defaulting on credit card accounts, medical and utility bills, and other consumer debt has increased in recent years, due in part to a sluggish economy.

Those hard times can mean banner years for the country's debt collection industry. Unfortunately, unscrupulous debt collectors work among those who follow the law.

While it may seem consumers have no choice but to accept abusive treatment from some debt collectors, powerful laws exist to protect them.

Tregg Lunn, a Lincoln criminal defense attorney, provided training for area case managers on helping clients dealing with harassing debt collectors.

During a July 11 training session at Lincoln's Center for People in Need, Lunn focused on consumer rights under the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, which provides protections to consumers dealing with debt collectors.

Specializing in combatting debt collectors who violate consumer rights, Lunn points out that violations of the FDCPA are common.

Under the law, debt collectors may not:

- call before 8 a.m. or after 9 p.m.
- threaten violence, use profanity, yell or otherwise be disrespectful
- fail to disclose who they are and where their company is located
- repeatedly call you and leave messages
- threaten to notify your employer or tell any other third party you owe debt
- claim your failure to pay could result in arrest or criminal charges
- call you at work if you have asked them not to, or contact you at any locations after you have instructed them in writing not to
- request you to pay more than



you owe, including interest, fees and expenses

- ignore a written request from you to verify the debt, or continue their collection efforts after you have asked for such verification
- continue to try to collect after receiving a notice to cease communication.

Lunn advises anyone who is sued by a debt collector or agency should file an answer immediately.

"Even if the answer is, 'I don't owe this,' be sure to file it," he said. "Getting a response on record is vital."

For more information, visit the National Consumer Law Center's website at www.nclc.org/issues/debt-collection.html, or the Federal Trade Commission's site at www.ftc.gov/os/statutes/fdc pajump.shtm.

Creamy summer fun at Burke, Mahoney

Ice cream and singing go well together on a summer Friday night. Just ask residents of Burke Plaza and Mahoney Manor.

The sweets, socializing and sing-along was made possible by recent visits from students involved with Urban Plunge, a faith-based outreach program that enables youth to make weekend mission trips to Lincoln, Omaha and other cities around the region to offer service to the community. Students and adults from the group sponsored the ice cream social and sing-along for both residences.

Linda Hecht, resident services manager at Mahoney Manor, received a call in May from Melanie Dehning, Lincoln Urban Plunge coordinator, asking if her group could visit. Dehning also contacted Gina Grosenbach, resident services manager at Burke Plaza, where the group visited June 7.

Grosenbach said the turnout for the Burke Plaza ice

cream social was one of the best for any event in recent memory.

“It was a big hit with the residents,” she said.

Along with plenty of ice cream and socializing, Dehning played piano as she led a sing-along for Burke and Mahoney residents.

Although this was Urban Plunge’s first visit to Burke Plaza and Mahoney Manor, Grosenbach and Hecht — and residents of both LHA high-rise communities — hope it won’t be the last.

“We’d love to see them come back next year,” Hecht said. “The residents really enjoyed themselves, and the kids who were visiting all had a good time, too.”



Left: From left, Jack Schubert and Crossroads House resident Mary Valencia chat as they enjoy some ice cream. Below: Everyone hopes to score big at the event’s Cake Walk.



A sweet day at Crossroads House

In what has become a summer tradition at Crossroads House, residents and their families and friends enjoyed an afternoon of ice cream and games.

This year’s ice cream social event was Aug. 11 in the building’s first-floor activities room. Dozens of residents and their relatives and friends enjoyed ice cream — in bowls or cones — with a variety of toppings. Raffle tickets were sold for a Husker football sweatshirt, and as always, everyone hoped to win big at the Cake Walk.

Money raised from raffle and Cake Walk tickets go into the resident fund, said Linda Ross, resident services specialist at Crossroads House.

Mary Valencia, Crossroads House resident, invited longtime friend Jack Schubert to the event to enjoy some ice cream and catch up with each other.

“This is the second ice cream social event I have been to since moving in last year, and it’s always fun,” said Valencia, a retired Lincoln Housing Authority employee. “Everyone has a good time.”

New citizen assistance available

Lincoln’s Center for People in Need provides assistance to refugees and new Americans with the preparation of citizenship, work authorization card and green card applications.

The center has two full-time, multi-lingual AmeriCorps members trained to help anyone needing assistance with the application process to ensure all required documents and forms are included and completed.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, contact Sue at 402-476-4357 ext. 212. In most cases, an appointment for assistance can be set within two or three days.

The Center for People in Need also provides citizenship classes. Call for the most current class schedule or visit online at www.centerforpeopleinneed.org.



A bridge to higher education

Help is available for those interested in secondary education geared toward office professional occupations.

Lincoln's Center for People in Need and Southeast Community College have teamed with other partner organizations for a Pathways to College bridge program targeted for low-income individuals to receive both basic education and college credit in efforts that it will lead into a postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree in the Office Professional program.

The program includes 10 weeks of instruction, meeting every day for six hours.

The Pathways to College program focused on the business industry, specifically office professional

occupations, and offers career preparation in:

- general office
- medical or legal office
- Microsoft Office
- graphic communications
- customer service
- office management

Following successful completion of the program, participants may enroll in the Office Professional program at SCC.

Scholarship funding is available for ResCare participants. For non-ResCare participants, funding may be available through other agencies with which they participate.

ResCare is a human services organization offering services to people of all ages and abilities to help make their



lives more independent. The company serves more than 1 million people a year at thousands of locations nationwide.

The first round was during the summer quarter, from July 10 to Sept. 19.

Those interested in participating should contact Anita Schinstock, project coordinator, at 402-476-4357 ext. 187, or by email at aschinstock@southeast.edu.

You also can contact Diana Vesely-Robb, director of adult education, at 402-437-2717 or at dveselyrobb@southeast.edu.

One Stop Career Center relocating

The One Stop Career Center is moving to a new location.

The organization will relocate Oct. 1 to the SCC-Energy Square building, 1111 O St., from its current location in the Gold's Building at 10th and N streets.

The One Stop Career Center offers a wide range of services and resources for job seekers in one location. Serving Lincoln since 2000, the single-location access is invaluable to anyone looking for a job, or keeping their employment options open.

Some of the services offered at the location include:

- Internet access to search for job opportunities, and apply online and post resumes.
- Staff assistance with job searches, applications, resumes and interviewing skills.
- Assistance with career guidance, including assessment of skills, abilities and job interests.
- Skills assessments, including keyboarding, data entry, basic math and reading.

For more information on the One Stop Career Center, call 402-441-7111 or view the website at www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/urban/wiprogonestop.htm.

Find a JobNow!

Visitors to Bennett Martin Library now have access to software that could make a job search much easier.



The new JobNow! live job assistance software, which has been installed on the library's new computers, features interactive online career assistance, including online interviews, resume preparation and more.

JobNow! can be accessed from any computer using an individual's library card barcode, enabling users privacy during interactive sessions or for practice job interviews.

JobNow! may be accessed online at the Lincoln library website: <http://webpac.lincolnlibraries.org:2048/public/jobnow.html>. You will need your library barcode and PIN.



The new JobNow! software on Bennett Martin Library computers provides a helpful job-search tool.

Mahoney: LHA's new maintenance superintendent

After more than four years as LHA's inspections supervisor, Jim Mahoney is switching roles. And locations.

Mahoney began as LHA's maintenance superintendent in June, taking over for Stan Heider, who retired this summer. In his new job, Mahoney works from LHA's Arnold Heights facility in northwest Lincoln.

Seanna Collins, tenant-based housing manager, will take over a supervisory role with the inspections department.

Mahoney began working full time at LHA in May 1993, starting as a clerk. After four years, he became a housing specialist, working in the role nine years before becoming a

leasing agent in 2007.

He has served as LHA's inspections supervisor the past three years before his most-recent promotion.

When he is not at work, Mahoney enjoys time with his wife, Missy, and their children, Andrew and Morgan. He also enjoys golfing and other sports.

To contact Collins, call 402-434-5505 or email her at Seanna@L-housing.com. Mahoney can be reached at 402-434-2620 or by email at jim@L-housing.com.

Jim Mahoney is LHA's new maintenance superintendent.



Mark your calendars

LHA offices will be closed the following days:

Monday, Nov. 11 — Veterans Day

Thursday, Nov. 28 — Thanksgiving Day

Friday, Nov. 29 — Day after Thanksgiving