

# LHA Today

December 2023

## Aldake's *grateful* for FSS

For Azzat Aldake, LHA's Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program will help him find a permanent home for his family after being displaced for so long.

Originally from Iraq, Aldake and his family came to the U.S. in December 2016 with a special immigration visa after Aldake served as interpreter for the U.S. troops for three years. Due to threats, the family fled their home before being approved to immigrate.

"When we came, everything was a blur," he said. "We had help from other immigrants about how to apply for housing and public assistance, and that is how we learned about the FSS program."

Aldake joined the program mid-2021 and recently graduated. His goal is to continue his education and increase his income to support his wife, Afia, and their six children.

Having worked as a lab assistant in Iraq, Aldake was inspired to continue his education in the U.S. He graduated with his associate degree in medical laboratory technology from Southeast Community College before joining the FSS program. While in the program, he worked at Bryan Health's microbiology department while earning his

*Azzat Aldake thrives by participating in FSS program.*

medical laboratory scientist bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska Medical Center. He continues to work at Bryan in several departments.

Along with support from his caseworker, Courtney, Aldake was encouraged to see when his rent increased, due to income increases, a percentage of the increase was placed in an escrow account through the FSS program.

"Even though it wasn't coming to me directly, I saved money at LHA until I graduated," he said. "It was a good relief to know the money was gathering for my kids and family, so it could be used to buy a home in the future."

Aldake encourages everyone to get into the FSS program for the opportunity to be responsible and successful.

"We are grateful for the program," he said. "Courtney is an amazing person, who is nice and respectful."

While thankful his family has a safe place to live, Aldake hopes to be reunited with his mother soon.

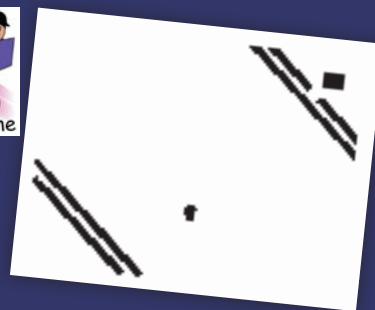
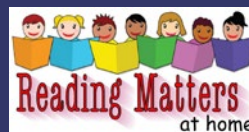
"My kids are happy," he said. "They have a lot of opportunities here, and the major thing is that we are safe. When you feel safe, you can explore your environment and survive."

## Reading Matters honored

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading announced its 2023 Public Housing Communities Honor Roll, which includes Lincoln Housing Authority. LHA was honored for its leadership and contributions supporting children and families using housing as a platform for education through its Reading Matters program.

Reading Matters provides new, diverse and age-appropriate books to children ages 18 and younger whose families reside in LHA's housing programs or receive Section 8 assistance.

Since its inception in 2018, the program has distributed more than 27,000 books.





# Kellie *eager to serve* residents

Possessing a strong desire to learn more about all that Lincoln Housing Authority offers and being more involved in ways to give back to the community, Ardelia (Ardy) Kellie says she was fortunate enough to find a way to do that.

A recent vacancy on the Lincoln Housing Authority Board of Commissioners was available for residents to fill. So, after being approved by the mayor and city council in September, Kellie was named to the board and will serve as a resident commissioner until 2025.

Prior to becoming a Mahoney Manor resident three years ago, Kellie was a lifelong resident of the West Coast. She lived in the state of Washington and, most recently, Portland, Oregon, before coming to Nebraska.

"I developed health issues, and I couldn't afford my home or its repairs anymore," she said.

Kellie started searching for affordable housing, but the waiting list in Oregon was more than five years. So, she expanded her research for locations with good medical care and affordable housing. Having a sister who lives outside of Lincoln, she called LHA, whose waiting list for seniors was just eight months. Right at eight months after applying, she got a call, sold her small home, packed up her dog

and headed east, moving into Mahoney Manor in July 2020.

Moving to Nebraska presented challenges, she said, especially at a time when things were closed or limited due to COVID-19. While she still misses the West Coast, Kellie notes an appreciation of Lincoln and all it has to offer.

"It's a similar size to Portland and has its own sense of community, and the people are friendly," she said.

While there still may be some unfamiliarity with her relatively new state of residence, she's no stranger to understanding the importance of housing and making ends meet.

"Throughout my life, and especially when I was raising my son, money was tight," Kellie said. "I had the knowledge how to budget this and that, but a couple of times I found myself right on the edge of homelessness."

She spent much of her career working with women recovering from alcohol and drug addiction.

"I watched them grow and change, get on their feet and learn how to take care of themselves to provide for their babies," she said.

Kellie also received her degree in gerontology later in life, which further fueled her passion on the importance of secure, affordable housing and advocating for those who can't speak or have the inability to speak.

She also spent six years counseling seniors about insurance and Medicare options in State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) in Oregon and continues to volunteer at Nebraska SHIP. Nonetheless, she considered this activity not enough and began thinking of additional areas to volunteer. That's when the application for commissioner showed up on her front door. Although she didn't anticipate it, she's honored to be selected.

"I want to learn more about LHA; and what I've learned so far is a whole new vocabulary," Kellie said with a smile.

She looks forward to experiencing ways to further help meet LHA tenants' needs. Kellie acknowledges that homelessness can prove to be a dark situation for many, and she wants to be a source of light for those seeking help.

"Finding good, affordable housing and shelter is an important part of a person being able to feel that they matter," she said.

Ardy Kellie serves as a Lincoln Housing Authority Board of Commissioners member.



## Girls can gain leadership experience

Girls in grades K-12 can be part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, free community troop meetings with engaging activities and snacks. Meetings are once a month. Girls in grades 6-12 join 9:30-10:30 a.m. at Reactor Coffee, 2124 Y St. #102; and girls in K-5 meet at Hilltop House, 1320 Hilltop Plaza, from 1-4 p.m. The next upcoming meeting is Dec. 17.

For more information, contact Abbie Grim at 402-875-4340 or [agrim@girlscoutsnebraska.org](mailto:agrim@girlscoutsnebraska.org).



# PTI Nebraska can help families with kids who have disabilities or special health care needs

While PTI (Parent Training and Information) Nebraska is Omaha-based, it serves as a statewide resource for families of children from birth through age 26 with disabilities or special health care needs.

PTI Nebraska assists parents and guardians with early intervention and early childhood services, special education services, transition planning for young adults aged 14-21 and helps families navigate the world of adult disability services in Nebraska.

“We also provide community resources and referrals based on a family’s needs, host information/vendor tables at different conferences and events across the state, as well as encourage and support parents in various leadership roles to help change systems and improve outcomes for children with disabilities,” said Jenn Smith-Miller, executive director.

With a goal to empower families’ confidence in navigating their child’s special education needs, PTI Nebraska helps parents understand their rights and responsibilities and gain knowledge and tools. The vision is that children with disabilities will be prepared to lead productive, independent adult lives to the maximum extent possible.

To see if a child is eligible for special education at school, a special education evaluation must be completed that assesses all areas of suspected disability. This evaluation gathers information on a child’s functional, developmental, and

academic performance, as well as determines the child’s educational needs. A full, comprehensive evaluation may include an examination of health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status (including behavioral needs), general intelligence (cognitive abilities), academic performance, communication, and motor abilities. To be found eligible for special education, a child must have an educational disability and a need for special education services. A child must meet one of the 13 disability categories listed in Rule 51, Nebraska’s special education regulations.

- Autism
- Deaf-Blindness
- Deafness
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Impairment
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment (Some examples are ADD/ADHD, Epilepsy, Diabetes, Asthma, Tourette Syndrome)
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech-Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment (including Blindness)

For more information about each eligibility verification category mentioned above and the different needs that are looked at in each one, check out the eligibility guidelines resources on the



Nebraska Department of Education’s website: [www.education.ne.gov/sped/eligibility-guidelines](http://www.education.ne.gov/sped/eligibility-guidelines).

All services provided by PTI Nebraska are free of charge. Parents would contact PTI if they:

- Have concerns or questions about their child’s special education.
- Would like resources on special education or topics relating to their child’s disability or special health care need.
- Want information on their rights and responsibilities.
- Need help navigating their child’s education plan — including a Student Assistance Team (SAT), 504 Accommodation Plan or Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- Or have questions about adult disability programs and services available.

For more information, visit [www.pti-nebraska.org](http://www.pti-nebraska.org); [www.facebook.com/PTINebraska](https://www.facebook.com/PTINebraska). Contact PTI Nebraska at 402-346-0525; toll free at 800-284-8520; or by email [info@pti-nebraska.org](mailto:info@pti-nebraska.org). PTI Nebraska also has a podcast available at [talkingspecialneeds.buzzsprout.com](http://talkingspecialneeds.buzzsprout.com).

## Resident Advisory board reviews annual plan

In November, Lincoln Housing Authority’s Resident Advisory Board met twice to discuss the administrative and occupancy plan and Moving to Work initiatives.

Moving to Work is part of LHA’s participation in a Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) demonstration program, wherein LHA is authorized to redesign certain elements of housing assistance programs to promote self-sufficiency and

achieve more efficient administration and greater housing choices.

Resident Advisory Board members represent all housing programs and are appointed by the LHA Board of Commissioners to serve one-year terms from October through September. Input from the Resident Advisory Board is considered by management and the LHA Board of Commissioners before the annual plan is approved each January.





# Mahoney Manor marks

# 50 years

An open house on Sept. 20 was part of the celebration to mark the 50th year for Mahoney Manor, an affordable housing building for individuals age 50 and older in northeast Lincoln.

Mahoney Manor was born out of the desire of the Lincoln Housing Authority Board of Commissioners, executive director and other visionaries to do something which hadn't been done prior — build a new federally funded affordable public housing building.

"Mahoney Manor was the first development of that kind ever built in Lincoln," said Chris Lamberty, executive director.

Built in 1973, the eight-story high-rise was named in honor of J. Phillip Mahoney, who served as a member of the Lincoln Housing Authority Board of Commissioners from 1952 to 1973. Since then, Mahoney Manor has seen many changes and upgrades, including a major remodel in 2014, adding a new community space and parking.

Anyone who has been to Mahoney

Manor knows it's more than just a building though. Through partnerships with the Nebraska Extension Nutrition Education Program and the Congregate Housing Services Program with Aging Partners, Mahoney Manor inspires residents and helps them continue to live independent, successful lives. Events and activities reinforce Mahoney Manor as a welcoming place.

"We really appreciate all the residents who have lived here for the last 50 years and especially the volunteers who make this a special place every day," Lamberty said.

He also thanked Linda Hecht, resident services specialist, who has served the building's residents since 1995.

"For the last 28 years, she has dedicated her time to the residents of this building, and it's one of the really great reasons

why this is a special place to live," Lamberty said.

Residents, too, agree that Mahoney Manor has made a imprint in their hearts.

"Everyone is friendly; it's a secure and comforting place," said Kathy, resident. "Everyone is happy, and there are lots of little things going on. I feel welcomed here."





# Three generations of Mahoney Manor residents

Third-generation resident Marena Cederdahl has called Mahoney Manor home for roughly one-third of its 50-year history in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Cederdahl first became familiar with the high-rise apartments for residents age 55 and older when her grandmother, Arleta Brandt, lived there.

In 2007, Cederdahl moved in to Mahoney Manor and resided there for almost two years before she temporarily stayed with her daughter due to some health issues. Cederdahl returned in 2009 and has since remained a member of the tightknit community within the historic Havelock Neighborhood.

"I like living here; it feels like home,"

she said. "It's a nice place to live with nice people."

Cederdahl's mother, Avis Hoyt, and father, Richard Cederdahl, respectively lived at Mahoney Manor for 14 and six years.

"This place has taken good care of my family," Cederdahl said. "I frequently visited my mom when she needed help and often watched the Nebraska games with both of my parents."

Along with living in stable, affordable housing, Cederdahl enjoys the relationships she's made with other Mahoney Manor residents.

In addition to hosting occasional visits from her two sons who live in Omaha,



Marena Cederdahl, left, with her mother Avis; daughter, Diane; and granddaughter, Jordyn.

Nebraska, and daughter who resides in Texas, Cederdahl likes tending to her little vegetable garden and going on excursions with her fellow shopping enthusiasts at Mahoney Manor.



Arleta Brandt, Marena Cederdahl's grandmother, first lived at Mahoney Manor.



Marena's father, Richard Cederdahl, lived at Mahoney Manor for six years.



Marena Cederdahl is a third-generation resident of Mahoney Manor.

## Homeownership help for refugees, immigrants

NeighborWorks Lincoln is supporting the homeownership dreams of refugees and immigrants through a down payment assistance program. This helps empower them by providing financial support, which will increase housing accessibility.

Qualified applicants receive a \$50,000 loan to cover the down payment and closing costs. This is a 0 percent interest, payment-free, forgivable loan.

Individuals must meet the following:

- **Refugee or Immigrant Status:** Applicants must hold refugee status, or have been granted asylum, or possess lawful immigrant status.
- **Income limit:** Applicants must meet the income eligibility criteria, which will be based on Federal Poverty Guidelines. No recipient can exceed 185% of poverty.
- **First-time homebuyer:** Must be first-time homebuyer, defined as individuals who have not owned

a home in the last three years.

- **Homeownership education:** Completion of pre-purchase homebuyer education through NeighborWorks Lincoln is required to ensure participants have necessary knowledge to make informed decisions throughout the homebuying process.

For more information or to apply, visit [nwlincoln.org](http://nwlincoln.org) or call 402-477-7181. Applications are also available at 2530 Q St.





## CLCs provide opportunities through sports league

In September, six Community Learning Center (CLC) schools worked together to form a new CLC basketball league. Teams are from Arnold, Belmont, Huntington, Lakeview, Norwood Park and Riley elementary schools.

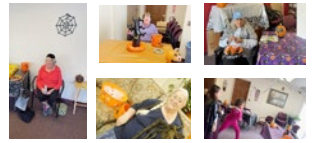
Six-member boy and girl teams of students were selected by choosing the club option on the regular club enrollment form. Teams practiced on Wednesdays, and games were on Thursdays, coached by health and physical education students from Nebraska Wesleyan University. Games were well-attended by parents, family members and school staff. Students were awarded certificates during a celebration the week after the final game.

The CLC basketball league was started as part of a sports equity movement to get more children involved in club sports who may not have the opportunity due to cost. The hope is to continue the basketball club in the spring and add CLC soccer league.



# Spooky entertainment

Residents of Burke Plaza, Crossroads House and Mahoney Manor had Halloween parties with candy, prizes, costumes and plenty of fun!



# Happy holidays!

Lincoln Housing Authority staff wishes everyone happy holidays. May your holidays and new year be filled with hope, joy, peace and prosperity.

So the LHA staff can enjoy the holidays, offices will be closed the following federally observed holidays: Monday, Dec. 25; and Monday, Jan. 1, 2024. We also are closed on Monday, Jan. 15, 2024, and Monday, Feb. 19, 2024.

# Free tax preparation services offered

As the countdown to the April 15, 2024, tax deadline approaches, consider using free community tax preparation services through the Lincoln EITC Coalition's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program.

VITA offers no-cost federal- and state-tax preparation and filing for low- to moderate-income households. VITA sites operate in various Lincoln area locations from January to April.

For more information, call 211 or visit [vita.unl.edu](https://vita.unl.edu). To make an appointment, go to [vita.unl.edu/signup](https://vita.unl.edu/signup) beginning Jan. 15.

**Note:** The scope of work that can be done within the VITA site is defined by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). If your return is considered "out of scope" for this site, VITA volunteers will not be able to prepare your return.

Please bring the following to tax preparation sites:

- Photo ID for all tax return signers. Both spouses must sign if filing jointly.
- Social Security cards or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number letters for everyone on the return.
- W-2s from employer, W-2Gs for gambling income, and 1099 forms for miscellaneous income including interest, dividends, unemployment, pension, 401(k) distribution and other income.

## FREE Community Tax Preparation 2023 Federal and Nebraska State Returns

### Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Site Schedule

Must have an APPOINTMENT

Schedule an appointment at <https://vita.unl.edu/signup/> beginning January 15th

When scheduling your tax preparation appointment, please choose a site location, date, and time.

All sites listed below, will be face-to-face and require an appointment.

Virtual preparation is available, in addition to facilitated self-assistance (FSA), limited walk-ins.

All sites will follow local health department guidelines.

	SITE NAME	ADDRESS	Hours	DATES AVAILABLE
MONDAY	American Job Center	1330 N Street	10:00 AM to 1:00 PM	Jan 22 - Apr 8 (Closed Feb 19)
	Asian Community and Culture Center	114 N 44th Street A	10:00 AM to 12:00 PM	Jan 29 - Apr 8
	Southeast Community College	8800 O Street, T-102	1:00 PM to 3:00PM	Jan 29 - Apr 8 (Closed Mar 11)
TUESDAY	F Street	1225 F Street	4:00 PM to 6:00 PM	Jan 30 - Feb 27
WEDNESDAY	Victor Anderson Library	3635 Touzalin Ave	4:30 PM to 6:30 PM	Jan 31 - Apr 10
	Center for People in Need	3901 N 27th, Unit 1	11:00 AM to 1:00 PM	Feb 6 - Mar 27
THURSDAY	Loren Eiseley Library	1530 Superior Street	4:30 PM - 6:30 PM	Feb 1 - Apr 11
	Southeast Community College	8880 O Street, T-102	3:00 PM to 7:00 PM	Feb 1 - Apr 11 (Closed Mar 14)
SATURDAY	Nebraska East Union* **	Holdrege & 35th Streets	10:00 AM to 3:00 PM	Jan 20 - Mar 2
SUNDAY	Bennett Martin Library	14th & N Street	1:00 PM to 3:00 PM	Feb 4 - Mar 24
	Good Neighbor Center	2617 Y Street	1:00 pm to 3:00 pm	Jan 28 - Feb 18
	Native American VITA	JGMC-Ubuntu/202, 1505 S St	1:00 pm to 3:00 pm	Feb 4 - Apr 7, (Closed Mar 10, 17 & 31)

\*East Campus: Enter on Holdrege and 35th.

\*\* Bilingual Site, Spanish

#### Site Closure Information

Lincoln Public Schools and/or UNL is closed due to bad weather all VITA sites are closed.

In case of bad weather, tune to KFOR 1240 for cancellations.

For more information call 2-1-1, visit [www.vita.unl.edu](https://www.vita.unl.edu)

#### Contact information

If you have questions, contact Lincoln VITA at [vita@unl.edu](mailto:vita@unl.edu) or 402.472.0857

- Child care receipts, including provider's tax ID and address.
- Statements of any student loan interest, mortgage interest and property tax.
- 1095s showing credible health insurance coverage.
- Records of revenue and expenses for self-employment or home-based business.
- Checking or savings account information for direct deposit/debit.
- If you plan to visit a VITA site, please bring a copy of last year's tax return.

## JOB AND BID OPPORTUNITIES

Under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Lincoln Housing Authority is required to publicly post employment and bid opportunities.

To learn about employment with LHA, visit [www.L-housing.com/Employment.html](https://www.L-housing.com/Employment.html).

LHA regularly issues public bid notices and request for proposals (RFPs) for ongoing repair, renovation and new construction projects. Review a list of current bid opportunities at [www.L-housing.com/Vendors.html](https://www.L-housing.com/Vendors.html).

## Free family activity

Families with young children are invited to attend a free Early Childhood Family Fair at Gateway Mall on Sunday, Feb. 18, from 2-4 p.m. The fair is a fun time for families to interact, play and learn together through crafts, activities and games. Families also can connect to a variety of resources and programs related to early childhood development and healthy parenting in Lincoln.

This fair is a project of Lincoln Early Childhood Network.

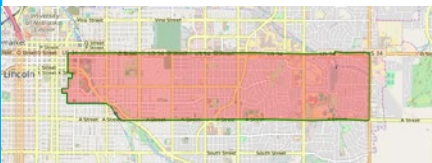




## Free books for children under 5

Through Linked2Literacy, families living in the 68510 ZIP code can sign up for the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program, which provides a free book every month to a child until their 5th birthday. This provides children access to books at an early age, promotes literacy and cognitive development, stimulates creativity and encourages a desire to read.

To sign up, visit [imagination-library.com/check-availability](http://imagination-library.com/check-availability) or scan the QR code.



Children under age 5 living in the 68510 ZIP code can receive a free book each month through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program.



PO BOX 5327, 5700 R STREET  
LINCOLN NE 68505-0327

PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
MAIL USA

Lincoln Housing Authority's  
Reading Matters Program

**BOOK  
GIVEAWAY**

All children 0-18 get a book!!  
You can pick books for your  
child(ren) or they can  
pick their own.

**Tuesday,  
December 19**  
LHA Main Office-  
5700 R Street  
1pm – 4pm

**Thursday,  
December 21**  
Carol Yoakum  
Family Resource  
Center-  
4621 NW 48<sup>th</sup> St.  
4pm – 6pm

## Headed for homeownership?

In partnership with Lincoln Public Schools, a home built by Lincoln Northeast High school students during the 2023-24 school year will be sold to an eligible family involved with LHA. This year's three-bedroom, two-bath home is at 5010 Starr St.

The price has not been set, but interested  
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LHA families can determine their eligibility to purchase the house or take advantage of a lease-to-purchase contract by contacting Susan Tatum at [SusanT@Lhousing.com](mailto:SusanT@Lhousing.com).

Applicants are encouraged to take homeownership preparation classes through NeighborWorks at [nwlincoln.org](http://nwlincoln.org).



Lincoln Northeast High School residential construction students learn about building a home, while helping a family in need.