



q&a with an inspiring woman

Barbara BARTLE

Who has inspired you?

My mother. It was an honor to plan my mother's 100th birthday celebration last April. One gift of having your mother live a long life is that she keeps teaching you lessons. Mom continues to crochet caps for cancer patients. She has made hundreds and hundreds that are all colors, shapes and sizes. I can see that no matter how old we are, it is purpose that gives meaning to life and creates our legacy.

Whom do you hope to inspire?

The Lincoln community. Recently I was visiting with several community members about the increasing divide and gap forming in so many places: locally, in our state and nationally. There was a real sense of discouragement. After listening for a while, I remarked that in my 44-year career, I am feeling more hopeful than ever. We have business leaders working to help build lives at the grassroots level in our highest-need communities. Neighborhoods are working together on early childhood, employment skills and innovation/entrepreneurship. Education institutions are building innovation pathways from cradle to career. Our public, private and philanthropic organizations have come together for projects like the West Haymarket and Antelope Valley. We have faith leaders in our churches, synagogues and mosques guiding us to love one another. I am hopeful because when I think about all the sectors and voices in our community, I feel the energy and know that we can work together so that

everyone prospers in Lincoln.

I challenge all of us to be inspired – all who love Lincoln and desire it to be a city like no other, a city where young people want to come to work, play and build their lives. I challenge us to step up and into the action.

What does leadership mean to you?

We all have talents and skills needed in leadership. It is important to learn and know our strengths and then share them generously wherever we have the opportunity. We lead by finding our joy in service to others. This generosity makes us happier. A recent neurological study, led by the University of Zurich and published in Nature Communications, found that there may be some biological truth to the adage "It's better to give than to receive." Two groups were studied over a period of time. One group's members spent the money they were given on themselves, and the other group gave it away. MRI scans afterward showed for those more giving, there was greater activity in the brain area associated with altruism. In addition, this part of the brain was more connected to its reward center. What matters when we lead is how we share.

What is your favorite quote or motto?

Johnnetta Cole, former Spellman College president, wrote in her book *Dream the Boldest Dreams* – "Leadership comes not only from growing up in a place called home, but from growing out into unfamiliar places."

How would you describe a great day at work?

People often inquire, "How can you ask people for money?" It is such a privilege to help connect individuals to passions that they care about and want to support. The funds established by donors provide grants that impact arts and culture, education and youth, environment and animals, health and human services, and faith groups. These

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grants provide resources to accomplish great things. The Lincoln Community Foundation's mission is to provide leadership and resources to help build a great city. My day is not about asking for money. My day is about connecting passion to purpose. Pinch me!

What's the best advice you've ever received, and who gave it to you?

It was 1991. The Lied Center was in its infancy, and I had the wonderful position of working with the Friends of Lied and the volunteers providing tours in the beautiful new facility. Woody Varner and Sheila Griffin were the magnificent duo running the show. An opportunity for an executive director position at another nonprofit was presented to me. I was torn about leaving the energy and excitement of the Lied. Sheila advised there were

not many executive director positions available in Lincoln. She said, "Take the position and make something happen." I did, and that's the rest of the story. Thank you, Sheila.

What's the highlight of your career (so far)?

My colleagues the past 44 years. First are my fellow teachers in Elmwood, Blair and Cozad. What a difference they make every day for our children and youth. The Friends of Lied and volunteers really introduced me to Lincoln in 1989, and I am forever grateful. The staff, board members, volunteers and donors for the Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools provided 18 years of comradeship and inspiration as we worked together to provide opportunities for the students, teachers and families in our great public schools. For nearly eight years at the Lincoln Community Foundation, I have worked alongside a dedicated professional staff, board members,

donors and volunteers who all love Lincoln and want to help it become an even greater city. My colleagues and I have had great fun and accomplished some good deeds. What could be better than that?

How have you changed over the course of your career?

I hope for the better. I used to relish Roger Larson's stories and words of wisdom as he would close with "and that's the way I see it." Now I often find myself with the most silver hair in the room providing the history and telling stories. As an elder,* I enjoy serving as a mentor for the next generation. Seasons change, and this is an awesome season.

**Elder: anyone over 50.*

Barbara Bartle

- Active in fundraising, program development, public engagement and teaching for 44 years.
- President of the Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools for 18 years.

- Serves on the Chancellor's Board of Counselors for the University of Nebraska Medical Center.
- Served on boards for the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra, Midwest Ballet, Nebraska Repertory (past president) and Meadowlark Music Festival.
- Member of Charitable Gift Planners of Nebraska and the Association of Fundraising Professionals.
- Past president of Rotary Club 14, Rotary 14 Foundation board and the National School Foundation Association.
- Spirit of United Way award recipient, Lincoln Independent Business Association's Lincoln Community Impact awardee and ambassador for programs to China and India.
- Recently named Lincoln's 2017 Inspire Woman of the Year (see page 10). Her favorite time is spent with her husband, Bob, and their three children and families – just ask her about her six grandchildren!



PHOTO BY MARK SCHWANINGER

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EDGE program featured at NC Rotary

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Stacie Higgins, director of the Nebraska City EDGE program dedicated to fighting poverty, spoke to the Nebraska City Rotary Club on Oct. 25, reviewing the organization's 2017 activities and presenting plans for future projects.

Eight high school students who are involved in the EDGE program were present.

Higgins spoke about what poverty looks like, where it most often reveals itself, and strategies for tackling the problem locally.

The mission of EDGE, an acronym for "Engage, Discover, Grow, Embark," is to facilitate declining poverty in Nebraska City by 2036.

Last November, Higgins and several other concerned with poverty in Nebraska City gathered to brainstorm about the problem.

She described her "Aha!" moment as the realization that filling backpacks with food for the poor stood in contrast to not needing to hand out backpacks of food at all. And so, EDGE was born.

Higgins said that the terms "poverty" and "poor"

are used interchangeably, but that "under-resourced" is a more accurate description of "poverty." Poverty doesn't always relate to money, she said, but rather should be viewed through the lens of "skill sets"—what a person does when without resources, whether financial, physical, spiritual, or mental.

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Poverty, Higgins said, is an issue of relationships and knowledge of the "hidden rules" that govern behavior in all classes—wealthy, middle-class, or poor. The "cycle of poverty" occurs when for more than one generation, people don't have the resources to escape poverty—financial capital, education, or connections. And the best way to address poverty is two generations at a time, that is, as it affects parents and their children.

The ways people move out of poverty, said Higgins, are the determination to change, a particular skill or talent, a relationship with someone who guides and supports you, and the pain of living in poverty.

One thing to notice, she

said, is that nowhere on this catalog of ways of moving out of poverty, from Dr. Ruby Payne's book, "A Framework for Understanding Poverty," is money mentioned.

Federal income guidelines place the poverty line at an annual income of \$24,250 for a family of four. To receive free or reduced school lunch, the guideline is between 31 and 45 thousand dollars annual income. In Nebraska City schools in 2001, one quarter of the population qualified for the lunch program; by this year, that number had nearly doubled, standing now at 49 percent.

Higgins reviewed the activities of EDGE in 2017. The "Reader's Edge" program, with 12 monthly volunteers, has distributed 800 books this year. Sixty-six percent of the funds needed to reach the program's goal of giving away 1,100 more books by the end of May, 2018 has been raised thus far.

EDGE sponsored two events this year, with 350 people in attendance. In "Lunch and Learn," community leaders share school lunch with students who need simply to sit down and talk with someone. "Poverty reveals itself mostly in the schools, but it affects your whole com-

munity," said Higgins.

In 2018, EDGE will continue its "College Kid for a Day" events, when fifth graders visit a college campus for one day to see what college looks like, laying the groundwork for future aspirations.

Other upcoming events center on the themes of mental health, nutrition, and internet safety.

On Nov. 7, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., the film "Standing Up to Poverty" will be shown at the Lewis and Clark Visitors Center in Nebraska City, followed by a panel discussion. Business, industry, and community leaders, elected officials, faith communities, and educators are invited to attend. Interested guests should RSVP to edgenebcity@gmail.com by November 1. Box lunches will be served.

A presentation for parents and students by Cheney psychiatrist Lindsey Teten called "The Teenage Brain Explained" will take place at the Nebraska City Middle School on Thursday, Nov. 9, 6-7:30 p.m. Families with children in grades six through 12 are welcome. Topics include

depression, mood disorders, coping skills, and community resources.

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High school students involved with EDGE who attended the presentation by director Stacie Higgins at last week's Rotary meeting are (left to right): Nebraska City High students Makensi Blum, Tyler Lechner, and Trinity Fox, with Lourdes Central Catholic students Halli Whitten, Quinten Vasa, James Mason, Carlos Serna, and Leticia Rodriguez.

PHOTO BY CLIFFORD DAVIS