

*Thursday June 29, 2017*

### **United Way of the Midlands' Karnett Trust Awards Three Grants to Support Children and Teens with Intellectual Disabilities**

United Way of the Midlands (UWM) has awarded three new grants, and will distribute third-year funding for another program, on behalf of the Ellen C. Karnett Trust. The trust focuses its funding on the care, education and training of children with intellectual disabilities and their caregivers in the Omaha metro area.

- Easter Seals Society of Nebraska Inc. will receive \$240,000 dollars over three years for the program "Work Incentives Planning & Assistance for Transition-Age Youth".
- Legal Aid of Nebraska will receive \$120,000 over three years for the "Health, Education and Law Project" (HELP).
- Munroe Meyer Institute at the University of Nebraska Medical Center will receive \$66,853 over three years for the Academic Evaluation and Intervention (AEI) Clinic.
- Ollie Webb Center will receive final year funding (\$25,000) from a three-year \$110,000 grant awarded in 2015 for the "First Chapter Book Club" program.

#### Easterseals Nebraska - Work Incentives Planning & Assistance for Transition-Age Youth:

The program will facilitate employment opportunities for 14-to-21 year olds in Douglas and Sarpy counties who have intellectual disabilities. Many people with disabilities want to work, but worry how their earned income will affect their benefits. The program provides planning and transition services to youth and their caregivers as they move toward adulthood and jobs. Clients and caregivers are advised on employment barriers, and learn about state and federal work incentives that impact services and facilitate post-secondary education and employment. Partners include the Social Security Administration. Karnett funding will allow Easter Seals to expand their work in Douglas and Sarpy counties.

"We know that the right information and support can make a profound difference in empowering young people with disabilities in our community to reach their potential, which is why we are incredibly grateful for the opportunity this grant provides us" said James Summerfelt, president and CEO of VNA/Easterseals Nebraska. "With these funds, we will expand our successful program model linking Easterseals Nebraska's experienced Workforce Development professionals, individuals with disabilities, human service providers, and employers into a single, dynamic environment in which individuals' needs are assessed and addressed, fears are diminished, strengths are accentuated and work happens."

#### Legal Aid of Nebraska - Health, Education and Law Project (HELP):

Families with children who have intellectual disabilities have to navigate many systems like education and public services to meet the needs of their child. By addressing their legal needs, the program ensures that clients are able to meet their basic needs for food, housing, income, education, employment, health care, and family stability. HELP's services include direct legal assistance, parent training, medical provider training, and system-wide advocacy. Any child diagnosed with an intellectual disability who needs legal assistance either to obtain supplemental security income, Medicaid or CHIP, or who has been denied educational rights would be eligible to receive services through this project. Karnett funding will allow Legal Aid to dedicate staff to education-related cases.

(MORE)

"This funding is a tremendous show of support for the work to address underlying legal barriers to positive outcomes for children with intellectual or developmental disabilities, said Milo Mumgaard, executive director of Legal Aid Nebraska. "Legal Aid's HELP project is singularly able to provide timely and effective representation for children and their families to lower these barriers, including special education and disability benefits, and the Karnett Trust funding will bring this work to many more struggling families."

**Munroe Meyer Institute at the University of Nebraska Medical Center - Academic Evaluation & Intervention Clinic (AEI):**

The mission of the AEI clinic is to provide parents of children with learning difficulties information and strategies that will help each child reach his or her highest academic performance. Staff members identify effective academic interventions and provide parents with strategies to implement at home or school to improve their children's academic performance. Karnett funding will allow the AEI clinic to serve a greater number of youth with intellectual disabilities and to develop a training program for parents in collaboration with the Nebraska Parent Training and Information Center (PTI-Nebraska), MMI family support staff and the NE Department of Health and Human Services Respite program focused on community resources.

"MMI is proud to be partnering with the United Way of the Midlands on this effort, which will help both children with intellectual disabilities and their parents as they navigate the educational system and community resources, which can be a challenging task for the youth we serve, said Dr. Karoly Mirnics, M.D., Ph.D and director of the Munroe-Meyer Institute. "Thanks to the United Way, we hope to make their progress a little easier."

**Ollie Webb Center - First Chapter Book Club:**

The club provides high school students who have intellectual disabilities the opportunity to read, discuss books and socialize while participating in an age-appropriate activity. The program covers students from all reading levels, from "emerging" to "proficient". The club focuses on three major components for students from demographically-diverse backgrounds: literacy, community inclusion and social connectedness.

**About the Ellen C. Karnett Trust**

The Karnett Trust Grant Program is administered by the United Way of the Midlands. Karnett Trust funds are available to 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations in Douglas, Sarpy and Pottawattamie counties with programs that are focused on the care, education and training of children with intellectual disabilities in the Omaha metropolitan area. Ellen C. Karnett left the trust funds to United Way to administer her wishes to benefit children in our community with intellectual disabilities. The funds are distributed in honor of Ellen's son, Richard.

**About United Way of the Midlands**

Thanks to donors, volunteers and community partners, United Way of the Midlands is not only focused on addressing our community's human needs today; it is focused on what can be, and what should be. It is building on today's strong partnerships to create even more comprehensive human service efforts tomorrow, so our community can solve some of the root causes of poverty. United Way is community-based, community-focused. Thanks to those who share their strength, United Way is COMMUNITY STRONG. We invite you to visit [www.UnitedWayMidlands.org](http://www.UnitedWayMidlands.org) for more information.