For the 26th year, Lincoln Housing Authority and Northeast High School have partnered to build a home for a family in need.

Northeast residential construction students worked throughout the school year to build a house at 2210 N. 69th St. The three-bedroom, two-bath and one-car garage home will be sold to an eligible family through LHA’s lease-to-own program.

Donations from the community help offset the cost, allowing for construction of affordable housing for the community.

For the sixth consecutive year, the Sowers Club of Nebraska donated $15,000 to highlight their focus on underprivileged children and families. The build also gives students valuable experience in construction.

New donors this year included the Cooper Foundation with $10,000 and Lincoln Community Foundation with $5,000.

When Lincoln Public Schools went to remote learning in March, work on the house didn’t stop. Teacher Bob Freese, volunteers Neal Simley and Mary Southworth, LHA Development Coordinator Bob Goggins, LHA Planning and Development Manager Thomas Judds and LHA Planning and Development Coordinator Corby Renard continued the work.

“Without the students, we need to get the house finished for a family,” Judds said.

The crew worked to finish the house in May, including touch up paint, installing carpet, linoleum, exterior siding and fixtures.
LHA Policy changes

Due to the economic impact and work disruptions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, Lincoln Housing Authority has temporarily changed two of its policies.

1. All households with annual recertification planned from July-December 2020 will be skipped. These households will have their next recertification in 2021. However, households with elderly or disabled members that skipped recertification in 2019 will have recertification in 2020. They will not be skipped again.
   • LHA increased payment standards and utility allowances at the end of 2019. All households will have an interim income review completed in 2020 to implement these higher rates. All households can request an interim income review immediately if income has decreased or the membership of the household has changed.

2. LHA has temporarily suspended its Minimum Earned Income (MEI) rule. MEI counts minimum income in a household with workable members. MEI is suspended for recertifications occurring after June 1, 2020, and immediately for new admissions.
   • Households can request an interim income review to remove MEI immediately.
   • Households regularly scheduled for annual recertification from July-December 2020 that are being skipped this year will NOT automatically have MEI removed. These households must request an interim income review.

LHA staff are prioritizing the processing of interim income reviews for individuals who have lost income due to the COVID-19 crisis. Please contact your housing specialist to request an interim income review. Please remember:
   • LHA’s 90-day rule still applies if a family member has terminated or reduced income by choice. In these instances, the household must wait 90 days before an interim income review can be conducted.
   • If the employment income was reduced or terminated due to an employer’s reduction in workforce, there is no delay.

LHA’s staff is doing its best to process the claims being reported. LHA staff members are working from home and using flexible scheduling to help limit the spread of COVID-19. When possible, please consider communicating with your housing specialist via email. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Job center connects workers to training, employment

The American Job Center provides an avenue for job seekers and businesses to access various employment services. The goal is to connect job seekers to roles and training opportunities in the industries with the greatest demand for workers. The center offers workshops, training opportunities, hiring events and coaching to ensure job seekers are connected to businesses.

The full-service center provides a variety of in-person and virtual services for job seekers, including resume development, job application assistance, job availability information, unemployment insurance claim assistance, referrals to partner resources and work-based learning.

It also offers businesses services related to labor market information, retention tools, hiring events, hiring incentives, labor standards, job postings and more.

For more information, call 402-413-9236. The American Job Center is located at 1111 O St., Suite 205 in Lincoln, and is open Monday to Friday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Resident Advisory Board needs you

If you’re a tenant interested in joining the Resident Advisory Board, Lincoln Housing Authority wants to hear from you. The board reviews, plans and influences LHA programs and policies. Board members meet two or three times from October through December. Meetings typically last up to two hours, and LHA assists board members with transportation and child care costs if needed.

Participants in any LHA rental assistance program are eligible to become Resident Advisory Board members. If interested, contact Sarah Jackson as soon as possible at 402-434-5530 for an application or more information.
Addressing Tenant Concerns Regarding Rent and the Temporary Suspension of Evictions for Nonpayment of Rent

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) developed this flyer to provide Housing Choice Voucher (HCV), Public Housing, and Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation (Mod Rehab) participants with important information and resources about paying rent during the national emergency concerning the coronavirus pandemic.

What is the suspension of evictions about?
Evictions for nonpayment of rent, and charges/fees for nonpayment of rent, have been temporarily suspended. This applies to all HUD-assisted participants from March 27, 2020 to July 24, 20201. Although your Public Housing Authority’s (PHA) Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policies (ACOP) and/or Administrative Plan may not be updated, please be aware that the suspension of evictions for nonpayment of rent is in place.

Having trouble making rent?
• Voucher and public housing participants: If you lost your job or had a significant loss of income, request an interim reexamination with the housing authority as soon as possible. Your rent can be adjusted to reflect the change in income or you may be eligible for a financial hardship exemption. Your housing authority may also know about other local resources.
• Voucher participants only: Contact your landlord right away. Reach out early to discuss potential payment plans or accommodations. Due to loss in income and the resulting interim reexamination, your rent adjustment may be retroactive. Confirm with the PHA and your landlord whether you will receive a credit for the previous month.

What else should you know?
• Rent is still due during this time period and will accumulate if unpaid.
• Your landlord and the PHA cannot initiate a new eviction action for nonpayment of rent and you should not receive a notice to vacate for nonpayment of rent from March 27, 2020 – July 24, 2020.
• Your landlord and the PHA cannot charge any late fees, or accrue charges/fees, and your assistance cannot be terminated for past due rent in April, May, June and July 2020.
• If you are behind on rent after the suspension of evictions expire: Voucher participants need to negotiate directly with your landlord to determine requirements to repay unpaid rent. Otherwise, your landlord could file an eviction. Public housing participants need to work with the PHA to pay unpaid rent in a lump sum or set up a repayment agreement. Otherwise, your assistance could be terminated and/or the PHA could file an eviction.
• Evictions for nonpayment of rent filed with the court before March 27, 2020 can proceed if there is no conflict with state or local laws.
• The PHA or your landlord can still terminate assistance and evict for drug abuse, criminal activity, lease violations, fraud, repeated minor violations, other good cause, etc.
• HUD does not intervene or participate in eviction proceedings. If you feel you are being wrongfully evicted, contact your local legal aid organization or social service agencies. If you are a Voucher participant, you may also contact your local PHA.

1 Enacted in Section 4024 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, 2020 “CARES Act” (Public Law 116-136).
The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program now has a Facebook page providing up-to-date information about community resources. The group, titled “Lincoln Housing Authority Family Self-Sufficiency” is available to anyone, not just FSS participants.

“The purpose of the group is to get current information out to individuals quickly,” said Courtney Gadeken, FSS caseworker. “Since we only meet with people in FSS every few months, opportunities can come and go fast, so this is an easier way to get it to them quickly.”

The group has details on food distribution, utility and rent assistance, scholarships, as well as school and legal updates.

“Really it’s for any information that might be beneficial to them becoming self-sufficient,” Gadeken said.

Since 1993, LHA has offered the FSS program, which helps families work toward becoming financially self-sufficient. Participants can enroll in the plan for up to five years, and work with a caseworker to determine a plan and steps to take to reach their goals.

Services can include: educational programs (GED, ESL, ABE and college), career assessments, job training, child care, counseling, case management, credit counseling, home ownership preparation, and Ticket to Work program. The FSS case manager helps the participant obtain the services needed and coaches the family while in the program.

When rent increases due to higher earnings while enrolled in the FSS program, a percentage of the increase may be placed in a savings account for the family. Participants receive the money in the account plus interest when the FSS contract has been completed successfully. Families use the funds for whatever they wish, but often for education, debt reduction, reliable transportation, and even home ownership.

The voluntary program is available to those in Public Housing or Housing Choice Voucher programs; employed or unemployed; students or those wanting to attend school, married couples or single persons. To learn more or to sign up for the FSS program, call FSS Caseworkers Courtney, 402-434-5529, or Amy, 402-434-5527. You will be sent a brochure via mail to sign up, and you will be placed on the waiting list.

Community resources listed through app

MyLNK is a mobile phone app where users can find community resources and services anonymously from nearly 500 organizations and 1,000 programs in Lincoln and Lancaster County. The app is free, easy to use and updated regularly with accurate information.

It can provide resources for children and families, victims of domestic violence, employment, education, food, housing, transportation and more.

The app can be downloaded for both Android and Apple phones. Once downloaded, it doesn’t require an internet connection or data plan to look up information within the app.

MyLNK also is available at mylnk.app where it’s translated into Spanish, Arabic and Vietnamese.

Food assistance

Check out the MyLNK app for information on free food distribution sites.
Manage anxiety, stress

For many, fear and anxiety might be high during the COVID-19 pandemic. Things can be overwhelming, causing strong emotions. Coping with stress will help you, those around you and your community.

Everyone reacts differently under stress. People who may respond more strongly to the coronavirus crisis include:

- Older people and those with chronic disease who are higher risk for COVID-19.
- Children and teens.
- People who are helping with COVID-19 response, such as doctors, first responders and health care workers.
- Those with mental health conditions including problems of substance abuse.

If you or someone you care about feel overwhelmed with sadness, depression or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others call:

- 911
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) Disaster Distress Helpline: 800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. (TTY 1-800-846-8517)
- CenterPointe’s Crisis Response line, call or text 402-475-6695. If you want to see someone face-to-face, walk-in crisis counseling is available at 1000 S. 13th St., Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
- National Crisis Textline: Text START to 741741.

Stress can include fear and worry about your health and the health of your loved ones, changes in sleep or eating patterns, difficulty concentrating, worsening chronic health problems, and increased use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs. People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms. To help lessen stress:

- Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to the news, including social media.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind and do activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others, talk with those you trust about your concerns and how you’re feeling.

Be sure to call your health care provider if stress gets in the way of your activities for several days in a row.

Census still important amid COVID-19

The 2020 U.S. Census aims to count everyone who lives in the U.S., regardless of immigration status. Every 10 years since 1790, the U.S. has counted population through a Constitution-mandated census process that ensures equal representation in elected government at the federal, state and local levels, and helps establish Nebraska’s proportion of federal funds for local- and state-level programs for the next decade.

In March, households began receiving an invitation letter to self-respond via telephone or internet. The Census is adapting and delaying some operations to protect the health and safety of staff and the public to ensure the population is counted. In most cases, the self-response phase has been extended and census workers interviewing households in person has been delayed.

All census responses are confidential. Paper forms will only be available in English and Spanish; however, people can respond online or by phone in Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Tagalog and Vietnamese. The Census Bureau also is providing video and printed guides in 59 non-English languages as well as American Sign Language. Braille questionnaires will be available at the local Census Office. For more information, go to 2020census.gov.
We all might be spending a bit more time at home this summer, and what better way to do that then by reading!

Reading every day can increase mental stimulation, vocabulary and memory, as well as enhance focus and concentration. The activity also reduces stress — not to mention it’s great, and often free, entertainment!

Lincoln City Libraries is hosting its Summer Reading Challenge online using the Beanstack app or website. The challenge begins June 1, and participants can log any reading including books, e-books or magazines, or listening to audiobooks. Log your reading time, participate in activities and earn tickets toward prize packages.

For more information, visit LincolnLibraries.org.

While the libraries are closed, Lincoln City Libraries is hosting Virtual Storytimes daily at 10 a.m. on its Read Aloud Lincoln Facebook page at facebook.com/readaloudlincoln.

Register online to vote

Have your vote heard this November by registering to vote or changing your address online. To register, visit ne.gov/go/NEreg2vote. You will need your Nebraska driver’s license or state identification card, and your current address. The registration takes a few minutes to complete and is available in English and Spanish.
For many, COVID-19 has increased isolation. For homebound seniors 60 and older and persons with disabilities, it’s already difficult to get needed items and socialization. NeighborLNK is a program designed to help by linking volunteers with seniors and disabled individuals seeking additional support. The program will help keep homebound residents healthy, connected and independent during the physical isolation required by the pandemic, and hopes to cultivate bonds beyond the crisis.

NeighborLNK volunteers do errands for the participants, such as picking up groceries, prescriptions or library book (prepaid and prearranged), and offer companionship through phone or video calls. Precautions will be followed and volunteers will not enter participants’ homes. Volunteers must be at least 19 years old and will complete an application, sign a waiver and pass a background check. Volunteers will be assigned to participants based on location and interests.

To sign up to participate or volunteer for NeighborLNK, visit lincoln.ne.gov/city/mayor/aging/neighborlnk or contact Aging Partners NeighborLNK at 402-441-7575 or NeighborLNK@lincoln.ne.gov.

As summer arrives, the temperature keeps rising. Senior citizens don’t have to sweat it out — Aging Partners’ Durable Medical Equipment program provides fans at no cost to seniors age 60 and older. To request a fan, call 402-441-3025. The program also provides other items at no cost for seniors including crutches, canes, wheeled walkers, handrails and shower chairs. All items are subject to availability, as well as cleaned and sanitized. More information on Aging Partners is available at aging.lincoln.ne.gov or 402-441-7070.
Effective March 18, all LHA office locations are closed to public walk-in traffic for now. This includes the main office, maintenance locations and apartment clubhouses. During this time, LHA continues to accept payments via the dropbox at the main office location.

If you have questions about this change, contact LHA at 402-434-5500 or info@L-housing.com.

LHA will update its website L-housing.com, with more information as the situation warrants.