

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



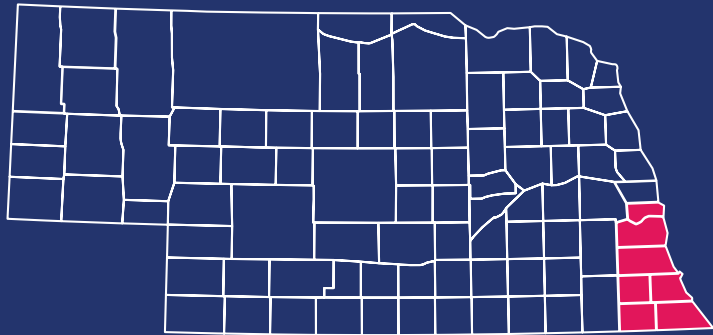
**Southeast
Nebraska
Community
Action**

Our Mission: Investing in Our Neighbors through Education and Partnerships to Improve Lives and Build Strong Communities in Southeast Nebraska

Southeast Nebraska Community Action Partnership, Inc. (SENCA) is a private non-profit 501(c)3 corporation incorporated on May 2, 1966 under the provisions of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

The agency offers a variety of programs and services specifically aimed to reduce poverty, revitalize communities and empower low-income households to become financially independent.

The business, property, policies, programs, and affairs of the corporation are determined and managed by a tripartite volunteer Board of Directors representing the six core county service area of: Cass, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee and Richardson.



**Serving the Counties of:
Cass, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe,
Pawnee, Richardson and Sarpy**

Leadership

Board of Directors

Northern Region

Taylor Boyle, *Public Official Rep.*
Pastor Michael Schmidt, *Low Income Rep.*
Lori Huebner, *Private Interest Rep.*

Central Region

Ted Evans, *Public Official Rep.*
Peggy Groff, *Low Income Rep.*
Grant Brueggemann, *Private Interest Rep.*

Southern Region

Rick Karas, *Public Official Rep.*
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Management Team



Vicky McNealy
Executive Director



Angela Antholz
Deputy/Head Start Director



Susan Keholm
Development Director



Jenny Stutheit
Fiscal Officer



Cathy Gutshall
Human Resource Director



Kay Wissmann
Community Services Director



Gin Christiansen
Weatherization Director



Amanda Palmerton
Housing Development Director

Investing in Families, Strengthening Communities



Bob and Sylvia - "SENCA Weatherization is A+!"

In February 2008 life forever changed for Bob and Sylvia's family. "Bob was at work when he suffered a brain bleed," shares Sylvia. "He was diagnosed with high blood pressure, diabetes and had a bad cold when he suffered the stroke."

"We first heard about SENCA programs when the hospital provided us with information explaining programs SENCA provides to families experiencing emergency situations," shared Sylvia. "At the time, we were over income to receive help, but I kept the brochure and was so grateful I did."

As a result of Sylvia's thriftiness, business sense, benefits Bob had earned while working, and the income from Sylvia's daycare, they managed to get through the next 14 years, raise their children and pay off their home. In 2022 Bob's health began deteriorating. He developed vascular issues resulting in the amputation of a leg in February 2023.

In an effort to keep Bob at home and provide him with the care he needed, Sylvia closed her day care, which greatly impacted the couple's income. Their home, now 20 plus years old, was in need of energy saving repairs, including a new furnace. Thankfully, Sylvia remembered the SENCA brochure she had saved since 2008, found it and contacted Gin Christiansen, SENCA Weatherization Director.

"I completed the application in May 2022 and by October 2022 the work to our home was completed," expresses a grateful Sylvia. "The SENCA staff, vendors, and employees doing the work were knowledgeable, professional and provided such wonderful attention to detail. SENCA is wonderful!"

Bob and Sylvia's home received 1,482 square foot of attic insulation, energy efficient light bulbs, weather-stripping, pipe-wrap, sealing of all penetrations of duct work and in the home, a new furnace and hot water heater.

To insure the homes health and safety ASHRAE ventilation was installed and the fans vented to the exterior. These improvements to Bob and Sylvia's home provided them with a savings of approximately \$530 per year.

Almost a full year after the work was completed, when Sylvia compares the amount of energy used each month, from 2022 to 2023, they are using "so much less" than they did before SENCA weatherized their home.

Natalie - "We are grateful for SENCA programs."

With limited job skills, and not having the financial resources needed to pay day care for her son, Xander, Natalie did her best working part-time as a server in a local food establishment. Natalie's mom watched Xander when she was able, but even then Natalie was barely able to pay rent.

Natalie was thankful when her family started receiving (SNAP) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits. SNAP helped lower their out-of-pocket food costs, but even then the family sometimes struggled getting through the month with enough food. Natalie learned of other local programs, such as SENCA, that help families overcome difficult situations as they work towards a self-sufficient future. This was especially encouraging as Natalie's family of three would soon welcome the addition of another son, Eli.

Natalie heard about the local SENCA Head Start Preschool from her older sister who recommended the program for Xander. Natalie contacted Nebraska City's Part-Day site and enrolled Xander for the 2020-2021 school year. Unfortunately this was during the COVID-19 pandemic, not a typical school year, which made it extra challenging for the very shy Xander.

During Xander's 2nd year in the Head Start program he started attending school at the full-day site. Natalie shares "By this time COVID wasn't as much of an issue and we became better acquainted with the Head Start staff. I joined the Head Start parent committee to be involved and learn more about the program. Diana, Family Service Advocate at the full-day site, was very helpful and referred us to additional services provided through SENCA's Otoe County Outreach."

By October 2023, Xander, now a first grader, had successfully completed kindergarten and has made new friends his own age. Little brother Eli is enrolled in his 2nd year of Head Start's full-day program. With both boys in school, Natalie received a Pell Grant and enrolled in classes at Southeast Community College (SCC) with a goal of becoming a certified Medical Lab Technician in two years.

"SENCA is a blessing for our family," expresses Natalie. "In addition to Head Start, we utilize other agency resources such as the Otoe County food pantry and participate in holiday programs provided by, or supported by, the agency. We are grateful for SENCA programs that continue improving lives."



Crystal - "SENCA, a wonderful community resource."

After twenty years of working in health care as a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) and Certified Medication Aide (CMA), Crystal's dream of becoming a Registered Nurse (RN) is on track to become a reality. This is a result of Crystal's determination and utilizing local resources such as SENCA's Job Skills Program.

To gain the medical skills required to increase her salary and help her move one step closer to her goal, Crystal contacted SENCA to ask if Job Skills could provide funding so she could enroll in an 8-week Phlebotomy Class. The class, offered by Southeast Community College

(SCC), provides participants with the education and skill required to perform blood draws in a medical setting. Crystal completed the Job Skills application, met program guidelines and was approved.

After successful completion of the class, Crystal became a certified Phlebotomist. "I work full-time as a CNA/CMA at a care facility in Otoe County. Becoming a Phlebotomist has tremendously increased my income," shares Crystal. She also works part-time providing in home health to shut-ins and is taking LPN (LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) classes. Once completed she can bridge to become an RN.

Crystal, a single mom and grandma, shares her home with her two daughters and her two grandchildren. Crystal comments, "I would highly recommend Job Skills for single parents, or anyone wanting to increase their skill and income. SENCA programs are a wonderful community resource."



COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Down Payment Assistance

- Since 2005, the SENCA HOMES program (Home Ownership Makes Economic Sense) has assisted **91 first-time homebuyers** with the purchase of a home throughout Cass, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson, and Sarpy counties.
- Funding through this program has supported **59 full-time employment opportunities** and generated various financial benefits of approximately **\$7.7 million**.
- The program has produced both long-term and one-time benefits resulting in a **4 to 1 return on investment**.
- The success of the previous and current projects has allowed SENCA to assist in making home ownership affordable to first-time homebuyers, as well as to provide rehab services to **88 of these 91 homes** ultimately improving the **health, safety, and affordability of these homes**.



Owner Occupied Rehab

- Since 2008, the SENCA OOR program has **rehabbed 51 homes** throughout Cass, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson, and Sarpy counties.
- Rehab to these homes has created an average increase in home owner wealth of **\$17,741 per owner** and an average of **\$5,288 in additional tax values** per home.
- OOR program funding has supported **13.6 full-time employment opportunities** and generated construction related income of approximately **\$767,800**.
- This program has produced both long-term and one-time benefits resulting in a **1.5 to 1 return on investment**.
- The success of the previous and current projects has allowed SENCA to extend the life of these area homes for another **20 years** by improving their health, safety, and affordability.



Homebuyer Education

- Since 2002, more than **1,025 first-time homebuyers representing 834 households** have completed homebuyer education.
- **Thirty-four percent (34%)** have gone on to complete the purchase of their first home with first mortgage financing totaling over **\$19.9 million**.
- Secondary financing of more than **\$1.5 million** from various programs was also utilized by these homebuyers.
- Assuming that a minimum of 50% of the aforementioned financing is protected as a result of homebuyer education, this program has the potential of producing a **16.2 to 1 return on investment**.



Affordable Housing

- During the 2023 fiscal year, twenty-eight (**28**) **low-income individuals** secured a safe, stable and affordable rental unit within one of two SENCA owned properties.
- **Elk Creek Apartments**, designated as a family complex, offers four (**4**) newly remodeled, one bedroom units.
- **Fulton Villa in Falls City**, designated as an elderly and disabled complex, provides twelve (**12**) newly remodeled, one bedroom units.
- **One hundred percent (100%)** of the renters received rental housing subsidies thereby reducing their out-of-pocket expense and making their housing costs affordable.
- **Seventeen (17), 61%** of the residents maintained independent living and avoided the higher costs of assisted living or a nursing home.
- SENCA Rental Housing has an estimated **16 to 1 return on investment** when comparing costs to a care facility.



Weatherization

- During fiscal year 2022-2023, SENCA provided Weatherization services and energy conservation education to **66 adults in 61 households** throughout Cass, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson, and Sarpy counties.
- Funding through this program has supported **6.4 full-time employment opportunities** and generated construction related income of approximately **\$359,905**.
- The investment of funds into these **61 homes** has the potential of creating long-term direct energy savings of about **\$925,237** and approximately **\$22,692** in annual reduction of utility costs.
- Another **\$1,495,441** in non-energy related savings may also be realized over the long-term.
- This program has produced both long-term and one-time benefits resulting in a **5 to 1 return on investment**.



Low Cost Public Transit

- SENCA operates two low-cost, public transit sites, one in **Pawnee City** and one in **Falls City**.
- There were **5,257** rides provided to individuals in Pawnee and Richardson Counties during the 2022-2023 fiscal year.
- The National Center for Transit Research estimates a **2 to 1 return on investment** for transit programs.



Meals on Wheels Congregate Meals

- Meal sites provided **11,301 meals** to residents in Johnson, Pawnee, and Richardson Counties.
- The meal program has an estimated **4 to 1 return on investment**.



Transit and nutrition programs enable seniors to stay in their own home longer. This helps improve morale and personal worth while supporting the local economy.



Radon Testing and Mitigation

- **Three hundred eight (308) homes** have been tested for high radon levels since the program began in the fall of 2018.
- **Forty (40) homes** have been mitigated to reduce radon levels.
- Assuming health insurance would cover the majority of costs for lung cancer treatment, SENCA estimates the program has a potential of producing a **8 to 1 return on investment**.

FAMILY OUTREACH



Family Development

- During fiscal year 2022-2023, **42% of families** in case management, with a goal of employment, obtained employment with a living wage or higher.
- **16% of families** successfully completed the program, with **84%** continuing to actively receive services.
- 46% of families with a goal of opening a savings account achieved their goal. **50%** increased savings with deposits.
- **96% of families** obtained safe and affordable housing. When someone unemployed, receiving government benefits, gains full-time employment and ends benefits, this produces a **44 to 1 return on investment** for the local economy.



Project First

- Project First is a transitional homeless program.
- **Seven (7) households, comprised of thirty (30) clients**, were enrolled in Project First during FY 2023.
- Currently **100% of households** have earned income, compared to 57% who didn't have at enrollment.
- **100% of the clients** exiting the program had income from employment and exited to permanent housing, with no recidivating events since that time.
- Project First has an estimated **3 to 1 return on investment**.



CSPF

- The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) helps improve the health of low-income people, who are at least 60 years of age, by supplementing their diet with nutritious food.
- The program serves clients residing in the counties of Johnson, Nemaha, Pawnee and Richardson.
- During the 2022-2023 fiscal year there were a total of **101 individuals** who benefited from **1,123 boxes of food**.
- This program has an estimated **4 to 1 return on investment**.



CASA

The SENCA Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program provides advocacy for youth who are introduced into the child welfare system through no fault of their own. CASA volunteers, appointed by the judge, provide a voice for the youth in the courtroom.

- During the fiscal year 2022-2023 there were a total of **88 children** in the Juvenile Court System in Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, and Richardson counties.
- CASA served **45** of those children with an active volunteer or by staff. The **43** remaining children's cases were monitored by the CASA Coordinator.
- Out of the **88** children in the Juvenile Court System **7 (8%)** of the children have been reunified with their parent or parents; **19 (21%)** of the children have been adopted; **3 (3%)** of the children entered into a guardianship; **5 (6%)** transferred to Lancaster County before assignment of a CASA Volunteer, and **54 (61%)** of the children remained in foster homes.
- There were **14 active Volunteer Advocates** and **1 CASA staff member** who visited the children, obtained information regarding the case and wrote court reports to the Juvenile Court Judge and spoke up on behalf of the children in the court proceedings.
- The programs estimated **return on investment 15 to 1**.



SNAP

- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) formerly known as Food Stamps, helps raise nutrition levels in low-income households by helping them purchase food.
- During fiscal year 2022-2023 a total of **23 SNAP applications** were submitted throughout the six county service area.
- Low-income individuals received **\$35,053** in benefit dollars which represents **11,585 meals**.
- Since SENCA started assisting low-income clients apply for SNAP benefits in 2017, a total of **357 applications** have been submitted resulting in **\$663,771 benefit dollars representing 240,000 meals**.
- This program is estimated to provide a **2 to 1 return on investment**.



YOUTH EDUCATION



Head Start

Head Start is a preschool program for 3-5 year old low-income children. Head Start is a child-focused program and has the overall goal of increasing school readiness of young children in low-income families. Comprehensive child development services, school readiness, and family support are provided through center-based options. SENCA Head Start works closely with various community partners to build relationships that better serve children, families, and the communities they call home.

SENCA has five Head Start preschools located in Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, and Richardson counties. SENCA has 3 collaboration sites located within the Falls City Public, HTRS and Auburn public school systems. Teachers enter documentation on an ongoing basis into the software program, Teaching Strategies Gold. The teachers rate each child's development three times per year which is called a checkpoint. Students who met or exceeded expectations for age increased in most areas from the fall 2022 to spring 2023 checkpoints. Across all domains, an average of **92% met or exceeded** expectations compared to the average of **63%** in the fall.

- Math saw the largest increase of all domains. Math scores improved by **133%** from fall 2022 to spring 2023.
- Language followed closely behind math with an increase of **120%** and cognitive with an increase of **104%**.
- Social-emotional skills improved by **94%**, literacy by **71%**, and physical by **63%**.
- Approximately **94%** of the students were meeting or exceeding all established school readiness goals, which is an average increase of **21%**.

Recent Early Childhood Education studies indicate that the return on investment is as much as \$13 to \$1.

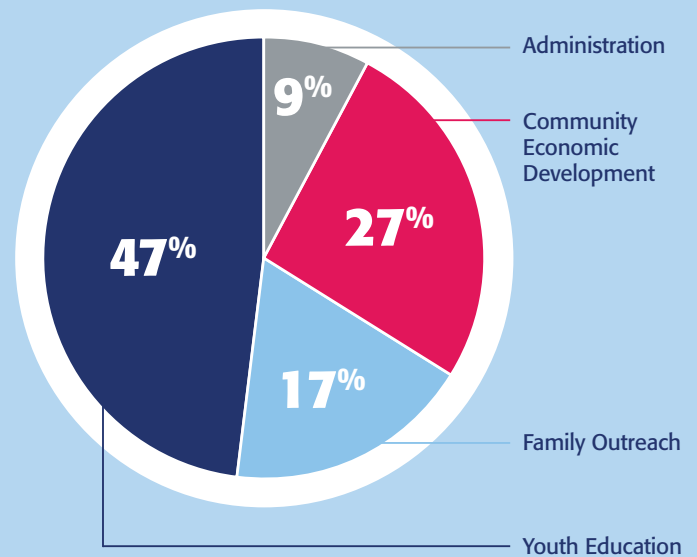
Domain	Fall	Winter	Spring	Spring School Readiness
Social Emotional	63%	78%	94%	93%
Physical	81%	95%	96%	95%
Language	55%	72%	90%	92%
Cognitive	62%	78%	95%	93%
Literacy	69%	78%	90%	92%
Math	50%	66%	89%	NA

Agency Financials

Total Agency Funding for Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2023

\$4,394,233

SENCA receives approximately 75% of program funding from competitive federal and state grants. The remaining funds are derived through private resources that include, but are not limited to donations, local funders and the agency's annual benefit golf tournament.



SENCA SMART

SENCA SMART (Strategic Money and Resource Techniques) is a unique financial literacy program available for high school students throughout the agency's six core county service area. SENCA has reached more than **4,180 students** since the programs inception during the 2011/2012 school year. Schools in five of six SENCA core counties participated during the 2022/2023 fiscal year.

- Pre/Post test scores indicated that **76%** of participating high school students increased their financial skills and knowledge by **24%**.
- Pre/Post test scores indicated that **79%** of participating 8th grade students increased their financial skills and knowledge by **18%**.
- Based on public school education costs, this program provides a **7 to 1 return on investment**.



**Southeast
Nebraska
Community
Action**

The Promise of Community Action

*Community Action changes peoples lives, embodies the spirit of hope,
improves communities and makes America a better place to live.*

*We care about the entire community and we are dedicated
to helping people help themselves and each other.*

Contact Us

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