



York and Surrounding Communities

May 1, 2023

Sarah Zuckerman and Jentry Barrett

PURPOSE

This report serves to document and summarize the main themes discussed at the NE CARES Community Listening Session, held on May 1st 2023 at the 4-H Building in York, NE.

Participants included representatives from the following organizations and agencies

- Seward Public Schools
- CASA for York
- MidAmerica Vision Center
- City of York
- NE Extension
- UNL



Participants described York and surrounding communities as welcoming, family-centered, warm, and affordable, with many resources becoming available in the near future. Hopes and dreams for the future include increasing the capacity diverse adults so they mentor children and youth, more access and infrastructure for health, including mental health, and having more options for kids after high school.

Participants described potential beneficial partnerships with UNL. Examples include providing or providing training on evaluation methods to increase understanding of what programs work, and to aid in applying for grant funding. Participants also voiced the need for grant writing and grant management, projections of school enrollment based on birth rates, and science communication.

THEME ONE: EVERY CHILD NEEDS CARING ADULTS

Participants reported that many youth in York spend their afterschool hours and summertime in proxy-childcare settings like the library, city pools, and community center. The staff at these public places do not have the all the training that might be necessary to care for large groups of youth. Participants also voiced the importance of diverse adults being in mentoring and leadership roles (like TeamMates) so the diverse youth in York can see them in these positions. CASA has had record volunteer participation, but the demand still outstrips the supply. Participants reported a dream for each child in the community to have something to excel at, a safe place for to be physically active, having enough adversity to teach persistence, and enough great learning experiences to ignite their passions.

THEME 2: INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESS

There is a lot of infrastructure being developed in the York area in the upcoming years including the new Seward Health Center and the expansion of walking trails. Participants reported that they hoped even more infrastructure/resources would be created including:

- Emergency mental health services
- Continuity of care
- Food access
- Screening for kids
- Parent Education
- Childcare
- Mental health care in general
- Resources for those in lower SES brackets

THEME 3: UNL AS A PARTNER

Participants expressed ideas around how UNL could partner, examples include:

- Evaluation research to show program effectiveness for planning, funding, and grant application purposes.
- Help them consider changing models of operation, moving towards more digital workflows and processes.
- Training for evaluation, grant writing, grant management
- Building capacity in the adult population to become volunteers for CASA and TeamMates
- Projections of school enrollment.
- Research about brain drain, why do people leave, why do people stay?

- Science communication, how does the school district present school data to researchers parents?
- Deescalation training for city employees that work directly with youth (such as librarians).

NEXT STEPS

- York City Administrator, Dr. Sue Crawford, has volunteered to be part of the NE CARES Steering Committee
- The NE CARES team and NE Extension will continue to act as connectors for ideas from York to UNL. For example, the College of Architecture may complete some planning research during the Fall 2023 semester.
- The NE CARES team will follow up with Dr. Crawford to connect with city employees to learn more about the challenges they encounter working with children and youth and develop a plan for deescalation training and other needs identified.

CONTACT INFORMATION

- Sarah Zuckerman, szuckerman2@unl.edu
- Megan Kelley, megan.kelley@unl.edu
- Jentry Barrett, jbarrett3@unl.edu
- Carrie Gottschalk, carrie.gottschalk@unl.edu
- Maria Cantu Hines, mcantuhines2@unl.edu
- Katelyn Larson, katelyn.pleskac@unl.edu