Newsletter Issue #18 November 2026

Consumer Family Advisory Committee

A newsletter to keep you in the know about CFAC



Fall in Love with Recovery Brunch 2026

CFAC hosted the first ever Fall In Love With Recovery Brunch on October 2nd. We celebrated individuals who have impacted the community by recognizing their strengths and their contributions to the recovery community.

The Peer Excellence Award - a peer who demonstrates exceptional leadership and commitment to recovery.- the recipient was Donnie

The Guiding Light Award - a supervisor who illuminates the path to success for their peers by providing guidance, support, and mentorship. - the recipient was Makenzie

The Hidden Gem Award - a peer whose often-unseen contributions have made a meaningful impact on the recovery community. - the recipient was Becki

The Bridge Builder Award - an individual who connects people, systems, services, and opportunities. - the recipient was Taisa

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WHAT IS CFAC?

The Vision of the Consumer/Family Advisory Committee (CFAC) is for a Behavioral Health System in Region 5 in which Consumers, Family, Organizations and Communities work together in partnership to promote recovery and ensure positive change to reduce stigma, support independent choices, and to treat consumers with both dignity and respect.

The Consumer Family Advisory Committee is looking for individuals to join the committee. Anyone can join consumers, family members, peers, and colleagues. We meet on the second Tuesday of the Month at 9:30am in person in Lincoln at Region 5 or zoom

CFAC is seeking applications from individuals who are interested in helping to improve the quality of life for consumers and family members affected by mental health, substance use disorders, or other addictive disorders. We are interested in filling vacancies with those who have lived experience as a consumer or a family member of a behavioral health services consumer. (The term of service is 3 years)

Serving the counties of Butler, Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Johnson, Lancaster, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Polk, Richardson, Saline, Saunders, Seward, Thayer, and York.



Taisa's Corner

our Regional Consumer Specialist

Taisa has been supporting partners and rural areas in WRAP seminars. Taisa was the guest speaker for Nebraska's Recovery Event in Partnership with The Division Of Behavioral Health.

Taisa asked for the voice of the community where she created a survey for consumers to participate in that will lead to a focus group where the community is encouraged to come share their experiences and use their voice for the needs and interests of behavioral health.

Taisa attended the event At Centerpointe for overdose and poisoning remembrance. Taisa attended the proclamation ceremony where September was recognized as Nebraska Recovery Month.

If you are interested in connecting with Taisa for funding opportunities or education with WRAP or peer support please reach out tbrumagen@winitiative.org

CFAC Committee Chairs and Co-chairs

Funding Committee Chair: Samantha Benda/Co-Chair TBD
Membership Committee Chair: Kurt Lockard / Co-Chair TBD
Bylaws Committee Chair: TBD / Co-Chair TBD
Special Projects Chair: Erica Craig / Co-Chair TBD

New Member Spotlight

Samantha Benda



Samantha is a dedicated mental health advocate who brings both professional expertise and lived experience to her work. Drawing on five years of personal recovery, she is passionate about supporting others as they navigate their own wellness journeys.

As a Peer Support Specialist with the Wellbeing Initiative, Samantha empowers individuals through one-on-one support and by delivering training in Mental Health First Aid, Peer Support, Circle of Security, and Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP). She is also a certified trauma-informed breathwork facilitator, helping people develop practical tools to manage stress, build resilience, and improve overall well-being.

Beyond her professional role, Samantha volunteers with an environmental conservation nonprofit, reflecting her belief that the health of people and the health of the environment are closely connected. As the mother of a 12-year-old daughter, she is especially passionate about creating communities where mental well-being is valued, supported, and nurtured for future generations.

Through her involvement on the committee, Samantha hopes to contribute her lived experience, strengthen collaboration, and help create inclusive, supportive communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

New Member Spotlight

Stephanie Stoneking



Stephanie Stoneking,is passionate about using her lived experience to support others and advocate for meaningful change within the behavioral health system. As a Peer Support professional, She has the privilege of walking alongside individuals as they pursue their own recovery journeys. Stephanie believes in meeting people where they are, fostering hope, and empowering others by sharing lived experience in a way that promotes dignity, respect, and self-determination. Stephanie's work has reinforced the importance of treating every person with empathy and recognizing that recovery looks different for everyone.

Stephanie is interested in serving on the Consumer Family Advisory Committee because she believes the voices of individuals with lived experience are essential to improving behavioral health services. She wants to help ensure that care is person-centered, recovery-oriented, and responsive to the needs of consumers and families. By serving on the committee, Stephanie hopes to contribute thoughtful feedback, advocate for positive system improvements, and collaborate with others who share a commitment to strengthening services and outcomes for our community.

Stephanie is honored to use both her personal and professional experiences to help create a more compassionate, inclusive, and effective behavioral health system where every individual feels heard, respected, and supported.

New Member Spotlight

Brandy Thompson



Brandy Thompson is a Peer Support and Community Outreach Specialist at St. Monica's who is passionate about advocacy, connection, and helping individuals and families navigate resources and overcome barriers.

Her work has strengthened her belief that the voices of consumers and families should be included in conversations about the services and systems that directly affect them.

Brandy joined Region Five's Consumer Family Advisory Committee (CFAC) because she wants to help bring real-life perspectives to the table, identify gaps in services, and be part of creating positive changes within the behavioral health system.

She believes meaningful change happens when people are not only heard, but also given an opportunity to be part of the solution. Brandy's story is one of rebuilding, discovering purpose, and learning that some of the hardest parts of life can eventually become the very things that allow us to reach someone else. Her story is proof that a past can explain where you have been without deciding where you are going.

New Member Spotlight

Sara Becerra Chrastil



Sara Becerra Chrastil serves as the Director of Programs for Wellbeing Initiative, where she is passionate about supporting rural communities, growing programs, and creating new opportunities that connect people with the resources and services they need.

She enjoys building bridges, strengthening partnerships, and finding meaningful ways to expand programming and make a positive impact. Sara also values the opportunity to share her experiences, learn from others, and support the work happening across communities. She is excited to continue growing, collaborating, and discovering new ways to make a difference.

Outside of work, Sara is a proud mom to her young daughters, ages six (Jonsey) and (Josephine)one, as well as a sister and a friend. Family is at the heart of everything she does, and she is intentional about making time to create memories with her girls, connect with her sisters, and spend quality time with the people she loves. These relationships keep her grounded, inspire her work, and remind her of the importance of connection, support, and community.



Clothing

- **CenterPointe** Campus for Health and WellBeing at 2202 S. 11th street Lincoln
  - Winter Essentials Drive - On November 25th from 9am-3pm you can get a free coat or other winter essentials at the
- **People's City Mission** Help Center - 6800 P Street
  - Winter Coat Drive -distribution at PCM's Help Center on November 6 from 9:30-11:30am

Food

- **Malone Center** - 2110 U Street Ct., Lincoln NE
  - Community Holiday Food giveaway on November 22nd 1-4pm available for the first 1000 families
- **Matt Talbot Kitchen and Outreach** 2121 N 27th St , 402-477-4116
  - Thanksgiving Dinner Homemade Thanksgiving feast with all the fixings! 5:30 – 6:30pm Thanksgiving Day
  - Christmas Lunch, December 25 - 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Warming Centers

  - see list below

CenterPointe

WINTER

ESSENTIALS DISTRIBUTION

November 25
9:00am-3:00pm



Individuals in need of new or gently used winter essentials are invited to attend our donation distribution day.

Items available include: coats, hats, gloves, hoodies, hand warmers, scarves, socks, blankets, and sleeping bags.

There will also be community partners providing helpful resources.

Items available while supplies last.

❄ **Refreshments Provided** ❄

Community Partners

- SNAP
- Capital Humane Society
- Molina
- Nebraska Total Care
- United HealthCare
- Clinic with a Heart
- Genoa Flu and Covid Vaccine Clinic

Campus for Health & WellBeing
2202 S. 11th St. Lincoln, NE

VISIONARY YOUTH AND MALONE CENTER PRESENT:



7TH ANNUAL
COMMUNITY HOLIDAY FOOD GIVEAWAY

Sunday, November 22nd, 2026

1 P.M. TO 4 P.M. | MALONE COMMUNITY CENTER
2110 U STREET CT, LINCOLN, NE

(TURKEY AND HOLIDAY MEAL PACKAGE FOR UP TO 1,000 FAMILIES)

ACTIVITIES: LIVE MUSIC
FREE RESOURCE BOOTHS AND MORE!

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Malone

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

MAKE A DONATION. A DONATION OF $60
WILL BUY A MEAL FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR.

WWW.VISIONARYOUTH.ORG

WWW.MALONECENTER.ORG

LET'S HELP OUR COMMUNITY!

FOR SPONSORSHIP OR BOOTH SET UP CONTACT: KRISWHISENHUNT@VISIONARYOUTH.ORG

Warming Centers 2026-2027

A warming center is a place people can go to get temporary relief from extreme cold. Please call ahead or check the facility's website or social media before you go in case hours of operation change.

Aging Partners Victory Park Senior Center
600 S 70th St
402-441-7070
Monday-Friday: 8am-4:30pm

***Air Park Community Center**
4900 Mike Scholl St
402-441-7876
Monday-Friday: 6:30am-8pm
Saturday: 10am-6pm
Sunday: 12-6pm

Anderson Branch Library
3635 Touzalin Ave
402-441-8540
Monday-Thursday: 10am-8pm
Friday-Saturday: 10am-6pm
Sunday: 12-8pm

***Belmont Recreation Center**
1234 Judson St
402-441-6789
Monday-Thursday: 6:30am-6:30pm
Friday: 6:30am-5:30pm
Saturday: 9am-5pm
Sunday: 1-5pm

Bennett Martin Public Library
136 S 14th St
402-441-8500
Monday-Thursday: 10am-8pm
Friday-Saturday: 10am-6pm
Sunday: 12-6pm

Bethany Branch Library
1810 N Cotner Blvd
402-441-8550
Monday-Saturday: 10am-6pm

The Bridge Connect
721 K St
402-477-3951
Monday-Friday: 2-7pm

Pets welcome!

***Calvert Recreation Center**
4500 Stockwell St
402-441-8480
Monday-Thursday: 6:30am-7pm
Friday: 6:30am-5:45pm
Saturday: 1-5pm

Catholic Social Services
2241 O St
402-474-1600 (ext 0)
Monday-Thursday: 9am-12pm and 1-4pm
Friday: 9am-12pm

Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties
210 O St
402-471-4515
Monday-Friday: 8:30am-5pm

***Easterday Recreation Center**
6130 Adams St
402-441-7901
Monday-Friday: 9am-4:30pm

Lincoln-Lancaster County
HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

Eiseley Branch Library
1530 Superior St
402-441-4250
Monday-Thursday: 10am-8pm
Friday-Saturday: 10am-6pm
Sunday: 12-8pm

***F Street Community Center**
1225 F St
402-441-7951
Monday-Friday: 8am-8pm
Saturday: 10am-5pm
Sunday: 1-5pm

Gere Branch Library
2400 S 56th St
402-441-8560
Monday-Thursday: 10am-8pm
Friday-Saturday: 10am-6pm
Sunday: 12-8pm

Grace Chapel
1345 S 16th St
402-484-8555
Monday-Thursday: 1-3pm

When LPS closes due to weather or holidays, Grace Chapel will be closed

***Irving Recreation Center**
2010 Van Dorn St
402-441-7954
Monday-Thursday: 9am-7pm
Friday: 9am-6pm
Saturday: 1-5pm

Matt Talbot Kitchen and Outreach
2121 N 27th St
402-477-4116
Monday-Wednesay: 8:30am-6:30pm
Thursday: 8:30am-1pm and 5-6:30pm
Friday: 8:30am-6:30pm
Saturday-Sunday (meals only): 11:30am-12:30pm and 5:30-6:30pm

Hours may be extended during times of extreme cold - call or check online for more info

People's City Mission
110 Q St
402-475-1303
24/7, 365 days a year

For individuals on weather only emergency shelter, PCM will be available when wind chill or temperatures fall below 32 degrees F

South Branch Library
2675 South St
402-441-8570
Monday-Thursday: 10am-8pm
Friday-Saturday: 10am-6pm
Sunday: 12-8pm

Walt Branch Library
6701 S 14th St
402-441-4460
Monday-Thursday: 10am-8pm
Friday-Saturday: 10am-6pm
Sunday: 12-8pm

Williams Branch Library
4900 Mike Scholl St
402-441-8580
Monday-Tuesday: 4-8pm
Wednesday-Thursday: 10am-6pm
Friday-Sunday: 1-6pm

Located inside of Air Park Community Center

*When Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) closes schools due to weather, all Lincoln Parks and Recreation Centers will open at 9am. If closing early due to weather conditions, it is generally 5pm or once all participants have been picked up.

lincoln.ne.gov/COLD