



2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT



FOR WHICH WE STAND

CIVIC NEBRASKA'S CORE VALUES

Community is built on trust and engagement.

Community is at the heart of everything we do, and we're better when we work together. A community thrives when people trust each other, and we show up for one another.

Innovation leads to continuous improvement and greater impact.

We embrace new ideas and put them into action. We learn together today so we can implement change tomorrow.

Learning creates pathways to participation and progress.

We are driven to advance learning as an act of civic engagement. Learning in all its forms strengthens us and our community.

Power is inherent in every person.

We connect people to power and believe that power should be shared. Anyone can lead change in their community.

Optimism is a driving force for change.

We believe that our work matters and expect to make an impact. We're optimistic about our democracy, and we're hopeful for Nebraska's future.

Global pandemics. Economic meltdowns. Racial violence. Political turmoil. Any single one of these ills can rattle the foundations of our democracy. In 2020, they converged all at once. The result, as we're all aware, has been widespread pain across our state and country.

We are often reminded that we live in "uncertain times." Yet, from our perspective, many important things have remained unchanged. Throughout this extraordinary year, as we've worked to connect more and more Nebraskans to civic power, we can't help but be encouraged by what we've experienced. People are standing up to be heard, many for the first time.

In 2020, we were reminded that Nebraskans are sincere and work hard; they are brave and compassionate; they innovate and are community-minded. And, as Civic Nebraska has redoubled efforts to strengthen our state's civic spirit, our fellow Nebraskans have proven once more to be resilient, vigilant, and optimistic. Better days are ahead for our democracy. Because Nebraskans don't run away from history – we make it.

This is the story of Civic Nebraska in 2020. A story of how, when the world went dark, we stepped up to continue linking key communities to civic power. A story of how, amid unprecedented disruption and social change, we've lifted up democracy in our streets, our schools, and the halls of government. And a story of how we have innovated to serve our state in new ways while holding firm to our core principles.

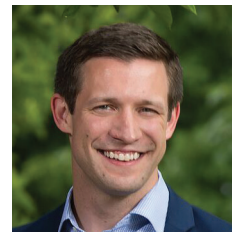
We often say that Civic Nebraska creates a more modern and robust democracy for all. It's a declaration that, of course, we hope inspires action and progress. But for meaningful progress there must be unshakeable faith in a set of values. **We must stand fast.**

We hope you enjoy this look back – and ahead – and resolve to join us in our mission.

Sincerely,

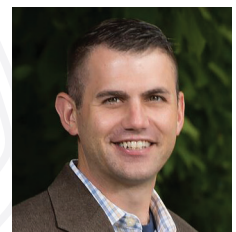
Adam Morfeld, J.D.

Executive Director and Founder



David C. Solheim, J.D.

Chair, Board of Directors



CivicNebraska.org/standfast

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STANDING GUARD



Team Voting Rights (clockwise from upper left: Mike Forsythe, Brad Christian-Sallis, John Cartier, Margaret Marsh) fights and organizes for Nebraska voters.

A modern and robust democracy requires free, fair, and secure elections. Through organizing, advocacy, and litigation, Civic Nebraska fights for a system in which democratic participation is truly representative of our great state.

In 2020, we led the successful defeat of a harmful voter ID measure at the Legislature. We trained and activated hundreds of new Voting Rights Advocates across the state. We collaborated with state leaders to promote vote-by-mail in the May primary. We went to court to challenge the constitutionality of appointing election commissioners in our largest counties, rather than electing them. And, amid protests of racial injustice, Civic Nebraska broke down barriers to democratic participation – obstacles both historic and current, intentional and indirect.

An election year provides citizens a dynamic opportunity to claim their inherent power and exercise their greatest of democratic rights. As we all work to create a more equitable and just democracy, Civic Nebraska stands guard so that every voter can be a part of it – freely and safely.



VOTE-BY-MAIL

Vote-by-mail won in a landslide this election cycle. With COVID-19 surging, nine in 10 Nebraskans reached for an early mail-in ballot – and, as a result, toppled a 48-year-old primary participation record. Civic Nebraska believes in the power of vote-by-mail and connects thousands of Nebraskans prior to each election to secure their early mail-in ballots. For more about supporting vote-by-mail, visit CivicNebraska.vote.



See our online annual report at CivicNebraska.org/standfast for more about these voting rights initiatives:

- **2020 Election Central**, a digital hub of information about the November vote
- **Digital organizing in the age of coronavirus**, with new get-out-the-vote tools
- Our **2020 Election Reports** recapping what went well and what can improve
- **Civic Nebraska legal actions** to resolve the contested constitutionality of appointed election commissioners



GETTING OUT THE COUNT

An accurate census is vital to democracy. In 2020 we established **Nebraska Counts**, a conduit between the U.S. Census Bureau and Nebraskans in traditionally hard-to-count populations. Our coalition launched a multifaceted, multilingual media campaign, and recruited residents in communities around Nebraska to conduct door-to-door (and eventually digital) canvassing in support of the census. By September, Nebraska was among the best-responding states. (Photo Courtesy Leadership Lincoln)

STANDING OUT



Our youth programs point students toward their inherent power.



CIVIC U.

Amid scholastic disruptions due to coronavirus, Civic Nebraska launched **CIVIC U.**, a virtual learning hub. Our innovative Youth Civic Leadership team is the force behind CIVIC U., adding new content regularly and hosting live events and activities, for students and non-students alike. As we continue to navigate the pandemic together – and apart – CIVIC U. connects civic-minded citizens of all ages. **Subscribe to CIVIC U. at CivicNebraska.org/virtualhub.**

One of 2020's indelible images has been of motivated young people demanding positive change of their communities. They must employ knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to realize that change – and that's where Civic Nebraska comes in. We help build lifelong civic leaders and create opportunities for youth community participation, service learning, problem-solving and civil discourse instruction, and student-centered enrichment. We develop skills in issue identification, problem-solving, and collaboration. And we link our programs based in schools with their respective communities to strengthen families, keep neighborhoods vibrant, and help children succeed in school and in life.

In 2020, Civic Nebraska launched before- and after-school programs for elementary students in the Raymond Central school district – our first extended-learning efforts outside Lincoln or Omaha, bringing our school-based programs to nine. As COVID-19 persists, our instructors maintain their strong connection with students, families, and communities; from summer activity kits to virtual clubs to hundreds of hours of remote video education and enrichment for all ages.

'We the People' means our youngest Americans, too. Through our growing Youth Civic Leadership work, Civic Nebraska empowers more and more young people to critically and creatively participate in their world. And work to improve it.



SERVICE LEARNING CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

This spring, Civic Nebraska was named a **Center of Extended Learning Excellence** in the area of service learning. In this new capacity, our Youth Civic Leadership team showcases and shares best practices with service-learning programming, staffing, and partnership development across Greater Nebraska. Our center, based in Grand Island and made possible by Beyond School Bells, offers regular professional development and coaching, including a free Civic Nebraska-developed resources toolkit available to all communities.

- See our online annual report at CivicNebraska.org/standfast for more about our Youth Civic Leadership initiatives, including:
- A partnership to promote literacy
 - Learning teamwork via *The Jungle Book*
 - Virtual clubs connecting students
 - Mini-grants to improve communities

STANDING TOGETHER



In our streets, schools, and neighborhoods, our Civic Health Programs link Nebraskans to lead change.

Civic health is the civic, social, and political strength of a community. Civic Nebraska is an active connector of these distinct yet interrelated strands – we help weave them together to fortify our state’s civic life.

In 2020, our Civic Health Programs built capacity in Greater Nebraska. Our rural initiatives empowered communities large and small to identify assets, identify goals, and lead change. In urban areas, Collective Impact Lincoln and One Omaha extended their neighborhood-building reach, linking residents to power structures and providing them with training and resources to take on issues. And we developed a five-year roadmap to improve Nebraska’s civic fabric.

When we’re more connected to one another and to our institutions, our communities are better able to solve local problems. That’s civic health – and from Scottsbluff to Diller, from Wayne to Ogallala, Civic Nebraska is strengthening it.



CIVIC SATURDAYS

In a time of anxiety, disconnectedness and polarization, people need a way to come together in civic community – in person or virtually – to reflect on and rededicate ourselves to the values and practices of being a

contributing member in civic life. Civic Nebraska brought the national phenomenon of Civic Saturday to Lincoln in 2019 and, with newly trained local “civic seminarians,” will regularly host virtual Civic Saturdays starting in fall 2020.



CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

How does our state fare in all areas of civic health – and what are the best ways to strengthen our collective civic life? Civic Nebraska

stood with partners to research, write and publish the **2020 Nebraska Civic Health Index**, a guide to our state’s political involvement, community engagement, social connectedness, and confidence in institutions. See the full report at CivicNebraska.org.

See our online annual report at CivicNebraska.org/standfast for more about our civic health initiatives, including:

- The **New Americans Civic Leadership Academy**, which creates agency among immigrants and refugees
- Phase 2 of **Collective Impact Lincoln** in Star City neighborhoods
- Mini-grants from **One Omaha** to strengthen the city street-by-street
- Training in **Civil Discourse** amid a heated 2020 campaign

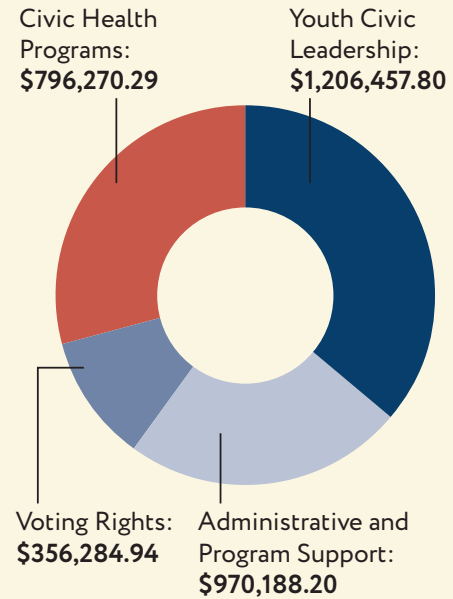
TOTAL BUDGET

\$3,329,201.23



IMPACTS

Funding Allocations, Fiscal Year 2019-20



NO STANDING STILL

WHAT'S NEXT FOR CIVIC NEBRASKA



OUR VOTING RIGHTS INITIATIVES PROGRAMS WILL:

- **Lead opposition to anti-voter policies**, such as voter ID, at the statehouse
- **Expand and fortify our statewide network** of volunteer Voting Rights Advocates
- **Continue our constitutional challenge** of the appointment of election commissioners

CivicNebraska.org/voting-rights



OUR YOUTH CIVIC LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS WILL:

- **Coordinate our programs and families** with Voting Rights and Civic Health
- **Build stronger ties** with families and neighborhoods by all means necessary
- **Infuse our programming** with Civic Nebraska's mission and values

CivicNebraska.org/youth-civic-leadership



OUR CIVIC HEALTH PROGRAMS WILL:

- **Drive investments in Civic Health programs and workshops** across the state using the 2020 Civic Health Index
- **Expand civil discourse** and media literacy training and Civic Saturdays
- **Build and support civic leadership** capacity in Greater Nebraska

CivicNebraska.org/civic-health-program



STAND WITH US

Our work wouldn't be possible without you. Your time, energy, and financial support have delivered civic education and service-learning skills to thousands of Nebraska students. You have strengthened civic life in communities across our state. And you have advanced the most precious of rights – to vote.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Join us. Call 402.904.5191 or email info@civicnebraska.org for volunteer opportunities.

Share our story. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and share our work with your social networks.

Donate. We immediately put your financial support to work in Nebraska communities. Support us at bitly.com/CivNebGive.

DEFENDING DEMOCRACY WITH PLANNED GIVING

Planned giving means long-term sustainability of our democracy-building work. To learn more, contact Director of Development Liz Potter at 402.904.5191, liz.potter@civicnebraska.org, or CivicNebraska.org/plannedgiving.



CIVIC NEBRASKA STAFF

Adam Morfeld, Executive Director & Founder; **Amanda Barker**, Deputy Executive Director & Director of Civic Health Programs; **Julie Ward**, Assistant to the Executive Director; **Liz Potter**, Director of Development; **John Cartier**, Director of Voting Rights; **Kent Day**, Director of Youth Civic Leadership; **Westin Miller**, Director of Public Policy; **Steve Smith**, Director of Communications; **Alexis Bromley**, One Omaha Director; **Nancy Petitto**, Collective Impact Lincoln Director; **Brad Christian-Sallis**, Voting Rights Field Director; **Nichollette Seigfreid**, HR Manager; **Bridgette Foerster**, Finance & Administration Coordinator; **Sarah Cohen**, Grants Associate; **Shari Kimble**, Youth Leadership Programs Manager; **Renae Ninneman**, Youth Leadership Programs Manager; **Brianna White**, Director, Sherman CLC; **Equasha Smith Gooch**, Director, Lothrop CLC; **Tracy White**, Director, Trailblazers Afterschool Academy; **Victor Ortiz-Morales**, School Community Coordinator, **Levi Eggers**, School Community Coordinator, Randolph CLC; **Michael Bandy**, School Community Coordinator, Northeast High CLC; **Chelsea Egenberger**, School Community Coordinator, Lincoln High CLC; **Kara Nelson**, School Community Coordinator, Raymond Central Before- & After-School; **Kieran Kissler**, Collective Impact Lincoln Community Organizer; **Daniel Bennett**, Civic Health Program Manager; **Chris McCurdy**, Civic Health Curriculum Specialist; **Alex O'Hanlon**, One Omaha Engagement Coordinator; **Michael Van Sant**, One Omaha Leadership Coordinator; **Margaret Marsh**, Voting Rights Field Organizer; **Mike Forsythe**, Voting Rights Field Organizer; **Heather Engdahl**, Voting Rights Field Organizer; *and more than 100 part-time staff creating a more modern, robust democracy.*



2020 ANNUAL REPORT CONTRIBUTORS

Katie Nieland, layout and design; **Steve Smith**, writer and editor; **Kylie Graham**, **Gwyneth Bauer**, **Bergen Johnston**, photographers



Creating a more modern and robust democracy for
all Nebraskans.

CivicNebraska.org

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