

2022 & 2023

We Care for Kids Impact Report

Nebraskans Demand
Public Solutions for
Its Child Care Crisis



Quality Early Childhood Education
For All Nebraska Families



Educación y cuidado infantil de calidad
para las familias de Nebraska

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Former campaign manager, Kara Ficke, speaks at the governor's proclamation in 2023.



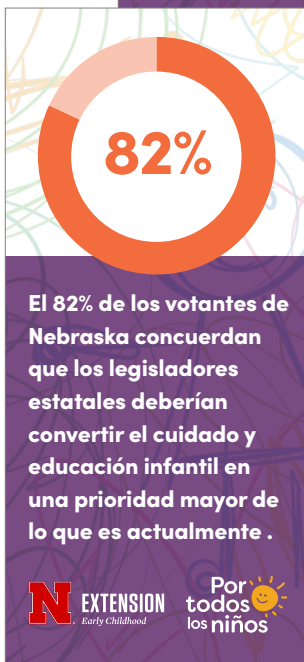
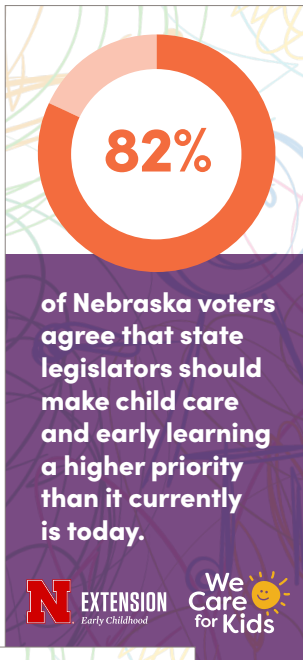
Campaign resources for communities are available on the website in English and Spanish.

Since launching the **We Care for Kids/*Por todos los niños*** public will building campaign in 2022, the statewide effort has met its goals, exceeded expectations, and set the stage for winning significant public funding to make quality child care and early learning accessible to all Nebraska families.

This report offers proof that Nebraskans overwhelmingly want state action on early childhood care and education and see it as integral to guaranteeing that the state remains a great place to live, work, raise a family, and invest in the success of future generations. **We Care for Kids/*Por todos los niños*** has helped put access to quality child care and early learning on the map as a top priority issue across Nebraska, with voters wanting state government to drive change through significant funding dedicated to helping communities solve the child care crisis and ensure access.

Originally developed and funded as part of a Preschool Development Grant administered by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska, the campaign is a collaborative partnership of diverse state and community-based organizations and foundations that see the value of child care and early learning to children, families, and the state's economy. The campaign has built upon tremendous early childhood assets in Nebraska, bringing together the many groups that have a stake in this issue under a campaign umbrella and tapping into their frustration with the pace of change—especially as post-pandemic life returned to normal and the availability of licensed child care declined across the state due to an unsustainable business model for providers that cannot be solved without appropriate public investment (Reference: [2023 Kids Count Report](#)).

We Care for Kids/*Por todos los niños* complements the great work of these diverse organizations by bringing them together, sharing resources and solutions, and providing them with professional campaign and communications expertise and materials to amplify their voices and engage their communities. The campaign is inclusive and reaches every corner of the state. A great source of pride is the fully bilingual nature of the campaign in *Por todos los niños*, where communications and materials are specifically transcreated for Spanish-speaking Nebraskans, and outreach strategies include engaging Spanish-speaking providers, families, and communities on quality early childhood education and the child care crisis.



By the end of 2023, support held steady for early childhood education in Nebraska, as demonstrated by a survey of voters in early 2024.

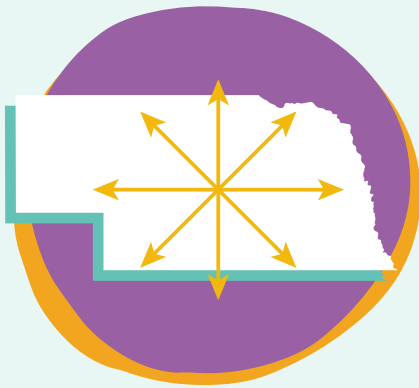
As a result, the demand for significant state investment in solving the child care crisis is **now uniformly strong** across urban, suburban, rural, and small town communities and, most notably, across political affiliation, age, gender, and parental status. The rapid growth of this demand is shown in the campaign's public opinion research where successive surveys demonstrate that public engagement moved the issue from being somewhat important to belief that access to quality child care is an urgent crisis that must be solved.

We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños emerges as a model for other states seeking to make access to child care and early learning a priority through public will building campaigns. It shows the power of collaboration, partnership, and funding professional campaign communications that unify and amplify the voices of communities. This requires significant investment, but the results are invaluable.

At the conclusion of 2023, a record 20 bills were introduced into the legislature that addressed child care in some way. Most, if not all, were generated by individual legislators reacting to the expressed needs of their communities, validating a central assumption of the campaign's strategy: change happens when policymakers feel on-the-ground urgency and support at home. Unfortunately, legislation was proposed and debated before public demand could be leveraged. As a result, only very modest gains were made in the legislative session, pointing to work that must be done in the second phase of public will building.

As the campaign moves ahead with engaging the public on the benefits of quality early childhood care and education for children, families, businesses, and the state's economy, early learning champions have a golden opportunity to leverage their work to make a big ask for state investment that will be supported by voters throughout Nebraska. The most recent public opinion research shows widespread and strong support for such an ask and action. Nebraskans have issued a mandate for a unified ask that is boldly pursued—an opportunity that should not be missed and a responsibility that cannot be ignored.

Turning Demand into Action: A Path to Solving the Child Care Crisis



120 PARTNERS

from every region of the state joined the campaign from June 2022 to December 2023, including faith-based organizations, small businesses, public school districts, chambers of commerce, economic developers, child care programs, and more.

Statewide survey results demonstrated

STRONG AND INCREASED SUPPORT

for solving Nebraska's child care crisis in 2023 and 2024.

Nebraskans viewed statewide paid media advertisements nearly **22 MILLION TIMES**

Governor Ricketts and Governor Pillen issued proclamations

in both 2022 and 2023, commemorating the importance of early childhood education in Nebraska and elevating the urgency of child care issues in communities.

Campaign website since launch:

163,000 visits,
18% of traffic
to Spanish
pages and
resources.



More than **14,500 Nebraskans** joined across three virtual and tele-town hall events: two in English and one in Spanish.

In 2022 and 2023 the campaign sponsored **18 community events**, including the Nebraska State Fair.



From 07/22/22 to 12/31/23: Campaign **email subscriber list grew from 200 to 2,535** and average **email open rates of 36.8%** were far above nonprofit industry standard (25.2%).

Campaign reach extends to more than **155,000 Nebraska families** through combined paid and organic tactics.



In partnership with the Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative, **24 child care providers** were recognized as **Early Childhood Champions.**



Partner Lincoln Littles hosted We Care for Kids at an event to share about the campaign and how to get involved.

We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños set out to bring together and support a diverse group of partners throughout Nebraska—organizations working directly on child care and early learning issues, as well as others working in related fields, such as economic development and health.

More than 120 partners from every region of the state joined We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños as of December 2023, including faith-based organizations, small businesses, public school districts, chambers of commerce, economic developers, child care programs, and more.

The campaign's success is driven by the collaboration of these partners. The campaign prioritized continuous engagement, keeping partners involved through advisory roles and outreach efforts that strengthened the network while building greater awareness.

Campaign Advisory Group

Through the life of the campaign, a key group of statewide early childhood care and education champions closely connected to communities and families provided vital insights and counsel through their participation in the Campaign Advisory Group. Advisory Group members actively recruit new partners to join the effort and serve as ambassadors to their networks, making personal asks to organizations and leaders to become official partners.

Campaign Advisory Group Members 2022-2023

Kyle Arganbright Community Banker and Mayor, Family and Community Representative

Lorena Beckius Marketing Coordinator, Wolf Auto, Family and Community Representative

Anne Brandt Executive Director, Lincoln Littles

Michael Burke Vice President, Buffett Early Childhood Fund

Cama Charlet Associate Director, Professional Learning, Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Emily Fern Grow Kids Associate Director, Good News Church

Holly Hatton Assistant Professor and Early Childhood Education Extension Specialist, Nebraska Extension

Nicole Johnson Director, Panhandle ESU 13

Amy Lapointe Education Director, Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska

Carrie Malek-Madani Director of Marketing and Communications, Nebraska Community Foundation

Michael Medwick Strategic Communications Manager, First Five Nebraska

Maricela Novoa Central Region Early Learning Connection Bilingual Specialist, ESU 10

Jason Prokop Director, First Five Nebraska

Jessie Rasmussen President, Buffett Early Childhood Fund

Deb Reiman Associate Vice President of Early Childhood Programs, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation

Mohammad Sahil Education and Training Supervisor, Lutheran Family Services

Rachel Sissel Associate Vice President of Early Childhood Programs, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation

John Spatz Executive Director, Nebraska Association of School Boards

Angie Stenger Executive Director, Northeast Nebraska Growing Together

Sue Sullivan Early Childhood Educator, South Sioux City School District

Ilissa Talkington Parent Ambassador Program Manager, Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative

Fawn Taylor Chief Executive Officer, Omaha Children's Museum

Albert Varas Chief Executive Officer, Latino Center of the Midlands

Monica Wells Family and Community Program Administrator, Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Renee Wessels Associate Executive Director for Strategy and External Affairs, Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Jeff Yost President and CEO, Nebraska Community Foundation



We Care for Kids Days digital resource focused on children's health.

We Care for Kids Days

Engagement efforts, like We Care for Kids Days, reinforced the message that all Nebraskans are impacted by early childhood care and education. Each month the campaign highlighted the intersection between early childhood care and education and other industries and issues, such as agriculture, health care, small businesses, and more. **We Care for Kids/*Por todos los niños*** reached out to organizations in the focus area each month sharing about the campaign and inviting them to become a partner.

Paid engagement tactics were also highly successful. For example, the campaign sent informational and action-oriented emails to paid lists that aligned with the focus areas and reached new individuals throughout the state.

As a result of these combined outreach efforts, the campaign averaged more than five new partners every month since launching in June 2022.

Between November 2022 and December 2023, We Care for Kids Days focused on:

- Early childhood educators
- Agriculture, farming, and ranching communities and businesses
- Faith-based organizations
- Child health and health care organizations
- Workforce, business community, and community/economic development
- Community leaders, civic organizations, local mayors
- Community colleges, education, and community organizations
- Service organizations
- Housing and public housing organizations
- Law enforcement, public safety, crime prevention
- School districts and school boards
- Community response and family/child wellbeing organizations

Partners bring the campaign to life.

Once on board, campaign partners were active ambassadors across Nebraska. The campaign created a turnkey toolkit and provided printed materials at no cost to make it as easy as possible for organizations and individuals to engage their networks and communities.

Ambassadors represented the campaign at events to hand out materials and help families understand the importance of quality early childhood education. They reached influencers through their relationships and raised awareness through local **We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños** proclamation ceremonies. They spoke to media outlets and on panels at conferences around the state to share community stories and lift up the importance of quality early educators. These partners are essential to the work of **We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños** and continue to be a valuable asset.



Partner and NECC Parent Ambassador, Kelsee Sayer, hosts an event table featuring campaign materials.

Partner Spotlight: Communities for Kids



In the spring of 2023, **We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños** partnered with **Communities for Kids (C4K)** to support local events and outreach activities in key campaign geographies. The C4K

network is embedded throughout the state, leveraging relationships with public and private entities to increase access to quality early care and education for all children from birth through age five, working alongside communities according to their unique needs and assets. The campaign jumped at the chance to be additive to their work already underway and amplify their reach.

C4K groups in 14 counties received stipends of \$5,000 each to support community activities and bolster outreach to achieve one or more of the following goals: engage community leaders; introduce **We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños** to families; and recruit at least one additional campaign partner.

These activities took place during Week of the Young Child in April 2023 and continued through the month. Communities flexed their creativity which yielded incredible impact. In total, they recruited 12 new campaign partners and reached more than 15,000 Nebraskans.



Columbus C4K used their stipend for a community billboard, reaching thousands of Nebraskans, and spreading the importance of early education.

We are grateful to the more than 120 partners who support the campaign, including members of our campaign advisory group.

ALICAP	Grand Island YMCA Childcare	Nebraska Extension
Auburn Sixpence	Growing Community Connections	Nebraska Extension Women in Agriculture
Bacon, Vinton & Venteicher, L.L.C.	Hall County Community Collaborative	Nebraska Library Association
Beatrice Mary Family YMCA	Hamilton Heights Child Development Center	Nebraska Library Commission
Behaven Kids	Hastings Family YMCA	Nebraska Public Leadership Foundation
Buffalo County Community Partners	Help Me Grow Nebraska	Norfolk Family Coalition
Buffett Early Childhood Fund	Huskers Illustrated	Norm Waitt Sr. YMCA
Busy Feet Childcare	Janssen Enterprises	North Platte Sixpence
The Callaway Courier	Karime Child Care LLC	Northeast Nebraska Growing Together
Cardinal Kids Learning Center	Kearney Family YMCA	Omaha Children's Museum
Central Region Early Learning Connection	Kee's Tiny Treasures Childcare	Omaha Community Foundation
Centro Hispano Comunitario de Nebraska	Kenesaw United Child Care Coalition	OpenSky Policy Institute
Christ Lutheran Early Childhood Community	Kids Can Community Center	Panhandle Partnership
City of Gothenburg	Ladybug Crossing Early Learning Center	Prairie Hill Learning Center
Columbus Area United Way	Latino Center of the Midlands	Rooted in Relationships
Community & Family Partnership	Lexie's Little Sunshines Childcare LLC	Rotary District 5650
Communities for Kids	Lexington Sixpence	Scottsbluff Family YMCA
Communities for Kids Lincoln County	Lincoln Center Kiwanis	Scottsbluff Public Schools
Cozad Local	Lincoln Chamber of Commerce	Scottsbluff Public Schools Sixpence
CRCC	Lincoln Children's Museum	Sixpence Early Learning Fund
Dayspring Bank	Lincoln Community Foundation	South Sioux City Community Schools
Dimensions Educational Research Foundation	Lincoln Littles	Sparq Data Solutions
Early Development Network North Platte	Little Peanuts Daycare	Step Up to Quality
Empowering Kids Academy	The Minden Courier	Stick Creek Kids Child Development Center
Enviser AMS	Mourning Hope Grief Center	St. John Early Learning Center
Eustis-Farnam Public Schools	Nebraska Children's Home Society	swishBOOM
First Five Nebraska	Nebraska Afghan Community Center	Tri-Faith Initiative
Flatwater Bank	Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children	The Teaching Tree
Fremont Family Coalition	Nebraska Association for Infant Mental Health	United Way of the Midlands
Fremont Family YMCA	Nebraska Association of School Boards	United Way of South Central Nebraska
Fremont Public Schools Sixpence Program	Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families & Schools	University of Nebraska Omaha College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences
Gage Area Growth Enterprise (NGage)	Nebraska Children and Families Foundation	Valentine Children & Families Coalition
Gering Public Schools	Nebraska City Area Economic Development Corporation	Volunteer Nebraska
Good News Church	Nebraska Commission on Latino-Americans	Wayne Area Economic Development
Gothenburg Chamber of Commerce	Nebraska Community Foundation	The Wellbeing Partners
Gothenburg City Government	Nebraska Department of Education	Westside Early Childhood Centers
Gothenburg Early Childhood Learning Coalition	Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services	Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska
Gothenburg Health	Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative	Wolf Auto Ogallala, LLC
Gothenburg Improvement Company	Nebraska Early Development Network	York Sixpence
Gothenburg Leader	Nebraska Economic Developers Association	YWCA Child Development Center of Grand Island
Grand Island Public Schools		



Nebraska Extension partnered with **We Care for Kids/ Por todos los niños** to field and release a statewide survey of voters in early 2023, and authored an op-ed that highlighted the results.

Partner Spotlight: Nebraska Extension



Nebraska Extension is a steadfast partner in furthering the campaign's mission. From engagement on the Campaign Advisory Group to co-releasing 2023 and 2024 survey findings and partnering at events, Nebraska Extension took **We Care for Kids/ Por todos los niños** to their vast network across the state, allowing the campaign to reach even more Nebraskans.

At the 2023 Women in Agriculture Conference, Nebraska Extension co-led an early childhood education-focused breakout session alongside the campaign, featuring panelists from the Nebraska Farm Bureau, Nebraska Future Farmers of America Foundation, and Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative Parent Ambassadors.

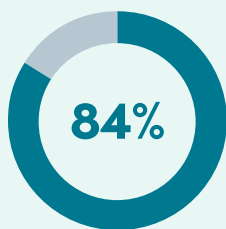
2023 Statewide Survey

In March 2023, Nebraska Extension partnered with **We Care for Kids/ Por todos los niños** to field and release a statewide survey of voters. This research aimed to compare findings from a 2022 survey prior to the campaign's launch, and check the current pulse of Nebraskans' support of early childhood issues and their understanding of the state of child care.

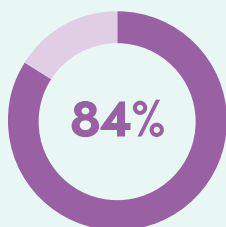
The survey found overwhelming support and, less than one year after the campaign launch, demonstrated voters saw a child care crisis that needed urgent attention. The findings resulted in a public briefing with media in attendance, a toolkit of materials to share the findings, and new paid media to raise urgency around the state. The findings continued to be used throughout the year by the media and policymakers.

Nebraska Extension co-branded the survey and all supporting materials, Campaign Advisory Group member Dr. Holly Hatton co-presented a preview of the survey findings during the March 2023 Town Hall, and Kathleen Lodi and Dr. Hatton co-authored an op-ed in the Nebraska Examiner to promote the survey.

2023 Survey Findings



say that Nebraska should support child care and early learning like it does K-12 schools and higher education.



say the lack of child care in Nebraska is a problem that will not solve itself, and want Nebraskans to come together to solve the problem and invest in solutions.



Social media graphics were created and disseminated for partners to spread the word about their participation in We Care for Kids Week.

Statewide Events and Outreach

Events across the state raised visibility, steadily bringing in new and unexpected partners, sharing resources, and reaching hundreds of thousands of Nebraskans.

We Care for Kids/*Por todos los niños* Week

We Care for Kids/*Por todos los niños* Week, held in late September to follow on the heels of the Thriving Children, Families, and Communities Conference and a busy summer event season, encouraged partner engagement, community events, and sharing of the campaign and the importance of early childhood education across Nebraska. In addition to statewide community events, proclamations by both Governor Pete Ricketts (2022) and Governor Jim Pillen (2023) ended the week with declarations that early childhood education is important to the future of Nebraska.

2022

Twenty-one organizations registered to host live events during **We Care for Kids/*Por todos los niños*** Week in 2022, reaching an estimated 4,000 families.

2023

Fifteen partner organizations signed up to participate in events and outreach throughout the week. This included participation in Omaha, Lincoln, Adams County, Lexington, Columbus, Norfolk, Schuyler, Falls City, Kearney, and Pierce. These efforts reached approximately 2,100 Nebraskans, including at least 160 families and at least 45 teachers. In 2023, the week kicked off with a full-page ad in the Lincoln Journal Star that included support from more than 90 partners, and culminated with the governor's proclamation and a gathering of nearly 50 campaign partners to collaborate and strategize about child care solutions in communities.

Nebraska State Fair

For two years in a row, **We Care for Kids/*Por todos los niños*** sponsored the Nebraska State Fair in Grand Island. In 2022, attendance included **more than 287,000 Nebraskans**. In 2023, the campaign supported the Safe Kids ID Program, securing **prominent logo placement** for the nearly **312,000 Nebraskans** in attendance. The campaign logo was also printed on wristbands provided to more than 6,000 children who attended to ensure their safety at the event. In 2023, more than 40 campaign partners and supporters also volunteered at the booth throughout the week.



Campaign partners volunteered to staff the State Fair booth, meeting with families and community members and speaking about the effort with Nebraskans from all walks of life.



Engaging Hispanic and Latino communities is a cornerstone of

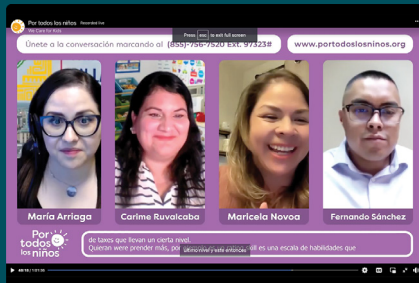
We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños. The campaign is bilingual and started with a collaborative transcreation process to

ensure the Spanish campaign name and tagline would resonate with Spanish-speaking Nebraskans. The campaign name, *Por todos los niños*, and tagline in Spanish capture the positive, warm, and friendly sentiment of the English version, ensuring a Spanish equivalent that shares the campaign's messages in a culturally competent manner to Spanish-speaking audiences around the state.

From flyers and swag, to social and paid media, every resource created is available in both English and Spanish, reaching families, educators, and influencers in their preferred language. Throughout the life of the campaign, traffic to Spanish pages remained steadily around 20–30% of all website traffic, demonstrating the efficacy of our bilingual strategy and a significant need that is being met with these resources.

Spanish-language Town Hall

On October 11, 2023, the campaign coordinated and implemented a Spanish-language virtual and tele-town hall, providing a platform for direct engagement and dialogue with community members. The event featured Maria Arriaga, Executive Director of the Nebraska Commission on Latino-Americans, as the moderator. Panelists included an advocate, an early childhood educator and business owner, and a parent. The conversation focused on sharing information about why quality early childhood education is important for families and Nebraska's future, and panelists shared their experiences accessing and working within the early childhood care and education space.



The Spanish-language Town Hall event engaged **3,033 participants**, and those who joined by phone stayed on the line for an average of **35.1 minutes**, significantly longer than the average length of time participants stay on the line for similar events (around 3 to 5 minutes). Paid promotion also ran for the event, resulting in **2,408,800 radio and TV impressions** on Spanish-language media outlets.

Hispanic and Latino Community Engagement

In-person events provided additional ways to engage with Hispanic and Latino communities throughout the state. This included recruiting Spanish-speaking educators to volunteer at the campaign booth during the State Fair so that information could be shared with families in attendance. Additionally, the campaign supported the Spanish-speaking Providers Conference, organized by the Center for Rural Affairs. The conference aimed to equip child care providers with the necessary tools to start a small, home-based business, including how to fill out license applications and sharing resources offered by the state. The campaign promoted the conference through its channels, provided campaign swag to attendees, paid for interpretation services during the conference, and developed talking points for longtime partner and keynote speaker, Carime Ruvalcaba.



Engaging Hispanic and Latino communities remains an intentional strategy, fostering meaningful connections and **advocating for the well-being of all children in the state.**

Campaign partner Carime Ruvalcaba (left), director and owner of Karime Child Care, LLC, supports the campaign through events, participation in the campaign PSA, and sharing materials with her community.

Proclamations in cities, communities, and at the state level raised awareness about the importance of early childhood education with state and local leaders.

Governor Ricketts and Governor Pillen issued proclamations in both 2022 and 2023. Campaign Advisory Group members and partners joined **We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños** during both ceremonies, commemorating the importance of early childhood education in Nebraska and elevating the urgency of child care issues in communities.

Followed by a partner gathering of nearly 50 advocates and community leaders across the state, the 2023 proclamation event celebrated the campaign's progress and marked an important opportunity to move from awareness to action.



Local community proclamations were issued across Nebraska to declare the importance of early childhood education.



A



B



C



D



E



F



G



H



I

A: Mariana Muñoz de Schell, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, joins the partner gathering.

B: Nearly 50 early childhood advocates celebrate on the capitol steps following the governor's proclamation.

C: Advisory group member and Parent Ambassador Program Manager, Ilissa Talkington, presents.

D: Governor Jim Pillen issues a proclamation for We Care for Kids Week.

E: Campaign partners and advisory group members gathered in Lincoln to celebrate the governor's proclamation.

F: At the partner gathering, campaign supporters strategized about early childhood solutions in Nebraska communities.

G: Partners wore campaign t-shirts to show their support.

H: NECC Parent Ambassadors Kelsee Sayer, Kaycee Meister, and Jess Parker participated in a panel at the gathering.

I: Governor Jim Pillen and campaign partners celebrate We Care for Kids Week with a statewide proclamation.



Bilingual paid media campaigns resulted in nearly 22 million statewide views from June 2022 to December 2023, reaching Nebraskans through radio, streaming, digital ads, and more. This fostered a surround sound of campaign messages through various mediums, ensuring that Nebraskans heard a consistent drumbeat on the importance of early education across the state. The statewide surveys informed the paid media messaging strategy—meeting Nebraskans where they are with messages proven to resonate by statewide survey data. In 2022, core campaign messages about the importance of early education for Nebraska to thrive drove the paid ads.

After learning that Nebraskans saw a child care crisis that was hurting families and warranted urgent attention, the campaign evolved the paid media messaging in 2023 from building awareness to elevating that urgency.

While most paid tactics resulted in higher-than-average engagement compared to industry standards, several stood out as particularly successful:

- **In September 2023, a full-page ad ran twice in the print edition of the *Lincoln Journal Star*, signed by more than 90 partners elevating the urgency of the child care crisis in Nebraska.**
- **Monthly target emails sent to purchased lists** from December 2022 through December 2023 aligned with the We Care for Kids Days focus areas, and shared campaign messages and resources with more than 500,000 Nebraskans. Audiences included the business community, school administrators, health care professionals, faith communities, the ranching/ag sector, and more. **Our most engaged audiences for these emails have been parents of young children, business leaders, and Spanish-speaking recipients, boasting open rates of over 21% (average is 15.6%).**
- **Community sponsorships achieved the dual outcome** of supporting community partners and raising awareness about the campaign among key audiences. **We Care for Kids/ *Por todos los niños* sponsored 18 community events and organizations across sectors, including:**
 - Nebraska State Fair
 - Women in Agriculture Conference



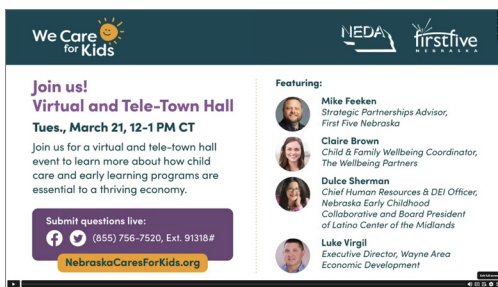
Campaign ad ran in the *Lincoln Journal Star* featuring partners across the state during We Care for Kids Week in 2023.

- Kids Can Do Luncheon
- ICAN Women's Leadership Conference
- Nebraska Economic Developer's Conference
- Juneteenth Freedom Festival
- Hispanic Heritage Month
- Boo at the Zoo
- Thank an Early Education Teacher Sponsorship
- Lincoln Early Childhood Family Fair
- **Overall, paid media accounted for nearly 80% of website traffic** from June 2022 to December 2023, driving visitors from LinkedIn, paid emails, Google ads, and digital display ads.

Virtual and Tele-Town Halls

Virtual and tele-town halls reached thousands of Nebraskans, demonstrating the demand for early childhood care and education information.

- **Nearly 7,500 people joined the first statewide livestreamed, telephone town hall** ([view recording](#)) in September 2022, outperforming national participation rates for events of this type by 27%. A complementary Spanish-language text message was also sent during this time to 9,189 phones, encouraging people to visit the website.
- **More than 4,000 Nebraskans joined the second livestreamed, telephone town hall** ([view recording](#)) in March 2023, which more directly targeted business and community leaders. Conducted in collaboration with campaign partners First Five Nebraska and the Nebraska Economic Developers Association, community panelists shared how access to early childhood education programs is essential for Nebraska to thrive and fielded questions from callers and online participants.
- **The campaign's first Spanish-language town hall** ([view recording](#)) **had more than 3,000 participants**, and those who joined by phone stayed on the line for an average of 35.1 minutes, significantly longer than the average length of time participants stay on the line for similar events (around 3 to 5 minutes).





Heidi Pieper, Nebraska Farm Bureau, speaks about the importance of child care at the 2023 Women in Agriculture Conference.

A steady earned media strategy resulted in numerous op-ed placements and extensive local media coverage around the state. Partners and representatives of community organizations around Nebraska are indispensable in this effort, using campaign talking points to spread the word about **We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños**, highlight the child care crisis in Nebraska, and emphasize the importance of the early years for children's development—enabling broad reach at the state level and within communities.

Pitching to local reporters across the state yielded coverage in Nebraska communities nearly every month from June 2022 through December 2023. Topics of local interest included Early Childhood Champions nominations, sponsored in partnership with Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative, partner participation in **We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños** Town Halls, the Communities for Kids stipend engagement, and campaign presence at events like the Nebraska State Fair.

Media Coverage

Notable coverage includes:

Nebraska Examiner: High-quality early childhood education is an important component of the quality of life in Nebraska

- Co-authored op-ed from Step Up To Quality and We Care for Kids.

Nebraska Public Media: Consider This: Early Childhood Education

- Thirty-minute segment from Nebraska Public Media about the importance of early childhood education, featuring partners from the Buffett Institute, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, and the Gothenburg Early Childhood Learning Coalition.

Omaha World-Herald: Survey: Nebraskans believe lack of affordable child care a serious problem in the state

[The full list of media coverage is available on the campaign website.](#)

- Exclusive launch day coverage of the 2023 Statewide Survey findings.

Nebraska Examiner: The child care crisis is forcing parents to leave the workforce

- Op-ed about the workforce impacts of the child care crisis, from partner Trevor Lee at the Nebraska Economic Developers Association.

Omaha World-Herald: Midlands Voices: Nebraska can't afford to lose its early childhood teachers

- Op-ed highlighting the child care crisis in Nebraska and the need to support early educators.

Telemundo Nebraska: Campaña local We Care for Kids apoya la educación infantil de calidad

- Statewide Spanish-language coverage of campaign impact.

Additional local media coverage:

The Chadron Record (Chadron):

Local child care provider honored

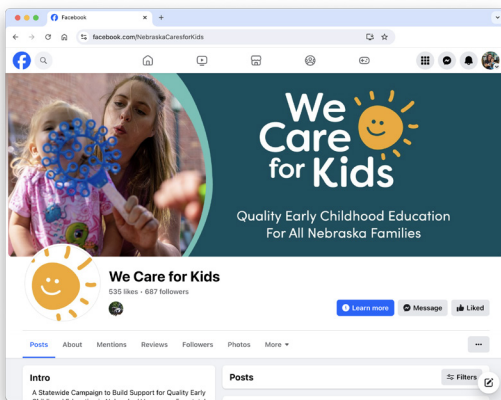
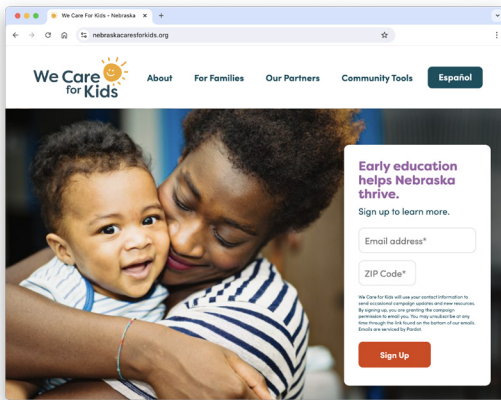
Grand Island Chamber of Commerce Business Special

(Grand Island): Carime Ruvalcaba: Breaking New Ground in Nebraska

Wayne Daily News (Wayne): We Care For Kids Town Hall, Question And Answer Session Featured For Childcare And Early Education Crisis In Nebraska

The Columbus Telegram

(Columbus): Caring about kids: Columbus area leaders learn about child care in Nebraska



We Care for Kids/ Por todos los niños digital presence grew throughout the life of the campaign, reaching larger audiences and serving as a way for partners and new audiences to engage, learn about the campaign, and access and share materials.

Since its launch on June 15, 2022, the campaign email list grew from 200 to 2,535 subscribers. Monthly email open rates of 36.8% average far above the nonprofit industry standard (25.2%).

The campaign website boasts more than 164,000 visits since launch, of which, an average of 18% of traffic is to the Spanish pages and resources—demonstrating a critical need that the campaign is meeting for Spanish-speaking communities in Nebraska.

- There were 21,000 toolkit and resource downloads, including from the Community Tools and 2023 Survey Resources pages.
- The Community Toolkit was also the most popular page, other than the English and Spanish home pages, with more than 21,000 visits.
- The Survey Findings Summary was the most popular download.
- The Nebraska Child Care Referral Network was the most popular partner link.

Social Media

The We Care for Kids Facebook page had 627 followers at the end of December 2023—increasing 623% since campaign launch.

- Total Facebook page reach: 55,200

The We Care for Kids X (formerly Twitter) gained more than 170 followers since the campaign launched.

- Tweet impressions since launch: 31,628

Through combined paid and organic tactics, campaign reach extends to more than 155,000 families in Nebraska. With parents and families as a key audience in this effort, **We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños** aims to:

- **Build a unified understanding** of quality early childhood education.
- **Bring early childhood educators to the center** of both quality and the system by sharing their stories.
- **Help connect families to resources.**
- **Communicate that all families should have access** to quality early childhood education.

Key efforts to reach families included:

Wrist bands distributed at the 2023 State Fair to more than **6,000 children** in attendance displayed the campaign logo.

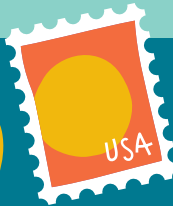


Nearly 7,500 Nebraskans joined the evening town hall in 2022.



Target emails in English and Spanish sent to parents of young children, totaling **194,800 impressions.**

Nearly 12,300 visits to English and Spanish family resources pages on the campaign website.



Nearly 65,000 Nebraska households with young children received direct mail post cards in English and Spanish, sharing how to access early childhood resources available through **We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños.**

Educators are the heart of quality early childhood education. This is a core tenet of the campaign and one that guides outreach to all audiences—lifting provider voices, appreciating quality educators, and ensuring families, communities, and influencers know that early childhood teachers are skilled professionals and every family should have access to one.

Sharing Educator Stories

Through the campaign website, quotes and stories are collected and shared from Nebraska early educators to highlight their experiences, their passion for the profession, and their skills in helping children develop to their full potential.

Early Childhood Champion Awards



nebraska early childhood
COLLABORATIVE

We Care for Kids/
Por todos los niños and

Nebraska Early Childhood

Collaborative honored two early educators per month for one year as Early Childhood Champions, to recognize teachers and highlight the importance of the early childhood workforce in Nebraska communities. Each Champion was given a \$1,000 gift and award plaque to honor their commitment to excellence in early childhood and their service to children, families, and communities. [You can find the full list of Champions here.](#)



Campaign partners like Carime Ruvalcaba participated in PSA filming, sharing stories about the importance of early education in Nebraska.



An evaluation by the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) College of Public Health found early childhood organizations across the state were familiar with the campaign and that many referred others to its resources. As part of a larger effort to understand the connections between organizations in 15 Nebraska counties, UNMC College of Public Health also asked about campaign awareness and usefulness. They found that 82.6% reported being aware of the campaign and of those, 58.3% reported referring others to the campaign website and using the campaign resources available on the website.

UNMC College of Public Health also interviewed early educators across campaign target counties to learn the answers to the question: **Are campaign resources being adopted by the early childhood education workforce and do workforce members feel the resources reflect their profession and its needs?**

Table 1. Prior Knowledge of We Care for Kids Campaign (N=17)

Yes, Prior Knowledge	Total
Social Media	6
Television	1
Early Childhood Conference/Meeting/Workshop	3
Local Partners	2
Emails	1
No Prior Knowledge	5

UNMC College of Public Health evaluators spoke with 17 early educators, sourced from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services licensed educator registry and representative of child care centers, family child care homes, and school-based child care centers, as well as educators that serve low-income, tribal, and/or Hispanic families. Bilingual early educators provided feedback on the Spanish-language campaign materials. Prior to the interview, educators reviewed campaign materials including a social media advertisement, workforce story flyer, the We Care for Kids Campaign website Families page, and a short video.

The majority of participants (71%, n=12) indicated they had heard about **We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños** prior to the interview in a variety of different ways including social media, television, early childhood conferences or meetings, through local partners, and through direct emails (Table 1). **After reviewing campaign materials 82% agreed that they would disseminate the materials to parents.**

More powerful than the level of awareness was the feedback on campaign materials and how early childhood educators and the profession are reflected.

Ultimately, nearly all of the 17 early childhood educators interviewed made statements that the campaign made them generally feel valued, represented, and supported, which many attributed to the portrayal of early childhood educators as professionals and the message throughout the materials around the importance of quality early childhood education.



We Care for Kids/*Por todos los niños* is honored to be recognized with two 2023 American Marketing Association Omaha Pinnacle Awards, in the categories of Public Relations – Not-for-Profit and Video – Not-for-Profit.

In December 2023, **We Care for Kids/*Por todos los niños*** was recognized by the Nebraska Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and awarded its Community Service Award. This significant statewide honor is based on external nominations and recognizes an organization that has made meaningful contributions to the common good of the community.



Quality early childhood education is a game changer for children, families, communities, and Nebraska. Children who receive quality early childhood education are better prepared to do well in school, graduate, and go on to earn more. Families can work knowing their young children are being prepared for success by a caring and skilled early childhood educator. And Nebraska businesses and the state's economy benefit from a productive workforce now, and skilled workers for tomorrow. **We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños** has demonstrated that Nebraskans not only understand this, but want and expect state action to achieve it.

Looking ahead, the campaign will continue to build upon the momentum it has generated for quality early childhood education for all Nebraska families and the important role early childhood educators have in ensuring that children, families, and communities thrive.





Quality Early Childhood Education
For All Nebraska Families



Educación y cuidado infantil de calidad
para las familias de Nebraska

We Care for Kids/*Por todos los niños* is coordinated by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska. Funding is provided by a Preschool Development Grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Holland Foundation, and the Buffett Early Childhood Institute.

This project is made possible by funding received through Grant Number 90TP0079-03-00 of the USDHHS-Administration for Children and Families, Office of Early Childhood; Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services; Nebraska Department of Education; and Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, following grant requirements of 70% federal funding with 30% match from state and private resources. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Child Care, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.