



# June NewsLetter

## A Message From Our New UNL Rural Fellows Intern

Dear Friends and Supporters,

My name is Graysan Guss, and I am excited to be spending the summer with enCourage through the end of July. During my time here, I will be helping plan and coordinate the upcoming Bloom Summer Camp, along with supporting several other community projects and initiatives.

I am passionate about creating meaningful opportunities for youth and strengthening connections within our community. As we prepare for Bloom Camp, I would love to hear your ideas, suggestions, and feedback. Community involvement is what makes programs like these successful, and your input can help us create an even better experience for participants.

If you have ideas for camp activities, would like to volunteer, or are interested in supporting our programs in any way, please don't hesitate to reach out via email to [bloom@encouragecenter.org](mailto:bloom@encouragecenter.org). I look forward to getting to know the Hastings community and working together to make this summer a memorable one.

Thank you for your continued support of enCourage.

Warmly,

Graysan Guss  
Summer Fellow



**enCourage**  
ADVOCACY CENTER

Been serving **Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, and Webster Counties** for over 50 years by providing free and confidential support to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

### **Services**

24/7 crisis hotline  
Emergency Shelter  
Legal Advocacy  
Support Groups  
Community Education Programs

Last year alone, enCourage served more than **400 individuals**, offering safety, support, and hope to those who needed it most.



## **Join Our New Auxiliary Group!**

enCourage is excited to launch a new Auxiliary Group for community members who want to support our mission and make a difference. Auxiliary members will help organize and support fundraising events, lead community drives, and attend regular monthly meetings to share ideas, celebrate successes, and plan future initiatives. Members are asked to attend meetings, participate in at least two events or drives each year, and serve as active ambassadors for enCourage throughout the community. This is a wonderful opportunity to connect with others, support local families, and help strengthen the impact of enCourage.



For questions about Auxiliary membership, please contact Shawna by emailing [shawna@encouragecenter.org](mailto:shawna@encouragecenter.org) or by calling 402-463-5810

# No One Heals Alone Wall Of Hands



Join enCourage Advocacy Center's No One Heals Alone Wall of Hands, a community art installation that celebrates healing, support, and connection. Community members are invited to create a handprint in any way they choose, like trace your hand, paint it, make a handprint, or create a photocopy and cut it out. Each hand will become part of a larger display, serving as a powerful reminder that no one has to heal alone. Handprints will be accepted through June 30, 2026. Drop off or mail your hand to enCourage Advocacy Center, 220 S Burlington Ave, Suite #4, Hastings, NE 68901, or stop by What the Dickens? in downtown Hastings to trace your hand while enjoying a cup of tea and a treat.



## Pieces of Strength Community Quilt Project

enCourage Advocacy Center is inviting local quilters to participate in Pieces of Strength: Healing, Courage, and Community Stitched Together, a community quilt project benefiting survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Participants are asked to create a 12" x 12" quilt block that reflects themes of healing, hope, courage, or community while incorporating purple, lavender, or teal into the design. Once all blocks are collected, they will be assembled into a single quilt that will be auctioned or raffled in 2027, with all proceeds supporting enCourage's programs and services. Contributors will be recognized for their participation, and the finished quilt will serve as a beautiful reminder of the strength and support found within our community. If interested in participating, please contact Shawna by emailing [shawna@encouragecenter.org](mailto:shawna@encouragecenter.org).



# June Volunteer Needs & Events

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## GI ACT Hotel & Motel Outreach June 17 from 12:00–3:00 p.m

Volunteers will work in teams of two to visit hotels and motels throughout Hastings, providing informational brochures and resource materials while connecting with staff about available training opportunities. This outreach helps ensure that local businesses are equipped to recognize and respond to situations involving human trafficking and exploitation. Participants will receive a **\$45 stipend** for their time. We are looking for additional volunteers to join this important community effort and help us expand awareness throughout Hastings. If interested in volunteering, please contact Allie or Jenny at 402-463-5810.

## June Donation Needs

enCourage is currently seeking donations of essential items for children and families we serve. At this time, we are especially in need of **size 5 and 6 diapers, baby wipes, new underwear, and gift cards to Walmart or for fuel**. These everyday necessities can make a meaningful difference for individuals and families during times of crisis. Donations can be dropped off at enCourage Advocacy Center during regular business hours. Thank you for helping us provide comfort, dignity, and support to those in our community.

## Fashion & Décor Sale June 27th, from 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Shop a variety of clothing, accessories, home décor, and unique treasures while supporting a great cause. All proceeds from the sale will help fund enCourage Advocacy Center's programs and services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Every purchase helps us continue providing critical resources, advocacy, and support to individuals and families in our community. The sale will take place at 220 S Burlington Ave #4, Hastings, NE 68901. The sale will also be open Monday, June 29<sup>th</sup> - Wednesday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, from 9 am - 4:30 pm.

## Free HIV & STI Testing June 17th, from 1:00–3:00 p.m

Free STI testing is available on June 17th, from 1:00–3:00 p.m at the enCourage Advocacy Center office. Regular testing is an important part of maintaining your health and well-being. Contact enCourage for additional information or

questions about testing services or you can email Heather with the Nebraska Aids Project at [heatherb@nap.org](mailto:heatherb@nap.org).

## **Support Group**

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enCourage Advocacy Center offers a **Peer Support Group every Tuesday from 4:00–5:00 p.m.** for individuals who have experienced domestic violence or sexual assault. This group provides a safe, supportive space to connect with others, share experiences, and find encouragement on the healing journey. No registration is required, and participants are welcome to attend whenever they feel comfortable. Whether you are newly seeking support or further along in your healing process, you are welcome here.



## **greenDOT**

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Green Dot is a community violence prevention program that empowers individuals to become active and effective bystanders. Through training, participants learn to recognize the warning signs of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse and discover practical ways to safely intervene before harm occurs. Green Dot offers strategies that fit a variety of comfort levels and personalities, making it easy for everyone to play a role in creating a safer community. If you are interested in attending a Green Dot training or scheduling a training for your workplace, faith community, school, or civic organization. **For questions or to schedule a Green Dot Training at your business or organization email [greendot@encouragecenter.org](mailto:greendot@encouragecenter.org)**

### **Peer Power: Make a Difference Together**

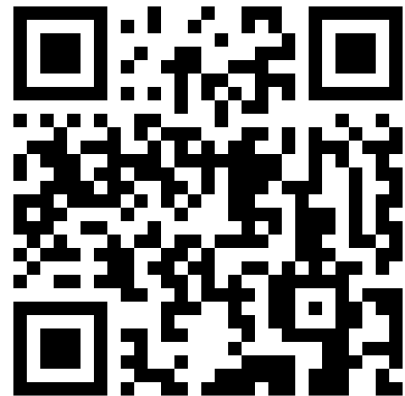
Friends and peers often notice troubling behavior before authorities do. Green Dot emphasizes empowering peers to hold each other accountable. Speaking up when someone makes harmful comments, encouraging positive behavior, and redirecting risky situations can prevent harm. This month, focus on peer accountability. Model respectful behavior and gently challenge actions that could escalate to violence. Remember, accountability isn't about punishment; it's about creating a safer space

for everyone. When peers take responsibility for each other, harmful patterns lose power, and community members feel supported rather than isolated.



# Bloom Camp

Registration is now open for **Bloom Summer Camp**, a free and empowering experience designed for middle school youth. The camp will take place **August 4–6 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. each day @ Prairie Loft Center** and will provide participants with opportunities to build confidence, develop leadership skills, explore creative activities, and make meaningful connections with their peers in a supportive environment. Bloom Camp focuses on helping young people grow, learn, and thrive while having fun. There is **no cost to attend**, and campers will receive **two snacks and lunch each day. Space is limited, so sign up today by scanning the QR code or visiting our website.** We look forward to welcoming campers for three days of learning, friendship, personal growth, and unforgettable summer experiences.





## A Box Built for One

Father's Day lands on the 21st this year, and the cards are already out — the ones that call a man a rock, a provider, the guy who shoulders the load and never asks for help. We hand that picture down to our sons like an heirloom. We mean it as love. And also, if you sit with the research a while, it starts to look like we may be handing them a cage.

A couple of years back, the Men's Project at Jesuit Social Services in Australia put out a study called *The Man Box 2024*, drawn from more than 3,500 men. The "Man Box" is their name for the cramped set of expectations a lot of us absorbed about what a real man is supposed to be: that opening up about your fears costs you respect, that backing down from a fight makes you weak, that a real man never turns down sex — and, at the hard edge, that violence earns respect, that he gets the last word in his marriage, that he's owed an account of where his partner is every hour. Australia, sure. But I don't think the box stops at the Pacific. I sit in a room every week with men here in Adams County who could recite the whole list from memory.

What I keep turning over is what the researchers did next. They sorted the men into five groups by how tightly they held the rules and looked at who had been violent toward a partner. At the loosest end, twelve out of a hundred. Then fifteen, twenty-two, twenty-five. And among the men gripping the box hardest — sixty-six. Two in three. So the box is not harmless; the more completely a man swallows what it tells him, the more dangerous he becomes to the people closest to him.

And also — this is the part that ought to stop us — the box is killing the men shut inside it. That same hardest-gripping group was eight times as likely to be thinking about ending their own lives almost daily. Go back to the first rule on the list: that a man who talks about what frightens him forfeits respect. Swallow that whole, and of course you end up isolated. Of course you end up in the dark. The rule sold to you as strength is the same one that makes sure no one gets near enough to help.

I'm not saying men are the real victims. The people harmed by this violence are the

victims, full stop, and a man's suffering is never a permission slip for the harm he does. But the control that endangers a partner and the silence that strands a man are not two problems. They are one box, bearing down from every side.

So where's the way out? Not into another box. There are a great many ways to be a whole man and remarkably few ways to be a deeply unwell one. Conformity to the box is a soul-killer and a self-killer. And no one has to vault from the worst of it to the best of himself in a single leap — the researchers found that moving a man even one notch down from the tightest end pulls the harm down with him. You move a little, in a better direction, and then do it again. I have watched men do exactly that. It is slow, and it is real.

Father's Day is coming. If a few of those rules sounded like the voice already running laps in your own head — don't ask, don't tell, handle it alone — you are not bound to the inheritance. That box has a door, and it opens from the inside. And if you love someone living inside one, or you're carrying what a man in a box has already done to you, that was never a weight to shoulder alone. enCourage sits right here in Hastings: (402) 463-5810. Whatever box you've found yourself in, there's more room out here than you were ever told.