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Sixpence Early Learning Fund awards 16 new grants

The Trustees of the Sixpence Early Learning Fund announced this week that sixteen high-quality early childhood programs serving at-risk infants and toddlers across the state will receive grant awards totaling approximately \$2 million, beginning July 1, 2015.

Sixpence grants are intended to build new early childhood programs or expand existing services to address the developmental needs of Nebraska's youngest children at risk.

"We know for a fact that children's preparedness to enter kindergarten and thrive in the K-12 system depends on the quality of their earliest learning experiences," said Dr. Matthew Blomstedt, Commissioner of the Nebraska Department of Education. "Sixpence is about creating the kinds of high-quality early experiences that reduce the achievement gap in our state and improve children's chances of lifelong success."

"Sixpence pursues its goal by helping Nebraska parents provide safe, stimulating, supportive environments and relationships during the critical early years of life," said Amy Bornemeier, grant administrator for the fund. "This is especially important for families who face significant challenges in meeting the developmental needs of their youngest children."

Sixpence grants are awarded to community partnerships through local school districts. The grants make it

possible for communities to provide an array of resources and services such as high-quality child care and specialists who work with individual families to improve parent-child interactions. “Sixpence partnerships are flexible and highly responsive to local needs,” said Bornemeier. “Communities can help families with young children more efficiently and effectively when they understand how to organize and make the most of their local resources. Sixpence helps make that happen.”

Sixpence is an innovative, results-driven model for early childhood development in Nebraska. It represents a collaboration between the Nebraska Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, and private investors at the state and local level.

“Our partners and donors demand a high degree of accountability for the dollars they invest,” said Bornemeier. “Sixpence grantees are held to a rigorous evaluation process conducted by world-class researchers at Munroe-Meyer Institute to ensure we’re seeing the kinds of outcomes we ought to expect from high-quality programs.”

Bornemeier also noted that Sixpence grantees are required to match their grant awards with local funds to demonstrate a commitment to this level of early childhood education. Approximately \$2 million in local resources was raised to leverage the \$2 million disbursed directly as Sixpence grants in the latest awards.

The following school districts are recipients of the June 2015 Sixpence grant awards:

- Auburn Public Schools
- Crete Public Schools
- Falls City Public Schools
- Fremont Public Schools
- Garden County Public Schools
- Hastings Public Schools
- Kearney Public Schools
- Lexington Public Schools
- Millard Public Schools
- Norfolk Public Schools
- Omaha Public Schools – Early Learning Center
- Omaha Public Schools - Educare
- Papillion-LaVista Public Schools
- Schuyler Public Schools
- Scottsbluff Public Schools
- Seward, Centennial and Milford Public Schools Consortium

“Sixpence is a far-reaching investment in our state,” said Cara Small, who was appointed to the Sixpence Board of Trustees by Governor Ricketts earlier this year. “It’s preparing more Nebraska children to succeed not only in school, but in life. That means more graduates with marketable skills, fewer young people entering the criminal justice system, healthier and safer communities, and a stronger economy.”

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For more information about the Sixpence Early Learning Fund, visit www.singasongofsixpence.org
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