

TWO YEAR REPORT

2014-2016









It's all about connections.

The Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center (Weitz CEC) is a one-of-a-kind place, designed to combine great ideas and organizations with the boundless energy of the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) campus. Every day, in our meeting rooms, hallways, and building partner offices, people build mutually beneficial collaborations and find creative ways to make a difference in our community.

In this beautiful, intentional place, community leaders, neighborhood advocates, nonprofit professionals, government officials, and learners of all ages come together to find solutions to our community's biggest problems. Almost every day, you'll find UNO students-Omaha's future leaders-engaged in a service project, perhaps working side by side with a nonprofit building partner organization. Many days, our meeting rooms and spaces are filled with a diverse array of building partners, community and university organizations, having civil and open dialogue, finding agreement and resolving differences.

The scope of services and opportunities that happen in the Weitz CEC wouldn't be possible without the welcoming and collaborative nature of the UNO and community organizations that we call our building partners. These organizations purposefully and organically ignite chain reactions of engagement with each other, the UNO campus, and the Omaha community—furthering our mission as a premier metropolitan university.

If you've already been to the Weitz CEC, thank you for joining us for the first two years of this wonderful adventure. If you haven't had a chance to visit, please plan to do so soon! We're here, ready to connect. (And, we have dedicated parking!)

Sincerely,

Sara Woods

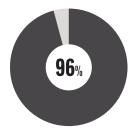
Associate to the Senior Vice Chancellor for Community Engagement, Director of the Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center

Sara Hoods

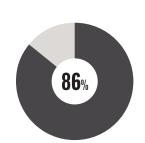
OUR IMPACT

The Weitz CEC currently houses more than 30 community and UNO-based building partner organizations, which have all been selected by a community and university led Building Advisory Committee through a values-based application process. These building partner organizations, which represent a full array of human services, arts, civic, sustainability, diversity, and social justice programs, collaborate with one another and with the university and Omaha community. We are living our metropolitan university mission at the Weitz CEC.

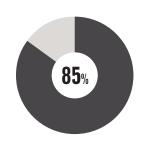
In 2015, a building survey was sent to our building partner organizations. Results from the survey demonstrate the positive impact of place for our building partner organizations.



The percentage of building partners who indicated their presence in the Weitz CEC contributed positively to their organizational mission.



The percentage of building partners who indicated their presence in the Weitz CEC contributed positively to their organization's sustainability.



The percentage of building partners who agreed or strongly agreed that their organization's capacity to serve their target population had increased since moving into the building.





The estimated value of contributed space and IT services saved by community organizations that have used our spaces for workshops, trainings, conferences, dialogues and other meetings, as well as special and public events.



The number of events hosted in the Weitz CEC by UNO, students, partners, nonprofits, and government organizations.



166,000+

The estimated attendance of UNO and community meetings and events hosted in our spaces.



648

The number of unique groups that have used space at the Weitz CEC.



32,000+

The number of Weitz CEC parking stalls that have been reserved for the community.



Having the ability to convene at the Weitz CEC has made it possible for the Women's Fund to bring community partners together to improve the lives of women and girls. The Weitz CEC is more than a great space for meetings, it sets a container where organizations and individuals can challenge one another to do better and do more for our community.

Michelle Zych, MPA Executive Director, Women's Fund of Omaha

77

1

SCHOLARSHIP OF ENGAGEMENT: UNIVERSITY & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS





VOLUNTEER PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

JOE LLEN

The Volunteer Program Assessment at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (VPA-UNO) is just one of the many outlets used to redefine scholarly work. Joe Allen, Ph.D., director of VPA-UNO, encourages his students from the UNO industrial/organizational psychology program to serve as VPA-UNO volunteers. Students work with clients a few hours a week, "as they're being trained, they're learning how to engage in a client interface—a skill set they don't really learn in the classroom," Allen says. By moving the classroom into the community, students are gaining valuable real-world skills, and the community, in turn, benefits. The work Allen does with undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students mentors and prepares them for academic presentations, publications, and careers.

VICTORIA GRAEVE-UNNINGHAM



Victoria Graeve-Cunningham knows the impact an on-site partnership in the Weitz CEC can have. Graeve-Cunningham worked on program evaluations with VPA-UNO clients, and her time with the program inspired her to start a volunteer-based organization to help nonprofits, providing consulting services at free or reduced rates. "It has given me awareness of the need for civic engagement at the student level, but also at the nonprofit level. That was really important to me because I saw firsthand from being in the Weitz CEC how important these things are."

When Sheridan Trent came to UNO, she was interested in pursuing a bachelor's degree in psychology. Now she's defending her master's thesis in industrial/organizational psychology, and in part credits her continued study in the field with her time at VPA-UNO. "I liked psychology, but being in VPA-UNO gave me a realistic job preview and a chance to see what this experience would look like. It also allowed me to interact with older graduate students in the program... They gave me a lot of good advice, and I feel I've learned a lot of useful skills."





SHERIDAN TRENT

"VPA-UNO gave me a realistic job preview and a chance to see what this experience would look like."













Tribal Management and Emergency Services (TMES) is an academic organization that focuses on Native American outreach. The UNO faculty and graduate students who are involved with TMES use academia, outreach, and research to empower members of the Native community with solutions to better respond to and plan for man-made and natural disaster emergencies.

Eduardo Zendejas directs UNO's TMES and is also a member of the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska. "Tribes and tribal communities are among the most vulnerable when it comes to emergencies," says Zendejas. "It's important that we provide them with an opportunity to share ideas and experiences so we can help them plan for the future."

As part of this outreach effort, the Weitz CEC and TMES created a place where elders from different tribes within the community can come together and talk about important issues. At these Grandmothers Circle meetings, the elders have access to faculty and graduate students who are active in the tribal community, and they find support through informational programs and collaborations with community organizations. It's a support group and classroom that they would otherwise not have.

"One of the things we want to accomplish is to be a sort of clearinghouse where thoughts and ideas can be stored and shared, and best practices can be implemented. Being at the Weitz CEC has allowed us to do that. It has been a good partnership because I think together we really have embodied the notion of engagement in our community," says Zendejas.

GRANDMOTHERS CIRCLE

TRIBAL
MANAGEMENT
AND EMERGENCY
SERVICES



ANOR HANOR

"It's important that we provide them with an opportunity to share ideas and experiences so we can help them plan for the future."

10

SERVICE LEARNING



RODRÍGUEZ-ARROYO

SERVICE **LEARNING ACADEMY**



When Sandra Rodríguez-Arroyo, D.Ed., was hired to help run the English as a Second Language Concentration (ESL) program at UNO in 2011, she saw an opportunity to create long-lasting community partnerships in bilingual communities.

Through the Service Learning Academy (SLA), she partnered with the South Omaha Boys and Girls Club. Here, she was able to provide her graduate students with an outlet to use their education in a meaningful way. Her UNO English Language Learners students (ELLs) went out into the community and worked with local ELLs middle schoolers. ELLs were given opportunities to research and write, while participating in real-world teaching experiences.

"What my students are learning in a service-learning project is a lot more valuable than me giving them tons of information they can't apply. They're more practice-oriented and that's a learning connection. [It's also a connection] for future mainstream teachers with linguisticallydiverse communities, and contributes to breaking down linguistic barriers and the fears of diverse communities working together."

Her work with the SLA and dedication to the community have not gone unnoticed. Rodríguez-Arroyo received the 2016 Outstanding Faculty Service Learning Award.

3,000 **UNO** students participated in service-learning courses from 2015-16

TATAL AL

P-12 students participated in service learning projects initiative from 2015-16

DIERBERGER

supported by the P-16

CULTURE FEST

SERVICE **LEARNING ACADEMY P-16** INITIATIVE



The P-16 Initiative is a unique model in the U.S., and it began right here at UNO in 2008. Since then, the program has engaged more than 20,000 Omaha students, who have learned to apply criticalthinking skills to community-identified needs—making classroom learning relevant and immediate. The P-16 Initiative adds different perspectives and participants to the experience by not only working with the K-12 schools, but by bringing in nonprofit partners as collaborators.

Julie Dierberger, coordinator of the Service Learning Academy (SLA) P-16 Initiative, says having a space in the Weitz CEC is essential to the success of the initiative. "We have community partners here and we have faculty members doing research just down the hall. We also train here, bringing teachers here to work with UNO." The P-16 Initiative currently has 10 UNO graduate students who support P-12 teachers, UNO faculty members, and nonprofit partners in their collaborative service-learning efforts that help make textbook learning come to life, while improving our community.

Through collaboration with the P-16 Initiative, Omaha South High Magnet School, Beveridge Magnet Middle School, and other campus and community partners helped bring Culture Fest to the Weitz CEC. Culture Fest is an active learning showcase highlighting the area's diverse cultures presented by students across the P-16 educational system. Community members were invited to experience and celebrate this diversity with hands-on activities, watch dances and other performances, as well as sample different types of food and get information about area nonprofits. Dierberger says, "as a result of these, and many of UNO's Omaha Public Schools partnerships, the UNO Service Learning Academy was the recipient of the Outstanding Community and Campus Collaboration Award from Nebraska Campus Compact."

190 service-learning courses across seven academic colleges in 2015-16

We [at the UNO Service Learning Academy] benefit from our partnership with the Weitz CEC by being in proximity to a number of nonprofit organizations as well as on campus groups. This allows us to collaborate on service learning classes and projects in a much timelier and convenient manner. Several projects have developed simply because we literally 'bumped into' a representative of an organization in the hallway.

> Paul Sather, M.S.W. Director, UNO Service Learning Academy

COMMUNITY SERVICE

I've been astounded by just how connected everything is — the building itself is for connecting the university community with the Omaha community — and just to see all these people come to our University to meet with the movers and the shakers of Omaha makes me proud. SAPPHIRE ANDERSEN SERVICE SUPERVISOR UNO OFFICE OF CIVIC AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY THE COLLABORATIVE

In fall 2015, The Collaborative, a program of the UNO Office of Civic and Social Responsibility (OCSR), answered a call from the Dundee-Memorial Park Neighborhood Association to help match UNO mentors with K-6 students from Dundee Elementary. The project: to create a mural for the Dundee Tunnel Restoration Project. In just three months, the project came together with help from fellow Weitz CEC community building partner organization, WhyArts?, local artist Mike Girón, and graduate students from the UNO College of Communication, Fine Arts, and Media.



OFFICE OF CIVIC AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

DUNDEE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Harnoor Singh, Program Coordinator for the OCSR, says being a UNO signature outreach program housed in the Weitz CEC is critical to the mission of The Collaborative-UNO's student-led, universitywide program that helps build skills by coordinating community service and volunteer opportunities. "We have several Weitz CEC building partner organizations as our nonprofit partners, but the open work space-the ability to walk over to someone's desk and just pick their brain on a particular issue, whether they're a partner or not-has really allowed our students to gain confidence."

Those student-employees work as service supervisors or service managers for their organizations that represent any of six areas of focus: Educational Support, Economic Sufficiency, Environmental Stewardship, Health and Wellness, International Service, and Social Justice. Working to further the mission of the nonprofit means they'll contribute to a service project over the course of a year, then share and collaborate with other students on how they achieved that goal.

Singh said, "It allows a great amount of diversity to tackle a particular problem, which we've found to be really helpful because our students come from various backgrounds, not just culturally, but their academic trajectories are really vast."

Tiffiny Clifton, a student worker who managed the Volunteer Connections Center at OSCR, saw how these connections make a big difference in the community. This role brought her full circle as she works on her graduate degree in nonprofit management. Her experience working at local nonprofits for the last 18 years has helped provide insight and personnel for any type of support that organizations need.



TIFFINY CLIFTON

> THE **COLLABORATIVE**



SINGH

students hired as **Service Supervisors** in The Collaborative from 2015-16

Community service is a big part of what draws students to a particular university. Undergraduate Sapphire Andersen chose to apply for a volunteer position at the Weitz CEC Welcome Desk in 2014 because: "It was a brand-new building on campus and there was this volunteer opportunity to learn more about the building itself, meet people, and be that 'first face' that community members see when they come to UNO."

During her two semesters at the Welcome Desk, she became familiar with The Collaborative and took a volunteer position there as a service project manager for Conservation Fusion, an Omaha nonprofit that helps the environmental and educational system in Madagascar. She was then hired as a service supervisor in environmental stewardship, working to promote sustainability efforts at UNO and in the community.

ANDERSEN

students hired as **Program Managers** in The Collaborative from 2015-16



In March 2016, she attended the IMPACT Conference, a national gathering of collegiate leaders, administrators, faculty, and staff engaged in social justice issues. All of her experiences and opportunities with The Collaborative and the Weitz CEC have inspired her to continue on a path of service; she plans on attending law school after graduation—making an impact in people's lives.

Also in 2016, Andersen was the recipient of the inaugural Marian Ivers Community Service Award, an honor that recognizes actions, commitment, and leadership of UNO students who are addressing issues affecting our community. Marian saw the potential in young women and ignited their leadership potential. Andersen is the kind of young female leader that Marian would have been proud to connect with. Through generous funding by community donors, the Weitz CEC has dedicated Room 128 as the Marian Ivers Board Room.

organizations served by OSCR and The Collaborative 2015-16

THE COLLABORATIVE

James Van Ormer was eager to do something that could help people. He found The Collaborative, and discovered that "something" — bringing a world of color to early childhood and special needs audiences. Working with Weitz CEC building partner organization, WhyArts?, Van Ormer directly served several middle schools by aiding artists hosting workshops for developmentally delayed middle-school children, designed and implemented summer projects, and became an integral part of the WhyArts? team.





JAMES VAN ORMER

Not only has Van Ormer, a computer science major, helped others in the community through his time as an OCSR collaborative program manager, he's become more open and social, and has uncovered a self-confidence that he never knew he had.

"I've definitely met a lot of cool people that I wouldn't have otherwise. My personality is somewhat introverted and this has helped me be more outgoing with people, to talk about things a lot more. It has educated me on ways to be helpful to the community," says Van Ormer. His experiences with The Collaborative also have influenced how he's thinking about the future. He's considering combining his love of technology and education into the nonprofit realm.

Before coming to the Weitz CEC, WhyArts? was operating like a lot of nonprofits, says director Carolyn Anderson. "We'd been doing this for almost 20 years, and we were on our dining room table."

The opportunity to become one of the inaugural community building partner organizations in the Weitz CEC has taken the organization to a different level, Anderson says. The mission of WhyArts? is to provide Omaha's under-served populations with access to inclusive quality arts programming. Being in the Weitz CEC means they have the ability to partner with others in the building.







OMAHA PUBLIC LIBRARY

Jody duRand, community engagement manager for Omaha Public Library (OPL), found a way to connect book lovers and art lovers after chatting with Andersen over coffee at the Weitz CEC: provide book club students from five Omaha middle schools with innovative ways to interpret what they're reading. WhyArts? artists visit with the kids and help them create sculptures, video animation, and poetry that helps them better understand the meaning of the books they read.

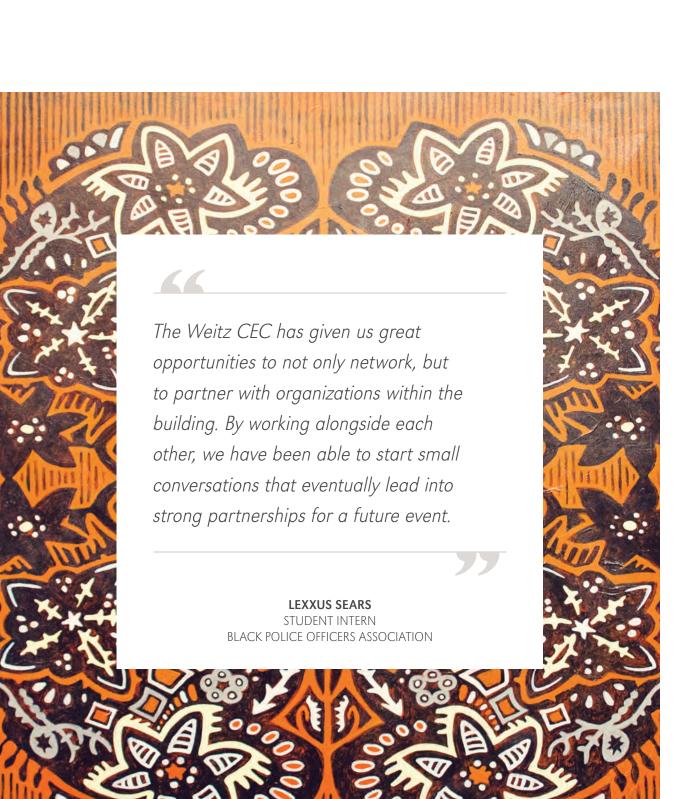
Of the program, duRand says: "We've consistently seen kids come out of their shell, and, in many cases, become leaders. Just to watch that happen in a simple one-hour program after school is lovely."

A partnership founded at the Weitz CEC over a cup of coffee has created a connection that the community, and the artists within this program, may never have experienced.

16

17

COMMUNITY & CAMPUS PARTNERSHIP





It started out as a simple field trip for 40 Girl Scouts from Sherman Elementary in northeast Omaha, and grew into an inspiring experience that all those involved would never forget.

Becky Haddix, outreach specialist for Girl Scouts Spirit of Nebraska, was organizing an after-school public service project at an area park for a group of Girl Scouts. But after talking with her Weitz CEC neighbors, the Nebraska Watershed Network, Nebraskans for Civic Reform, and the Black Police Officers Association, she had a thought: Why not broaden the scope of the project to make it both educational and social? Because the design of the Weitz CEC allows for building partner organizations to work closely with each other, collaboration is easy and can grow quickly.

Kent Day, director of civic engagement programs with Nebraskans for Civic Reform, says "because we walk in and out of the same doors, use the same meeting spaces, and have developed relationships with each other, we know each other's missions and the means that each uses to accomplish those missions."

Levi Carter Park, with its lake, was a built-in ecosystem and the perfect place for the Nebraska Watershed Network to give the girls an onsite science lesson. And with the Black Police Officers Association providing supplies for s'mores to break the ice, the event had the makings of a promising field trip. The girls learned things like water conservation, and were introduced to terms like watershed, quality indexing, agrichemical runoff, and coliform.

Partnering with the Black Police Officers Association provided an opportunity for the girls to form positive relationships and see that officers are fun and a lot like them. "It was big for us to have

The Nebraska Watershed Network got to provide community education that they hope will have an impact on awareness of their program. And the Black Police Officers Association got to strengthen their relationships in the community—posting on their website how they're assisting the community in working with these girls.

the police as a community partner. The girls had a great experience with the officers and got to ask them a few questions about their jobs. Some of the girls actually did pushups with them," says Haddix. The partners also reaped the benefits from meeting these Scouts, she says.



Lexxus Sears, a UNO student intern with the Black Police Officers Association, saw firsthand how these partnerships can make a difference in the community. Of the Girl Scouts outing, Sears says it's a great example of being able to create a fun and positive environment between the community and the police.

"I love being able to see how our events make such a positive impact on the community, specifically the north Omaha community. Many of those girls live in an environment where they are told to hate the police," she says. "But by our Black Police Officers Association members being able to create fun between the two"—a Scout teaching one officer how to do a popular hip-hop dance and singing songs together— "really made an impact on the girls' perspective of the police."

Sears says what she enjoys most about working for the Black Police Officers Association is the ability to work alongside many community organizations, including those housed in the Weitz CEC. Being in the Weitz CEC has had an impact on Sears' internship—allowing her, she says, to build on the relationships she makes and incorporate those relationships into future events for the Black Police Officers Association.









GIRL SCOUTS SPIRIT OF NEBRASKA





HUNGER FREE HEARTLAND



BRETTANY MCCARTHER



UNO SERVICE LEARNING ACADEMY



Rachel Olive knows the UNO campus. She earned her bachelor's degree and her master's degree here, and was ready to go out into the world and make a difference. As it turns out, she didn't actually have to go very far to make a big impact.

"You come here as a wide-eyed 18-year-old and now you're back leading change you dreamed about," she says. As Executive Director for Hunger Free Heartland, one of the Weitz CEC's building partner organizations, Olive works with public schools across the state, food banks, government institutions, the Midwest Dairy Council, urban gardeners, and other community and faith-based groups, just to name a few. In 2015 she found time to teach as an adjunct faculty member in the Grace Abbott School of Social Work in which she incorporated service-learning.

The organization has also found opportunities to connect with colleagues across UNO and with other building partner organizations in the Weitz CEC. Future UNO student, Brettany McCarther, was connected to a student intern opportunity to work with Hunger Free Heartland as part of the Avenue

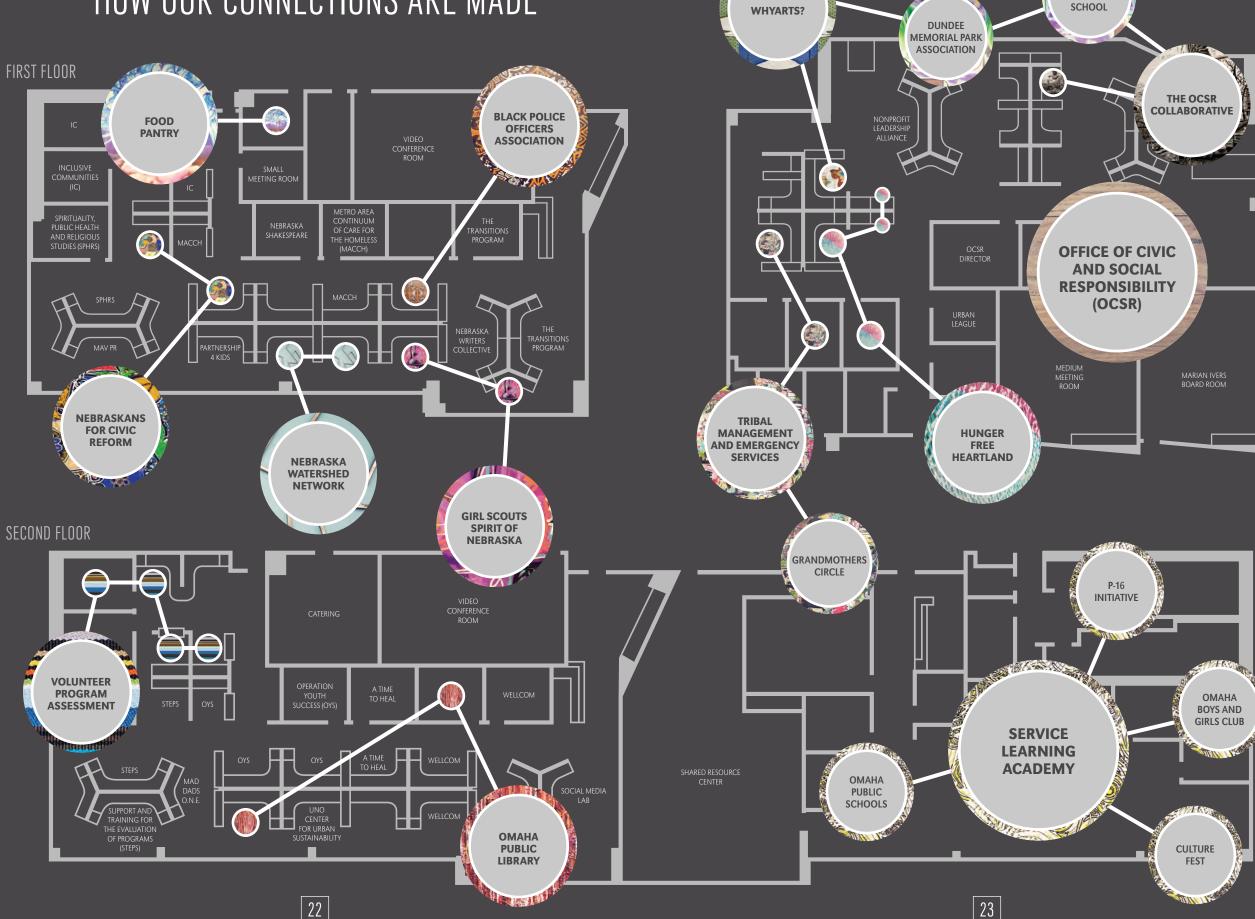


Scholars Foundation. This program facilitated career opportunities for students through education and supportive relationships. McCarther came to know the Weitz CEC through The William Brennan Institute for Labor Studies and has now put her growing interest in social work as an intern at Hunger Free Heartland.

"Working with Hunger Free Heartland has changed my whole career path," she says. "Working at food pantries and being able to assist in the processes has made me think, hey, I really want to do something in social work."

She appreciates the support she's received from Rachel Olive and the Hunger Free Heartland staff, as well as from other Weitz CEC building partner organizations. "I've met a lot of community leaders and those in the community who work for food pantries. Beyond working with the organization, I get to dabble with other groups. If I'm working on something for school I can ask them for help. I don't think I'd be close to having this opportunity in a normal job, if I wasn't working here. I love it."

HOW OUR CONNECTIONS ARE MADE



DUNDEE

ELEMENTARY



THE BARBARA WEITZ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CENTER POSSIBLE:
Weitz Family Foundation

William and Ruth Scott Family Foundation
Union Pacific Railroad
Omaha Public Power District

The University of Nebraska at Omaha shall not discriminate based upon age, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, gender-identity, sex, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran's status, marital status, religion, or political affiliation. 0123BOOKCEC1016