

# The White Cane Foundation

2023

ANNUAL  
REPORT



**NEW CLOTHES.  
BIG SMILES. LASTING IMPACT.**

[thewhitecanefoundation.org](http://thewhitecanefoundation.org)

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## Letter from Executive Director

The best things in life take time. You don't get an education in one day and it doesn't stop when that degree is in your hand. The job you are working today is likely the result of the many roles and careers in your rearview. When you become a parent, the reset starts from the very first cry and ends with your very last breath. A simple thank you that is received from one person to another, stems from an effort that was necessary in a moment between two people. Human interaction.

**2019 Highlights:** Belmont Elementary said “yes” to The White Cane Foundation, and we started our journey. We provided 165 “bundle of joy” (BOJ) packages, which include 2 brand new tops and bottoms, 1 new pair of tennis shoes, 2 pairs of socks and underwear, a new coat if necessary and miscellaneous hygiene items.

**2020 Highlights:** Covid closes the world. Despite what was occurring, Lakeview School was added. We delivered 250 BOJ packages to our students.

**2021 Highlights:** Norwood Park and Clinton were added. 350 BOJ packages were gifted to our children.

**2022 Highlights:** Prescott, McPhee and Everett were added to our list. WCF received \$100,000 from UBT's Big Give, to expand our reach. We presented 475 students BOJ packages with the promise of adding 5 additional schools to our list and purchasing our WCF Mobile Unit.

**2023 Highlights:** West Lincoln, Hartley, Elliott, Saratoga, Huntington joined our list of schools which rounded WCF out to 12 Community Center Learning Center (CLC) Elementary Schools being served! Our truck was purchased. Over 1,000 smiling children took home their BOJ packages in the spirit of our tag line: New Clothing. Big Smiles. Lasting Impact.

**Grand Total To-Date:** 2,240 students have now received our BOJ packages, surpassing our early expectations, and fueling our resolve to doing more.

We started this mission of love to give pride and joy to our Title One students so that they can feel better about themselves and do better in school. Our “future generation's” job right now is to discover who they are and what they want to become in this world. The excitement, laughter and pride that is displayed by our children as they walk out the door with their BOJs is the gift that is given between two people at that moment. It is in those precious minutes between a child and their volunteer when the language of connection is on display. Human interaction at its finest. The best things in life take time — time that is captured in the moments that we create for each other. We are excited to see what we can all create in the next five years.

**“In a gentle way, you can shake the world.” - Mahatma Gandhi**

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## About the White Cane Foundation

The White Cane Foundation was established in 2019 after an inspiring trip to St. Louis, where we witnessed the power of supplying brand-new clothing outfits to school children in Title I schools. We looked at Lincoln and were surprised to find the level of need in our schools. Lincoln hides its poverty well, and kids are the first to suffer. The White Cane Foundation was imagined with these needs in mind. To be of service to kids in need and allow them to take advantage of the wonderful opportunities an education provides.



### How the White Cane Foundation Impacts our Local Community

- We partner with Title I elementary schools in Lincoln, NE where the majority of students live below the poverty level. We currently serve 12 of the 18 Title I Schools.
- Each school has an assigned liaison to identify students in need and submits weekly information about the children selected to The White Cane Foundation.
- Volunteers take the information and make weekly deliveries to the school with supplies we provide. They meet one-on-one with students in The White Cane Foundation “store,” a designed space in every school where selected children can shop, in a place that provides privacy and dignity in a school-designated area
- Each Student receives two pairs of brand-new pants and two tops, tennis shoes, socks, underwear, hygiene items, and a coat if needed.
- We encourage and love the students while helping them “shop” and see the pride in their eyes as they walk out the door with their new clothes which we call “Bundles of Joy.”
- Our current goal is to be a part of every Title I Elementary School in Lincoln. We are 2/3 of the way there.

### Mission Statement

The White Cane Foundation is here to provide students with basic needs through a consistent presence. An emphasis will be placed on maintaining the dignity and respect of the individual. Students are empowered to go out in the world with confidence and independence to become their very best self.

### Core Values

Act with dignity, grace, and compassion.  
Be present.  
Bring the joy.  
Be open and accepting of others.

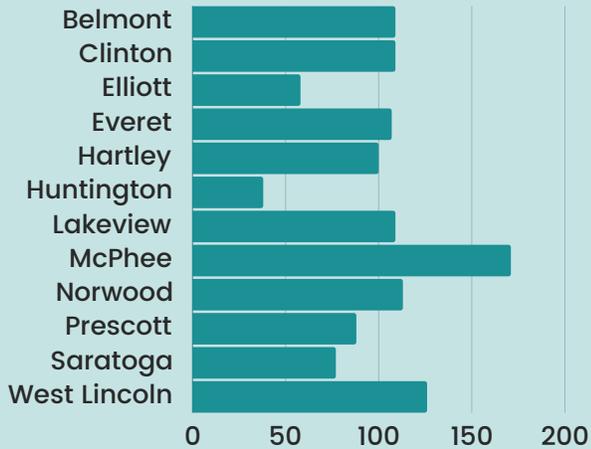
### Vision Statement

To be the light for every student  
with a need.

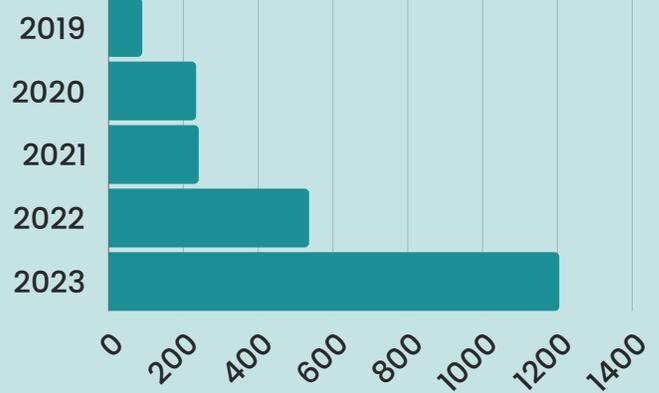
## Outcomes and Impact

Each White Cane package includes all new items: two pairs of pants, two tops, two pairs of socks, two pairs of underwear, one pair of shoes, a jacket or coat, and sundry items.

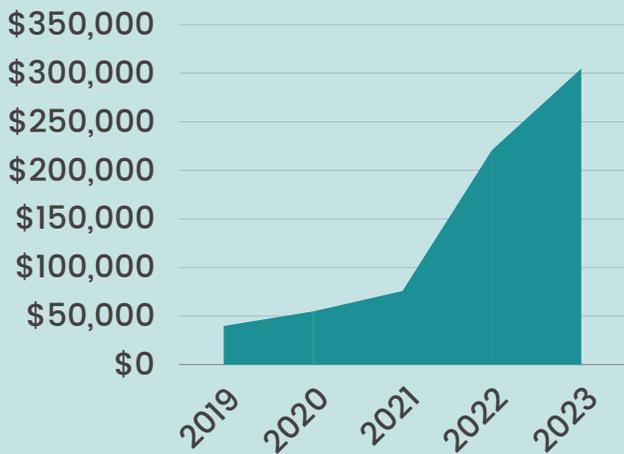
### 1205 Packages Delivered in 2023



### Over 2300 total "Bundle of Joy" Student Packages



### \$304,000 raised in 2023



### Volunteer Hours

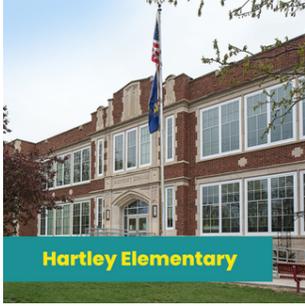


From 39 consistent volunteers



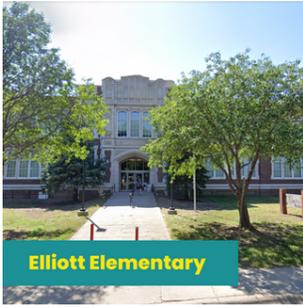
"If you want to touch the past, touch a rock. If you want to touch the present, touch a flower. If you want to touch the future, touch a life."

# A Year in Review



We added 5 New Schools:

- Hartley Elementary
- Elliott Elementary
- Huntington Elementary
- Saratoga Elementary
- West Lincoln Elementary



We added this incredible mobile unit you may see out on the roads.

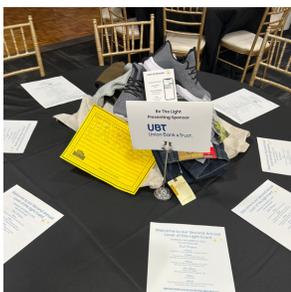


# A Year in Review

We added 5 new board members.



We raised OVER \$44,000 at our annual Lover of the Light event this fall!



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## The White Cane Foundation Award Recipients



Lover of the Light Award  
 Curt Rohn



Volunteer of the Year  
 Jennifer Carney



Staff Member of the Year  
 Samantha Jacobi

## The White Cane Foundation Board and Staff

### Board Executive Committee Members

Stacy Gutschenritter, Board President – Vice President, Union Bank & Trust  
Crystal Wichita, Board Vice-President – Chief Operating Officer, Cornhusker Bank  
Jennifer Carney, Board Treasurer – Retired Partner, Grant Thornton LLP  
Cindy Schwaninger, Board Secretary – Retired Director of Elementary Ed., LPS  
Deb Gokie, Past Board President – VP Consumer Health, The Arthritis Foundation

### Board Members At Large

Quentin Brown – Executive Director, Educare Lincoln  
Kara Bunde-Dunn – CEO and Founder, Karmic Leader  
Kathy Griesel – Retired, Habersfeld Associates  
Gary Kebbel – Retired Professor, University Of Nebraska Lincoln  
Ronesha Love – Director of Care Services, UNL  
Laurie Miller – Occupational Therapist, LPS  
Keshia Norris – Manager, Technical Customer Success, NRC Health  
Curt Rohn – Assistant Vice President – Marketing, Union Bank & Trust  
Kim Rosenthal – Principal, Belmont Elementary School  
Rob Simon – Associate Professor, UNL  
David Lauer D.C., Co-Founder – Chiropractor, Havelock Chiropractic

### Staff Members

Kelly Lauer, Executive Director & Co-Founder  
Samantha Jacobi, Inventory & Volunteer Manager  
Megan Lytle, Inventory Data Manager  
Wendy Russell, Executive Assistant  
Kate Gutschenritter, Social Media Manager

## Corporate Sponsors

### Union Bank & Trust \$100,000 The Big Give Grant

Used to purchase our mobile unit, expand staff, and add 5 more schools



### Warehouse Space and In-kind Donations



### Be The Light Partners



*The Schmieding Foundation, Inc.*



Sandhills Global



### Empowerment Partners



### Compassionate Partners

- BIC
- Haberfeld
- Q2

### Joyful Partners

- Pinnacle Bank



“You have no idea how much you actually help us learn instead of being focused on our appearance.”

~ Belmont Elementary student

“My favorite story was with this darling girl who, after getting her new clothes, said, ‘This is the best day ever!’ It was so sweet and as she was starting to leave, she came back to me and said, ‘Do you know why this is the best day ever? It’s because of you and her!’ (referring to the other WCF volunteer) and then she gave me a great big hug. What a heart-melt moment that was and it about brought me to tears!”

~ Janelle Lamb

“Each and every experience with the children that WCF serves is special and unique. I recently had a kindergarten girl who was very excited to receive a ‘bundle of joy.’ She took 2 pants and 2 tops into the tent to try them on. She came out with both outfits on at the same time!”

~ LeAnne Nordquist

“I had a 1st grader and she picked out an outfit with bright pink jeans and a sparkly top. When she came out of the tent to look in the mirror, she strutted out like a model walking down a runway and struck a pose, smiling. She then turned around to pose again and said, ‘I LOVE IT,’ and flipped her hair. It was absolutely adorable.”

~ Wendy Young

“After receiving her BOJ package, a couple of months ago, I was with a child in my class who had won an award around the same time. We were going through pictures one day and she excitedly saw a snapshot of herself and pointed to it, ‘that’s me.’ I said ‘yes, that’s when you won your award.’ She immediately replied, ‘no, that’s me in my new outfit!”

~ Belmont Teacher

“We had 10 super-excited and happy kids today at one school. One young boy kept saying ‘this is so amazing!’ Another one kept asking, ‘how much money was this?’ We had to explain that this was a gift from Lincoln! So sweet!”

~ Samantha Jacobi

To learn more about The White Cane Foundation visit us at  
[www.thewhitecanefoundation.org](http://www.thewhitecanefoundation.org)  
[hello@thewhitecanefoundation.org](mailto:hello@thewhitecanefoundation.org)



**NEW CLOTHES.  
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[thewhitecanefoundation.org/event](http://thewhitecanefoundation.org/event)

