

Congratulations

2026 Region VII Head Start Award and Scholarship Recipients!



Administrator of the Year

LEISA HARNAR

Director of Head Start/Early Head Start
Economic Security Corporation
of South West Area



Teacher of the Year

HEATHER STEMSRUD

Drake University Head Start



Support Staff of the Year

LISA LECH

LPN, ECP Nurse
Central Nebraska Community
Action Partnership



Excellence in Community Service

BELINDA ECKERT

DNP, APRN, CPNP-PC, Assistant Professor
Washburn University School of Nursing



Family Advocate of the Year

RAEANN HULLMAN

Area Manager, South Brown Head Start
NEK-CAP Inc.



Family Leader of the Year

MARK HABA

Head Start Child & Family
Development Program, Inc.



Alumni High School Senior Scholarship

LANE JOHNSON

Twin Rivers High School
SCMCAA - Broseley Head Start



Parent Post-Secondary Education Scholarship

CLINTASHA WESTBROOK

Educare of Omaha Indian Hill



Staff Post-Secondary Education Scholarship

TONYA LAKIN

Central Nebraska Community Action
Partnership (CNCAP)

"... Head Start has been a big part of my life, and I'm grateful for everything it's done for me and my family. It helped give me a strong start when I was younger, and I know that's played a big role in helping me get to where I am now as a senior getting ready to graduate. This scholarship is going to help me take the next step toward my future, and I really appreciate the support. It motivates me to keep working hard and to make the most of the opportunities I've been given. Thanks again for believing in me and for everything you do for kids and families like mine.

P.S. My mom thought you would enjoy seeing a picture of my first day of Head Start."

— Lane Johnson - Recipient of the Region VII
2026 Head Start Alumni - High School Senior Scholarship



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Children's Champions



Iowa Children's Champion

JANE DRAPEAUX
Hawkeye Area
Community Action Program



Kansas Children's Champion

BRENDA BANDY
Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition



Missouri Children's Champion

MELODY BOLING
Missouri Department of Mental Health



Nebraska Children's Champion

DR. CHARLES CRAFT
Nebraska Department of
Health & Human Services



Region VII Children's Champion

DR. CHARLES CRAFT
Nebraska Department of
Health & Human Services



Region VII Head Start Association

IOWA | KANSAS | MISSOURI | NEBRASKA