

New projects announced for Lincoln Cares program

By the Lincoln Journal Star

Mayor Coleen J. Seng has announced eight projects that will be funded by the Lincoln Cares community donation program this year.

Lincoln Cares allows Lincoln Electric System customers to voluntarily add \$1 to their monthly payments to help pay for projects not included in the city's budget.

For the fifth consecutive year, the program will receive matching funds from TierOne Bank Foundation and World's Foremost Bank (Cabela's VISA Operation). Each provides 50 cents for every \$1 contributed, up to \$30,000 each. Corporate contribution to Lincoln Cares, from February 2003 through 2006 equaled \$240,000.

LES customer contributions and direct donations to the Lincoln Parks Foundation during that time have totaled \$309,468.

"In just four years, this program has made a huge difference in our parks system," Seng said in a news release. "Generous donations from LES customers have allowed us to complete important projects that otherwise would have required taxpayer dollars."

This year, Lincoln Cares will help fund the restoration of the Smoke Signal statue at Pioneers Park, Hazel Abel Park renovation, Pioneers Park Nature Center artwork, the Jamaica North Trail, Sunken Gardens pathway lighting, the Youth Outdoor Adventure Program, the Green Team Youth Employment Program and swimming and recreation program scholarships.

Those who pay LES through automatic bank billing can add the \$1 to their payments by calling LES at 475-4211 and can discontinue the contribution at any time by notifying LES.

For more information on Lincoln Cares, contact the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department at 441-8264 or see the City's Web site at lincoln.ne.gov (keyword: cares).

2007 Lincoln Care projects

Smoke Signal Statue Restoration, \$20,000

The sculpture is a landmark in Pioneers Park. The 16-foot cast concrete piece sits on a Dakota Sandstone outcropping and depicts Chief Red Cloud sending a smoke signal with a blanket. It was created by Ellis Burman in 1935 and dedicated to the "Nebraska Indian."

Restoration work involves cleaning and sealing the concrete and creating fiberglass feathers to replace those lost to vandalism. Estimated total cost: \$40,000. Additional funder: National Endowment for the Arts Access to Artistic Excellence Grant, \$20,000.

Sunken Gardens pathway lighting, \$10,000

Original plans for Sunken Gardens renovation project included lighting along pathways in the lower level of the garden for evening visibility and after-hours security. Underground conduit was installed, but light installation was deferred due to cost.

Estimated total cost: \$20,000. Additional funder: Lincoln Parks Foundation, \$10,000.

Hazel Abel Park renovation, \$10,000

Alice Abel donated Hazel Abel Park at 18th and E streets to Lincoln in September 1982 as a tribute to her mother, Hazel Abel. Alice Abel took a personal interest in development of the park and selected many of the unique park features including the Renaissance-style fences, English gazebo and antique baroque fountain. Proposed renovation will include replacement of the playground, walkway paving, benches and irrigation system; new plantings; repainting of the iron fence; and a new interpretive sign. Estimated total cost: \$150,000. Additional funders: City of Lincoln, \$65,000, and Alice Abel estate, \$75,000.

Pioneers Park Nature Center entrance sign/Artworks, \$10,000

Plans have been developed for four metal sculptural panels to be created as signage for the Pioneers Park Nature Center. Estimated total cost: \$19,730. Additional funders: donations, \$4,000; Friends of Pioneers Park Nature Center, \$2,000; and Winnette Trust Funds grant, \$3,730.

Jamaica North Trail Phase 2, \$10,000

The Jamaica North Trail is being built in an abandoned railroad right of way corridor that begins about half a mile south of Saltillo Road. The first phase of the trail to First and Calvert streets was completed last fall. The second phase will extend the trail north another 2.25 miles to Fourth and J. The southern end of the trail connects to the Homestead Trail that will ultimately extend through Beatrice to northern Kansas.

Estimated total cost: \$774,000. Additional funders: donations secured through the Great Plains Trails Network, \$264,000, and Transportation Enhancement Grant, \$500,000.

Parker's Pals Swim and Recreation Program scholarships, \$15,000

Lincoln Cares funds are used to provide scholarships to children from low-income families for swimming lessons through a partnership with the Red Cross and Lincoln Parks and Recreation. In 2006, Lincoln Cares provided swim scholarships to 191 children. Lincoln Cares funds also are used to provide admission to public pools for low-income children and families. In 2006, the funds covered nearly 3,000 children. Scholarships are also provided for before- and after-school programs, summer day camps, youth sports programs, therapeutic recreation programs and outdoor education programs.

Green Team Youth Employment program, \$7,000

Lincoln Cares funding is used to pay participants in the summer youth employment program for low-income and at-risk youth 13-15. The program emphasizes job-training skills, including preparation of an application, interviewing and completing assigned work tasks. Participants help with park maintenance activities, playground construction and summer day camp programs. Participants work six hours a day for three weeks. The Green Team had 20 participants in 2006.

Youth Outdoor Adventure program, \$30,000

This program introduces low-income children to the great outdoors through recreation activities including fishing, archery, canoeing and orienteering. Lincoln Cares funds are used to buy equipment, provide staff funding and pay for transportation and entrance fees.