



# Wings



Our Mission: To provide comprehensive family-centered resources that bring hope and healing to children, youth and families across Nebraska in a compassionate and caring manner.

Our Vision: A world where families have a clear pathway to the resources they truly need to lead healthier, more hopeful lives.

## A NEW YEAR A NEW CHAPTER FOR EPWORTH FAMILY RESOURCES

The new year is a really good time to evaluate what we have done during the past year – the past 365 days! Did our life and work reap eternal results? It is the time of year when we should assess the results of our work for the Lord and consider whether we have made the most of our time, talent, experience and treasure. Time to think through and make changes in our goals and plans for the upcoming year. Here is a brief recap of 2023 and a look into 2024.



**Margaret Donovan, CEO** 2023 was a busy year with exciting changes - new name, logo and offices - and it ended with a big bang. The York First United Methodist Church threw a Christmas party for the children and families we serve and provided Christmas meal boxes for the families. We had many of you, churches and businesses donate Christmas gifts for all the children and youth. Because of your support, our families had wonderful a Christmas - I can just picture each child's awe on Christmas morning. Julie Troy, who joined our team as development manager in August, coordinated all the Christmas preparations for the families.

Our board of directors spent significant time developing a new strategic plan which we will begin implementing in 2024. In the upcoming year you will see changes as we implement strategies to enhance our ongoing communications and connections with you. The monthly update is one of the changes you will see. We feel blessed that Julie came our way, with all her talent, and joined our wonderful team of staff who put their hearts into serving children and families. We are looking forward to 2024 and wish you a happy and blessed new year!

**In-Home Family Services** is ending the year working with 14 families. This year we have worked with 46 families in all consisting of 42 males, 42 females and 75 children. In-home has noted a significant increase in use of illegal substances and mental health. In the families we serve, our family life specialists have completed numerous trainings throughout the year that have given us tools to better serve the families we work with.

Epworth Family Life Specialists provide parenting time supervised visitation to ensure families get to spend sufficient time with their children. Family life specialists also provide drug testing services and either in-home family support or out-of-home family support to families to either keep the family from getting the children removed from the home and/or assist the familis in fixing the issues in the home so their children can retun to their care. In=home services are always geared to family reunification. In-Home will continue to stay trained and support the families we serve in 2024!

**Foster Care Services** 2023 was another year of growth and change for the foster care program. Throughout the year we were able to support 44 youth throughout their journey in foster care. For 4 of those youth their journey ended in adoption and finding their forever families; for one youth it allowed him to find guardianship. Along with supporting the 44 youth, we were able to support 25 foster families, and license 4 new foster homes, with 2 currently in the process.

Although we watched our friends move on to new careers we were able to hire new staff and have been blessed with a full a full team to support and encourage all our foster families and youth to pursue their goals and dreams.

As we look into the New Year our biggest goal is recruitment and finding ways to get families to become foster families for youth across Nebraska. We here at Epworth Family Resources understand it is a choice to be a foster parent and we are here to support, encourage, train, and provide whatever you may need to feel successful in your journey.

**Little Jewels Childcare** A new director was hired in August, Amanda Handy. Amanda has been busy implementing Creative Curriculum in the classrooms. She is also working towards Step 3 in Step Up to quality. Amanda continues to search for the perfect team to work with the children at Little Jewels. Her goals for 2024 are to be fully staffed and to have all the rooms full. She would also like for her new staff to have more team trainings.

## ➤➤➤ JANUARY NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS

January has many days of celebration but I narrowed it down two. These two fit the season very well. January is officially National Soup Month and Slow Cooker Month. For this reason I would like to share with you one of my favorite slow cooker soup recipes. Enjoy!

### Comforting Chicken & Noodles

#### Ingredients



- 2 can(s) Cream of chicken soup
- 24 oz 1 package(s) frozen egg noodles, frozen
- 1 Salt & pepper
- 1 stick(s) (1/2) cup butter
- 1 Mixed - vegetables
- 1 teaspoon(s) Better Than Bullion, optional; I add for a richer chicken flavor
- 6 Small boneless, skinless chicken breasts or 4 large

#### Instructions

- Salt & pepper chicken breasts.
- Place in the bottom of Crock Pot.
- Spoon soup over the chicken.
- Cut butter into several pats and place pieces evenly over soup.
- Whisk the bouillon with the broth and pour over soup.
- Place lid on the Crock Pot and turn to low. Cook for 6 hours.
- Remove chicken and tear into pieces.
- Add back to pot.
- Now add noodles; if adding veggies add now. Cook for another 2 hours or until noodles are desired tenderness. I stir a few times during last 2 hours. (You may want to add more broth to thin out at the end of cooking, as the homemade noodles thicken the broth, which we like.)

## Staff Spotlight

*Sheila Decker*

Sheila Decker joined Epworth Family Resources in September of 2016 as the In-Home Family Services Manager.

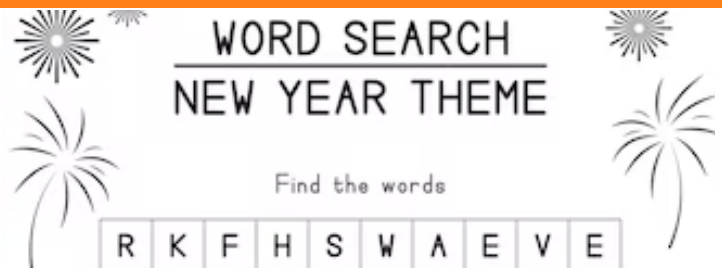


She has over 30 years of experience in the social work field, working with families to help them succeed. Sheila and her husband, Jim were foster parents for 17 years and adopted 3 children. They maintain contact with many of the children they've fostered over the years. Sheila states "I have a strong passion for helping families in need while empowering them to better their situation that brought them to Epworth."

Sheila grew up in Beatrice, NE and graduated from Tri County High School in 1986. She currently lives in Wymore, NE. Sheila and her husband have 6 children, a daughter-in-law, 4 grandchildren and 2 dogs. She enjoys family time, go-kart racing, car racing, sports, the outdoors and camping.

### Join Our Team! Positions Available!

Little Jewels Teacher & Teacher Assistant  
In-Home Family Life Specialist  
For more information contact Rochelle at 402-362-3353.



Find the words

R	K	F	H	S	W	A	E	V	E
O	V	I	Z	M	C	J	O	E	B
P	A	R	T	Y	E	A	N	D	Q
C	M	E	B	S	T	N	E	W	O
S	F	W	A	H	Y	U	L	O	A
Y	N	O	L	J	H	A	P	P	Y
E	A	R	L	A	O	R	U	C	T
A	V	K	O	X	S	Y	E	B	U
R	E	S	O	L	U	T	I	O	N
G	O	P	N	D	H	O	P	E	W

1. HAPPY
2. NEW
3. YEAR
4. EVE
5. HOPE
6. RESOLUTION
7. FIREWORKS
8. PARTY
9. BALLOON
10. JANUARY

Thank you...

*To those who donated their time, food boxes, toys, clothes, toiletries and cleaning supplies! The kindness was unforgettable!*