CREATING BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR 30 YEARS
“Partnership 4 Kids is really an organization that changes lives,” President Deb Denbeck said in summarizing the wide scope of programs Partnership 4 Kids (P4K) provides. As P4K celebrates its 30th anniversary year, Denbeck also reflected on the impact the nonprofit organization has had on area youth and the larger community.

“When P4K works with a young person growing up in poverty, we broaden their thinking and help them formulate a future of opportunity,” Partnership 4 Kids (P4K) President Deb Denbeck said. “And to see that future come alive is extremely rewarding to me. We get to see them succeed. It’s a reflection of the hard work by the staff and volunteers and how meaningful the programs have become to the young and maturing students.”

Fundamentally, P4K is a goal-setting and group mentoring program for underserved students that helps them create a foundation for success from their earliest days in elementary schools through the start of their careers. More than 90 percent of the participants come from low-income households and many face additional challenges such as language barriers and food and housing insecurities. P4K helps youth overcome hindrances to success by facilitating paths to academic achievement, promoting positive life skills, cultivating parent involvement, and inspiring hope for the future.

“It’s a program that takes you from very early in your life all the way to your career,” Denbeck said. “We do that through goal-setting, mentoring, career exploration, and college access.”

The organization’s vision statement starts with “To build a better community…” in reflection of its network of partnerships with Omaha public schools, other programs, local businesses and individuals. More than 5,000 students from 22 schools in the Omaha Public School district and a number of post-secondary institutions partner with P4K.

Yanneys’ Kids

The origin of P4K stretches back three decades to two couples who simply wanted to make a difference.

In 1989, self-made Omaha businessman Mike Yanney started a mentoring program for middle-school youth, an idea he’d had for some time. “If you can show these young people how bright the future can be if they get an education and try to be good citizens, it changes lives,” he said.

He chose McMillan Middle School (now McMillan Magnet Center) because his niece Norma Deeb happened to be principal there.

“She got 20 kids together at McMillan and we all sat on the floor in a circle. I’m sitting there in a sport coat and tie, and as about out of place as you can get,” Yanney said. He told the students he’d assign everyone a mentor and hoped to see them all graduate high school and maybe go on to college.

The response was underwhelming, he recalled. When relating the experience to his wife, Dr. Gail Walling Yanney, a retired anesthesiologist, she suggested adding something more tangible.

“So I went back and talked to the same group, only this time I offered them a scholarship to any college or university in Nebraska if they completed the program,” he said.

This time, their interest was piqued.

“About two weeks later all 20 of them came down to my conference room and we had a nice little get-together and we signed contracts,” Yanney said. “And that was the beginning of what was Yanneys’ Kids.”

Of the 20 students starting in the original group, four were quickly lost to forces that had unfortunately already been at play, Yanney said. But 16 were still sticking with the program 90 days later. “I know all 16 of them graduated from high school, at least 12 graduated from college and at least four of them went on to get their masters or PhDs.”

Yanneys’ Kids went on, too, growing into a full-fledged mentoring program over time and renamed All Our Kids. That program ultimately led to Partnership 4 Kids.
"TO CHANGE THE trajectory OF A YOUNG PERSON GROWING UP IN poverty [REQUIRES] A STRONG AND TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP, consistency… TIME, AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES. CHANGE CANNOT happen TOO QUICKLY, THAT IS WHY THE length OF OUR commitment IS CRITICAL."

~ DEB DENBECK, PRESIDENT, P4K
“You always hope for success,” Gail Yanney said.

“I didn’t really set a goal for (numbers). My whole objective was to find out how we could change lives and how we could motivate them. So it’s very pleasant to see,” Mike Yanney said. “It’s been one of the most heartwarming projects I’ve ever done in my life.”

**Winners Circle**

In 1995, another self-made businessman, Jerry Hoberman, and his wife, Cookie, a communications professional, wanted to recognize Belvedere Elementary School (Omaha Public Schools) students for their academic achievements. What began as an adopt-a-school relationship evolved into an achievement program called Winners Circle that was modeled on a goal-setting and incentive system Jerry Hoberman used to motivate his employees.

“Parents would come to school not because their kids were in trouble but because they were celebrating their kids’ productive success,” Cookie Hoberman said.

She recalled one parent offering an apology several years into the program for doubting and questioning if the Hobermans’ commitment would last.

“Trust comes late in the relationship,” she said. “I said, ‘You were right to not trust us until Jerry and I proved ourselves to you that we were going to be long-lasting and that we really cared.’”

The program eventually expanded from Belvedere to a dozen OPS elementary school. Years later, the Hobermans still regularly cross paths with former Winners Circle participants.

“I’d be sitting in a movie and someone would come up to me and say, ‘Miss Cookie, is that you?’” Cookie Hoberman said.

“I was eating at a McDonald’s once when a young person came up to me and said, ‘Hi, Mr. Hoberman. I’m still making my goals!’” Jerry Hoberman said. He added that another former Winners Circle participant the couple stays in touch with—now a college graduate in a successful retail management career—has told them, “I never wanted to let you down.”

“The rewards were so much greater in the giving for Jerry and me than in what the kids were receiving. To see their faces light up, to see the parents…” Cookie Hoberman said.

One success factor common to both Yanney’s Kids and Winners Circle was an expectation of responsibility on the students’ part.

“There’s accountability. We wanted them to be a valuable part of the community and to understand their responsibilities,” Mike Yanney said.

“As a goal-oriented competitive person, I feel you have to set levels of goals that are realistic to raise the bar,” Cookie Hoberman said.

Accountability continues to be an important element in P4K programming today.

“We do teach our students accountability but we teach the ‘why’: why it’s important to be in school, why it’s important to work hard and get good grades, why it’s important to learn about your community and give back,” Denbeck said. “Because at the end of the day, when our young people graduate we want to make sure they are good citizens and they’re ready to go on and be part of the cloth of the community in a very productive way.”

**Important collaborations**

In 2007, Winners Circle and the Yanney’s program by then known as All Our Kids joined forces to form what is now Partnership 4 Kids. The initial introduction of the Yanney’s to the Hobermans was facilitated by philanthropists and community leaders Dick and Mary Holland, who had supported both seminal organizations.

“Yanney’s Kids worked with kids in middle school and high school. So if we could merge with them, we’d have a seamless program that would help a child all the way through high school,” Jerry Hoberman said. “Theirs was a terrific program and it was just a natural merger. We all got together and decided it was the thing to do and we formed that partnership.”

“We were fortunate enough to meet Cookie and Jerry Hoberman and their very fine program,” Gail Yanney said. “Albeit 5,000 students a year isn’t nearly as many as there are that need help, our growth to that number came from our wonderful liaison with Winners Circle.”

By all counts, the union was positive and seamless.

“There was never any kind of proprietary thought. Everything was about what we can do together to help these kids,” Jerry Hoberman said. “There was never a problem with competition between the organizations. It was a beautiful transition.”

“The bottom line was, ‘What does this do for the children?’” Cookie Hoberman said.

The support of community visionaries who saw the viability of both organizations and, ultimately, P4K, was important to the success of the program.
partnership 4 kids

“PARTNERSHIP 4 KIDS IS AMONG THE MOST important initiatives IN THE OMAHA AREA THAT SUPPORTS achieving STUDENTS’ DREAMS TO pursue A COLLEGE DEGREE.”

~ DR. B.J. REED
SENIOR VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, UNO
“We started out working with the superintendent of schools and principals, and we kept developing the program based on what we needed to get results. We were always adjusting, always trying to find better answers to things,” Mike Yanney said. “In order for it to be successful, you have to make these changes. And we are not done making changes.”

“Our program was built on community participation, from the superintendent of schools to all the teachers and my friends and all the other individuals who contributed money to make the program become a reality,” Jerry Hoberman said. “I will be eternally grateful for their trust that we could get that done.”

“When you’re trying to help young people, when you do this type of work, you have to be cooperative,” Denbeck said. “We all need one another and the young people we’re helping need us. This is hard work and it doesn’t take just one agency or one school or one teacher; it takes everyone cooperating together, and when we do that we see success.”

Partnership remains key to P4K’s endurance. In 2013, Partnership 4 Kids created a formal alliance with TeamMates and College Possible and now has a group of more than 30 partner programs with which it collaborates to support students.

“There are many programs that include mentoring, and that’s wonderful because it takes a village. It takes all of us,” Gail Yanney said. “They all serve in different ways but basically what they’re doing is placing a young person with someone who cares. I think that we’re making a difference and we’ve all grown as we’ve went along… We do it differently but the goal is the same.”

Visionary supporters
Mary Ann “Andy” Holland serves on the board of directors for P4K and is the daughter of the late Dick and Mary Holland, the couple who supported the root organizations that became P4K and suggested they merge to serve children from kindergarten through high school and beyond. The Hollands were passionate believers in the responsibility of community leaders to bridge the opportunity gap for young people in poverty, she said.
“My dad always had a lot of compassion for people who didn’t necessarily have every opportunity growing up,” Holland said. “He didn’t have every opportunity growing up.”

Dick Holland and his siblings all started working from an early age, earning money through jobs like paper routes and shoveling snow, she said. And not only was hard work encouraged, “Both of his parents believed a great deal in education and gaining knowledge, and they influenced my father and his siblings to become well-read and educated. My father had it deeply ingrained in him the importance of having opportunities. It’s not fair if only people with wealthy parents are able to pursue opportunities.”

The family’s ongoing support of P4K is a natural continuation of the family’s beliefs and honors Dick and Mary Holland, Holland said, as well as their faith in P4K’s programs and philosophies.

“P4K is an example of an organization that has found a way to be very effective at what they do,” Holland said. “They have such a high proportion of their students succeeding. It’s working.”

Joanne Poppleton, P4K’s middle school program director, agrees.

“P4K staff transcends a family environment filled with passion, and our program really works,” Poppleton said. “Our program is about ensuring student success by way of a career path. Beginning in elementary school we knit together the school staff, the students and their families, and introduce our ‘to and through college’ program. From year to year we all grow and learn together.”

These relationships are essential to P4K’s effectiveness.

“The connection we establish with the students and their families early on, and then with matched mentors in middle school, creates a unique synergy,” Poppleton said. “It’s the relationship and the bonds created that continue to high school and beyond.” Students are matched with a mentor and a group of fellow mentees in middle school, and the group typically sticks together through graduation. P4K statistics show participants realize improved success in school, career, and even personal pursuits.

Poppleton calls the program a “winning formula” to curbing generational poverty, building a strong workforce, and developing successful young adults.

“The students may seem wobbly with study and time management skills, yet mentors say—and we see—that in high school these students successfully maintain good grades, engage with our program, and excel at extracurricular activities, and some even juggle an after-school job,” she said.

“That seems impressive, especially knowing the environmental fabric of these students’ lives. Yet, it is even more distinguished when these students graduate high school and go on to a post-secondary opportunity they had never before dreamed of, instilled and fully supported by P4K, their ‘family’.”

The superintendent of Omaha Public Schools, Dr. Cheryl Logan, said she sees the program working every day.

“Omaha Public Schools serve many students who need additional support. All of our students have the capability of becoming high-functioning citizens who contribute to making Omaha a vibrant and attractive city,” Logan said. “P4K is a partner in the investment in our young people by the citizens who understand that if we are to continue to attract residents, they should expect—and in fact do demand—a high-quality educational experience.”

P4K programs are an effective enhancement for the school system’s efforts to support students, she added. But she also sees how the lives of the adult participants and volunteers are enriched.

“In innovative ways, (P4K) augments the school day experience by providing mentors and programs that are exciting for our youngsters and provide support,” Logan said. “Mentoring others should be an expectation for those who dedicate their lives to public service. This extends to our employees who work outside of schools.”
Mentoring and working with a youngster one-to-one provides a unique opportunity for employees to make meaningful connections for the young person and provide context to their work in the school district regardless of assignment.

Tim Burke, president and CEO for Omaha Public Power District (OPPD), said he’s seen companies hesitate to support their employees in contributing workday hours to nonprofit activities because they fear productivity will be compromised. It’s been his experience, however, that endorsing community involvement has been overwhelmingly positive. More than 70 OPPD employees volunteer as P4K mentors, the most of any of the approximately 30 local companies partnering with the program.

“What we have demonstrated inside this organization is that you have far greater committed employees because you allow them to do this important work at schools,” Burke said. “They make sure their work gets done and we get higher-quality employees engaged in it because they want to give back to the community. We’re building that community focus muscle within the organization, which I think is important in corporations nowadays.”

Volunteerism has fostered compassion and awareness in his workforce, he added.

“I think our employers get to see a part of our community that has needs; we may not typically get to see that as employees,” Burke said. “It gives us insight how we can be better corporate partners in the community and gives us a better understanding of some of the needs and community issues we can make a difference in… There are so many needs out there, how do you get as many volunteers to make a positive impact? It’s not about throwing money at it; it’s about involving people who want to engage with it.”

Burke serves as vice chair for the P4K board and on its recruitment and fundraising committee. He and his wife, Terri, started their involvement with Winners Circle and Terri has served as a “Goal Buddy” at Kellom Elementary School in the past and collected more than 1,500 books for its summer reading program. They’ve brought their sons into the fold, too: son Pat Burke is the president of the P4K’s service league and brother Matt joins him and their father when their Irish pub band Shenanigans
plays the Hops & Grapes Fall Festival, a P4K fundraiser. The Burkes volunteer because they believe in the program, Tim Burke said.

“That research is pretty profound in that the students over time tend to see higher grades and test scores, to be absent less, to get in less trouble in school and to be more focused. We’ve seen that those involved in P4K and other programs tend to have higher GPAs and go to college and have higher college graduation rates,” Burke said. “Once you change the trajectory of one individual, you change it for the next generation.”

**Building the future**

OPPD has now hired employees that participated in P4K as children and the company has also hired parents inspired to pursue additional education after seeing their children succeed in P4K programs. Burke said he fully admits that one factor in his ongoing support for P4K is that it benefits businesses, too.

“We’re helping develop the workforce of the future,” Burke said. “How can we engage youth to continue in education and perform well and get the additional skill sets they need—we need—in the business world? We can start earlier and give them hope before waiting until they’re a senior in college.”

John Fonda is owner, chairman and CEO for John Day Company, a wholesaler/distributor of supplies and equipment. He’s also the area manager for “Dream it. Do It.” a nonprofit that works with students, parents and educators to advocate careers in manufacturing and trades for students with aptitude.

“I’ve enjoyed working with and getting to know Partnership 4 Kids. They’re great for the community and they’re so passionate,” Fonda said. He works with multiple nonprofits and organizations, but his work with P4K recognizes common objectives including P4K’s mission to mentor kids not just for college today, but also for “careers tomorrow.”

“It’s (about) how we interact with each other and what can we bring to each other’s groups so we can be more effective for the students and the business community,” Fonda said. “Everyone has been outstanding. Everyone wants to get it right. Omaha is very fortunate to have these dedicated groups.”

**LA’ASZJA WILLIAMSON** said the new experiences and access to opportunities provided by P4K are what makes the organization so important to her. College tours, college and career fairs, summer camps and field trips have helped her envision what her future could look like.

Williamson said she also appreciates that doors have been opened to her through her participation in the program. Her hard work and excellent grades have allowed her to apply for several educational and scholarship programs primarily discovered through her involvement in P4K.

Community responsibility is a key component to P4K curriculum, and is something that Williamson has demonstrated throughout her participation in the program. For instance, as a 7th-grader Williamson volunteered at an assisted living facility with her classmates, where she sang songs, interacted with residents, and wrote notes of encouragement. In the fall of 8th grade, Williamson took a lead role in a grade-wide donation drive and poverty awareness campaign. She also helped serve pancakes as a Martin Luther King Jr. Day fundraiser that raised money to help impoverished individuals and families. P4K has made her realize, she said, that she likes helping people.

Williamson said she has really enjoyed her time in P4K since she was accepted into the program at the beginning of 7th grade, and her accomplishments include being awarded Student of the Month at her school during the 2018-19 school year. When asked why P4K is a priority for her going forward, she answered, “It’s good to get out of the house and be a part of something positive.”
There is no question that the industry sector’s need for skilled workers “is already there,” but Fonda said he recognizes “we’re part of a process.”

“It’s going to take some time. It’s not going to happen overnight,” Fonda said. “I believe in the long-term. The sooner we expose these young people to all paths, if they have the chance to excel, many will.”

Core Bank President John Sorrell, who also serves as a board member and on the finance committee for P4K, said his company’s involvement stems from highly valuing both education and volunteerism.

“I have been on the outside looking in at P4K due to my relationship with Mr. Yanney (who served on the board of directors for Core Bank Holding Co.), and now I’m fortunate to serve on the board of directors and lead a company that has several mentors involved with the program,” Sorrell said. “While we do a lot in the community, P4K has been the organization our staff have been very engaged with. Core Bank employees get 16 hours of volunteering each year in addition to the time they commit to mentoring P4K students. The P4K mission is perfectly aligned with the core values of Core Bank.”

Sorrell said that investing in youth is simply “the right thing to do” for Omaha.

“Everyone deserves a fair shot,” he said. “P4K gives kids the tools to be successful and then helps them get into the work force, cultivating them into the next generation of Omaha leaders. Investing in P4K’s programs that mentor kids to and through college and careers will pay dividends tenfold.”

Education beyond high school
As the director of P4K’s high school and post-secondary programming, Molly Verble works with high school juniors and seniors to provide access to college and post-secondary options and support their efforts to complete their certificates and degrees and achieve their career goals.
SA BIR BA D A W I joined P4K in 5th grade and had difficulty, like most P4K students, with the critical transition periods between middle and high school and between high school and college. Academically he did well, but was concurrently experiencing some personal challenges and emotional turmoil. P4K helped Badawi with scholarships, learning to address personal stressors, time management and adjusting to new academic expectations. As a Buffet Scholar, Badawi had access to on-campus support from not only P4K, but also the University of Nebraska Omaha Thompson Learning Community. The guidance and assistance provided enabled him to remain focused on his academics and excel in the classroom. In May, Badawi graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor of science degree in political science and minors in human rights studies and philosophy.

“One of the most significant areas of guidance I received through Partnership 4 Kids was the foundation of knowledge on higher education and professional careers. I remember the times in middle and high school where we would meet with mentors and professionals in the community to learn about their jobs, careers, and paths of education that led them to where they are. I was the first in my family to go on to college. This type of guidance was very valuable to me,” Badawi said.

Badawi said his dream job is to work as a legal aid for the government. He has been working for the Douglas County Public Defender’s office and will be attending law school in the fall at the University of Dayton—on an academic dean’s scholarship, of course.
**GOING FOR THE GOLD**

**profiles in partnership**

**MAR SHA PAW**

**exemplary endurance**

*MAR SHA PAW* moved to the U.S. in 2008 from a refugee camp in Thailand. She struggled to adjust to her new surroundings and learn both a new language and way of life. Paw recalled that she was shy and self-conscious about her spoken English, so making friends and participating in school was difficult at first. As an 8th-grader, she joined P4K, which she credits with helping her connect with new friends and practice and improve her English.

Paw found so much value and support as a participant in the P4K program that she continued her participation through high school and is now majoring in elementary education at the University of Nebraska Omaha (UNO). Paw aspires to be an English as a Second Language teacher and help students who are struggling with the same issues she experienced as a youth.

Paw is a P4K scholarship recipient, which she said has allowed her to worry less about money and focus more on school. In addition to being a full-time student, Paw is also a mother of two children, which she said is a motivating force behind her efforts to pursue an education. “Adjusting to being both a parent and a student was hard, but I won’t give up,” she said.

Paw will graduate from UNO’s education program in December of 2020 and is already considering returning for a master’s program.

“Mar Paw has encountered several obstacles throughout her education, but she doesn’t let them slow her down,” said P4K College Access Supervisor Deanne Harris. “She continues to have a positive attitude and work towards her goals and dreams and set an example for her two little ones at home.”

“A word I think of often in this kind of work is ‘dependability.’ You’re providing a dependable situation for the student; but then for the mentor, being part of the program also requires you to be dependable,” Schmailzl said. “People get to where they are because of others who stood by them. Somebody had to help you. I see Partnership 4 Kids filling that role and it’s an organized, professional effort.”

Schmailzl said he frequently promotes P4K as a guided opportunity for young professionals to get involved in the community.

“People who want to volunteer and be part of it are volunteering to make a difference in people’s lives,” Schmailzl said. “That takes a little more work and a little more structure. I know the P4K staff does a good job of coaching people in the right direction.”

A P4K board member who also serves on the curriculum committee, Dr. Juan Casas is an associate professor and director of the psychology graduate program at the University of Nebraska Omaha (UNO). Casas said he shares the P4K philosophy that education is the road map out of poverty, and sees close to 100 P4K students on the UNO campus meeting their goals in the pursuit of their dreams for their careers and lives.

“The university has really made a concerted effort to increase contact time with first-generation students, both in and outside the classroom. P4K’s programming on the campus has been a nice complement to all these efforts, and this makes for a great partnership,” Casas said. “As a college professor, I am always very concerned about the overall development of young people. The fact that P4K’s programming begins in preschool and continues to and through post-secondary education allows students a pathway to a brighter future.”

Dr. Casas said he applauds P4K’s continual use of evidence-based research in developing the curriculum, and for always looking at the individual needs of the youth the organization serves.
**partnership 4 kids**

**GOING FOR THE GOLD**

**profiles in partnership**

**MONIQUE CRIBBS**

**legacy builder**

"P4K serves a very diverse population of students who are growing up in poverty, and they provide not only tuition assistance, but also the needed guidance and services which help the students succeed. Students can count on the staff to always be there to help," Casas said.

UNO’s senior vice chancellor for academic affairs, Dr. B.J. Reed, said he also witnesses the program’s value at the post-secondary level.

"Partnership 4 Kids is among the most important initiatives in the Omaha area that supports achieving students’ dreams to pursue a college degree. They do it through providing critical support and assistance to students so they can succeed personally and educationally," Reed said. "UNO is one of the beneficiaries of what P4K has achieved with hundreds of their kids thriving in college and beyond. We could not be prouder of our partnership and to see it expand and make even a greater difference in the future."

**Evolution continues**

Thirty years has gone by fast, Denbeck said, and one reason P4K has flourished is that the people in the organization and its predecessors have been willing to evolve.

"I always tell our staff that change will happen and that we must change, because if we don’t, we become irrelevant to our youth. So we’re continually looking at what we have to change, what we have to do to adapt, what we have to do to do business better," Denbeck said. "I think that’s a good model for everybody whether you’re in a nonprofit or a for-profit business: you need to be able to adapt and change. Education has certainly evolved. There is more pressure on educational institutions to produce the people who are needed for the 21st-century workforce. Quite honestly, we’re part of that. We have to be a change agent."

Burlington Capital Group Chairman & CEO Lisa Roskens is the daughter of Mike and Gail Yanney and serves on P4K’s board and nominating committee.

**MONIQUE CRIBBS** is working on her doctoral degree in educational leadership and higher education from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, with the goal of graduating this year. Earning an advanced degree is an impressive accomplishment under any circumstances, but even more meaningful for a single parent and first-generation college student.

Cribbs was enrolled in college when she discovered she was pregnant. "I personally was devastated because I had promised my mom and dad I would be the first to graduate and not have children," Cribbs said. "Every day I wanted to drop out; I cried almost daily."

With the support of her family, friends, faculty and P4K, Cribbs continued attending college as a single mother.

"They basically helped me all the way through, because they saw the potential in me to go to college. All my son has known is education—meaning I have either been enrolled in college or working at a college (she is a career exploration and development manager at Metropolitan Community College)—and last year we finished what we started together," said Cribbs.

Cayden Cribbs, also a P4K mentee, graduated from high school in 2018 and had a successful freshman year at the University of Kansas.

Although she struggled, Cribbs said she kept pressing forward to obtain her dreams for herself and her son. “We couldn’t be more grateful,” she said.
One could say that Cayden Cribbs was born into Partnership 4 Kids. After all, his mother (Monique Cribbs) was a participant in the college phase of the program when she was expecting.

Cribbs joined P4K in 7th grade at Lewis and Clark Middle School and became a part of the college access program at Omaha North High School.

With the support of P4K and a mother who knew firsthand the value of an education, he worked hard to earn impressive grades and competitive scholarships. Cribbs is now attending the University of Kansas as an Adidas Leadership Scholar and aspires to eventually earn a master’s degree in architecture.

“All throughout my years with P4K, I have been supported by the team,” he said. “When it came to my 8th-grade graduation party all the way (through) to deciding on a college, P4K has been there to support me.”

Cribbs demonstrates how students thrive with good support. He said he hopes to tie together his education in architecture with his interest in design, real estate, and property management to eventually become a luxury home designer/seller as he’s always dreamed.

Roskens said that although hard data has been impressive, the true success of P4K over three decades is impossible to precisely quantify.

“I don’t know that there’s any way to truly measure that impact, because how do you measure the effect of changing someone’s life and the trajectory upon which they’re living?” Roskens said. “You can sit down and say there’s X number of kids and this data point, but at the end of the day those are just numbers and there’s no real way to say because you changed this person’s life how many other lives are changed in a positive way.

“It’s so sweeping what P4K has done. Every child that goes through the program is looking at life differently as a result of that, and they’re approaching their world differently. They’re all going to come back and be a part of making better things happen. What’s being done and has been done is priceless.”

As part of the next generation of P4K leadership, Roskens emphasized that the important work her parents and the Hobermans started must continue.

“The legacy of Partnership 4 Kids is a better community. If you put people on a better path and inspire them to help others get on a better path, why wouldn’t that fundamentally change everything around them? If they’re contributing to the world around them rather than taking from the world around them, it’s improving communities by improving individuals,” Roskens said. “You can change communities by building facilities or you can change communities by building the people. P4K falls into that second category—and not only that, P4K has been a leader in that category.”

“Mike and Gail and Cookie and Jerry set an incredible foundation for this organization and now it’s both my responsibility and the board of directors’
responsibility and the community’s responsibility to carry this legacy forward," Denbeck said. "We do have a model that works and if we’re truly committed to helping young people in poverty situations then we need to be able to put our arms around this organization and help bring it forward."

The community has a responsibility to support its youth, and he’s confident the people of Omaha will step forward, Mike Yanney said.

"Omaha is a community not like any I’ve ever seen anywhere in the world where we’ve done business," he said. "It’s really a true community; we really want to make a difference and we want to see it continue to do better."

His hopes for the future of P4K is not about a personal legacy, he added.

"Our concern is that we continue to focus on our youth and motivate them to see what the future can be like if they work hard," Yanney said. He added that he and his wife are confident the leadership of P4K has what it takes to carry on—for decades to come—what they and the Hobermans started.

“We have great leadership with Deb Denbeck and the board of directors and I’m very proud of them,” Mike Yanney said. “I think we also have to continue to put money into the foundation to ensure sustainability into the future.”

“We hope the board will take us forward and go through what changes are necessary to continue to do what we are doing and do what our mission suggests. If we go out of business because we’re so successful, well, that would be great," Gail Yanney said. “But I suspect we will be needed. Because there will always be need.”
FOSTERING HOPE FOR 30 years

"IT’S BEEN ONE OF THE most heartwarming projects I’VE ever DONE IN MY life."

~ MIKE YANNEY
FOUNDER, YANNEYS’ KIDS/ALL OUR KIDS/P4K

"IT’S A PROGRAM THAT TAKES YOU FROM very early IN YOUR LIFE all the way TO YOUR CAREER. WE DO THAT through GOAL-SETTING, MENTORING, CAREER EXPLORATION, AND COLLEGE access."

~ DEB DENBECK
PRESIDENT, P4K

"YOU CAN change COMMUNITIES BY BUILDING facilities OR YOU CAN change COMMUNITIES BY BUILDING THE people."

~ LISA ROSKENS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS, P4K

save the date!

30th Anniversary Gala
November 13

Downtown Hilton
10th and Cass
5:30 PM Cocktails, 6:30 Dinner and Program

For additional information contact Cheryl Murray cmurray@p4k.org, 402-930-3082