
Beyond School Bells Newsletter – February 2025

From Beyond School Bells <bsbinfo@nebraskachildren.org>

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February 2025

News and Events

Nebraska's Afterschool Programs: Galloping Forward

"Through rain or snow, or sleet or hail, we'll carry the mail. We will not fail."

Those famous words evoke the spirit of the historic Pony Express mail service, which had 38 stations in Nebraska, mostly nestled along the Platte River Valley. Two of these 1860s era stations still stand as National Park Service monuments in Gothenburg and at Rock Creek Station.

I thought about this historic motto and spirit of commitment to the nation-bridging mission the Pony Express conveyed in light of the temporary uncertainty that erupted last week when the Federal funding freeze was announced via Executive Order and then quickly, thankfully, rescinded.

Nebraska's afterschool programs reflect the same can-do spirit as the Pony Express service and exist along a similar statewide course stretching from Omaha to Scottsbluff, albeit one with many more refueling stations wherever children and families seek learning experiences and care along the way.

And like our forbearers, despite whatever challenges - weather-related or otherwise - that emerge, Nebraska's Afterschool program staff also remain committed to their important mission to help spread the promise of the Good Life to youth, families and communities across our vast state. These vital programs provide young people opportunities to learn and

grow in safe and welcoming places after the end of the school day and in the summer when parents and caregivers are still busy at work, driving Nebraska's economy forward.

All of us at Beyond School Bells wanted to acknowledge the can-do, mission-driven spirit of the dedicated afterschool professionals who power afterschool and summer learning programs across Nebraska. While you work outside of the limelight, giving your best day in and day out, you provide services which are essential to the well-being of our communities.

We thank you and because of your dedication and service, we too will not fail!

Registration OPEN: Nebraska's ELO Innovation Invitational 2025



Third time is the charm...

... and we hope to see you, in a little more than a month, at Beyond School Bells' third Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Innovation Invitational, which will be held from March 10 – 12th at UNL's Innovation Campus, where you will be honored and celebrated as our very special guests.

This free event provides opportunities for afterschool and summer program practitioners and advocates to come together alongside youth and community, state and national leaders to exchange ideas and participate in hands on workshops exploring the critical role that exciting, engaging and inspiring afterschool and summer programs play in the lives of children, families and communities across Nebraska. For more information on this exciting event, go to our conference website at <https://beyondschoolbells.org/innovation-invitational/>

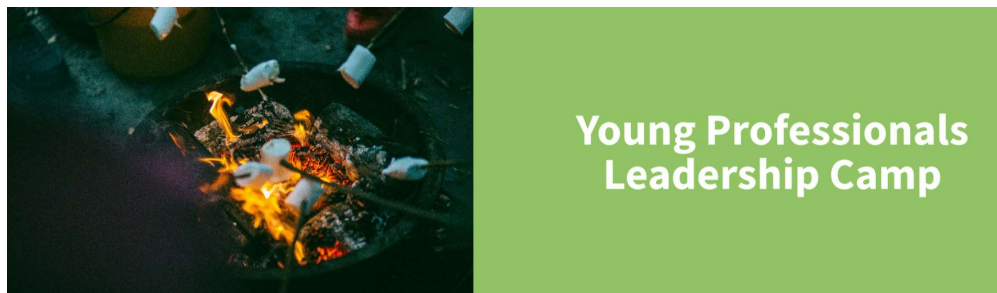
Space for this free event is limited, so act now to reserve your spot and start getting ready!

Register Today!

SUMMER!

REGISTRATION OPEN: Young Professionals Leadership Camp

Camp Comeca | August 6-8, 2025



We encourage you to register for the BSB Young Professionals Leadership Camp August 6-8, 2025, at Camp Comeca near Cozad, NE. This experience will bring high school and college-age afterschool professionals together for training, connection and leadership development.

To learn more and to register, visit <https://beyondschoolbells.org/resources/young-professionals-leadership-camp.html>.

To join our planning team, please reach out to Alana Pearson at apearson@nebraskachildren.org.

BSB Funding Opportunity: Summer of Exploration



The summer months are just around the corner and when better to think warm thoughts of field trips, lemonade stands, and flourishing gardens than in February? As the BSB team gets ready to host the 3rd ELO Innovation Invitational on March 10-12, we will also be finalizing details on the upcoming grants for the "Summer of Exploration". This year, we will center our summer grants around the student-centered learning described in chapter 8 of *Whole Child, Whole Life* by Stephanie Malia Krauss. Grants will be open to school- and community-based summer learning programs serving school age children, will be limited to one award per community, and will consider applications up to \$15,000.

More information to come at the ELO Innovation Invitational and our March newsletter.

Resources and Opportunities

AVAILABLE FOR CHECK-OUT: Think, Make, Create (TMC) Trailer



Fully stocked Think Make Create (TMC) Labs are available for programs to check out. If your program is looking for ways to incorporate hands on learning experiences for students in your program, check out the TMC Lab. <https://beyondschoolbells.org/mobile-maker-space/>

If you would like to bring this resource to your program, please complete the interest survey below!

Interest Survey

Free Health Sciences Curriculum and Training (Grades 3-6)

Sign-Up Deadline: 3/31/25



Nebraska Hospital Association is looking for afterschool programs who would like to participate in the Health Care Heroes League program. The Health Care Heroes League, which is part of the Health Careers Pipeline Initiative, is a program intended for students in grades 3-6 to learn about a multitude of health career choices through fun, engaging and innovated approaches.

What will afterschool programs receive:

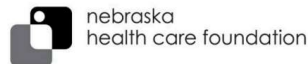
- Comprehensive curriculum to assist your program in facilitating the activities
- Virtual training sessions for facilitators, 1 hour
- Supplies and materials for each student per site
- Access to the NHA Health Careers Pipeline website for materials

Through partner funding, we provide all supplies and materials for the first year. We're hoping the funding will be ongoing.

Who can facilitate the activities?

The activity/lesson can be facilitated by any afterschool staff member. Current sites delivering the Health Care Heroes Program are using members of high school HOSA members, the school nurse, college nursing students, retired teachers or health care workers in care facilities. Once you choose your instructors/facilitators, we will provide training for them.

For more information or to sign-up for the program, contact Laura Leach at lleach@nebraskahospital.org by 3/31/25

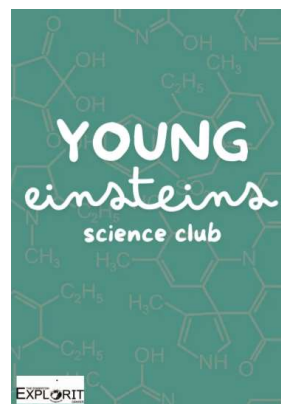
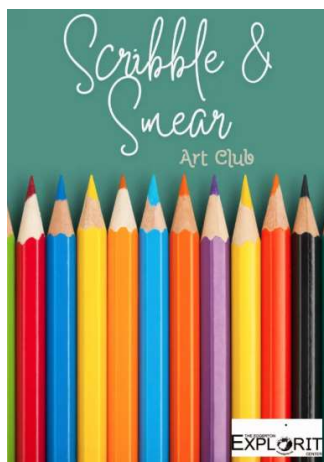


Sponsored by



Free Afterschool and Summer Camp Activities

by Edgerton Explorit Center



Looking for new arts and sciences clubs and activities for students grades K-8? Look no further! BSB's partner and Center of Excellence, the Edgerton Explorit Center, has created dozens of fun, engaging, hands-on lessons that are free to download and use in your afterschool and summer programs today!

[Access Lessons](#)

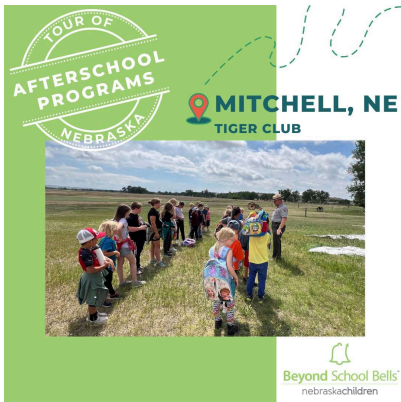
Program Spotlight

Tour of Nebraska Afterschool Programs

A celebration of high-quality afterschool and summer learning programs across Nebraska



Next Stop: Mitchell's Tiger Club



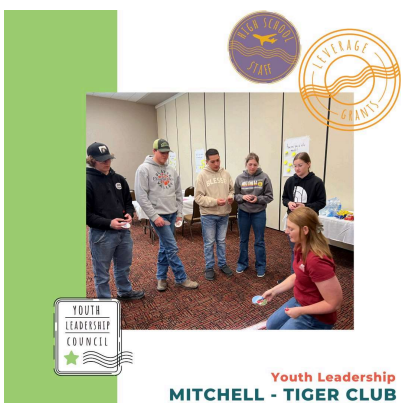
The Tiger Club Afterschool Program is a shining example of a close-knit community investing in its children's future. Launched in 2022 through ESSER funding, the program brings [Mitchell Public Schools](#) Superintendent Dr. Kathy Urbanek's vision to life, creating a safe and enriching space for students to learn and grow.

With hands-on learning in STEM, arts, and agriculture, the Tiger Club thrives year-round. Students dive into 4-H projects during the summer, preparing creations to showcase at the fair.



Under the leadership of Program Director Jennifer Krahulik, **youth voice is a top priority, and high school students are empowered as staff members.** The team's involvement with Beyond School Bells Youth Leadership Council further strengthens the program's impact.

"Give children the resources and freedom to create, and you'll be blown away by the incredible things they bring to life". – Jennifer Krahulik, Program Director



The Tiger Club demonstrates the power of collaboration and innovation in shaping bright futures for Mitchell's youth, ensuring they have the skills and resilience to thrive.

Read more about how the Tiger Club is making a difference in our blog article: "Beyond the Classroom: Transforming Learning with Real-World Skills in Mitchell, Nebraska." <https://bit.ly/3Pvqfh3>

We are proud of our partners throughout the state and look forward to continuing our tour of Nebraska programs. Follow along to see our next stop ([Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [X](#), [LinkedIn](#))!

**Our Contact Information**

Nebraska Children & Families Foundation
215 Centennial Mall South
Suite 200
Lincoln, NE 68508
402-476-9401

<http://www.NebraskaChildren.org>

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