

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contacts:

Kristin Ostrom, "Nebraska Is Home Fremont" Co-Chair, h: 402-753-3674, c: 402-317-7823

Gabby Ayala, "Nebraska Is Home Fremont" Co-Chair, 402-719-6854

Vanessa Martinez, "Nebraska Is Home" State Coordinator, w: 402-438-8853, c: 402-890-4893 vmartinez@neappleseed.org

COMMUNITY MEMBERS CELEBRATE LAUNCH OF NEW COMMUNITY-BUILDING CAMPAIGN: "Nebraska Is Home" promotes community unity in Fremont

FREMONT, NE – June 6, 2009 –Fremont community members gathered today in front of a colorful new billboard depicting families picnicking together to celebrate a new effort to build community through conversations, education, and positive messages.

"Nebraska Is Home Fremont" is a local effort to promote working together for a strong and united Fremont community, welcoming and respecting all people. The campaign's participants include community members with various backgrounds – education, faith, business, and community – who have joined together with partners Keene Memorial Library and Fremont Area Ministerial Association to celebrate shared community values and promote understanding of our various immigrant histories.

"This campaign is important to me because I have been working with immigrants in Fremont for over twelve years," said Michelle Knapp, a teacher in Fremont. "I count some of the immigrants in this community among my best friends. I think it's important that we all remember that people are people. We all have the same needs; we all have the same wants; we all have the same values. We are people."

The group plans to coordinate a community meal, community conversations in churches and living rooms, and other opportunities for community members to get to know one another and work together toward a shared future.

"I'm involved because I want a better future for my daughter," said Gabby Ayala, "Nebraska Is Home Fremont" Co-Chair. "What better way to know others in the community than getting involved with a group like Nebraska Is Home?"

"That's what Nebraska Is Home Fremont is all about: neighbors getting to know neighbors and working together as a community," said Reverend Scott Jensen, Chaplain at Fremont Area Medical Center. "I'm proud to support an effort that will continue that tradition and ensure our strength as a community." The Fremont Area Ministerial Association has already begun to organize a series of "Table Talks."

“Simple community conversations are a great way to get to know your friends, neighbors and community members,” said Kristin Ostrom, “Nebraska Is Home Fremont” Co-Chair. “Nebraska Is Home is a great opportunity to meet your neighbors. This is who we are as Fremont. Unity starts with each of us.”

“I love this community and am proud to call Fremont home,” said community member Armando Martinez. “Sometimes it can be hard to overcome a language divide, but becoming involved in this campaign is a great way to start.”

Community members left the event with posters to distribute to local churches and businesses, which they hope will create an opportunity to start positive conversations about Fremont’s future. “Fremont is strongest when we work together for our future,” said Ayala.

“Nebraska Is Home Fremont” is a community-led project designed by Fremont residents. Nebraska Appleseed—a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that promotes equal justice and full opportunity for all Nebraskans—helped provide coordinating support to the project. Four Nebraska communities – Crete, Grand Island, Seward, and Schuyler – have also launched “Nebraska Is Home” community campaigns.

Speakers at the event included:

Michelle Knapp, Teacher, Fremont Community Member

Kristin Ostrom, Co-Chair, Nebraska Is Home Fremont

Gabby Ayala, Co-Chair, Nebraska Is Home Fremont

Luis Canahui, Fremont Community Member

Armando Martinez, Fremont Community Member

Rev. Michael Ostrom, Pastor, Sinai Lutheran Church, Fremont Area Ministerial Association

Rev. Scott Jensen, Chaplain, Fremont Area Medical Center, Fremont Area Ministerial Assoc.

Dr. Jeremy Rehwaldt-Alexander, Associate Professor of Religion, Midland Lutheran College

Katya Segovia, Student, Fremont Community Member

Alfredo Velez, Local Business Owner, Tienda Mexicana Guerrero

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Nebraska Appleseed, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public interest law project, is a national leader in addressing social problems facing vulnerable children without loving and permanent homes, low-income families working hard to make ends meet, and new immigrants seeking a better life. Nebraska Appleseed’s current year action plan and description of its six program areas, significant litigation and policy reform successes, and broad-based accomplishments can be found at neappleseed.org.

Nebraska Appleseed is a part of the Appleseed network of independent state-based public interest law centers working to identify and address social injustices. The Appleseed network seeks to build a just society through education, legal advocacy, community activism and policy expertise by addressing root causes and producing practical, systemic solutions with broad implication. For more information visit appleseednetwork.org.

Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest
941 O Street, Suite 920
Lincoln, NE 68508
www.neappleseed.org