

# Omaha World-Herald

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## DONATIONS TO RURAL ENDOWMENTS

# Investments in the future

**A** 9-year-old splashes happily in the community pool. Aspiring volleyball players practice at the recreation center. A high school freshman quietly uses the public library for a research project.

Across Nebraska's rural counties, such community assets are available in many cases because of something quite special: local community foundations.

More than 200 such foundations are found across Nebraska, and their endowments provide long-term funding for public needs. The foundations receive donations from local residents and from those who have moved elsewhere but still want to help their hometowns.

It's an inspiring example of rural Nebraska drawing on its own resources and vision to safeguard the future.

The Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF), the statewide coordinator for such efforts, works with more than 200 local funds across the state. At present, the community endowments exceed \$32 million.

Since 1993, some \$118 million has been reinvested in Nebraska communities thanks to this forward-looking initiative.

Contributions usually take the

form of a check, of course. But just about any asset with value can be used.

Life insurance policies, for example. In Imperial, Doug and Judy Gaswick have made such a donation: \$200,000 to the Imperial Community Foundation Fund and \$50,000 to NCF. In northeast Nebraska, the Connie Endowment Fund provides thousands of dollars each year for children's needs. The endowment was funded by the late Connie Day through a \$500,000 life insurance policy.

The Nebraska Community Foundation notes that farmers and ranchers have a donation option that might sound surprising: Foundations can accept donations of agricultural products. When an ag producer transfers legal ownership of the commodity to a charity before it is sold, the producer will not have taxable income from a sale, reducing the producer's tax burden.

Over the past year NCF and its affiliated funds have received nearly \$60,000 in gifts of products such as corn, soybeans and livestock.

In Brown County in the Sand Hills, gifts of corn and livestock in recent months have totaled around \$13,800 toward the local community foundation's five-year goal of raising

\$500,000.

In Holt and Antelope Counties in north central Nebraska, community needs will benefit from the donation of \$130,000 in kidney beans by Paul and Karen Seger.

"The beauty of an endowment is that it lasts forever," Paul Seger notes. "So many times you see a project completed with a one-time large donation and then the money is spent. Through the (Stuart Community) Foundation Fund, the giving to many different projects will go on through generations."

The Ford Foundation has pledged \$1 million if the Nebraska Community Foundation can reach a goal of \$3 million. It is a tribute to NCF that it is one of only five such organizations to be offered the challenge grant.

So far, the trend is encouraging, with more than \$2.3 million raised. NCF will use these funds to continue to provide training and support for its affiliated funds across the state.

Every donation — including those in the form of Nebraska's abundant ag products — will be helpful in reaching the \$3 million goal. And when it's reached, future swimmers, volleyball players and high school researchers all will cheer.