

# Omaha World-Herald

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## NEBRASKA'S LOCAL ENDOWMENTS

# 'We Can' is right message

If you're looking for a success story about community progress, look west — to Imperial. In 2000, the Nebraska community's population was 1,982. By 2010, it had grown 4.5 percent to 2,071.

It is the first time since the 1970s that Imperial has seen population growth. Something is going right.

This progress didn't just happen. Imperial residents took action to boost their community. Imperial stayed in close touch with its young people who had moved away for college or economic opportunities and notified them when job opportunities arose at home.

The result was noted this year in the Imperial Republican newspaper: "Imperial has seen quite a surge in recent years of CCS (Chase County Schools) graduates who have returned here, often with their young families, to take jobs and get involved in the community."

Another impressive move by Imperial residents has been their level of financial support for the Imperial Community Foundation Fund, which aids a wide variety of community needs.

During 2006-07, Imperial residents reached a \$150,000 goal some 16 months ahead of time, and the community is now focusing on raising \$1 million by 2016.

The Imperial example is relevant as the Nebraska Community Foundation announced Wednesday that Nebraskans have a crucial opportunity to invest in their communities through donations to the 212 local endowments across the state.

Over the next 50 years, more than \$600 billion will be transferred from one Nebraska generation to the next, the foundation said. If just a small part of that were donated to the community foundations, the opportunities for local progress would be great.

"You have this extra opportunity but only a limited amount of time to address it," says Jeff Yost, executive director of the Nebraska Community Foundation. In 51 counties, the wealth transfers will peak over the next 10 years.

In other words, now is the time for Nebraskans to consider including such donations in their estate planning.

Some Nebraska communities have achieved remarkable levels of donations. Shickley, a town of 376 people about 80 miles southwest of Lincoln, was featured in the Chronicle of Philanthropy this summer for amazing philanthropic achievement.

About 60 percent of the town's residents have donated to the local community foundation. That fund is nearing \$700,000, and if expected gifts are included, the total is \$2.7 million.

Yost cites Shickley's example and says, "This is the 'We Can' attitude I find remarkable."

Shickley is showing a wonderful attitude. So is Imperial. And so can many other Nebraska communities if they make the choice to invest in themselves and their future.

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