

# “Appreciated Stock” Boosts Hopes for Diller

**Question: What do you call a gift of cattle? Answer: Appreciated stock.**

Al Svajgr gave Diller, his hometown in Southeast Nebraska, 48 heifers, and the community is mighty grateful, not to mention surprised. “Speechless!” was how Beth Roelfs put it. Roelfs is chairperson of the Diller Community Foundation, which accepted the gift on Diller’s behalf. “It made my day,” she said, “And, in essence, it made Diller’s future.”

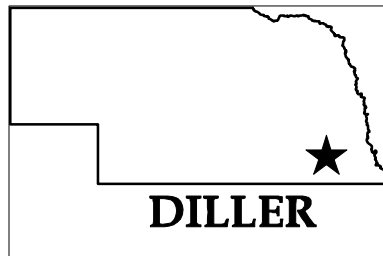
For Svajgr (pronounced “swagger”), chairman of the Beef Board, a national group of beef producers, the gift made perfect sense. “All the gain I had in those animals would have been taxable if I’d sold them and then made a cash donation,” he said. “This way, I was able to give more value, because I didn’t have to pay taxes on the capital gains.”

Valued at just over \$50,000, the unusual gift infused Diller with a huge boost of hope. “We are now looking at longer-term goals we hadn’t had the resources to consider before this gift,” Roelfs said. The foundation board made Svajgr’s gift the cornerstone of a campaign to raise \$200,000 by the end of 2008. The monies generated in interest by that community endowment will help underwrite historic restoration and community development projects in Diller.

That’s one of the reasons Svajgr, now of Cozad, decided to make his gift. “I visited the community and saw the old opera house and some of the historical buildings that need preservation. I decided it would be meaningful to me to give something that would be useful to the community.”

Another reason for Svajgr’s gift was gratitude. “I come from a generation that feels like we need to give something back,” he said. “I went to a one-room schoolhouse for eight years, high school in Diller, on to college. I really wanted to give something back to the community in honor of my parents, who were instrumental in my success.”

Svajgr’s parents, Ed and Bessie Svajgr, who live in Fairbury, raised their children on a farm near Diller. In a letter to the Diller Community Foundation, Svajgr wrote of his appreciation for their



encouragement: “My parents set a great example in creating an environment for my sister, brother, and me to be used throughout life. They taught us the value of knowing right from wrong, the reasons to possess a good work ethic, the need for a strong faith, how to love and share, that honesty is always correct and the importance of pursuing further education in our endeavor to serve our fellow man.”

Svajgr has a Ph.D. in biochemistry and nutrition and, since 1977, has been involved in cattle feeding, ranching, farming and banking in Dawson County.

Like many others, the Diller Community Foundation actively promotes its projects and asks for contributions. Each year, the foundation sends Diller’s alumni—currently 900 of them—a publication called *Hometown Connections*, which highlights the goals, projects and development in the Diller area. “And we have given people the opportunity to support their community through some sort of gift,” Roelfs said. She noted that Svajgr took advantage of that opportunity.

Svajgr said he was comfortable placing his charitable dollars in the hands of the Diller Community Foundation because of its affiliation with the Nebraska Community Foundation, which he trusts. “I’ve known Jeff Yost for several years,” he said. Yost is president and CEO of the Nebraska Community Foundation, which works with 165 affiliated funds across the state.

Like many other small towns, Diller, with a population of 287 according to the 2000 census, relies on volunteers and generosity for many of its projects, such as the three-day celebration Diller has held every year for 108 years. “Many, many man-hours,” Roelfs said.

Svajgr recalled another example of community support: “After the fire destroyed the old high school, I was one of those who were privileged to attend classes in many of the downtown buildings in Diller for a year or more.”

“We are built on strong volunteerism,” Roelfs said. “Strong fire unit support, strong school support.”

Indeed, the Svajgr family is known for leadership and volunteering. “They were always willing to step up to the plate,” Roelfs said. “They were community leaders, having served on the school board, the church board, in pivotal roles. They continue to model leadership with this endowment gift, to establish a new resource for the community.”

“You always think of the possibility of such a gift, but you question whether it will become a reality,” Roelfs said. “It was an exciting Christmas gift and has opened the door to so many possibilities for Diller’s future.”



**Editor’s Note: This is one in a series of articles on Nebraskans and former Nebraskans who have left living legacies to their hometowns, through wills, bequests and charitable giving. It was written by Judith Parks of Papillion. The articles are funded, prepared and distributed by the Nebraska Community Foundation, which is helping rural towns across the state establish permanent endowments for community projects. More than 70 communities affiliated with the Nebraska Community Foundation are building endowments through cash donations, planned gifts and wills and bequests. For further information on the Nebraska Community Foundation: 402-323-7330, PO Box 83107, Lincoln, NE 68501-3107. Visit their website at [www.nebcommfound.org](http://www.nebcommfound.org).**