

Peer Learning, Mentoring Core to NCF Approach



Judy Lichti shares some of the lessons the Shickley Community Foundation Fund learned during its endowment-building campaign which was successfully completed in December 2015.

More than 50 Fund Advisory Committee members from 12 communities convened in Kearney early in May, and the positive energy was undeniable. Nebraska Community Foundation held the two-day event to teach volunteers how to cultivate donor relationships and plan for the launch of their unrestricted endowment-building campaigns.

The goal for each community is to raise \$200,000 to receive the maximum \$100,000 challenge grant provided by The Sherwood Foundation. The campaigns are in the early “quiet” phase – they have not been announced publicly. (For this reason, persons quoted within this article are not identified by name.) Each fund is being coached by NCF staff and mentors on how to plan, recruit leadership, identify major donors, and of course, complete internal campaigns in which each committee member pledges a gift that is personally significant.

Nebraska Community Foundation carefully plans its training sessions to be

highly interactive, where volunteers teach and learn from one another. We involve peer mentors – volunteers from communities of all sizes who have succeeded in raising significant challenge grant dollars and are now in the position to create long-lasting change in their communities.

Helping out at the training were Judy Lichti of Shickley, Paul Madison of Nebraska City, Dale Dueland of McCook and Al Steuter of Brown County. All are peer mentors who have been part of successful endowment-building campaigns. Trainees hung on every word that was spoken about the real-life experience of making face-to-face asks for significant gifts, holding gathering events to educate donors, and being patient.

The 12 community-based funds will reconvene in several regional sessions in August and September to learn more about inviting donors to contribute and showing appreciation for their generosity. Find out about this and other community endowment- and capacity-building initiatives at www.NebraskaHometown.org/programs-research. ■

“Mentoring is so important. It is easy to see that our mentors want us to succeed.”

“I loved Judy’s story of how many other projects were going on in the county or surrounding communities and they still hit their goal. Excuses are just a crutch!”

Assistant Director of Community Development Philanthropy Karl Shaddock is part of the team of staff members who design peer learning sessions and NCF’s annual affiliated fund training.



Closing Circle

At the close of each peer learning session participants stand in a circle and share their thoughts. Here are some of their remarks:

“This experience has opened the doors to so many ideas, so many other doors.”

I wish everyone in our Fund Advisory Committee were here. I can’t believe what they are missing and I can’t wait to get back home and share this with them.

I love the energy I’m feeling.

I liked how the mentors explained the importance of making sure spouses are involved when it comes to recruiting new FAC members.

Rural Nebraska is in good hands and has a bright future.

Doing something is better than doing nothing at all.

This has brought me a whole new level of confidence.

I appreciate the concept that you are honoring someone when you invite them to participate by contributing.

I just want to say thanks to Nebraska Community Foundation for everything that you are doing.

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Leading Change

I recently was asked to name my favorite cause or charity. My response was “youth leadership development.” Building leadership skills in our younger generation is critical to achieving Nebraska Community Foundation’s vision. The progress and change we are working to create for the future is completely dependent on the development of skillful, community-minded leadership today.

As the cover story of this newsletter affirms, building unrestricted endowments is an important component to long-term success, but money alone will not ensure future prosperity for our communities. Only wise and tenacious servant leaders can create pathways to progressive hometowns. That is why it is so important to be preparing young people for future leadership roles.

Leadership can be learned in countless ways, and you’ll read about some of them in this report. When our kids are given the opportunity to grow their own food,

create their own inventions, or contribute their ideas for improving their hometown, they are learning about leadership.

This summer’s newsletter features a number of stories about offering kids and young adults opportunities to explore their own strengths and connect to their communities.

Living in Nebraska in the 21st century is a wise choice for our youth and young adult leaders. We’re pleased to share stories of charitable investments that are making our hometowns ever more “livable” for an increasing number of young families who are choosing to put down roots in some of the 249 communities we serve.

Enjoy the good news! ■



Jeff Yost
NCF President and CEO

NCF Board Impressed with Progress in Pender-Thurston

According to Ray Welsh, a member of the Pender-Thurston Education and Community Foundation Fund and an honorary NCF Board member, Pender has a history of leaders who didn’t skimp. “If you believe in it and build it right, great things will happen,” he said.

There are a lot of things being built “right” in Pender-Thurston. A \$7 million community/wellness/child care center is the latest project, but building the Fund’s unrestricted endowment remains an overarching goal.

NCF Board and staff members joined more than 100 community members at a community celebration hosted by Ray and Deb Welsh with the help of other

Pender-Thurston Fund Advisory Committee members. The event in June coincided with NCF’s quarterly Board meeting, which is held in various affiliated fund communities across the state.

Jeff Yost thanked the community for its warm welcome. “Progressive places invest in their people, their places and their economy. Young people are looking for exactly what Pender is doing!” Yost said.

Ray Welsh thanked the guests and closed the evening by reminding people, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. Pender got to where we are today by relying on each other. We got here together!” ■

Gifts Fund Life-Long Learning

It was standing room only in Deshler's new Jennifer Reinke Public Library during a dedication ceremony on June 17. The program honored Jennifer Reinke, who used her NCF donor-advised fund to offer a \$750,000 challenge grant to the community to raise additional funds to launch the building project. One of the early significant contributions came from another NCF fund, the Kreutz Bennett Donor-Advised Fund for libraries.

The new, spacious, handicapped accessible library is beautifully appointed and is a dream come true for the people of Deshler and especially for Ms. Reinke. Jennifer, who now lives in Hebron, grew up in the Deshler area. Her love for books and words became apparent at a very young age.

When she was eight years old she read a story about the White House and from then on was determined to travel to Washington D.C. As a fifth grader she was old enough to participate in the county spelling contest and won second place.

Her dream to get to Washington D. C. to win the National Spelling Bee became more achievable as she won county and district contests in both seventh and

eighth grade. At the age of 14, Jennifer's dream came true. She out-spelled dozens of contestants to win the 1967 national title in Washington, D. C. with the word "Chihuahua."

Before the ceremonial ribbon-cutting, NCF Director of Advancement and Gift Planning, Jim Gustafson, congratulated Jennifer for turning up her dream switch to accomplish what she dearly desired, and he challenged the community to follow her example. "It has been said that bad libraries build collections; good libraries build services, but great libraries build communities. Turn up your dream switch and think of this beautiful new building as a place that can open doors between citizens who come together for the benefit of the community. Where people learn from one another as well as from books," Jim said.

Jennifer thanked the community, her family and Nebraska Community Foundation for their help in making the new library a reality. She said the library is a great place for children to go after school. "A good book is a great companion on a snowy day," she said smiling. ■



A photo collage of the new library honors Jennifer Reinke for her generous gift. NCF's Jim Gustafson was the keynote speaker for the dedication of the Jennifer Reinke Public Library in Deshler in June.

Kreutz Bennett Donor-Advised Fund Grants for Libraries

Guidelines

Eligible applicants: Nebraska public libraries located in communities with fewer than 3,000 residents.

Planning Grants

For non-accredited public libraries working toward accreditation

- Annual amount: \$500 minimum; \$2,500 maximum
- Match required: 1:1 (In-kind match not allowed)
- Timeframe: Multi-year grants possible

Enhancement Grants

For accredited public libraries to enhance programs and services

- Annual amount: \$1,000 minimum; \$20,000 maximum
- Match required: 1:1 (Up to 50% of the match amount may be in-kind)
- Timeframe: Multi-year grants possible

Facilities Grants

For accredited public libraries to build or improve their facilities

- Grant amount: \$5,000 minimum; \$20,000 maximum
- Match required: 1:1 (In-kind match not allowed)
- Timeframe: One-time grants only

Short-form applications are due October 1. After initial review, eligible applicants will be invited to submit full proposals, due in January.

Guidelines and application forms are at nebcommfound.org/fund/kreutz-bennett

For more information contact **Reggi Carlson**, rcarlson@nebcommfound.org, (402) 323-7331. ■

Affiliated Fund Updates

Elgin Area Community Foundation Fund provided a \$5,000 grant to help with construction of a greenhouse measuring 18 feet by 24 feet for the Elgin FFA Chapter. Members held their first potted plant sale in May. The goal is to utilize the greenhouse year-round. “Next fall, we hope to start growing veggies for the schools and senior center,” said chapter advisor Julia Schwartz. The greenhouse is located on the south side of Elgin High School.



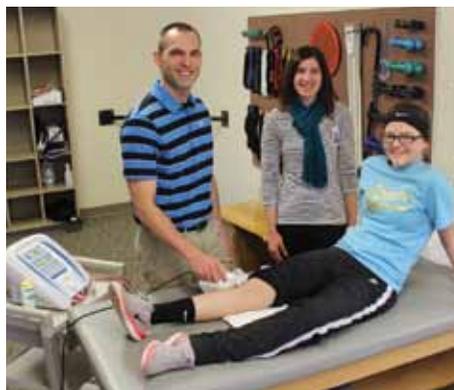
The Elgin FFA Chapter spent parts of their spring in some new “digs” transplanting and cultivating vegetables and preparing flowers for hanging baskets to sell in May.

Bennet Area Community Foundation Fund planned and raised funds for nearly two years to bring a splash pad to Bennet Village Park. The Fund received support from almost 150 families and individuals and more than 50 businesses and organizations. Cash and in-kind donations of about \$75,000 were raised. “In the summer the kids had nothing to do here in Bennet and no place to cool off,” said Linda Jensen, a Fund Advisory Committee member. “Young families are excited for it because it will be such a positive thing for our park.”



Splash pads like this one in Bennet are becoming popular because of their low construction, maintenance and overhead costs. The sprays of water are activated only when someone comes near the sprayer.

Longtime donors to **West Holt Medical Services Foundation Fund**, Nick and Carissa Konrad, have made it possible to purchase an additional ultrasound and electrical stimulation machine. Donor and physical therapist Nick Konrad said that combining the two treatments has a significant healing effect. He also notes, “We were running into scheduling conflicts... Having an additional machine makes it more convenient for our patients.”



Physical therapist Nick Konrad demonstrates the new ultrasound and electrical stimulation machine on patient Alissa Gubbels while West Holt Medical Services Foundation director Jessica Prussa looks on.

Eustis Area Community Foundation Fund is playing a leading role in planning and raising funds for the Eustis-Farnam Community Wellness Center. The center will feature new locker rooms, a walking track and exercise equipment that can be used by all ages. The wellness center will be open to both students and the public and will be an extension to the east side of the existing school gymnasium in Eustis. The goal is to raise the \$700,000 in project funding through charitable contributions and grants.



Kaleb Gibbens uses exercise equipment currently housed in the Eustis-Farnam School. Plans call for constructing a new facility with exercise, training and locker rooms adjacent to the existing school gym.

Ravenna Area Vision Fund – It’s an appropriate name for one of NCF’s newest community-based affiliated funds. Early efforts sponsored by the Fund involved two visioning sessions – one for more than 100 adults and one for 50 high school students – in this community of 1,300 northwest of Grand Island. NCF staff facilitated the community conversations that led the groups to imagine what their hometown should offer in the future. Priorities identified by the two groups were remarkably similar and focused on business/occupational opportunities, outdoor recreational facilities and a first-class educational system including a 21st century library/media/technology center. Our thanks go out to Ashley Olson and Dennis Hansen of the Red Cloud Community Foundation Fund for joining in the conversation and encouraging the people of Ravenna to “turn up their dream switch.”

Nebraska City Community Foundation Fund

has a mission of investing in people. One longtime commitment has been supporting the city's leadership classes. This year's Leadership Nebraska City class project was a "Wall of Hope" public art installation in Memorial Way Park. Large chalkboards offer a place for the public to share positive artwork or inspirational thoughts with the community. According to Rev. Greg Bolt, a member of the class and assistant manager for this year's project, the installation will provide an excellent vehicle for public expression. "The world is not permanent. This type of art allows for changing reflections around different themes throughout the year," said Rev. Bolt.



Members of Leadership Nebraska City Class No. 11 stand at a 16-foot-long, double-sided chalkboard installed in Memorial Way Park to encourage inspiring messages and public art.

Columbus Area Community Foundation Fund

is part of a community-wide effort to increase STEM-based curriculum opportunities (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) for students of all ages. The Fund awarded \$5,000 to Camp Invention, a one-week, nonprofit summer program for children entering grades 1-6. The grant provided full and partial scholarships to enable children from across the Columbus area to participate in substantive, problem-solving learning. This summer 69 students created "solar-bot crickets," a pinball machine from a dismantled computer, usable items from recycled materials and other fun inventions.



Evan Line, Ethan Suhr and Gavin Rocha practice their precision measuring skills to achieve the preferred consistency of a particular type of slime at this summer's Invention Camp in Columbus.

Three affiliated fund communities

hosted "giving days" this spring benefiting nearly 100 area nonprofits. Norfolk's first ever Big Give in May resulted in more than \$86,000 raised from 969 donors. Valley County had its fourth Big Give March 17-18, which raised \$95,288 from 454 donations. Organizers say the best part is that the event attracted 100 new donors. Columbus held its third annual event in May, with more than 750 donations totaling \$85,545. All of these charitable dollars will go a long way toward improving the lives of our friends and neighbors. And each year more and more people learn how giving brightens the lives of those who give as much as those who receive.



Save the Date

2016 Annual Training, Expo and Banquet
Thursday, November 10, 2016
Peter & Dolores Graff Events Center
McCook, Nebraska

This year's annual training and banquet will focus on the issues central to our mission: Building unrestricted endowments and impacting our communities.

For more information call **402-323-7330** or info@nebcommfound.org.

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Free Wills Guide

More than half of American adults don't have a will or other estate plan in place. If you are among that group, or if your current documents could use an update, NCF has a free guide full of useful information and templates to record your family information, accounts, assets, liabilities, beneficiaries and charitable intentions. Our new "Planning Your Legacy" tool is a guide to providing for your family and supporting the community you care about.

Check it out at Nebcommfound.GiftLegacy.com



Beefing Up School Lunches

A year or so ago, Rob Marsh read an article in Nebraska Cattleman Magazine about a program that provided locally sourced beef for area school lunches. The idea intrigued him, and soon a group called the Titan Beef Boosters was formed to contribute both livestock and money to put more beef on the menu of Thayer Central Public Schools in Hebron.

“We have a huge group of positive people that are pitching in to make this happen,” Rob said.

Producers can commit to donating a quality animal to the school within a three-year period. Cash contributions for processing the beef are given to the Hebron Community Foundation Fund in partnership with Nebraska Community Foundation. Rob says this is the perfect avenue to secure charitable contributions. “I can’t say enough about what a great service this is. We could never run this

program without the foundation,” Rob said.

The program has verbal commitments from more than 100 cattle producers, businesses and individuals in the local communities. The money the school saved this past year bought more fresh local fruits and vegetables, and was used to purchase an oven, grill and tables for the cafeteria. According to Rob, participation in the school lunch program increases dramatically on the days when beef is served.

“Our communities need to be self-reliant. We love our hometowns. We don’t want to just survive, we want to thrive. We can be creative in ways that we work together, and give together and promote agriculture at the same time. What better way for kids to learn,” Rob said

Judging from the looks on the kids’ faces it appears they couldn’t agree more! ■



Thayer Public School students are enjoying beef in their lunches more often thanks to the Titan Beef Boosters program. (L-r) Superintendent Drew Harris and program volunteer Rob Marsh accept a \$3,750 contribution from Lindsey Escritt, Krissy Ozenbaugh and Tom Pfister.

Students Find New Appetite for Learning



(L-r) Arnold Public School 9th graders Cole Gracey, Matthew Corbin and Logan Coleman harvest lettuce and spinach grown in one of the school’s tower gardens.

Students at Arnold Public Schools got a taste of what it is like to grow their own vegetables this past semester thanks to a grant from Arnold Community Foundation Fund. Under the guidance of

teacher Liz Brown, the funding enabled the school to purchase three aeroponic tower gardens.

Each tower will grow 28 plants, and everything matures rapidly. The growing chamber contains no soil. Instead the roots are “washed” every 15 minutes with natural fertilizer dissolved in one gallon of water. The plants are under grow lights for 14 hours a day.

“Studies show that when kids grow their own vegetables they are more likely to eat vegetables,” said Ms. Brown. “Our long-term goals are to produce enough fruits and vegetables to be served during our school lunches and be sold at the farmers market in the summer.” Any profits will go back into supporting the cost of seeds and fertilizer, but those are fairly low.

Ms. Brown says the school superintendent would like to buy additional towers. One tower is being used for grades 7-12 and two are in the elementary school. According to Brown, the students are learning aspects of related subjects. They are responsible for maintaining the proper pH and nutrient levels, and those who are creating recipes work with conversion tables.

Students do everything from putting the towers together, to maintaining the irrigation, to planting and harvesting the cucumbers, squash, basil, spinach, green beans, peas, and vegetables they may have never eaten, such as bok choy.

“All of the kids, no matter their grade level, are really enjoying the project. They come in every day to see how things are growing,” said Ms. Brown. ■

Envisioning the Future



NCF staff members are increasingly called on to facilitate community conversations about the future of our hometowns. This year Norfolk is celebrating its 150th anniversary. Leaders there have organized three events to hear citizens' suggestions on ways for attracting people and supporting businesses. While a birthday is a good opportunity for a

community to celebrate, it's also an opportunity to "talk about the future," said affiliated fund development coordinator Anders Olson. "We can make it about more than just cake and fireworks."

Contributions to Nebraska Community Foundation provide the resources needed to send talented facilitators and trainers to communities across the state. Thank you! ■

Dr. Michael Chipps (left), president of Northeast Community College, and Troy Strom (right), president of U.S. Bank in Norfolk, listen as NCF affiliated fund development coordinator Anders Olson speaks during a community conversation on Norfolk's future this spring.

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Youth Engagement

Give Kids a Positive Send Off

Over the past several years, more affiliated funds that award scholarships are also taking steps to intentionally invite young people to return to their roots in the future. And they have reason to believe their efforts can have a positive influence.

NCF surveyed nearly 6,000 middle and high school students in rural districts. While the vast majority planned on pursuing higher education, 51 percent of youths said that they would consider returning home in the future if there were career opportunities. Business ownership was the preference of 44 percent of those surveyed. Most students said that their community was a good place to grow up. But only 29 percent said an adult had asked them to share their views about their hometown.

One of the most powerful questions anyone can ask is, “What do you think?” When NCF staff facilitates community visioning and planning, we always suggest that combined or parallel sessions be held with young people. Youths are excited to give their ideas about what makes them proud of their community and what would make it better.

When we develop grantmaking strategies with our community-based funds we point to opportunities for youths to explore entrepreneurship and small business ownership. When making grants to schools we encourage committees to look at programs that are relevant to the local economy and culture.

Our young people have told us that their rural communities are a great place to grow up. Today, young adults are telling us that they are a great place to settle down. In 50 of Nebraska’s most rural counties there has been a net increase in residents age 30-49. Communities are wise to send off their graduating seniors with the knowledge that they will always be welcome home. But we shouldn’t wait until they are leaving town. We should be inviting them back through intentional conversations as often as possible. ■

Salutarian Carlos Chavez-Enriquez (left) and Valedictorian Michael Musgrove (right) pose with personalized mailboxes presented to every Chase County High School graduate by the Imperial Community Foundation Fund. Chair Elizabeth Haarberg (center), one of the class’s kindergarten teachers, encouraged the graduates to experience the world but consider returning to make Imperial their home in the future. Also pictured are ICFF Fund Advisory Committee members Elna Johnson and Tyler Pribbeno.

