



NORFOLK DAILY NEWS

Ag ed teacher says Howells residents are the best

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HOWELLS — The Nebraska Community Foundation is pleased to support this series and introduce readers to a series of Northeast and North Central Nebraskans who are “Loving Where They Live.”

To kick off the 10-part series that will be published every other Wednesday through December, meet Jordan Brabec, agricultural education teacher/FFA adviser at Howells-Dodge Consolidated Schools. Jordan and his wife, Becky, are the parents of three sons.

How long have you lived in Howells?

This is my 13th year living in Howells. I am originally from Leigh. After graduating from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, I took my first job in Howells as the agriculture education teacher.

What do you love most about your community?

The great people who live here! I always tell my students that it takes all different types of people to make the world go. Even with a population of just over 500, we have people of different backgrounds, ethnicities, career fields and special talents. The diversity of our residents makes our town unique because we are able to function like a bigger city but do not have to contend with traffic, crowds, noise and cramped areas. We all know each other, trust each other and rely on one another in times of need, and that is what makes Howells special. My kids have more than one set of parents watching out for them, and that helps with peace of mind knowing that they are taken care of wherever they go in town.

Is there something special about Howells that is surprising or that makes it unique?

Surprisingly, for the size of our town, there is much to keep people occupied when it comes to recreational activities. Howells' annual BBQ and Brew, year-round sporting events, farmers markets, sand volleyball leagues, Father's Day Horse Show and Knights of Columbus fish fries and tractor



pulls are just a few of the events that keep people engaged in our community. There is something offered for all ages throughout the year. While these events take a lot of preparation and work to make them happen, people always step up to ensure success.

How would you describe your community to a pen pal in another country?

Howells has a very laid-back, small-town atmosphere, yet has everything to make your life complete. Hard-working, religious, active and caring are some of the best words to describe the residents of our agriculture-based community. Heavy traffic and long lines don't exist here—just a lot of waves as you drive down the quiet streets, with activity happening all around town as people earn an honest living and raise their families.

What makes you most proud of your community?

The way people step up when a need is recognized. When someone has fallen on hard times or something needs to be done within the community, a few phone calls result in successful cooperation. There is always somebody willing to lend a helping hand, commit financially or offer expertise.

A few months ago, we were working on replacing the fencing in our horse arena and we needed a little extra help that evening. I turned to Facebook and sent out a plea and by 6 p.m. we had over 15 volunteers show up (and mostly women) to set posts and hang fence. That reinforced what I believe makes this place so special. I really believe that our town believes in “we” rather than the “I” society much of the country seems to be dealing with.

What are your dreams for your hometown?

With the decline in population in many small towns, I hope that Howells can buck that trend and find ways to keep graduates, appeal to outsiders and attract new businesses to our small community. When the next census is finished, wouldn't it be great to be able to change our population sign coming into Howells with a larger count? In my 13 years of being a resident, much has changed in Howells, but we always need to be thinking about the next 50 or even 100 years and what we can do to ensure Howells is still on the map and a place where people want to raise their family. If we can continue to keep our kids coming back and attract new families, we can ensure the success of our town.

What is your relationship to the Howells Community Fund?

I serve on our fund advisory committee and have been a member since our inception in 2013. I appreciate the connection with Nebraska Community Foundation because

of the support and guidance we receive. The training sessions, connections with other affiliated funds and words of support have pushed Howells Community Fund to get where we are today. It would probably have been easy to get a good start and then

become stagnant, but NCF has been there keeping us moving forward. They are constantly checking in, offering support and wisdom that keeps us engaged.