



# NORFOLK DAILY NEWS

## Sons honor mom's legacy through community fund

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GRACE PETERSEN

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HOWELLS — There was never any doubt how Chris and Dorothy Mejstrik felt about Howells.

It showed in everything they did.

“Mom and dad understood the importance of community, but also understood without the people, there is no community,” said Bryan Mejstrik, one of their sons. “And that’s one thing that makes Howells special — the support and kindness of the people of the community.”

Their children — Bryan, his sister, Megan, and a brother, Jordan — have fond memories of their late parents, saying they were very loving and “did a great job of modeling what it means to work hard and be a good person.”

“Chris and Dorothy were great people. They touched everyone they met. As parents, they were very supportive. Even though they were busy, they were willing to drop everything to be with us,” Bryan said. “Still today, people always remind me of how special they were and how they miss them both and usually have a story to share about them.”

Perhaps one of things that sticks out most is their involvement in the community.

Chris Mejstrik was a volunteer firefighter when the three siblings were growing up, and also was on the Howells’ village board and board of education, serving as the president of the latter for numerous years. He also operated Northeast Nebraska Automation — a company started by his father, Walter, in the 1970s.

Dorothy Mejstrik served on the parish council, library foundation, community club and was a founding member of the Howells Community Fund.

“When Howells started hosting the BBQ and Brew, mom was involved and on committees. She was part of the inaugural group for the community fund, which has done many great things for the community,” Megan said. “Her position on community



boards and committees allowed her to show her passion for her community and this furthered numerous small projects, which helps in multiple aspects of our community.”

Written in her own words, Dorothy urged Howells to take part in a challenge grant opportunity that indicated if the community raised \$500,000 in three years, Howells would receive a \$250,000 grant from the Sherwood Foundation.

“The Sherwood Foundation is promoting rural philosophy to assist small towns like ours to continue to prosper,” Dorothy wrote.

She also talked about how important community foundations were in rural towns.

“Small towns are faced with many challenges, smaller populations, city budget restrictions,” she wrote. “In that vein, community foundations have been started in communities under the guidance of the Nebraska Community Foundation. They provide us with training, management of the account, of which 100 percent of our funds ... is under our control.

“This is the safety net that communities like ours use and can continue to use to make those necessary improvements and to keep Howells viable and attractive to youth to come back to live.”

She wrote that the Howells Community Fund had already benefited the community in numerous ways, including assistance to the fire/rescue squad, the Howells Ballroom, schools, 4-H Club start-up, parks and signs.

“We can do so much more but need your

help in building this endowment,” Dorothy wrote. “Your roots started here. Please help us continue to grow.”

Megan Mejstrik said her mom was always planning for the future.

“This was important because she knew that in order to keep our town thriving, we need to look to the future,” Megan said. “Howells was the wonderful place mom and dad chose to raise their family and grow their business and she wanted to see that legacy continue for multiple generations, not just for her family, but for all Howells residents.”

Sadly, Chris and Dorothy will not see all of the dreams they had for Howells come to fruition. In 2014, Chris died, and then two years later, Dorothy died.

Bryan, who was living in Lincoln when his mom became ill, came back to Howells to help his brother at the family business.

After their mom died, the Mejstrik brothers wanted to honor their mom’s legacy by continuing to be part of community fund, and to see Howells continue to thrive.

“As strongly as I feel about Howells, I still realize there are ways to make it a better place to live and raise a family. The Howells Community Fund gives a community a strong root for growth and accomplishing goals it may have,” Bryan said, adding that he knows their mom would be happy with what they’re doing. “Although we are just getting started, I know she is always proud of us.”