

• Diller Community Foundation Fund Newsletter •  
An Affiliated Fund of Nebraska Community Foundation

## Grow Towers Provide Fresh Produce for School Lunches



The FFA and Science Department purchased 4 sets of Grow Towers this past year. Three of the towers are planned to be utilized at the high school, while the other tower will be located in the elementary. With the purchase of the grow towers Diller-Odell Public Schools has been able to complete a couple of different goals. We are able to provide fresh lettuce for our high school lunch room, use the towers for research in class, and also use them to compete in the state FFA Agri Sciences Fair.

This past year Jady Schultis and Ashtyn Humphreys

used the tower to research if the PH of the water in the towers will influence the growth of certain crops. They started the project in January, and recorded data daily until March. The data was then put into report format and entered into the FFA State Agri Sciences Fair. With the current COVID-19 outbreak the Nebraska FFA Convention was canceled and results are still pending.

Future projects for the towers include the idea of providing lettuce for both elementary and high schools at Diller Odell, and to provide a hands-on resource for district wide research projects. It is expected that the Grow Tower will be placed at the elementary by September of this year.

Funding for the garden towers was provided by the Diller Community Foundation Fund through a donation from the Dale and Jean Tinstman Family Fund, an affiliated fund of the Nebraska Community Foundation. Dale Tinstman had lived in Diller during his early years and we are thankful to the Tinstman family for remembering and giving back to the Diller community.

## New Student Member

The Diller Community Foundation Fund recently made the change to add Student Members to the committee to foster student community involvement.

Skylar Pretzer has been serving as this year's student member thus far, and we hope to ultimately have two students serve on the committee each year.

We are excited to gain

the perspective of our youth as it pertains to improving our community.



## Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF) Student Survey

While working to build upon Nebraska Community Foundation's Goal #3 "People attraction is occurring in Nebraska hometowns", the inclusion of youth has uncovered itself to be indispensable in this effort.

Drawing upon the skills and talent that our youth provide our hometowns is an untapped resource many communities have yet to discover. The first step in engaging youth in our communities is simply by asking, "What can we do to make this a better place for you?" Nebraska Community Foundation's youth survey project is that first step.

Through written survey and group discussion, this project's objective is to gauge youth perception of their hometowns, and the state in general, to better understand what the most important factor is to them when deciding where to live, their likelihood to return home, what they would like to see happen in their hometowns, and, most importantly, let them know coming home is a noble option.

NCF intern Kristen Ohnoutka is working with our Foundation Fund and provided a survey for Diller-Odell high school students. She is getting her Master's degree in community planning at UNL. Kristen is helping communities across the state conduct youth surveys and then compile and analyze the statewide results to get valuable information about youth perceptions concerning their hometowns.

Forty-seven Diller-Odell high school students participated in the survey and at this writing, results and future planning are being conducted. The Diller Community Foundation Fund committee hopes to have a round-table discussion with participating youth at the school to expand on themes discovered in the survey, and ask them to elaborate on trends noted.

## Happy Harbiners' Main Street Youth Philanthropy Project



These photos are of Brianna and Joely Weers working on the planter by the Diller Post Office.

The Happy Harbiners 4-H Club have planted succulents and other plants for the season in the planters along Main Street. They received \$500 from the Diller Community Foundation Fund through a Youth Philanthropy grant to complete the project. The planters also contain other items such as little houses and rock paths to add interest so all 8 planters offer something different and unique. To comply with Covid-19 social distancing guidelines, the club assigned planters to each family to complete. Thank you to Stacy Schlichtman and Kristen Hennerberg, co-leaders of the club and Kathy Engelman for assisting and mentoring the club members. Thank you to the Happy Harbiners 4-H Club for continuing to contribute to our community with this project each year. It is very much appreciated!

## Nebraska Community Foundation Affiliated Fund Training

NCF 25 Turn it up! Dream! That was the theme for the Nebraska Community Foundation's 2019 Annual Affiliated Fund Training, Expo & Banquet held November 14, 2019 at the Holthus Convention Center at York NE. Attending from the Diller Community Foundation Fund were Scott Pretzer, Tammy Weers, Kendra Weers and Diane Wellsandt. Breakout training sessions were held during the day on topics ranging from fundraising, to embracing diversity, engaging youth and more. The training was attended by over 300 trainees representing 138 Nebraska communities. An expo featured displays from funds representing many towns across Nebraska. A banquet was held in the evening attended by 640 guests.

*Stay tuned for details about the 2020 DREAM event. The planning committee is considering how to plan the event to ensure an enjoyable but safe evening. Watch facebook and other social media for updates.*

## Honoring Our Veterans

The Diller American Legion Post 282 honors our veterans with the Veterans Memorial at Prairie Home Cemetery and the Memorial Park on Main Street. The Diller Community Foundation Fund provided funding to replace the flags at both of these memorials this year as well as funding for the lighting of the memorial in Prairie Home Cemetery. The flags are flown at all times and in all weather. Therefore, they need to be replaced about three times per year.

## 2020 GRANTING CELEBRATION

Grants from the Diller Community Foundation Fund for 2020 were announced on January 21, 2020 during the annual Granting Celebration. Once again, the granting celebration was held in conjunction with a spaghetti dinner sponsored by the Diller Community Club at the Diller Opera House. In addition, to the grants, the 2020 Youth Philanthropy Awards were also announced. The Diller Community Foundation Fund is pleased to partner with groups and individuals that invest time and talents to build and support our community.

### Our Apologies!

The Diller Community Foundation Fund would like to extend our apologies to the 3D Extension Club for an error in last year's issue of Hometown Connections. The 3D Extension Club was awarded the grant to paint the light pole bases in town, instead of the Merry Modern Extension Club. We regret this error occurred.

# FROM HOMETOWN ROOTS TO FUTURE SUCCESS - CLASS OF 2020

The Class of 2020 had a very different ending to their high school careers from what they had been looking forward to. With classes moved out of the school buildings, sports and extra-curricular activities brought to a halt and many special events canceled, COVID-19 abruptly changed everything and even put a graduation ceremony in jeopardy.

The Diller-Odell community and Diller-Odell Public Schools worked to recognize the accomplishments and success of these 19 graduates. Joyce Kostal from O.A.C.E. contacted the Diller Community Foundation Fund to help with the cost of two sets of picture banners for each senior graduate. The idea was to display the picture banners in both

Diller and Odell for a senior class parade that was held in each town on May 16. Following the parade, the banners in Odell were then moved to the high school where they lined the driveway to the front entrance of the building and the banners in Diller were moved to the west side of the park along the highway and were displayed for approximately one week. The graduation commencement was held on June 6 at the Diller-Odell High School for the seniors to receive their diplomas and celebrate with family. This was a great way for the senior class of 2020 to be recognized in both communities.

Each year, the Diller Community Foundation Fund (DCFF) and O.A.C.E. recognize the graduates of



Diller-Odell and invite them to consider returning to their hometown community in the future. In 2020, the seniors were presented with totes from DCFF and O.A.C.E. to remember their hometown roots and to wish them success in the future. CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2020!



**Thank you to our donors!**

Gifts received  
June 1, 2019 - May 31, 2020

Thank you to community members and alumni who have generously donated to the Diller Community Foundation Fund this past year. We are grateful for your support and the financial resource your contributions will provide. Together, we are creating a lasting legacy to benefit future generations.

Pam Busboom  
Franklin and Betty Damrow  
Loren and Marcia Duerksen  
*In Memory of James Duerksen*

Land O'Lakes Foundation  
Bret & Toni Landenberger  
Robert and Cynthia Milligan  
Sharon Ocker  
Michael Pralle  
Gladly Rice  
Roelfs Transfer, Inc.  
Richard Timmerman  
Mark Schoenrock  
Joe and Kayla Schnuelle  
Jona Simonson

*In Memory of Elmer & Bonnie Meyer*  
Greg and Tamara Weers  
Dell Wehling  
Robert and Diane Wellsandt  
Delmar and Phyllis Wiemers  
Marilyn Wrigley

*In Memory of Lorren & Blanche Stephens*  
Jim and Rita Yeggy  
Several Anonymous Donations

We also want to give a shout out to the donors who have supported The D.R.E.A.M. and Fed From the Farm Program this past year. THANK YOU for making both very successful for the benefit of our community.

**2020 Grants**

The following grants were announced at the granting celebration held on Sunday, January 21, 2020 at the Diller Opera House.

Diller Park Committee (Tot Zone Equipment, Ages 2-5)	\$15,000.00
Village of Diller (Main Street Christmas Lights)	\$5,000.00
Bank Museum (Custom-built Display Case)	\$4,000.00
Diller Opera House (Speaker System)	\$4,000.00
Veteran's Mini-Park (Christmas Lights)	\$1,000.00
Diller-Odell Youth Football (Helmets & Football Pants)	\$1,000.00
Diller-Odell FFA Alumni (Fed From The Farm Program)	\$1,100.00
Diller-Odell Elementary Summer Reading (Supplies)	\$400.00
Ellis United Methodist Church (HUGS Group)	\$300.00
Beatrice Shooting Stars Baseball (Medals, Year-end Celebration, Supplies)	\$300.00
St. Paul Lutheran Church (Youth Outreach/VBS/Crosswalk)	\$250.00
Diller Community Blood Drive (Food & Supplies)	\$150.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 32,500.00</b>

**2020 Youth Philanthropy Grants**

Happy Harbiners 4-H Club (Plant flowers & succulents in Main Street Planters)	\$500.00
L.E.A.R.N. After School Program (Provide material and supplies for crafts and games once a month for elementary students)	\$500.00
Diller-Odell Art Club (Paint and other materials for mural at Diller-Odell High School)	\$570.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 1,570.00</b>

**Who is on the Fund Advisory Committee?**

Chairman : Scott Pretzer  
Vice Chairman : Micki Krieger  
Recording Secretary : Diane Wellsandt  
Correspondence Secretary : Beth Roelfs  
Treasurer : Tammy Weers  
Brett Landenberger  
Kendra Weers  
Kayla Schnuelle  
Vonnie Schlichtman

**ACCOUNT BALANCES**

As of May 31, 2020

Endowment Fund	\$ 829,841.70
General Account	\$ 47,375.60
Main Street Account	\$ 1,319.49
Museum Account	\$ 1,287.48
Opera House Account	\$ 1,396.01
Fed From The Farm	\$ 742.31
<b>TOTAL FUND BALANCES</b>	<b>\$ 881,962.59</b>

*Thank you to all the organizations in our community that submitted applications for the grants and the work that you do. Please contact any Fund Advisory Committee member if you are interested in applying for a grant in support of a project, program or event in the Diller community.*

*Design and Publishing by the Wymore Arbor State*

# Grant Dollars Keep Kids Reading

Due to the outbreak of COVID 19 the DCFE \$400 grant that was designated for the Summer Reading program held each year at the Diller-Odell Elementary was reassigned to the Odell Library Summer Reading Program with a portion of the donation being used to complete the Reading Classic collection.

The Odell Library Summer Reading Program is a program developed for children of all ages with the goal to keep them reading throughout the summer. It is a self-led program, where they are to read a set number of books or pages, tracking their reading on a log that they receive from the library. Upon signing up for the program at the library, the kids are entered into their reading level, receive their reading tracker log, a bag of gummy worms ("Book worms"), and a bookmark.

When they complete their goals and the reading tracker log is filled out, they come back into the library, where they receive their incentive rewards. The rewards consist of a drink ticket to the Odell Market, a bag of small prizes, and their choice of either a One Day Pass to the Wymore Aquatic Park, or a \$5.00 Amazon Gift Card.

Parents and kids will also receive a "weekly challenge" on a Facebook Group,

where they can receive extra prizes for completing tasks. Melina Kostal will also be posting Picture Book Readings weekly.

Our Summer Reading Program opened up on Tuesday, June 16. As of June 24, we have 20 children signed up. We are estimating at least 30-40 will sign up due to the interest. This is above our average.

Thanks to the help of local organizations, such as Odell Area Community Enrichment and the Diller Community Foundation Fund, we are able to meet the needs of the children for our Summer Reading Program.

The Reading Classics Program is one that Diller-Odell participates in each school year. Our school enters in both Division I (3rd & 4th grades) and Division II (5th & 6th grades). Each division has a Reading Classics Book List. Each team, of at least 4 students, reads as many books from the list as possible and practices throughout the season. Focusing on reading comprehension, so they are able to answer detailed questions at the competition in the spring. The team meets at the County Level where they compete against local teams. If they place 1st or 2nd they are eligible to move on to the state competition.

The Odell Public Library has tried to purchase

as many titles for the Reading Classics lists as possible each year. We have focused specifically on the New additions each year, coming close to supplying all the titles. The Library feels that the addition of these books to our library is a great use of funds.

Thanks to extra funding in 2020 from the same organizations (OACE and Diller Community Foundation Fund), and also some private donors, the Odell Public Library is very happy to announce they have ALL the titles from both RC Division lists!

## Foundation Helps Prevent Summer Learning Loss

The Nebraska Reading Act is a law that takes a comprehensive approach to improve the early literacy skills of Nebraska's K-3 students. It emphasizes the importance of strong early reading instruction and individualized supports for students who struggle. With many libraries being closed during this pandemic, Diller-Odell Elementary wanted to offer a school based summer reading program for those students in grades K-3 who are eligible.

Thanks to the Diller Foundation Fund, the program was made possible. Diller Community Foundation Fund offered to help fund internet services to those families in need, and purchased Summer Bridge Activity Books for those 17 students that were eligible for these summer interventions. It is designed to prevent summer learning loss and help children get a head-start on the next year.

Of those 17 students, 9 of them also took advantage of the weekly individualized sessions provided by Mrs. Heble, Mrs. Hennerberg, and Mrs. Hynek. Those sessions run for 4 weeks throughout the month of June, and due to the lifting of some Covid-19 restrictions, those teachers and students were able to meet in person or via zoom. Teachers and students work on foundational reading skills through high quality, researched based programs.

Our community is very fortunate to have such generous support from Diller Community Foundation Fund.



# Park to begin Transformation in 2020!

Park improvement has been ranked as a high priority by community members of all ages. Through questionnaires and surveys people have shared their vision for an improved recreation area that includes a walking path and new play equipment.

The Diller Park Committee has worked with Andrew Ferguson of Frey and Associates to turn the vision into reality. Through three grants totaling \$20,500 from the Diller Community Foundation Fund the first of three play

zones, along with a portion of the sidewalks and tennis court improvements will be completed in 2020.

The Tot Zone will feature a Custom Dozer along with Flower Steppers and Butterfly Climbers. The Spring Mates that are currently in the park will be relocated to this area. The Tot Zone will appeal to children ages 2 - 5. It will be located closer to the shelter for easy access to the restrooms and will have a connecting sidewalk between the two.

Renovations to the ten-



nis court are also taking shape. Student council members from Diller-Odell High

School toured the site before winter break and worked with Craig Schroeder, of the

Heartland Center for Leadership Development to create a proposal that would convert



the dual court into a basketball only court, repaint the full court lines and add 2 sets of hoops at heights appropriate for younger players. The students also recommended the addition of a tether ball game to the playground area.

The walking sidewalk will also be started and will define the perimeter or the Tot Zone.

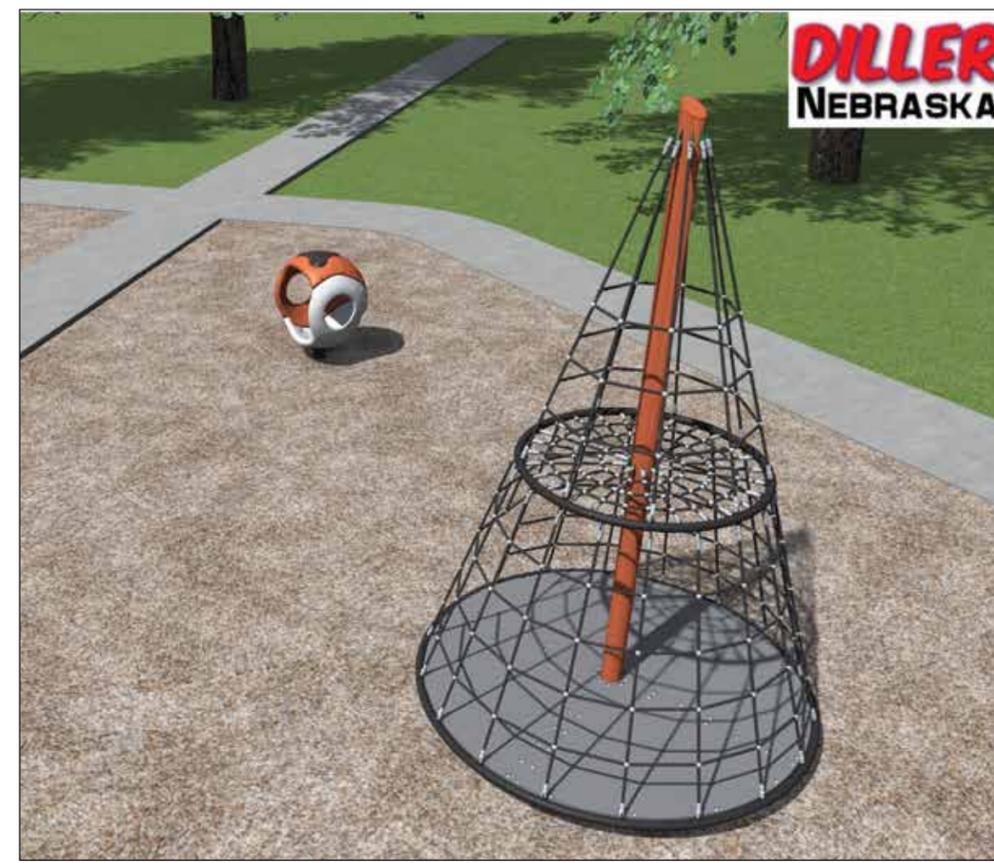
The full plan includes a Spin Zone featuring a Cozy Cocoon for small groups and the Cone Spinner that offers climbing and spinning for up to 20.

The Play Zone will reconfigure parts of the current equipment and add additional slides and climbing options. This Play Zone will also include the swings and add a Group Swing with basket, the Quattro Seesaw, along with a Climbing Net.

All zones will be defined by wide sidewalks and a central courtyard with seating to complete the design.

The walking sidewalk will meander around the perimeter of the park with possible exercise stops and benches provided along the way.

The cost of this project will be covered through contributions as well as grants. Volunteers will be invited to invest sweat equity in the renovation. The goal is to complete the project within a 3-year period but will depend upon available funds and manpower. The Park committee is developing a fundraising campaign and plans are to include donor recognition in the courtyard design.



# Youth Outreach Helps Children Connect to the Power of God!

St. Paul of Diller received a wonderful grant from the DCFF for \$250 to fund the community youth outreach programs of Cross Walk and Vacation Bible School during 2020.

Cross Walk is a weekly after-school program for children ages PK – 6th grade. Everyone is welcome at no cost to participate in the Bible stories, snack time, games and music. An average of 20 children attended each session.

Service learning and caring projects have also been carried out by the kids. At Christmas they invited senior members of the community to a party and presented each guest a gift bag that the children had filled. They found ways to honor local veterans and first responders, also reaching out to a community friend dealing with a life threatening illness with handmade cards.

Starting in March the weekly program continued but, came to the children through the church's Facebook page. Each week students received a packet of activities that related to the

week's lesson and a new Cross Walk session was posted each Wednesday. For the weeks before Easter the packet included a card to finish and the children were encouraged to consider making and giving it to someone who needed a smile during the COVID closures.

A total of 34 homes and 58 children received packets. This reached far beyond the group that had gathered for Wednesday sessions previously. The generous grant from the Diller Community Foundation Fund was used to purchase envelopes, postage and materials to make the mailings possible. The virtual program and mailings gave many kids a bright spot during 7 weeks of staying at home. To view the on-line programs go to [www.stpauldiller.com](http://www.stpauldiller.com) Youth. The Community VBS is scheduled for July 27 – 31.



Find us on   
@dillercommunityfoundation

## Fed From The Farm Partnership with Diller-Odell Schools

*This past school year the Diller-Odell FFA Alumni completed a very successful 1st year with our new Fed from the Farm program for Diller-Odell Schools. We had 9 local producers provide home grown beef and pork for the program, and over 22 cash donors that covered the cost for the processing, which was all completed at Diller Locker. These supporters were honored in March with an appreciation meal and award recognition night. Local meat was served through the lunch program at Diller-Odell Schools 1-3 times a week for the entire school year. The response that the kids and staff have shown is only positive. The kids enjoyed the meals and brag how good the meat tastes and the cooks have been creative to offer choices that the kids enjoy.*

*We look forward to continue with this awesome program in the future and expand on more educational aspects for the students to learn more about why agriculture is important. Diller-Odell FFA Alumni strive to provide the best resources and healthy choices for our kids.*

*We continue to look for new supporters and if you are interested in becoming a donor please contact Diller Odell School 402-766-4210. Cash donations may also be submitted through the Diller Community Foundation Fund and designated to Fed From the Farm as a tax deductible contribution. The Diller Community Foundation Fund was proud to be a donor to this program for 2019-2020.*



## Community Beautification Volunteers

The community of Diller continues to benefit from the talents and time of several dedicated 'Green Thumb' volunteers. Sandy Kotas planned and cares for the lovely flowers at the north and south village signs. She goes to great effort to mow the areas as well.

Kate Schnuelle donates her energy to mowing the green space around the community sign located at the intersection of Highways 103 and 136. She has also added flowering plants to enhance the location.

Larry Germer continues to support his community through his horticultural talents. The mini park on Main Street is a beautiful green space that thrives under his skilled hand. These generous community members create a warm and attractive welcome for visitors and residence alike. We extend a sincere thank you for your dedication to the Diller community.

## 4th Annual D.R.E.A.M. Raises over \$28,000

The Diller Community Foundation Fund (DCFF) held its fourth annual D.R.E.A.M. “Diller Remembers Endowment Achieves Magnificence” auction event in Diller on November 22, 2019 at the historic Diller Opera House.

The evening was successful again as over \$28,000 was raised for the DCFF in ticket sales and silent and live auction purchases. The community was brought together again for a fun and festive evening. The Field Sports Bar of Diller held a cash bar and Colleen’s Catering of Beatrice catered the evening meal.

We were honored to have Dennis Schmidt, past DCFF committee member and past chair, deliver a video talk prior to our live auction. Dennis relayed how important it is to give back to our community and we thank him for his efforts. Denny Henrichs and The Auctioneers again provided auction service during the live auction segment and helped auction off many special items. He was also the unfortunate recipient (and good sport) of this year’s pie in the face!

Many local residents and businesses made this evening possible through donations of live and silent auction items. A percentage of the proceeds from this auction event will go towards the park improvement project, which entails getting new playground equipment.

The Diller Community Foundation Fund wishes to thank all who made this evening possible, including committee members, donors, helpers, auction item purchasers, and spouses. Special thanks go to the Diller-Odell FFA Chapter, who provided table service for the attendees, as well as setup and cleanup of the event. We plan to have our fifth annual event again the Friday prior to Thanksgiving, November 20th, 2020. The planning committee is considering a variety of different options for the 2020 event and will be finalizing plans in the coming weeks.



Winning bidder Sarah Thimm delivers the pie in the face to Dennis Henrichs.

## Student Paints Mural

Senior graduate and art student, Sierra Maginnis, completed a mural for the school’s visiting psychotherapist Cole Stark and his students. Sierra and Cole collaborated to create a space that was relaxing and inviting. Sierra wanted students to feel they were transported to another place and to have a conversation starter. Due to the Coronavirus, the mural’s completion was delayed. Sierra didn’t give up and since she believes you finish what you start, she returned and finished her project at the Diller-Odell High School. Funding to purchase the paint and other supplies was provided by the Diller Community Foundation Fund. Best of luck to Sierra as she works towards completing her future goals and congratulations on a job well done.



## Civic Nebraska Visits Diller to Discover Why We ‘Get It’

In July of 2019 the Nebraska Civic Health team visited Diller to see how the town of 270 operates.

The following are excerpts from the online article What Rural Communities that ‘Get It’ Have in Common, written by Daniel Bennett for the August 2019 Civic Nebraska newsletter.

Diller’s reputation as an active, vibrant place often precedes it. And for good reason. After only an hour with the advisory committee of a local foundation, we were stuffed full – both by locally produced meat and cheese, and from incredible stories of success. There’s the three-day community picnic that has run for 123 consecutive years, and the 175 volunteers who run it (in a town of 270!). There’s the wave of support for the construction of a modern fire hall, recently renovated



community center and restoration of the beautiful old opera house, all without outside grant dollars. There’s a vacancy-free Main Street. And, there’s the Diller Community Foundation Fund’s youth philanthropy program.

Civic Nebraska’s work in community engagement is ramping up across the state, but we’re already finding dozens of communities where the good work of civic health is as established as Diller’s 123-year-old community picnic. Some places just “get it.” How does that happen?

There are a number of answers and hypotheses to that question, but data released last week from the Nebraska Rural Poll show that people in rural places across the state put leadership at the top of the list.

According to the poll, “over three-quarters of respondents agree or strongly agree that strong leadership will prevent their community’s decline,” and two-thirds agree that the problems their small communities face can be solved through effective leadership.

So what’s the secret? It may start with how we think about community leadership, and the civic habits we form as a community. Here are three things we’ve heard from the road in recent months:

- “It’s something you do.”
- “No wrong door.” There’s no wrong door to getting involved, and no wrong way to contribute to the community.
- “Make the invitation.” Like actually, go talk to and invite someone to be involved. Diller invites youth to be involved through the Principal’s youth advisory council and their youth philanthropy program.

We believe that communities are stronger when we own them and build them together. We’re energized by the towns doing the hard work of leading and inviting others to be involved. This is civic health. With persistence, these habits of engagement overcome habits of disengagement. Diller is just one example.

— Daniel Bennett, Rural Civic Health Program Manager

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## Memorial Park Water System Installed



When we stop downtown or if we are passing through, many of us look and admire the Memorial Park on main street. The park was initially started in the fall of 2005 through a Community Enhancement Program (CEP) grant through the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum. Larry Germer helped to write the grant and assisted with planting and landscaping. The total cost of the project was \$18,400 with the CEP Grant covering 80% and the Diller Community Foundation Fund providing additional funding.

Larry Germer has maintained this beautiful park since it was established with mowing, cleaning, weeding and WATERING BY HAND for almost 15 years. In 2014, the Diller Community Foundation Fund designated \$1,000.00 from the Main Street Fund to install an underground watering system for the Memorial Park. Materials were purchased, but the project had been delayed several times over the past five years. Brett Landenberger spearheaded the installation of the watering system late last summer. Assisting him in completion of the project were Scott Pretzer, Jeff Barnts and Larry Germer. A HUGE thank you to these gentlemen for getting this “long, overdue” project completed. We thank Larry for his many volunteer hours and hard work to maintain the park. It is a beautiful garden spot for all to enjoy. We hope the watering system makes it a little easier going forward.