

# CONNECTIONS



Imperial's successful efforts to attract young people were recently featured in *The Better Half* series. Pictured left to right: Alex McNair, Jill Fiedler, Derek Russell, Dillon Harchelroad and Tiffany Reeves.

## The Better Half by the Numbers

- **3,449,834** = number of times *The Better Half* articles have been viewed online
- **9,497,644** = total number of social media impressions



Illustration by Matt Haney/The World-Herald

## Read it. Love it. Share it!

It is not unusual to hear the phrase, "NCF is the best-kept secret in Nebraska!" from someone who is learning for the first time the full extent of our impact in more than 200 communities. We never intended to be secretive about our success. So, this year we're taking advantage of an exciting opportunity – a collaboration with the *Omaha World-Herald* called *The Better Half* – to spread the word about the work we're doing together in Greater Nebraska.

Nebraska Community Foundation is pleased to provide support for *The Better Half*, a collection of columns celebrating Nebraska's intriguing places and fascinating foods. These stories, written by *Omaha World-Herald* journalists Matthew Hansen and Sarah Baker Hansen, encourage us to experience more of what makes Nebraska unique. As a married couple, they travel Nebraska to share insights into little-known people, unexpected stops and memorable places to eat.

As part of our collaboration, the *Omaha World-Herald* publishes related stories, written by NCF staff, celebrating the work, achievements and generosity of

affiliated fund volunteers and donors. Our partnership with the newspaper began in March and will continue into the fall with a total of about two dozen stories written by the Hansens, and the same number prepared by NCF.

Stories written by NCF appear in the online edition of the *Omaha World-Herald*. Later, in November, stories by the *Omaha World-Herald* feature writers will be compiled in a book, with an introduction written by NCF president and CEO Jeff Yost.

We encourage everyone to go online at [omaha.com/living/the-better-half](http://omaha.com/living/the-better-half) to uncover some of our best kept secrets. You'll learn how people working together are creating greater communities in places as small as Byron (pop. 83), as large as Norfolk (pop. 24,210) and everywhere in between.

In the coming weeks and months, we look forward to sharing stories that will shine a light on what it means to be living in our hometowns. It's no secret these stories of success and generosity deserve to be told. So please, join the millions of readers who are sharing the good news about Greater Nebraska with family and friends! ■

## The Better Half: An occasional series

Food critic Sarah Baker Hansen is from Omaha. Columnist Matthew Hansen grew up in Red Cloud. As a married couple they travel Nebraska to share with each other little-known people, unexpected stops and memorable foods. Come along and discover more of what the state has to offer.

Prepared with support from Nebraska Community Foundation.

### Here are a few [easy] ways to share *The Better Half*:

- Post article links on your personal and affiliated fund social media pages.
- Forward to community leaders who are curious about why committed citizens (like you!) are joining the statewide movement to build a more prosperous future.
- Keep a few printed copies on hand and share the old-fashioned way!

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Jeffrey G Yost

## Together a Greater Nebraska

People invest in what they help build – they invest their time, talent, treasure and talk. This saying typically rings true, but in community development, it's absolutely true. What is personal is deemed important, and what's important is what gets done.

The NCF network is a living, breathing example of this philosophy at work. NCF is a long-term partner in a learning relationship with community leaders to inspire and empower them to better shape their community's destiny. The community success stories being told in the *Omaha World-Herald's* The Better Half series are proof that our narrative about ourselves and our future is increasingly positive and opportunistic.

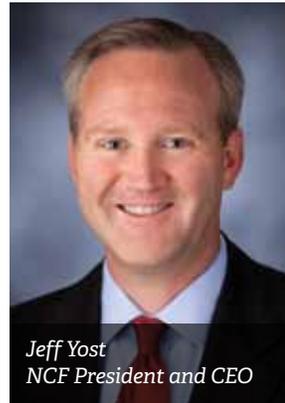
As a value added partner, the NCF

network is one of the most significant and indispensable resources we offer affiliated funds. On November 2, hundreds of members of that network will convene in La Vista for NCF's Annual Celebration – an opportunity to share what's working (and what isn't), to celebrate our many successes and meet face-to-face with a group of dreamers and changemakers who share an optimistic vision for a

more prosperous future.

Successes within the NCF network are interconnected and interrelated. We lean on one another for advice, expertise, and an ear to listen. Together we are achieving more. Together we are a force for change. Together we are building a Greater Nebraska.

See you in La Vista! ■



Jeff Yost  
 NCF President and CEO

## "Thanks!" from the NCF Staff

It's a rare occasion when the NCF staff, hailing from points east, west, north and south, can all come together for a face-to-face work session.

Thanks to the generous people and organizations who make our work possible in so many places! ■



(Front, l-r) Jana Jensen, Carrie Malek-Madani, Phuong Dinh, Kristine Gale, Janny Crotty.  
 (Middle, l-r) Jenny Herstein, Teri Alley-Davis, Juli Rosso, Martha Livingston, Greta Leach,  
 Karla Egger, Diane Wilson, Amy Fey.  
 (Back, l-r) Les Long, Jim Gustafson, Jeff Yost, Anders Olson, Karl Shaddock, Jason Kennedy,  
 Reggi Carlson.



NCF board and staff members enjoy a tour of Red Cloud's historic Starke Round Barn.

## NCF a Voice for Rural Philanthropy at International Conference

Nebraska Community Foundation continues to serve as an international model for its innovative work in rural development philanthropy. President and CEO Jeff Yost was invited to speak at the Community Foundations of Canada Conference in Ottawa in May.

Eleven staff, board, and peer mentors joined him for the gathering of philanthropic and foundation leaders from 34 countries to hear inspiring speakers and build upon their knowledge and skills.

When asked what lessons he will take home with him, board member Dale Dueland of McCook said, "With technology and global access to less populated regions, there is plenty of room and resources for everyone. Rural community foundations can and must play a significant role in advancing this idea."

Added Peggy Been, an NCF peer mentor, also from McCook, "There is a correlation between healthy community foundations and healthy communities. Each helps and enhances the other." ■

*NCF staffers Anders Olson (left), Jana Jensen (center) and board member Dale Dueland (right) squeeze in some sightseeing at the Canadian Parliament building in between conference sessions.*



## NCF Visits "America's Most Famous Small Town"

NCF's quarterly Board of Directors meeting was held in "America's Most Famous Small Town," Red Cloud, on June 8-9. Before the meeting, NCF board and staff were treated to a heritage tour featuring the Auld Public Library, the childhood home of American novelist Willa Cather, and Starke Round Barn, among other attractions.

Beyond a historic tour, NCF also got a glimpse into Red Cloud's future with a visit to the site of The Valley Child Development Center, the community's new state-of-the-art early childhood development center which broke ground just a few months ago. The center fills a critical need for high quality, affordable childcare in south-central Nebraska, and its proximity to Cherry Corner Estates, an assisted living home, will lend itself to unique

multigenerational programming which will benefit participants, both young and old.

NCF's June 9 board meeting took place in Red Cloud's historic Opera House, the same place Willa Cather delivered her graduation speech in 1890 and former first lady Laura Bush gave her keynote address just a week before as Red Cloud opened the doors to a new \$7 million center dedicated to Cather history (more on that below).

The Red Cloud Community Foundation Fund has received local and national press attention, not only for its support of local tourist attractions, but for its bold investments in heritage tourism and early childhood development, two driving forces behind people attraction and rural economic development. ■

## Red Cloud Hosts First Lady

"You are preserving history," former first lady Laura Bush said to a capacity crowd of 300 in the lovingly restored Red Cloud Opera House.

On June 3, Bush was personally invited by staff and board members of the Willa Cather Foundation to



Cather's most famous books.

Along with the Willa Cather Foundation, Red Cloud Community Foundation Fund members have exhibited tremendous leadership in Red Cloud's heritage tourism initiatives. Nebraska

Community Foundation has worked proudly alongside these leaders for over two decades to secure capital, consensus and the partnerships necessary to maximize use of this world-class cultural asset. ■

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# AFFILIATED FUND UPDATES

## Butler County Area Foundation Fund

continues its major support for one of Nebraska's top art galleries. Bone Creek Museum, located in David City, is featuring "150 Artists, 150 Artworks, 150 Years of Nebraska in Miniature." The exhibition runs through July 30 and features paintings, photographs and sculpture by Nebraska-connected artists. For more information, visit [bonecreek.org](http://bonecreek.org). ■



*Bone Creek Museum in David City is regarded as one of Nebraska's top museums. The museum's latest exhibit celebrates Nebraska's sesquicentennial with 150 artworks.*

## Brown County Community Fund's

many supporters have a lot to be excited about. The Fund recently announced it had surpassed 75 percent of its \$500,000 challenge grant goal for building an unrestricted endowment. Every gift received before December 31, 2018 will be met with a 50 percent match from The Sherwood Foundation of Omaha. At the end of May, the Fund had received contributions and pledges from 127 donors. Over the next year, the Fund will be reaching out to current and former residents for gifts of all sizes to invest in the future of Brown County. ■

*People in Brown County gathered in 2016 for an NCF-facilitated visioning session to prioritize community goals supporters hope to achieve by building an unrestricted endowment.*



## Stuart Community Foundation Fund and Holt County Economic Development

convened a gathering of more than 30 people earlier this year to discuss how support for early childhood development can improve chances of academic success and attract young families to communities. The panel of presenters included Sally Hansen and Ashley Armstrong of Red Cloud, and Bryce Jorgensen of Shickley. Both Red Cloud and Shickley have NCF affiliated funds that have played a critical role in bringing these important opportunities into their communities. Steve Brewster, an NCF Board member and Stuart Fund Advisory Committee co-chair, stated, "Providing early childhood development is not a matter of 'if' – it's a matter of 'when.'" ■

## Hebron Community Foundation Fund

recently presented a second \$7,000 grant to help develop a walking/biking trail in the city. The ultimate goal is to connect the current trail to the Korff Wellness Center and Blue Valley Lutheran Homes and Assisted Living. Signage will point to Hebron's amenities such as the ballpark, swimming pool and downtown eateries. ■

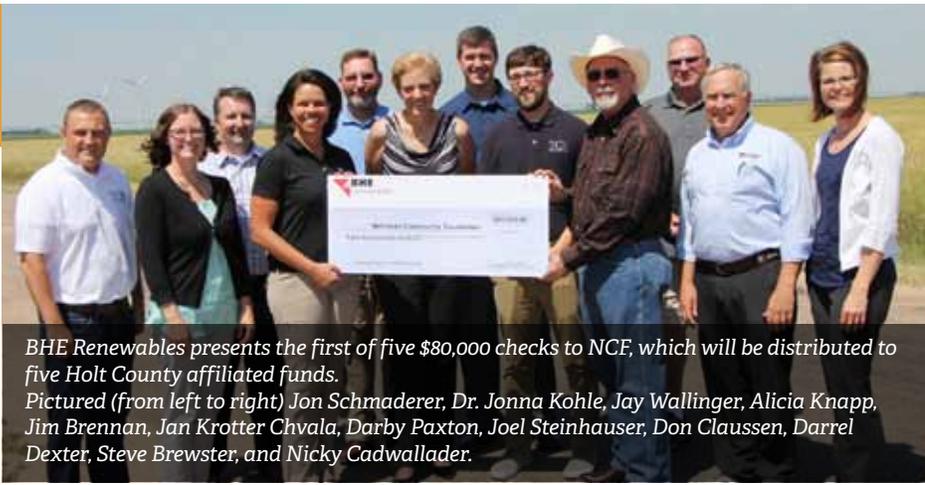
## Hickman Area Community Foundation Fund

granted \$50,000 toward construction of the new Hickman Community Center, Reading Centre and City Hall. Since 2008 the Fund has raised money for a variety of community improvements including a welcome sign, downtown beautification, a future aquatic center and skate park, and a permanent endowment. It is also an active partner in sponsoring numerous public events for this community, which has grown by more than 50 percent in the past several years. ■

*Hickman City Administrator Silas Clarke raises the American and Nebraska flags at the ribbon cutting of the new community center in May.*



*Walking Coalition volunteers pour concrete on Phase I of Hebron's trail project on Fourth Street by the Little Blue River.*



BHE Renewables presents the first of five \$80,000 checks to NCF, which will be distributed to five Holt County affiliated funds. Pictured (from left to right) Jon Schmaderer, Dr. Jonna Kohle, Jay Wallinger, Alicia Knapp, Jim Brennan, Jan Krotter Chvala, Darby Paxton, Joel Steinhauser, Don Claussen, Darrel Dexter, Steve Brewster, and Nicky Cadwallader.

**BHE Renewables Commits \$400,000 to Holt County Funds** Representatives of affiliated funds throughout Holt County visited the Grande Prairie Wind Farm mid-June to accept an \$80,000 contribution from BHE Renewables, the first of five grants to benefit the respective community-based affiliated funds

in Stuart, Atkinson, O'Neill and Chambers, as well as the Holt County Economic Development Fund. "We look forward to dreaming with local leadership about how these gifts can further build on the success that Holt County has already achieved and set our sights on even bigger goals for the future," said Jeff Yost, NCF president and CEO. ■

**Valley County Community Foundation Fund** has played a leading role in the area's Big Give events for the past five years. Big Give is a big deal in this community, with many corporate sponsors and related activities within the schools. In 2017, donors produced a record-setting 24 hours of giving with a total of \$95,944 benefitting more than 30 nonprofits. Among the 550 donations, 157 represented first-time donors to the organizations. Hats off to volunteers of the Valley County Philanthropic Partners for the countless hours they put into this spring's successful community-building event! ■



In Valley County students made contributions to "teacher jars" during Big Give week in March. The teachers who garnered the most money won the right to "Sumo wrestle" as part of the Big Give kick-off.

**Boone County Foundation Fund, Diller Community Foundation Fund, and Rock County Community Fund** have each "gone public" in announcing their endowment-building campaigns. Each fund must raise \$200,000 by December 31, 2018 to receive an additional \$100,000. Now is the time when volunteer leaders will be asking all current and former residents to pitch in with contributions large and small to make their hometowns even greater. When all gifts and pledges are collected, these three affiliated funds will have together increased their unrestricted endowments by \$900,000. Nine additional community-based funds are currently involved in similar Rural Development Philanthropy challenge campaigns. All are making significant progress! ■

## This is Good Living

Nebraska arts and music nonprofit Hear Nebraska has officially kicked off another statewide Good Living Tour celebrating Greater Nebraska through music. The tour is aimed at exposing new audiences to Nebraska's homegrown talent and providing Nebraskans in communities of all sizes access to top-notch entertainment.

Community-based affiliated funds have been instrumental to the tour, working closely with Hear Nebraska to bring the Good Living Tour to their hometowns. Nebraska Community Foundation is proud to be among Hear Nebraska's statewide sponsors and will enjoy prominent visibility in the "community highlight reels" which are circulated widely post-tour.

### This year's tour stops include:

- Hebron ..... June 9
- Auburn ..... June 10
- Imperial ..... July 1
- Red Cloud ..... July 15
- McCook ..... July 29
- Norfolk ..... August 4
- Lyons ..... August 18
- Hastings ..... August 19 ■

Lincoln-based Mad Dog and the 20/20s perform in the first concert of the 2017 Good Living Tour in Hebron.



Photo by Lauren Farris

## Syracuse Expands Learning Opportunities and Young Minds

As a parent, Joy Stilmock of Syracuse recognized the importance of providing fun and engaging summertime activities for her son. As a life-long educator and principal of Syracuse-Dunbar-Avoca High School for 14 years, she knew the critical nature of making academic opportunities available for his developing mind year-round.

When she and other members of the Syracuse Library Foundation Fund sat down with NCF to brainstorm about their hopes and dreams for the future, the Fund Advisory Committee (FAC) placed the creation of an expanded summer learning program at the very top of the list. Syracuse had the necessary funds in place, but that was the easy part – launching a brand new expanded learning program was no small feat.

NCF facilitated a meeting with Bright Lights, a program that has been offering summer learning adventures to elementary and middle school students in Lincoln for nearly three decades. Bright Lights staff members were thrilled to lend their talents and expertise and worked directly with members of the FAC to launch Syracuse Summer Blast, the first program of its kind in the region.

In its inaugural year, Syracuse Summer Blast is offering Disgusting Science, Lego Robotics, Fishing and Cupcake Wars, with a special emphasis on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) curriculum. Summer Blast has afforded kids the opportunity to collect and examine microorganisms under a microscope, dissect cow eyeballs to learn about their structure, build



*In Disgusting Science, a class offered through the Syracuse Summer Blast program, kids have the chance to experience hands-on STEM education and learn about the structure of the heart and eye by dissecting parts of a cow!*

robots out of Legos and much, much more.

“Nebraska Community Foundation assisted us in developing dreams and goals for our endowment,” said Joy. “Our goal was to enhance educational opportunities. Our Summer Blast teachers are teaching exactly as it should be done – collaboratively, interactively, and hands-on – utilizing critical thinking and problem-solving skills.”

“They don’t even realize how much they are learning,” she adds. “They are having fun and there are no tests!” ■

## Acting on Opportunity in Verdigre

After launching in 2009, it didn’t take long for the Verdigre Community Foundation Fund Advisory Committee members to find their focus. Within a year, the Fund conducted a community-wide survey to explore the possibility of an afterschool/summer learning program.

A year later, teachers and community volunteers were offering hands-on activities in science, technology, and many other subjects at the elementary school two days a week. Through careful planning and overwhelming support from community members, the program continued operating, at least once a week, for several years.

All the while, Fund leaders had their sights set on an even more critical need in their community: reliable, high-quality daycare. Making childcare affordable

to working families meant operating at a deficit, but project leaders were confident that churches, organizations, and individuals would rise to the challenge, because childcare is essential to a growing workforce and a prospering community.

In March 2015, Alpine Village Retirement Center, owned by the Village, committed to operating a daycare in a building purchased and donated by “Doc” and Noreen Pavlik. It soon reached its licensing capacity at 29 children.

Earlier this year, the Fund announced a generous gift of \$21,500 from the family of the late Adolph and Marceline Kruse. The gift is serving as a challenge

grant to expand the daycare facility by 750 square feet. The \$43,000 project will provide for greater licensing and create more space to accommodate each child’s needs throughout the day. It will also allow for additional afterschool, walk-in and drop-off services, which will help address revenue shortfalls.

The challenge grant campaign kicked off in June with a unique fundraiser. Staff at Green River Greenhouse created decorative planters from donated toys and household items. The planted flower pots were auctioned off and brought in nearly \$4,000!

It is safe to say that Verdigre is a family-friendly hometown. ■

*Brock Carpenter, left, and Henry Miller are happy one-year-olds enjoying “free-play” time at Alpine Village Daycare.*



# Thanks to These Generous Donors Who Support Our Work

## GIFTS RECEIVED JULY 1, 2016 - JUNE 30, 2017

### \$100,000 and above

The Sherwood Foundation  
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Kiewit Foundation  
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Judy and Ron Parks  
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Bellevue  
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Bassett  
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PO Box 83107  
Lincoln, NE 68501-3107  
(402) 323-7330  
Fax (402) 323-7349  
www.nebcommfound.org  
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## SAVE THE DATE TO CELEBRATE!

Join us for Nebraska Community Foundation's Annual Celebration on **November 2 in La Vista!**

NCF's Annual Celebration is a gathering of Nebraska's most ambitious citizens committed to **building stronger, more prosperous communities across the state.** Learn from and be inspired by hometown and statewide leaders

at annual training. Attend the expo and see firsthand the incredible work of over 1,500 volunteers. Share ideas, plan for action, break bread and celebrate success with a growing network of dreamers and changemakers.

Watch our website ([nebcommfound.org](http://nebcommfound.org)) for more details and a registration link, coming soon! ■

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## NEED FIVE MORE REASONS TO ATTEND?

- 1) COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT** – gain knowledge and awareness of what others are doing to create a magnetic hometown.
- 2) NETWORKING** – connect with leaders from all across Nebraska and create lasting relationships.
- 3) COLLABORATION** – Exchange ideas with peers from across the state, both from the private and public sectors.
- 4) INSPIRATION** – Return home more motivated, confident and passionate about your work and the future of your hometown.
- 5) SKILL DEVELOPMENT** – Develop key leadership skills to help your community move forward.

## Lunch & Learn with Us!

NCF's "Lunch & Learn" series is a virtual path to peer learning. Log-in on the first Wednesday of the month to explore cutting edge topics with your fellow volunteers. Each 30-minute session is designed to give you a powerful idea to ponder for the next month. Check out our Upcoming Events page at [nebcommfound.org](http://nebcommfound.org) for more information and to register.