

## Building Community Capacity

**More than \$13 million in new contributions to locally controlled, unrestricted endowments.**

That is the financial goal for Nebraska Community Foundation's partnership with 25 community-based affiliated funds through an initiative which began in 2012 and will continue through 2020.

Equally important are the skills, the knowledge and the relationships developing among dozens of leaders across communities and regions.

In 2012, four community-based affiliated funds – McCook, Nebraska City, Norfolk and Shickley – became partners in the NCF initiative, *Building Community Capacity in Rural Nebraska*. The program offered \$250,000 challenge grants to build local, unrestricted endowments for each fund. It required a 2-to-1 match in local contributions by the end of 2015. It also required affiliated fund leaders to delve deeply into the practice of Rural Development Philanthropy.

Over the course of the challenge period, NCF organized and facilitated six multi-day peer-learning sessions and other training events to help the volunteer leaders explore how to create communities of choice that attract “newcomers, returners and stayers.”

We are proud to report that each of our Round 1 affiliated funds has met or exceeded its goal.

In 2014, a committee made up of Round 1 volunteers selected four additional community-based funds

for a second round of challenge grants and peer learning. They are now in the early stages of launching their campaigns.

We are grateful to The Sherwood Foundation for its continuing support, and we welcome Peter Kiewit Foundation as a new supporting partner for a third round of the *Building Community Capacity in Rural Nebraska* initiative. A committee of Round 1 volunteers has selected five affiliated fund

applicants to participate in Round 3.

In addition, we are excited to announce a new initiative through which 12 additional community-based affiliated funds will launch local campaigns to match, 2-to-1, challenge grants of \$100,000 also provided through The Sherwood Foundation. We will provide these community leaders with extra training, marketing and leadership support as they proceed through their endowment campaigns.

*Building Community Capacity in Rural Nebraska* has enabled NCF to create a practice that employs our theory of change: abundance, local decision making, trusting relationships and the power of our hometowns. Our staff, community volunteers and funders – working together and learning together as a team – have deepened the understanding that it's about more than just the money. It's about the change we hope to bring. ■

*“From the very beginning, Nebraska Community Foundation helped us realize our vision and mission. They provided the infrastructure that removed the management burden and allowed us to focus on what was important. Without NCF, we would never have had the opportunity to accept this challenge. They taught us how to raise the funds, which is a monumental task, and they organized and facilitated all the peer learning. They made our success possible.”*

Kiel VanderVeen  
Nebraska City Community  
Foundation Fund

*Kiel VanderVeen of Nebraska City and Bryce Jorgenson and Judy Lichti of Shickley listen as Doug Skiles talks about choices and significant decision points his McCook Fund Advisory Committee faced during their endowment-building campaign, at the final peer-learning session in Shickley in August 2015.*



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## Unrestricted Endowments Key to a Bright Future

Our cover story trumpets the good news: Extraordinary volunteer community leaders banding together to positively shape the future. They're doing this by collectively envisioning the future they want, and the future they believe will be required, to attract people of all ages to their hometowns.

Our work with community-based affiliated funds is bringing Nebraska closer to that vision. By teaching local leaders how to capitalize unrestricted endowments to benefit their hometowns, we are helping them create a margin of excellence that makes their hometowns magnetic for current and prospective residents.

When community leaders make the case for giving to an unrestricted endowment they articulate their hopes and dreams for the future of their hometown and invite their friends and neighbors to join

a community development journey. Now that's community leadership.

*The Building Community Capacity in Rural Nebraska* initiative enables us to scale our unrestricted endowment-building efforts. We are connecting affiliated fund leaders to effective community economic development practices and to one another. The network of community advocates that is being assembled will be a force for good for generations to come.

We thank our partners and volunteer affiliated fund leaders who are building a more prosperous and bright future for our Nebraska hometowns. ■



Jeff Yost  
NCF President and CEO

## Meet Jason Kennedy

Please join us in welcoming Jason Kennedy, who joined Nebraska Community Foundation in February as our new Chief Financial and Administrative Officer. Jason is responsible for accounting, financial reporting, investment, regulatory, compliance, human resources and administrative matters for Nebraska Community Foundation. He will be working closely with our development team, Fund Advisory Committee members and investment managers to provide the highest level of professional management services to our affiliated funds and donors.

Jason has spent most of his professional career with the University of Nebraska Foundation working his way from junior accountant to the position of senior vice president, chief financial officer and

treasurer. He served on the executive team with primary responsibility for managing the financial assets of the NU Foundation.

He was responsible for investment, finance and audit committees and implementing strategic plans with the board of directors.

Jason, who grew up in Pawnee City, is a member of the Nebraska Society of Certified Public Accountants. He is a volunteer coach for numerous youth sports leagues. He and his wife, Tracia, have three teenage sons who attend Norris Public Schools. ■



Jason Kennedy

## Annual Training: Bigger. Brighter. Bolder.

More than 190 people – the largest audience ever – participated in NCF’s annual daylong training opportunity for NCF volunteer affiliated fund leaders, held in Columbus in November. The event was rated as “excellent” or “good” by 93 percent of survey respondents. We’ve included some of their comments here.

The day began with University of Minnesota rural sociologist Ben Winchester urging people to ignore “anecdota” that may be opinion presented as fact. He pointed to Nebraska-specific data to show why many positive changes require us to rewrite the narrative of rural communities.

In 50 of Nebraska’s most rural counties,

the number of people in their 30s and 40s is on the rise. The phenomenon called the “brain gain” is one of the outcomes that can occur when communities use philanthropy in strategic ways to attract young families.

Other sessions during the day included exercises in rural myth-busting, storytelling, and asset mapping. Over the past two years we have evolved our approach to annual training to emphasize peer interaction as a powerful learning and motivational tool.

Affiliated fund leaders tell us they are liking it. About 95 percent say they hope to attend this year’s training in McCook on November 10. ■

*“(Storytelling) is going to make it so much easier to do fundraising. It’s not asking for money. It’s asking others to be a part of a dream for a great place to live! That’s an easy story to tell!”*

*“Seeing all of the assets on the map provided a positive and exciting feeling of the good things in our community.”*

*“The peer interaction was the most beneficial part of the conference. I commend the NCF Board members for making themselves so available to interact with members of the FACs.”*



Columbus Area Foundation Fund Advisory Committee members use asset mapping to identify people, places and things that enrich their hometown and make it a community of choice. (L-r) Drew Brookhart, Columbus Public Library director; Karen Gomez, Centro Hispano director/CACFF member; Matt Gotschall, Central Community College-Columbus president/CACFF chair; Raul Arcos, Centro Hispano.

## New Board Members

Join us in welcoming our new members to the NCF Board of Directors!

### Dale Dueland

operates a family farm and ranch north of McCook. He is a UNL graduate in agricultural economics and finance and has worked in agricultural real estate sales and finance consulting. Dueland has



been a board member and officer of Frenchman Valley Farmers Coop for 25 years and has served on advisory committees for coop and ag policy development and legislation at the state and national level.

Dueland is a McCook Community Foundation Fund Advisory Committee member. He is a board member and past chairman of the McCook Economic Development Corporation and McCook Planning Commission.

### Dr. Paul Madison

grew up in South Sioux City before earning a B.S. degree in pharmacy from UNL and an M.D. degree from the University of Nebraska College of Medicine in Omaha.



After completing a family practice residency, he and his family moved to Nebraska City in 1975. There he practiced for 28 years before retiring in 2003. For many years Dr. Madison served as a volunteer faculty member of the University of Nebraska Medical Center Department of Family Medicine, which honored him in 2000 as Alumnus of the Year.

Dr. Madison has served as a board member for St. Mary’s Hospital, president of the Optimist Club and chapter president of Ducks Unlimited. Since retiring, he has been active in family farming, serving as president of the Nebraska City Apple Corps, and serving on the Fund Advisory Committee of the Nebraska City Community Foundation Fund. ■

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Walter Insurance  
Dale and Janie Zadina

# Affiliated Fund Updates

The **Philanthropy Council of Northeast Nebraska** held its fifth annual awards and youth philanthropy contest in February. Ten youth contest project winners were funded by area sponsors prior to the awards ceremony. On the evening of the awards event honoring area philanthropists and volunteers, an additional 17 project ideas were presented by youths, and each project received funding from individuals, groups or businesses. Most projects receive about \$1,000, and the youths are paired with a mentoring organization. Since 2012, more than 100 youth philanthropy projects have benefitted veterans, senior citizens, animals, abuse victims, children, families in need, and more.



Grant Elementary 2nd graders in Norfolk deliver "Bags of Joy" to children in need as part of their youth philanthropy project.

**Boone County Area Foundation Fund** was one of 16 nonprofits participating in the Boone County Philanthropy Council's second annual Big Give event, which netted more than \$145,000 from 804 donors. The Fund received \$28,038 from 43 donors. Many special events, such as a waffle feed, soup and sandwich luncheon and a special movie presentation helped raise awareness for the three-day event in December.

*A \$1.8 million endowment will enhance the Syracuse Public Library's educational offerings, technology, youth programs and other community services. The funding will not be used for ongoing operational expenses that are the responsibility of the Syracuse City government.*

**Verdigre Community Foundation Fund** has played a leading role in bringing high quality, affordable childcare to town. The concept began as a way to serve employees of Alpine Village Retirement Center, according to former administrator, Brian Vakoc. Brian, who is chair of the Fund, said, "The projected business financials and feasibility looked terrible, but the project was always looked at by supporters as more of a necessity for our community." The Fund partnered with community organizations, churches, banks and individuals to raise support for the center. Finally, in March 2015, Alpine Village Retirement Center committed to operating the daycare, which is located in a building purchased and donated by Dr. Kenneth and Noreen Pavlik. The daycare opened in August and was at full capacity of 29 children within six months. It employs five full-time staff and a number of part-time teachers. Four employees have early childhood development degrees. The center serves children from neighboring communities that have limited childcare options. "It has been rewarding and inspiring to see so many supporters come together to overcome obstacles in order to provide daycare to our families," Brian said.



Lily Pischel, Wyatt Kramer and Poppy Pease are three of the lucky children who receive quality affordable care at Alpine Village Community Daycare in Verdigre.

A grant from **McCook Community Foundation Fund** will help staff at Hillcrest Nursing Home better monitor vital signs and activities of Alzheimer's patients. A new care program involves the use of a Fitbit, the fitness bracelet that can track activity, exercise, food, weight, sleep and more. According to Hillcrest Foundation director Maggie Repass, it is difficult to get an accurate heart rate reading if the patient is agitated. A Fitbit will enable staff to monitor the patient 24 hours a day. The gift will also help expand ongoing Alzheimer's education.



McCook Fund Advisory Committee member Don Harpst (right) presents a \$5,000 grant for Hillcrest's new dementia care program to Kent Craw, chairman of the Hillcrest Foundation board of directors. They are joined by Cynthia Huff with MCFE and Maggie Repass, director of Hillcrest Foundation.

**Syracuse Library Foundation Fund** has established an endowment with Nebraska Community Foundation through a \$1.8 million bequest from the estate of former Syracuse resident, Sylvia Antholz. "We were expecting a gift, but we were completely overwhelmed when we learned about the size," said Abbie Widger, who serves on the library foundation's board. "Managing the investment and learning all the policies and procedures would be a full time job." The board started looking for options and soon decided on Nebraska Community Foundation. "Nebraska Community Foundation has a reputation for outstanding growth and they understand small-town reality," Abbie said.



## Affiliated Funds in Knox County – **Bloomfield, Crofton, Creighton, Niobrara, Verdigre and Wausa**

– supported the first Knox County Leadership program July through December. In addition to presentations by local community leaders, several NCF staff members and consultants led sessions on youth mentoring, community foundations, the Gallup Strengths Finder, youth engagement and asset-based community development. The class traveled to the six sponsoring communities to foster stronger regional relationships and networking.



*Knox County Leadership program participants include (l-r) Kelsy Jelinek, Verdigre; Abigail Frank, Creighton; Collette Panning, Bloomfield; Carolyn Hall, Wausa; Megan Hanefeldt, Center; Jennifer Poppen-Neukirch and Tyler Fuchtman, Creighton. Not pictured: Amy Eisenhouer, Bloomfield and Valorie Zach, Niobrara.*

## **Creighton Community Foundation Fund**

helped support a six-week after-school program for 6th graders at St. Ludgers Catholic School and Creighton Elementary School earlier this year. The course was based on the EntrepreneurShip Investigation (ESI) curriculum, co-developed by UNL Extension, NCF and other partners. The program was facilitated by Megan Hanefeldt, Knox County Development Agency, and Abigail Frank, Creighton Economic Development. “This is a pilot project for now to see if we can implement it in more towns,” Abigail said.

“We had 16 students who each created a product. They all made business plans. We discussed marketing and advertising. Students learned the proper way of counting back change and keeping track of petty cash and were ready to work with customers and generate income. The biggest advantage of participating with the youth is to listen. They have so much to offer and their ideas are endless,” said Abigail. “Economic development needs to be aligned with the needs and opportunities of young people so they feel a sense of pride and connection to their community.”



*Students from St. Ludgers Catholic School and Creighton Elementary School display their products at a weekend home show in February.*

## Save the Date

**2016 Annual Training, Expo and Banquet**  
**Thursday, November 10, 2016**

**Peter & Dolores Graff Events Center**  
**McCook, Nebraska**

For more information call **402-323-7330**  
or [info@nebcommfound.org](mailto:info@nebcommfound.org).

## New Resource for Thoughtful Donors

We're pleased to announce a new website chock-full of information designed especially with the savvy donor in mind.

Check it out at

**[Nebcommfound.GiftLegacy.com](http://Nebcommfound.GiftLegacy.com)**.

You can also get to the information through our homepage:

**[NebraskaHometown.org/Donors](http://NebraskaHometown.org/Donors)**. Click on “Planning Your Gift.”

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## FOLLOW US ON TWITTER

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## Stay Connected With NCF E-Newsletters

If you are a Fund Advisory Committee member and have not been getting our bi-weekly e-newsletter, contact **Juli Rosso** at **[jrosso@nebcommfound.org](mailto:jrosso@nebcommfound.org)** right away. We'll make sure we have your correct email address. Be sure to add communications director “Reggi Carlson” as a safe sender to your inbox.

# Charitable Giving

## New Resource for Thoughtful Donors

Earlier this year we launched a website with an incredible amount of information for the discerning donor, especially those interested in planned giving.

Check out **Nebcommfound.GiftLegacy.com**.

You'll learn about the advantages of different types of gifts and the different ways you can make a gift. Here are just a few features you'll find on our new website:

- A planned gift calculator to run illustrations for gifts that provide income and tax benefits.
- A section on preparing your will, including accurate wording for making a bequest to NCF or one of our affiliated funds, with videos that focus on the basics of planning, trusts, healthcare, gifts to your family and more.

- Timely news articles on personal planning, news from Washington, savvy living and finance news.
- A free wills guide to record family information and estate distribution plans.

There is a special section for professional advisors which includes up-to-date guidance on laws that impact planned giving.

You'll also find dozens of donor stories, information about our Legacy Society and a link that takes you to our complete list of affiliated funds that accept contributions.

Be sure to sign up for our weekly e-newsletter full of tips for people who care about their community and are thoughtful about their giving!

Visit **Nebcommfound.GiftLegacy.com** today! ■

## Charitable IRA Rollover

*Give more to charity.  
Pay less in taxes.*

Late last year the Charitable IRA Rollover provision was permanently extended by Congress.

### How it Works:

- > The law allows those age 70½ and older to transfer up to \$100,000 from an IRA to charity – tax free. If married, each spouse can transfer up to \$100,000 from his or her IRA each year.
- > The gift must be made directly from the custodian of your IRA to the Nebraska Community Foundation for the benefit of your community's or organization's affiliated fund.
- > Your tax-free rollover gift will be excluded from your gross income.
- > Your gift can count toward your required minimum distribution.
- > Gifts to life income plans, donor-advised funds, supporting organizations and most private foundations do not qualify.

## Charitable IRA: A Tax-Wise Way to Give Back

Ron and Judy Parks are longtime supporters of Nebraska Community Foundation. Ron served as NCF Board member from 1997-2006, including three years as chair, and continues to provide guidance through his involvement as an Honorary Board member. Judy began her first term on the Board in November 2010 and continues to serve.

Ron used a Charitable IRA Rollover to make a major contribution to NCF's endowment. The Charitable IRA Rollover law, which has been extended permanently, allows those age 70½ and older to transfer funds from an IRA to a charity tax free.

"When I turned 70½ I had to start taking a required minimum distribution from my IRA annually, and I have to pay taxes on that. At this point in our lives, Judy and I don't need the extra income and we certainly don't need the extra taxes," Ron said.

"I looked at different ways of charitable giving, including gifts of highly

*Ron and  
Judy Parks*



appreciated stocks, gift annuities and life insurance, and for me, the Charitable IRA Rollover seemed like a great way to make a charitable gift."

Ron grew up on a farm near Foster, Nebraska. He is the founder of Millard Manufacturing Corp. in Omaha. He is also an accomplished sculptor whose works are placed in several prominent locations in Omaha.

Judy grew up in Kansas and Missouri. She is an avid conservationist, pilot, researcher and writer.

When they are not working, volunteering and creating, Ron and Judy enjoy spending time on their farm south of Valparaiso and boating in the Pacific Northwest. ■

We would be happy to discuss this charitable giving opportunity with you. Please contact

**Jim Gustafson**, NCF's Director of Advancement and Gift Planning at **(402) 323-7341** or **jpgustafson@nebcommfound.org**. ■

## Remembering Elaine Wolf

Nebraska Community Foundation lost a longtime friend and generous supporter when Elaine Wolf of Albion died on January 20, 2016. Elaine and her late husband, Jim, were founding members of Nebraska Community Foundation, and were constant supporters and advocates, both locally in Albion and throughout the state.

Elaine's community service included serving on numerous volunteer boards including Albion Public School Board and the Good Samaritan Society – Wolf Memorial



Home of Albion. One of her most beloved projects was the creation of the Boone County Fitness Center, which she and Jim co-founded in 1984.

Elaine helped create the Boone County Area Foundation Fund in 1993 and provided the first \$100,000 challenge grant to build the Fund's permanent endowment. In 1999 Jim and Elaine gifted \$100,000 to establish the first endowed funds to support NCF's training, education and technical assistance for affiliated funds.

"Mom and Dad had a vision of what community foundations could mean to

small towns in Nebraska," said their son, Jay Wolf. "The successes of Nebraska Community Foundation and of the 220 affiliated funds are those dreams coming to fruition."

"Elaine and Jim were both true believers in what is possible," said Jeff Yost.

"In 2005 Elaine made a key wager on the NCF mission when she committed \$250,000 over a five-year period to support our work. Those early investments of leadership and dollars were essential as we were growing the NCF network into what it is today," said Jeff.

"Elaine and Jim were important influencers in my life and to many of us. She will be deeply missed." ■

## Couple Has a Big Heart for a Small School

Curt and Sue Wischmeier were born and raised in Nebraska. They met in college, went to medical school, worked as an ophthalmologist and an anesthesiologist, respectively, and have spent most of their adult lives in Aberdeen, South Dakota. Why, then, would they be so committed to a small school district in southeast Nebraska?

"That's easy," said Curt Wischmeier. "They did a great job. I would have never gotten to where I am today without the great teachers I had. They were so dedicated to their students, and still are today. I know this because I stay in contact with my nieces and nephews who also graduated from the school."

Curt is talking about Lewiston Consolidated School. It serves the small communities of Lewiston (86), Burchard (103), Crab Orchard (49), Liberty (86) and Virginia (67). In 2008 – the year the Wischmeiers began making charitable gifts to support a preschool program – the school had a net loss of 28 students: 35 moving out of the district and 7 moving in.

This year the district has a net gain of 57 students and its enrollment at 217 is the highest since 2003. Superintendent Rick Kentfield credits a lot of this success to the school's expansion of its 3- and 4-year-old preschool programs, thanks in large part to the generosity of the Wischmeiers.

Curt and Sue turned to Nebraska Community Foundation to carry out their continuing support of the Lewiston school district through a donor-advised fund.

"We didn't want to set up a private foundation on our own. That's like reinventing the wheel," said Sue.

Curt added, "They're the experts in philanthropy. Jim (Gustafson) is always wearing a smile and always thinking about what can happen."

"Jim was essential to our charitable strategy," Sue said. "NCF's people helped us get there and do it. Preschool is absolutely important to both the children and to rural communities. Often rural communities just don't have the immediate resources they need."

"In these smaller school districts you



*Curt and Sue Wischmeier of Aberdeen, SD provide salary support for two staff members of the 3-year-old preschool program at Lewiston Consolidated School.*

have to give young families access to resources like preschool in order for your schools to grow," Curt said.

Superintendent Kentfield says that once the children enroll in preschool they tend to stay in the school district. It has proven to be an effective recruitment tool. School-provided transportation has been made available to bridge the 17-mile trip from Beatrice to transport students whose parents prefer to send their kids to a smaller school.

"The Wischmeiers are passionate about the school and have a deep-seated love," Kentfield said. ■



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# Best Practice

# Convening

## Communities Envision and Plan

Community-based affiliated funds regularly call on NCF expertise to facilitate productive public forums. For example, Norfolk held a number of visioning sessions several years ago to develop target areas for its grantmaking and is now partnering in a series of “community conversations” about the city’s future during its 150th anniversary.

In Hebron a visioning session was held to identify community interests and opportunities after learning of a large bequest. Plattsmouth FAC leaders have hosted visioning sessions to better understand community issues and perceptions. NCF has recently facilitated community-wide visioning as a precursor to affiliated fund action planning in Wymore-Blue Springs and Ravenna. And in Big Springs, young adults in their 20s to 40s have shared their vision during sessions designed for community builders.

Early this year the Brown County Foundation Fund partnered with North



Affiliated fund development coordinators Anders Olson and Jana Jensen recently facilitated county-wide visioning sessions in Ainsworth that drew 90 adults and 20 youths in Brown County.

Central Development Center to host a county-wide “Town Hall” meeting to establish a vision for the community and to identify priority goals in pursuit of that vision. More than 90 adults and about

20 youths attended separate sessions that posed the question, “What future do I want for Brown County?”

Throughout the evening, nine visionary concepts or target areas were identified along with numerous suggestions for goals and objectives. NCF staff who facilitated the conversations developed a report that revealed the three priority target areas identified by the group: Diverse Recreational Opportunities; Womb to Tomb Healthcare; and Thriving Economic Development. Committees and action plans are now being formed to create an update to the Strategic Plan for Community and Economic Development, crafted in 2007 and still viable and in progress to date.

NCF affiliated funds’ participatory dialogue within their communities is critical to the successful practice of Rural Development Philanthropy. NCF staff and mentors look forward to being part of more community conversations in the future. ■