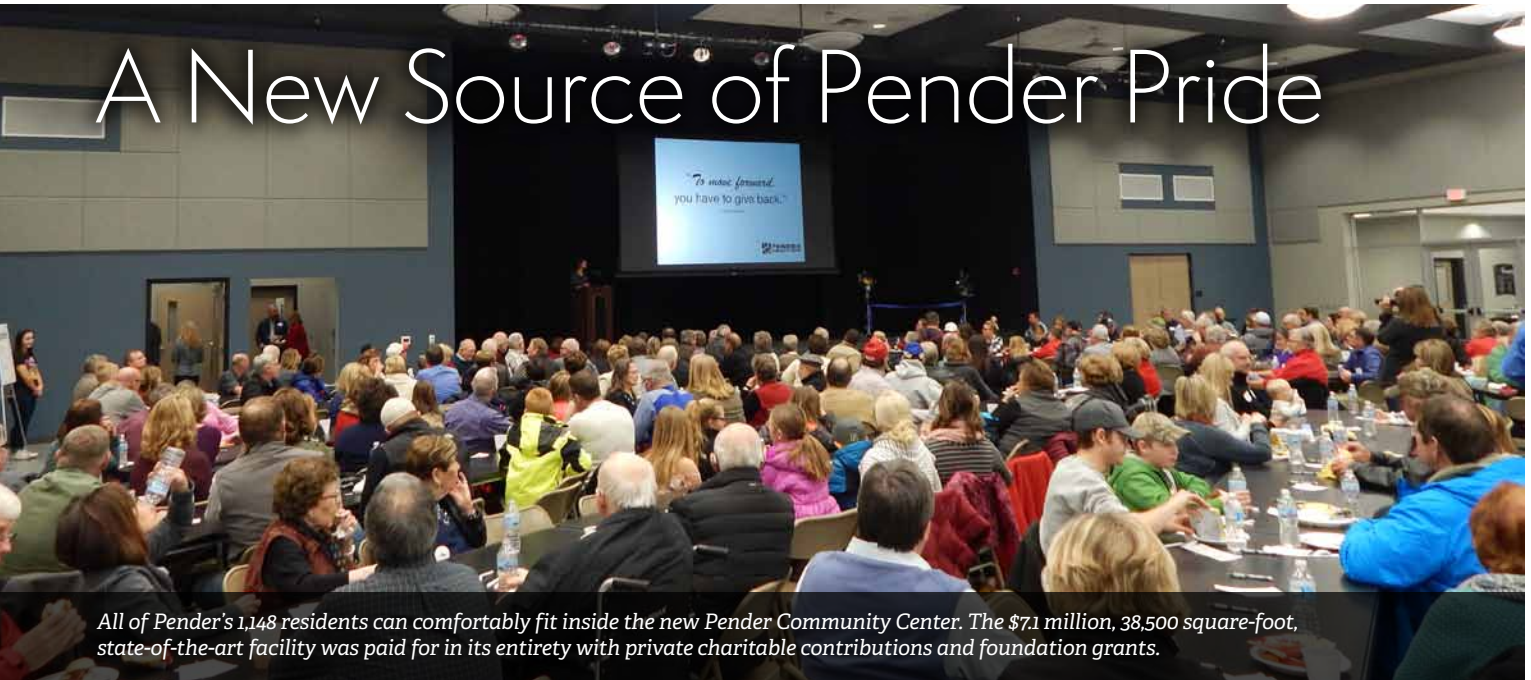


# CONNECTIONS



## A New Source of Pender Pride



*All of Pender's 1,148 residents can comfortably fit inside the new Pender Community Center. The \$7.1 million, 38,500 square-foot, state-of-the-art facility was paid for in its entirety with private charitable contributions and foundation grants.*

After nearly eight years of planning and persistence, the Pender Community Center is finally complete. The \$7.1 million, 38,500 square-foot facility, located in the middle of town on Main Street, can easily accommodate all of Pender's 1,148 residents. About half that number showed up to celebrate the extraordinary accomplishment of this small, but mighty community.

The impressive facility features event and community meeting spaces, basketball courts, a walking track, and batting cages. It also houses the Village of Pender main offices, Pender Veterans organization, a 24-hour fitness center, as well as an early childhood development facility, owned and operated by the local hospital.

All project funding has come from private charitable contributions and foundation grants to a Nebraska Community Foundation account within the Pender-Thurston Education

& Community Foundation Fund. Now that the building is complete, local volunteers are setting their sights on building an endowment, also through Nebraska Community Foundation, to help support operations and programming long into the future.

Katie Gutzmann, chair of the Pender-Thurston Education & Community Foundation Fund and manager of the Pender Community Center, welcomed an enthusiastic crowd of over 600 to an open house on a snowy evening in January. Attendees enjoyed guided tours of the facility and refreshments prepared in the new state-of-the-art catering kitchen.

"We have so much to be proud of here," said Katie. "We are making great progress to improve the quality of life for those living here and those who are considering raising their family in a rural setting. The best thing about this facility is that it's only one component of all of the great things

going on in Pender."

The community center is just one project among a long list totaling nearly \$50 million in construction community-wide – a hospital expansion, new law enforcement center, and two Main Street housing and restoration projects among them.

Residents insist that Pender's success is largely due to a culture of giving that has been cultivated in the community for decades.

Ray Welsh, a longtime volunteer to the Pender-Thurston Education & Community Foundation Fund and key fundraiser and donor to the community center campaign said, "The ethic of community, love of community and philanthropy, and a willingness to give back – that has been here forever. People taught us how to do that, and I think it's our job as stewards to pass that gift on. That gift of knowing how to give." ■

## NCF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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 Lynn Roper of Lincoln, *Treasurer*  
 K.C. Belitz of Columbus, *Secretary*  
 Greg Vasek of Lincoln,  
*Chair, Advancement Committee*  
 Paul Madison of Nebraska City,  
*Chair, CBAF Advancement Committee*

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 Kurt Kruse of Albion  
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 Sara Coffee Radil of Omaha

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 Brandon Day of Norfolk  
 Connie Day\* of Norfolk  
 P. Mark Graff of McCook  
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 Jeanene Wehrbein\* of Plattsmouth  
 Ray Welsh of Pender  
 Jim Wolf\* of Albion

\*Deceased

Maxine Moul, *President Emerita*

### PRESIDENT and CEO

Jeffrey G Yost



Jeff Yost  
NCF President and CEO

# Community.

**Community-centric.  
 Community-driven.  
 Community well-being.**

You'll hear these words and phrases everywhere within Nebraska Community Foundation's network. We're community builders. In today's digital economy, where so many of us can live and work wherever we want, community building – creating hometowns where we choose to raise our families and live our lives – is of extraordinary importance.

"Great schools don't make great communities. Great communities make great schools." This phrase is often repeated by Dr. Matt Blomstedt, Commissioner of the Nebraska Department of Education. We find it applies to more than just education.

For much of the past century, society has focused significant resources on scientific and technological

advancement. Our knowledge-based society has created incredible benefits, ranging from improved life expectancy to a higher standard of living. But knowing is not enough. We must act.

Knowledge and technology will only make a difference when we truly understand why the science matters to each of us and how it can increase both our quality of life and prosperity. The NCF network helps community leaders bridge the gap between what we know and what we do as a community.

It's important to remember that people solve problems and make life better. Ideas and money are both critical inputs to that process, but ultimately, it's up to us, as community leaders, to step up and create the communities of our dreams. ■

## Welcome Our New Board Members!

Nebraska Community Foundation is thrilled to welcome two new community leaders to our board of directors!



**Kurt Kruse** is a native of Albion. He owns and operates Kruse Farms, a grain and cattle-feeding enterprise in Boone County. Kurt is chair of Nebraska Community

Foundation's Boone County Community Foundation Fund, whose mission is to help communities work together and inspire investment in Boone County's quality of life.

Kurt says he is excited to join Nebraska Community Foundation and

help communities work together to grow and prosper.

Also joining the board is

**Jane Moreland** of Imperial. She and her husband returned to Chase County after college where they raise crops, cattle, and thoroughbred race horses. Moreland was the owner and broker of Moreland Realty for over 35 years.



Jane is a member of the Imperial Community Foundation Fund advisory committee and is excited about the growth and impact of Nebraska Community Foundation and its local affiliated funds. ■

The Annual Celebration is a time to connect with fellow volunteers across the NCF network. According to our survey, the average attendee renewed 6.3 connections and made 5.9 new ones – that's 1,508 renewed connections and 1,417 new connections in an eight-hour period!



## NCF Annual Celebration Draws Record Numbers Across the State

Two hundred and sixty volunteers representing 41 communities, plus more than 20 community development organizations, and an additional 400 business leaders and individuals passionate about the future of Nebraska gathered in La Vista November 1-2 to celebrate the community-building successes of the Nebraska Community Foundation network.

NCF's 2017 Annual Celebration – which included training for its affiliated fund leaders, a community expo, and celebratory banquet – drew record attendance representing communities as far as Scottsbluff, as close as Papillion, and dozens of communities in between. Centered on the theme “Together a Greater Nebraska,” speakers and training sessions focused on the importance of building strong communities across the state.

NCF's Annual Celebration began on November 1 with several pre-training peer gatherings including a bus and walking tour of South Omaha, an area known for its cultural diversity and rich immigrant history. On November 2, 260 community volunteers gathered for a full day of training facilitated by peers in the NCF network, subject matter experts from a variety of

Nebraska organizations, and NCF staff members. Topics included community and economic development issues that are important to rural communities like local food in schools, early childhood development, workforce and leadership development, and youth engagement.

Following a full day of training, the Annual Celebration culminated with an expo highlighting the work and successes of communities across the NCF network and a banquet featuring remarks by community volunteers including high school senior Chloe Higgins of Nebraska City, as well as individuals hailing from Omaha, Lincoln, Norfolk, Ogallala, Byron, Albion, and former Congressman Doug Bereuter of Cedar Bluffs.

“I believe strongly that to be an economically vibrant and attractive place for all of its citizens to live and work, Nebraska needs strong and progressive communities in every part of the state,” said Doug Bereuter, former Nebraska Congressman and NCF board member, to a crowd of 600. ■

*High school senior Chloe Higgins of Nebraska City spoke to a captive audience about her own experiences volunteering with the Nebraska City Community Foundation Fund youth advisory committee. She has served on the committee since eighth grade and is well known in the community for her philanthropic work.*



**Mark your calendar for November 8 when hundreds of volunteers across the NCF network will meet in Norfolk for the 2018 Annual Celebration!**

## 2017 Annual Celebration Sponsors

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# AFFILIATED FUND UPDATES



Students in Stuart document their dreams for the future of their hometown and the assets they will use to achieve them.

## Stuart Community Foundation Fund

recently hosted an NCF facilitated visioning session for 65 students in grades seven to 12. The exercise gathered youth input as a follow-up to an adult visioning session held at an earlier town hall meeting. Each grade had the opportunity to dream together and post their responses to the question, "What future do I want to create for Stuart?" One 10th grader quipped, "It'd be great to have some new last names in town!" The adult and student groups agreed on a number of community improvement ideas. The feedback gathered is being used as the Fund updates its action planning and grantmaking goals. ■

**O'Neill Community Foundation Fund** recently completed its \$30,000 funding commitment to the Northeast Community College O'Neill extended campus. NECC president Dr. Michael Chipps noted, "We appreciate the vision and generosity of the O'Neill Community Foundation Fund. Places like this are designed to help rural Nebraskans address critical workforce shortages, attract and retain local business and industry, and to sustain the viability and vitality of rural communities. The O'Neill Community Foundation Fund has made an excellent investment in the future of Northeast Nebraska, and it will serve the greater good for all Nebraskans." ■



The Northeast Community College O'Neill extended campus has state-of-the-art classrooms, health and science labs, and a technical training wing for industrial and ag-related courses.

Photo courtesy Northeast Community College



Owen Armstrong creates his own version of a dump truck at the new Valley Child Development Center. His mother, Ashley, says, "It's been such a positive experience. From the reliability, to the mobile app the center uses to communicate about my child's day."

## Red Cloud Community Foundation Fund

celebrated dreams come true when The Valley Child Development Center opened early in January. The center serves children six weeks to 12 years old. Currently, 41 children are enrolled, including eight babies "on the way." The Fund played a pivotal role in the planning, fundraising for construction, and building an endowment for the center, which is open year-round and staffed by certified professional teachers and staff. ■

Welcome to NCF, **Overton Area Community Fund!** NCF's new fund will complete action planning this spring and begin a fundraising effort to build a community endowment. An Overton alumnus has offered a \$25,000 challenge grant if the Fund can match that amount in local contributions by the end of 2019. The Fund has recruited 10 ambitious volunteer leaders who are on a fast track to success! ■



Sarah Luther snaps a selfie of the group gathered for Overton's community visioning session, which launched this new affiliated fund's action planning for building a community endowment.



Thayer County middle school students hear from Hunter Radenslaben, creator of AthleteNation.org, who shares stories about leadership in sports that deserve to be told.

## Deshler Community Fund

helped sponsor four motivational speakers on Leadership Day for students from the three middle schools in Thayer County. The event offered insights into the different aspects and behaviors of leadership from representatives of Jostens Renaissance Program, AthleteNation.org, the National Guard and the county-level

Youth Action Board. Each speaker built on the message that any person can make their school, community or world better by the choices they make and the projects they help to create. Additional Deshler Community Fund investments in its students include grants to the beef in school lunch program and equipment for a makerspace for the library, once renovation is complete. ■

NCF board member K.C. Belitz of Columbus speaks to a group of Nebraska City community volunteers about his experience helping community partners collaborate rather than compete in planning and fundraising for the construction of four multi-million community improvement projects over the past several years.



## Nebraska City Community Foundation Fund

was host for a presentation by NCF board member K.C. Belitz of Columbus entitled "Collaborate or Die," which helped set the tone for two days of visioning and action planning for Nebraska City's future. The Fund continues its leadership role by serving on a planning committee of local leaders envisioning long-term community issues and goals. Earlier this year, more than 100 people from the city's various sectors gathered for the planning session designed and facilitated by NCF's Jeff Yost and Janny Crotty. ■

## Rock County Community Fund

has provided start-up funding for the Fine Arts Club at Rock County Schools. Sophomore Adam Turpin, who is involved in speech and theater, said he was excited to hear about the club. "I was hyped to become a member of a club that honors kids who don't necessarily participate in sports," he said. The club is open to students participating in choir, band, speech, quiz bowl and theater, who maintain good grades, earn two letters in fine arts, or participate in four activities. Each year students travel to Lincoln or Omaha to visit museums, galleries and live performances. ■

Members of the Rock County Schools Fine Arts Club enjoy a recycled wood painting activity at the Burkholder Project during a First Friday Art Walk in Lincoln. Pictured left to right, Bailey DeVall, Brodee Fleming, Shae Thin Elk, and Aaron Sybrant.



## Save the Date to Celebrate!

**NCF's Annual Celebration, Affiliated Training, Expo and Banquet Thursday, November 8, 2018 Divots Conference Center Norfolk, Nebraska**

Find out why 91 percent of the people who attended in 2017 plan to do so again this year!

## New Year... New Website!

NCF's website has received a complete makeover! Here are a few of our favorite features:

- A revamped Gift Planning page with an array of resources and tools
- A new Donor Impact page highlighting our amazing supporters
- A landing page for Community Success stories, lifting up extraordinary communities across the NCF network



But wait... There's more to come! We are currently reorganizing your "Tools and Techniques" section to make it easy to find updated resources for affiliated fund success. Take a moment to visit [nebcommfound.org](http://nebcommfound.org) and check out the upgrades.

## Lunch & Learn

NCF's Lunch & Learn series is offered on the second Wednesday of the month. Log in and join your peers in exploring topics important to the work you are doing in your community. Each 30-minute session is designed to give you a powerful idea to ponder and act upon. Check out [nebcommfound.org/events](http://nebcommfound.org/events) for more information and to register.

## Charitable IRA Rollover Gaining Popularity

Jerry and Darlene Ehlers are among the growing number of Nebraskans using the Charitable IRA Rollover as a smart way to give back to their hometown. They have lived in Ainsworth most of their lives, and have raised three children there. Jerry is a retired school superintendent, and Darlene is a former insurance agent.

The couple helped launch the Brown County Community Foundation Fund in the mid-1990s and

has been involved in its steady growth ever since. When volunteers complete their most recent challenge grant

campaign later this year, the Fund will have more than \$1.2 million in its unrestricted endowment.

Jerry and Darlene used the Charitable IRA Rollover to make their gifts to the endowment. Their son, a CPA, advised them to consider using this method of giving.

“Since Darlene and I are both over 70-1/2 years old, we must take a minimum distribution from our

IRAs each year. By transferring some of the funds from our IRA directly to charity, our taxable income for the year is reduced,

along with our tax burden,” Jerry said.

“By using a Charitable IRA Rollover, the money for gifts we make to the Brown County unrestricted endowment and to our church and other causes is not subject to taxation.

“An endowment is about long-term, growing benefit. It gives people the opportunity to buy into the community. In the earlier years, many grants have been made that helped projects and programs on a small scale. But now, we will be able to address community-wide goals with community-wide investments.”

Jerry said he appreciates the support NCF has provided. “The personal interactions, the training. All that has been helpful. I’m not on the Fund Advisory Committee these days, but from the outside looking in, I can see that NCF is really gaining strength.” ■



*Darlene and Jerry Ehlers of Ainsworth*

## Quality Childcare Key to Quality Workforce

High quality childcare is a prerequisite for attracting young families to our communities. Boone County Foundation Fund (BCFF) has been addressing this challenge successfully over the past several years. Last fall, thanks in large part to the active leadership and initial funding BCFF provided, an afterschool program was launched at Boone Central Schools with a STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) focus.

This spring BCFF is developing a program to assist private licensed child care providers throughout the county. Funds from BCFF are being matched by an anonymous NCF donor-advised fund to create high quality curriculum and materials. The project is being developed by two former teachers with early childhood degrees and several members of Boone Central’s Career Academy who are interested in education. The

“curriculum tubs,” with a year’s worth of instruction, will be located at Albion Public Library, available for checkout by licensed providers.

BCFF continues to seek input from the community regarding next steps for early childhood development. Recently, the Fund sponsored a visioning meeting facilitated by NCF’s Jeff Yost and Anders Olson. A survey conducted by BCFF indicated that 69 percent of responding families said they had difficulty finding licensed childcare locally. Nearly half of employers said childcare availability has affected their ability to hire and retain employees.

Programs initiated and supported over the long-term, like those in Boone County, are making a positive difference for both families and childcare providers, but most importantly for the children who will enter our schools prepared to learn



*Korbin Predmore, left, and Xander Wright are regular visitors to Albion Public Library’s “makerspace.”*

and succeed.

One-to-one matching grants up to \$7,500 are available for youth engagement and development projects targeting all ages, thanks to an anonymous NCF donor-advised fund. NCF affiliated funds should contact their affiliated fund development coordinator for information and application forms. ■



Representatives from several organizations that benefitted from the Atkinson Big Give, including the Atkinson Community Foundation Fund, gather for a photo opportunity following their event which raised nearly \$22,000 for local charitable causes.

## Big Give, Big Return!

Atkinson and Boone County are just two of many communities across the NCF network that are encouraging locals to “give where they live” through Big Give events. Local affiliated fund volunteers have been instrumental in organizing Big Gives which bring together a variety of charitable causes and offer residents a “one stop shop” to make donations to the organizations they care about most, often with the possibility of matching funds.

Though it wasn't the first Big Give

in Atkinson, it was the first year the local affiliated fund coordinated the event. Fund Advisory Committee member Nicky Cadwallader said the group enlisted the help of fellow NCF volunteers in Boone County as they planned the event, which brought in nearly \$22,000 from 106 donors. Record participation was likely due to the Giving Stations volunteers set up at local banks all week allowing for maximum convenience and visibility.

Nicky added that Atkinson's Big Give

was exactly what the Fund needed to “go public” in announcing its Rural Development Philanthropy (RDP) challenge grant opportunity to the rest of the community, which will increase Atkinson's unrestricted endowment by \$300,000. “The Big Give provided just the momentum we needed to finish out 2017 strong and achieve 60 percent of our challenge grant goal,” said Nicky.

This year Boone County raised an impressive \$171,000 with a record 1,235 donors. The number of gifts has increased steadily since the event began in 2014. Over the past four years, the Boone County Big Give has reinvested more than \$670,000 into the community. The event has been so successful, they have extended it from a single day to an entire week-long celebration.

Tina Stokes, a member of the Fund Advisory Committee said “We had donors who were so worried they wouldn't be able to donate if it were to snow on the day of the event. The enthusiasm from the community and their willingness to participate has been overwhelming.” ■

## Welcome to Our Growing Team!

Nebraska Community Foundation has welcomed two new members to its staff – Denise Garey of McCook and Katie Kinsella-Boles of Lincoln. Denise and Katie are among six new employees joining the NCF staff in the past two years, the majority of whom are occupying newly created positions, just one indicator of NCF's dramatic growth in recent years.

Denise will serve Nebraska Community Foundation as an affiliated fund development coordinator focused on southwest Nebraska, including her hometown of McCook. As affiliated fund development coordinator, she provides training, education and

resources to local volunteers as they strengthen and enhance their community impact.

Katie joins the Nebraska Community Foundation team as executive assistant to the CEO. She provides support to the CEO, performing a variety of organizational, logistical and administrative duties.

Be sure to watch our Careers page – [nebcommfound.org/about/careers](http://nebcommfound.org/about/careers) – for job postings in the future. Nebraska Community Foundation is always on the lookout for professionals with a passion for Greater Nebraska and expertise in finance, planned giving, community development, education



Denise Garey




Katie Kinsella-Boles

and communications to join our movement! ■

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## BACK TO OUR HOMETOWNS

*Beginning with this issue, the back page of our newsletter will share insights from young adults who have chosen to move back to their hometown.*

**Kiel VanderVeen** did not always plan to return to Nebraska City after college. “At one point I planned to live and work in Omaha or Lincoln. I had job opportunities, but it would have taken me two to three times longer to move on the path to ownership. I have a certain amount of entrepreneurial spirit,” Kiel said.

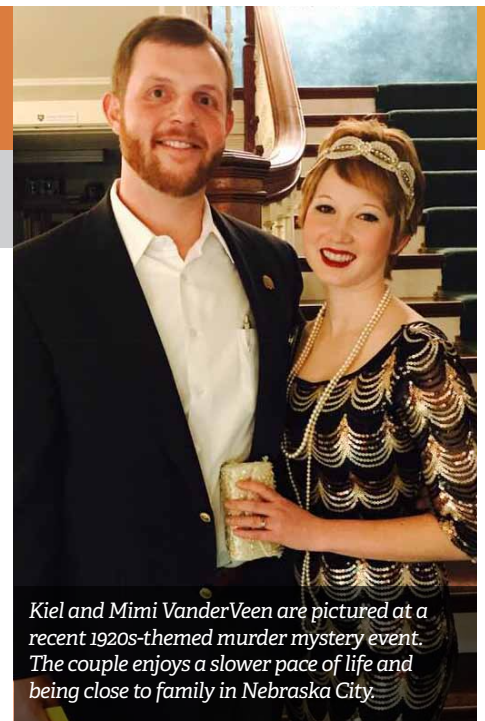
Kiel is a financial planner with CenterPoint Financial Group in Nebraska City. He is married to Mimi, whom he has known since childhood. As a senior in high school in 2007, he became the first chair of Nebraska City Community Foundation Fund’s Youth Advisory Committee.

“It taught me that I could make a difference, and that there were different and better ways to raise money than selling cookies and washing cars!” Each year the youth committee is responsible for 20 percent of the grantmaking from the Fund’s \$1.1 million unrestricted endowment.

Kiel thinks getting kids involved in their community at an early age is key. “In my peer groups, those who chose to be uninvolved as kids, stayed uninvolved as adults. And those of us who were engaged at a younger age tend to be more bought into the community than the former.

“Being on the youth advisory council and now the adult Fund Advisory Committee (FAC) has been a great learning experience. I don’t know where else I could have gotten the mentoring from more experienced people. The NCF network is like pouring gas on the ‘learning fire.’ The relationships, both personal and professional, are all a result of being part of the network,” he said.

FAC members give back in three ways—through annual gifts, gifts to the endowment, and through planned gifts. “The reason for a planned gift is if you’re not looking toward the future, why are you living here? My planned



*Kiel and Mimi VanderVeen are pictured at a recent 1920s-themed murder mystery event. The couple enjoys a slower pace of life and being close to family in Nebraska City.*

gift will be given through a retirement plan beneficiary. It’s a simple and efficient way to plan a gift,” Kiel said.

Kiel is excited about having his kids grow up in a small town. “Personally, I would not have had so many opportunities in a larger city. For instance, I am on the board of public works. Most people in larger cities wouldn’t get that opportunity until they were nearing retirement.” ■