

CONNECTIONS



Members of seven affiliated funds gathered in January for celebration and peer learning at The Old Feed Store Art Center in Bassett.



Thanks to Rock County volunteers for their invaluable help in organizing our regional meeting at The Old Feed Store Art Center in Bassett.

Spring 2019 Regional Meetings:

- Stratton – April 3
- Hebron – April 16
- Bertrand – April 24
- Big Springs – April 25

Call 402.323.7330 for information.

Together a Greater Nebraska

“ I’ll admit, I wasn’t really sure. I’ve never gone to one of these, and I don’t usually like this kind of thing, but I’m glad I came. This was good. ”

We understand that’s high praise in the Sandhills!

The comment was made earlier this year by one of the 32 folks from seven affiliated funds that gathered in Bassett to celebrate success and contemplate next steps. Mainly, they came together to learn.

For several years our message to communities has been, “Turn Up Your Dream Switch!” People across Nebraska took that call to action seriously. In the last 10 years, endowed assets held by NCF community-based funds have more than tripled.

Now, dozens of community funds have annual payouts of more than \$10,000, enough to make a difference as a community partner. Several mature funds have \$50,000 to \$100,000 annually for community investment. For these volunteer leaders, the next challenge is to determine the most strategic steps to take for growing their communities. This will be different in every place, but every community can learn from their neighbors and from the experience NCF brings to its regional gatherings.

The desire to learn brought Fund Advisory Committee members from Rock, Keya Paha and Brown Counties, Stuart, O’Neill and Atkinson, plus Holt County Economic Development together to share what they had experienced throughout their multi-year challenge grant campaigns. The

six community-based funds had either completed or were still working toward meeting ambitious goals. Together, the volunteers had increased their unrestricted endowments by nearly \$2.5 million! That’s the kind of news that will warm up a cold January night.

“Together a Greater Nebraska” is an affirmation of the vision that will propel our work on to a brighter future. Nebraska is a place where our hometowns are achieving their dreams! ■

Greater Nebraska Floods: How to Help

We know many NCF volunteers and generous donors are looking for ways to support their fellow Nebraskans as they rebuild and move forward. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us at 402.323.7330.

INSIDE NCF

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Meet Our New Board Members

Pam Abbott of Ogallala grew up in central Nebraska and graduated from the University of Nebraska at Kearney with a degree in education. Her life and career have involved a variety of education



positions, including teaching in public schools, preschool, management at an educational and employment testing corporation in Illinois, and treasurer of a school board. Pam is currently the vice chair of the Keith County Foundation Fund in Ogallala, a member of Mid-Plains Community College board of governors, and a member of the Keith/Perkins Counties Early Childhood Development steering committee. She and her husband, Mike, own a cow/calf ranching operation.

Brad Bauer is the regional president for Pinnacle Bank of Nebraska based out of Grand Island. Prior to that, he and his family spent 17 years in Ogallala where he was involved as a volunteer with the



Keith County Foundation Fund. Brad received a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska at Kearney. As regional president of Pinnacle Bank, Bauer has had numerous opportunities to become familiar and work with many Nebraska communities and has seen firsthand the positive impact NCF affiliated funds are having in communities across the state. He believes that experience will enhance his service to NCF.

Yesenia Peck is originally from Lima, Peru where she worked as an attorney for the Supreme and Superior Courts. Yesenia holds a master's degree in Leadership from Bellevue University



and is certified in workforce diversity management by Cornell University and Bellevue University. Yesenia is a diversity manager for Nebraska Public Power District at the Columbus general office. Peck has volunteered for over 13 years with the Nebraska Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and is the current president. She was recently appointed by Governor Ricketts to the Nebraska Latino American Commission. She defines herself as a servant immigrant for the community of Nebraska.

Kiel VanderVeen of Nebraska City is a Certified Financial Planner™ professional. Kiel began his career as a tax preparer, which provided a strong foundation for his pursuit of a career in financial

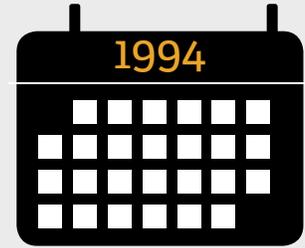


planning. He earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and accounting from the University of Nebraska and holds the Series 7 and 66 securities licenses. Kiel has been involved with NCF, both locally and statewide, since 2005. He was a member of Leadership Nebraska Class X and is involved with EDGE Nebraska City, Nebraska City Growth Fund, and the Nebraska City Board of Public Works. ■



NCF staff members: (Front, 1-r) Les Long, Jana Jensen, Phuong Dinh, Janny Crotty, Steve Brewster (Middle, 1-r) Kristine Gale, Greta Leach, Betty Wagner, Reggi Carlson, Emily Sulzle, Kara Weander-Gaster, Teri Alley-Davis, Kira Geiger (Back, 1-r) Karla Egger, Carrie Malek-Madani, Jason Kennedy, Jeff Yost, Juli Rosso, Jim Gustafson, K.C. Belitz, Dena Beck, Denise Garey, Diane Wilson. Not pictured, Amy Fey.

NCF AT A GLANCE



First Affiliated Funds established

229
Affiliated Funds

1,500
Volunteers

258
Communities served

Total assets
\$162.6 Million



Endowed assets
\$88 Million

\$323
Million
Reinvested since 1994

As of 12/31/18

Dreams Realized

At 25 years old, the Nebraska Community Foundation network has now firmly established itself as the go-to resource for both input and engagement on what is important to Greater Nebraska. Beyond that, affiliated fund volunteers have earned a reputation as the group with the ambition and the wherewithal to get things done.

This recognition isn't just coming from fellow Nebraskans. In March, New York Times columnist David Brooks and a team from the Aspen Institute embarked on an extensive tour of several communities in the NCF network because they heard that when it comes to community-building, Nebraskans are doing something right.

In this newsletter, you'll see some impressive numbers. They represent some very successful fundraising, but more than that, they represent the

growing optimism that people have for the future of their hometowns. Volunteers in the NCF network have long been on the leading edge of an attitude that approaches community development from a place of abundance—a philosophy that we are seeing more organizations, associations and social movements adopt in 2019.

The results are tremendous and the stories truly inspiring. Today, communities are making investments in the kinds of positive change that may not otherwise occur.

As we look to the next 25 years, Nebraska Community Foundation is eager and prepared to unleash the abundant local assets that will make Greater Nebraska a destination for newcomers and returners and a point of pride for the people who have always called it home. ■

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED AFFILIATED FUNDS



AFFILIATED FUND UPDATES



Dental hygienist Diane Alden examines JW King, a first grader in Ainsworth. Miles of Smiles reported 78 kids in Brown County participated in the program this year.

Brown County Community Foundation Fund grew its unrestricted endowment by nearly \$800,000 over the past three years. It now has more than \$1.2 million that will advance community-building efforts, such as restoration of the Grand Theatre, support for kids' dental health through the Miles of Smiles program, and ongoing investments in tourism through the annual Sandhills Discovery Conference. The people of Brown County are well positioned to welcome a growing number of newcomers. ■

Howells Community Fund is six years old this spring. Since 2013 it has enlightened the community to the benefits of an unrestricted endowment. On a blizzardy night in February the fund announced to a packed Howells Ballroom that the community was well on its way to raising \$500,000 to match a \$250,000 challenge grant. That is serious money for this volunteer group known for its infectious humor and joyful outlook. Whether delivering sandwiches to seniors or making major investments in recreation for young families, Howells Community Fund volunteers are helping to shape a very bright future. ■



Delivering lunches and visiting with senior citizens is just one of the many engagement activities the Howells Community Fund Advisory Committee members use to raise awareness of their mission.



Bone Creek Museum in David City is the only gallery in the nation devoted exclusively to agrarian art. It receives ongoing support from BCAFF.

Butler County Area Foundation Fund (BCAFF) raised twice what it needed to meet its recent \$200,000 challenge grant goal. The Fund now has more than \$950,000 in its unrestricted endowment. With its 17 different accounts for various communities and programs, Fund volunteers have supported numerous causes over the 20 years since becoming an affiliated fund. Now, with the endowment's significant increase in annual payout, volunteers and NCF will be working with community partners to determine strategic investments that will have a long-term impact on growing Butler County. ■

Boone County Foundation Fund is leading an effort to support families and employers by launching quality child development programs. Cardinal Kids Club, an after-school program, serves 38 kids in grades K–5. Students explore their world through activities that range from building robots to crocheting. Director Mollie Morrow is looking forward to a second year of summer camps. Each of the nine weeks will involve a different theme and a related community member to connect what kids are doing to the community where they live. Next up for this ambitious community-based fund—working with partners to create an early childhood and family development center. ■



Archer Ruby Spann takes direction from staff member Haley Andreason during games and sports week at last year's Cardinal Kids summer camp. Activities in 2019 will continue to focus on getting kids outdoors and moving.



The National Willa Cather Center draws visitors from across the nation and around the world. Red Cloud Tourism & Commerce aims to create amenities that will entice visitors to spend an extra day or two.

Red Cloud Community Foundation Fund

has provided more than \$200,000 in the last year and a half to support heritage tourism. Investments have resulted in many awards and acknowledgements. Expedia once again named Red Cloud the best place to escape to in Nebraska. Red Cloud Tourism & Commerce and The Willa Cather Foundation both received

funding for ads in the 2020 Nebraska Travel Guide, which is distributed nationally. And this spring, the National Willa Cather Center partnered with Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary for an ecotourism and cultural day trip to expose visitors to the magnificent crane migration and the experience of visiting the places that inspired a Pulitzer Prize-winning author. ■

Arnold Community Fund

continues to support School House Graphic Products. All aspects of this remarkable school program—from product design to invoicing—are headed up by students and coordinated by Clay and Julie Mohr. The program began in 2007 and has expanded well beyond graphics production. A recent grant of \$13,584 purchased a 3D printer that uses carbon fiber reinforcement, which enables students to go from CAD design to beautiful, structurally strong end-use parts in hours. Students produce everything imaginable from vinyl signage to furniture. In the last 10 years, the student-run business has reinvested \$530,000 into its operations. ■



The newly formed youth leadership group offers elementary students weekly tutoring and fun monthly events with junior and senior high school students in Diller.

The Diller Community

recently completed a challenge grant that boosted its endowment assets to over \$717,000. Committed to carrying out the dreams of community members, the Fund distributed surveys to adults and adolescents and held two visioning sessions with 80 total participants. The result was the formation of four task forces focusing on youth involvement, housing, park improvements, and communications services. In January, Mahaila Engelman, a member of the youth task force, was awarded a grant to help with a leadership program in which high school students provide weekly tutoring and other resources for elementary school children. ■



Arnold Public High School senior Logan Coleman is in charge of the new Markforged Mark Two 3D printer — its latest tech acquisition for the student-run business.



NCF is Turning 25!

Meet us in York at the Holthus Convention Center for a Milestone Occasion!

Part volunteer training, part hometown expo, part celebratory banquet, our Annual Celebration is special this year as we look ahead to the next 25 years of achieving dreams in Greater Nebraska!

Save the date and plan to celebrate!

Thursday, November 14, 2019

(See more on page 7)

Find a Fund to Love!

Like what you see on these two pages? This is just a snapshot of the momentum and optimism growing across Greater Nebraska. Visit our website for dozens of stories and videos of ambitious people building the communities of their dreams! Go to NebraskaHometown.org, be inspired, and find an affiliated fund you want to support!

Many Happy Returns!

Are you a member of a Fund Advisory Committee who has returned to Greater Nebraska after living away for a while? We'd love to hear your story! We are working on a series of articles (like the one you'll find on page 8 of this newsletter) and videos of people returning to their roots to blossom. Please share the story of your journey home with **Carrie Malek-Madani**, cmalek-madani@nebcommfound.org or **402.323.7331**. We're waiting to hear from you!

Saluting a Visionary in Valley County



Twenty years ago, a group of ambitious leaders stepped forward to transform the challenges facing their Valley

County communities into opportunities for a new century.

Local attorney Bob Stowell has been a central figure in nearly every measurement of Valley County's progress. He was instrumental in forming a community partnership with NCF in the early 2000s. His instinct for marrying public and private economic development has resulted in a new hospital, businesses, a housing development, and much more.

Valley County's economic development director Trevor Lee sums up the changes: "It's hard for many of us, particularly

transplants and Millennials, to fully appreciate the community attitude shift that has taken place over the last 20 years." Today, school enrollment is up 14 percent from five years ago and 70 percent of high school seniors report they would like to return in the future.

Bob and his wife Jean are deeply philanthropic and have helped others to discover their own generosity through service on Valley County Community Foundation Fund. Today, the community benefits from more than a dozen endowments totaling \$6,227,000. Another \$4 million is in place as planned gifts for the future.

Bob Stowell has been directly involved in securing most of these charitable assets by

helping his friends and his clients give back to the hometown they share. NCF extends its heartfelt congratulations to Bob who was recently honored by the Charitable Gift Planners of Nebraska with the Community Sower Award. ■



The renovated theater in Ord is a nonprofit venue for area events, musical and theatrical performances and more.

Envision a Brighter Future. Nurture Active Hope.

One sound principle in any planning exercise is to start with the end in mind. For NCF affiliated funds, the "end" is what rises to the top as a community-wide vision.

Nebraska Community Foundation's visioning sessions are a big draw in small towns like Chester (pop. 232) and

Coleridge (pop. 473). On a cold night in January, more than 100 people—nearly 25 percent of residents—participated in Spencer (pop. 455).

"Everyone wants the community to grow and thrive, but no one was sure how to start that process. I think the biggest thing people walked away with

was the feeling of having a direction to head," said Chester Community Fund chair Adam Tipton following a recent visioning session.

The next step is for each Fund Advisory Committee to create vision, mission and values statements, then begin to prioritize short- and long-term community aspirations and develop strategic action steps to achieve them.

The overarching goal for NCF volunteers is to build an unrestricted community endowment that will grow and continue to provide an increasing annual payout. This is often an unfamiliar concept for newer volunteers. But with NCF's track record of success—\$73 million endowed within 136 community-focused affiliated fund endowments—people are eager to get started! ■



There was no shortage of aspirations expressed by Chester community members at their visioning session in February. Peer mentors from Diller, Shickley and Byron joined in to share their own success stories and to inspire the group to dream big.

Welcome to Our Team!

We are proud to introduce three new staff members dedicated to building a Greater Nebraska!

K.C. Belitz of Columbus has assumed a new position created to address the growing demand for NCF's services. As Chief Operating Officer, K.C. will work to advance strategic goals critical to the success of NCF communities statewide. K.C. earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Truman State University. Prior to joining NCF, he served as president of the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce for 18 years. K.C. will office in both Lincoln and Columbus, where he is head volleyball coach at Lakeview High School. He is a former member of the NCF Board of Directors and has served on the Fund Advisory Committee for Columbus Area Future Fund.



Steve Brewster is the new affiliated fund development coordinator for north-central Nebraska. He offices near his hometown of Stuart, Nebraska. Before joining NCF in his current capacity, Steve practiced law full time and served on the NCF Board of Directors as well as the Stuart Community Foundation Fund Advisory Committee. Before returning to Stuart, Steve consulted for nonprofit community and economic development organizations while living in Canada. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics before receiving his law degree, both from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.



Emily Sulzle has been named to the new position of Assistant Director of Gift Planning. She works from NCF's Lincoln office but helps people across the state implement charitable gift plans to support the work of Nebraska Community Foundation and its affiliated funds. Her goal is to ensure that donors' legacies fulfill their dreams and desires to make an impact in their hometowns. Emily's background in planned giving started at the University of Nebraska Foundation, where she partnered with the gift planning team for more than four years. Emily graduated from the University of Nebraska at Omaha with a bachelor's degree in nonprofit administration. ■



Save the Date 2019 ANNUAL CELEBRATION

**Affiliated Fund Training, Expo & Banquet
Holthus Convention Center | York, NE
Thursday, November 14, 2019**

Part volunteer training, part hometown expo, part celebratory banquet, our Annual Celebration brings hundreds of ambitious community leaders under one roof to embrace the assets, abundance and optimism that have earned us the name Greater Nebraska. Together, over 1,500 volunteers are inspiring change, taking control of their future and achieving their dreams. And we're just getting started! ■

252
volunteers representing
105
communities at training.

NCF volunteers are most craving
skills and **training**
in **Community Impact**
and **Leadership Development**

Attendees renewed
5-6
connections



and made
4-5
new connections



84% plan to be in York for the 2019 Annual Celebration!

**Data obtained through a survey distributed to all 2018 Annual Training attendees.*

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

BACK TO OUR HOMETOWNS

NCF reserves the back page of our newsletter to share stories and insights from NCF volunteers who have chosen to move back to their hometowns.



Many of the Greater Nebraska returners we speak to say they didn't expect to find themselves back in their hometowns. In the case of Derek Snyder of Burwell, however, the call to return was always loud and clear.

"It was always the dream to come back to my hometown and work with my dad," said Derek.

After spending two years at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and several more at Creighton University's School of Pharmacy, Derek returned to his rural roots and a community where "everyone cares for everyone."

As a pharmacist, Derek says one of the most satisfying aspects of his work is

getting to know his patients and offering high quality healthcare in a small-town setting. "If you don't have a pharmacy, patients are self-diagnosing and treating," said Derek. "We're always looking out for the best interest of our patients."

Volunteering for his local affiliated fund, the Calamus Area Community Fund, has provided Derek another way to serve his neighbors; those neighbors have been hugely supportive of the Fund's work dating back to 1996. Since its inception, the Fund has received over 5,000 contributions from nearly 1,300 unique donors. That's particularly impressive considering the total population of Garfield and Loup Counties is just 2,600.

Derek was asked to join the Fund Advisory Committee shortly after moving back to Burwell and says he is just one of many young people taking an active role in the future of the Calamus Area. That future looks particularly bright since the Fund



Derek Snyder of Burwell says he had always hoped to return home as an adult. When he's not working at Burwell Pharmacy with his father, he volunteers on the Calamus Area Community Fund Advisory Committee.

successfully completed a challenge grant opportunity increasing its unrestricted endowment by \$300,000.

Derek says the endowment payout will be used for community improvements that help further strengthen his case for returning to Burwell. He's become an active recruiter for the community and says he's noticed a trend of young returners, especially young entrepreneurs, returning to the Calamus Area to start their careers and raise their families.

"You just want to see your small town succeed. We need young families and young people to do that." ■