



*"Inspired by the past,
focused on the future"*

2024 NEWSLETTER

PO Box 51 ■ Leigh, NE 68643

An affiliated fund of Nebraska Community
Foundation



Leigh Legacy Fund Members (Front Row, L to R): Michele Clausen, Melissa Brabec, Justine Fischer, Paige Ritz, Tammy Wendt; (Middle Row): Megan Hillen, Tara Dlouhy, Kamin Held, Tricia Mullenhoff, Chris Herink, Heather Held; (Back Row): Landon Wietfeld, Thomas Urban, Brent Wietfeld, Ryan Hillen

A NOTE FROM OUR CHAIR, JUSTINE FISCHER

WHEN I THINK ABOUT LEIGH, an abundance of images flash through my mind. Some of them are from long ago, like memories of playing softball and swimming at the pool at Centennial Park, marking special family occasions at Park Place, carrying the crosses to the graves each year at Memorial Day, entering exhibits and excitedly meeting up with friends at the Colfax County Fair each summer, or feeling inspired by so many of my teachers throughout my years as a student at Leigh Community Schools.

Other images are more recent. I think of walking through the doors of Leigh Community Schools each day, now as a high school teacher, and feeling inspired by the amazing, respectful kids I have the privilege of teaching and coaching, and feeling so blessed that my own children get to go here. I think of the enjoyment I get from singing with the community choir and playing with the alumni band at various community events. I think of the sense of belonging I feel going about my everyday tasks, knowing I will be greeted with friendly small talk getting my mail or shopping for groceries. I feel a sense of safety thinking of our amazing volunteer fire and rescue first responders who are truly second to none. I think of all the countless times people have helped others in times of need, be it great or small, and I sleep soundly knowing that if I or my family were ever in need, we would have the members of this community to fall back on. And finally, I think of the overwhelming excitement and hope I feel when reflecting on all the progress Leigh has made in recent years and where it is headed in the future.

Others, I'm sure, have different images come to mind when they think of Leigh, but whether you have lived in Leigh your whole life, moved here at some point, or moved away at some point, what I believe links all of our collective Leigh memories together is PRIDE. Pride in who we are or where we came from. Pride in the hometown that molded us into the individuals we are today or, in some cases, pride in the new community in which we have found a sense of belonging.

I believe it is a rare gift to grow up in a small town like Leigh. A simple gift that many of us have probably taken for granted at times, but a gift to be deeply treasured nonetheless. I want Leigh to continue to thrive into future generations so that my children and future grandchildren can feel the same pride as I do. I want my students to grow up knowing that they will be supported in any path they choose

in life, but that we would love for them to come right back here someday to raise their own families.

But members of the Leigh Legacy Fund believe it is not enough to simply sit back and hope to see the future we envision for Leigh and the surrounding rural area. We must actively strive each day to create it. We must be forward-thinking, intentional, hard-working, and willing to act.

Right now, all of us reading this newsletter have an opportunity to be intentional and take action to benefit Leigh's future. And the time to take action is now. What a tremendous opportunity we have been presented with! Raise \$500,000 for our permanent endowment to receive a 2:1 match of an additional \$250,000 from an anonymous group of Leigh alumni living away from Leigh and Nebraska Community Foundation. This would amount to a total of \$750,000 added to our permanent endowment. Combined with the funds we already have endowed, this amount would generate nearly \$40,000 in interest EACH AND EVERY YEAR, all while the principal continues to grow. This would be invested back into the community in the form of worthy causes like community infrastructure, beautification efforts, education, youth engagement, leadership development, arts and cultural experiences, entrepreneurial endeavors, newcomer attraction, and more.

Since "going public" with our fundraising campaign just this past fall, we have already raised \$250,000 toward our goal! This amount reflects cash already in the bank and does not include pledged amounts yet to be fulfilled. Thank you to everyone who has already donated or pledged to donate! Your intentional generosity is already paying dividends in the amount of grants we are able to award.

But we could use everyone's help in reaching our goal. Our time is short, our need is great, and this opportunity is too important to let pass by. Whether you are a current resident, past resident, or just "friend of Leigh," we humbly ask that you consider joining us to "Leave a Legacy" to help Leigh continue to thrive both now and in future generations. ■

With great sincerity,
Justine Fischer, Leigh Legacy Fund Chair



Scan to watch an inspiring video about Leigh!

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

LEIGH LEGACY FUND (formerly the Leigh Area Foundation) launched in 2020 as an affiliated fund of Nebraska Community Foundation. From day one, LLF's goal has been to increase charitable giving among those who love this community as much as we do and make grants that enrich the quality of life for present and future generations, preserve our heritage, and nurture our sense of community.

Leigh Legacy Fund is focused on building a permanent, unrestricted endowment. The beauty of an endowment is that the principal is never touched, and the invested earnings increase over time. A portion of the earnings serve as "payout" that LLF

will grant to programs and projects that benefit our community and the surrounding rural area. "Unrestricted" means that anyone who donates to the endowment has not put forth any guidelines on how the money is used beyond benefitting Leigh—though we always welcome input from contributors! Unrestricted gifts provide ultimate flexibility for the future as we cannot anticipate community needs 10 years from now, 50 years from now, and beyond.

Thanks to the generosity of community members like you, in less than four years, LLF has already supported many projects to improve local quality of life. Think of what we could accomplish with a sizable endowment!

WE HAVE BEEN CHALLENGED

LEIGH LEGACY FUND HAS LAUNCHED a campaign to substantially grow our endowment. We have been "challenged" by a group of "Distinguished Leigh Alumni." Fourteen families and individuals (all Leigh High School alumni who have moved away but still hold the community dear) have joined together to issue a challenge to our community and other alumni and friends of Leigh living elsewhere.

The Distinguished Leigh Alumni group pledged \$200,000 to the LLF permanent endowment. Nebraska Community Foundation then sweetened the deal with another \$50,000!

This means that if we raise \$500,000, the Distinguished Leigh alumni and NCF will match the funds 2:1 resulting in as much as a \$750,000 increase to the Leigh community's unrestricted endowment. The money must be pledged within three years, but pledges can be payable over five years. We are one year into our campaign. All contributions must be pledged in the next two years, but they can be payable over the next four years! Please see our pledge sheet included separately in this mailing.

\$200,000

Distinguished Leigh Alumni Challenge

+

\$50,000

Nebraska Community Foundation match

+

\$500,000

In contributions from those who believe in the future of Leigh!

=

\$750,000

Increase to our community unrestricted endowment

PROGRESS

OUR CAMPAIGN OFFICIALLY KICKED OFF on January 1, 2023, and we are excited to announce our progress! The 15 members of the Leigh Legacy Fund were the first to donate, contributing a total of \$80,000. Since then, many individuals, families, and businesses have joined us, and we are proud to announce that we have surpassed \$250,000 in funds raised already! This number represents cash already in the bank and does not include pledges yet to be fulfilled. We sincerely thank everyone who has already donated!.

Leigh has always been a small but mighty community, and we have experienced so many positive successes in the past several years. Now is the time to really come together to plan for a thriving community for current and future generations. We are asking for everyone's help. Let's prove what our community can do and make our dreams for Leigh a reality!



HELP US RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

Your generous gift will not only help build the unrestricted endowment today, it will continue to grow and keep giving tomorrow.



Cash - A gift of cash may be eligible for income tax deductions as prescribed by current law. Your cash gift may be by check, credit card or electronic funds transfer, which authorizes the automatic transfer of funds each month from your checking or savings account.



Gifts of IRA - Individuals who have reached age 70½ may contribute up to \$100,000 directly from their Individual Retirement Account (IRA), without having to recognize the IRA distribution in taxable income. If married, each spouse can transfer up to \$100,000 from his or her IRA.



Agricultural commodities - Gifts of grain or livestock may provide significant income tax savings to a producer. Because the property is gifted, no revenue is recognized, and the cost of production may still be deducted as a business expense.



Marketable securities - A gift of publicly-traded stock, bonds or mutual fund shares is eligible to be matched at the full fair market value. Such a gift may provide you with additional tax benefits, as you will not pay capital gains tax on the appreciation in the value of the securities.

LEIGH LEGACY FUND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Contact any LLF member for more information. We would love to discuss the campaign with you further.

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Ryan Hillen, *Vice-Chair* 402.276.3320
Melissa Brabec, *Secretary* 402.992.0287
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Tricia Mullenhoff 402.910.0805
Paige Ritz 402.276.6831
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Tammy Wendt 402.276.0585
Brent Wietfeld 402.750.0140

LLF AWARDS GRANT TO YOUTH ADVISORY PROJECT



YAC President Jordan Noonan and Vice-President Macy Clausen explain their group's project.

LAST SUMMER, the Legacy Fund awarded a \$2750 grant to the Leigh Youth Advisory Committee to support them in their efforts to make improvements at Centennial Park Pool! This amount was matched by the Nebraska Community Foundation's Youth Engagement Grant for a total of \$5500! The YAC students contributed another \$5,500 for the project and also secured a grant from the Marolf Family Trust for the same amount. Between all 4 organizations, the students were able to raise \$16,500 for their project!

With this money, the students donated 5 new thermoplastic-coated benches, 2 round picnic tables, and 2 umbrellas. They also repainted the base of the diving board and held a "Community Night" on July 31 to celebrate their accomplishments. Everyone enjoyed a night of free swimming and a free meal of "Zion" burgers, hot dogs, brats, potato salad, chips, and cookies. They held a project dedication and raffled off a free YETI cooler.

The students plan to finish the project this spring and summer by putting up a new welcome sign and "pool rules" sign, making improvements to the lifeguard stand, and redoing all the landscaping around the pool and by Park Place! It was awesome to see what several community groups working together could accomplish! ■



PHASE TWO OF BALLFIELD IMPROVEMENTS COMPLETE

IN 2021, the Leigh Legacy Fund received the wonderful news that they were the recipient of an over \$250,000 gift from the estate of William (Bill) and Theresa Eggers.

Because of Bill and Theresa's love of family and community, their gift will impact the community of Leigh for generations to come. It was their family's wish that a portion of the gift be used to support the Leigh baseball/softball field and the rest be allocated to the Legacy Fund's permanent endowment.

Beginning in 2022, the Legacy Fund honored the Eggers' wishes by making the first of a series of improvements to the ballfield by renovating the concession stand and bathrooms. Also in 2022, a "quick-dry" dirt was added to the field in a joint effort between the Village of Leigh and Leigh Summer Rec program.

In late 2022, the Legacy Fund applied for and earned a grant from Kansas City Royals Charities for an additional \$10,000 in funds to support their ballfield improvement efforts.

The second round of Legacy improvements in early 2023 included tearing out the existing fence around the field and adding a new, black, powder-coated fence with a weed guard. This also included a net from dugout to dugout, allowing many of the big poles to be torn out to provide better viewing for spectators. The dugout and grandstand poles were painted black to match.

This was followed by adding concrete on each side of the grandstand extending to both dugouts so that all bleachers sit on concrete. Another concrete pad was added in front of the new batting cage.

Finally, late last fall, in-ground sprinklers were installed in the infield and outfield. We are excited to see these in use this upcoming summer!

In December 2023, the Nebraska Softball Association awarded the community of Leigh the State of Nebraska Governor's Award for Outstanding Improvements in Amateur Sports. Members of the Men's Fastpitch softball team and Legacy Fund were present to accept the award.

A lot of planning and volunteer time went into these projects, and LLF is very proud of the work that has been completed. Thank you to everyone who volunteered time and equipment! We believe we have one of the prettiest areas to watch a ball game around, and we look forward to one more round of ballfield improvements in the upcoming year! ■



Bill and Theresa Eggers (standing) are pictured with Bill's parents, Alvin (Butch) and Olga Eggers.



LLF SPONSORS FIRST HOMETOWN INTERN

LEIGH LEGACY FUND was thrilled to have Cassidy Hoffman as their very first "Hometown Intern" last summer.

Hoffman is the daughter of Ryan and Kelli Hoffman of Leigh and the granddaughter of Roger and Karen Bruhn of Leigh. She is a 2021 Leigh High School graduate and current University of Nebraska-Lincoln Accounting major. She was one of 21 interns working in communities from all over the state as part of the Nebraska Community Foundation "Hometown Intern" program this summer.

The goal of the Hometown Intern program is to help young people and local affiliated funds discover the abundance of their communities, map their assets, and plan for the future.

Legacy Fund members supervised Hoffman's intern experience along with supervisors from the Nebraska Community Foundation. Her work was paid for in part by the Legacy Fund with matching funds provided by NCF.

Cassidy's primary job this summer was to completely redesign the Village of Leigh website (last updated in 2002!)

"I loved getting the opportunity to revamp and update Leigh's website!" Hoffman said. "It's been such a rewarding experience to dig deeper into our community and highlight all the great assets our small town has to offer.

"I worked with a website developer from the Nebraska Public Power District with the intention of creating a place that current residents, prospective residents, and visitors could all find useful information and answers to most questions they have," Hoffman continued. "The website now contains information about necessary permits and licenses, utilities, event space rental, and local businesses and organizations, among other things."

In addition to developing the website, Cassidy assisted in tasks for the Leigh Legacy Fund and attended all Legacy Fund meetings. She also met regularly via Zoom with other interns across the state completing various "missions" and hearing about other intern experiences as part of something akin to a hometown leadership academy.

Be sure to check out the newly designed website at cityofleigh.com and read Cassidy's "Love Letter" to her hometown! ■

LOVE LETTER TO MY HOMETOWN



DEAR LEIGH LEGACY FUND,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to be a hometown intern! I am so grateful for all the experiences I've had throughout the summer that have helped me to grow as a person and value Leigh on a deeper level.

Because of my work both with the Leigh Legacy Fund and the Nebraska Community Foundation, I have a newfound view and appreciation of Leigh. Getting to connect with community members and talk about what makes Leigh so special has reminded me of why I love our community so much.

I've fallen in love with Leigh all over again. Our small community is growing and thriving, and it's taken me moving away for a bit to come to appreciate all that our town has to offer. Working on updating the community's website has allowed me to rediscover all the amazing things around Leigh by highlighting our town's great assets. Our amazing recreation activities, great school, new housing developments, growing businesses, and, most of all, the supportive and driven community members help make our place so incredible. It's crazy how when you live somewhere for so long, you overlook and forget about all the remarkable assets we have.

Significant progress has been made in Leigh in recent years, and I'm excited to see how our small town will continue to grow and prosper in the upcoming years. I am so proud to say that I am from Leigh and am grateful to have completed this internship to see our community through a new lens. I'm so excited that our Fund Advisory Committee participated in this great program for the first time. I hope that it continues and that young people from our community learn that they can make a difference and know how valued, important, and embraced they are. No matter where I end up, I will always call Leigh home.

Thanks again,
Cassidy Hoffman ■

THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING GOING ON IN LEIGH!



We had fun throughout the year participating in smaller ways with numerous community events like Trunk or Treat, the Leigh Community Christmas Festival, and the Colfax County Fair parade (pictured above)!

GENERAL FUND AND ENDOWMENT BALANCES

Beginning Balance,
July 1, 2022

\$268,716.73

Donations/Income/Market Gain:

\$592,127.32

Grant Payouts/Expenditures/Fees/
Market Loss:

\$113,441.61

Ending Balance, December 31, 2023:

\$747,402.44

WITH DEEP APPRECIATION

WE WISH TO THANK all of our donors and contributors! We are still just beginning our journey with Nebraska Community Foundation as they dare us to dream big dreams for our community and surrounding rural area. One thing Nebraska Community Foundation stresses is that gifts come in the form of more than just money. They come in the form of "Time, Talent, and Treasure." One thing our fund has discussed time and time again is that we want the word "grateful" to be synonymous with the Leigh Legacy Fund. We wish to extend our sincerest gratitude for every monetary donation given to our fund, great or small. Just as importantly, we want to thank everyone who helps us in the giving of their time or talent. This type of gift is just as important. **YOU ARE SO APPRECIATED!** There are so many Leigh community heroes, living both close and far away, working to make this a better place for all to live and visit. To all of you, thank you for believing in the importance of community, the power of dreams, and the future of the Village of Leigh! ■



LHS ALUMNI REUNION SUCCESS

FOR THE THIRD YEAR IN A ROW, the Legacy Fund, in coordination with the Leigh Alumni Association, was fortunate to be able to plan and host the Leigh All-Class reunion at the Colfax County Fairgrounds on Sunday, May 28.

All proceeds were used to fund the Leigh Alumni Association scholarships. It was a great way for Legacy members to be of service to the community and get the word out about our organization.

The day's festivities consisted of tours of the new high school given by members of the Leigh Youth Advisory Committee, social time, and dance with the Duffy Belorad Orchestra. A chicken fried steak meal prepared by Park Place. Timberwolf provided a cash bar throughout the evening.

This was followed by a short program featuring the presentation of 2023 scholarship winners, Jessica Hoffman and Mason Whitmore, and the announcement of honored classes. Some Leigh High Trivia was shared, and the members of the honored classes were announced. Special recognition was given to the Class of 1953 guests, Regina Hogendorn and Adolph Stepan.

A special performance by the newly formed Leigh Alumni band under the direction of Kevin Welsch performed as well, with all former Leigh cheerleaders in attendance leading the singing of the Leigh school song. To round out the program, Justine Fischer and Ryan Hillen shared information about the Leigh Legacy Fund and their hope for the future of Leigh, and shared a video.

Special thanks to Chuck and Sue Folken for playing music throughout the evening and the use of their sound equipment!

The Leigh Alumni Association and Leigh Legacy Fund wish to express their sincerest thanks for helping make this event a success! ■



LHS Honored Class of 1963: (Front Row, L to R): Diane (Kafka) Belohrad, Carol (Folken) Motycka, Darlyn (Wolken) Flesher, Veronica (Bausch) Kauk, Vicki Mackenstadt, Jean (Botsch) Korte, Mona (Deichmann) Kubert; Back Row (L to R): Gary Franzen, Daryl Wolken, Allan Motycka, Lawrence Franzen, Mike Inselman, Stan Granatowicz, Bob Barjenbruch

OUR VISION

Leigh is a thriving, caring community committed to enriching the quality of life for present and future generations, preserving our heritage, nurturing our sense of community, and fostering a culture of giving back.

OUR MISSION

LLF is a vehicle for the philanthropy of individuals, businesses, and organizations that desire to make a lasting contribution to the community of Leigh. We act as a catalyst for growth to provide leadership and resources to strengthen our community both now and for future generations.

GIFTS FOR LEIGH 2023 GRADUATES



THE LEGACY FUND gifted all 2022 graduating Leigh High School seniors a Legacy logo tumbler and \$15 in Leigh Bucks. LLF wishes all of this year's smart and talented graduates the best of luck in their future endeavors! We are so proud of them for the way they have represented our community in their high school endeavors, and we hope many of them will someday make the choice to bring their talents home and raise their families in Leigh! ■

NOW ACCEPTING GRANT APPLICATIONS

WE WANT TO REMIND EVERYONE that we can accept grant applications at any time! Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis, and we will contact you about your request within 30 days of a submitted application. If your organization has a project idea that will benefit the community of Leigh, we encourage you to apply for funds using our grant application found on the Nebraska Community Foundation website:

<https://www.nebcommfound.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Leigh-Grant-Application-fillable.pdf> ■



Over the past year, the Leigh Legacy Fund has sought to promote city-wide beautification efforts. A recent grant to the Village of Leigh purchased a replacement set of "Welcome to Leigh" banners for Main Street!

COMMUNITY CLUB DONATES FARM PULL PROCEEDS TO LLF

FOR FOUR YEARS, the Leigh Community Club has hosted a tractor pull at the end of August and donated the proceeds to the Leigh Legacy Fund endowment campaign. The Leigh Legacy members help work the pull and are grateful to the Community Club for donating!

In addition to the Community Club, the Legacy Fund would like to send a big thank you to Kyle Dlouhy, the Leigh Fire & Rescue Departments, Zion Church food stand, and many other countless volunteers for making this event happen this year!

The event also could not have happened without the support of these sponsors: Citizens State Bank, Redstar, Pinnacle Bank, Clarkson Bank, Sobota Seeds, Koch Trucking, Lazy J Land & Cattle, Platte Valley Equipment, Colfax Co Ag Repair, Mullenhoff Attachments, Groteluschen Trucking, Groteluschen Repairs, Mitchell Equipment, Wietfeld Trucking, J&L Automotive, Wietfeld Electric, Kit Held Seed & Chemical/Clay Hills Ag, Settle Transportation, Tom Kabes Farms, Keaton Indra Trucking, Magsamen Repair, and Svehla Custom Spraying.

Thank you to the many in attendance of the free event who made freewill donations to the Legacy Fund! ■



Garrett Schroeder was one of many local pullers that day.

ANOTHER YEAR OF "SENIOR SKIP DAY" MEALS!



Members of the Leigh Kindergarten class sang Christmas songs at the December "Senior Skip Day" meals as entertainment.

THIS IS THE THIRD YEAR the Legacy Fund has coordinated "Senior Skip Day" meals. The meals are free of charge to anyone 65 or older who lives in Leigh or is a "friend of Leigh." They are held each third Thursday of the month at 11:30 am in the Zion Church basement. Each month, a Leigh organization or business sponsors a meal and after-dinner entertainment to promote food, fun, and fellowship.

The meals in 2023 were sponsored by the Leigh Legacy Fund, Leigh Community Club, St. John's Lutheran Church, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Zion Lutheran Church, St. Mary's Catholic Church, and Citizens State Bank. Thrivent Funds were also used for supplies.

Leigh Community Schools even got in on the fun, as the Culinary Arts students prepared most of the months' meals! The class was given a menu by the group hosting, and the kids were able to create shopping lists, and prep and prepare the meals for a great learning experience! The Leigh elementary students were able to come sing for one of the month's entertainment. Other musical entertainment has been provided as well as bingo and cards.

Over 40 people are served each month between those who eat at Zion and those who have the meals delivered to their house! Be sure to look for updates in the Leigh World newspaper and the Leigh Legacy Fund Facebook page. ■

OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS

July 2022–December 2023

ENDOWMENT CHALLENGE CONTRIBUTORS

Clancy & A'anna Ahrens
Brad & Sandra (Hoff) Angle
Jeff Bachman
Belohrad Family
Chris & Deb (Ternus) Bessler
Harold Brown
Corrine Brown
Dustin & Melissa Brabec
Heath & Michele Clausen
Adam & Ann Cerv
Kyle & Tara Dlouhy
Pat & Diana Dowling
(in memory of Dennis
Schroeder)
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Douglas Hobel
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Veronica (Bausch) Kauk – *In
memory of Doyle Kauk*
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Brent & Kacy Wietfeld
Shawn & Julie Wills
Vicki Wilke
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BUSINESSES

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Citizens State Bank
Clarkson Bank
Cooperative Supply
Granville Custom Homes
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(Mike & Sheryl Johnson)
Mitchell Equipment
Pinnacle Bank Columbus
Pinnacle Bank Schuyler
Premier Glassworks LLC (Logan
& Paige Ritz)
Stealth Broadband
Wietfeld Electric

ORGANIZATIONS

Leigh Community Club
Leigh Youth Advisory Committee

MEMORIAL AND OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

Ronald & Ruth Asche
Bethany United Methodist
Church
Dustin & Melissa Brabec
Heath & Michele Clausen
Eric Davis
Travis & Jennifer Dicke
Family of Calvin Dietrich
Kyle & Tara Dlouhy
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Women of the ELCA St. John's
Lutheran
Landon & Michkayla Wietfeld
Vicki Wilke

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Gordon Asche
Arlen Beck
Roland Beck
Craig Bellinghauser
Bernice Busteed
Paulette (Kudrna) Comer
Calvin Dietrich
Rhonda Estdad
Mark Foltz
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