

CONNECTIONS



Through Nebraska City Community Foundation Fund's grant to the Pioneer Pride Time class, local middle schoolers are learning to plant and nurture a garden while also building an understanding of the larger ecological systems they are supporting in the process.

Investing in People. Investing in the Future.

Since 1999, Nebraska City Community Foundation Fund has been led and nurtured by dedicated volunteers that share a deep love for their community. These individuals are forever changing the future of their place. But because they are humble Nebraskans, you probably won't hear them talk about their long list of accomplishments or the legacy they are building for future generations of Nebraska Citizens. Here are just a few of the Fund's many achievements:

In total, NCCFF's assets have grown to an impressive \$2.4 million. To date, the Fund has reinvested \$5.6 million into the community it serves, with each grant aimed at its core mission: investing in people.

NCCFF and its donors have supported 38 community projects, organizations

and accounts through grantmaking. Among them the dog park, the skate park, the science fair, the Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Corporation, local museums, Main Street development, youth sports, and more.

Since 2001, the Fund has awarded 62 non-traditional scholarships to adult learners. This is a real difference maker to the dozens of Nebraska Citizens balancing career and family while furthering their education and opportunities.

NCCFF's completion of an ambitious challenge grant opportunity in recent years resulted in an enormous increase to Nebraska City's unrestricted endowment. That account now tops \$1.1 million with approximately \$45,000 in annual earnings to be invested back into the community and its people every year.

Through planned gifts, NCCFF is keeping considerable wealth in Nebraska City where it was made and accumulated. A good many of those planned gifts were made by members of the Fund Advisory Committee themselves.

But NCCFF's most important and notable contribution to the community is its fervent commitment to investing in Nebraska City's most precious resource—its people, particularly youth.

Every year, NCCFF gives its youth advisory committee control of 20 percent of its unrestricted endowment payout—at about \$9,000 annually, that's real money. Not only is it bringing about positive results through innovative philanthropic projects, it is sending a strong message to young people—we value your opinion, we want you here. ■

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An Update on Our Progress

Eighteen months into Nebraska Community Foundation's Strategic Framework, which spans fiscal years 2019 through 2023, we are making significant progress on our initiatives centered on endowment building, people attraction, and high impact grantmaking. Among the goals providing a compass for our work over the next several years is: **Affiliated Funds have the capacity, competence and confidence to inspire, lead and support progress in their place.** We are particularly proud of the momentum building toward this objective.



Jeff Yost, NCF
President and CEO

■ In FY 2019, NCF hosted 61 educational events with 803 Fund Advisory Committee members in attendance. In just the first half of FY 2020, we have already hosted 47 events with participation from 566 FAC members and 1,286 community representatives!

■ In the first half of FY 2020 alone, NCF has facilitated 96 peer mentor activities.

■ In just 10 years, community endowments have more than quadrupled! Community-based affiliated fund endowments now total \$104.7 million with \$51.4 million in unrestricted endowments and capacity ever-growing.

Our hope is that NCF's value to our affiliated funds continues to grow and evolve—as we welcome team members that offer new knowledge and skills to our communities and volunteers; as our network becomes more connected, competent and confident; and as the movement to

build a Greater Nebraska spreads and multiplies.

How can NCF better support progress in **your** place? What are the services, support and expertise that would further your community-building mission? Email me at jeffyost@nebcommfound.org. We want to hear from you.

Meet our New Database Specialist!

Nebraska Community Foundation welcomes Liz Petrzilka to our talented team of professionals committed to building stronger communities and a Greater Nebraska.

A Saunders County native, Liz obtained her Bachelor of Psychology from the University of Nebraska.

An internship at the University of Nebraska Foundation marked the beginning of a career in the nonprofit sector honing her skills in donor prospect research, data integrity, and information management. She then



spent several years with the Tabitha Foundation where she implemented strategies for database management, donor relations, gift processing, and prospect research.

At Nebraska Community Foundation, Liz's primary role as Database Specialist will be developing an expansive donor database that furthers the work of 236 affiliated funds serving 260 Nebraska communities. Liz says she is excited to learn more about Nebraska and all the amazing things happening in communities throughout the state.

NCF Board Welcomes Two New Members

Nebraska Community Foundation is pleased to welcome two exceptional individuals to serve on our statewide board of directors.



Cindy Huff of McCook is a retired school superintendent after 32 years of service to public schools in central and southwest Nebraska. Cindy's career included

positions as a teacher, coach, principal, and superintendent. She continues her connection to public education through her affiliation with the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association as an educational consultant, conducting superintendent searches and Board of Education development opportunities.

In addition to her service on the board of Nebraska Community Foundation, Cindy will continue to serve as volunteer chair of NCF's affiliated fund, the McCook Community Foundation Fund.



Originally from Nebraska City, **John Miyoshi** of Wahoo is a retired conservation manager. John taught high school vocational agriculture and was later a

University of Nebraska agricultural extension agent. He spent the last 33 years of his career leading the Lower Platte North Natural Resources District.

He is president of the Wahoo Lions Club and Fremont Rod and Gun Club, an active member of Wahoo Lodge #59 Ancient and Free and Accepted Masons, and a member of the Omaha Scottish Rite. He is also an active leader in preservation and relocation of Japanese Hall from downtown Scottsbluff to the Legacy of the Plains Museum in Gering. ■

Hometown Internships

Nebraska has 58,000 unfilled jobs—people attraction is our top priority and to make progress, we must cultivate relationships with young adults who already have a connection to our hometowns.

NCF's board of directors is partnering with affiliated funds to offer college students a paid internship to serve their hometown communities during their summer break. The NCF board is offering up to 10 challenge grants of \$1,500 to \$3,000 to be matched one-to-one. Many affiliated funds are already taking advantage of this opportunity. Reach out to your affiliated fund development coordinator NOW if you wish to host an intern in your community!

NEBRASKA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
2020 ANNUAL CELEBRATION
TRAINING EXPO BANQUET

Dreams Welcome

NCF Celebrates 25 Years



Nebraska Community Foundation celebrated 25 years of building stronger communities and a Greater Nebraska in November with the biggest event in its history. The 2019 Annual Celebration, which included an all-day volunteer training and evening banquet, drew over 300 trainees representing 138 Nebraska communities, 640 guests registered for the evening meal, and support from a record breaking 84 event sponsors.

The all-day event took place at York's Holthus Convention Center and featured 15 training sessions led by volunteer community leaders, aimed at building the capacity, competence and confidence to inspire, lead and support progress in their places. Topics ranged from fundraising, to embracing diversity, engaging youth and more.

The arts were integrated into many aspects of the celebration, including multiple sessions centered on the arts as a community and economic development tool. Two live performances from *The Dream Switch* were presented by an all-Nebraska ensemble of musicians. Artist Greg Gersch also created impressive murals using feedback from volunteers about their dreams for the future. ■

2020 ANNUAL CELEBRATION
TRAINING EXPO BANQUET
November 12, 2020 | McCook, NE

Save the Date

Meet us in McCook for NCF's biggest event of the year when hundreds of community builders from across the state gather to share ideas, learn from one another, and work together to achieve their dreams!

In 2020 we set our sights on making Greater Nebraska a place where everyone belongs. Bring your biggest passions and your brightest ambitions. All dreams are welcome here!

AFFILIATED FUND UPDATES



Jaycie Stout and Zakia Dawe care for new baby dolls that will alert the students when they need to be fed, burped, rocked, or have their diapers changed.

Calamus Area Community Fund's Weverka Endowment enhances teaching and learning in Burwell Public Schools. Health and PE teacher Marcie Smith used the grants she received to purchase four new "baby dolls" to teach 10th grade students about the rigors of parenting. Each doll is equipped with a computer chip that tracks when it is fed, changed, and the amount of time it is cared for when it is crying during the three days and two nights it stays with each student. Ms. Smith also used grant money to purchase new adult and baby CPR dolls to help her freshman students obtain CPR certification. ■

Welcome **Lynch Area Future Fund!** This energetic group of new volunteers in north-central Nebraska joined NCF in November 2019 and have their sights set on bringing their community on board to build an unrestricted endowment. In December the Fund Advisory Committee co-sponsored the community's very successful "Christmas in the Valley" celebration, drawing 245 people. A subsequent event in February drew another packed house for a roast beef dinner and news about the campaign that has already raised \$20,000. ■

In February, citizens learned about Nebraska Community Foundation, their new Lynch Area Future Fund, and plans for moving their park and building a splash pad.



Mason Hagan, an eighth grader at Rock County Schools, practices shielded metal arc welding. There are 24 students enrolled in the two classes offered this semester.

Rock County Community Fund joined with Farm Credit Service's Working Here Fund, FFA, and an individual donor to purchase new equipment that significantly expands shop courses at Rock County Schools. Students are now able to enroll in welding, power structure, and technical systems courses previously not offered. Ag/FFA educator Ann Dvorak said that it is much easier to approach the school for additional funding when philanthropy covers half the cost of needed upgrades. "There is a definite shortage of electricians, welders, and other tradespeople," she said. Dvorak and her colleague Kara Sybrant are giving students experience to help fill the gap. ■



Students and community members have access to the new wellness center built and equipped through fundraising efforts spearheaded by Eustis Area Community Foundation Fund.

Eustis Area Community Foundation Fund is nearing the completion of a multi-year fundraising effort to build and equip a 3,500 square-foot, state-of-the-art wellness center open to both Eustis-Farnam students and community members. A citizen survey in 2014 revealed the need for a shared facility. More than \$600,000 has been raised for the center, which includes a flat-surface walking track, an open area for fitness classes, a weight room and seven pieces of stationary cardio equipment. The Fund's E-Unit youth committee helped with fundraising and was awarded a \$7,500 grant from an anonymous NCF donor. ■



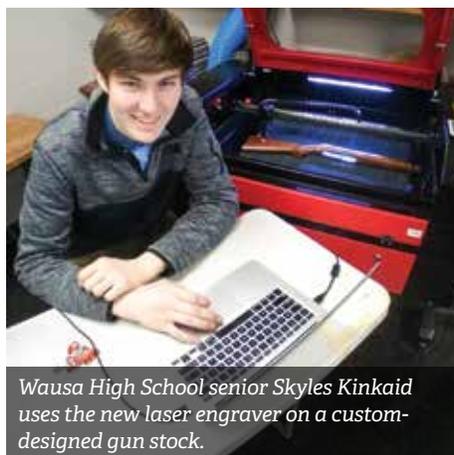
Client advocate MaryLynn Ballard meets with Sandy Castro and her daughters during a parenting counseling session sponsored in part by O'Neill Community Foundation Fund.

O'Neill Community Foundation Fund

is investing in a relatively young organization addressing a critical need. A \$2,000 grant will help with the Positive Partners in Parenting program offered through Beginnings Pregnancy Resource Center, which provides a wide variety of free and confidential services to the community.

Director Mandy Chavez says the program develops good parenting skills with tools to help build successful families. This includes taking responsibility for our actions and attitudes. The program helps with intervention when needed, but is valuable for even the most stable families, which are key to building a healthy, positive community. ■

Friend Area Fund and other local donors matched a grant by an NCF anonymous donor to create a LEGO robotics makerspace located in an unused area of the local hospital. The plan calls for structured classes for 10 to 15 students twice per month, and other non-formal class times when the equipment is available for students to explore on their own. Each student generally has access to their own computer and LEGO Mindstorms robot kit. "The Friend Historical Society had offered a few training sessions over the last year or so," said Eric Black. "When I moved to town, I asked them if they would be interested in expanding it. I have a degree in electrical engineering and taught robotics part-time as a missionary in Nigeria. It didn't take long to gain momentum." ■



Wausa High School senior Skyles Kinkaid uses the new laser engraver on a custom-designed gun stock.

Wausa Community Foundation Fund recently granted \$9,000 to Wausa Public Schools to give students access to cutting-edge technology. The grant was used to purchase four computers and a laser engraver for the Industrial Technology program. The school also received a grant from ESU 1 to purchase a 3-D printer. Instructor Bob Evans said the new equipment will help his students develop the math, science, technical skills, and critical thinking to prepare them for high-demand careers in the future. "Small towns and major cities can never have too many problem-solvers," said Evans. ■



Turning Up Dreams

Hometowns across Nebraska are "turning up their dream switch" through a brand-new song cycle co-produced by Blixt Locally Grown and Nebraska Community Foundation celebrating sense of place, belonging, and the joy of blooming where you're planted. *The Dream Switch* is an original community concert event featuring talented Nebraskans including Becky Boesen (lyrics), David von Kampen (music), and rising star Andrea von Kampen (vocals).

Beyond a moving live performance, The Dream Switch Project provides countless opportunities for meaningful community engagement and a special "act two" candid community conversation about welcoming and belonging in our hometowns. Visit www.nebcommfound.org/dreamswitch to learn more and find out how to bring *The Dream Switch* to your community in 2020.



Tori Bresson, left, and Aniston Meints, both age 10, create LEGO robots at a recent workshop for elementary students in Friend.



COMMUNITY IMPACT

Homegrown Challenge Grants on the Rise

Challenge grants are not new to NCF communities, but they are becoming much more popular as communities are opting to look closer to home for matching grants offered by a diverse set of locally connected donors.

Currently, 12 NCF affiliated funds are involved in or have recently completed challenge grants ranging from \$5,000

to \$200,000. If all are completed successfully, more than \$2 million will be added to the unrestricted endowments in Axtell, Bertrand, Byron, Chappell, Chester, Crawford, Keya Paha County, McCook, Neligh, Overton, and Perkins and Seward Counties.

In August 2019, Perkins County Community Foundation Fund Advisory

Committee members “went public” with their challenge grant campaign goal to raise \$100,000 for a \$50,000 match from an anonymous local donor. By year’s end they had passed their original goal and added \$186,000 to their unrestricted endowment. Treasurer Michelle Ross explained how she approached making the ask. “I went door to door and made phone calls. I’ve been living and working in this community all my life, so I know everyone!” High school alumni were also an important target for fundraising. Michelle said a former basketball coach was very successful in reaching out to his players.

On January 1, PCCFF chair Becky Uehling proudly announced the names of all the 90 donors to the campaign, and later in the month mini celebrations were held in the Perkins County communities of Grant, Madrid, Elsie, and Venango. Nice way to spread the love! ■



The Perkins Community Foundation “went public” with its challenge grant campaign in August 2019. Pictured left to right, front: Kim Bishop, Michelle Ross, Becky Uehling, Diana Maupin. Back: Kris Long, Valerie Foster, Janet Lagler, Dennis Demmel, Angela Gloy, Tana Miller, Barb Tines. Not pictured: Jeff Wallin.

A Game Changer for Ralston

A piano teacher’s generosity and love for her community is forever changing the landscape of downtown Ralston.

Members of the Ralston Community Foundation Fund have been entrusted with a \$7.5 million gift from the late LaDonna Johnson that will provide momentum to fuel the community’s longtime economic development vision, better known as the Hinge Project.

The Hinge Project will work to establish a distinct identity for the community located just nine miles southwest of Omaha. The idea came out of the city’s 10-year comprehensive plan and will include strategies to create a more vibrant and attractive downtown like filling empty businesses, creating more housing options and mixed-use developments, entertainment and

dining areas, and new amenities for both Ralston residents and visitors to the community.

In February, community leaders involved with the Hinge Project, members of the Ralston Community Foundation Fund Advisory Committee, and HDR (the engineering company contracted for the project) hosted a vision workshop which invited Ralston residents to voice their thoughts on the attractions and amenities that could energize downtown. Many ideas emerged from that meeting that will inform future decisions about green spaces, parks, streetscapes and other features.

Though LaDonna is no longer living, project leaders are taking their responsibility to uphold her intentions and legacy very seriously.



LaDonna Johnson’s belief in her hometown is providing momentum for Ralston’s longtime dream to revitalize its downtown.

“LaDonna’s wishes are at the top of mind in every conversation we have about the Hinge Project,” said Ralston city administrator, Rick Hoppe.

“LaDonna’s legacy will live on forever through her generosity and her belief in the future of Ralston,” said Bill Haas, FAC chair. “This is a gamechanger for our community.” ■

Elis Endowment Earnings Fuel Economies

An endowed bequest of \$2.3 million established by a bachelor farmer in 2008 has grown to \$5,263,111—more than twice the amount of the original gift. Yet over the past decade, endowment earnings of nearly \$1.8 million have been used to support entrepreneurship, leadership, and people attraction in Holt County and in the Norfolk area.

Mr. Rudolph Elis chose to benefit these communities because he admired how they were working to grow and stay vibrant. Over the past 10 years, more than 40 grants have supported programs in business coaching and succession planning, career academies in the public schools, entrepreneurship camps for middle schools, community visioning, strategic planning, and much more.

Rudy Elis was seldom seen in anything but his overalls and a flannel shirt, but he was a shrewd investor. He was not into giving hand-outs; he was interested

in giving ambitious people a hand up. Grants made to organizations such as Holt County Economic Development, an NCF affiliated fund, are a perfect match for Mr. Elis's charitable intentions. Now in its 11th year, HCED has been instrumental in these key economic development achievements:

- 214 new business starts, 56 expansions, and 31 business successions
- More than 600 jobs created and more than 230 retained
- Nearly 700 individuals and families have moved to Holt County

And for the first time in decades, population has begun to stabilize.

In the growing community of Norfolk, the Elis endowment grants are helping to meet workforce needs by preparing students for careers in agriculture, construction, drafting, health sciences,

welding, and automotive and business technologies.

NCF salutes our friends who, like Rudy Elis, have chosen to believe in the future of Greater Nebraska by including their communities in their estate plans. Their legacies will enrich and empower generations to come. ■



Holt County Economic Development hosted a job fair in February with 39 businesses and organizations participating, and 75 job seekers making many new connections.

Charitable IRA Rollover: A Tax-Wise Giving Option

With recent changes in our tax laws, some donors are unsure of the wisest ways to support their community. NCF has recommended the Charitable IRA Rollover to many generous Nebraskans.

Gene and Rose Wissenburg of Newman Grove are turning to the very popular Charitable IRA Rollover to fulfill their commitments to church and hometown. Gene has served on the Newman Grove Community Foundation Fund Advisory Committee “off and on” for 10 years.

“Since the standard deduction was increased a couple years ago, making an outright cash contribution did not provide the tax benefits that it used to. However, both my wife and I are over the age of 70½, so we can take advantage of using the Charitable IRA Rollover,” Gene said.

This method allows a donor to make an IRA distribution directly to charity, without claiming the income, thus minimizing the overall income taxes the donor owes in a particular year.

What is the SECURE Act?

Provisions of the SECURE Act took effect on January 1, 2020. It made several changes to qualified retirement plans that impact charitable giving.

Major changes include increasing the age for Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) from IRAs to 72. However, the Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) minimum age remains unchanged at 70½. Therefore, IRA owners over age 70½ may still transfer up to \$100,000 each year to qualified charities. This transfer may fulfill all or part of a required distribution.

SECURE Act

Here are major points of the new act:

- No change in Qualified Charitable Distributions (Charitable IRA Rollovers)

- Pushes back Required Minimum Distribution from age 70½ to age 72
- Eliminates “Stretch” IRA provisions. Now, most non-spouse inheritors of IRAs must take the full distribution within 10 years. Some exceptions include minor children and persons who are chronically ill or disabled.

If you have questions on how the SECURE Act may impact your charitable giving, contact Emily Sulzle or Jim Gustafson in NCF's Office of Gift Planning by calling 402.323.7330 or email info@nebcommfound.org. ■

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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 are making a home in Greater Nebraska.



Returner Denise Davis recently took the steps to make a planned gift to her hometown, a symbol of her love for her community and the central role it has played in her family.

Nebraska City has been like another family member to the Davises. Spend a few minutes with Denise Davis, the eldest daughter of Bill and the late Betty Davis, and it is soon apparent—community activism is in her DNA.

Betty and Bill were originally newcomers to Nebraska City. Denise said a desire to raise their family in a small town was what prompted the newlyweds to leave Omaha. Upon arriving in Nebraska City, it didn't take long for Betty and Bill to plug into their new community and get involved—he served as the city and county attorney, was a member of the Optimist Club, Rotary and the

Nebraska City Community Foundation Fund. She was a substitute teacher and gave generously of her time and talent to their church and countless children's activities. Denise calls her parents "model citizens without realizing it."

Though she loved her hometown, Denise was also an avid learner fascinated by faraway places. In high school, she began taking Spanish classes, a skill that would open her up to a world of opportunities starting with living abroad in Spain for 10 years, a service-learning project in Nicaragua, and eventually three years in Paraguay as a Peace Corps volunteer. Her years away from Nebraska City also involved earning an MS in Library and Information Science and a decade spent working at Simmons College in Boston.

As her parents advanced in age, it became apparent that the time was right to return to her beloved hometown. Like her father, Denise was soon invited to serve on the Fund Advisory Committee of the Nebraska City Community Foundation

Fund. Today she is a reference librarian at the Morton-James Public Library where she has daily opportunities to use her Spanish skills to assist and communicate with the community's growing Latino population.

Denise sees her role in the community as that of a bridge builder. She believes diversity is an integral element of strong communities and like her parents, strives to make Nebraska City as welcoming to all newcomers as the community they discovered decades ago.

In early 2020, Betty Davis passed away. At a service honoring her life, Denise told a room full of friends, family, and fellow Nebraska Citians about the commitment of her parents to NCCFF's mission of welcoming and investing in people. "I can't imagine growing up anywhere else, and as an adult, I've been grateful to have a place like Nebraska City to come home to. [Dad] and Mom created solid roots for us here . . . it's at the heart of our family tree." ■