

# CONNECTIONS



## The Momentum that's Building a Movement

Nothing's impossible in Greater Nebraska.

By the end of 2020, Nebraska Community Foundation affiliated funds in Howells, Columbus, Imperial, Keith County, and Stuart had each met a \$500,000 fundraising goal, securing a \$250,000 challenge grant. That \$750,000 went straight into each affiliated fund's unrestricted community endowment—a savings account that grows forever and provides perpetual annual payout offering volunteers the ability to award locally-controlled grants for community betterment.

"I am so grateful and proud of the work put in by our campaign committee members. They were charged with a monumental task, and they represented the Future Fund well in seeing that this goal was met," said Columbus Area Future Fund Advisory Committee Chair, Dee Hanson, "The Future Fund is ready and excited to start building relationships and granting these funds to worthy causes in our community."

Nine years ago, four Nebraska Community Foundation affiliated funds embarked on a journey to unleash the abundance in their hometowns. McCook Community Foundation Fund, Nebraska City Community Foundation Fund, Norfolk Area Community Foundation Fund, and Shickley Community Foundation Fund participated in the inaugural round of NCF's Building Community Capacity in Rural Nebraska initiative, a partnership with The Sherwood Foundation and Peter Kiewit Foundation.



*Volunteers from across the state gathered in 2019 for NCF's annual training event—just one of many ways the NCF network builds skills, capacity, and powerful relationships.*

In round two, Brown County, Pender, Plattsmouth, and Valley County joined in learning much about themselves and their communities in the process.

"We know we can finally really Turn Up the Dream Switch," said Leanne Maxwell, chair of the Brown County Community Foundation Fund. "Instead of only being able to consider the traditional grants, we can now really believe in much bigger grant possibilities. We know we can collaborate with other individuals and organizations to work toward and complete projects that were once unattainable. For instance, a new childcare center hopefully will someday be a reality, not just a dream."

Building Community Capacity is just one indicator of the NCF network's momentum. There are hundreds of communities using philanthropy and local generosity to transform their hometowns and the future of our state. NCF and NCF affiliated funds experienced a strong six months leading

up to December 31, 2020. Charitable gifts totaled nearly \$15 million including gifts of \$100,000 or more to 20 different affiliated funds. NCF total assets are now \$211 million, triple the amount 10 years ago. Community unrestricted endowments now total \$61 million, a five-fold increase since 2012. Most importantly, at least \$30 million is being reinvested in Nebraska hometowns every year.

For years, Nebraska Community Foundation's network of volunteers gathered in community centers and assembly rooms, putting their heads together to foster a mindset of abundance. They identified collective strengths and then drafted blueprints to harness them. Their passion for their hometowns inspired. Soon, their friends, family and neighbors joined in. When regular people realize they can effect change in their communities, anything is possible. The future is bright, and together we're going to go further, faster. ■

# INSIDE NCF

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## Unleashing Active Hope

*"We are only limited by what we can visualize."*

*"Start pressing play on your dreams."*

*"Anyone can be a philanthropist."*

These capture only a sliver of the inspiration shared during Dreams Welcome Week—NCF's first-ever all-virtual Annual Celebration and Training. Over the course of four days in November we hosted eleven training sessions centered on the wisdom of 123 peer mentors across the state. Hundreds of ambitious Nebraskans convened online for rejuvenating messages, energizing connections, and powerful information for their hometown development toolbelts.

Dreams Welcome Week was different from every previous annual gathering, but just like any other year, I walked away recharged and reaffirmed in the importance of this work and the remarkable dedication of this network to the future of Greater Nebraska.

While much about the future still remains unclear, Nebraska Community Foundation staff along with dozens of generous volunteers in southwest Nebraska are optimistic that we will hold our 2021 Annual Celebration

in-person in McCook on Thursday, November 18.

The theme is **Unleash Active Hope**—something we desperately need in times of change and uncertainty. If you're not yet familiar with the concept, active hope is different from regular hope. Hope is passive. Hope is sitting back and wishing that things were better. Active hope is proactive. It's seizing opportunities that come our way and manifesting new ones. Active hope means creating your own destiny.



Jeff Yost, NCF  
President and CEO

Active hope is an asset the NCF network has in spades and it's transforming the future of our places for the better. Currently, there are 80 community-based affiliated funds building unrestricted endowments. Of those, 46 have an annual payout of over \$10,000 to grant to projects, programs, and causes that are making their places even better. It took lots of active hope to build these resources and even more to envision a brighter future.

So please mark your calendar and join us in cultivating active hope for the return of a safe in-person event with our closest friends, advocates, collaborators, and fellow Nebraskans. We look forward to seeing you there! ■

A graphic for the Nebraska Community Foundation's Annual Celebration and Training. On the left, the text "Unleash ACTIVE HOPE" is displayed in a mix of red and white fonts, with a stylized sunburst graphic below it. On the right, the text "NEBRASKA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION'S Annual Celebration AND TRAINING" is shown in white, with a silhouette of a city skyline below it. At the bottom, it says "MCCOOK • NOVEMBER 18, 2021 MCCOOK COMMUNITY COLLEGE". The background is a gradient of red and orange.

## NCF Welcomes New Board Members

Five Nebraskans who are wholeheartedly committed to our community-building mission joined Nebraska Community Foundation's statewide Board of Directors in November 2020.



**Jeffrey Gerhart** is chairman of the Bank of Newman Grove and president of Gerhart Insurance Agency. He is

a fourth-generation Nebraskan and has served on the Newman Grove Community Foundation Fund, an affiliated fund of NCF, since its beginning. He has also served in the leadership of the Nebraska Independent Bankers Association, the Independent Community Bankers of America, and the Federal Reserve Board of Kansas City board of directors.

extension roles in Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Indiana. Hibberd retired in 2020 following eight years of service as Dean and Director of Nebraska Extension. He has served Cooperative Extension regionally and nationally and was a nine-year member of the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy, the national governing board of the Cooperative Extension Section.



**Adam Pavelka** of Hastings is a real estate broker and farm manager with Agri Affiliates, Inc. He grew up on a farm near Blue Hill

where he remains active in his family's operation. Pavelka is a past president of the Prairie Loft Center for Outdoor and Agricultural Education and serves the Adams Central FFA Alumni as treasurer. He also served two recent terms on the Mary Lanning Health Care Foundation Board and is a current board member of the Great Plains Federal Tax Institute.



**Megan Helberg** grew up on a ranch in the Sandhills of Loup County. She has been a member of her local NCF affiliated fund,

the Calamus Area Community Fund, for six years. She teaches secondary English at Burwell Public School. Holocaust and genocide education is a passion for Helberg and she feels strongly about providing opportunities for her students that include glimpses into various cultures and ways of life. In 2020, Helberg received the prestigious honor of being named Nebraska Teacher of the Year.



**Kent Warneke** worked 37 years in the newspaper business, including more than 30 as the Editor and Vice President of the

Norfolk Daily News. He now serves as director of grants and contracts at Northeast Community College in Norfolk. He serves on the board of directors of the Nebraska Press Association, the Nebraska District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Faith Regional Health Services in Norfolk, and the Norfolk Area Chamber of Commerce. ■



**Dr. Chuck Hibberd** grew up in Cozad and Lexington. His 38-year career focused on teaching, research, and

### Six Perks of Affiliation

Are you fully utilizing the benefits your NCF affiliation provides?

**1. Our full-service marketing department** is available to assist with everything from developing a new trifold brochure to preparing for a media interview.

**2. Exclusive funding opportunities** like the Hometown Interns program, Youth Engagement Grants, and Connecting Elders are available only to members of the NCF network.

**3. Peer mentor connections** bring together fellow ambitious Nebraskans to talk about challenges they've encountered and opportunities they've seized.

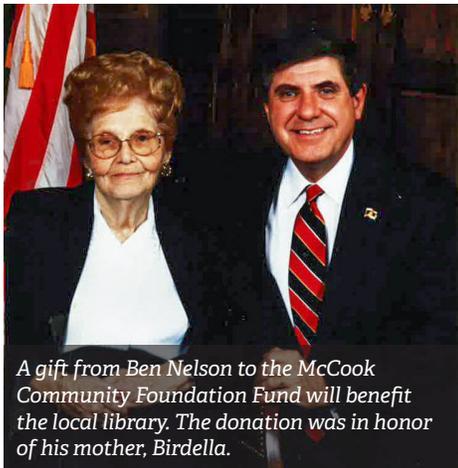
**4. Assistance with complex and planned gifts** allows affiliated funds to receive a huge variety of charitable contributions—real estate, grain, livestock, stocks, bonds, retirement assets, life insurance, even tangible property.

**5. Our top-notch credentials** put us in compliance with national Standards for U.S. Community Foundations as established by the Council on Foundations. When donors ask about NCF's financial management, investment, and grantmaking practices, you can say with confidence that they meet the very highest benchmarks and most stringent requirements.

**6. Our vast education and training offerings** will help you and fellow FAC members hone your abilities in fundraising, leadership development, and much more.

*Reach out to your Affiliated Fund Development Coordinator if you would like more information on how your fund can more fully take advantage of the benefits your NCF affiliation offers.*

# AFFILIATED FUND UPDATES



A gift from Ben Nelson to the McCook Community Foundation Fund will benefit the local library. The donation was in honor of his mother, Birdella.

**McCook Community Foundation Fund** received a generous gift from native son U.S. Sen. Ben Nelson to honor his mother while assisting the local library in growth to meet the demands of the future.

Nelson donated \$500,000 to kickstart the Birdella Nelson Endowment for the Library account within McCook Community Foundation Fund. Named after Nelson's mother, the endowment's payout—expected to exceed \$20,000 within its first year—will fund programs, activities, and technology to assist the McCook Public Library in achieving a margin of excellence for years to come. ■

**Crofton Community Foundation Fund** will be fueling dreams for years to come thanks to a generous gift from a family with local ties. The family of Merle Guenther gifted the fund \$1 million in fall 2020 through a donor-advised fund in his name. Half of the gift went to the fund's unrestricted endowment, and \$400,000 will be used to help the community's effort to build a new pool.

"The endowment isn't the foundation's, it's the community's," said CCF Advisory Committee Chair Jon Zavادل. "It's not going to be there just for this year, it's going to be there for years to come." ■



Merle Guenther and his sister Twila pose for a photo at their family's Crofton farm in 1938. The family recently made a \$1 million gift to the Crofton Community Foundation Fund. (Courtesy Photo)



Huxley, a 9-month-old goldendoodle, recently arrived at Arcadia Public Schools as a therapy dog to benefit students, teachers, and the community.

**Valley County Community Foundation Fund** helped Arcadia Public Schools welcome a furry friend to the halls earlier this year, thanks to the Bridging the Learning Gap funding opportunity. Huxley, a goldendoodle, will serve as a therapy dog for the school and the community.

Huxley will be trained by Agricultural Educator Chrisinda Scheideler and her animal science students, working with a professional dog trainer.

Once Huxley has completed his training, he will be used in the classroom as a reading buddy, in behavior intervention, and to help students with self-esteem, responsibility, and self-discipline. ■



The Tri-County Bank presents a \$7,500 check to the Atkinson Community Foundation Fund.

NCF affiliated funds in **Stuart, Atkinson, Rock County, and O'Neill** each received generous gifts from The Tri-County Bank. In celebration of its 75th anniversary, the bank presented each of the funds with a \$7,500 check.

With its motto of "Building Your Future . . . Together," TCB's donation to each community's unrestricted endowment account will benefit future growth.

TCB looks forward to serving the area for the next 75 years, just as these contributions will serve the communities of Stuart, Atkinson, Rock County, and O'Neill for years to come. ■



Local students made their own designs for a new \$4 million community center in Laurel, which will be considered for the architects' final design.

**Laurel Area Community Foundation Fund** empowered local high school students to get involved in their community's future.

Laurel-Concord-Coleridge Schools teacher Pat Harrington recognized an opportunity for students in his Drafting and Design class. With the support of LCC administration and guidance from the Laurel Community Center Committee,

Harrington stood before his class and delivered their next assignment: design Laurel's new community center.

"We were impressed with the ideas the students came up with," said FAC member Jim Recob. "We used their design as our rough draft for the architects, who agreed it's a great basis for our community center and look forward to working with the students." ■

**Greater Waverly Area Foundation Fund** advisory committee members gave Waverly High School athletes and fans something to cheer about when they granted \$119,000 to District 145 for stadium enhancements.

The money will be used toward a new track and a turf field at the high school, an effort the community has worked on for the past few years.

"We are grateful for the donations made by so many caring individuals, families and businesses for our stadium project," said Superintendent Cory Worrell. "This upgrade to our track and field will benefit students, athletes, and community members for years to come." ■



A grant from Sidney Community Donor-Advised Fund brought an Anatomage table equipped with interactive 3D technology to Sidney High School.

**The Sidney Community Donor-Advised Fund** expanded opportunities for Sidney High School students involved in the Career Pathways program with a \$100,000 grant.

The grant will provide Sidney Public Schools with the resources to create a dedicated agriculture pathway, which involves the hiring of a new full-time certified teacher; new classes including Intro to Agriculture, Agri-Business, Animal Science, and Plant Science; textbooks and supplies; the purchase of a 3D virtual dissection table; and increased leadership opportunities through the FFA. ■



Born in 1929 at her parents' farm home, Jeanette Major-Nix always felt a fondness for her hometown. Her \$1.2 million estate gift to the Future of Decatur Foundation Fund will create positive change for generations to come.

**The Future of Decatur Foundation Fund** received a major gift from a former resident this year, ensuring her affection for her hometown is felt forever. Jeanette Major-Nix's \$1.2 million estate gift will be a boon for the Decatur fund. The fund advisory committee says Major-Nix's gift will be used to further and foment local recreation projects that will make the community more vibrant and attractive. Today, Major-Nix's nephew, Larry Murphy, proudly serves on that committee.

"She was always a supporter of the town," Murphy said. "She wanted Decatur to prosper and do better." ■

Join us in welcoming **Lodgepole Community Fund** and **Plainview Brunswick Community Fund** to the NCF network! Volunteers in Lodgepole joined the network in May 2020, and the Plainview Brunswick Community Fund is the newest community-based affiliated fund to join NCF with their February 2021 establishment. ■



Greater Waverly Area Foundation Fund recently made a gift to further District 145's efforts to renovate athletic facilities.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WAVERLY NEWS

# COMMUNITY IMPACT

## Honoring Hometown Legacies

Nebraska Community Foundation's Hometown Legacy Society is our way to celebrate and say thank you to generous donors with future gift provisions through estate plans that benefit our Nebraska communities.

The following individuals, couples, and families have joined the nearly 200 members of the Hometown Legacy Society in making a planned gift to their community between July 2018 and December 2020. You can find a full listing of our Legacy Society members at <https://nebcommfound.giftlegacy.com>.

If you would like to support NCF or your hometown, or if you have already made a future gift intention in your will, through a beneficiary designation or with a life income arrangement, contact Emily Sulzle, Assistant Director of Gift Planning, or Jim Gustafson, Director of Advancement and Gift Planning, at 402.323.7330 or [info@nebcommfound.org](mailto:info@nebcommfound.org). We want to thank you! ■

Bartak Family, *Long Pine*

Sue Batie, *Cypress, CA*

Kent and Peggy Been, *Indianola*

Paul Parks and Gregg Biba, *Fletcher, NC*

Sharon Bohling, *McCook*

Austin and Kelsey Coufal, *Howells*

Tom and Deanne Damkroger, *Lincoln*

Denise M. Davis, *Nebraska City*

Denise Garey, *McCook*

Dennis and Sally Hansen, *Red Cloud*

Stacie Higgins, *Nebraska City*

Thomas and Cynthia Huff, *McCook*

Stephen Hunt, *Plattsmouth*

Brian and Michele Kent, *Pender*

Kurt and Jerene Kruse, *Albion*

Bob Lowe, *Goode, VA*

Jane A. Moreland, *Vero Beach, FL*

Ashley Olson, *Red Cloud*

Dan and Jessica Piskorski, *Ord*

Scott and Nancy Steinhauser, *Ainsworth*

Paul and Mary Stevenson, *Nebraska City*

Kent and Susan Warneke, *Norfolk*

Billie Wisnieski, *Howells*

## Providing for the People and Places We Love

Sally and Dennis Hansen's Red Cloud roots trace back generations starting with Dennis' great grandmother who homesteaded in Webster County—an act that was practically inconceivable for a woman at the time. Red Cloud has always had an important presence in their lives. They met there as children, attended school together, dated, graduated, and ultimately left to pursue college educations and careers.

But the call to return home was strong, especially as a young married couple dreaming about starting a family and the type of childhood they wanted for their kids. They returned to their hometown to raise two boys—Matthew and Cole.

Their sons were among the first people they spoke to about their plans to leave a legacy gift for the future of Red Cloud via the local early childhood education facility. They didn't see it as a choice between family and community, but rather an opportunity to provide for both the people and place they care

about most. Matthew and Cole were wholly supportive; The Valley Child Development Center, which has an account within the Red Cloud Foundation Fund, was deeply appreciative.

After speaking with Nebraska Community Foundation, the Hansens learned that the life insurance policy they intended to leave to The Valley Child Development Center was a less tax-burdensome asset to leave to their children. They decided instead to list the Red Cloud Foundation Fund (for the benefit of The Valley Child Development Center) as a beneficiary of their retirement plan—an inheritance that they learned would have serious income tax implications for Matthew and Cole.

Sally and Dennis have been integral in getting the nationally celebrated early childhood development center planned, built, and ultimately opened in 2018. It has been a life-changing community amenity to the children who learn there and the families that



Sally and Dennis Hansen

depend on the high quality, consistent, and affordable care.

"It's always important to invest in that new generation," said Sally. "We've invested in Red Cloud for the long term and for the rest of our lives. We chose to live here, and by doing so, we want to put back in what we've gotten from this community."

"We want to make it a great place to live not just two to three years from now, but forever," said Dennis.

If you are interested in learning about tax-wise ways to give to both your family and your community, contact Emily Sulzle or Jim Gustafson at 402.323.7330 or [info@nebcommfound.org](mailto:info@nebcommfound.org). ■

## Connecting Elders Opportunity Extended Into 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to make it difficult for families to visit loved ones and friends who are patients or residents of hospitals, assisted living, or nursing home facilities.

In Spring 2020, Nebraska Community Foundation announced the Connecting Elders with Family funding opportunity, a collaboration between the Alice DeVoe Donor-Advised Fund—an affiliated fund of Nebraska Community Foundation—and another anonymous donor. The opportunity provides matching grants to NCF affiliated funds to connect and engage elders with family and friends, including electronic devices and complementary equipment. Funding is also available for other projects and programs that address COVID-19-related social isolation.

NCF expanded and extended the Connecting Elders with Family funding opportunity into 2021 with the hope that

even more communities might take advantage of the program, available exclusively to NCF affiliated funds. Additionally, we increased the match to \$10,000, meaning funds can potentially make a \$20,000 impact in their places.

Many affiliated funds took advantage of the opportunity in 2020, enabling families in their communities to stay connected. The grants allowed many funds to purchase tablets, cameras, wireless internet, and other upgrades, like Valley County Health System Foundation's purchase of a laptop for fitness programs for older generations. Some funds, like the Keith County Foundation Fund, used the money to provide additional support for meals at senior centers or for deliveries to elderly residents.

The scope of the funding opportunity allows funds to pinpoint localized, creative avenues to minimize the



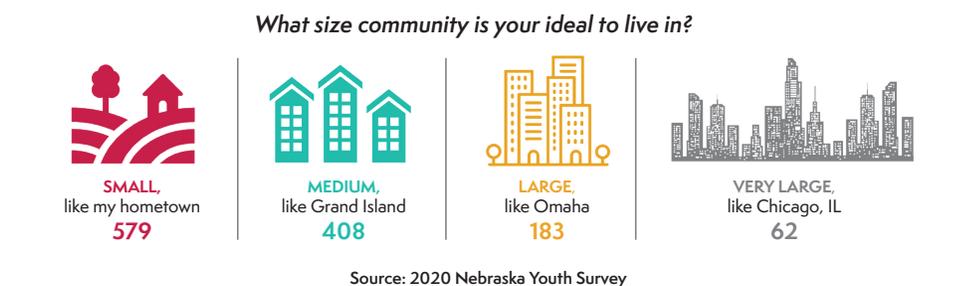
effects of a global pandemic on individuals while maximizing generosity, collaboration, and positive impact community wide.

Best of all, the amenities and services purchased and established through the Connecting Elders opportunity will continue to serve long-term care residents and their families even when the pandemic is in the rearview mirror. ■

## Survey, Hometown Interns Initiative Invite Young People Home

Nebraska Community Foundation's 2020 Youth Survey revealed that most participants would prefer to live in a small community, and they're motivated to make a positive impact on the places that raised them. The primary reason young Nebraskans don't envision a future in their hometowns comes down to job opportunities—44% of our respondents said the main reason they would not remain in their area is because of career opportunities elsewhere.

"I feel like I'm creating a legacy for future generations and getting to make a mark here," said Abigail Moody, who interned with the Valley County Community Foundation Fund last summer. "This place helped teach me what I love to do and where my strengths and gifts lie, and now that I've refined those gifts in



college, I'm able to use them to give back. It feels like things have come full circle."

NCF's Hometown Internship program is working to address this with opportunities for ambitious young Nebraskans to return to their hometowns for the summer and further the work and mission of their local Nebraska Community Foundation affiliated fund. After the success of 13

exceptional 2020 Hometown Interns, we expanded the program to up to 25 interns for the summer of 2021.

This program is helping young people feel more connected to their hometowns, hone job relevant skills, and network with adults and job creators in the area. Importantly, it's allowing them to envision a bright future right in the comfort of their own hometown. ■

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## Winter Intern Gains Experience in Thayer County



*UNL pre-pharmacy student Katelyn Richardson spent her winter break interning for Thayer County Health Services Fund.*

University of Nebraska-Lincoln pre-pharmacy student Katelyn Richardson knew she wanted to go beyond her studies and get a glimpse into what life would be like as a pharmacist. She found that opportunity through the Foundation for Thayer County Health Services Fund and Nebraska Community Foundation.

She joined the latest batch of young Nebraskans to participate in NCF's Hometown Interns program, which kicked off in Summer 2020 with 13 interns across the state, then continued with a winter round. The extended

break between the first and second semesters offered interns a chance to get more immersed in their respective communities. Richardson settled in and learned by doing at Thayer County Health Services in Hebron.

"I wanted to gain experience in the pharmacy field and see what happened day to day to learn more than I would just shadowing," Richardson said. Beyond learning, she also felt like a valuable member of the team when a new pharmacy opened downtown.

"I got the chance to really contribute and be a part of the team to help get things started," she said.

The Chester native learned a lot during her internship, and local leaders have asked her to continue as a pharmacy tech should her schedule allow.

"I had a great experience," she said. "It was nice having the internship close to home so I could live at home over the break. The people I worked with were also very helpful in teaching me about what the field was really like."

In addition to learning more about the field, Richardson got another

perspective on the Thayer County community and everything that makes it unique.

"I appreciate that our community tries to create events to have more community involvement. Pancake feeds, parades, etc. bring everyone in the community closer together and help to make new connections."

The experience led to a new appreciation for the county that raised her.

"I'm excited by how much our community wants to improve to keep our community interesting and make people feel welcome. I want to be able to come back and help be a part of continuing to make our community a great place for people to live."

She said the experience has inspired her to return home someday to work in Thayer County.

"I want to live in a small community most likely close to family," Richardson said. "I want to live in a community where your neighbors know you and try and help you however they can and vice versa." ■