

# CONNECTIONS



## Nineteen Young Nebraskans Welcomed Home

At Nebraska Community Foundation, we believe our number one community economic development priority should be people attraction. We are proud of the progress that has been made in hometowns across the NCF network to retain those already in community with us and entice newcomers who want to be in community with us.

The 2020 Nebraska Community Foundation Youth Survey provided affirmation of this goal. Of the over 1,300 high schoolers who participated in the survey, most reported they would prefer to live in a small community, and they're motivated to make a positive impact on the places that raised them.

Not only did the coronavirus pandemic result in the largest-scale remote work experiment in history, it was largely responsible for over 15.9 million relocations according to United States Postal Service data. While it seemed like everyone was staying home, they were in fact moving in larger numbers than usual. Time will tell if those relocations are permanent and how they might impact states like Nebraska.

This is all great news for our people attraction efforts. Nebraskans have long known that local quality-of-life offerings can rival those of just about any other state. And if thousands of jobs can now be done from anywhere in the world... why not right here in Nebraska?

In 2020, Nebraska Community Foundation launched the Hometown Interns program, a paid internship opportunity aimed at attracting ambitious young Nebraskans to return



*Nineteen college students arrived in their hometowns in May to further the work of local NCF affiliated funds and strengthen their connections to the places that raised them. In June they enjoyed the opportunity to meet in-person for a peer learning session in Seward.*

to their hometowns for the summer and further the work and mission of their local NCF affiliated fund. The 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 their own hometown.

Despite a global pandemic, the success of 2020's cohort of interns led to expansion of the program in 2021. This year 19 young Nebraskans have returned to their hometowns for the summer. The students will lend their expertise and enthusiasm to a huge variety of projects while gaining real world experience in everything from marketing to social media, healthcare, early childhood education, event planning, fundraising, asset mapping, historical research, economic development, and much, much more.

"The benefits go both ways," said NCF President and CEO Jeff Yost. "Our affiliated funds gain a new, youthful perspective to propel them into the future, and interns learn their hometowns offer so much more than previously assumed. By the end of the summer, we hope they will find Greater Nebraska is the perfect place to build a career, family, and life."

Some Hometown Interns say they can already see that future clearly.

"When I picture home, I see a place where I can be both independent, but connected to my family and friends," said Emily Morrow, a UNL student working with the O'Neill Community Foundation Fund on marketing, public relations, and videography projects. "A small community allows me to do both of those things. I would love to come back to the Holt County area to start a family who can make it home as well." ■

# INSIDE NCF

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## Remembering Nancy Hoch

Perhaps no one person exemplified the Asset-Based Community Development approach as much as Nebraska City's Nancy Hoch.

"She always said work with the willing," said Doug Friedli, who worked alongside Nancy for many years. "Work with your strengths. It was absolutely in tune with NCF and of a similar mindset."

Hoch's impact on Nebraska was readily apparent by the time she became one of the original nine NCF incorporators in 1993 (and served on the statewide board from 1994–2002). She had already served as the first female member of the University of Nebraska Board of Regents in 1982, run for U.S. Senate in 1984, and was one of three women to run for Nebraska governor in 1986—the first time a woman, let alone three, campaigned for that office. The victor, Kay Orr, became the first female Republican governor in the United States.

Hoch died May 5, leaving behind a monumental legacy in Nebraska politics, community development, education, and much more. Despite her success on larger stages, Hoch never forgot her hometown. She worked tirelessly to improve and share Nebraska City's magic, and her influence is still felt throughout amenities and attractions she helped make possible, including the Kregel Windmill Museum, Red Fox Run Sports Complex, the trolley system, and the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, which she co-founded. Her extensive list of projects earned Nancy the Nebraska Tourism Commission's 2015 Henry Fonda Award.

The economic development community also benefited from Hoch's tenacity. She played an integral role in bringing Cargill to Nebraska City, and in keeping the large employer in town following



*Nancy and Richard Hoch were both influential in Nebraska City, inspiring lasting change throughout the community.*

a successful campaign to double the number of local employees from 150 to 300. Today, the plant employs almost 600 people.

"She was always thinking about what was best for the community and how we could grow," Friedli said. "It wasn't about her. It was about the community."

She served on numerous local boards and committees, including the Nebraska City Rotary Club, the Nebraska City Library Board, First Presbyterian Church, River Country Economic Development Corporation, and many groups dedicated to local arts and humanities.

"She had very deep roots in Nebraska City," Friedli said. "She loved to plant new ideas, new projects. She loved to create things."

Though the community lost one of its most ardent champions, Hoch's influence will continue to be felt for years. And her example will inspire Nebraskans across the state for decades to come.

"It's a big loss, but at the same time in her honor we need to keep pushing forward and live by some of the mantras she taught us," Friedli said. "We need to look back at her style and her passion and her commitment and emulate that as much as we can." ■

## The Meaning of Active Hope



Jeff Yost, NCF  
President and CEO

Active hope. What does it mean to you? At Nebraska Community Foundation, we say the phrase is both a noun and a verb. In its noun form,

it's "proactive optimism for the future." Those with regular hope simply sit back and wish things were better. As a verb, it means "creating one's own destiny."

Active hope is alive and well in southwest Nebraska, the site of our upcoming 2021 Annual Celebration. Though our friends in McCook will serve as hosts, they have been very intentional about including and celebrating the entire region, especially the work and accomplishments of their fellow NCF affiliated funds. And believe me, there is much to celebrate—*incredible fundraising successes,*

*exponential unrestricted endowment growth, and transformative quality of life investments. It's all happening in this corner of the state.*

In Bertrand, big investments in technology are ensuring rural youth build the same skills for the future as their urban peers. Communities like Overton, Stratton, Imperial, and Perkins County have taken advantage of funding matches to help bridge the learning gap in the face of COVID-19.

Eustis, population 520, raised over \$700,000 to build a state-of-the-art community recreation center.

Generous homegrown challenge grants and planned gifts all across southwest Nebraska are fueling change that may otherwise not occur.

Communities throughout the region—like Wauneta and Perkins County—are seeking out leadership training to better prepare their communities for the future. Palisade and Overton are

hosting regional networking gatherings. And Eustis, Wallace, Perkins County, and Imperial have all recently completed NCF's Action Planning Update—a challenging but essential process where Fund Advisory Committees update their vision, mission, and values; set ambitious goals; and reaffirm their commitment to their communities.

And, of course, our hosts at the McCook Community Foundation Fund are superstars of the NCF network. McCook has taken on fundraising challenge after challenge, opportunity after opportunity to grow their unrestricted endowment which is now over \$4.2 million. They stepped up to help community members in need during the pandemic and are always thinking decades into the future. As one MCF member put it, "We aren't doing this work for us. We're thinking 30 to 50 years ahead."

Join us in November and be inspired by the momentum building in southwest Nebraska. See you there! ■

**Unleash  
ACTIVE  
HOPE**

NEBRASKA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION'S  
*Annual Celebration*  
AND TRAINING

MCCOOK • NOVEMBER 18, 2021  
MCCOOK COMMUNITY COLLEGE

WED NOV 17	THU NOV 18	FRI NOV 19
"Night on the Bricks" Explore historic downtown McCook	DAY: Affiliated Fund Training	EVENING: Banquet and Celebration
		Rural Leadership Symposium Tickets: <a href="http://www.extension.unl.edu">www.extension.unl.edu</a>

### The Dream Switch is Back On!

This original community concert and in-depth engagement event explores sense of place, belonging, and the joy of blooming where you're planted. Join us for the following free performances!

#### NEBRASKA CITY | Memorial Building Parking Lot

**August 29, 2021**

Pre-show Activities: 4:00–6:00 PM

Showtime: 6:00 PM

#### THAYER COUNTY | Thayer County Activity Center, Deshler

**October 3, 2021**

Pre-show Activities: 11:30 AM–1:00 PM

Showtime: 1:00 PM

**For more information visit:**

[www.nebcommfound.org/events](http://www.nebcommfound.org/events)

# AFFILIATED FUND UPDATES



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

**Leigh Legacy Fund** celebrated the generosity of a local family who recently presented the fund with a \$250,000 gift from the estate of Bill and Theresa Eggers. Bill was a 1968 Leigh High School graduate and operated Bill's Bar.

A part of the gift will fund a recreation project, while the rest will be placed in the fund's unrestricted endowment.

"The Leigh Legacy Fund wishes to express its utmost gratitude to Bill and Theresa for their generosity," the FAC said. "A gift of this magnitude in the first year of the Legacy Fund's existence is truly inspiring and humbling." ■

**McCook Community Foundation Fund** launched a podcast this year chronicling the stories of area residents in an effort to preserve the history of southwest Nebraska.

The endeavor, titled "I Remember When: Uncommon Stories from the Buffalo Commons," comes in the wake of Judge Cloyd Clark's death—the founder of the Buffalo Commons Storytelling and Music Festival.

"Cloyd took a lot of stories with him," said Ronda Graff. "This is our way to honor him."

The podcast features interviews with older residents and shares their stories about their own history as well as McCook, southwest Nebraska, and beyond. ■



MCCFF Coordinator Ronda Graff interviews Walt Sehnert for the fund's new podcast.



Prairie, one of the members of the Imperial Dolly Parton Imagination Library, poses with her first book through the program.

**Keith County and Imperial Funds** joined the growing membership of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, bringing the country star's passion for learning to local children.

The Imagination Library program sends free books by mail each month to children in participating communities, no matter their family's income. To date, over 154 million books have been sent.

"We're so grateful to the Keith County Foundation Fund for the starting grant, and to local service organizations for stepping up so enthusiastically," said Elise Lockhart of the DPIL steering committee in Keith County. ■



Seventh graders Owen Ramaekers and John Hippen practice their shot at the new Whispering Pines disc golf course in Bennet.

**Bennet Area Community Foundation Fund** helped two friends build a disc golf course in the eastern Lancaster County village's new Whispering Pines Park. Owen Ramaekers and John Hippen, both seventh graders at Palmyra Junior-Senior High School, worked with BACFF to fundraise, plan, and build a nine-hole course that they hope will become a popular place to spend time in Bennet.

"It was the fund's youth grant that started this whole ball rolling," said John's mother, Julie. "John and Owen would have never been able to get this off the ground if it weren't for the BACFF grant. It's been phenomenal." ■

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BEATRICE DAILY SUN



Lewiston Consolidated Schools breaks ground on a new outdoor track complex made possible with the help of NCF and an anonymous donor.

**Lewiston Consolidated Schools** broke ground on a new outdoor track complex thanks to NCF's work with an anonymous donor. The donor contributed \$1.5 million toward the dream of keeping the Lewiston school district alive for generations to come.

As part of the donation, the district's board of education also pledged to set

aside \$1.1 million for a new agricultural education facility. The district identified the track and the ag facility as worthy improvements during a needs analysis conducted with NCF staff assistance.

Superintendent Rick Kentfield said the track project is something that could not have happened without the donor's generosity. "This kind of gift is just amazing," Kentfield said. "We are so thankful to be a recipient." ■

**Nebraska Flood Recovery Fund** provided a boost to communities after 2019's historic flooding. The fund invested more than \$500,000 over the last two years to help rebuild Greater Nebraska. Grants were used in an array of projects. North Bend used the money to help pay for planning costs for a new levee system. The City of Winslow put its grant toward researching options for potentially relocating the community. The effort also helped establish multiple long-term recovery groups.

All granting decisions were made by a volunteer Fund Advisory Committee composed of members located across the state with a variety of experience and expertise, from housing to business and rural community development. ■

PHOTO BY DARIN EPPERLY/NORFOLK DAILY NEWS



Following 2019's floods, affected communities received a boost from the Nebraska Flood Recovery Fund.



Hickman FAC members Chelsea Hood Reese (left) and Thomas Rekasis (right) receive a check from Sherri Eggleston (center).

**Hickman Community Foundation Fund** worked with a local photographer to immortalize more than 30 area youth sports teams—including 424 local athletes.

Sherri Eggleston, owner of Sherri Eggleston Photography in downtown Hickman, took team and individual photos for local parents and coaches. Families could then purchase a variety of collectible items. Altogether, the effort raised \$1,551 for HACFF. ■



Shirley Lindekugel left a substantial gift for the Wallace Community Foundation Fund which will boost the fund's unrestricted endowment.

**Wallace Community Foundation Fund** recently received a substantial gift from longtime residents.

Shirley Lindekugel found a home in Greater Nebraska through her husband, Howard. Together, they've left a \$362,260 estate gift to benefit the community they loved.

The bulk of the gift—\$326,034—will be a boon for the fund.

"It took everyone a couple seconds to process the size of the gift," said Fund Advisory Committee Chair Shawn Gartrell. "It was just amazing."

Shirley designated the money to bolster WCFF's unrestricted endowment, a permanent account wherein assets are invested to generate an ongoing source of income year after year. Investment earnings from the endowment are used to support community improvements and programs.

The Lindekugels' gift will almost double WCFF's endowment, vastly increasing their grantmaking capacity.

"In three years, we'll have double the amount of money to give out in grants as we did last year," Gartrell said. "That means a lot to a small community." ■

## You Don't Have to Choose Between Family and Charity



*Kent and Susan Warneke of Norfolk wanted to make the most positive impact possible with their estate. A "Give it Twice Trust" ensures that both their family and their community will benefit from their legacy.*

Kent and Susan Warneke are deeply rooted in their community. Kent's over three-decade role at the Norfolk Daily News made him a local household name, as did Susan's long career as a teacher and church musician. Though their career paths have since changed a bit, their commitment to Norfolk is unwavering. The Warnekes knew they wanted their estate plans to continue to leave a mark on the place where they grew their family and their careers.

"Susan and I were looking for a way to have the most positive impact with our estate possible," said Kent. "Many people may think that it's a choice between giving to family or charitable organizations. We wanted to find a way to do both."

With the help of a professional advisor, they did exactly that. The Warnekes opted to put 60% of their estate into a Charitable Remainder Trust upon their

passing. The arrangement affords their two children—Sarah and Alex—the opportunity to receive income from the interest off the principal for 15 years, giving Kent and Susan the peace of mind that their family is taken care of.

After 15 years, the trust remainder will be split between numerous local and statewide charities, among them Norfolk Area Community Foundation Fund. This giving method has come to be known as a "Give it Twice Trust" for its ability to benefit both family and charity.

"This was an excellent vehicle to look after children and their families but also provide a gift to the organizations that we've been involved with and are important to us."

For more information, contact Jim Gustafson, Director of Advancement and Gift Planning at 402.323.7341 or [jgustafson@nebcommfound.org](mailto:jgustafson@nebcommfound.org). ■

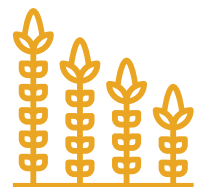
## Farmers and Ranchers: Think Outside the Checkbook

Before charitable farmers and ranchers open their checkbooks this year, NCF encourages thinking beyond cash and opting to instead donate gifts of grain or livestock.

Grain futures are higher than they've been since 2013, and giving a portion of your harvest is a great way to share the bounty with the causes closest to your heart. By contributing commodities like corn or cattle, farmers and ranchers can save significantly on taxes while strengthening the mission of their local community-based affiliated fund or Nebraska Community Foundation.

Instead of selling the agricultural commodity, the producer transfers ownership of the livestock or grain directly to Nebraska Community

### Giving Back with Gifts of Ag



Foundation for the benefit of their affiliated fund of choice. The producer can still deduct all their production costs for income tax purposes. By transferring legal ownership to a charity, the producer will not have taxable income from a sale, thus minimizing taxes. Tax savings may be realized on federal income tax, state income tax, and self-employment tax, depending on the producer's specific circumstances.

It is important to first check with your professional advisor to determine whether a contribution of grain or livestock is appropriate for your tax situation. It is also important that you notify NCF as there are specific (but simple) procedures that must be followed.

NCF Controller Les Long is always available to point you in the right direction at [llong@nebcommfound.org](mailto:llong@nebcommfound.org) or 402.323.7346. ■

## Gift Exemplifies Shickley's Can-Do Attitude

When a community fosters belonging, anything can happen. In Shickley, a standard case of neighbors helping neighbors resulted in a gift for the Shickley Community Foundation Fund.

David Stolzenburg died in May 2020. He is remembered for his passion for teaching, operating the family farm, coaching, and much more. He taught high school science for more than 40 years. His longtime friend and neighbor, Charles Dondlinger, said he left a lasting impact on students.

"All the kids I've talked to over the years who were his students, they all just loved him," Charles said.

David had at least one last impact to make on the Shickley area. Through the course of his life, he had amassed a collection of aluminum cans in a small shed on his farm. His friends and family saw potential there.

David's wife, Gayle, had recently undergone knee surgery, which made it difficult to keep up with the chores around the farm—including deciding what to do with all those cans. That's when Charles decided to roll up his sleeves and get to work. Over six months, he crushed and bagged 80,000 cans, 60 years' worth by his estimation, then hauled them to City Iron and Metal in Hastings for recycling.

Gayle wanted to donate the money to the local affiliated fund. When Charles told the recycling center employees to make the check out for a charitable donation, they increased the payout by 40 cents per pound—for a total of \$700.

She wanted to make that number an even \$1,000, so she wrote a check to cover the difference.

"I just thought a nice, round number would be better," Gayle said.



David and Gayle Stolzenburg's collection of aluminum cans became a donation for the Shickley Community Foundation Fund.

She said David would have been thrilled to know his collection of cans turned into a gift for the community he lived in his whole life. Fund members were thrilled as well as grateful for the surprise donation.

"The Shickley Community Foundation Fund now has \$1,000 we didn't have last month, simply because a kindly neighbor helped clean up a temporarily disabled widow's property," said chair Loree Hendrickson. "Community really is everything." ■

## NCF Helps Get Dental Health Kits to Families



NCF, four of the state's public health departments, and an anonymous donor joined forces to provide Nebraska children with dental care.

A partnership between Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services, the University of Nebraska Medical Center's College of Dentistry, an anonymous donor, and NCF is helping Nebraska children get a head start on proper dental care.

Almost 65% of Nebraska third graders have experienced tooth decay of some

variety, according to the DHHS' 2016 Nebraska Oral Health Survey. Nearly half of the children enrolled in Head Start programs throughout the state reported tooth decay as well. That's troubling for experts like Nebraska State Dental Director Dr. Charles Craft, because, among other concerns, untreated decay can lead to a condition known as Early Childhood Caries (ECC).

"This process creates acids that quickly start to destroy the enamel on the teeth resulting in cavities," Craft said. "Decay can start on multiple teeth and if left untreated can create acute pain and chronic infections."





The four entities hope to put dental health starter kits in the hands of thousands of families, guiding Nebraska children

down a path toward comprehensive wellness for the rest of their lives.

Craft said the Office of Oral Health and Dentistry began distributing kits seven years ago to local health departments throughout Nebraska. All in all, they distributed 10,000 kits.

Nebraska Community Foundation joined the effort with the help of an anonymous donor. As of December 2020, NCF had sponsored the distribution of 1,800 English and Spanish language kits to Nebraska public health departments across the state. Overall, the university distributed 6,600 kits to 12 health departments in 2020. Organizers plan to assemble 18,000 more kits in 2021, with the hopes of exceeding the goal of 25,000 by the end of the year. ■

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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.*



*Joel and Nicole Ferguson found a home in Wallace, where the community has welcomed them with open arms. Joel encourages all to find their place in Greater Nebraska.*

Amid weather reports, local brawl breakdowns, and friendly jabs at neighboring towns, the “Wallace Warblings,” a regular social news column published by the Lincoln County Tribune in the 1890s, chronicled the neighborly exploits of Wallace residents. A dive into the archives reveals a town where residents fundamentally invested themselves in their neighbors’ joys, successes, and hobbies.

Correspondent Tod Moxa highlighted clubs fueled by the energy of the “rising generation,” a New Year’s Eve event made magical by “harmony” among the community, and countless updates on local families—who was marrying who,

which sibling came to visit from Omaha, who recently moved to town, etc.

Jump forward almost 130 years and Wallace residents remain community-focused, as Joel Ferguson and his family learned when they moved to town. A parade of welcoming residents eagerly greeted the family soon after they moved to their new home. The revolving door of smiling faces sparked an appreciation for their new hometown.

“On our first day of living in town, we were greeted by no less than seven groups of individuals offering help, dropping off treats, or simply saying hello,” Joel said. “We knew moving our family to a place where we only knew the town name was going to be a challenge, but from day one we were put at ease by the people in the community.”

The Fergusons sought a community where residents were invested in local youth and supportive of growth. They were pleased to see Wallace exceeded

their expectations. They’ve come to realize the community values every person for the unique strengths and skills they bring to the table. That shared engagement and connection inspired Joel to get involved in civic life, specifically the Wallace Community Foundation Fund’s advisory committee.

“I’ve enjoyed getting to meet people who are dedicated to serving the community of Wallace,” he said. “Their drive and support to make our community the best version of itself inspires me to continue to do more. Everyone on the committee has a different background but each of us are valued for the perspective we bring. I cannot wait to get to work on the next great idea to make our community better than before.”

Joel encourages returning or finding your own place in Greater Nebraska.

“I would tell someone thinking about returning to Greater Nebraska to take the leap. They will not regret it.” ■