

# DAN GILLESPIE

## SOIL HEALTH FUND

### FALL/WINTER 2023 NEWSLETTER

#### MYRON JOHNSON DONATES \$10,000 TO SOIL HEALTH FUND

The Dan Gillespie Soil Health Fund recently received a major contribution of \$10,000 from Myron Johnson.

Myron Johnson, who grew up on a farm in Iowa but is now a resident of Nebraska, noticed from an early age that conventional farming practices were not good for the soil or his neighbors and instead favored the profits of machinery, seed, fertilizer, and chemical suppliers.

A couple of years ago, he began watching documentaries about soil regeneration—practices he began using in his own vegetable garden with great success. While enrolled in an NU test program, another participant introduced Johnson to the Dan Gillespie Soil Health Fund. He sees it as an ideal way to promote the soil regenerative movement he is so passionate about supporting.

“At age 88 and a widower, it made no sense to me to die with a lot of wealth. It only seems right and reasonable that I leave something of value for the next generations. The only way we will get the abuse of our soil under control is by starting at the bottom and supporting the young farmers and letting it percolate up,” said Johnson. “It was an easy check to write.”

#### WE HAVE BEEN CHALLENGED... AGAIN!

In just two years of existence, the Dan Gillespie Soil Health Fund has received multiple challenge grants from generous donors who believe in our work and mission.

The latest is from Brian and Cori Vavricek who challenged the DGSHF Advisory Committee to raise \$5,000 to receive an additional \$5,000 resulting in \$10,000 to further education related to soil health and regenerative agriculture, including but not limited to no-till farming, water conservation, tree conservation, and planting cover crops.

“I am not donating money to the cause for any recognition or to get anything from it, I am doing it because Dan was a great friend and it's a great cause,” said Brian.

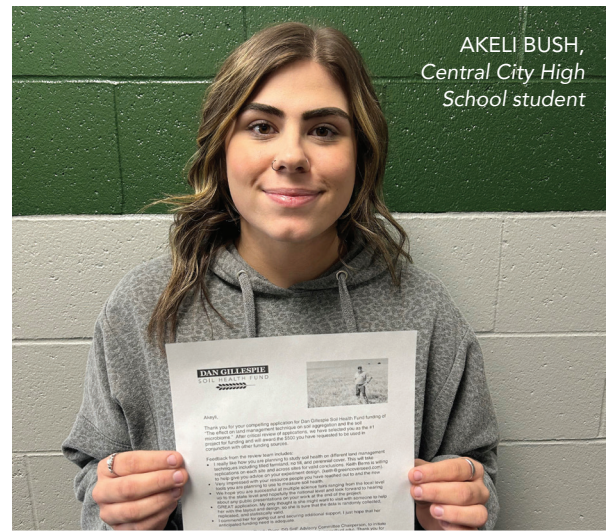


DGSHF's latest challenge grant donors receive a clock made by Ray Ward. Ward, of Ward Laboratories Kearney, donates a personal handmade clock made of wood from his farm in Saline County to any donor of \$1,000 or more.

#### OUR FUND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Randy Pryor, Chair** | UNL Emeritus Extension Educator  
**Keith Berns** | Owner of Green Cover (Bladen, NE)  
**Craig Derickson** | Retired NE NRCS State Conservationist  
**John Wilson** | UNL Emeritus Extension Educator  
**Rebecca Evert and Tim Gillespie** | Family representatives

AKELI BUSH,  
Central City High  
School student



#### OUR GRANTMAKING IN ACTION

Contributions to the Dan Gillespie Soil Health Fund help fund grants made to organizations, projects, and initiatives that are furthering regenerative agriculture, improving soil health, as well as promoting no-till farming, water conservation, tree conservation, and planting cover crops.

The latest DGSHF grant went to Central City High School in October for the benefit of student Akeli Bush's scientific research program on the effect on land management technique on soil aggregation and the soil microbiome.

Other grants have supported:

- No Till on the Plains: Soil health bus tour
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln/Nebraska Extension county-based educational programming for increasing awareness of soil health
- City Sprouts for urban students with interests in agricultural careers
- Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District for the Central Nebraska Regenerative Agriculture Conference
- Battle Creek High School FFA for their project on cover crop effectiveness on preventing soil erosion and infiltration which went on to place top 10 at the 2023 FFA National Competition!

See the backside of this newsletter for more information on the DGSHF granting priorities and process.

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

On March 1 and October 1, the Dan Gillespie Soil Health Fund Advisory Committee begins reviewing grant applications to make awards of up to \$1,500. Examples of grantworthy projects and programs include (but are not limited to):

- Educational events and programming related to soil health and regenerative agriculture for youth, current farmers, ranchers, and others involved in agriculture
- Training activity expense reimbursement for farmers who want to learn how to better steward their land
- On-farm (or-ranch) research projects that seek to quantifiably improve soil health practices. No-till on the Plains (NTOP) has volunteered to help farmers receive awarded funds (as an eligible 501c3) and pass the award to the farmer recipient upon completion of an eligible research project.

## SUBMIT APPLICATIONS

### DOWNLOAD THE APPLICATION

Visit [go.unl.edu/dgfund](https://go.unl.edu/dgfund) | Click **APPLY FOR GRANT**

#### DIGITALLY:



Fill out the grant application digitally by scanning this code

#### VIA EMAIL:



[randy.pryor@unl.edu](mailto:randy.pryor@unl.edu)

#### BY MAIL:



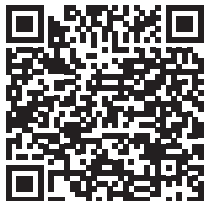
*Dan Gillespie Soil Health Fund*  
Nebraska Community Foundation  
8100 S. 15th St., Suite A  
Lincoln, NE 68512

## SUPPORT OUR WORK

Our work depends on the generosity of those who share our vision and passion for promoting more sustainable agricultural practices. We humbly ask that you consider making a contribution to further the work of the Dan Gillespie Soil Health Fund.

*Ray Ward, Ward Laboratories Kearney, will donate a personal handmade clock (with wood from his farm in Saline County) to any donor of \$1,000 or more to the Dan Gillespie Soil Health Fund.*

## CONTRIBUTE TO THE DAN GILLESPIE SOIL HEALTH ENDOWED FUND



Scan this code



[go.unl.edu/dgfund](https://go.unl.edu/dgfund)



**Mail a check made payable to:**  
*Dan Gillespie Soil Health Fund*  
Nebraska Community Foundation  
8100 S. 15th St., Suite A  
Lincoln, NE 68512

### CONTACT US

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SOIL HEALTH FUND