

CONNECTIONS



The Transfer of Wealth—A Game Changer for Our Nebraska Hometowns

Whether through trees planted to replace those destroyed by a devastating tornado, a new pool in Friend, or the ongoing revitalization of the historic Warren Opera House, residents of Beaver Crossing and Friend experience the benefits of the transfer of wealth every day.

For the past decade, the two communities blossomed under the direction of volunteers overseeing the Leona Ihde Donor-Advised Fund. Ihde, a Beaver Crossing resident known for gardening and frugality, showed her lasting love for the two communities with a surprising \$1.8 million gift (which has since grown to over \$3 million) that will impact the communities forever. Volunteers ensure any grants made from the Fund match Ihde's vision.

"If Leona was driving through Friend and saw her impact, she would feel proud," said Charlie Vossler, a member of the fund advisory committee and Leona's cousin.

Similar stories abound across our state, written by ordinary Nebraskans with extraordinary dreams. In Diller, a community of 247 people, 13 planned gift expectancies total \$536,643, and payout from a \$1.1 million unrestricted endowment is helping the community create superior amenities that are courting young people back home. In Nebraska City, the local affiliated fund has granted more than \$6 million back into the community to further its mission of "investing in people."



NCF's Transfer of Wealth Study documents more than \$100 billion in Nebraska wealth passing from one generation to another over the next 10 years.

You can write similar success stories in your hometown. Nebraska Community Foundation's Transfer of Wealth Study, released in November, reveals more than \$100 billion will transfer from older to younger generations during the next decade in our state. Over the next 50 years, the figure swells to \$950 billion.

The numbers are daunting, which is why NCF has gathered plentiful resources to help ambitious Nebraskans understand and unlock the transfer of wealth in their communities.

Enter NCF's "5 to Thrive" campaign, which urges Nebraskans to consider leaving just 5% of their estate to their hometown. Doing so would amount to more than \$5 billion in the next decade—and \$47.5 billion over the next half-century. When you visit www.fivetothrivene.org, you'll find community success stories,

customizable press releases, planned giving guides, slideshows, and much more to help hometowns plan their own transfer of wealth giving campaigns.

Importantly, many Nebraska counties are approaching or are already experiencing their peak transfer years. The Transfer of Wealth Study illustrates the real urgency to act now to secure this tremendous community-building abundance.

"If endowed, think of the impact that kind of money could have on education, health, prosperity, and quality of life," said Nebraska Community Foundation President and CEO Jeff Yost. "Think of how it could contribute to a community's ability to attract quality talent and young families. Harnessing just a small percentage of the transfer of wealth could be a game changer for the future of our hometowns." ■

Stronger Communities, a Greater Nebraska



Jeff Yost, NCF
President and CEO

The last year ended with a banner couple of months for Nebraska Community Foundation, starting in November with the launch of our 2021 Transfer

of Wealth Study and 5 to Thrive campaign (more about that on the cover of this newsletter).

Members of the NCF network have put in countless hours educating friends and neighbors about the abundance that exists in every one of our Nebraska hometowns. After two decades, we are seeing that hard work take root and it's paying off in terrific community impact and a more optimistic narrative full of possibilities. As of December 31, 2021:

- Total assets in the NCF network exceed \$266 million, triple the amount 10 years ago
- Forty-nine community-based affiliated funds now have an unrestricted endowment payout of over \$10,000 per year—17 funds have \$50,000+ annually to invest in their places

- Twenty-one Nebraska counties with an NCF affiliated fund now have \$2 million or more in endowed assets
- In the past five years, we've received 46,507 contributions and reinvested more than \$159 million in our hometowns

Attend Nebraska Community Foundation's Annual Celebration & Training and you'll witness this progress first-hand. The momentum from our 2021 Transfer of Wealth Study and 5 to Thrive campaign launch carried us all the way to Southwest Nebraska in November, where hundreds of ambitious Nebraskans gathered to share ideas, learn from one another, and *unleash active hope*. At the request of our hosts in McCook, the celebration lifted up all affiliated funds in the region, culminating with an unforgettable Night on the Bricks experience featuring the tastes, sights, sounds, and abundant assets in this thriving corner of Nebraska.

We closed out 2021 with one of the most successful Decembers to date, thanks to the tireless work, dedication, passion, and generosity of affiliated fund leaders; volunteers; donors; numerous local, regional, and statewide partners; and my NCF colleagues.

The 2021 Transfer of Wealth Study proves Nebraska has the wealth to capitalize so much more community capacity and good news related to the extraordinary generosity of donors and community builders. Everything I've highlighted so far is just the tip of the iceberg of what is possible to help our hometowns thrive. Geography and size are not the determining factors in these community success stories. The common theme in each of these places is passionate and plentiful community leadership. In all of these communities, invitation precedes success. An invitation to be a part of the conversation. An invitation to gift some of our abundance to support the next generation. An invitation to volunteer and lead. An invitation to move home to raise your family. An invitation to dream big about the future we want for ourselves and generations to come.

In 2022, NCF focuses on connection—to our dreams, to our neighbors, to our communities, and to our fellow ambitious Nebraskans across the state. Whether you connect to learn, to grow, to resources, or to opportunities, we are all connected to our shared vision of building stronger communities and a Greater Nebraska!

Thank you for all you do for your hometown and our great state. ■



2022
ANNUAL CELEBRATION
AND TRAINING

La Vista | November 17



NCF Elects New Board Members

Three Nebraskans who are wholeheartedly committed to our community-building mission joined Nebraska Community Foundation's statewide Board of Directors in November 2021.



Kim Engel has served as health director for Panhandle Public Health District since 2003. The district covers 12 rural counties in the Nebraska Panhandle with approximately 87,000 residents over 15,000 square miles. Engel holds Master of Business Administration and Bachelor of Science degrees from Chadron State College. Prior to becoming health director, Engel was the chief operations officer at Chadron Community Hospital. She managed CCH's rural health clinic and supervised services for special needs children.

in the Midwest. She attended the University of Nebraska at Omaha, studying Communications and Spanish. Perez is the executive director for Centro Hispano in Columbus, working to foster intentional change for immigrant families, learners, and entrepreneurs through direct services, programming, and advocacy.



Beth Roelfs and her husband, Dean, are lifelong Diller residents and farmers living in rural Jefferson County. They have raised hogs, built

an Angus herd, and produce soybeans, corn, and forage. Roelfs received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education with a Special Education endorsement (K-12) and her master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Doane College. Beth joined the staff of the Diller-Odell Public Schools in 2000, and she recently retired as elementary Special Education teacher. ■



Karina Perez was born in Los Angeles and she and her family migrated to Nebraska in 1999 seeking work opportunities

Welcome to the Team!



Kara Asmus, NCF's new affiliated fund development coordinator for East-Central Nebraska, will work with

volunteer leaders to build community awareness, conduct fundraising efforts, and increase community impact through grantmaking and citizen engagement. Prior to joining NCF, Asmus led multiple programs for the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce.



Kevin Warneke joins NCF as the director of advancement, a position in which he'll work closely with existing leadership to

develop and execute fund development plans for advancing NCF's mission. Prior to joining NCF, Warneke served as the director of client advancement at the Omaha-based Steier Group, where he held multiple leadership roles over a 10-year span. ■

NCF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Karina Perez of Columbus
Beth Roelfs of Diller
Kiel VanderVeen of Nebraska City
Kent Warneke of Norfolk

President and CEO, Jeffrey G Yost

Find a full list of our honorary members at www.necommfound.org/about/board-of-directors

Are You on NCF Connect?

NCF Connect allows Nebraska Community Foundation affiliated funds to access important financial information at any time, without the assistance of an NCF staff person—like account balances, contributions, and other details typically included in your quarterly fund statement.

Better yet, NCF Connect users are now able to log in and see payout balances of their endowed accounts!

STEP 1: Log in to NCF Connect

STEP 2: Navigate to the *Reports* menu

STEP 3: Choose *Fund Documents* and your payout report will be listed there

Don't have an NCF Connect account yet? Visit www.ncfconnect.org to sign up. Please note, NCF Connect accounts are limited to three users per affiliated fund.

Have questions? Reach out to ncfconnect@necommfound.org.

AFFILIATED FUND UPDATES



Northern Cheyenne tribal members Vincent Whitecrane and Gilbert Whitedirt stand in front of the Northern Cheyenne Breakout Monument in northwestern Nebraska.

Northern Cheyenne Breakout Legacy Fund formed in 2014 to assist with building a monument to recognize the bravery of the Northern Cheyenne ancestors who fought to return home on a fateful night in January 1879. The monument was successfully completed in 2016, so the Northern Cheyenne Breakout Legacy Fund Advisory Committee is now focusing on the next phase of its vision: a four-mile Northern Cheyenne Healing Trail. The trail will run alongside the path taken by the Northern Cheyenne who sacrificed their lives to help their people return to their homelands in the North. ■

Crawford Area Fund recently raised more than \$60,000 for its unrestricted endowment after successfully completing a challenge grant issued by Security First Bank and the Harrison-based Bill and Virginia Coffee Family Foundation. The community exceeded the \$40,000 fundraising goal, triggering \$10,000 gifts from both Security First Bank and Coffee Family Foundation.

Several Crawford High School alumni were instrumental in the success of the challenge grant, which many learned about through an annual event hosted by alumni. “I loved growing up in Crawford,” said alumnus William Schwanz. “This was a great way for us to share our good fortune.” ■



Security First Bank representatives *Sindy Schultz, Jennifer Barry, and Shirley Schafer* pose with FAC members *Samantha Dyer, Carrie Frahm, Dave Redden, and Crawford youth Taitt Redden and Jarrett Redden.*



Kelly Holthus, Virginia Holthus, Frank Sibert, and Charleen Frehrichs celebrate Bertrand's success. Sibert and his late wife, Shirley, also issued a homegrown challenge to their hometown, Red Cloud.

Bertrand Area Community Fund's most recent accomplishment highlights the unifying power of homegrown challenge grant campaigns. The end of 2021 saw the Fund surpass the goal set by Kelly and Virginia Holthus in late 2017, raising \$322,000 altogether. The Holthuses have provided a \$150,000 match.

The funds will be placed in BACF's unrestricted endowment, which now totals around \$900,000. The challenge will boost annual payout and the Fund's grantmaking capacity. “Thank you to all our community members, all our BACF committee members, and especially Kelly and Virginia,” said BACF Chair Chris Davison. ■



Legacy Fund for Seward County has been successful in building robust endowments to perpetually benefit the community today and into the future.

Legacy Fund for Seward County's endowments—one unrestricted and one for youth—total more than \$1 million, thanks to the fund advisory committee's careful stewardship and the community's outstanding generosity. Given the Fund's establishment in late 2019—months before the COVID-19 pandemic—that accomplishment is even more impressive.

Because of that incredible growth, the FAC is equipped to make substantial impact in Seward County—that's not to say members haven't already. In 2020, the fund helped bridge the learning gap, supplying the necessary resources and technology to keep kids learning. ■



Boone Beginnings Early Childhood and Family Development Center opened its doors in fall 2021 after volunteers dedicated years to fundraising and community-building work.

Boone County Foundation

Fund offered steadfast encouragement and support to a monumental effort. In 2021, on a sunny day in November, Boone County officially opened the doors to the ultimate community dream, Boone Beginnings Early Childhood and Family Development Center. The state-of-the-art facility was made possible with 250 charitable gifts, 80% with local ties, totaling \$4.5 million.

“I believe this center is really going to provide families a reason to come back to the community,” said Boone Beginnings Director Mattaya Addison.

Inspired by similar efforts in the NCF network, and fueled by the tireless work of dozens of committed volunteers, Boone County proved once again that in order to succeed, Greater Nebraska hometowns must make bold investments in the future. ■

Walthill Skatepark Project

plans a new accomplishment in Nebraska—the first skatepark on the Omaha Reservation in Thurston County. Organizers have already secured nearly \$350,000 for the 4,000 square foot project but continue to raise funds that will be utilized for future programming and youth engagement. Walthill is the latest NCF community to pursue a skatepark, joining Hickman, Imperial, McCook, and others.

Studies have shown skateparks give teens a vital physical and emotional outlet and a mega dose of self-esteem. They also become social hubs—spawning contests, music festivals, and art competitions, all while attracting families to the park. ■



Walthill will soon have its own skatepark, like the one seen here in Hickman, for local youth to enjoy.



Michele Wehbi, Julie Yanney, Mary Jo Klinetobe, and Wendy Kemling-Horner were thanked for the challenge grant offered in honor of E.K. Yanney.

Lodgepole Community Fund

awarded a grant to the Panther Activity Center last year to assist with ongoing renovations, including an upgraded sound system and repairing the building’s air conditioner unit.

The Lodgepole Community Fund is also raising money to match the Yanney Challenge that will grow the unrestricted endowment account. E.K. Yanney, a former banker in Lodgepole, was a respected businessman and community leader. E.K.’s daughters, Mary Jo Klinetobe, Michele Wehbi and Julie Yanney, along with his brother Michael Yanney have offered a \$20,000 challenge grant to be met 1:1 by the Lodgepole Community Fund. ■



Dan Gillespie, a longtime no-till farmer and advocate, established a fund to promote regenerative agriculture last year.

Battle Creek no-till farmer and advocate Dan Gillespie sought to leave any land he farmed in better condition than he found it. Late last year, Gillespie, his family, friends, and peers established the **Dan Gillespie Soil Health Fund** to ensure Gillespie’s philosophy continues to inspire farmers in Nebraska and surrounding states for years to come.

The Fund is dedicated to promoting soil health and regenerative agriculture, including but not limited to no-till farming, water conservation, tree conservation, and planting cover crops. The fund advisory committee is composed of industry professionals and dedicated family members who share Gillespie’s vision to make impactful grants to support educational events, youth programs, farmers, ranchers, and others involved in regenerative agriculture.

Following Gillespie’s passing in February after a long battle with ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis), the fund has received dozens of contributions honoring the life and legacy of this generous Nebraskan.

“We feel this is not only a way to recognize Dan’s contributions to soil health but to continue his and others’ efforts in supporting the growth of regenerative agriculture,” said Rebecca Gillespie Evert, Dan’s sister. ■

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 January 2021 and December 2021. 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 us at **402.323.7330** or info@nebcommfound.org. We want to thank you! ■

Mark and Kara Asmus, *Columbus*
Ronda and Jon Graff, *McCook*

Brandon and Kate Gutzmann, *Pender*
Virgil, Joyce, Sandra and Kevin Marik,
Howells

Scott and Holli Pretzer, *Diller*

Gift of Machinery Benefits Wauneta Area

Brothers Dale and Hank Wicke of rural Wauneta found a pragmatic way to support their community, as detailed in an article in *Successful Farming* magazine. In preparation for retirement, the farmers gifted their machinery to Nebraska Community Foundation. The equipment was then sold at auction, with proceeds destined to eventually benefit Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Hayes, Hitchcock, and Red Willow counties.

The magazine detailed the brothers' act in a story earlier this year, sharing the Wickes' generosity with an audience outside southwest Nebraska—and potentially inspiring others to give back to their hometowns.

"The brothers can retire comfortably, so it just made sense to use the farm auction as a way to help others," writes reporter Bill Spiegel. "In a unique transaction, they gifted the machinery to the Nebraska Community Foundation, proceeds from which to be used locally. Hank hopes they will fund scholarships to young people wishing to pursue a post-secondary college or technical education. Maybe towns like his beloved Wauneta can use grants to help with community projects."

Such gifts aren't relegated to farm equipment. Tangible personal property is broadly defined in the tax code as any property, other than land or buildings,

that can be seen or touched. Because the brothers gifted the machinery to NCF, the equipment is sold tax-free, bypassing ordinary income taxes on the sale of the equipment. This type of gift can present complex tax, valuation, and authentication issues so it is important to involve your professional advisors and NCF to ensure you have the greatest gifting opportunities.

NCF used the proceeds of the sale of the Wickes' equipment to create two charitable gift annuities for the brothers. Ownership of the machinery transferred to NCF prior to the auction. Following the sale, the money was placed in the annuities, which guarantees income for the brothers' lifetimes, disbursed in fixed installments. Charitable gift annuities allow Nebraskans to maintain a comfortable life while knowing they will be leaving a legacy to their community in the future.

Nebraska Community Foundation's website provides ample resources on charitable gift annuities, as well as the numerous other ways Nebraskans can give back to the places they love. Visit nebcommfound.giftlegacy.com to learn more about the unique ways you can impact your community. ■



Hank Wicke and his brother Dale Wicke recently gave back to their southwest Nebraska community through a gift of farm machinery.

Flatwater Free Press Revitalizes Nebraska Journalism

In September 2021, USA Today published a story on a Lakota couple's conflict with a Nebraska school after staff cut their daughters' hair without permission. The story was not the work of an out-of-state reporter stopping in flyover country, but a homegrown effort originally published by a then-new nonprofit news outlet.

The article exemplifies The Flatwater Free Press' mission to cover stories from across Nebraska, not just Omaha and Lincoln. Executive Director Matt Wynn and Editor Matthew Hansen, a former Omaha World-Herald columnist, aim to tell stories other outlets aren't, particularly those happening in Greater Nebraska or involving historically excluded populations. Flatwater's articles are published under a Creative Commons license, allowing Nebraska newspapers and broadcasters to use them at no cost.

"We're a nonprofit," Wynn said. "We're not chasing clicks."



Flatwater Free Press founders Matt Wynn (center) and Matthew Hansen (left) with fellow Nebraska journalists Holly Edgell, Patrick Janssen, and Myles Davis.

They are indeed finding Nebraska stories to tell—so many in fact, that staff more than doubled within months. Flatwater now employs two full-time reporters, a business development advisor, an events coordinator, and a grant writer, along with a cadre of freelancers.

Wynn, a former USA Today editor and Omaha World-Herald reporter, said NCF's assistance was vital while building the foundation for Flatwater. Beyond financial management, the NCF

network and its leadership form a vast statewide source network, a must for good journalism. Within Flatwater's first few months of existence, staff had already held community meetings in Norfolk, McCook, and Nebraska City, thanks in part to NCF connections.

"NCF helps us see the forest for the trees," Wynn said. "That's invaluable. We know NCF knows the entire state. If we want to do outreach in a community, we can shortcut right to the answer." ■

Caring for Our Communities



Valley County Health System Foundation Fund is building an endowment to support high-quality healthcare in the community.

Community-based affiliated funds might be the most abundant fund-type in the NCF network, but they aren't the only ones improving their places. Among over 250 funds are donor-advised funds, field of interest funds, organizational funds, and more. Boone, Brown, Chase, Fillmore, Thayer, Kearney, Valley, and Holt counties have each established funds to support a critically important community amenity—their local hospitals.

Shawn Jaeger, Foundation and marketing coordinator at Chase County Community Hospital & Clinics, hasn't been on the job long but immediately recognized the benefit of building an endowment. Prior to working at the hospital, he was a financial advisor, an experience that provided him with a deep understanding of NCF's financial management and investment practices.

Recently the hospital received a \$100,000 pledge. The anonymous donor recommended maximizing the contribution with a challenge, something they had seen Imperial's community-based NCF affiliated fund do in recent years. Jaeger said he's certain that NCF's vast experience with endowment-building and challenge grants were among the

things that moved the donor to make such a generous investment in the organization's future.

The Foundation for Thayer County Health Fund established its unrestricted endowment in 2019 with a sizeable planned gift from longtime resident Johannes Dittbrenner. It has grown significantly thanks in part to a commitment that 5% of all contributions to the hospital's foundation go directly into the endowment fund.

Marketing and Development Director Rita Luongo said her biggest dream for the fund is more collaboration with the eight NCF affiliated funds serving Thayer County.

"Any time we can keep funds in the county we all benefit." ■

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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.



Andrew and Alix Ambriz along with sons, Zander and Isaiah, are proud to call McCook home. The family recently returned to purchase the award-winning Sehnert's.

By the time Andrew Ambriz's sister reached middle school, her school had shut down twice for gun violence. It was the final straw for the Los Angeles family. They packed up and moved to Nebraska in the dead of winter. "I think two of us owned pants," said Ambriz.

West Point, Nebraska was a far cry from Los Angeles, but before long, Ambriz made friends, even joined FFA. He went on to become an FFA State Officer, eventually pursuing a Meat Sciences Degree at the University of Nebraska.

In 2016, Ambriz signed up for a Rural Futures Institute internship. His assignment took him to McCook where he gained hands-on experience in economic development. Upon graduating, he convinced his new wife, Alix, to move to McCook with him, this time for a fulltime gig at the economic development office, first as interim director and eventually as director.

Ambriz said he learned the importance of building trust in a small town. The birth of a baby forced them to reevaluate everything. Seeking proximity to family, he and Alix relocated to Broken Bow where he again began work as director of economic development.

Alix and Andrew remained in touch with friends in McCook. On a Tuesday night in February, Andrew received a text from Matt Sehnert, owner of McCook's legendary James Beard Award-winning restaurant. It said: "Are you ready to quit your nine to five and start your entrepreneurial journey in McCook?"

Ambriz said he didn't intend to purchase Sehnert's Bakery & Bieroc Café, yet he couldn't stop himself from dreaming about the possibilities. Matt and his wife, Shelly, invited Alix and Andrew to McCook and gave their full pitch. The Ambrizes left McCook with a pledge to become the business' successors.

Once again, the Ambrizes are proud to call McCook home. Ambriz admits he knows little about running a bakery but living in a supportive community helps dissipate any fears. It also helps to be in network with hundreds of young Nebraskans across the state—many of them entrepreneurs—via Connecting Young Nebraskans (CYN), an affiliated fund of NCF.

Ambriz continues to make time for CYN because of the generous and straightforward feedback it provides. "That's what CYN does for aspiring young leaders," he said. "CYN is a network of people that want as much for you as you want for yourself." ■