

## The momentum behind **A MOVEMENT**



**Jeff Yost, NCF President and CEO**

During one of the most unpredictable years in recent history, Greater Nebraskans refused to give up. We rolled up our sleeves, wiped our brows and continued our march toward a brighter tomorrow in 2020, and we're carrying our momentum into 2021.

Our upward trajectory is apparent in five communities where volunteers recently raised a combined \$3.75 million to pursue hometown dreams. 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. Their success means each will receive a \$250,000 match for a grand total of \$750,000. That money goes straight into their affiliated fund's unrestricted community endowment—a savings account that grows forever and provides perpetual annual payout which offers volunteers opportunities to award locally-controlled grants for community betterment.

Thirteen communities took part in this effort—we call it Building Community Capacity—between 2012 and 2020, including McCook, Nebraska City, Norfolk, Shickley, Brown County, Pender-Thurston, Plattsmouth, Valley County, Columbus, Stuart, Imperial, Howells and Keith County. Campaigns began by investigating the roots of their community assets. Inspired by an inclusive rural development philosophy, volunteers dove deep into what makes their hometowns

unique. These endowments were built by local volunteers inviting friends and neighbors to build community together.

This was about more than money. What people might see from outside —financial capital, success, growth—is only the tip of the iceberg. To reach that point, volunteers build relationships, strategize and plan their next steps behind the scenes. These community leaders turned the spotlight on improving community confidence and advancing a culture where everyone's input matters—essential work that is hard to quantify. To achieve lasting, transformational change, leaders built genuine relationships with their neighbors and championed giving by everyone in the community, whether through dollars, talent, time or creativity.

We anticipated community leaders would gain a new understanding of opportunities in their hometowns. Volunteers exceeded expectations. All told, these communities raised upwards of \$9 million for their unrestricted endowments. They are among the 80 NCF affiliated funds with an unrestricted endowment—46 of which have an annual payout of more than \$10,000. Altogether, these unrestricted endowments total more than \$60 million—a substantial increase from \$12 million in 2012.

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 the movement, too. When regular people realize they can affect change in their communities, anything is possible. ■

## Grant helps connect elders **WITH FAMILY**

The Covid-19 pandemic changed many long-held assumptions in just a few months. One of these assumptions is that we can easily and frequently visit loved ones and friends who are patients or residents of hospitals, assisted living or nursing home facilities.

The Alice DeVoe Donor-Advised Fund, an affiliated fund of Nebraska Community Foundation, and another anonymous donor provided matching grants to NCF affiliated funds to connect and engage elders with family and friends, including electronic devices and complementary equipment. Additional funding was also available for other projects and programs that would address social isolation

due to the Covid-19 pandemic which can be damaging to individuals socially, emotionally, and physically. Applicants were asked to emphasize the ways richer connections among elders would be fostered during this unprecedented time.

"The Keith County Senior Center received a matching grant of \$5,000 to help in remodeling their kitchen," said Richard Johnson, president of the Keith County Senior Center Board. "The senior center not only connects people for lunchtime meals at the center, it is also home base for Meals on wheels. They are very thankful and are looking forward to utilizing these funds in the near future." ■



Our work depends on **YOUR SUPPORT**  
Contribute to our mission at [www.keithcountyfoundation.org](http://www.keithcountyfoundation.org)

Keith County Foundation Fund is an affiliated fund of Nebraska Community Foundation.



## 2021 NEWSLETTER VOLUME 1

*Keith County Foundation Fund is proud to share its vision, mission, and values statements. These guiding principles are referenced routinely as we do our work and grantmaking.*

### OUR VISION

**Enhance Keith County's ability to grow as a community where people want to live, work, learn, have fun, and prosper.**

### OUR MISSION

**To enrich the quality of life in our county-wide community through providing a means for citizens to give, supporting local nonprofit organizations, making grants, partnering with other community groups, and building an endowment to meet future needs.**

### OUR VALUES



#### INTEGRITY

Relationships/partnerships are built on trust, reciprocity, and confidentiality.



#### INCLUSIVITY

We seek to encourage diversity and collaborate with all people, organizations, and groups.



#### VISION

We create opportunity and focus on the future of Keith County.



#### STEWARDSHIP

In partnership with Nebraska Community Foundation, funds are invested prudently and continuously monitored. Donor intent is preserved across generations.

## Message from our **CHAIRWOMAN**



Many in Keith County agree that affordable housing, quality childcare, and first impressions are among our region's most pressing issues. Our Keith County Foundation Fund plays a vital role in grantmaking that will undoubtedly help leverage much-needed funding to assist.

We also realize that our funding alone won't get the job done. We must couple grantmaking with active, effective, informed advocacy. It's about educating ourselves, our donors, and our partners.

In a few short months, volunteers have begun visualizing and fine-tuning dreams. They are working on projects and initiatives that will help us make progress on our key priorities as soon as this current year.

But that's not all.

We have been busy with three other significant endeavors that speak to people attraction, community, and families. It is our intention they become routine practices now and into the future.

Our Big Give event on June 12th deserves to be on your social calendar. Our Big Give committee is working hard to make this inaugural event one for the books (trust me, you won't want to miss it). Our primary goals for this event are two-fold. First, helping our service and relief organizations educate our community by familiarizing us with the 'what' and why they exist. Second, giving donors a voice for your philanthropic dollars by donating to specific needs. Our KCFF helps these organizations and volunteers continue doing their vital work by funding this Big Give platform and matching your donated dollars up to \$40,000.

Our youth have always been important to us. Now we're bringing them into the fold with two initiatives.

We welcome with open arms our first KCFF summer college intern and hometown 2020 OHS graduate, Rachel Orth! Rachel will help co-produce a plan for both our post-Big Give event evaluations and asset mapping specific to our lake residents, which we've longed to do for a while now. She will also network with about twenty peer interns across the state throughout the summer.

Our school-age Youth-Inspired Philanthropy (YIP) has demonstrated what we've known all along. Kids want to belong to and help our community in ways more profound and inspirational than we allow them. If we're going to continue building and fostering a civic-minded culture, we need to begin at the grassroots. Let's help them realize they can make a difference.

If you are interested in becoming involved and would like to help us continue moving forward, consider this a personal invitation. Contact me or any one of our FAC members.

It takes all our assets, gifts, and relationships to create a more robust, thriving community for years to come. ■

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## Berryman Scholarship applications due **JUNE 1**

For nearly a decade now, students who reside in Keith County have benefited from scholarship dollars bequeathed to the Keith County Foundation Fund from the estate of Charles Wilton “Bud” Berryman.

This year will be no different.

With the scholarship committee formed and approved by Nebraska Community Foundation, of which KCFF is an affiliate, applications will be accepted for the Berryman Scholarship until June 1.

The Berryman Education Account provides scholarships for students pursuing post-secondary education. Applicants must reside in Keith County and be starting post-secondary education following a break in education or continuing directly from high school. Scholarship funds must be used to pursue a continuing education course, a degree, or a certificate program at a public accredited community college or an accredited degree-granting college or university.

The scholarship was established in 2012 with donations from the estate of rancher Charles Wilton “Bud” Berryman. Endowments for college scholarships were created by bequests of more than \$170,000 in both Keith and Arthur Counties.

For a Berryman Scholarship application, contact [piercem@mpcc.edu](mailto:piercem@mpcc.edu). ■

## Schimonitz leaves legacy in **KEITH COUNTY**



Keith County’s future depends upon the continued generosity of donors who have lived, worked, and played in Keith County during their lifetime. Some of our legacy donors have called Keith County their home their whole life. Kenny Schimonitz was one of those special people. Ken lived in Keith County his whole life. Heck, he lived in the same house his whole life!

Ken personified all things characteristic of Nebraskans: humble, hard-working, frugal, AND selfless, to name a few. In early 2021, Kenny gifted KCFF with an endowed gift of \$268,000. To his credit, Ken bequeathed other Keith County organizations gifts from his estate, exemplifying his love and appreciation for the home he called Keith County.

Ken was born at Sutherland to Stephen and Martha Schimonitz on January 18, 1938. He grew up on their family farm, south of Paxton, and graduated from Paxton High School in 1956, and lived in the same house his whole life. Ken began farming with his father and brother, Louis, and continued farming all his life, except for the time he served in the U.S. Army in the late 1950s.

Ken retired in 2009 but continued living on the farm until 2017. He loved the outdoors, enjoyed fishing and hunting both waterfowl and deer, loved traveling and flying with friend Fred Lierly in Fred’s plane, and liked an occasional visit to the casinos. Ken was a member of St. Pat’s Catholic Church and American Legion, both in Paxton, the Elks Club and Eagles Aires #2839.

We’re humbled and honored by Kenny’s gift. His legacy will live on forever in our community, eternally making dreams come true. ■



## KCFF helps bridge the **LEARNING GAP**

Nebraska Community Foundation’s Bridging the Learning Gap effort invested a total of nearly \$1.2 million in 51 Greater Nebraska schools last year. KCFF took advantage of the opportunity to award \$20,000 in grants to Ogallala Public Schools and Paxton Consolidated Schools. The money went toward Chromebooks, mental health resources, Logitech Crayon Pencils, and improved internet access for all students. The impact was immediate.

“Ogallala Public School District has greatly appreciated the support from this grant,” said Teacher Heather Orth. “Our kindergarten students have received a huge benefit from the ability to have touch screen computers available to them. When I walk into a room where students are using them, rapt engagement and interaction with learning concepts is happening almost effortlessly as students touch the screen and the computer responds. This integration of technology is helping to meet student needs intuitively right before our eyes.” ■

## Youth-Inspired **PHILANTHROPY**



We had an amazing time during the youth inspired philanthropy event, led by retired teachers Barb Jeffres and Mary Jensen.

We were blown away by the talent of our youth in the community.

Congratulations to each of the four \$1,000 winners: Caden Rhoades with “Help the Lost and Hurt,” Maccoy Morken with “Tech Take Care,” Alexis Gerih and Guliza Rosales with “Project Uplift,” and Gaby,



Scan this code with your mobile phone to watch a video and learn more!

## Welcome home, **RACHEL**

KCFF has completed the interviewing and hiring process and is proud to welcome our first Hometown Intern Rachel Orth! Rachel is a driven UNL student looking for ways to improve rural towns by surveying and observing needs and using problem-solving and critical thinking skills to aid in community engagement and involvement. Rachel graduated from Ogallala High School in 2020 and it’s fantastic to have her back this summer! Welcome home, Rachel!

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

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. 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. ■



## Library sparks **IMAGINATION**

Support for a local affiliate of Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (DPIIL) is growing quickly. Keith County Foundation Fund was proud to provide a grant of \$3,000 joining numerous organizations—the PEO Sisterhood, Chapter HI of Ogallala; Ogallala Optimists; and Ogallala Kiwanis—that are showing enthusiastic support for this endeavor.

Started by country legend Dolly Parton in 1995, the Imagination Library book gifting program sends free books by mail each month to children from birth to age five, no matter their family’s income. Importantly, studies have shown that having books in the home is a key factor in health and development as well as academic success.

The steering committee is working to raise \$16,000 to fund the program for five years. With early childhood development identified as a top community priority, the hope is to raise even more to sustain the program well into the future and to complement all other efforts to help local children and families thrive.

If you want to help put more books in the hands of Keith County kids, please send your support to Keith County Foundation Fund (P.O. Box 104) with “DPIIL of Keith County” in the memo line. Contributions may also be dropped off at Pinnacle Bank in Ogallala. ■