

dedicated to the improvement and long-term viability of our community

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### keith county

dedicated to the improvement and long-term viability of our community

info@keithcountyfoundation.org

# **President's Message**

Hello from Keith County!

Keith County Foundation Fund has received an anonymous gift of over \$7,000,000! Together with our existing endowment, and the success of our Building Community Capacity Campaign, our endowed funds will now exceed \$9,000,000!

The implications of this money is endless. KCFF will be able to use the earnings from these endowed funds to literally shape the future of Keith County. Payouts from our endowments are expected to exceed \$400,000 EVERY YEAR!



We are very excited to share this news. On June 25, 2019, we held an event where we shared the news with 140 attendees from all over Keith County. Everyone was stunned and amazed at the generosity of the donor, and the possibilities for our future.

Separate from the large gift, our Building Community Capacity challenge of \$500,000 has been met. The Sherwood Foundation will match our challenge up to \$250,000! It is worth saying that we met this challenge without using any money from the \$7,000,000 gift. This is a credit to all of our donor partners who see the incredible opportunities we have with a large endowment.

Our Fund Advisory Committee has had a busy summer. Several members have attended webinars, meetings, and have traveled to visit other communities to expand our vision for what is possible in Keith County.

Finally, KCFF wants to thank Nebraska Community Foundation for their guidance and expertise in putting this significant gift to work in Keith County. Because of the education and training we have participated in through NCF, our FAC is in a

good position to make grants that impact the future of Keith County.

Sincerely,

Eric Duhachek, Chair Keith County Foundation Fund





# Jeff Yost: Unrestricted Opportunity

CEO Nebraska Community Foundation



Think of all the ways your community has evolved over the past 20 years. Change is happening at lightning speed in ways we could never have imagined. Children born today will occupy jobs we can't even conceive of. There is no way to predict what the world will look like in another 20 years, so how can Nebraska's community leaders invest wisely for the future?

Nebraska Community Foundation's answer to this question is simple: build an unrestricted endowment for your hometown. Flexible, locally controlled opportunity capital that can be used to foment positive change – the kind of change that may otherwise not occur. The kind of change that cannot be anticipated today.

Similar to a community savings account, unrestricted endowments are an important tool to keep hometowns across Nebraska growing, thriving and improving for future generations. While a portion of the income earned by an unrestricted endowment is granted annually to fund projects and programs to benefit the community, the principal remains intact and grows every year. Forever.

Forty-three Greater Nebraska communities in the Nebraska Community Foundation network now have unrestricted endowments that are generating at least \$10,000 in payout each year. These investment earnings are funding projects and programs that are improving quality of life and attracting young people back to Nebraska's hometowns. They are providing discretionary capital that affords communities the opportunity to innovate and take important risks. Today in Nebraska, unrestricted endowment payout is being used to support initiatives like early childhood development, arts and culture, leadership development and youth engagement.

Challenge grants have been central to the success of these communities, in particular, an opportunity in partnership with Nebraska Community Foundation and The Sherwood Foundation of Omaha. As of the end of 2018, 16 communities across the state, ranging in size from over 6,000 to only 83 people, increased their communities' unrestricted endowments by \$6,639,389 in a matter of just three years. They include: Atkinson, Brown County, Boone County, Butler County, Byron, Calamus Area, Diller, Eustis, Friend, Laurel, O'Neill, Pender/Thurston, Plattsmouth, Red Cloud, Rock County, and Valley County.

Through their affiliated funds with Nebraska Community Foundation, each community worked toward its ambitious fundraising goal by asking friends and neighbors to envision a brighter future for their hometown and to invest in it by giving to a community unrestricted endowment.

Today, these communities have far greater grant making capacity, some more than \$50,000 per year. Because endowments are permanent, and the investments are managed for growth, the annual amount available for granting continues to grow as well. The real value of an unrestricted endowment is that, in 20 years, a community will be able to unleash its energy in a future far different from today, without restriction and without the burden of being able to predict what the future holds.

Volunteer fundraisers across the NCF network will admit that asking someone to give to an unrestricted endowment is different than asking for a donation to build a new community center or swimming pool. That's why Nebraska Community Foundation provides peer mentoring, training, and technical support that empowers volunteers to capitalize on the strong and trusting relationships that exist in Nebraska's hometowns. Having a locally controlled, unrestricted endowment will allow you, and the generation of leaders who come after you, to have the discretionary dollars to make the most of opportunities continuous change will bring.

# Leaving a Legacy – Guy's Way

Seven million dollar gifts get a lot of attention and fanfare. Donations of \$100,000, \$10,000 or \$5,000 are difference makers, for sure. But gifts of all of sizes are critical to moving a nonprofit's mission forward. Like a 401K or savings account, consistent donations to an organization allow anyone to make a more significant impact than they might realize possible. When sustained over a long period, even a small monthly donation can add up to thousands of dollars in a donor's lifetime.

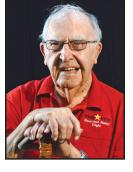
Our Keith County Foundation Fund has donors who have realized for years the power of monthly donations. Gold level Guy Bechtel is one of them. He has not only contributed ten dollars each month, he has made a planned gift to our Fund, as well. Guy began his legacy in our Unrestricted Endowment Fund in 2003 when Larry Callen issued a challenge grant to our community.

"I didn't want to dip into any savings plans at that point in my life. I asked Pete (Peterson) if I could make contributions on an installment plan. Pete checked with the Nebraska Community Foundation to see if monthly contributions were an option, as no other donors in Keith County had chosen that option at that time." And so it began.

Guy has been a loyal supporter of Ogallala/Keith County through the years, whether he's donating his time or money. Guy certainly realizes the arts lift us to make a better community. He is a staunch supporter of the regional arts council, band, vocal and drama departments at Ogallala Public Schools, and currently volunteers on Wednesdays at the Kenfield Petrified Wood Art Gallery. He also served nine years on the city council.

"You gotta be active as long as you can."

You are so right, Guy. Thanks for continuing to make a difference. We salute you, sir.



# **New Library Nears Completion**

Ogallala's new Kathleen Lute Public Library is getting closer to completion. Ogallala City Manager Bruce Smith says, "The parking lot is done, the building shell is completed, and the roof is on. Contractors will be starting on the wiring, plumbing and exterior finishes soon." Funds are still being raised for about \$100,000 in final landscaping, furnishing and audio/visual equipment expenses. The building is expected to be completed by the end of the year, with move-in slated for the spring of 2020.

Elise Lockhart of the Ogallala Library Building Advisory Committee says, "We're so grateful for the support of all our generous donors, and we're in the midst of planning a special donor recognition wall in the entryway to honor their contributions." She adds, "During this final push to project completion, we invite supporters to remember the library in end-of-year planning and gift-giving."



by Pam Abbott

### kcff

### **Bus Tour to Iowa and Minnesota**

In September, Ken Snyder and I, along with 26 other Nebraskans, toured Iowa and Minnesota communities. We shared what great programs and assets are unique to our communities as a result of the work of our partnerships at the community levels.

#### "Wisely granting \$400,000 is a big responsibility. It's obvious we have to learn as much as we can about good grant-making." — Ken Snyder

Ken and I were especially in tune with these communities' successes because, at the end of our fiscal year, June 2020, KCFF will be able to grant more than \$200,000. That will ultimately grow to approximately \$400,000 annually in the 2021 granting year and each year after that. As Ken states, "Wisely granting \$400,000 is a big responsibility. It's obvious we have to learn as much as we can about good grant-making."



Some of the impactful and unique community projects we saw included education, brain health, poverty issues, housing, tourism, and the arts. The overall theme, though, was what we refer to in the Nebraska Community Foundation network as 'margin of excellence' investing – when a community identifies its current assets, it spends more on that project to make it excel above and beyond the ordinary.

Our love for our communities and how we invest our grant-making money was a common denominator, but where those funds come from

makes us each unique. Our NCF affiliated funds (like KCFF) uses the earnings from the invested principal of our endowed funds. That money comes from the generosity of donors who have, or are, living in our communities and want to see our community(ies) thrive. Each NCF affiliated fund decides how to best use those investment earnings. In Iowa, gaming money is their granting source. That money is distributed using a formula per capita to each community and each community decides how they will use that money.

Winterset, Iowa, is home to John Wayne and is located in Madison County. (Think "The Bridges of Madison County" novel by Robert James Waller and movie starring Clint Eastwood and Meryl Streep). They have embraced and honored their fallen military and also historical building sites with plaques that give a brief history of the building's owners/shops over time. You can bet there's a bridges tour, too.

Dubuque, Iowa, gave us insight into what they are doing to promote brain health (aka mental health) both proactively and reactively. At the education level, they are focusing on quality childcare available for all economic classes from birth to three-year-olds as a proactive step toward reducing mental health issues within the home and child. Public schools are offering therapy dogs as optional calming agents, and their foundations are providing manipulative tools to aide with stress for students. Additional mental health counselors have been added for reach, as well. Law enforcement and healthcare have partnered to provide calming or destress-related holding rooms at hospitals for the safety of both the individual requiring healthcare and law enforcement/healthcare providers.

Mason City, Iowa, a community of approximately 28,000, has undertaken a \$38 million renovation project along their riverfront that includes multifamily residential housing and businesses. Mason City is also known for the last remaining Frank Lloyd Wright-designed hotel in the world and the first Prairie-style house in Iowa. Their sculpture path strategically placed through their downtown business area was phenomenal. I asked, "How did you afford to do that?" They have 50 life-size sculptures from various bronze artists on loan as a means



of exposure to the art and the individual artists' works. I asked if they kept track of any gain economically to businesses since they constructed the Sculpture Path. The said 'yes!' but they didn't have the numbers readily available. Occasionally, the community votes on the statue they like best and purchases it from the artist as a permanent work to the community.

### "Art makes people look at the world in a different way." — Mayor Bob, Mason City, IA

Our stop in Austin, MN, was most memorable for the intermediate school we visited (5th & 6th graders). This school was immersed in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math), and it showed the minute we entered the door. Showcases of robotics projects and their trophies were encased in glass. Floors measuring distance in their tile design and measurement on the walls (imagine "I'm as tall as...Charlie Brown's Christmas tree, length of large intestines, Curiosity-one of NASA's Mar's Rovers, etc.). There were inspirational quotes about curiosity and never giving up.



Most impressive was the Hormel Foundation's commitment to providing 'margin of excellence' money to education and educators' commitment to foster inspiration and curiosity to students by educating themselves further. Hormel sponsored free tuition for any teacher wishing to get their Master's degree in their area of expertise: science, math, art, technology, history, etc. It was a perfect example of a 'margin of excellence' project. Contractual agreements to retain their talents for a specific length of time were designed, too.

NCF has been a guide in supporting further education of ourselves and broadening our network of ideas and inspiration. In addition to this tour, we have had discussions with data experts that have gathered information about Keith County. We hope to use this information to dive deeper into conversations that will lead to us being a catalyst to dreaming

# Bus Tour (continued)

bigger in Keith County. Stay tuned. We plan to share this information with anyone interested in the community sometime early 2020.

"Curiosity – The habit of searching for reasons and answers without being compelled to do so." – I.J. Holton Intermediate School, Austin, MN

Here's a list of topics we've participated in learning about this year:

- Dream Switch The Arts McCook/Norfolk/Ord
- Bridges Out of Poverty NCF; Lincoln
- Data/Statistics sessions with:
- Don Macke, Economist, Lincoln
- David Drozd, Demographer, UN/Omaha
- Ben Winchester, Rural Sociologist, Univ of MN Extension
- Bus Tour Iowa/Minnesota Community Foundations
- New Faces in Our Community

### Joe & Gerri Thomas Family



1. Introduce yourself and your family (where you grew up, connections to Keith County or Nebraska, education, employment, hobbies / passions, etc.). We are Joe and Gerri Thomas and are blessed with five beautiful daughters, Danielle, Ella, Lexa, Juliana and Eliana. Joe is currently the VP of Evaluation and Research for Junior Achievement USA. He keeps an office in Colorado Springs, but spends

most of his working hours working out of his home office. His hobbies include flying, aquaponics and consulting in applied statistics. I try to keep busy with home school activities and my side hustle is dabbling in real estate. Ella is a passionate dog enthusiast with varied interests such as welding, sewing and rehabbing anything (currently a 1990 RV). Lexa loves art. She sketches, paints, does computer home design, including floorplans and interior design. Juliana is our resident scientist and Eliana loves all things dance and drama. Joe grew up overseas (Europe and Asia) in a military family and I am from the Pacific Northwest, but we have both lived in various cities across the country including LA, Baltimore, DC, Portland, and Southeast Florida. We are now proud to call Lemoyne, Nebraska, "home."

**2. Tell us something unique about yourself (selves).** We may be considered unique for our zest for exploring and trying new things. Joe's career has lead us on plenty of adventures and enabled us to thrive in different geographic and economic climates, including living in and traveling through 20 states in an RV. (Now you can see why we home school!)

3. What brought you to Keith County? Initially, we were visiting the lake from Colorado Springs. The more we came, the longer we stayed and the girls absolutely fell in love with the lake, nature and animals. It started to make sense to invest in a lake cabin and plan for relocating in the distant future when Joe retired. It felt right from the minute we broke ground working with Mick and Charlie on our building project. They gave us a lot of great advice and a fine introduction to living in the Sandhills. The folks at the Lemoyne Senior Center extended a very gracious welcome to our family and our neighbors were fabulous at making sure we were supported as newbies on the block. The local churches also extended a welcoming hand and have been instrumental in helping us meet our Keith County neighbors. We were easily convinced we wanted to be a part of

• Thrive Early Childhood Conference 2019 - Kearney,

- Regional Community Affiliated Funds Peer Learning Big Springs
- Sherwood Challenge Peer Learning Session (#4) Howells
- Weave: The Social Fabric Project Round Table with David Brooks -North Platte
- Weave: The Social Fabric Project/Aspen Institute Washington, D.C.
- Community Foundations of Canada Conference Victoria, B.C.
- Community visits to Scottsbluff, Gering, Columbus, Norfolk, Wayne, Laurel, Ord, Burwell
- Early Childhood Education: Nebraska Children and Family Foundation and Panhandle Partnership
- NE Dept of Economics and UNL Extension regional meeting
- Housing Rehab & Renew Tired Housing: Why, Who's Doing it? and How?
- · Flood Relief updates

this community and experience all that Keith County had to offer full time. Joe arranged to work remotely and we officially moved to Lemoyne in August of 2018.

4. What community assets do you appreciate most about Keith County/Ogallala? (list as many assets as you wish) The most obvious for us at first was the lake and sandy beaches, and the unspoiled natural environment surrounding it. Having a local community bank like Adams was unique to us and we appreciated having their services to make the transition seamless. We were amazed at the quality of the welcome center, the library, recreation center, parks and roads which you don't always see in small towns. The investments in the downtown area and additions to hotel and retail spaces have been added assets since we arrived. The volunteer fire and rescue team is mindblowing.

5. What surprises you most about Keith County? I don't believe I have ever use the word "altruism" to describe anything from personal experience until we moved here. We have a benchmark now and have seen "the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others" played out time and time again in our local community. It has been a priceless gift for our growing girls to see firsthand. 6. What do you dream Keith County/Ogallala to look like in 15 years? Keith County is rich in opportunities just based on landscape alone. We have been given one of the biggest assets in the Midwest with our lake and recreational activities, both which are natural draws for people. We would love to see more invitations to retirees and pre-retirees to relocate here to share in what we have to offer and to contribute. Providing seniors with housing and resources to stay in our community would also be a valuable investment in the future. It might also result in a potential outflow of jobs to attract young professionals.

Notes from the younger generation: It would be nice to have some more open gathering places in the community. Recreation opportunities such as putt-putt golf, a dog park, bike trails, a zip line or an outdoor skate park, and a private swimming beach with concessions for residents during peak season. The girls are delighted that both Driftwood and Lakefront Express have a kid-friendly atmosphere. Icing on the cake would be a Chik Fil A with a Play Land off of I-80.

**7.** In your opinion, what change agents would be instrumental in making that vision a reality? A collaboration of leadership and various government entities to update the Comprehensive Plan and provide a feasible framework going forward. Each goal appears to hinge on meeting contingencies such as availability of land, designated financial resources, local resources (e.g., contractors, professional services, zoning approvals). A thriving community desires quality childcare, roads to early childhood education, sufficient housing, appealing physical features like trails and amenities, a vital downtown and economic incentives for growth and retention. All of these require planning and projecting. A general consensus to get started on creating a "map" to make it all happen is all we need to get the community to get on board.

# Charitable giving does not require great wealth

It requires generosity of spirit - the desire to share what you have for the benefit of others. So many of us have a desire to help in other ways - the challenge is how to best realize it.

### Lifetime Legacy Endowment Donors since 2003

#### Platinum \$25,000+

#### Anonymous

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#### **GOI** \$5,001-\$24,999

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#### Contributions & Memorials received since April 1, 2019

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- In Memory of Lester & Patricia Rhodes Kenny Rhodes, Big Springs, NE
- In Memory of Norma Barbrick Beverly Pollack, Ogallala
- In Memory of Walter Tressler Ann Herbel, Scottsbluff, NE
- In Memory of Marilyn Knaub Dr. Bart & Angie Kolste, Ogallala
- In Memory of LouAnn Coe Claude & Christine Coe, Charlotte, NC

#### In Memory of (continued)

In Memory of Carl & Zada Jensen Thomas C. Jensen, Tucson, AZ

In Memory of Jerry Mears Robert & Katheryn Elliot, Denver, CO

#### Collister Park / Splash Pad Project

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Keith County Foundation Fund P.O. Box 104 • Ogallala, NE 69153





### Keith County Foundation Fund

Funds Statement – June 30, 2019

General Fund \$317,377
Scholarships \$144,822
Ogallala Library Fund \$298,702
FAC Endowment\$7,344,642
Paxton Library Fund \$12,231
Brule Cemetery Fund \$7,464
Ogallala Arts Endowment \$9,039
Legacy Endowment \$1,381,219
Holzfaster Board Endowment \$40,923
Berryman Education Account \$212,885
Wendt Account \$3,003
Total\$9,762,307
Legacy Commitments
Total\$9,762,307



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All monetary gifts are tax deductible.

Mail to: KCFF P.O. Box 104 Ogallala, NE 69153

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