



2024 NEWSLETTER Volume 1 Digital Edition

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

Provide leadership

that promotes collaboration, cooperation and partnerships within the Keith County community

Encourage charitable giving

to build endowments and other community-focused funds

Provide stewardship

in partnership with Nebraska Community Foundation that provides guardianship and investment of funds

Make impactful grants

addressing community needs and opportunities through high-impact, sustainable grant-making

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Send your email information to
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KCFF to Participate in NCF Hometown Intern Program: Most selected for 2024

Keith County Foundation Fund will once again participate in the Nebraska Community Foundation Hometown Intern Program. This will be KCFF's third year of participation in the now four-year-old program; a program that has grown and evolved into an impressive curriculum used to offer local college students an opportunity to design and work on projects which recognize and focus on local assets. Through these projects, through peer learning, and with the help of NCF and KCFF members, interns are able to view their hometowns through a different lens, often with new recognition and appreciation.

Each intern will work from their hometown for the summer. HTI projects will vary depending on community needs and the talents and interests of each intern. Although statewide participants will meet and work together on a variety of assignments and several peer learning sessions, each intern will have an experience unique to that intern. The purpose of the program is to create lasting connections and provide valuable experience that will impact the interns throughout their lives. The work of the interns will promote community development locally and statewide in meaningful ways and identify and utilize community assets already in place. Significantly important is the way the program fosters a positive emotional connection with these special hometowns.

The 2024 KCFF Hometown Intern, Caleb Most, was selected earlier this year. Most is currently a first-year student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln where he studies agricultural education. He brings with him an impressive academic resume and a strong connection to his community through extracurricular activities. Most, quite impressively, received national recognition as the 2023 National FFA Organization Extemporaneous Public Speaking Winner. He was also the recipient of the KCFF 2023 Cliff and Ruth Hermance Scholarship. In addition, Most's roots reach deeply into Keith County, as a fifth generation Keith Countian.



Caleb Most

In 2023, NCF hometown interns represented fifteen Nebraska communities. Many interns reported positive experiences. A compelling desire to follow the success of the projects and continue with the program explains why some choose to return after one year. KCFF's past interns include Rachel Orth and Miah Hoppens. Orth has continued to work with NCF since her year as a KCFF intern and has even helped with the intern program.

KCFF is excited that Ogallala will be the host city for the first NCF HTI peer learning sessions planned this summer in May. When Hoppens was an intern, she had hoped to invite her fellow interns to Keith County, believing that they would fall in love with what she loved, Keith County. Hosting the peer sessions will now provide the opportunity for the interns to see first-hand what Miah recognized, the beauty of the geography and more importantly the beauty of the people. ■

Investing In

KCFF Offers Childcare Provider Incentive Program

Propelling childcare providers from the status of great to even better is the goal of the Keith County Foundation Fund and its cash incentive program that was initiated in January.

Licensed childcare providers in Keith County have the opportunity to participate in the Step Up To Quality (SUTQ) program and earn cash incentives for achieving specific levels. Providers who complete Step 4 will earn \$5,000; and those who attain Step 5, will be awarded \$10,000, for a total of \$15,000.

"We want to show our providers that we appreciate their efforts in always striving to be their best," said Angie Kolste, KCFF chair.

In 2019, KCFF determined early childhood education to be a priority. Early childhood education and the care of children is far reaching and affects children and families, the work force, and a community's overall wellbeing, Kolste said.

SUTQ, a program of the Nebraska Department of Education, offers childcare providers a pathway, for the betterment of their children's and families' futures, to grow their programs beyond basic childcare. The five-step program is self-paced and includes educational, coaching and resource components, all of which focus on a path to take quality care to the next level. Those qualifying for the local incentive program through KCFF will have three years to complete the program.

Laura Kemp, Keith County Communities for Kids (C4K) coordinator, said childcare programs have changed during the last 20 years and parents want to ensure that there is a focus on early childhood development in their childcare programs.

"SUTQ is a great program to help with that," Kemp said. "The resources that are available for providers are huge, especially because it is harder to get these in the more rural settings. This is a chance for all childcare providers and families to have the opportunity for continued growth and education."

Communities for Kids, a state-wide initiative created in response to community requests for assistance with shortages of high-quality early care and education programs, endorses the SUTQ program.

The SUTQ program encourages participation from licensed family childcare homes and childcare centers, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, public school-operated early childhood programs and licensed preschools. In addition, the program also offers parents a guideline as to what to look for in regard to quality, and addresses the topics of curriculum, learning environments, teacher-child interactions, child outcomes, professional development and training, family engagement and partnerships and

program administration. SUTQ also lists providers and step levels achieved for parents' consideration.

"Newcomers or potential workforce recruits to our community are including quality childcare in their priority lists before accepting a job offer," Kolste said. "SUTQ ratings help newcomers know and understand that quality matters here."

High Plains Early Learning Connection coordinator Cheryl Roche said the importance of children having access to quality early learning education and childcare is crucial.

"Ninety percent of children's brains are developed before age 5," Roche said. "Those who provide care to our youngest citizens make a tremendous impact not only on the children but also on families, so it is important that they know and understand how to support early development and learning. Participating in SUTQ gives them the tools to be successful."

According to the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, parents are children's first teachers, but most young children are not with their parents for many hours of the day. In Nebraska, more than 72 percent of children under age 6 live in homes where all adults work. Who is caring for children and how they are doing it matters greatly. The safety, relationships, and interactions between young children and their parents, caregivers, and teachers are the most important elements of a high-quality experience, according to the BECI.

Kemp said it is important parents have choices regarding childcare as providers help to build their children's foundation as learning begins at birth. The KCFF's incentive program can help providers bolster their income while upping the quality of care they provide.

"This program with KCFF is a great partnership not only for C4K but the families and childcare providers of Keith County," Kemp said.

Kemp encourages childcare providers in Keith County who are licensed and in good standing with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to apply for the incentive program. For applications, additional information, and requirements for the KCFF incentive program, providers can contact Kemp via email at c4kcoordinatorkc@gmail.com. ■

For More Information on the
KCFF Childcare Provider Incentive Program

c4kcoordinatorkc@gmail.com

For Information About Step Up To Quality

stepuptoquality.ne.gov

Keith County

Register for 2024 KC Big Give Now Through April 15

In 2023, thirty-nine charitable organizations joined together to raise over \$262,000 through the Keith County Big Give. Since its inception, Keith County Foundation Fund has been instrumental in establishing and nurturing this annual giving event through financial support which includes the valuable contribution of matching funds. Last year KCFF gave \$60,000 in matching funds. This year those matching funds will jump to \$75,000, providing a strong incentive for donors to maximize contributions as they support local projects during the two-week event.

In order to participate, charitable organizations must be designated as a 501c3 or have a 501c3 financial sponsor. Registration for those wanting to participate is open now through April

15. It is important for groups to get registered early so promotional materials can be designed, printed, and distributed. All organizations are able to utilize the KC Big Give website to get their message and project information out to as many people as possible. In addition, the KC Big Give promotes the event with videos, radio spots, print ads and other marketing tools. Content Open Houses have been scheduled to help groups unfamiliar with the event. Organizations can attend an open house to receive help as they design their web page and prepare to share about their projects. ■

For information about the KC Big GIVE or to learn how to register, email to: keithcountybiggive@gmail.com



Big GIVE Content Open Houses

Open Houses held at MPCC Ogallala Campus

Tuesday April 16th 5-7 pm

Monday April 22nd 5-7 pm

Tuesday April 23rd 5-7 pm

For More Information Email: keithcountybiggive@gmail.com

Big Give Project Follow-Up

The Keith County Big Give offers local residents the opportunity to support the projects they back and endorse. Last year the Ogallala Regional Arts Council used the KC Big Give platform to raise funds to bring the Missoula Children's Theatre back to Ogallala after a lapse of several years. With the help of ORAC and the Ogallala Optimists, the company was able to return, marking the 30th year Ogallala children were able to benefit from the program.

The theatre troupe plans, auditions, practices, and performs a play within a week. With each performance there are opportunities for youth grades kindergarten-12 to be cast in a role or help with production. Approximately 50-



60 youth participated in Ogallala's 2024 production of "Peter and Wendy." Volunteers from ORAC were involved to provide help with the auditions, rehearsals, and two performances. ■

BERRYMAN SCHOLARSHIP

Applications for the Berryman Scholarship, administered through the Keith County Foundation Fund, will be accepted until June 1, 2024.

To be eligible for the scholarship, the student must be a Keith County resident pursuing a post-secondary education following a break in education, a current college/university student, or a traditional student continuing directly from high school to post-secondary education.

* **Preference given to a non-traditional student pursuing a post-secondary education.**

The application must be postmarked by June 1, 2024, and mailed to: Keith County Foundation Fund, Scholarship Committee PO Box 104, Ogallala, NE 69153.

For further information, email Mary Pierce at piercem@mpcc.edu or go to keithcountyfoundation.org/berrymanscholarship



You can enrich your hometown's future. Consider leaving just five percent of your assets to your favorite Nebraska hometown charity or to Keith County Foundation Fund to benefit all our communities. When you "LEAVE FIVE," you can secure your family's legacy and help your hometown thrive.

10 TOOLS FOR CHARITABLE GIFT PLANNING

- 1 CHARITABLE BEQUEST** – A gift that leaves a legacy
- 2 GIFT OF RETIREMENT PLANS** – Avoids potential double taxation
- 3 GIFT OF LIFE INSURANCE** – Easy, convenient and flexible
- 4 DONOR-ADVISED FUND** – Maximum tax benefits and grantmaking flexibility
- 5 CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY** – Provides lifetime income
- 6 GIFT OF SECURITIES** – Offers multiple tax benefits
- 7 GIFT OF AG COMMODITIES** – A tax-wise gift compared to cash
- 8 GIFT OF REAL ESTATE** – Provides significant tax advantages
- 9 CHARITABLE REMAINDER TRUST** – Increases income and bypasses capital gains taxes
- 10 GIVE IT TWICE TRUST** – Helps provide for family and charity



Excellence. Accountability. Impact.™

Confirmed in Compliance with National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations.

YOUR FREE ONLINE RESOURCE FOR CHARITABLE GIFT PLANNING
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www.keithcountyfoundation.org