

Blaine County Area Community Foundation Making An Impact

The Blaine County Area Community Foundation is pleased to report the impact made in the area and reported in their 2022 newsletter they had awarded \$7,750.00 in grants in 2021. Total grants awarded since 2009 total \$77,500.00.

Impact grant making included:

- Village of Brewster: Propane for the Brewster Community Center.

- Village of Halsey: Halsey Community Building air conditioning system.

- Purdum Rural Fire: Assisted with the cost of a new P40 tanker.

- Blaine County Rescue: Continuing education costs, equipment updates and page my cell service.

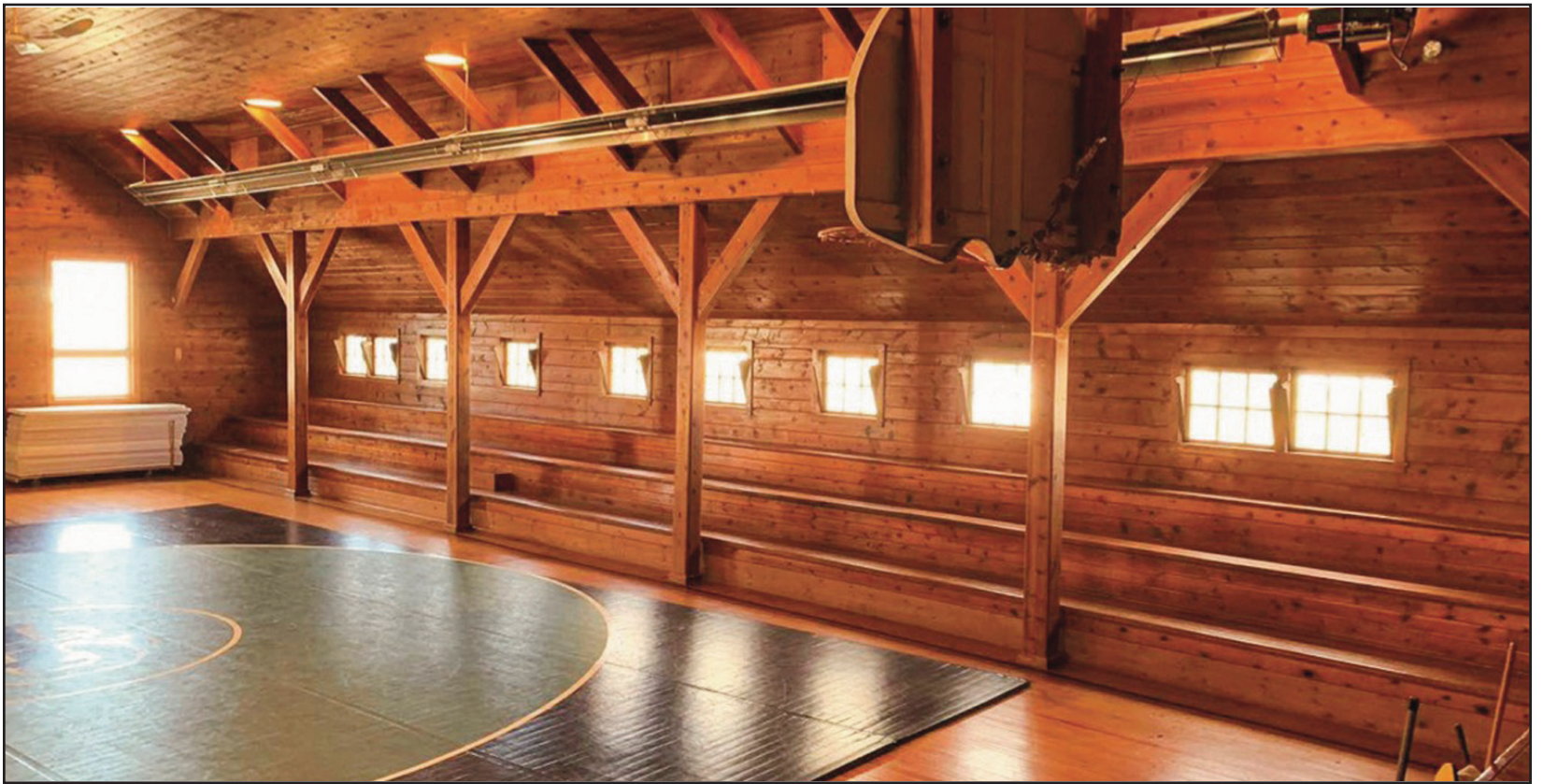
- Sandhills Heritage Museum: Operating expenses.

- Nebraskans for Hereford Heritage: Display case.

- Sandhills FBLA: Assisted with youth activities.

- Village of Dunning: Dunning Community Hall door replacement.

TLC, Inc., Craig and Carol Thompson have given back to their community through the Blaine County Area Community Foundation with a gift of stock to the Unre-



MATT ZUTAVERN PHOTO

The Dunning Community Hall was built in 1938 by the Works Progress Administration under the Roosevelt Administration following WWII. It is a beautiful stucco structure with a pine interior and oak floor. The building has been used for many events including weddings, basketball games, dances, craft shows, and “picture shows.” Currently, Sandhills Public Schools utilizes the hall for Sandhills-Thedford Knights wrestling as well as award banquets. The Blaine County Area Community Foundation has been a proud supporter of the Dunning Community Hall. Grants have supported restroom renovations, sidewalk and access improvements, maintenance, and waterline repair.

stricted Endowment Account and by also establishing the Thompson Family Scholarship Ac-

count.

The Thompson family ranch was established in 1909 by Lawrence Thompson, Craig’s grandfather. Having been in the community for decades, the Thompson family feels it is important to give back.

“We have five children, and all have gone on to be successful in their chosen field,” Carol said. “They learned from this community that hard work is important and that you must give back.”

The Thompson Family Scholarship Account will provide scholarships to graduating seniors and those currently pursuing a course leading to a Vocational Technical Certificate or an Associate Degree at a Community College and/or two-year college or trade school. The annual payout will be distributed to Sandhills Public Schools to be awarded as scholarships in amounts of no less than \$1,000 per recipient.

The mission of the

BCACF is to promote, protect and ensure the past, present and future of the Blaine County Area.

Serving on the advisory committee is Sue Clark, Becky Collier, Russ DeNaeyer, JD Furrow, Shirley Gouldie, Dawn Hasebroock, Ron Hasebroock, Bailey Maca, Jack Moody, Pam Moody, Amy Simonson, J.W. Simonson, Elaine Zutavern, and student members, Andrew Furrow, Emily Martindale, Rhett McFadden, Becca Smith, and Charlsie

Teahon.

If you have a desire to leave a legacy and give to the Blaine County Area Community Foundation Fund you may contact Jana Jensen at jana.jensen@nebcommfound.org or by calling 308-588-6299 for more information.

Contributions may also be mailed to Blaine County Area Community Foundation Fund, P.O. Box 84, Dunning, NE 68833.

SJNSB Annual Conference Set For January 21

Linda Teahon

“Sunny Days, Starry Nights” is this year’s theme for the Sandhills Journey National Scenic Byway annual conference being held Saturday, January 21st at the One Box Convention Center in Broken Bow.

The day starts with a business meeting at 11:00 a.m.

The schedule for the day is:

1:00 - 5:00 p.m. is the BYWAY SHOWCASE featuring many vendors from central and western Nebraska.

Those vendors include: the Mullen Art Center; Horizons Without Bounds-Agri/Eco/History Tourism from Cairo; Grand Island Visitors Center; Audrey Powles Photography from Bingham; With Love Photography from Thedford; John Hunt-Author of Broken Bow; T & J Western Works at Mullen; The Vault from Cairo; CaLinda’s Pot Shop and Art Gallery from Ashby; Lingonberry, Mullen; Round House B & B of Broken Bow; Klitter

Meadows from Ashby; Chandlers Honey at Anselmo and The Shed Crafters at Ansley.

2:00 p.m. - Geri Proctor from the Nebraska National Forest will give an update on the fire recovery.

3:00 p.m. - Jenna Bartja, Nebraska Tourism Commission will talk about tourism throughout Nebraska.

5:00 p.m. Social Hour
6:00 p.m. - Dinner by Smokin’ Hot Catering of Merna.

Keynote speaker is Jenna Bartja presenting a program about star gazing in central Nebraska.

Award presentations will be made to the SJNSB Business of the Year, Friend of the Byway, Frontline Employee of the Byway and finally the Byway Enhancement Award.

The morning and afternoon events are free and open to the public. Tickets for the banquet are \$25 and can be reserved by calling 308-430-0786.

This conference is important to all businesses along the Byway stretching from Grand Island to Alliance.

MARCIA HORA

Western Nebraska state senators are working hard for this part of the state and are sponsoring bills to help rebuild the Nebraska 4-H Camp in the Nebraska National Forest near Halsey, move the headquarters for the Game and Parks Commission to Sidney, and level the playing field to open the door to interests for proposed racinos in North Platte, Ogallala and Gering after Nebraska voters amended the state constitution in 2020 to allow casinos at horse tracks.

State Senators Mike Jacobson of North Platte and Tom Brewer of Gordon have co-sponsored a bill to steer \$30 million in state help toward rebuilding the Nebraska 4-H Camp near Halsey.

LB 281 would set aside \$50 million for “any qualifying nonprofit organization for building or renovating youth outdoor education camp facilities.”

District 42 now includes Thomas County and is in Senator Jacobson’s district. District 43 Senator Tom Brewer’s district included all of the forest before the redistricting and includes Blaine County. The Nebraska Depart-

ment of Economic Development would process the grant funding.

Senator Brewer and Senator Jacobson recently attended a meeting between the University of Nebraska, the 4-H Foundation and the U.S. Forest Service. These three organizations share overlapping jurisdiction of the camp. Discussion at the meeting included a number of innovative ideas brought up by the group and included a public-private partnership to help ease the burden on taxpayers.

Senator Steve Erdman will introduce a bill to move the headquarters for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission to Sidney.

Senator Erdman said moving the headquarters to Sidney would be advantageous for western Nebraska and it would put the commission right where they need to be.

“Current state law says the headquarters for the Game and Parks Commission has to be at Lincoln, but having the headquarters at Lincoln makes little sense, especially when it comes to wildlife. There is very little wildlife in the city of Lincoln, so those who work for the commission seldom ever encounter the same kinds of

problems with wildlife that we see in western Nebraska,” Erdman said.

Erdman said state parks in western Nebraska do not get the same kind of special treatment that state parks get in eastern Nebraska. Mahoney State Park offers glamping, an aquatic center, an indoor playground, a treetops rope course, an observation tower and an indoor rock-climbing wall.

Erdman said these kinds of amenities at our western state parks are not available.

“The fact of the matter is that the camping fees collected at state parks in western Nebraska end up getting used to spruce up state parks on the eastern side of the state and that’s not right.”

In addition moving Game and Parks would give an added boost to Sidney’s economy.

Erdman introduced a similar bill in 2021. However, LB562 never advanced out of committee and was indefinitely postponed at the end of the session.

“Because it often takes several years to get a good bill passed into law, I will try again,” Erdman said.

Senator Jacobson has also introduced Legislative Bill 148 which would overrule lawmakers’ 2022

decision to delay new horse track casino combinations until after completion of a statewide market analyses and an impact study.

Last year’s LB 876 put a moratorium on considering new racino locations while Nebraska’s six existing horse tracks added casinos.

Jacobson said now that casino gambling has been approved in the state you can drive to Grand Island, 150 miles away from North Platte and leave your money there and they get all the property tax relief.

Jacobson’s bill will help open the door to west central and western Nebraska without a lengthy delay. Communities from Grand Island east have been allowed to participate in a statewide initiative that has a property tax reduction component and supporters say it will give western parts of the state the same opportunity as is available in eastern Nebraska.

Race tracks have been proposed at North Platte, Ogallala and Gering. The bill would also extend the deadline for the racinos’ completion from 2025 to 2030 and let regulators potentially approve new horse racing licenses in the state.

Rescheduled Post Drought Meeting Is February 1

The Post Drought Meeting for the Sandhills will be held at the Arthur County Fairgrounds February 1st with a social beginning at 5:30 p.m., meal at 6:00 p.m. and the program starting at 6:30 p.m.

The program is being sponsored by Zoetis, Nebraska Cattlemen, and Nebraska Extension. There is no cost to attend the program, but you must register by January 23rd to make sure there is enough food. You may register by calling (308)

532-2683 or emailing rsaner2@unl.edu and Travis Wenzel at (308) 280-0238.

The program topics and speakers are:

Tax Management During Drought by Randy Saner, Beef Systems Nebraska Extension Educator.

Pasture and Range Management During and After Drought by Mitch Stephenson, UNL Range and Forage Specialist.

Extension programs are open to all.