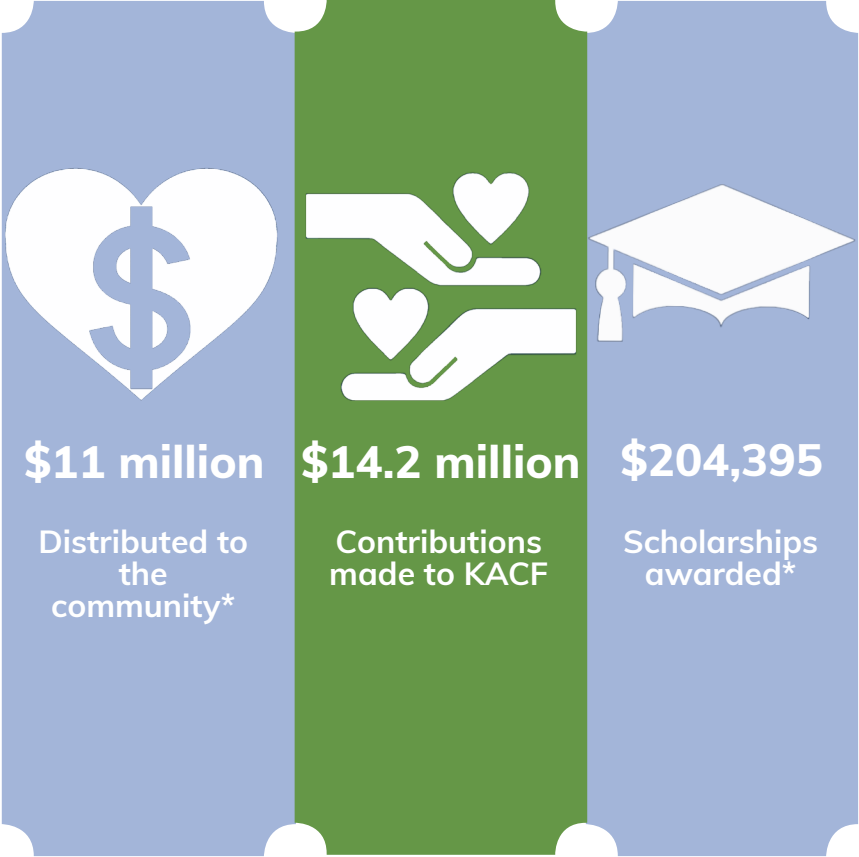


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2025 Impact



*Includes allocations for future distribution.

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2026 | Volume 2
**spring
Newsletter**

Responding to Critical Needs

New Fund Looks to Make an Immediate Impact

The Kearney Area Community Foundation (KACF) has always worked to make the community a great place to live. And while that often looks like supporting nonprofits and projects that improve life, it is also our mission to help the community in unexpected times of need.

That's why KACF recently created the Community Critical Needs Fund to help community neighbors facing difficult times. The fund provides grants to local nonprofits addressing critical needs like food, housing, transportation and healthcare.



**Community
Critical Needs Fund**



KACF created the fund after receiving a generous lead gift from Rhonda Artrup and Pam Radtke. The purpose of the fund struck a chord with other donors, as the fund received more than \$100,000 in donations during Give Where You Live (GWYL). One of those GWYL donors that KACF staff spoke to says they felt compelled to support the fund since its mission is so important. They said they know first-hand how important it is to have money ready to help if something unexpected happens, like a natural disaster or disruption in regular funding.

The purpose of this fund is not only to provide assistance to nonprofits addressing critical needs, but also to respond quickly since the need is often urgent. This means the grant payout is a bit different than KACF's other grants. Our other grants are reimbursement grants, so the money is given out following the organization submitting receipts for the services/items purchased for the grant purpose. With the Community Critical Needs Fund grant, 80% of the funds go out as soon as the nonprofit is approved as a recipient. The nonprofit receives the remaining 20% after completing a follow-up form submitting receipts showing how the original 80% was spent and reporting back the impact those dollars had.

Since the grant application opened in December 2025, KACF has already received several applications, and has awarded \$20,000. "Our first grantees were either food or health related, truly our most core critical needs as humans," says Ashley Weets, KACF Program Manager. "Our nonprofits have really had to pivot due to increases in cost of goods and cuts in funding, and it's been essential to have this option in our community to help close the gaps for our organizations doing that 'boots on the ground' work for our community."

If you would like to donate to the Community Critical Needs Fund, or if you know of a nonprofit that may be interested in a grant from the fund, you can reach out to Ashley at (308) 237-3114 or ashley@kearneyfoundation.org.



"connecting people who care with causes that matter"

Building for Tomorrow

bi-annual grants

Building Community

Giving Back to the Place We Call Home

Leaving a Bigger Legacy

Making a Gift That Will Have a Lasting Impact

Spring 2026 Grantees

Kearney Area Community Foundation's "Building for Tomorrow" fund recently awarded \$13,500 in grants to eight local nonprofits. More than \$420,000 has been granted since the unrestricted endowment was created in 2000.



- **Haven's Chapel Ball Association** received \$1,000 to support the upgrades and expansion of their concession stand area.



- **Kearney Area Children's Museum** received \$5,000 to support renovating the Performing Arts Exhibit at the museum.



- **Merryman Performing Arts Center** received \$2,500 to go toward their Merryman Matinee Series for Elementary students and families.
- **Minden Public Schools Foundation** received \$5,000 to support the building of an FFA Greenhouse.

Community is not something we simply live in. It is something we help build, sustain, and strengthen together.

That belief was shaped early by watching my parents in my hometown of Pender. They understood that when you benefit from a community, you also have a responsibility to invest in it. They gave back not because they had extra time or extra resources, but because they believed it was part of being a good neighbor and a good citizen. That lesson has stayed with me.



Linette Butler
KACF Board Member,
General Manager at
BD Construction

Today, I see that same truth across Buffalo County. This is where we choose to live, raise our families, and build our businesses. We all enjoy the benefits of a strong community, parks supported by local taxes, youth programs made possible by donations, scholarships that open doors for students, and services that care for the most vulnerable among us. Those things do not happen by accident. They happen because people and businesses choose to put this community first.



At BD Construction, we like to say, "we build communities." Most people connect that to our construction work, and they are right. But building community means more than projects and job sites. It means understanding that local investment creates local impact. When businesses keep their dollars close to home, whether for a major project like constructing a new business, an everyday purchase like printing business cards, or a donation to a local nonprofit, they strengthen the local economy. A stronger local economy, in turn, creates more capacity to support nonprofits, public amenities, and the causes that make this place better for every family.

That is one reason the work of the Kearney Area Community Foundation matters so much. It connects generosity with real needs and lasting impact, helping sustain the long-term health of our community.

Giving back does not need to be flashy, and it should never be about recognition. It is simply part of the responsibility we share if we want to enjoy the benefits of a thriving community.

During this spring season, a season that is full of renewed life and new growth, I hope each of us will reflect on one way we can give back, in a way that breathes new life and promotes growth in the Buffalo County communities we are proud to call home.

Invest In the Community in a Special Way!

When people think about giving, they usually have something specific in mind, like a cause they care about or an organization close to their heart. And those gifts matter. They truly do.

But there's another kind of giving that's just as meaningful, and in some ways, even more lasting: giving without restrictions.

Unrestricted endowment gifts are really about trust.

It's a donor saying, "I don't know exactly what our community will need years from now, but I trust you'll know." And that's something we don't take lightly.

If there's one thing we've learned, it's that needs can change quickly. One moment things feel steady, and the next, a devastating flood, a wildfire, a crisis or an unexpected challenge turns everything upside down. Other times, it's not about a challenge, it's about an opportunity to do something really good that we didn't see coming. In those moments, unrestricted funds make all the difference.



They allow us to respond right away, without having to pause and figure out if funding "fits" a certain category. They give us the flexibility to support the work that matters most in that moment, whatever that may be. And they allow us to think long-term.

When a gift goes into an endowment, it doesn't just make an impact once. It's invested, and each year a portion comes back to the community as grants. That means one gift continues to give, year after year. Over time, that adds up in ways that are hard to fully measure, but easy to see in the strength of our community.

There's also something really powerful about doing this together.

Unrestricted gifts are combined with others, creating a pool of resources that can support a wide range of needs over time. It's not about one issue or one moment, it's about the bigger picture of what helps a community thrive. And for many people, it's a simpler way to give. You don't have to have all the answers or pick just one area to support. You can trust that your gift will be used thoughtfully, guided by people who care deeply about this place and the people in it.

At the end of the day, this kind of giving is about more than flexibility, it's about creating something that lasts. It's about making sure that no matter what the future brings, our community is ready. And it's about being part of something that will keep doing good long after any one of us is around to see it.

We may not know exactly what's ahead, but together we can be ready for it.

If you're interested in helping the Kearney Area Community Foundation by making an unrestricted endowment gift, contact Judi at judi@kearneyfoundation.org or at (308) 237-3114.

Building for Tomorrow applications are accepted on a bi-annual basis. To view guidelines or apply, please visit www.kearneyfoundation.org/building-for-tomorrow.