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IMPORTANT GRANT DEADLINES



August 15

Building for Tomorrow grant applications are due **August 15**. (Please allow time to complete the pre-application due August 1.)



September 30

Ted Baldwin Donor Advised Fund grant applications open August 1 and are due **September 30**.



October 15

Arthur Klinkacek Community Enrichment grant applications are due **October 15**. (Please allow time to complete the pre-application due October 1.)

Please review the grant guidelines to make sure your nonprofit organization and project qualifies to be considered for a grant. Visit www.kearneyfoundation.org/grants to view guidelines, apply and find more information, or call us at (308) 237-3114.

www.kearneyfoundation.org | (308) 237-3114

2026-2027 BOARD AND STAFF

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2026 | Volume 3

summer
Newsletter

A Testament to Generosity

Coming Together to Help Our Neighbors

3 Days. That's how long it took for donors to raise more than \$100,000 dollars for people most of them had never met.

The Garden County Community Foundation in Oshkosh, Nebraska, is an affiliate fund of the Kearney Area Community Foundation (KACF), which means they partner with KACF for investment and administrative oversight so they can focus more of their efforts on supporting their community. When the wildfires in western Nebraska broke out in March, it didn't take long for them to jump into action. They called KACF President/CEO, Judi Sickler, to immediately set up the Nebraska Sandhills Rancher Fire Relief Fund.



Courtesy Photo: Aerial view of Morrill fire near Oshkosh (lower right) and Lewellen (upper right-center)

Mary Kay Robinson-Boone, one of the fund's organizers, says getting the fund set up was an easy way to make a quick impact. "Our fund was born out of the immediate desire to help by a young rancher, Sara Cover, who called me while the fire was still blazing," says Robinson-Boone. "Our county has turned to KACF for their expertise in the past and Judi and her staff did not disappoint. Our fund was set up in one day and we started accepting donations."

The KACF Board of Directors took an emergency vote to approve the fund on Monday, March 16, and by the end of the day on March 19 more than \$110,000 in donations had come in. Now, as of June 30, generous donors from all across the state and even the country have given more than \$1.7 million in gifts. As donations come in to KACF, they are sent straight to the Garden County Community Foundation's fund. A local grants committee from the disaster area then reviews applications to determine how the grants will be awarded to victims of the disaster.

One ranch family affected by the fires expressed their gratitude to the donors that are helping them through the tragedy. "Your kindness and generosity have meant more to my family and me than words can truly express during this difficult time," says a member of the Loomis family of Circle L Ranch. "Beyond the financial assistance, your thoughtfulness has given us comfort and hope at a time when both have been needed so much. We are deeply grateful for your compassion, encouragement and willingness to stand beside us when we needed it most."

Although the donations are making a big difference financially, they also bring another perhaps unexpected gift to those dealing with the disaster. As Robinson-Boone says, "The outpouring of generosity along with prayers and caring of the many donors has renewed my belief that our country is filled with caring and moral people."



KEARNEY AREA
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

"connecting people who care
with causes that matter"

Enriching Local Nonprofits

through project and program support

Spring Grantees

Arthur E. Klinkacek made a large impact on the community in the form of a \$2 million gift to the Kearney Area Community Foundation (KACF) from his estate. In honor of his wishes to help locally, the Foundation created the Arthur Klinkacek Community Enrichment Fund, for community preservation and enrichment purposes. Since its inception, more than \$856,000 has been granted to local organizations enriching the Kearney area community.



This spring, 11 nonprofit organizations were awarded a total of \$42,000 in grants.

- **Angels Among Us** received \$2,500 for its financial assistance program to support pediatric cancer families.
- **Compass** was awarded \$2,500 to launch an adoption support group for families who have adopted youth from foster care.
- **Economic Development Council for Buffalo County** received \$15,000 for the Nebraska Childcare Substitute Network Pilot which reduces staffing shortages, burnout and classroom closures.
- **Hooves of Hope Animal Rescue and Rehabilitation** was awarded \$1,000 for the direct care and rehabilitation of neglected and at-risk equines.
- **Junior Achievement District of Kearney** received \$2,000 for the JA BizTown immersive simulation.
- **Kearney High Band Parents Association** was awarded \$2,500 for a new drumline.
- **Kearney Teen Reach Adventure Camp (TRAC)** received \$2,000 to help cover the facility fee for summer camp.
- **Kearney Whitewater Association** was awarded \$7,500 to support the construction of a publicly accessible landing near the Cherry Avenue Hike/Bike Trailhead in Kearney.
- **Kearney Woman's Club** received \$3,000 to help replace their house's original sewer line.
- **Kids & Dreams Foundation** received \$3,000 for the Autism Action Partnership training for first responders in Kearney and Buffalo County.
- **Sandhill Cranes Academy** received \$1,000 to help purchase essential outdoor classroom materials at their center.

If you are interested in making an impact in our community through a planned gift, call President/CEO Judi Sickler at (308) 237-3114.

Choosing Their Path

Finding the Best Option

One of the best parts of working in higher education is seeing firsthand the difference scholarships make in students' lives. Over the years, I've had the opportunity to meet students from all backgrounds. While their stories are different, many share



Brad Green
KACF Board Member
Chief Enrollment Officer
UNK

a common challenge: figuring out how to pay for their education. For some, a scholarship is a meaningful recognition of their hard work and academic achievement, or a scholarship helps cover a gap that would otherwise require additional loans. For others, it means being able to attend college at all.

The higher education landscape has changed considerably in recent years. Students today have more options than ever before, including technical programs, certificates, apprenticeships, and traditional college degrees. At the same time, families are paying closer attention to the cost of education and the return on their investment. Those are important and reasonable considerations. What hasn't changed is the value of opportunity.



Scholarships provide more than financial assistance. They send a message to students that someone believes in them and is willing to invest in their future. That encouragement can be just as meaningful as the dollars themselves.

I've also come to appreciate that scholarships don't just benefit individual students. They benefit entire communities. Many scholarship recipients go on to become teachers, nurses, business owners, skilled tradespeople, and community leaders. The support they receive today often translates into service and leadership tomorrow.

As we recognize this year's scholarship winners, we should also celebrate the donors whose generosity makes these opportunities possible. Their investment is helping students pursue their goals and build brighter futures for themselves, their families, and our communities.

Congratulations to this year's recipients. We look forward to seeing where your journey takes you.

Investing in Our Students

Local Students Get a Boost Toward Higher Learning

Their Pursuit of Higher Education

Scholarships are the building blocks for future generations, providing the financial assistance for local students to fulfill their dreams of post-secondary education.



Matthew Goldfish
Shelton
High School

Matthew Goldfish received the **Bruner Family Scholarship**. He plans on attending Northeast Community College and getting an AAS degree in Building Construction. His goal is to one day run his own construction business. "Higher education is an important step toward that future because it will not only strengthen my technical abilities but also help me develop problem-solving, leadership, and project management skills," Goldfish says. "I hope to prepare myself for a successful career in which I can contribute to my community, take pride in the work I do, and create opportunities for others in the construction trades."



Izac Reineke
Kearney
High School

Izac Reineke received the **Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce Bruce Blankenship Scholarship**. He plans to attend the University of Nebraska-Kearney and major in Business with an emphasis in Finance and Accounting. He hopes to eventually become a financial advisor or a CPA. "I believe the next four years will not only provide me a solid education, but it will also give me a chance to determine a post graduate career path" says Reineke. "Having a dual emphasis [major] will expand not only my knowledge, but also provide me with a broad scope of skills that I can utilize in many different career opportunities."



Adalyn Skrdla
Amherst
High School

Adalyn Skrdla received the **Troy and Kay Bauer Scholarship**. She will be attending the University of Nebraska-Omaha and will be working toward a degree in Kinesiology/Pre-Occupational Therapy. After finishing college, she hopes to build a career in pediatric occupational therapy. "My goal is to work with children who may face challenges due to injuries, disabilities, or developmental delays and help them gain confidence and independence in their everyday lives," Skrdla says. "By continuing my education, I hope to build a fulfilling career where I can positively impact my community and help children reach their full potential."



Elly Spracklen
Kearney Catholic
High School

Elly Spracklen received the **Charles and Jeanette Mumma Scholarship**. She plans to attend South Dakota State University and will be working toward a degree in Animal Science with a minor in Equine Studies. After college, she hopes to build a career in the horse industry. "While I have had much hands-on experience with horses, I am excited to also gain an educational foundation, which I know is essential to becoming a knowledgeable and effective professional," Spracklen says. "Higher education will provide me with scientific understanding, industry connections, and internship opportunities that will prepare me for a sustainable career in the horse industry."

These scholarships, through the Kearney Area Community Foundation, are established by generous businesses, organizations and donors, like you, focused on assisting students in their pursuit of higher education.

Endowed scholarship funds are an excellent way to leave a legacy for future generations to achieve their dreams. Call or email our office at **(308) 237-3114** or **kacf@kearneyfoundation.org** if this is something you'd like to learn more about.



Congratulations!

2026

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Arthur E. Klinkacek Promise Scholarship awards scholarships to Buffalo County students with financial need.

Recipients: Rogelio Hernandez, Reuben Reyes and Zury Rivas

Asher Family Scholarship awards scholarships to seniors of Ravenna High School.

Recipients: Emma Gentrup, Abby Lewandowski and Lindsey Teichmeier

Aubree Joy Hubbard Memorial Scholarship awards a scholarship to a senior of Elm Creek High School.

Recipient: Ava Hellriegel

Bernadine and Douglas Howarth Memorial Scholarship awards a scholarship to a senior of Elm Creek High School.

Recipient: Aspen Tool

Blanche Thompson Memorial Scholarship awards a scholarship to a senior of Garden County High School who will be a first-year college student.

Recipient: Karma Peterson

Bruner Family Scholarship awards scholarships to seniors of Shelton High School.

Recipients: Susanna Cheney, Matthew Goldfish and Emily Wiehn

Buzz and Thelma Wise Scholarship awards a scholarship to a senior of Kearney High School who is enrolled at CCC.

Recipient: Connor Stewart

C.D. Orr and Emily Orr Scholarship awards a four-year scholarship to a Garden County High School senior.

Recipient: Lane Brenneman

Carla J. Middleswart Memorial Scholarship awards a scholarship to a Buffalo County student who has served in the military or has a family member who has served.

Recipient: Sahara Vasquez

Carol Cope Alpha Xi Delta Scholarship awards a scholarship to a UNK student who is a member of Alpha Xi Delta National Women's Fraternity.

Recipient: Kiya Garrelts

Chad and Dyan Wise Scholarship awards a scholarship to a senior of Kearney High School who is enrolled at UNK.

Recipient: Lyza McCracken

Charles and Jeanette Mumma Scholarship awards scholarships to seniors active in the Buffalo County 4-H program.

Recipients: Madden Brabec, Alex Meier and Elly Spracklen

Charles and Verna Lee Falk Scholarship awards two scholarships for seniors of Wilcox-Hildreth High School, with a preference to those pursuing degrees in healthcare or agriculture.

Recipients: Cheyenne Lieb and Aubree Overholser

City of Oshkosh Scholarship awards a scholarship to a Garden County High School senior.

Recipient: Carver Corfield

Colene Pfeiffer Memorial Scholarship awards a scholarship to a senior of Pleasanton High School with preference given to those majoring in education.

Recipient: Claire Ahrens

Don Newth Memorial Scholarship awards scholarships to seniors of Garden County High School who will be first-year college students.

Recipient: Korryn Beberniss and Karma Peterson

Donald Kaup Memorial Knights of Columbus Scholarship awards a scholarship to a senior residing in Holt or Rock County.

Recipient: Cameron Kaup

Dr. AA Jaeke Scholarship awards a scholarship to a senior of Shelton High School who is enrolled full time with preference to those pursuing a degree in the medical field.

Recipient: Erin Gegg

Dwight and Lois Gangwish Scholarship awards scholarships to current or past graduates of Shelton High School.

Recipients: Jalyn Branson, Erin Gegg, Emily Wiehn and Demarion Williams

Elm Creek Public School Foundation Clara Marshall Scholarship awards scholarships to seniors of Elm Creek High School.

Recipients: Devin Anderson, Emma Graddy, Ava Hellriegel, Madelynn Miller and Aspen Tool

Elm Creek School Foundation Scholarship awards scholarships to seniors of Elm Creek High School.

Recipients: Devin Anderson, Emma Graddy, Ava Hellriegel, Madelynn Miller and Aspen Tool

Today, the Kearney Area Community Foundation manages **67 scholarship funds**. We awarded **99 scholarships** equaling more than **\$204,975** in **2026** to local students enrolled in a technical college, community college and/or university. This year, we are working with **62 different scholarship recipients**.



94% of recipients used the Kearney Area Community Foundation's online universal scholarship application



91% of scholarships were awarded to students pursuing higher education in Nebraska



36% of scholarships were awarded to those with majors in the medical field



24% of scholarships were awarded to those getting a 2-year degree

Want to apply next year?

Visit www.kenneyfoundation.org/scholarships

scholarships

The universal application opens February 1, 2027.

Faye Wendt Memorial Scholarship

awards a scholarship to a senior of Pleasanton High School with preference to those who attend UNK, majoring in education.

Recipient: Shane Lucht

Ferol G. Carney and Patricia A. Carney Memorial Scholarship

awards a multi-year scholarship to a senior of Garden County.

Recipient: Carver Corfield

Garden County High School Alumni

Scholarship awards scholarships to seniors of Garden County High School.

Recipients: Korryn Beberniss and Lane Brenneman

Hands On Scholarship awards a scholarship to a senior of any Nebraska high school.

Recipient: Rogelio Hernandez

Harry and Helen Pagels Scholarship

awards a scholarship to a Kearney High School senior that is enrolled in UNK's College of Business.

Recipient: Izac Reineke

Holy Cross Lutheran Mitchell Scholarship provides financial assistance to Holy Cross Lutheran church students.

Recipients: Wyton Fiddelke, Dane McClary, Alexa Jacobsen, Evan Shaffer and Natalee Wright

Jane S. and Franklin V. Bernhard

Scholarship awards a scholarship to a Shelton High School senior going to a two-year school.

Recipient: Drake Power

Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce

Ag Committee Scholarship awards scholarships to graduating high school students from a Buffalo or Kearney County high school pursuing a degree in agriculture.

Recipients: Ava Hellriegel and Allison Unger

Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce

Bruce Blankenship Leadership in Business Scholarship awards a scholarship to a student pursuing a degree in the field of business.

Recipient: Izac Reineke

Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce Friends of Law Enforcement Scholarship

awards a scholarship to a student from Buffalo County pursuing a degree in law enforcement or a similar field.

Recipient: Dylan Johnson

Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce Mark Benjamin Building Opportunity Scholarship

awards a scholarship to a student in Buffalo or Kearney County pursuing a degree in the construction trades field of study.

Recipient: Rogelio Hernandez

Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce Student Leader Scholarship

awards scholarships to seniors from a Buffalo County high school who are enrolled full-time at CCC or UNK.

Recipients: Eleanor Hird-Pruner (CCC) and Natalie Contreras (UNK)

Kenneth L. Erickson FFA Scholarship awards a scholarship to a Pleasanton or Ravenna High School senior involved in FFA.

Recipient: Cadence Dixon

Kurt Keaschall Memorial Scholarship

awards a scholarship to a senior of Pleasanton and Ravenna High School with preference given to those attending a two-year technical school.

Recipients: Haden Smith (Pleasanton) and Abby Lewandowski (Ravenna)

Lance Corporal Kyle Codner Memorial

Scholarship awards scholarships to seniors of Shelton High School with financial need.

Recipients: Susanna Cheney and Erin Gegg

Lynn Rosenlof Hoelting Memorial

Scholarship awards a scholarship to an outstanding female athlete, student and leader of Kearney High School through a nomination process.

Recipient: Reese Holscher

McKenna Rae Johnson Memorial

Scholarship is a character-based scholarship where candidates are identified through a nomination process.

Recipient: Paige Wolinski

McKenna's Rae of Hope Foundation

Mental Health Field Scholarship awards scholarships to a high school senior, college student or graduate student in a mental health program.

Recipients: Malynn Boyles and Jacqueline Ramirez Estrada

Oren and Joyce Vogt Scholarship awards a scholarship to a senior of Ravenna High School with financial need.

Recipient: Cooper Todd

Path to Success Scholarship awards a scholarship to a senior from Buffalo County with financial need studying trades.

Recipient: Demarion Williams

Patricia Trubl Scholarship awards a scholarship to a current or past graduate of Shelton High School.

Recipient: Susanna Cheney

Pauline Fulton Memorial Scholarship

awards a scholarship to a graduate of a Nebraska high school who has been accepted into the nursing program at UNMC - Kearney division.

Recipient: Brooke Bryant

Pleasanton Career Builders Scholarship

awards scholarships to seniors of Pleasanton High School who have participated in community activities.

Recipients: Cadence Dixon, Austin Hollingsworth, Brennan Lindner, Brittney Riley and Brecken Wendt

Pleasanton Career Builders Scholarship in

honor of Bob Bednar awards a scholarship to a Pleasanton High School senior.

Recipient: Allison Unger

Pleasanton High School Alumni Scholarship

awards a scholarship to a senior of Pleasanton High School with financial need.

Recipient: Cade Klein

Pleasanton Law Enforcement Scholarship awards a scholarship to a Pleasanton High School senior going into law enforcement.

Recipient: Haden Smith

Powell Family Scholarship awards a scholarship to a senior from Buffalo County.

Recipient: Rogelio Hernandez

Ravenna Public School Class of 1948

Scholarship awards a scholarship to a senior of Ravenna High School enrolled full-time in a Nebraska college, university or tech school.

Recipient: Abby Lewandowski

Ravenna Public School Foundation

Scholarship awards scholarships to current, graduating seniors of Ravenna High School who are enrolled full-time in a Nebraska college or technical school.

Recipients: Abby Lewandowski and Lindsey Teichmeier

Richard Dunn Memorial Scholarship

awards a scholarship to a senior of Garden County High School.

Recipient: Lane Brenneman

Robin and Judy Marshall Scholarship

awards a scholarship to a senior of Elm Creek High School with financial need.

Recipient: Aspen Tool

Roy and Doris Abood Scholarship awards a scholarship to a first-generation college student enrolled at UNK.

Recipient: Jacqueline Ramirez Estrada

Shelton "Paying it Forward" Scholarship

awards a scholarship to a Shelton High School Senior with preference given to those pursuing a degree in STEM subjects.

Recipient: Macy Willis

Ted Headley Ag Scholarship awards a scholarship to a senior of Shelton High School pursuing a degree in agriculture.

Recipient: Macy Willis

Troy and Kay Bauer Scholarship awards a scholarship to an Amherst High School senior who plans to major in the agricultural or medical field.

Recipient: Adalyn Skrdla

Vanity Fare Scholarship awards a scholarship to a senior of Paxton Consolidated Schools.

Recipient: Ella Fote

Vernon and Beverly Reinertson Scholarship awards scholarships to seniors of Ravenna High School pursuing a degree in a two-year or four-year program.

Recipients: Abby Lewandowski and Lindsey Teichmeier

Violet Wadzinski Memorial Scholarship

awards a scholarship to a senior of Ravenna High School with financial need.

Recipient: Lindsey Teichmeier

Youth Leadership Kearney Scholarship

awards scholarships to three high school seniors who graduated from the Youth Leadership Kearney program and are attending college in Nebraska.

Recipients: Ocean Lin, Kaden Slaymaker and Elly Spracklen