

2025 NEWSLETTER |

roots to grow

Published Spring 2026

OUR VISION

Howells is a caring, thriving community with a place for all to call home.

OUR MISSION

Creating a lasting impact by inspiring the generosity of our community to support educational, social, recreational, economic opportunities, and services.

OUR VALUES

The Howells Community Fund is a hardworking team supporting our community's future and progressive goals. We are dedicated, positive, compassionate, and always work with integrity.

HOWELLS COMMUNITY FUND

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Our Fund Advisory Committee is made up of dedicated local leaders who care deeply about the future of Howells. Each member brings valuable experience, insight, and a unique perspective to the table. Together, they help guide the mission of the Howells Community Fund, growing our resources, awarding grants, and making a lasting impact on our town.

Gary Brester*	(402) 833-8061
Janelle Brester	(402) 350-9027
Austin Coufal*	(402) 380-4862
Hailey DeMers	(402) 380-2231
Bernie Hegemann*	(402) 750-7512
Marti Brichacek*	(605) 323-9197
Laura Mejskrik*	(402) 631-7322
Trent Mastny*	(402) 750-9218
Marilyn Sindelar*	(402) 750-7401
Billie Wisnieski*	(402) 380-7635
Susie Pokorny (Emeritus)	(402) 615-3838
Kathy Heard (Emeritus)*	(402) 380-8290
Joan Mastny (Emeritus)*	(402) 750-7639

*Denotes Legacy Donors who have made planned gifts to the Howells Community Fund in their wills.

PODCAST FEATURES

Hear from committee members Trent Mastny and Gary Brester as they reflect on the power of giving back, the impact of local grants, and how community connections are helping shape the future of Howells.



Scan QR code to listen!

Jill Grovjohn thinks being asked back to her hometown feels pretty good! Learn more about Jill and the Growing Together Career Scholars Program by listening to Ep. 62 of the Growing Small Town Nebraska Podcast!



Scan QR code to listen!

2026 HCF EVENTS

- **Senior Citizen Potluck** – Wednesday, April 8 at 11:30 AM | St. John's Basement
- **Alumni Golf Tournament** – Saturday, June 6 | Club 91 Golf Course
- **Summer Sand Volleyball Celebration** – July | During League Play
- **Feed Your Dreams Breakfast** – August 16 | Howells Ballroom



HELPINGHOWELLS.ORG

The Howells Community Fund
is an affiliated fund of the



NEBRASKA COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

NEWS AND UPDATES

DOWNTOWN BEAUTIFICATION

For years, the Howells Community Fund has envisioned a brighter, more welcoming downtown. In 2025, that vision became reality.

Through thoughtful planning and strong collaboration between HCF leadership and local volunteers, two major beautification projects transformed our downtown district.

A Summer in Bloom

The first project brought vibrant flower baskets and large decorative pots to our beloved downtown. In partnership with Siffring Landscaping and Garden Center of Fremont, the pots were filled, baskets delivered, and installation began. With timely summer rains, fertilizer, a creative watering system, and dedicated volunteers who faithfully maintained them, the flowers flourished all season long.

The result was unmistakable — a beautiful, colorful downtown that drew countless compliments from residents and visitors alike. A bright and welcoming main street leaves a lasting impression and reflects the pride we share in our community.

Just as flowers take root and grow, our town blossoms when we invest in it. That is what Roots to Grow represents — planting seeds today that allow Howells to shine for years to come!

A Winter Wonderland

After seeing our downtown come alive in the summer, we turned our attention to the winter months. We knew the darker season leading into the holidays held untapped potential. The HCF team proposed creating a winter display on the corner of 3rd Street and Front Street, just north of Howells Plumbing and Heating. Adam Dreger, Howells-Dodge Ag teacher, eagerly embraced the idea and brought it to life alongside his high school Ag students.

What began as a simple concept quickly turned into an impressive display of craftsmanship and creativity. The students' skill and dedication were remarkable, and the finished Winter Wonderland brought warmth, light, and holiday magic to our community.

This project would not have been possible without the contributions of Adam Dreger, the Howells-Dodge Ag students, Northeast Nebraska Automation, Dean Macholan, Zach Bayer and Michael Dostal.

With fresh snowfall and twinkling lights, the new addition created a truly magical setting during the holiday season. And this is only the beginning. Keep an eye on the corner of 3rd Street in the years ahead as the Winter Wonderland continues to grow.



Lisa Bayer, Kathy Heard, Marilyn Sindelar, Rachel Sindelar, Donna Brester and Joan Mastny took part in making sure our flowers thrived.



Winter display on the corner of 3rd Street and Front Street.

Howells Parade of Homes

December is a time for cheer and holiday memories. This year, we brought back a community favorite event and hosted the Howells Parade of Homes, bringing together holiday spirit and hometown pride! This year's line up included eight total viewing locations. Homes included those of Jeff & Deb Wegner, Jordan & Mikayla Mejstrik, Kevin & Chris Brester, Dave & Brenda Hegemann, Glen and Joan Mlnarik's Shed, and the Centennial rental owned by Kent & Mary Smith. The two additional locations were The Howells Historic Museums and Saints Peter and Paul Church. Each stop brought a unique sense of holiday spirit and community belonging as participants viewed the creative displays the hosts put together. The event wrapped up with a fun evening in partnership with Eighty8 Bar and Grill with a warm soup dinner and live entertainment from the Polk-a-holics.



Transformation of the interior of Saint Peter and Paul Catholic Church, a stop on the holiday tour.



Kiddos at the park enjoying watermelon while parents play volleyball.

A SWEET SUMMER NIGHT AT SAND VOLLEYBALL

In past years, the Howells Community Fund has supported summer sand volleyball by hosting a watermelon feed during one of the game nights. Sharing fresh, cold watermelon was a simple way to add to an already enjoyable evening of competition and community!

It was great to see players and families stop by for a slice and spend time visiting between matches. We're grateful for opportunities to support events that bring Howells together.



NEWS AND UPDATES



HEROES OF HOWELLS

Each year, we recognize individuals who invest their time, energy, and heart into strengthening our hometown. Howells Heroes are everyday community members whose actions reflect the values, pride, and spirit that make Howells special.

Isabel Belina, a high school senior, is already making a meaningful impact. From helping with the summer reading program and Easter egg hunt to cleaning highways, Isabel gives her time to bring people together. This summer, she created more than 65 reusable book bags from recycled materials for the library program, showing her commitment to caring for both her community and the environment. She describes Howells as tight-knit and is proud to give back to the place she calls home.

Dan Busch quietly keeps Howells looking its best. Whether tending flowers at the post office, cleaning storm drains, or picking up trash at the park, Dan believes that if you are proud of where you live, you take care of it. He says not everyone gets to live somewhere this peaceful and safe. His word for Howells is home.

Carmen Belina invests in Howells through her business, volunteer work, and love of local history. From serving on the Alumni Committee to supporting the Historical Society, Carmen believes in preserving the stories that shape our town. She shares that Howells has given her everything, and giving back ensures future generations experience the same sense of belonging. Her word for Howells is shared.

Bob and Dan Fiala have dedicated decades of service to our community. Bob serves on multiple boards and committees, believing that if everybody does some, it helps. Dan has served on the Village Board, Park Board, and volunteers with Little League and the Knights of Columbus. Both men reflect the steady leadership and volunteer spirit that keep Howells strong. Bob describes Howells as helpful, and Dan calls it outstanding.

Together, these Howells Heroes strengthen the roots of our community through service, pride, and a shared commitment to keeping our hometown thriving.



Trent Mastny presenting award to Isabel Belina.



Laura Mejsstrik presenting award to Dan Busch.



Janelle Brester presenting award to Carmen Belina.



Bernie Hegemann presenting awards to Bob and Dan Fiala.

ANNUAL FEED YOUR DREAMS BREAKFAST

Our community gathered for the Feed Your Dreams Breakfast. Thanks to all the generous donations, we are officially one step closer to bringing a Frisbee Golf Course to Howells. More than just a fundraiser, the morning was a reflection of what makes Howells special. It's the people who show up, support one another, and believe in building something that lasts. With plenty of laughter and connection, it was a great reminder of why we're proud to call this community home.



Members of the HCF serving.

PLANTING THE ROOTS OF OUR BRAND

We're excited to introduce a refreshed look for the Howells Community Fund! While our mission remains the same—supporting projects and people that strengthen our community—our updated branding better reflects the pride, growth, and momentum we see in Howells today.

At the center of the new brand is a meaningful symbol: roots. Our updated logo features a rooted tree paired with the Howells Community Fund name. The roots represent strength, stability, and growth, reflecting our deep connection to the community and our commitment to planting seeds that will benefit Howells for generations to come.

Our refreshed color palette helps bring the brand to life across all of our materials. Green remains the heart of the identity, symbolizing growth and community pride, while black, white, tan, and lime provide balance, warmth, and energy. Together, these colors create a welcoming and recognizable look that reflects the spirit of our town.

We also introduced a consistent set of fonts to keep our communications clear and professional. Larken is used for headlines, Shelby adds a touch of personality, and Arial ensures readability in longer text.

Finally, our slogan, "Roots to Grow," captures the heart of what the Howells Community Fund is all about. It reminds us that strong communities are built by investing today in the people, ideas, and opportunities that help our town thrive tomorrow.

This refreshed brand is more than a new look—it's a celebration of our community and a symbol of the bright future we're continuing to grow together.



🌱 NEWS AND UPDATES 🌱

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF HOWELLS

The Howells Community Fund was proud to host Landon Dobbins as our Hometown Intern during the summer of 2025. Landon's roots in Howells run deep. Growing up in the community, he was actively involved in school and local activities including football, golf, speech, debate, and he also served as an honorary youth member of the Howells Community Fund during his high school years. After leaving for college, Landon gained a deeper appreciation for just how special his hometown is, and this internship gave him the opportunity to give back to the community that helped shape him.

During the summer, Landon brought his interests and strengths to the internship while working to create meaningful projects for the community. With a strong interest in medicine and healthcare, he organized a free community health fair focused on wellness and prevention. The event included blood pressure screenings, cancer prevention information, and a cooking demonstration led by Food and Nutrition County Extension Educator Hannah Guenther. The health fair saw a great turnout, and participants left with valuable knowledge and practical tips for improving their health.

Landon also wanted to encourage outdoor activity in the community. After researching different ideas, he proposed expanding our park amenities by creating a frisbee golf course in Howells. With support from the HCF and the Howells Village Board, Landon spent time researching, planning, and designing a course layout. The next steps for the project include purchasing the needed equipment this winter, with installation of the baskets planned for Spring 2026 so the course will be ready for play this summer.

Another project Landon worked on was recording video interviews with members of the community, capturing stories and memories from people who have helped shape Howells over the years. These conversations help preserve the history of our town and remind us that the stories of our community matter just as much as the projects we build.

It is always an honor to work alongside the talented young people in our community. Landon brought thoughtful ideas and great energy to his internship, and we are grateful for the time and effort he invested in supporting Howells this past summer.



Landon Dobbins pictured in the streets of Howells.

LEGACY GIFT DONORS

A legacy. We have all more than likely wondered at some point in our lives what type of legacy we each will leave behind. Your legacy can be multifaceted, ranging from the impact you create through relationships, time, actions, property, or assets. The members of the Howells Community Fund stand by our mission to create a lasting impact by inspiring the generosity of our community to support educational, social, recreational, and economic opportunities and services. With this in mind, our members have all made a personal vow to pledge a legacy gift in support of the Howells Community Fund. Members who have already finalized their legacy gift include Kathy Heard, Joan Mastny, Billie Wisnieski, Marilyn Sindelar, and Austin Coufal. In recent years, four additional members of our group have pledged their legacy gift: Trent Mastny, Laura Mejstrik, Marti Brichacek, and Gary Brester.

A legacy gift provides a great opportunity to support your hometown and community by pledging a gift that will be received at a later date. One of the greatest aspects of a legacy gift is that it can be structured however best fits you individually. Any gift of any amount can be a legacy gift; every person's legacy matters and has an impact. A few ways that a legacy gift can be honored are through gifts in a Will or Trust, Designation of a Beneficiary on accounts such as CDs, mutual funds, annuities, life insurance policies, or retirement plans. Need help planning out your legacy gift?

Reach out to a member of the Fund or to The Office of Gift Planning with the Nebraska Community Foundation at 402-323-7330.



Scan QR code to learn more!

HOWELLS ALUMNI WEEKEND

The Howells Community Fund kicked off a Saturday morning for Howells/HDC alumni weekend with a golf Scramble. Held at Club 91 Golf Course in Leigh, the event brought together 11 teams and 46 golfers for a morning of sport and community support. Following the scramble, participants enjoyed a meal and an awards presentation featuring prizes donated by Fund members. Tournament Highlights: 1st Place: Dax VanLengen, Mekenna VanLengen, Darrin Pokorny, and Luke Rocheford. 2nd Place: Gary Baumert, Bernie Baumert, Devin Risch, Clint Fiala, Austin Hegemann, and Brian Hegemann. 3rd Place: Bryan Mejstrik, Laura Mejstrik, Austin Coufal, and Kelsey Coufal.



Winners of the golf scramble.

🌱 NEWS AND UPDATES 🌱

GROWING COMMUNITY ONE CUP AT A TIME

What began as a simple conversation has grown into one of Howells' most meaningful traditions: **Coffee and Conversation.**

It started with just a few women gathering over coffee, sharing stories and talking about life in Howells. But something special happened in those early mornings — laughter filled the room, connections were built, and a sense of belonging took hold. Word spread, more women joined, and today that small gathering has grown into a monthly tradition bringing 25–30 women together at the Owl Café.

At a gathering, the room is filled with stories of favorite school memories and beloved teachers. Homemade muffins and rolls were shared, door prizes were given, and as always, there was no shortage of laughter. It's these simple moments that remind us what makes this community so special.

Hosted each month by Joan Mastny, Susie Pokorny, Marilyn Sindelar, and Kathy Heard through the Howells Community Fund, Coffee and Conversation has become more than just coffee. It's a space for friendship, fun, and fellowship. Each month brings a new topic, homemade treats, and sometimes even a field trip, but what never changes is the feeling of community.

What's even more special is that this idea has grown beyond Howells. The Nebraska Community Foundation recognized Coffee and Conversation at its statewide convention, and other communities across Nebraska have started their own gatherings inspired by what began right here.

Coffee and Conversation takes place on the second Tuesday of every month from 8:30–10:00 AM at the Owl Café, and everyone is welcome.

It's a reminder that in a place like Howells, even the smallest ideas can grow into something that brings people together!



Coffee and Conversation hosted by members of the Howells Community fund in September, 2025

A TRADITION THAT TRAVELS WITH THEM

Each year, the Howells Community Fund celebrates the Howells-Dodge graduates not just for reaching graduation day, but for everything that lies ahead.

As these young men and women step into their next chapter — whether that's college, the workforce, or a path of their own — they carry with them the values, work ethic, and pride that come from growing up in a community like Howells.

One of the most meaningful parts of this tradition is a simple, thoughtful gift: a Howells Community Fund/Howells-Dodge branded mailbox. Given to every graduate each year, it's something they can take with them wherever life leads.

But it's more than just a mailbox.

It's a reminder of home. A symbol of the community that raised them, supports them, and will always be cheering them on. No matter how far they go, that connection remains.

In a world that moves fast and often pulls people in many directions, it's these small, intentional traditions that keep a community close.

Because in Howells, we don't just celebrate where our graduates are going — we remind them they'll always have a place to come back to.



Howells-Dodge Class of 2025 and members of the Howells Community Fund.

GROWING STRONGER TOGETHER

The Howells Community Fund team recently attended the Nebraska Community Foundation Annual Training and came back energized, encouraged, and aligned in our purpose. We were reminded that strong communities lift each other up, that the next generation's voice matters, and that a simple invitation can create a powerful sense of belonging. Most importantly, we were reminded how much relationships matter and how grateful we are for everyone who invests their time, energy, and heart into Howells. As we continue sharing our stories and building connections, we remain committed to strengthening the foundation that gives our community roots to grow.



Members of the Howells Community Fund at the Annual Training.

NEWS AND UPDATES

GRANTS FULFILLED

2014
Sound System.....\$3,800

2015
Senior Mailboxes.....\$623
East Shelter.....\$4,031
Fire House Lockers.....\$2,750
Park Benches.....\$1,427
East Shelter Benches.....\$2,500

2016
Howells Sign (HWY 32).....\$1,173
4-H Archery Startup.....\$250
Journal Subscription for Seniors.....\$418

2017
Basketball Court.....\$13,018
Park Bench.....\$319
Senior Mailboxes.....\$706
East Shelter Bathroom Upgrade.....\$2,200

2018
Howells Public School Foundation.....\$500
Senior Mailboxes.....\$575
Playground Equipment.....\$5,000
Library - Omaha Street Percussion.....\$200
Ballroom Chairs.....\$2,000

2019
Horse Arena Fencing.....\$700
Senior Mailboxes.....\$828
American Legion Doors.....\$3,000

2020
KC Fish Fry.....\$920
Senior Mailboxes.....\$739
Picnic Tables & Trash Receptacles.....\$2,000
Little Angels Daycare.....\$10,000
FFA Family Night Board Games.....\$1,348
Fire Department Jaws of Life.....\$10,000

2021
Senior Mailboxes.....\$1,002
Picnic Tables.....\$2,821
AED's for SSPP, SJ, Heun, Trinity Lutheran.....\$4,003
Museum (Annex HVAC).....\$6,000
Baseball Scoreboard.....\$1,500
Heat/AC Unit for Howells Historical Museum.....\$6,000

2022
American Legion Flag Replacement.....\$800
Howells Ballroom Renovation - February.....\$10,000
Picnic Tables.....\$3,510
Senior Mailboxes.....\$899
Ballroom Renovation, Alumni Challenge.....\$14,168

2023
Kitchen Supplies - Ballroom, Legion Hall, Catholic Social Hall.....\$856
Sand Volleyball Court Expansion.....\$9,500
Picnic Tables.....\$4,500
HCCS iPads & Sundries.....\$3,318
New "Howells" Sign.....\$26,000
HDC Schools Bleachers.....\$1,000

2024
PickleBall Court Prep.....\$1,759.15
Swimming Pool Repairs and Updates.....\$2,000
Sand for Volleyball Courts.....\$440
Howells-Dodge Youth Softball.....\$1,000
Kids Fundraiser Pool Repair Match.....\$574
Pool Repair Proceeds from Breakfast.....\$5,000
AED's for Daycare & American Legion.....\$3,838

2025
Little Angels Playground Equipment.....\$1,000
Downtown Beautification Flower Pots.....\$11,000
HCCS Capital Campaign.....\$25,000
Howells-Dodge Consolidated Teacher Gifts.....\$250
Sons of the American Legion Fence.....\$1,500



\$50,000

Amount left over from Q125 celebration used to establish Howells Community Fund



\$1.2

MILLION

Unrestricted Endowment



\$220,263.15

REINVESTED

through impact grant making

GROW SOMETHING GOOD IN HOWELLS

There's something special about this place! It's the people who show up, lend a hand, and care deeply about making Howells better for the next generation. The Howells Community Fund exists because of that spirit — and it's here to support ideas that bring our community together and help it grow!

If you've ever thought, "Someone should do this..." — maybe that someone is you.

We're looking for ideas that:

- Bring people together
- Make Howells more beautiful and welcoming
- Support kids, families, and future generations
- Strengthen the pride we all feel in calling this place home

Applying is simple:

1. Scan the QR code to the right
2. Share your idea (it only takes a few minutes)
3. Let us help bring it to life

Or apply online here: <https://form.jotform.com/211258165726154>



Scan QR code to apply for a grant today!

Every project we support starts with someone who cares enough to take the first step. We're grateful for this community — and excited to see what we can build together next!



NEWS AND UPDATES



OUR GENEROUS DONORS

December 2024 - December 2025

In Memory/Honor Of:

Francis Baumert
Marguerite Brodecky
Bernie Wieman
Don Maliha
Ann Ruzek
Janet Eureka
Emil Roubal
Irene Fiala
Dale Vogel
Emil Roubal
Patricia Langhost
Larry Langhorst
Dwight Boysen
Dennis Tomka
Dale Vogel
Evy Kumm
Joe & Marilyn Sindelar
Patti Bohac
Leola Rhode
Gale Radcliff
Glen Burenheide
Jeff Elbracht

Donors:

Pam K. Barta
Brian and Laura Baumert
Randy Baumert
Gary and Bernadine Baumert
Duane and Dorothy Baumert
Russ and Lisa Bayer
Larry and Suzi Bazata
David and Debra Blum
Kathleen J. Bradley
Gary and Deborah Brester
Craig and Janelle Brester
Jordan and Marti Brichacek
Stephen and Denise Buckley
Daniel Busch
Eileen Cada
Gene Clements
Austin and Kelsey Coufal
Paul and Sheri Coufal
Leon and Marilyn DeJong
Alan and Carol Dostal
Janet Dunker
Marvin B. Dvorak

Randy and Jenny Elbracht
Deanne and Gary Ernesti
David Eureka
Rick and Debra Faltys
James and Lorene Fiala
Doug and Judy Gaswick
Lawrence Hanke
Kathy Heard
Travis and Tonia Heard
Bernie and Theresa Hegemann
Dylan Higby
Edward and Adrian Hilz
Norma Hledik
Mark Howe
Don and Terri Hypse
Larry and Patricia Jakubowski
Kevin and Mary Janata
Adrian and Carol Kampschnieder
Larry Karel
Kenneth and Debra Karel
John and Marlene Konsel
Tim and LaVone Kreikemeier
Carolyn A. Kulhanek

Sherri Maliha
Beverly A. Mann
Kevin V. Marik
Trent and Nevada Mastny
Brian and Joan Mastny
Mike and Linda McQuiston
Bryan and Laura Mejsstrik
Ruth Melena
Shawn and Amanda Messerlie
Tony and Ramona and Meyers
Joseph and Mary Molacek
Trevor and Tammy Micek
Marcheta Molacek
Chester and Sue Nemec
Mark and Lynne Ondracek
Harry and Susie Pokorny
Bob and Marcy Reisdorff
Wendy Reznicek
Mary Rocheford
Chris and Jill Rogers
Elaine Roubal
Daniel and Phyllis Rupprecht
Martin and Laurie Schlautman

Richard Shapiro
Joseph and Marilyn Sindelar
Larry and Lois Smeal
Steve and Suzanne
Steffensmeier
Andrea Sumy
Garry Konsel
Lori Taylor
Marc and Judy Taylor
Gene and Brigitte Uher
Keith and Deborah Vacha
Beverly Vazzano
Jeffrey and Debra Wegner
Terry and Carol Welke
Cory and Allison Willison
Billie Wisnieski
David and Joann Wragge
Brian and Kelsey Yosten
Colfax County Clerk
Kathleen Joan Bradley,
Revocable Trust
Clarkson Bank
Bromiken LLC

MAKE A DONATION TODAY!

ONE CONTRIBUTION in full: \$ _____

ANNUALLY: \$ _____

SET UP RECURRING PAYMENTS ONLINE AT: www.nebcommfound.org/give/howells-community-fund

☐ This is an anonymous gift ☐ This gift is made in memory of / in honor of: _____

Donor Information:

Donor Printed Name(s) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____

ZIP _____ Phone _____ Email _____

☐ I would like to learn more about leaving a legacy in Howells through planned giving.

MAIL CHECKS PAYABLE TO: Howells Community Fund | PO Box 63 | Howells, NE 68641

CONTRIBUTIONS MAY ALSO BE MADE

ONLINE: www.nebcommfound.org/give/howells-community-fund



Howells Community Fund is an affiliated fund of Nebraska Community Foundation, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. All monetary gifts are tax deductible.



HOWELLS

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