

SUMMER 2026 NEWSLETTER

Making McCook An Even Better Place to Call Home



Former and Current Members Celebrate MCFF's 25th Anniversary

In April 2026, current and former McCook Fund Advisory Committee members gathered to celebrate the 25th anniversary of MCFF.

Founding members in attendance included Doug Skiles and Mark Graff, who were instrumental in starting the McCook Community Foundation Fund in early 2001, alongside Floyd Hershberger. Other founders included Stan Goodwin, Gene Morris, Bill Rockwood, and Kay Lavene.

Over the past 25 years, the McCook fund has grown both in its unrestricted endowment to the size and numbers of grants it gives out twice a year.

The McCook FAC is also busy throughout the community as the MCFF subcommittees continue to grow, including Beautify McCook, the McCook Philanthropy Council, the McCook Wellness Initiative and McCook Volunteers.

The McCook Fund is proud of what it has accomplished the past 24 years, but is also looking forward to making McCook an even better place to call home for the next 25 years.



Current and former members of the McCook Fund Advisory Committee celebrating MCFF's 25th anniversary included: (front row, left) Ronda Graff (local coordinator), Linda Taylor (current), Peggy Been (current secretary), Cindy Huff (past chair), Mark Graff (founder), Jan Korell (former), Linda Frank (former); (second row, left) Matt Sehnert (current chair), Kyle Dellevoet (former), Pam Wolford (current), Amanda Engell (current), Bill Graves (former), Kay Flaska (former); (third row, left) Dennis Berry (current), Dale Dueland (current), Tim Wiebe (current), Sean Wolfe (current), Don Harpst (former) and Doug Skiles (founder).

NEW FAC MEMBER HIGHLIGHT - TIM WIEBE

MCFF welcomes its newest fund advisory committee member with the addition of Tim Wiebe joining this past spring. A long-time supporter of MCFF, Tim is a loan officer at MNB Bank in McCook.

As for the future of our community, Tim is impressed with how engaged people are—especially the next generation. There are a lot of talented individuals already involved in service organizations, leadership programs, and community activities, and that gives me a lot of confidence in where we're headed.



McCook Community Foundation Fund is an affiliated fund of the Nebraska Community Foundation



308.340.3412



www.mccookfoundation.org



402 Norris, Ste 315, Box 525, McCook NE 69001



Congratulations to the Spring 2026 MCFF grant recipients, who are working to make McCook an even better place to call home.

MCFF Unrestricted Endowment:

McCook Economic Development Corp.: St. Catherine's Hospital Housing Project, \$12,350
Community Kitchen: Recipe as a Remedy, \$2,500
City of McCook/Chamber: Airport Renovations, \$3,000

In Honor of Jean & Walt Sehnert and Sehnert Challenge:
6th Floor/ArtBank: Youth Docents/Interns, \$5,000

In Honor of Arvene & Neva Myers and Myers Challenge:
Norris Institute: Burr Oak Canyon Symposium, \$2,000

In Honor of Andy and Geri Anderson:
Hillcrest Nursing Home, flooring project, \$7,500

Challenge Grant:
Beautify McCook: Downtown lighting project, \$12,500

On-Going Pledges:
McCook YMCA: Capital Campaign;
City of McCook: Ballpark project

For a complete list of past MCFF grant recipients, please visit mccookfoundation.org. Grant deadlines are April 1 and October 1. Grant applications are available on the website or by contacting mcffund@gmail.com.

Cars Under the Stars and Third Thursdays Starting Third Year

Cars Under the Stars, which was created by MCFF's youth group, Youth Change Reaction, began its third year of outdoor movies at the Red Willow Co.



Fairground in 2026. Dozens of cars and hundreds of movie-goers have enjoyed free movies under the stars of Southwest Nebraska with more planned throughout the year.

Third Thursday, which began as an idea with MCFF, continues to bring the community together on Norris Avenue from May through October. Coordinated by the McCook Creative District, a different organization hosts each month, with music, food and fun bringing friends, neighbors and families together. MCFF regularly participates whether YCR is serving dirty sodas or FAC members encourage creativity by coloring ceramic tiles.



Murals Continue to Blossom Around McCook

McCook's second large-scale mural was completed along D Street between West First Street and Norris Avenue. Titled "Rhythms of the Heartland," the mural showcases the different cycles on the prairie throughout the year, from plants to animals to humans. Led by local artist Karrie Steely and other local artists, the mural was completed in May 2026.

MCFF is proud to support local arts and culture projects like the mural project, thanks to donations through the Sehnert Challenge.

Watch for more mini-murals around McCook throughout 2026, led by the McCook Creative District with support from the McCook Arts Council and MCFF.



308.340.3412



www.mccookfoundation.org



402 Norris, Ste 315, Box 525, McCook NE 69001

MCFF Scholarships Expand Again for 2026-27 School Year



MCFF continues to expand the number of scholarships awarded in McCook and Southwest Nebraska. New in 2026 was the George and Lois Tiller Scholarship, which was awarded to Nathan Rippe, a 2026 graduate of Southwest High School, received \$2,000 toward his education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The Bernard and Nelda Haag \$1,000 Scholarship was given to Alexander Lashley, a 2026 graduate of Southwest High School.

The Barbara Fassler-Neumann Nursing Scholarship provided four \$1,500 scholarships,

including Sara Peterson of McCook, Elsa Wilcox of McCook, Ella Cure, a 2026 Southwest High School graduate, and Madison Smith of McCook.

Now in its second year, the Frank and Marion Weiland Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Kyndall McKinzie, a 2025 Hayes Center High School graduate.

MCFF also continues to develop the Learn and Return Scholarship with a focus on those who intend to return to return to McCook after their schooling and has been awarded to Lucas Gomez-Wilson.

McCook Volunteer Recognition Program Growing Strunk Service Celebration Planned for April 2027

Since February 2025, a McCook resident has been honored each month as the McCook Volunteer of the Month. Chosen by the McCook Philanthropy Council, the volunteer receives a certificate, Chamber Bucks and perhaps the best for each recipient is recognition and notoriety in the McCook Gazette and through social media. A volunteer will continue to be honored each month, but the program will expand over the next year with the new Strunk Service Celebration, which will take place each April during Volunteer Recognition Month.

Planned for April 15, 2027, the celebration will include recognition of the 12 honorees named from May 2026 through April 2027.

Additionally, the McCook Community Foundation Fund will donate \$1,000 to the non-profit organizations the 12 honorees represent.

And what may be the most important part, all volunteers throughout the community are welcome to an evening of fun and appreciation for all they do in McCook and Red Willow County.



The McCook Volunteer of the Month program is funded by MCFF's McCook Volunteers subaccount.

The Strunk Service Celebration is made possible thanks to the generosity of Allen Strunk, former publisher of the McCook Gazette. The Strunk family encouraged giving back to your community, following the slogan: Service is the rent we pay for the space we occupy in this world. The recognition of the volunteers during the Strunk Service Celebration will help continue that motto for years to come.





Box 525 McCook NE 69001

SUMMER 2026 MCFF NEWSLETTER

PAGE 4

Five-to-Thrive Continues To Be McCook Priority

By PEGGY BEEN

MCFF Fundraising Subcommittee Co-Chair

"And when you pass on, what you gonna pass down?"

That's the main line from a current Country Music song titled, "McArthur," sung by four acclaimed artists (Tim McGraw, Eric Church, Michael Hardy and Morgan Wallen).

That line resonates with my husband and me as we consider what kind of legacy we want to leave for our family and our community. In our involvement with the McCook Community Foundation Fund, we have learned how to leave a lasting and impactful gift through the Nebraska Community Foundation program called 5-to-Thrive.

We are living in a time of the largest transfer of



wealth from one generation to the next. In 5-to-Thrive, NCF encourages each of us to consider a planned gift of just 5% of your estate given back to the community as an endowed investment in its future. For Red Willow County, the transfer of wealth in the next ten years amounts to \$608 million, and 5% of that is \$30 million to ensure the vitality and sustainability of McCook and Red Willow County! The process is fairly simple to designate 5% of your estate to a nonprofit, such as your church, school, civic groups or your local community foundation.

If you would like more information on making a planned gift, please contact McCook Community Foundation Fund, mcffund@gmail.com. We are all going to pass on. It is your decision what you are going to pass down.

McCook Community Foundation Fund is an affiliated fund of the Nebraska Community Foundation



308.340.3412



www.mccookfoundation.org



402 Norris, Ste 315, Box 525, McCook NE 69001