



# RAPPORT

## HUMANITIES NEBRASKA

HELPING PEOPLE EXPLORE WHAT CONNECTS US AND MAKES US HUMAN

**Weaving  
*a* Nation**  
Nebraska Chautauqua



**COMMEMORATING THE 250<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
DECLARATION OF  
INDEPENDENCE  
AUGUST 2 & 3, NORFOLK**

PG 2



**CAPITOL  
FORUM DAY  
RECAP  
MARCH 25**

PG 5



**NEW FUND  
HONORS BOB  
NEFSKY'S  
LEGACY**

PG 12

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- DUE
JUL 01
**MINI GRANTS**  
 July 1, September 3  
*(details on our website)*
- DUE
JUN 17
**MEDIA/DIGITAL GRANTS**  
 June 17 *(details on our website)*
- DUE
JUN 14
**2024 SOWER AWARD**  
 Nominations due *(see page 10)*
- DUE
JUL 08
**CAPITOL FORUM TEACHER APPLICATIONS FOR '24-'25**  
*(details on our website)*
- DUE
AUG 1
**MAJOR GRANTS**  
 August 1 *(details on our website)*
- AUG
2-3
**NEBRASKA CHAUTAUQUA**  
 "Weaving a Nation" at Norfolk Public Library and Northeast Community College, Norfolk
- SEP
24
**29<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GOVERNOR'S LECTURE IN THE HUMANITIES**  
 Lied Center, Lincoln

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## NORFOLK TO HOST NEW

# "WEAVING A NATION" CHAUTAUQUA

## Three-year Chautauqua series commemorating the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence begins August 2 & 3, 2024.

An all-new Chautauqua called "Weaving a Nation" launches this summer in Norfolk, commemorating the 250th anniversary of the United States and its evolving vision of democracy. It will feature a selection of stories that have helped give this nation its rich tapestry of backgrounds and perspectives. Some stories will be new, while others will be a fresh look at the development of our country from angles that have not been as prevalent.

"Our country has always been threaded with different cultures and ideas," HN Program Manager Kristi Hayek Carley said. "This Chautauqua is really going to celebrate that by giving people a new take on history."

Following the format of the last two Nebraska Chautauquas, events will run from Friday evening through Saturday. Three Chautauqua scholars will present first-person narratives on stage at Northeast Community College's Cox Activity Center during the

evenings. On Saturday, a variety of interactive workshops will share even more stories.

Community organizers in Norfolk are also planning pre-Chautauqua and concurrent events that relate to the theme. Everything will be family-friendly, free and open to the public.

On Friday evening, attendees will meet **El Vaquero**, America's first cowboy, as portrayed by Angel Vigil, a Colorado Heritage Artist storyteller. A composite of many different historic figures, this Spanish colonial cowboy was the first to ride the open ranges and sleep under the stars. He learned to tame the wild horses of the plains and delivered vast herds of cattle across great distances, mastering riding, roping and other skills.

"Without the Spanish Vaquero there would be no John Wayne... no Annie Oakley...no rodeos... no cowboys singing around the campfire...no Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows," said Vigil, who is the author of six award-winning books on Hispanic and Western culture and arts. "El Vaquero is the seminal figure in the creation of the American West."

Vigil's portrayal of El Vaquero will give color to the enduring American myth of a self-reliant cowboy riding tall in the saddle with an independent spirit representing all that is good in the American character.

Saturday evening's Chautauqua presentations will begin with **Abigail Adams** as portrayed by Jessica Downing-Ford. "America's first Second Lady and second



Angel Vigil as El Vaquero.

First Lady” played an important role in the founding of this nation. Indeed, one could say “the room where it happened” was often her dining room or parlor.

John Adams and his wife Abigail were intellectual equals who could discuss the complex issues of founding a nation together. She referred to her husband as “my dearest friend” when she wrote the many letters that contained her astute advice while he was away from their farm, working with the other patriots.

“She adored her husband and respected his duty to our country above even her own happiness,” wrote Downing-Ford.

It was during a trip back to her home state of Massachusetts in 2014 that Downing-Ford attended a reenactment of the signing of the Declaration at the Adams’ National Park on the 4th of July and was brought to tears by a reading of Abigail’s “Remember the Ladies” letter.

All her background in performance merged seamlessly with her passion for Abigail Adams’

story, and her career as a Chautauqua scholar was born. She “brings Abigail to life” for history classes in Colorado and coaches students through the Young Chautauqua program with Colorado Humanities.

The final presentation will be of Big Elk (*Ongpatonga*), as portrayed by Taylor Keen, a direct descendent of the Omaha chief.

In the 1800s, when the expanding U.S. threatened First Peoples, Big Elk sought ways to protect his tribe and their culture from obliteration. He created alliances to protect his people and prepare for a future that he thought depended on a closer relationship with the United States.

Fans of Nebraska Chautauqua may recall Keen as Chief Standing Bear during “Free Land? 1862 and the Shaping of Modern America” 2012-2016, and again at last year’s “What Connects Us” Chautauqua. A former HN board member, Keen is a full-time instructor at Creighton University and the author of the new book “Rediscovering America: Sacred Geography, the Ancient



Above: Jessica Downing-Ford as Abigail Adams. Right: A rare portrait of Big Elk.

Earthen Works and an Indigenous History of Turtle Island,” which will be published in June 2024.

Plans are also coming together for Saturday workshops, which will take place at Norfolk Public Library. Topics will include the Japanese-American experience in Western Nebraska and a look at political and cultural landscape as Nebraska was adopted as the 37th state in 1867.

HN is grateful to Northeast Community College, Norfolk Public Library and local volunteers who are making “Weaving a Nation possible. As plans are made, updates will be readily available on the HN website.

For more information, please visit [www.NebraskaChautauqua.org](http://www.NebraskaChautauqua.org)

To become a sponsor, please email [heather@humanitiesnebraska.org](mailto:heather@humanitiesnebraska.org).

## THANK YOU TO THESE RETIRED BOARD MEMBERS!

Humanities Nebraska is grateful to each of the board members who reached the end of their board service in January.

**VALERIE CUPPENS** of Lincoln served on the Council from 2022-2024. **MIKE LINDER** of Omaha served on the Council 2015-2024, and **DORI WANITSCHKE** of Grand Island served on the Council 2018-24.

**BRENDA CHRISTENSEN** of Omaha served on the Foundation 2018-24. Brenda was president of that board in 2023.

**DON ARP, JR.** of Lincoln served on the Council 2015-2023 and Foundation 2017-2023. **CONNIE DUNCAN** of Lincoln served on both

Council and Foundation 2017-2024, chairing the council board 2022-23. **LYNETTE KRIEGER** of Hastings served on both boards from 2018-2023. **BARB SCHLOTHAUER** of Gering served on the Council 2018-24 and the Foundation 2021-2024.

Each of these board members provided leadership in many ways, including chairing committees, advising staff, and providing insight and direction through HN’s strategic planning process and visioning for the future.

We are grateful to them for their service and dedication to enriching the lives of all Nebraskans through the humanities.

# WELCOME, NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

Humanities Nebraska recently welcomed nine new board members. Seven joined the board of the Nebraska Humanities Council, and two were added to the Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities at the spring meeting. Three of the new Council board members were appointed by Governor Jim Pillen.

## NEW TO THE COUNCIL

**DON DEITEMEYER** (Doniphan) has been heavily involved with nonprofits for more than 30 years,



including the Hall County Historical Society and Stuhr Museum. Since retiring from manufacturing and advertising

in 2021, he has increased his work in nonprofits, following the inspiration of his local mentors.

**KRISTIN KRUEGER** (Omaha) is a Shareholder in Koley Jessen's Litigation Department. She has achieved significant courtroom successes alongside her role as General Counsel at Koley Jessen, where she advises on professional ethics and risk management. She has been recognized by The Best Lawyers in America.



**M. TIMOTHY NOLTING** (Bushnell) served six years as an elected Kimball County Commissioner. After retiring as a rancher and businessman, he took up writing. His current projects include a



history of the early range cattle industry in the Nebraska Panhandle, an autobiography, and a sequel to his recently published novel, "By The Way They Treat Their Horses."

**STEPHEN OSBERG** (Omaha) is Vice President of Project Development at Paul G. Smith Associates. With his urban

planning background, he creates neighborhoods that support



human interaction and economic mobility. Previously, he worked at the Greater Omaha Chamber of

Commerce, where he oversaw development of the Urban Core Strategic Plan.

**CRYSTAL SANDBERG** (Gering) retired from Scottsbluff Public Schools after 28 years and now works for a family business. She

serves on the Western Nebraska Community College Foundation board and the Monument Marathon Steering Committee, and she chairs the Vera Dulaney Oregon Trail Days Art Show.



**SCOTT SNELL** (Hastings) is Projects & Programs Coordinator for Orton Management, where he helps manage various state associations related to water and



irrigation. He is a board member of the Nebraska State Irrigation Association and recently served a four-year term

on the Hastings City Council.

**SUNSHINE THOMAS-BEAR** (Winnebago) is currently the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Native American Graves Repatriation Act Representative, Cultural Preservation



Director and Angel De Cora Museum Director for the Winnebago tribe. She also sits on various other boards.

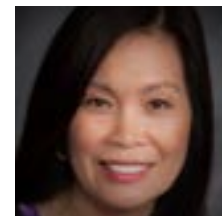
## NEW TO THE FOUNDATION

**NANCY SHANK** (Lincoln) was the founding Associate Director of the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center. In 2020, she took up creative writing. Her first play, "This Mortal Life Also," was produced by the Angels Theatre Company and was part of the 2021-22



Lied Center for Performing Arts season. Shank also co-hosts the Front Porch Book Club podcast.

**CAROL WANG** (Omaha) is the executive director of the Metro Omaha Medical Society. Previously, she worked as a journalist in newspaper and television. She's an active



volunteer, serving on the boards of the Omaha Chamber of Commerce and Nebraska Journalism Trust, and on advisory committees for several other organizations.

The Council re-elected **Beth Whited** (Omaha) as chair. **David Vail** (Kearney) was elected vice chair, and **Michael Evans** (Peru) was elected treasurer. The Foundation elected **Mike Homa** of Omaha as president and **Laura Troshynski** (North Platte) as vice president. **Keith Bystrom** (Plattsmouth) was re-elected treasurer.

# CAPITOL FORUM STUDENTS SHARE THEIR VIEWS ON FOREIGN POLICY

Offered since 1998, Capitol Forum on America's Future has been one of Humanities Nebraska's most impactful programs for youth. This year, high school students from 14 schools around the state participated. They gathered in Lincoln on March 25 for Capitol Forum Day, which was co-sponsored by Secretary of State Robert Evnen. The students explored key global policy issues, shared their own ideas, and interacted with state and national elected officials.

Participating social studies teachers at each high school used the Choices curriculum by Brown University for in-class or extra-curricular programs. Choices provides a grounding in immigration, international trade, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and climate change along with current event articles related to these five issue areas.

Each of the students came prepared to discuss one of the five Choices topics with peers from around the state in breakout sessions. "I liked hearing what other people had to say," one student said. "It helped me learn a lot."

Students in the immigration breakout session heard from a peer whose own family had come to the U.S. in search of freedom from an oppressive government. The terrorism discussion touched on recent events overseas and what constituted a threat to this nation. International Trade students got first-hand knowledge about the topic from Secretary Even. In the climate change discussion, students weighed in on how climate policies can affect international trade and immigration, unprompted by

facilitating teachers.

"I didn't think there were that many young people interested," one student said, "But I had many intelligent conversations with a lot of my peers!"

Students also worked in teams to prepare presentations, which in some cases required them to defend ideas counter to their own views. The students then voted on which policies they agreed with most before returning home to share their experiences with classmates.

One of the highlights of the day was meeting and asking questions of Senator Pete Ricketts and Governor Jim Pillen. Some schools were also able to have lunch with their Unicameral representatives or a member of their staff.



## ATTENTION TEACHERS!

**DUE**  
JUL 08

Humanities Nebraska is now recruiting high schools for Capitol Forum in 2024-2025. For details to share with a Nebraska teacher, visit [HumanitiesNebraska.org](https://HumanitiesNebraska.org). Contact [kristi@humanitiesnebraska.org](mailto:kristi@humanitiesnebraska.org) with questions. To become a sponsor, please email [heather@humanitiesnebraska.org](mailto:heather@humanitiesnebraska.org).

# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Join these generous contributors and help people explore what connects us and makes us human.

Gifts received between November 1, 2023 & February 29, 2024.

Many donors make multiple gifts throughout the year. Cumulative giving for the year is listed in our annual report.

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Contact Heather Thomas at [heather@HumanitiesNebraska.org](mailto:heather@HumanitiesNebraska.org) to learn more.



## SAVE THE DATE! GOVERNOR'S LECTURE TUESDAY, SEPT. 24

On September 24, at Lincoln's Lied Center for Performing Arts, Humanities Nebraska (HN) and the E.N. Thompson Forum on World Issues will co-present the annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities featuring a national speaker.

The 7:30 p.m. talk will be free and open to the public. HN will also have a benefit dinner at the Embassy Suites prior to the free public program.

Invitations to the benefit dinner will be mailed this summer, and more information will be posted on the Humanities Nebraska and E.N. Thompson Forum websites soon. For information about sponsorships, please email [heather@humanitiesnebraska.org](mailto:heather@humanitiesnebraska.org).

## PRIME TIME PRESCHOOL: KID'S CORNER

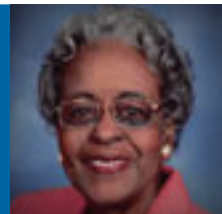


"Is it Prime Time Reading yet?" asks Nova Brown, a five-year-old student at the Nelson Mandela Early Childhood Development Center in North Omaha. She asks about Prime Time Preschool every day.

Prime Time Preschool has been a wonderful experience for the families at Nelson Mandela Early Childhood Development Center. Families enjoy a meal together and listen to an engaging story. Nova's favorite part is the center activities, which encourage children and their adults to explore and discuss themes through roleplay, crafts, art and writing.

Nova's favorite book this spring was "Tops and Bottoms" by Janet Stevens.

## IN MEMORY



**BARBARA JEAN COFFEY | 1931-2024** Dr. Barbara Jean Waldron-Coffey passed away on January 18. With a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from the University of Nebraska, Barbara was a sharp, hard-working, meticulous leader who believed in helping others have a better life. She was instrumental in helping low-income students succeed at UNO and served as Assistant to the University of Nebraska President for Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action. She served on the HN board 1994-1997.



**CHARLES EVERETT PACE | 1946-2024** Nationally acclaimed scholar/speaker Charles Pace died April 11. A founding member of the modern-day Chautauqua movement, Charles came to Nebraska as Frederick Douglass in "The American Renaissance" (1991-93), Booker T. Washington in "Behold Our New Century" (1998-2001), the enslaved York in "From Sea to Shining Sea" (2002-06), Malcom X in "Visions for America" (2007), and W.E.B. Du Bois in HN's "World War One: Lessons of a Forgotten War" (2016-18).



**THOMPSON H. ROGERS | 1953-2024** Tom Rogers died February 8. An investment manager by trade, Tom's commitment to community service including co-founding Opera Omaha, for which he was board president (1987-88) and CEO/Executive Director for the 1993-1994 season. Most recently, Tom was Chairman of the Board of Partnership 4 Kids and advisory board member for Civic Nebraska. He served on Humanities Nebraska boards for four terms: 1992-1996, 1996-2002, 2003-2010 and 2022-2024.



## RECENTLY AWARDED GRANTS

**African American Midwest/Milwaukee Film, Bethesda, MD**, \$13,359 for a documentary about racial unrest • **Asian Community and Cultural Center**, Lincoln, \$5,460 for the project “New Nebraskans: Immigrant and Refugee Stories” and \$1,630 to help fund Camp Culture 2024 • **Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts**, Omaha, \$3,932 for facilitated discussion and a poetry workshop related to the “Raven Halfmoon: Flags of Our Mothers” exhibition • **Blixt Locally Grown**, Lincoln, \$1,550, for “Not Too Far Distant” statewide tour and educational outreach • **Bright Lights, Inc.**, Lincoln, \$5,000 to help fund humanities-themed summer enrichment camps • **Circle Theatre**, Omaha, \$1,000 for a Yiddish theatre festival • **Civic Nebraska**, Lincoln, \$2,000 to help fund Kid Governor Nebraska

- **Crane River Theater Company**, Kearney, \$2,000 to help fund Page to Stage Library Outreach 2024 and \$1,000 for student matinee performances of “To Kill A Mockingbird”
- **The Durham Museum**, Omaha, \$10,500 for the exhibition “Beyond Combat: WWI Through the Lens of Doc Cook”
- **El Museo Latino**, Omaha, \$3,767 in support of a lecture series and public programming
- **Friends of the Homestead**, Beatrice, \$1,375 for Homestead National Historical Park's 2024 Tallgrass Prairie Fiddle Festival
- **Gage County Historical Society**, Beatrice, \$1,757 to help fund “Big Blue Reservation: Struggles and Hopes of the Otoe/Missouria Tribe”
- **Gering Public Library**, Gering, \$2,000 to help fund “Amberley Snyder: Turning Tragedy into Triumph”
- **Great Plains Theatre Commons**, Omaha, \$8,000 for the annual new play conference
- **Harold Warp Pioneer Village Foundation**, Minden, \$2,500 to help fund “Historical Experience through Virtual Reality”
- **The House of Afros, Capes & Curls**, Omaha, \$9,500 for its “Young History Detective” youth program
- **Kearney Area Community Foundation**, Kearney, \$857 to help fund the Platte River Singers and The Journey West
- **Lincoln Community Foundation for the Benefit of Intertribal Medicine Collective**, Lincoln, \$1,588 to help fund the series “Indigenous Medicine Traditions on the Plains”
- **Nebraska Crossroads Music Festival**, Lincoln, \$5,750 to support the “Dream Warriors” workshop and roundtable discussion
- **Museum of American Speed**, Lincoln, \$1,738 to help fund the Nebraska Auto Racing Hall of Fame
- **National Orphan Train Complex Museum and Research Center**, Concordia, KS, \$4,880 for “When Orphan Trains Went West”
- **Nebraska State Historical Society**, Lincoln, \$2,000 to help fund Pershing Mural academic curriculum
- **Plum Creek Children's Literacy Festival**, Seward, \$5,000 supporting the Fall 2024 festival
- **Sidney Gold Rush Days, Inc**, Sidney, \$2,000 supporting the 2024 festival
- **Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center**, Denton, \$1,970 to help fund expansion of the April 2024 “Return of the Thunderbirds” event
- **Stand in for Nebraska**, Lincoln, \$4,538 for “Roots to Rise” summer camp
- **Tri-Faith Initiative of Omaha**, \$5,500 to help fund its 2024 “Race, Religion, and Social Justice” conference
- **University of Nebraska at Kearney Board of Regents**, \$3,500 to help fund Loper Launch humanities enrichment summer camps
- **University of Nebraska-Lincoln Board of Regents**, \$4,005 for the “Women in Agriculture Gallery: An Agricultural Science Connections Opportunity”
- **West Nebraska Arts Center**, Scottsbluff, \$1,406 to help fund “Lakota Culture through Artists' Eyes”
- **Willa Cather Foundation**, Red Cloud, \$7,810 for the 69th Annual Willa Cather Spring Conference: “Cather and the Readerly Imagination”

33  
GRANTS

\$128,872  
TOTAL

# GRANT SPOTLIGHT: VIRTUAL LITERARY READINGS

With the support of Humanities Nebraska program grants, three Nebraska literary organizations capitalized on now-widespread familiarity with online video apps to present free, statewide cultural programming to overcome geographic barriers, allowing anyone to participate.

In 2023, HN grants helped support monthly virtual reading series hosted by the Larksong Writers Place (Lincoln), the National Willa Cather Center (Red Cloud), and Nebraska Poetry Society (Omaha). All three included Q&A sessions that enabled an exchange of ideas among the writers and online participants.

**Larksong Writers Place First Friday Online Reading Series** featured authors with Nebraska connections, national presence, and a newly published book. Authors shared stories behind their writing, including social and historical context and personal influences. Larksong Writers Place says the series helps to create “a supportive community that fosters an ongoing appreciation of writing and reading.”

**The National Willa Cather Center’s Author Series** explored humanities topics related to Willa Cather, art, and Great Plains history across a variety of styles and genres. Organizers said participants told them that they “enjoyed books they never would have encountered had it not been for the author series.” The series also provided an opportunity for the National Willa Cather Center to reach beyond Red Cloud and connect with libraries and reading programs in other communities.

**Nebraska Poetry Society’s Nebraska Poets Reading Series** featured poets who have published at least one chapbook or full body of work and are connected to Nebraska. The Society noted the value of the readings, stating that “Attendees either see themselves in the poem and gain a connection to another who is similar to them, or they are exposed to a different experience allowing them to gain understanding of life in someone else’s shoes.”

The reading series is one component of several that led to them being honored as the

fastest-growing state poetry society, according to the National Federation of Poetry Societies.



Guest speakers included (clockwise from top left): Jamaica Baldwin, Keven Clouther, Jessica Hendry Nelson, Tyler Jacobs, Oscar Hokeah and Amy Haddad

## MAKE AN IMPACT

**GIVE NEBRASKA**



is a coalition of 76 diverse nonprofits working to build a vibrant, creative, and healthy community. Humanities Nebraska greatly appreciates donors who designated gifts to us through their Give Nebraska workplace giving campaigns.

To learn more, please visit [givenebraska.org](https://www.givenebraska.org).

**DUE**  
JUN 14

## SOWER AWARD NOMINATIONS

Nominations are welcome for the 2024 Sower Award in the Humanities, presented in conjunction with the Governor’s Lecture in the Humanities, held September 24 in Lincoln at the Lied Center for Performing Arts.

Anyone may nominate an individual who has made a significant contribution to public understanding of the humanities in Nebraska via a commitment of time, expertise, resources, or any combination of the above.

### PAST HONOREES INCLUDE:

- Talented humanities faculty or educators who reach beyond the classroom
- Committed volunteers or philanthropists who enhance cultural life of the state
- Writers, filmmakers, or journalists who address important public issues

Nomination forms can be found on the HN web site:  
[HumanitiesNebraska.org/programs](https://www.HumanitiesNebraska.org/programs)

### PREVIOUS RECIPIENTS:

Marian Andersen • Robert Audi • Keith Blackledge • Marion Marsh Brown • Gene Bunge • Jack Campbell • State Sen. LaVon Crosby • Beth S. Dotan • Nancy Duncan • Walter Friedlander • Judi gaiashkibos • John Gottschalk • Natalie Hahn • Richard Holland • Jane Renner Hood • Ron Hull • Ted Kooser • Frederick Luebke • Robert Manley • Jack McBride • Gary Moulton • Ron Naugle • Robert Nefsky • Paul Olson • Don Pederson • Rhonda Seacrest • Todd Simon • Joe Seger • Bernice Slote • Annette and Paul Smith • Pamela Hilton Snow • Joe Starita • E.N. “Jack” Thompson • Charles “Chuck” Trimble • Morrie Tuttle • Kathering L. Walter • Don Welch • Larry Wewel • John R. Wunder

# THE ADVENTURE BEGINS WITH SUMMER READING KITS

## MAY 30: GIVE TO LINCOLN DAY!

Sponsored by the Lincoln Community Foundation, the 13th annual Give to Lincoln Day is a perfect time to support Humanities Nebraska and summer reading. Gifts to HN will help fund 400 summer reading kits for families across Nebraska.

Each kit includes the six books pictured here (four in both English and Spanish versions), a bilingual discussion guide, a toy, and family activities.

The online giving platform is open May 1 through May 30 so gifts may be made anytime during the month of May. Every donation you make helps even more because Humanities Nebraska will receive a proportional share of a \$650,000 challenge match fund. Help create reading adventures for children this summer. *Thank you!*



Make your gift between May 1 and May 30 at:  
[GivetoLincoln.com/nonprofits/humanities-nebraska](https://GivetoLincoln.com/nonprofits/humanities-nebraska)



### NEBRASKA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

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|   | <b>Jaclyn M. Wilson</b><br>Lakeside      |

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| <b>Karen Higgins, M.D.</b><br>Grand Island              | <b>David D. Vail</b><br>Kearney        |
| <b>Jeannette Eileen Jones</b><br>Lincoln                | <b>Beth Whited</b><br>Omaha            |
| <b>Kristin Krueger</b><br>Omaha                         | <b>Carol Wang</b><br>Omaha             |
| <b>Patrick Leahy</b><br>Omaha                           | <b>Jaclyn M. Wilson</b><br>Lakeside    |
|   | <b>Sara Woods</b><br>Omaha             |

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**Ensure an Endless Tradition of Arts & Humanities in Nebraska**

Preserve the values and assets that are important to you and your family while helping to preserve arts and humanities for the future.

Download our FREE legacy planning guide, *Donor Strategies to Preserve Arts & Humanities in Nebraska*, at [NebraskaCulture.org/wylegacy](https://NebraskaCulture.org/wylegacy).

Logos for Humanities Nebraska, Nebraska Cultural Endowment, and the 50th Anniversary of the Nebraska Arts Council and Humanities Nebraska.

Nebraska Cultural Endowment enables your donations with public support to enhance the programs and arts of the Nebraska Arts Council and Humanities Nebraska.



TO UPDATE ADDRESS OR CANCEL SUBSCRIPTIONS,  
402.474.2131 or [INFO@HUMANITIESNEBRASKA.ORG](mailto:INFO@HUMANITIESNEBRASKA.ORG)

## REFLECTIONS ON ROBERT NEFSKY, A RARE GEM FOR THE HUMANITIES

### ARTS AND HUMANITIES CHAMPION TO BE HONORED WITH A SPECIAL NEBRASKA CULTURAL ENDOWMENT FUND IN HIS NAME



Humanities Nebraska (HN) is fortunate to have had many remarkable people doing amazing things. And then there is Robert Nefsky, who passed away shortly before publication of our last newsletter. Bob was a rare—even singularly unique—volunteer leader who left such a positive legacy for the arts and humanities in Nebraska that it is hard to imagine where we would be without him.

He first became involved with HN and the Nebraska Arts Council (NAC) in the 1990s, a critical and challenging time for the funding landscape of public arts and humanities throughout the nation. He was chair of the Nebraska Humanities Council board in the mid-90s, when there was a serious threat to eliminate the National Endowment of the Humanities and National Endowment for the Arts, which would have spelled doom for the state arts and humanities councils across the nation.

Bob was part of our visits to Washington, D.C. at the time, and understood firsthand that we had to diversify funding while building stronger relationships across the political spectrum. While both national endowments were cut substantially at the time, they survived, and so did the state councils. Bob's leadership continued to make an impact as

we built a stronger private fundraising program here in Nebraska, helping to ensure that we could strengthen our financial stability.

Bob also became closely involved in behind-the-scenes efforts to create a unique public-private partnership to benefit arts and humanities across the state: the Nebraska Cultural Endowment (NCE). Thanks to the tireless work of Bob and a handful of other committed volunteers, the Nebraska Legislature passed legislation in the late 90s that created a trust to match private support with state funds, with the earnings from both then being distributed to HN and NAC. For 25 years, the NCE has provided hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to the two councils, enhancing our ability to support local arts and humanities projects all across the state. Up until his passing, Bob Nefsky was involved every step of the way.

In 2014, HN presented Bob with the Sower Award in the Humanities, which honors someone who has made an outstanding contribution to the public understanding of the humanities. There has never been a more worthy recipient.

The new NCE fund established in Bob's name will continue his legacy for ages to come.

**To contribute to the NCE fund honoring Robert Nefsky, please contact  
Maggie Smith at 531-375-3934 or [msmith@nebraskaculture.org](mailto:msmith@nebraskaculture.org)**