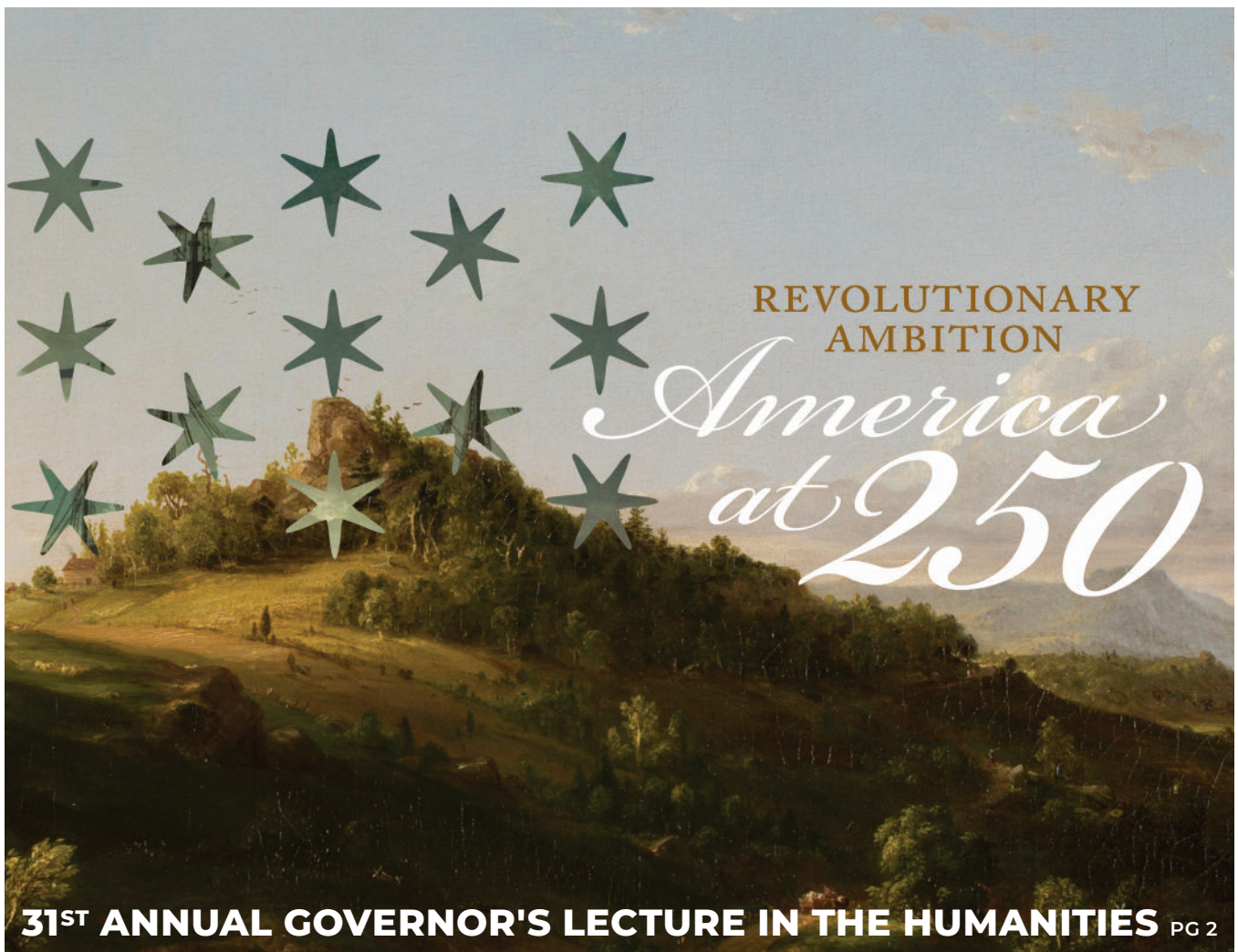


ISSUE 41 | SUMMER 2027

# RAPPORT

HELPING PEOPLE EXPLORE WHAT CONNECTS US AND MAKES US HUMAN



"WEAVING A  
NATION"  
CHAUTAUQUA  
PHOTOS

PG 6



SUMMER  
READING  
KITS  
DELIVERED!

PG 12

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- 22, 29** NEBRASKA WARRIOR WRITERS WORKSHOPS BEGIN *Omaha, Lincoln, Online*
- SEP 1** MINI GRANT DEADLINE *(Details on our website)*
- 21** SPARK! PLACES OF INNOVATION OPENS *Haigler, through October 30*
- 16** BOARD NOMINATIONS DUE *(Details on our website)*
- 27** GOVERNOR'S LECTURE IN THE HUMANITIES *(See adjacent story)*
- 9** SPARK! PLACES OF INNOVATION OPENS *Madison, through December 18*
- 14** THE CELEBRATION OF NEBRASKA BOOKS *(Details on their website)*

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## WASHINGTON IN THE HURRICANE'S EYE: AN INTERVIEW WITH NATHANIEL PHILBRICK



From *Journal of the American Revolution*; used with permission.

The 31st annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities will feature a conversation with historian/author Nathaniel Philbrick. We hope you enjoy this interview.

If not for a series of devastating hurricanes in the Caribbean Sea in 1780, George Washington might not have met Lord Cornwallis at the Battle of Yorktown and America may never have gained her independence.

This serendipitous scenario comes to the fore in Nathaniel Philbrick's fascinating book *In the Hurricane's Eye: The Genius of George Washington and the Victory of Yorktown*. Forever the sailor, the renowned author shows how the sea was such an important factor in Washington's strategic plans for defeating the British. If not for these crippling storms, which forced the French fleet northward, the outcome of the American Revolution could have been decidedly different.

"It was a wonderful surprise," Philbrick said. "I had never heard how the hurricanes in the Caribbean a year before Yorktown were so integral to what would happen in 1781."

Philbrick point outs that Washington was an accomplished sailor who owned a schooner. The general spent much of his life in the Tidewater region of Virginia where transportation by

water was a way of life, if not a necessity. Philbrick describes how

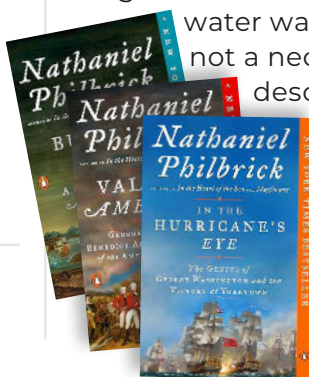
Washington was on a barge in the Hudson River a few months before Yorktown. It grew

dark and conditions worsened. Washington calmly took the tiller and carefully guided the barge to shore and safety. "There are two accounts of him taking the helm under very trying conditions," he said. "I find that fascinating!"

The opening chapter of his book describes how three massive hurricanes rolled through the West Indies in 1780. One is estimated to be a Category 5 storm with winds in excess of 200 miles per hour. That third tempest caught the Spanish fleet at sea and nearly destroyed it. The first almost capsized a British frigate, which avoided sinking only because it was blown ashore on Cuba.

Following these catastrophic storms, it would take the French, English and Spanish years to rebuild their fleets. The French opted to move North for the summer and early fall to avoid further destruction. That shift in operations was a godsend to Washington, who had begged the French for naval support for years.

"What was amazing to me was Washington's level of understanding of the overall strategy," Philbrick said. "A lot of people dismiss his generalship but he was really the only one who got it from the very beginning. He knew the only way it was going to work was if the French could establish naval superiority on the Atlantic seaboard, thus enabling the Americans to be victorious on land and force Britain to the negotiating table."



For most of the American Revolution, Great Britain controlled the coastal regions and could easily reinforce or rescue its troops by sea. Even at the Battle on Monmouth in 1778—a nominal American victory—the British army was able to escape total defeat by slipping away to New York, thanks to “the efforts of the Royal Navy.



Detail:  
“Washington  
Rallying the Troops  
at Monmouth” by  
Emanuel Leutze

Washington pleaded with his allies to support him by sea as he tried to take on a very formidable, better-equipped and well-trained enemy. “Washington spent three years trying to get naval support and but the French were very lackadaisical because they were so consumed with the Caribbean,” Philbrick said. “Finally it falls together but it’s Washington pushing, pushing, pushing that makes it happen.”

When the French fleet finally moved north, Washington began a series of negotiations to support his overall strategic goals, which at first included taking back New York. When that became unfeasible, Washington began looking south to Virginia. “Washington understood the circumstances that would bring victory,” Philbrick said. “When those circumstances changed, he was willing to adjust and develop new plans.”

Two important naval engagements—the battles of Cape Henry and the Chesapeake—preceded the maneuvering that would lead to the Siege at Yorktown. Gen. Benedict Arnold, now a brigadier in the British army, had landed in Virginia and was wreaking havoc with the Raid on Richmond. Washington convinced Admiral Destouches to take his ships from Newport, Rhode Island, and assist with operations by the Marquis de Lafayette against Arnold. The French encountered the British fleet commanded by Admiral Arbuthnot in the Chesapeake Bay, near the mouth of the James River. After several hours of fighting, the British ships gained an advantageous position inside the bay and the French withdrew. Arbuthnot was able to reinforce Arnold and later assist with his retreat down the James River peninsula.

Though it was not the outcome Washington hoped for, the Battle of Cape Henry was the impetus needed to spur the French to further action.

While Washington and Rochambeau moved their combined land forces south—first feinting toward New York to fool the British—Admiral de Grasse began moving his ships north from the West Indies into position near



Detail:  
“Second Battle  
of the Virginia Capes,”

V. Zveg, 18th Century, National  
Museum of the U.S. Navy

*Continued on next page*

## THANK YOU FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE

### A message from Executive Director Chris Sommerich

Humanities Nebraska continues to find its way forward in fulfilling our mission and serving all of Nebraska with continuing funding uncertainty and challenges at the federal and state levels. It has never been clearer what a difference private donors and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment make for Humanities Nebraska as we help people explore what connects us and makes us human.

After a full year of zero federal funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) making its way to the state humanities councils--funding that Congress had intended and appropriated--in recent weeks some of those funds have become available to the councils. The amount being released by NEH is under half of what Congress allocated to the councils on a bipartisan basis; but for Humanities Nebraska, that combined with the Cultural Endowment support, state funding, and private donations means we won't have to dip into our financial reserves in order to finish the year with a balanced budget.

There is still a long road ahead of us before the federal funding picture is clear and stable, and that road has become rockier with a pending \$5 million cut to the Cultural Preservation Endowment Fund (CPEF), the state fund that for decades has been matching private donations to the Nebraska Cultural Endowment (NCE) dollar for dollar. Every year, earnings from both CPEF and NCE are distributed to Humanities Nebraska and the Nebraska Arts Council to support arts and humanities programs in communities all across Nebraska. This public-private partnership has been such a success that the news of federal and state funding cuts recently drew the attention of National Public Radio (NPR), who sent a reporter to Nebraska for an in-depth story about this partnership and what is at stake.

Despite the murky and challenging public funding picture, HN is determined to continue doing our best to meet the needs of all Nebraskans who are interested in engaging

*Continued on next page*

the Chesapeake for the conclusive clash between both fleets.

Cornwallis correctly surmised what his adversaries were plotting and began moving his army toward Yorktown, where he could easily escape across the James River with assistance from British Admiral Thomas Graves. That strategy had worked many times in the past and there was no reason to doubt that it would again.

Except before, there was no French fleet to contend with. When Graves arrived at the Chesapeake on September 5, 1781, he discovered he had opposition with the enemy in command of the bay. Both fleets maneuvered for position and the battle soon began. The British could not capitalize on a critical tactical error by the French and suffered a humiliating loss. In the end the British surrendered control of the Chesapeake to the French—and ultimately victory to Washington at Yorktown.

“It’s a miracle the French won the Battle of the Chesapeake given the ragtag nature of how the fleet was assembled for the engagement,” Philbrick said. “De Grasse ordered a Line of Speed, which meant the fastest ship would lead. This left a large gap in the French line, which was a major advantage for the British. But they failed to seize the moment and lost the opportunity.”

With the British fleet subdued, it

would only be a matter of time for the American and French troops. The siege began on September 26 with the encirclement of Yorktown. It would take only a few weeks to tighten the noose. After a few key skirmishes, Lord Cornwallis surrendered his army of 7,000 men. With that key defeat, the British recognized they had lost the American colonies. Negotiations began in earnest and the Treaty of Paris was signed two years later. America had her independence.

Philbrick came away from this book with a deep sense of admiration for Washington. The more he researched, the more he understood the general’s grasp of military strategy and his ability to adjust his plans according to the situation at hand. That’s why the title of his book—*In the Hurricane’s*

*Eye*—is such an apt metaphor for the country’s first commander in chief. “What’s interesting about a hurricane is the tremendous forces that focus ultimately on the eye of the storm,” Philbrick said. “For me, that’s where Washington was in all of this. He was always standing amid those incredible centrifugal forces, maintaining things so that they didn’t spin out of control.”



Detail: “Surrender of Lord Cornwallis,” John Trumbell, 1820, U.S. Capitol Rotunda

## THE 31<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL GOVERNOR'S LECTURE: REVOLUTIONARY AMBITION: AMERICA AT 250

7:30 p.m. Tuesday, October 27

Lied Center for Performing Arts  
Center, Lincoln/Livestreaming

Presented in partnership with  
the E.N. Thompson Forum on World Issues

For details: [HumanitiesNebraska.org/Governors-Lecture](http://HumanitiesNebraska.org/Governors-Lecture)



## THANK YOU FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE *continued from page 3*

with history, culture, literature, arts, and other areas of the humanities. We are working side by side with our partners at the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, Nebraska Arts Council, and Nebraskans for the Arts, as we all make the case for the important societal value that the arts and humanities provide Nebraska, while also enriching so many individual lives. One way that you can help in the coming months is to get connected with Nebraskans for the Arts and the Nebraska

Cultural Endowment, as they will be leading efforts to educate elected leaders on the importance of continued state funding for the arts and humanities. It is clear that when the next Nebraska Legislature forms after the elections, it is going to have a very tough budget situation to address, and we expect more efforts to eliminate the Cultural Preservation Endowment Fund. Your voice will make a difference, more than ever. *Thank you!*

## 2026 SOWER AWARD RECIPIENT: MARGARET HORNADY-DAVID

Humanities Nebraska has chosen Grand Island's Margaret Hornady-David to receive the 2026 Sower Award in the Humanities. Her nomination by Bonnie Smith and numerous letters of support highlighted her dedication to arts, history, and culture; her tireless volunteerism and deep generosity; and her unwavering advocacy for the humanities.

Hailing from a family who arrived in America on the Mayflower and later started a substantial manufacturing company in Grand Island, Hornady had a successful career at Poloroid Corporation before retuning to the family business in Grand Island following the death of her father. She later became the first female chair of the Grand Island Chamber of Commerce.

In 2006, Hornady became the first female mayor of Grand Island. Almost immediately, she found herself leading the city through a very difficult time of distrust and cultural division.

Her commitment to her home city has been apparent in many behind-the-scenes contributions to local organizations such as the Grand Island Little Theater and Goodwill. She also played a key role in bringing the Nebraska State Fair to Grand Island.

Nominator Smith noted, "Beyond philanthropy, Margi has devoted countless volunteer hours and exceptional leadership to her hometown and across the state...Her support extends beyond financial contributions; she actively mentors, cultivates partnerships, inspires civic engagement, and encourages others to invest their time and resources in cultural endeavors and institutions."

In her letter of support, Grand

Island Community Foundation executive director Melissa DeLaet noted that Hornady "has invested her time, talent, and resources in many of Central Nebraska's cultural treasures, including the Stuhr Museum, Grand Island Little Theatre, Grand Island Partnership for the Arts, and the Museum of Nebraska Art."

Heartland United Way president Karen Rathke added that Hornady's involvement with statewide organizations such as the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, Nebraska Arts Council, and Humanities Nebraska "has helped ensure that Nebraskans of all ages can engage with history, art, and cultural experiences that deepen our understanding of ourselves and our communities."

Hornady will be honored on October 27, 2026, at a benefit reception and dinner preceding the 31st Annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities in Lincoln.



Following the Sower Award presentation at Embassy Suites, Humanities Nebraska and the E.N. Thompson Forum on World Issues will present "Revolutionary Ambition: America at 250" at the Lied Center for Performing Arts. Philbrick's appearance will begin at 7:30 p.m. and is free and open to the public. A live-stream viewing option will also be available.

The free public event will begin at 7:30 p.m., following a benefit dinner to raise funds to support HN's statewide programming.

## BOARD NOMINATIONS DUE

**DUE  
OCT  
16**

Humanities Nebraska is seeking nominations for its Council board by Friday, October 16.

Board members are selected statewide from those who show a passion for the humanities and the cultural life of Nebraska. HN makes every effort to find community members who reflect the geographic, occupational, and ethnic diversity of Nebraska, and also seek balance between involvement in the humanities and other pursuits.

Board members agree to attend three board meetings a year, serve on a number of subcommittees, attend and evaluate programs, etc., to support HN's statewide work.

Nominations for the Council board must be postmarked or submitted online on or before October 16. You can find nomination forms and a complete list of basic responsibilities on our website or by making your request via email to [info@humanitiesnebraska.org](mailto:info@humanitiesnebraska.org). Visit the "About Us" page at [HumanitiesNebraska.org](https://www.humanitiesnebraska.org) and select "Board" for more details.

# NEBRASKA CHAUTAUQUA'S "WEAVING A NATION" BRINGS AMERICAN STORIES TO LIFE IN HASTINGS

In its third and final year, "Weaving a Nation" Nebraska Chautauqua created a lasting impact on crowds in Hastings during the weekend of June 26 and 27. Created by HN program manager Kristi Hayek Carley, "Weaving a Nation" gave Nebraskans an opportunity to observe the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, through an array of lesser-known stories from our country's rich melting pot of backgrounds and perspectives to Hastings. These two days spent learning together brought Nebraska communities together in an interactive and unique way.

On Friday, an afternoon of breakout sessions occurred in the Hastings Public Library. Audiences learned about Black homesteaders in Nebraska and other states of the Great Plains, heard the memories of Nebraska Holocaust survivors and the people who liberated them, and were introduced to stories of Hispanic history and heritage. During the evening, authentic Mexican dancing was performed by area children at Hastings College's French Memorial Chapel, followed by "An Evening with El Vaquero." Scholar Angel Vigil portrayed the first American cowboy, separating fact from fiction as he twirled a lasso, his spurs jangling as he walked across the stage.

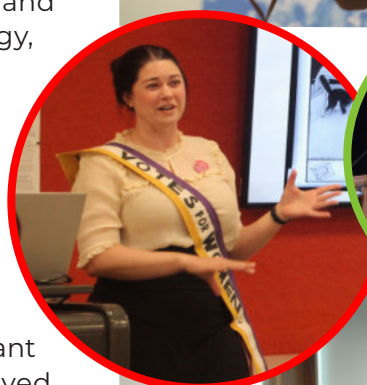
On Saturday, audiences were able to pick from a range of topics and discussions at the Hastings Public Library. In the morning, an in-depth biography about Abigail Adams was followed by a fascinating conversation surrounding the Picture Cave, a 1,300 year old

rock art site sacred to Native Americans. Then, audiences learned the origins of American Cowboy Culture, passing around ropes and spurs for a tactical experience.

Afternoon sessions gave attendees the option to choose between different topics, such as women's suffrage, Japanese settlers in Nebraska, Lewis and Clark, indigenous archeology, Nebraska statehood, and Nebraska's literary history.

Later at French Memorial Chapel, "An Evening with Abigail Adams" was presented by Jessica Downing-Ford. Viewers were able to become engrossed into the important role that Abigail Adams played in the American Revolution. Afterward, Taylor Keen presented "An Evening with Big Elk," which brought awareness to the chief of the Omaha Tribe during the 1800s. Keen is the fifth-great-grandson of Big Elk, making the presentation that much more impactful for audiences to enjoy.

"Weaving a Nation" Nebraska Chautauqua was brought to Hastings thanks to the generous contributions of Hastings Community Foundation, Shoemaker Family Foundation, Hastings Public Library, Hastings College, Hastings Museum, Nebraska Cultural Endowment, Hastings Parks and Recreation, Adams County Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the State of Nebraska. Other contributors include Roger & Karen Doerr, Lynette & Paul Krieger, Monica & Rich Lloyd, Chuck Shoemaker, Lynne Friedewald, Charles & Margaret Hermes, Harry & Phyllis



Salyards, Linda Daniel, Pamela Lay, Charles & Jane Bauer, Byron & Deb Jensen, Robin & Ann Koozer, Chris & Colleen Schukei, Justin & Kili Wenburg, City Iron & Metal Co., Coach's Corner. Many thanks to all these sponsors!



# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

You can join these generous contributors and help people across the state explore what connects us and makes us human.

Gifts received between **March 1, 2026 & June 30, 2026.**

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

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**Many thanks to these well-wishers who honored the recent nuptials of board members Ana López and Stephen Osberg with gifts to Humanities Nebraska. *Thank you!***

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 Holly & Jay Kline  
 John Conley & Catherine Lang  
 Michael & Susan Lebens

Sarah Grossman-López & David López  
 Mary & Rodrigo López  
 Dan McCarthy  
 Courtney & Kevin Tracy  
 Sara Gray & Matt Vining

## GRANT SPOTLIGHT: THE NEGRO MOTORIST GREEN BOOK EXHIBITION AT THE DURHAM MUSEUM

Earlier this year, The Durham Museum in Omaha hosted the final public display of The Negro Motorist Green Book exhibition, which was developed by the Smithsonian Institution's Traveling Exhibition Service. The exhibition tells the national story of the historic motorist guide that helped African Americans navigate the United States in the era before the Civil Rights Movement. A complementary exhibition at the Great Plains Black History Museum (GPBHM) in Omaha helped to connect local Green Book sites and stories to the national narrative. Omaha Public Schools' Making Invisible Histories Visible (MIHV) program and the Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) also collaborated on the project.

Omaha's Green Book sites are unique. While only about 20% of Green Book sites overall are still standing, in Omaha, 36% of the listed sites still exist (though they aren't still the same businesses). In other cities, a large majority of

the Green Book sites were owned by Black Americans, but in Omaha, census records showed the properties were owned by a mix of Black Americans (60%), Jewish, Czech, Danish, Yugoslavian, and Irish immigrants.

Museum visitors left overwhelmingly positive comments about the exhibition. One person wrote, "I was genuinely moved and touched to see how much everything has changed from past to present. As well as how great an African American overcame any obstacle they were faced with." Another stated that, "This exhibit is a blessing to all who view it. Having knowledge over things like this is what leaves a beneficial mark on the world."

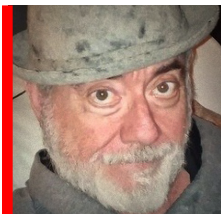
In addition to developing the exhibition, Durham staff worked with almost a dozen community partners to develop a series of four lectures and performances featuring local scholars and artists to bring further depth and new audiences to the exhibit. They wrote that, while

the exhibition itself found success as the fourth-highest-attended spring exhibition, "[o]ne of our important successes was the community relationships we built and strengthened during this project."

A lasting outcome of the exhibition will be a new oral history project focused on Omaha's connections to the Green Book that will be added to the museum's archive and used for future programs, including The Durham's River City History Tours.



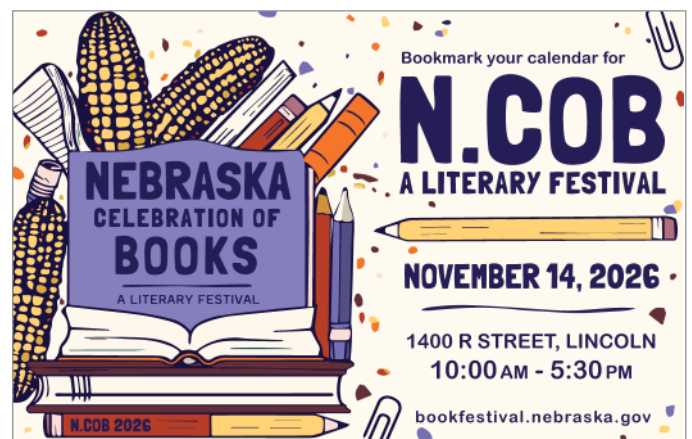
## IN MEMORY



### JEFF KAPPELER | 1950-2025

Native Nebraskan Jeffrey Kappeler earned a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Midland Lutheran College and taught for several years. His lifelong interest in history led to his career

of museum curator at John Brown's Cave in Nebraska City and the Dodge County Historical Society/May Museum in Fremont. Additionally, he presented programs on 19th century life in Nebraska as a member of the HN Speakers Bureau.



## RECENTLY AWARDED GRANTS

**Asian Community and Cultural Center**, Lincoln, \$1,600 for Camp Culture youth summer camp • **Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts**, Omaha, \$7,700 for discussion events related to summer exhibitions • **Bone Creek Museum of Agrarian Art**, David City, \$1,080 for youth workshop on the history of photography • **Bright Lights, Inc.**, Lincoln, \$2,800 for humanities-related youth summer camp sessions • **Canopy South**, Omaha, \$6,680 for an exhibition on South Omaha history • **Circle Theatre**, Omaha, \$1,300 for educational activities related to the play "Hana's Suitcase" • **Civic Nebraska**, Lincoln, \$5,500 for the Kid Governor civic education program • **Clinic with a Heart**, Lincoln, \$600 for history and culture conversations at a community block party • **Crane River Theater Company**, Kearney, \$3,650 for "Come From Away" student matinees with discussion and \$1,700 for Page to Stage theater / literary workshops for youth • **Creighton University**, Omaha, \$2,000 for an immersive simulation of post-prison reentry and discussion • **Dawes County Historical Society**, Chadron, \$2,778 for post-production for "Dawes County U.S.A." documentary film • **Friends of the Homestead**, Beatrice, \$4,350 for America 250 summer event series at Homestead National Historical Park • **Friends of the Midwest Theater**, Scottsbluff, \$981 for Willa Cather events linked to America 250 sculpture celebration in Gering • **Genoa U.S. Indian School Foundation**, \$2,000 for Recognition and Remembrance Day events • **Great Plains Black History Museum**, Omaha, \$2,000 for a community event on Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech • **Great Plains Theatre Commons**, Omaha, \$6,000 for the 2026 New Play Festival • **Indian Center, Inc.**, Lincoln, \$950 for Roots To Runway • **John G. Neihardt Foundation**, Bancroft, \$500 for the 2026 Neihardt Spring Conference • **Lincoln Symphony Orchestra**, \$4,000 for pre-concert chats for the 2026-27 season • **McCook Arts Council**, \$1,800 for the 2026 Buffalo Commons Storytelling and Music Festival • **Meadowlark Hearth Living Environment Foundation**, Scottsbluff, \$1,329 for the Archaeology Fair at Legacy of the Plains Museum • **Nebraska Crossroads Music Festival**, Lincoln, \$8,300 for the 2026 festival • **Nebraska Poetry Society**, Omaha, \$1,200 for a series of virtual poetry workshops • **Operation Christmas Card, Inc.**, North Platte, \$3,750 for the North Platte Pow Wow • **Salt Creek Song Festival**, Ashland, \$1,442 for the 2026 Festival • **Seward County Bridges, Inc.**, \$1,800 for speakers at the Great Plains Literacy Festiva • **Sheldon Art Association**, Lincoln, \$2,000 for a series of events using poetry to interpret artwork • **Sidney Gold Rush Days, Inc.**, \$5,600 for presenters at 2026 Gold Rush Days • **Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center**, Denton, \$1,550 for the 2026 Return of the Thunderbirds event • **Stand in for Nebraska**, Lincoln, \$1,898 for Roots to Rise youth summer camp • **The Durham Museum**, Omaha, \$8,500 for an exhibit on the Declaration of Independence signers • **The House of Afros, Capes & Curls**, Omaha, \$9,400 for the Young History Detectives summer program • **UNK Board of Regents**, Kearney, \$4,767 for humanities-related Loper Launch youth summer camp sessions • **Willa Cather Foundation**, Red Cloud, \$9,510 for speakers at the 2026 Spring Conference and \$1,250 for a virtual author series event • **World Speaks**, Omaha, \$1,390 for an English-Spanish bilingual cultural exchange

**37  
GRANTS**

**\$124,855  
TOTAL**



Top: The Indian Center's "Roots to Runway" program. Above: Ashley Olson, executive director at the National Willa Cather Center, speaking at the Gering Civic Center for a "Really Big Willa Cather Book Club Event"

## NEBRASKA WARRIOR WRITERS AT WORK AGAIN

Since 2014, Nebraska Warrior Writers (NWW) has helped veterans and active duty military personnel express their thoughts and feelings in words. With professional writing instructors and guest presenters, participants are able to further develop their skills in an encouraging community centered environment.



"As veterans we are all injured or damaged in the experience," one attendee said. "This is an avenue by which we can express ourselves and get things off our backs. Sometimes you can't say aloud what is going on but you can write it. This is a healthy and healing outlet."

Through biweekly sessions held in both Omaha and Lincoln with the option of online participation, 100% of spring 2026 participants reported that their writing skills improved because of the program. Additionally, with the option of public reading, confidence is built amongst participants that allows for feedback and growth in their work.

Many participants give the program praise for being a space where they feel encouraged. A majority of spring participants said they would continue attending. The autumn term began August 22.

"It was an amazing way of finding a community of fellow writers that holds me accountable to write, but was also way less pressure and financial strain than going back to school for a creative writing degree," one attendee said.

Participants only need to be interested in writing in order to benefit from the workshop. Regardless of skill level, a majority of participants reported feeling inspired to write through prompts given and discussion amongst members. Participants have continued to grow as writers through each session.

By the end of 2026, the second NWW anthology will be released, featuring the writings and work done by participants. The publication will showcase a wide range of poetry, essays, memoirs, and personal reflections that capture the unique experiences and perspectives of veterans and active duty service members. This serves as a moment of growth and accomplishment for participants to celebrate their work.

More details available at:  
**HumanitiesNebraska.org**

## SUMMER READING KITS DELIVERED STATEWIDE

Thanks to generous donors, Humanities Nebraska was able to provide nearly 450 summer reading kits to families across the state. These kits were filled with award-winning children's books, a bilingual family discussion and activity guide and art supplies in a reusable tote. The kits are designed for preschool and elementary school kids and help maintain literacy skills for a better start to the fall semester. This is the sixth summer HN has been able to provide these kits. Many thanks to the **Abel Foundation, Acklie Charitable Foundation, Roger & Carol Lewis, Lincoln Community Foundation, the Sherwood Foundation** and numerous Give to Lincoln donors who helped HN continue this valuable project.



## GET YOUR LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL INVOLVED IN GLOBAL ISSUES!

Humanities Nebraska is now recruiting high schools for Nebraska Forum on Global Issues during the 2027-2028 school year. For details to share with a Nebraska teacher or principal, visit **HumanitiesNebraska.org**. Contact **kristi@humanitiesnebraska.org** with questions. To sponsor this program, please email **erin@humanitiesnebraska.org**.

# HUMANITIES CHAMPIONS CORNER

## People Behind the Mission: Sarah Peetz and Nancy Shank

A shared passion for the humanities and a commitment to ensuring they remain vibrant in Nebraska bring Sarah Peetz and Nancy Shank together on the HN Board of Directors.

Peetz is a fifth-generation Nebraskan with a deep love for the state. As a retired attorney who worked in community philanthropy at the Lincoln Community Foundation, she had the opportunity to work with many nonprofit organizations throughout Lincoln. One that stood out was Humanities Nebraska.

"I always enjoyed working with the staff of Humanities Nebraska and believed in the many successful programs that they had," Peetz said.

After moving to Lincoln, Peetz and her family began attending the Governor's Lecture each year, growing a strong appreciation for the event and the work of Humanities Nebraska. Now, she has served on the board for a year while working additionally as a co-chair for the Governors Lecture alongside Shank.

Shank worked at the Public Policy Center for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, which shares a building with HN which led her to learning the mission of HN. As a humanities lover, Shank found herself inspired to serve on the board.

"I have learned a lot while serving on the board, and my viewpoint has expanded," Shank said. "During the last Governor's Lecture with Zahn McClarnon and Bird Runningwater, I thought to myself, 'There is nowhere I'd rather be.' I'm so proud to be a part of that."

For both women, serving on the board is an opportunity to help foster understanding,

strengthen communities and ensure Nebraskans of all backgrounds have access to meaningful humanities experiences.

"I think learning about others and their experience creates empathy, which is one of the most important skills a person can learn," Shank said. "Nebraska is a unique place. I love that Humanities Nebraska recognizes and celebrates that while bringing other worlds to Nebraska."

Peetz believes the humanities play an essential role in connecting people across differences and enriching communities throughout the state.

"The basics of being exposed to humanities, I believe, builds our whole statewide community and encourages cultural understanding, communication, interaction, in addition to the critical thinking and problem-solving skills that you get while working with history and the arts," Peetz said. "Humanities are a way for people to find a common bond and have the ability to enjoy each other while not agreeing on everything."

Above:  
Nancy Shank.  
Right: Sarah Peetz

As board members, both Peetz and Shank are motivated by the opportunity to support an organization they believe makes a lasting difference across Nebraska.

"It is such joyful work to be involved with a professional staff where your money and time will be used effectively," Shank said.

For Peetz, serving on the board is both an honor and a way to give back to the state she has always called home.

"The exposure to a statewide program like Humanities Nebraska that contributes to the quality of life—I love being on a statewide board, and it is a great privilege," Peetz said.

Peetz and Shank bring decades of professional experience, a shared appreciation for lifelong learning and a commitment to ensuring the humanities continue to connect, inspire and enrich communities across Nebraska for years to come.



**The Nebraska Cultural Endowment is proud to support Humanities Nebraska.**



Investing in the arts and humanities for a greater Nebraska.



Learn more about how we are investing in a greater Nebraska at [NebraskaCulturalEndowment.org](http://NebraskaCulturalEndowment.org)

# MAKE A GREATER IMPACT: JOIN THE PATRON'S CIRCLE



The Patron's Circle is a group of individuals who are committed to ensuring that the humanities flourish in Nebraska. With an annual cumulative donation of \$1,000 or more, these donors receive advanced notice of HN events, special invitations, and other benefits. To learn more, please contact Erin L. Moran, Director of Development: [erin@humanitiesnebraska.org](mailto:erin@humanitiesnebraska.org)

Below are Patron Circle members from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026.

|                                      |                                  |                                       |                                         |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Anonymous                            | Dan Hamann & Joan Squires        | Christine & Robert Makowski           | David & Trixie Schmidt                  |
| Virginia & John Aita                 | Tami & Jerry Hellman             | Dan McCarthy                          | Mark Howard Schulze                     |
| Effie Athanassopoulos & George Gogos | John & Karen Higgins             | Renée & Ed McClymont                  | Earl & Patricia Scudder                 |
| Cindy & Mogens Bay                   | Robert Hillestad                 | Emily J. McElroy                      | Rhonda Seacrest                         |
| Robert & Jo Anne Bettenhausen        | Jacki & Chris Hochstetler        | Linda Hillegass & Jim McKee           | Nancy & Bryan Shank                     |
| Charlie & Marilyn Bicak              | Carol & Tom Holyoke              | Cynthia & Robert Milligan             | Chuck Shoemaker & Lynne Friedewald      |
| Amy Bones                            | Steve & Jeni Homan               | Jane & Randy Moody                    | D. David & Martha Slosburg              |
| Dan & Esther Brabec                  | Jane Renner Hood                 | Erin L. & Michael L. Moran            | Larry Small                             |
| David & Laura Buntain                | Fred & Julie Hoppe               | Mary Nefsky                           | Annette & Paul Smith                    |
| Keith & Dianne Bystrom               | Margaret Hornady-David           | Sharee & Murray Newman                | Marcus Snow                             |
| Jack & Sally Campbell                | Anne Hubbard                     | Helen & Robert E. Nichols             | Chris & Vicki Sommerich                 |
| Linda Clark                          | Susan Thomas & Steven Hutchinson | Molly & Tim O'Holleran                | Dr. Michael Stieghorst & Dr. Sue Conley |
| Jason Conrad & David Clark           | Calvin Johnson                   | Ana López Shalla & Stephen Osberg     | Anne & Dan Stockmann                    |
| Kim & Tom Dinsdale                   | Kile & Virginia Johnson          | Don & Rita Otis                       | Christopher & Wendy Swenson             |
| Karen & Roger Doerr                  | Jean & Lee Johnson               | June Pederson                         | Bette Anne Thaut                        |
| Amnon & Beth Dotan                   | Bob & Rossell Kelley             | Sarah & Jeffery Peetz                 | Bill & Laura Troshynski                 |
| Connie & Todd Duncan                 | Pat & Don Kingsley               | Andy & Kris Pollock                   | Katherine Walter & Timothy Rinne        |
| Judy & Jack Ekeler                   | Tara Knapp                       | Carolyn Rasmussen                     | Carol Wang                              |
| Carol Fichter                        | Vikki & Doug Kotil               | Senator Pete Ricketts & Susanne Shore | Dori Wanitschke                         |
| Jane Fliesbach                       | John & Wende Kotouc              | Brenda Robinson                       | Dr. Tom Waring                          |
| Kay Fowles                           | Beverly Kracher & Jerry Stegeman | Lynn & Dana Roper                     | Beth & Kelvin Whited                    |
| Julie & Lance Fritz                  | Paul & Lynette Krieger           | Constance Ryan                        | Eric & Kristin Wiebe                    |
| Dr. & Mrs. Richard Fruehling         | Pat & Lou Lamberty               | Amy Sandeen                           | Ross & Judy Wilcox                      |
| Linda & Mark Graff                   | Patrick & Emily Leahy            | Matthew & Maggie Schaefer             | Pete & Kristae Zandbergen               |
| Jeffrey & Judy Greenwald             | Carole Levin                     |                                       | Art & Chris Zygielbaum                  |
| Amy Haddad & Steve Martin            | Carol Lewis                      |                                       |                                         |
|                                      | Charles & Ellen Lierk            |                                       |                                         |
|                                      | Mary & Rodrigo López             |                                       |                                         |

## DEVELOPMENTS FROM DEVELOPMENT

### Thank you!

We had another record-setting year of support for Summer Reading Kits through Give to Lincoln Day 2026! With \$52,801.80 total raised, 447 kits were sent to 36 organizations in 30 communities—we were thrilled to deliver kits to all corners of the state. We are so thankful to all of our donors for helping us make this critical program happen!

With fall right around the corner, we are in preparation mode for the upcoming 31st Annual Governor's Lecture. If you have not already made plans to join us, we would love to have you there. If you are unable to make it, we welcome you to join via livestream. We are working with locations across the state to promote watch parties! For the second year, the Midwest Theater in Scottsbluff will stream the event live. We have promotional materials that can be shared also.

Not only is fall right around the corner, but it's time to start planning for end-of-the-year giving. HN's fiscal year ends on October 31, so our preparations start earlier than the end of the calendar year. There are many ways to give back to HN:

- **Via online portal or QR code** (right), which is found at



Executive Director Chris Sommerich delivered summer reading kits to the Lexington Public Library.

HumanitiesNebraska.org/donate *Note: to sustain your positive impact on the humanities in Nebraska, you can also become a recurring donor. Our platform allows you to choose frequency of giving.*

- **By check or Donor Advised Fund (DAF)** to be mailed to: Humanities Nebraska 215 Centennial Mall South, Suite 330 Lincoln, NE 68508
- **Gifts of Stock:** Please reach out to Erin (erin@humanitiesnebraska.org) *Note: any verification or online details needed for DAF or stock gifts can also be sent to Erin.*

Please don't hesitate to reach out to Erin at [erin@humanitiesnebraska.org](mailto:erin@humanitiesnebraska.org) or Hannah at [hannah@humanitiesnebraska.org](mailto:hannah@humanitiesnebraska.org) if you have any questions.

Thank you for your continued support of HN!



To become an HN donor, please visit:  
**[HumanitiesNebraska.org/donate](https://HumanitiesNebraska.org/donate)**

## WORKPLACE GIVING

**GIVE NEBRASKA** is a coalition of 75 diverse nonprofits working to build a vibrant, creative, and healthy community by connecting donors to causes they care about. Give Nebraska celebrates the arts and humanities, provides health care to those who cannot afford it, and more. Humanities Nebraska greatly appreciates those who designate gifts to us through Give Nebraska.

For more details, please visit [givenebraska.org](https://givenebraska.org)



### NEBRASKA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

|                                              |                                          |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <b>David D. Vail</b><br>Chair, Kearney       | <b>Yoko Lawing</b><br>North Platte       |
| <b>Ana Lopez Shalla</b><br>Vice Chair, Omaha | <b>M. Timothy Nolting</b><br>Bushnell    |
| <b>Matt Low</b><br>Treasurer, Omaha          | <b>Frederik Ohles</b><br>Lincoln         |
| <b>Effie Athanassopoulos</b><br>Lincoln      | <b>Stephen Osberg</b><br>Omaha           |
| <b>Don Deitemeyer</b><br>Doniphan            | <b>Sara Peetz</b><br>Lincoln             |
| <b>César Garcia</b><br>Omaha                 | <b>Crystal Sandberg</b><br>Gering        |
| <b>Cecil L. Hicks</b><br>Omaha               | <b>Amy Shane</b><br>O'Neill              |
| <b>Chris Hochstetler</b><br>Dannebrog        | <b>Scott Snell</b><br>Hastings           |
| <b>Jeannette Eileen Jones</b><br>Lincoln     | <b>Sunshine Thomas-Bear</b><br>Winnebago |
| <b>Kristin Krueger</b><br>Omaha              | <b>Michelle Warren, Ph.D.</b><br>Kearney |

### NEBRASKA FOUNDATION FOR THE HUMANITIES

|                                                    |                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Laura Troshynski</b><br>President, North Platte | <b>Matt Low</b><br>Omaha              |
| <b>Nancy Shank</b><br>Vice President, Lincoln      | <b>Renée McClymont</b><br>Norfolk     |
| <b>Joel Falk</b><br>Treasurer, Omaha               | <b>Dave Miller</b><br>Lincoln         |
| <b>Keith N. Bystrom</b><br>Plattsmouth             | <b>M. Timothy Nolting</b><br>Bushnell |
| <b>Jennifer Creager</b><br>Lincoln                 | <b>Stephen Osberg</b><br>Omaha        |
| <b>Don Deitemeyer</b><br>Doniphan                  | <b>Andy Pollock</b><br>Pleasant Dale  |
| <b>Karen Higgins, M.D.</b><br>Grand Island         | <b>Amy Sandeen</b><br>Hastings        |
| <b>Michael J. Homa</b><br>Omaha                    | <b>Scott Snell</b><br>Hastings        |
| <b>Jeannette Eileen Jones</b><br>Lincoln           | <b>David D. Vail</b><br>Kearney       |
| <b>Kristin Krueger</b><br>Omaha                    | <b>Anne Stockmann</b><br>Omaha        |
| <b>Patrick Leahy</b><br>Omaha                      | <b>Carol Wang</b><br>Omaha            |
|                                                    | <b>Sara Woods</b><br>Omaha            |

### STAFF

|                                                                    |                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Chris Sommerich</b><br>Executive Director                       | <b>Erika Hamilton</b><br>Director of Literary Programs |
| <b>Katie Bradshaw</b><br>Grants Management and Outreach Specialist | <b>SheriLynne Hansen</b><br>Communications Manager     |
| <b>Kristi Hayek Carley</b><br>Program Manager                      | <b>Liz Makowski</b><br>Program Associate               |
| <b>Valeria Facio-Lom</b><br>TITLE TBD                              | <b>Erin L. Moran</b><br>Director of Development        |
| <b>Barbara Grant</b><br>Office and Grants Coordinator              | <b>Hannah Rentsch</b><br>Development Associate         |
| <b>Susan Hale</b><br>Prime Time Assistant                          | <b>Mary Yager</b><br>Associate Director                |
|                                                                    | <b>Anika Keese</b><br>Intern                           |

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

## PRIME TIME PROGRAMMING SERVING MORE NEBRASKANS THAN EVER

Humanities Nebraska (HN) has been helping underserved children and their families develop the literacy skills that help them succeed at school and in life since introducing Prime Time Family Reading in 2002. This award-winning program was created in 1991 by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities. Humanities Nebraska soon became the state council with the second highest number of Prime Time Programs.

Prime Time is proven to help children achieve school success. A 10-year analysis published by Prime Time creators found that children who attend Prime Time Family Reading show a 95-100% improvement on achievement tests through elementary school and 81% improvement on high school exit exams. Last year, the Library of Congress chose Prime Time for the 2025 Literacy Awards American Prize.

"I want my kids to have this experience," said a parent who attended Prime Time in Kearney last spring. Another parent who brought their daughter to Prime Time in Holdrege said, "I think it's a very valuable resource for helping my daughter learn and develop a love of reading."

Many participating parents agree that Prime Time has affected the way they read books as a family. They discuss themes in the story, relate what happened to the characters to real-life situations, and ask each other questions the same way Prime Time discussion leaders ask during the program. A Norfolk parent reflected, "It helped my child want to read more books and pay closer attention to the illustrations and use their imagination while reading."

### HN Autumn 2026 Prime Time Locations



This autumn, HN achieved a new local record with 16 different communities offering either Prime Time Family Reading, Prime Time Preschool, or both. Prime Time is offered free to families statewide thanks to the generous support of the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, H. Lee and Carol Gendler Charitable Trust, the Sherwood Foundation, and Union Bank & Trust. Local community support is provided in Lincoln by Woods Charitable Foundation and the Rogers Foundation; in Norfolk by the Johnny Carson Foundation Fund at the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, and in North Platte by Molly and Tim O'Holleran.

Learn more about Prime Time Family Reading and Prime Time Preschool at:  
[www.HumanitiesNebraska.org](http://www.HumanitiesNebraska.org)