



WINTER 2022

# A Message from President Barrett

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Juan Sandoval, Norfolk  
Courtney Schmidt, Madison  
Amy Shane, O'Neill  
Dr. G. Tom Surber, Norfolk  
Kathryn Svik, Norfolk



Greetings,

This fall, we celebrated the success of alumni and supporters of Northeast Community College. Whether they have made significant contributions in their careers, the community college system as a whole or they have successfully made meaningful impacts on the students of Northeast, we are proud to call them friends.

In the following pages, you will learn more about these exceptional individuals for the great work they have been doing as they leave lasting legacies that will make meaningful impacts for years to come. Their inspiring stories reflect the true nature of the type of individuals our college is so fortunate to have in its midst.

Northeast is also excited to announce that it will play a key role in a new \$25 million effort to help Nebraska become a national leader in robotic technologies and automation in the manufacturing and agriculture industries. Northeast will invest its \$4.6 million allocation through the White House's Build Back Better program into an endeavor that will be geared to the workforce needs of local and area manufacturers, many of which generate products and serve clients that support the agriculture industry.

These are among the great things happening at the College. This edition of the Northeast Community College Foundation Winter Newsletter, however, is a special opportunity to celebrate you – our marvelous benefactors. Thank you for your continued support of our wonderful institution.

Your generosity of contributing to the Northeast Foundation allows our students to fulfill their career aspirations. As a result they, too, may be recognized in the years to come as a successful alumnus and choose to be a donor like you.

Thank you for investing in their future!

Leah A. Barrett, Ed.D.  
President



# Scholarships

**Academic Year**  
2021-2022

526

Total Scholarship Awards

\$895

Average Scholarship Award

\$471,024  
in Scholarship Awards

There are many ways to support students at Northeast Community College. One way you can make a difference is by donating to an existing scholarship fund or creating a newly named one. By donating to a scholarship, you can make attending college possible for many first generation and low-income students who may otherwise never be able to attend. Last year we had 803 students apply for scholarships, but we were only able to award 526! We need your help to make sure all students, who have the desire, can go to college and fulfill their dreams.

## ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIPS

Annual scholarships are those funded by you each year. There is a minimum amount required to establish a scholarship in your name. Contact the Northeast Community College Foundation to learn more.

## ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIPS

Endowed scholarships create a permanent fund that is invested to ensure the scholarship retains its value in perpetuity. Scholarships are awarded from the interest accrued while the principal is never touched.

A minimum of \$25,000 is required to establish an endowed scholarship. It will then generate one scholarship annually. Incorporating endowed scholarships into estate planning is a way to leave a significant legacy and help students achieve their dreams.

If you are interested in establishing a scholarship or contributing to an existing fund, please call 402-844-7240 or email [foundation@northeast.edu](mailto:foundation@northeast.edu).

The Foundation staff will work directly with you to structure your scholarship agreement to include eligibility criteria that you would like for your fund. ■



## Newly Established Scholarships (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022)

402 Blue Collar Scholarship  
Art Robertson First Generation Scholarship  
Barbara Lynch, Larry Holland & Robert Hupp Non-Traditional Student Scholarship  
Bluestem Renewable Energy Scholarship  
Boyd Jones Construction Scholarship  
Builders of the Future - Lucille Wuebben Bowder Memorial Scholarship  
Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute Scholarship  
Dan A. Marr Scholarship  
Darin L. Koepke Agriculture Memorial Scholarship  
Dorrine Liedman Scholarship & Equipment Fund  
Greg Weidner Memorial - Greg & Karen Weidner Scholarship  
Future Leaders Scholarship  
Lora J. Rohrich Memorial Scholarship  
Mahlon B. Kohler Scholarship  
Marvin D. Hall Physical Therapist Assistant Memorial Scholarship  
New Generation Construction Scholarship  
Quest, Inc. Ag Scholarship  
West Holt Medical Services Foundation Scholarship

# Achievement Awards

Honoring Northeast alumni and friends who have made outstanding contributions to the College, who have been successful in their profession, and those who have chosen to give back and support their local communities.

## Alumni Hall of Success

### ALUMNI HALL OF SUCCESS

*Awarded to former students who have achieved significant success in their profession, exhibited exemplary citizenship qualities, or made significant contributions to their community.*

### DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

*Presented to individuals who have demonstrated active service to higher education and who have played a significant role in the development of Northeast Community College.*

### NEBRASKA COMMUNITY COLLEGE ASSOCIATION DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

*Award is presented by the Nebraska Community College Association to one distinguished graduate of each of the community college areas. Recipients have previously been awarded the Northeast Alumni Hall of Success Award.*



Brandy Price & Lisa Guenther

### Brandy Price

Brandy Price graduated from Pierce High School in 2002 and earned an Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education from Northeast Community College in 2004.

In 2020, she earned a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education Birth-3rd Grade from the University of Nebraska-Kearney.

Brandy is an Early Childhood educator, administrator, trainer, and advocate. She has owned and operated ABC 123 Childcare and Learning Center in Pierce since 2002. Because of the overwhelming need for more quality childcare, Brandy's business is expanding to open a second childcare site on the main level of the family home.

She is an early childhood independent trainer through the Nebraska Department of Education, and she teaches several continuing education classes needed by daycare providers to maintain their licensing.

Brandy is a past president and member of Pierce Elementary PATS (Parents and Teachers for Students), has been a committee member of the Norfolk Early Childhood Conference for 18 years, a Girl Scout leader for nine years, and a member of Pierce Rescue for 15 years where she currently serves as a captain and has previously served as secretary.

Brandy is married to Derek, who is also a Northeast alumnus. They have five children, Izzy, Easton, Sophia, Stella and Bentley. ■



Dr. Tracy Kruse, Walter J. Aschoff & Dr. Leah Barrett

### Walter J. Aschoff

Walter J. Aschoff earned an Associate of Applied Science degree in Architectural Drafting from Northeast Community College in 1993.

He began his construction business in his home after college and is now the owner/president of Aschoff Construction, Inc. in Osmond. The company specializes in concrete, contract, and steel buildings.

Walter and his family own a fully-robotic dairy operation, Four Aces Dairy, LLC in Osmond. He has established many senior living communities and also developed motels in several Nebraska communities.

Over the past 18 years, Aschoff Construction has earned National Dealer of the Year awards from Sentinel Buildings. The company has also earned 11 Sentinel Chairman Club awards and is a Lester Buildings Eagle Award Winner. Aschoff Construction was named a Madison Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year.

Walter is a member of the Northeast Community College Foundation Board of Directors and of the Osmond General Hospital Board of Directors.

Walter's family includes his wife, Michele; children, MaKayla (Brandon) Brazel, Robert, Keli, Charley and Bennett Aschoff; and grandson, Dax Brazel. ■



# Distinguished Service



## G. Tom Surber

Dr. G. Tom Surber graduated from Norfolk High School, earned his undergraduate degree from Nebraska Wesleyan in 1968, and his doctorate in medicine from the University of Nebraska Medical Center in 1972.

Dr. Surber joined Dr. Joe David in practice in Norfolk in 1975, eventually becoming part of the Norfolk Medical Group. He retired from the practice of family medicine in 2011. Dr. Surber concentrated on family practice, but also did occupational medicine and EMS work. He has served – and continues to serve – as the medical director for the Norfolk Fire Department and seven other Basic Life Support squads in Northeast Nebraska for many years. He was also a member of the Nebraska State EMS boards for many years.

Dr. Surber, together with the Norfolk Fire Department, was responsible for the development of the Paramedic Program at Northeast Community College.

Dr. Surber has been actively involved as the medical director for both the Paramedic and EMT programs at Northeast since their inception. He was an integral part of helping the Paramedic Program become accredited with the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs.

Dr. Surber was heavily involved in Boy Scouts and was active in the Norfolk Kiwanis Club for many years. For 30 years, he was the pianist for the Northeast Area Jazz Ensemble. Dr. Surber served as chairman of the Norfolk Tree Advisory Board. He is a member of the Northeast Community College Foundation Board of Directors.

Dr. and Mrs. Surber have supported Northeast Community College financially, with scholarships and a special emergency fund for students, including the Emergency Medical Services Scholarship, Emergency Medical Director Scholarship, Eagle Scout Scholarship, and Doc's Emergency Needs Endowed Fund, which was established late in 2021.

The Surbers participated in a series of dance clubs. He continues to enjoy gardening, reading, music and an unending search for knowledge and wisdom.

In 2011, Dr. Surber received the city of Norfolk's Edward I. Vrzal Award, and he was recognized as a Hometown Hero that same year.

Dr. Surber's family includes his wife, Susan, and children Adam, Eric and Kate, as well as Era, an exchange daughter. ■

# Nebraska Community College Association Distinguished Alumni



## Darin L. Koepke\*

Darin L. Koepke was devoted to agriculture his entire life. He was a farmer, sheep herder, and agribusinessman. He loved the agriculture industry and built genuine relationships with every person he came in contact with.

Darin graduated from Pierce High School in 1986 and earned an Associate of Applied Science degree in Agriculture with a Livestock Option from Northeast Technical Community College in 1988. Darin served on the college livestock judging team and continued to support Northeast after graduation. He was named to the Alumni Hall of Success in 2010.

According to Darin's wife of 33 years, Kelli, "Agriculture was Darin's life. He was always involved in 4-H, FFA, all things ag."

Darin worked for Agrex, Inc. for 22 years. At the time of his death, he was the assistant regional manager for the western division of Agrex, working and supervising employees at locations in Enola, Laurel and Superior.

Darin lost his life as the result of a workplace violence incident on Oct. 21, 2021. About three weeks after the tragedy, Nebraska State Patrol Lt. Brent Bockstadter said, "The actions of Mr. Koepke saved lives, and he unfortunately ended up giving his own life in the process."

In his honor, Darin's family established the Darin L. Koepke Agriculture Memorial Scholarship to be awarded annually to a second-year agriculture student at Northeast.

Darin was an active member of St. John's Lutheran Church, rural Pierce. He was an elder and instrumental on many committees, shepherding young men. Darin started the first local live nativity scene at the church.

Darin's family includes his wife, Kelli; daughters, Kayla (Shea) and Krystina (Maddie); grandchildren, Naomi, Celeste, Uriah, Malachi, and Ella; his father, Larry; his brother, Dennis; and sister, Dawn. ■

\*Awarded posthumously

If you are interested in nominating an individual for the Northeast Alumni Hall of Success, please contact the Northeast Community College Foundation.

402-844-7240 | [foundation@northeast.edu](mailto:foundation@northeast.edu)  
Online application: [northeast.edu/achievement-awards](http://northeast.edu/achievement-awards)

# Planned Giving

## Mahlon B. Kohler Estate Funds Northeast Nursing And Optometry Scholarship

A love for nursing and a desire to help young people prompted a Norfolk man to include a nursing scholarship at Northeast Community College in his estate planning.

Mahlon “Jack” Kohler passed away in Sept. 2021, at the age of 96. In his will, he left \$40,000 to Northeast for nursing and optometry scholarships. It has been placed in an endowment and will provide assistance for nursing students into perpetuity.

Before graduating high school, Kohler was called to duty by the United States Navy in 1943. After basic training at Farragut, Idaho, he was sent to the Pacific Theatre where he was stationed at Guadalcanal, New Guinea, Russell, and Amerilites Islands. He then returned to the Brooklyn, New York Naval Base in 1945. Kohler received an honorable discharge on May 6, 1946.

After his discharge from the Navy, he moved back to Norfolk and worked for American Optical Company for 33 years. Kohler was recognized as a World War II Honorary Sentinel in front of over 86,000 fans at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln during a Cornhusker football game just after celebrating his 95th birthday.

“Jack lived in the Norfolk area for many years and was always fond of

education,” said his stepson, Ronald Kotrous. “He decided to choose nursing (for his benevolence) because of the people. In the last few years, they (nursing staff and doctors) were really good to Jack and to my mom, so they wanted to give back to that community.”

Endowed scholarships at Northeast create a permanent fund in which contributions are invested to ensure the scholarship retains its value in perpetuity. Scholarships are awarded from the interest accrued while the principal is never touched.

“Endowed scholarships are a great way to create a legacy,” said Dr. Tracy Kruse, vice president of development and external affairs at Northeast and executive director of the Northeast Foundation. “The principal of an endowment is invested, and scholarships are paid from the earnings.”

Kruse encourages others to consider Northeast Community College in their estate planning.

“An estate gift is one of the largest charitable donations that you will ever make, and it is a wonderful opportunity to leave a lasting legacy,” she said. “You can be assured that we will be able to honor your philanthropic intentions.”



A minimum of \$25,000 is required to set up an endowed scholarship at Northeast Community College, and that amount can be paid over a five-year period. Annual scholarships are awarded to students on a yearly basis. A minimum amount is required to establish a scholarship in the donor's name(s).

For more information on planned giving, please email [foundation@northeast.edu](mailto:foundation@northeast.edu) or call 402-844-7240. ■

**LEARN MORE**



## *Founders Society*

The Founders Society is comprised of those individuals who have chosen to include Northeast in their estate plan with a deferred gift for the ultimate benefit of the College and its students.

Anonymous (3)  
Kendra Barnes  
John & Diana Blaylock  
The late LauraNel Carlisle  
Dr. Michael & Susan Chipp  
Vern Fairchild & the late Lucille Fairchild  
Scott & Angela Gray  
Dr. Wade & Kristine Herley  
The late Robert & Joan Hodgson  
The late Mahlon B. Kohler  
Daniel & Dr. Tracy Kruse  
Dave & Ann Lund  
Ed & Corinne Morris

The late Norman Ochsner  
Dirk & Jan Petersen  
Mark & Beth Pfeil  
Brian & Rose Ann Rogers  
Jeff & Lori Scherer  
Brian & Nicole Sedlacek  
John & Vickie Sehi  
Dr. G. Tom & Susan Surber  
Chris & Frank Tudor  
Glenice & the late John C. Watson



# Spotlight

## Northeast To Open New Workforce And Customizable Training Lab Space In Downtown Norfolk

A building in downtown Norfolk is being transformed into a new innovative venture through Northeast Community College, in partnership with the Nebraska Innovation Studio on the University of Nebraska's Innovation campus in Lincoln, Invest Nebraska, area manufacturers and school districts.

The purchase was dependent on the outcome of a federal grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration. Northeast is one of six partners in the Heartland Robotics Cluster that will receive funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) through its Build Back Better Regional Challenge program.

Northeast will receive approximately \$4.6 million of the Heartland Robotics Cluster's overall \$25 million award - \$3.4 million for the development of an innovation hub in downtown Norfolk and \$1.2 million to create a two-year robotics/automation curriculum and technology outreach program. It is the largest federal grant Northeast has ever received.

The innovation hub will be geared to the workforce needs of local and area manufacturers, many of which generate products and serve clients that support the agriculture industry. It will also create an environment where ideas are shared and become reality through applied technologies, economic and community development, and business and industry training.

The hub will feature high-tech equipment and collaborative workspace to allow manufacturers to explore ideas, streamline production processes and create prototypes. It will be open to the public, offer a variety of membership and use options, and include space for student robotics use.

Northeast Dean of Applied Technology Shanelle Grudzinski said the College



*Location of Northeast Nebraska Innovation Hub*

is "beyond excited" to partner with Invest Nebraska and others who share a vision of looking at rural vitality and community growth through a different lens.

"The Northeast Nebraska Innovation Hub is being built in the heart of downtown Norfolk," Grudzinski explained, "as an innovative approach to engaging cross disciplinary programs and involving the community."

"This will assist in stimulating the entrepreneurial ecosystem," she continued, "and expand educational opportunities for a wide variety of groups including K-12 students, two and four-year-college students, incumbent workers, and the community at large."

"It is an opportunity to combine resources, knowledge, and local talent," Grudzinski added, "while offering affordable and accessible manufacturing and creative equipment. This will allow individuals to imagine, prototype, problem-solve, and produce in a collaborative work environment. The Northeast Nebraska Innovation Hub will help address workforce challenges and provide economic development opportunities.

Justin Eckert, a local entrepreneur and

real estate developer who has been working with Northeast on developing the innovation hub, said the space will be an exciting addition to all the creative energy occurring in downtown Norfolk and northeast Nebraska.

"It's going to be great to have a space with high quality machines where individuals and companies can learn and build whatever they need or desire. We're fortunate to have access to this kind of cutting-edge technology," Eckert said. "Thanks to President Barrett and Northeast for spearheading this innovative idea to serve Northeast Nebraska."

Renovations could begin late next spring or early summer, and be complete by fall of 2024.

Dr. Leah Barrett, president of Northeast said, "We look forward to working with our partners to develop programs and experiences to support innovation in our industries, career pipelines for our children, and a place for learners and builders to explore and create."

For more information on the Northeast Nebraska Innovation Hub, visit [northeast.edu/giving](http://northeast.edu/giving) or reach out to [foundation@northeast.edu](mailto:foundation@northeast.edu). ■



# Northeast

community college

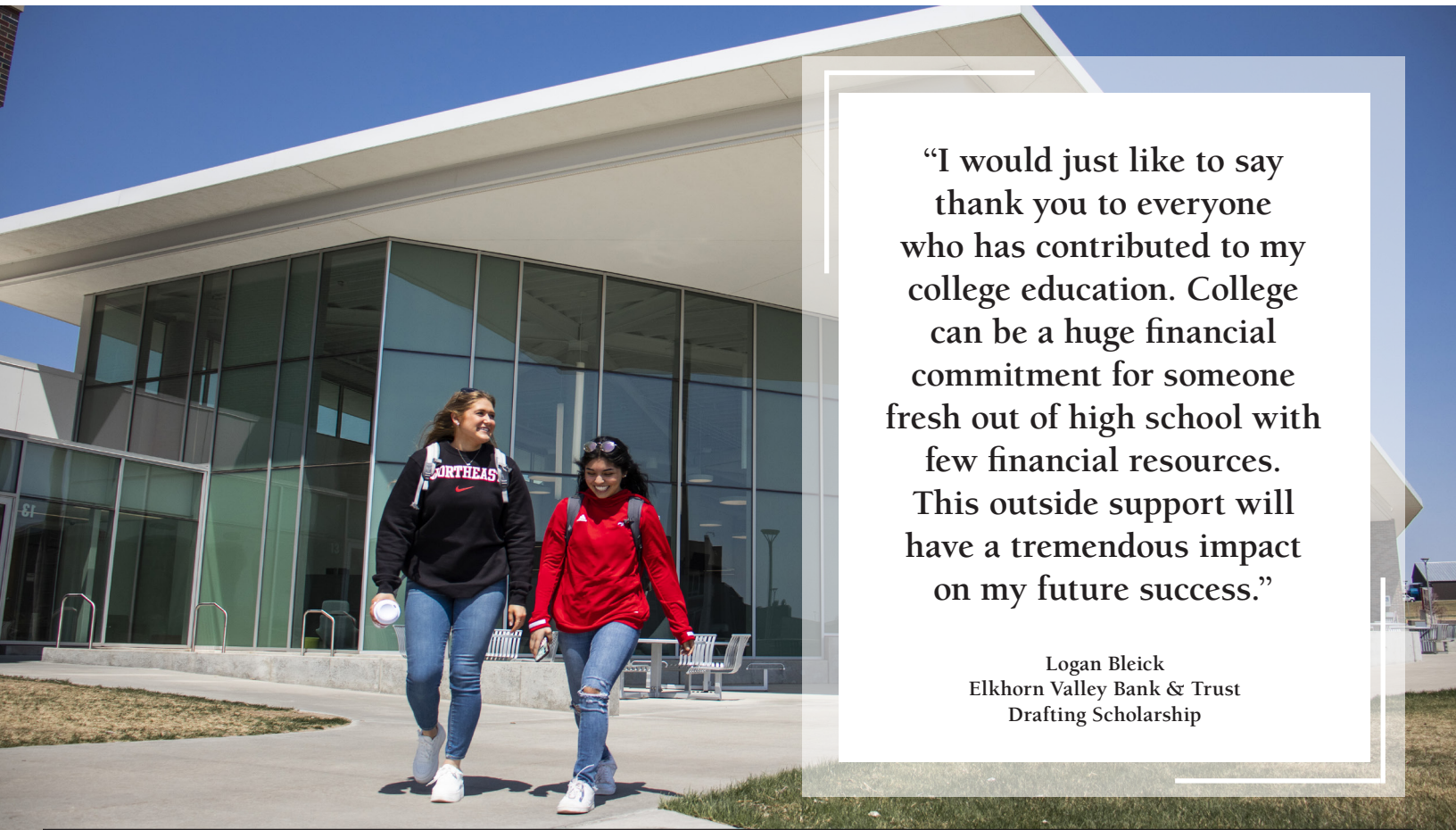
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## FOUNDATION

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Norfolk, Nebraska 68702

[northeast.edu](http://northeast.edu)  
(800) 348-9033

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“I would just like to say thank you to everyone who has contributed to my college education. College can be a huge financial commitment for someone fresh out of high school with few financial resources. This outside support will have a tremendous impact on my future success.”

Logan Bleick  
Elkhorn Valley Bank & Trust  
Drafting Scholarship