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Building a Hopeful Future

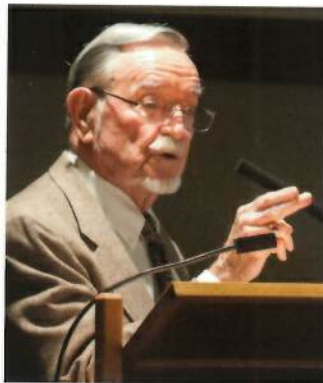
I recently discovered something that I think is unique to Nebraska. An impressive citizen movement that I have not seen anywhere else in the nation, anchored by the Nebraska Community Foundation.

Local citizens are pioneering a new approach to strengthening their communities while insuring a much more productive future in more than 250 places in Nebraska.

In each of these places local residents have created a structure to focus their wealth on mobilizing citizens to undertake new initiatives. Through their affiliation with the Nebraska Community Foundation, these new groups are funders of the future. They assemble the contributions of local residents and institutions as a force for visioning and renewal.

It is amazing to see the number of these new funds organizing to make things better and converting local wealth into a force for productive change. They do this in many ways:

- Each affiliated fund is an advocate for their place. These volunteer leaders understand the importance of the history, achievements, struggles and hopes of those who call this place home.



John McKnight captivates a sold-out crowd at NCF's Annual Banquet on November 7, 2013 in Nebraska City.

- Each is calling forth the collective power of local citizens to be problem solvers and inventors. In this way they are strengthening local democracy.
- Each local fund is preparing its members to be civic leaders for the future.
- Each is identifying and magnifying the assets of the local community.

Too often we have come to believe the future is something we can buy rather than create. People engaged with the Nebraska Community Foundation are learning that most of what they need can be found right where they are. This knowledge is providing a way for local residents to be producers as well as consumers by encouraging productive citizenship.

Finally, and perhaps most important, this unique and impressive movement is fostering a culture of giving. This culture is manifested in two ways—first, through financial contributions, and second, through the contributions of the gifts, skills and capacities of local people. It is this powerful combination that makes Nebraska one of the most hopeful states in the nation.

Congratulations!

John McKnight ■

John L. McKnight is co-director of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

McKnight and his longtime colleague, Jody Kretzmann, created the Asset-Based Community Development strategy for community-building, which has been part of the NCF strategy since our founding. They co-authored *Building Communities*

from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Identifying and Mobilizing a Community's Assets. This book has become one of the nation's best-selling guides to community development, and the methods it outlines are now utilized world-wide.

John McKnight shares brief comments about NCF and its affiliated funds in this short video: vimeo.com/79321573