

## AACF Fundraising Earns Challenge Grant

About two years into its fund drive to double its endowment fund, the Aberdeen Area Community Foundation (AACF) received a boost from the South Dakota Foundation (SDCF). In 2022, SDCF, which partners with AACF through its Community Savings Account program, offered a challenge to the Aberdeen foundation in that if it raised \$400,000, SDCF would add \$50,000 to its endowment. That milestone has been achieved, a fitting moment in AACF's 40th anniversary year.

With the grant, AACF has raised \$475,000 in cash and pledges to increase its endowment and its funds available for grantmaking every year. Its net assets have surpassed \$1 million.

"We're very excited to receive the challenge grant from SDCF," said Heath Johnson, chair of the AACF board of directors. "It's a great program they offer to support their local community foundation partners. We thank everyone who donated to support the Foundation's work and help us reach this part of our goal."

AACF was established in 1984. Over time, it has made more than \$300,000 in grants to the community, more than a third of that total since 2020. With its endowed funds invested in SDCF, AACF can use a portion of its assets for grants every year. With the near doubling of its assets in the past couple years, AACF's grantmaking will nearly double as well.



The AACF received a \$50,000 challenge grant from South Dakota Community Foundation for raising \$400,000 for its endowment.



The Aberdeen Area Chamber of Commerce helped celebrate AACF's 40th anniversary.



Top: Fallout Creative Community received an AACF grant for a movie studio. Middle: The Aberdeen Gymnastics Association purchased equipment with an AACF grant. Bottom left: AACF supported a Boys & Girls Club career exploration program for youth.

## AACF Grants in 2024

In 2024, AACF made more than \$23,000 in nine grants for local projects:

- Aberdeen Community Theatre received \$5,000 for capital improvements to the Capitol Theater building.
- The City of Aberdeen received \$5,000 to support sending a group of people to FuturistU, a program to train futurists to identify and implement Aberdonians' vision of the future.
- Junior Achievement of SD received \$2,000 to support programming in Aberdeen schools, which provides about 2,000 students financial literacy and other economic education lessons.
- Aberdeen Gymnastics Association received \$3,000 to purchase new equipment to be used in practice and competitions.
- Housing Plus Inc. received \$2,500 to support financial assistance for clients facing housing challenges and homelessness.
- Fallout Creative Community received \$1,000 for the creation of a mini-movie studio in Red Rooster for community-building programming.
- South Dakota CEO West Women's Business Center received \$1,000 to support Aberdeen area programming, including the Women's Business Conference.
- Leadership Aberdeen's Baird Park Project earned \$1,000 for its project to support improvements to Baird Park for winter activities.
- Aberdeen Area Boys & Girls Club received \$2,500 to support career exploration programming for members at a range of ages.

Some of the grants mentioned here and in the Knight Grants section were accomplished because AACF acted as fiscal sponsor for organizations that are not 501(c)(3) nonprofits but whose projects are charitable. These included the AACF's Leadership Aberdeen grant and Knight's Aberdeen Downtown Association grant. In addition, AACF served as fiscal sponsor for the local pickleball group's fundraising to build new courts in

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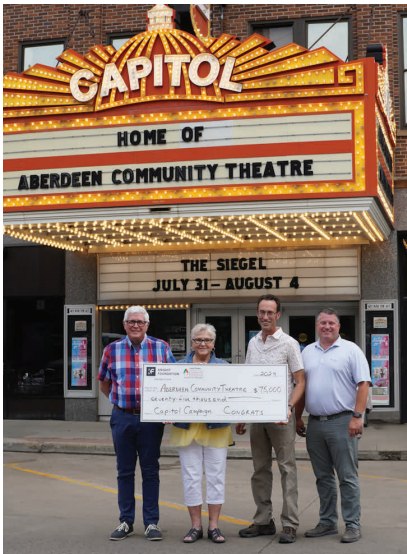
*AACF Grants 2024 continued*

partnership with the Aberdeen Parks & Rec Department.

The Foundation again supported the Happy Generosity Hour. The Aberdeen Area Nonprofit Network event promotes local nonprofits.

Internally, the board updated grant guidelines and financial management and held a board retreat to discuss direction, particularly with increased assets and grant-making capacity. They also launched a social media contest. The Boys & Girls Club of Aberdeen Area won a \$500 grant, and randomly selected voter Blake Arnesen got to direct a \$500 grant, for which he also chose the Boys & Girls Club.

## Knight Grants



*Top: Aberdeen Community Theatre received a Knight Aberdeen Fund grant for Capitol Theater improvements.*



*Katie Harr earned first place in the Aberdeen Downtown Art Project.*

AACF also worked with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to support local activities through \$135,000 in grants from its Knight Aberdeen Fund, held at the South Dakota Community Foundation.

- The City of Aberdeen received \$50,000 to support local participation in FuturistU, a program to train futurists to identify and implement a common vision of Aberdeen’s future.
- Aberdeen Community Theatre received \$75,000 for improvements to the Capitol theater.
- The Aberdeen Downtown Association received \$10,000 to support it downtown holiday activities.

Another Knight-funded project is the Aberdeen Downtown Art Project, which completed its fourth year in 2024. Local artists submit artworks and ten are chosen to be applied via vinyl clings to downtown business windows. In 2024, the selected artists included two high school students and a sixth grader in addition to veteran artists. First place was awarded to Aberdeen Christian School student Katie Haar for “Harvest Time.”

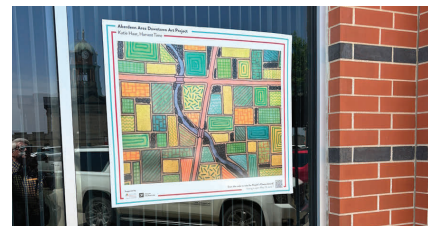
In addition, two board members, Heath Johnson and Bea Smith plus *Aberdeen Insider* publisher Troy McQuillen attended the Knight Foundation-hosted Knight Media Forum in Miami in February 2024.

*Dear Donors and Friends,*

*I would like to begin this letter by thanking you for helping us reach our capital fundraising goal that we began in 2022. By adding much needed new capital into our foundation, we have increased the amount we can grant to the many worthy causes we support each year. I would also like to thank the members of our board who made this success happen with their personal asks, calls and letters to the community. There is always uncertainty at the beginning of any capital campaign, but the support of the Aberdeen community made our efforts worthwhile.*

*As you will see in the information in this newsletter, we have been busy making many grants throughout this past year. It is truly an honor to join my fellow board members in our efforts to make Aberdeen and the surrounding area a better place for all of us to live. Thank you all for your continued support!*

*Sincerely,  
Heath Johnson, AACF Board Chair*



*Katie Harr’s “Harvest Time” print graced a Northeastern Mental Health Center window on Main Street.*

The AACF is as a community savings account with the South Dakota Community Foundation, one of the SDCF’s 87 partner communities. SDCF is a public nonprofit organization established in 1987 that administers 1,200 funds benefiting hundreds of charitable organizations annually. The Foundation distributed nearly \$31 million in grants in 2023 which made a tremendous difference in communities statewide.

## 2024-2025 AACF Board of Directors

- Heath Johnson, Chair
- Megan Biegler, Vice Chair
- Robert Fouberg, Secretary
- Don Kainz, Treasurer
- Matt Harr
- Bea Smith
- Gordon Tree Top
- Hannah Walters
- Patrick Gallagher, Executive Director

## Donate to AACF

I hereby authorize an investment in the Aberdeen Area Community Foundation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ as follows:

- My check is enclosed. *Please make checks payable to: Aberdeen Area Community Foundation*
- To donate online with a credit card, please visit [aberdeencommunityfoundation.com/donate](http://aberdeencommunityfoundation.com/donate).**
- Contact me about a gift of securities.

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Aberdeen Area Community Foundation, Inc. is a section 501(c)(3) corporation. As such, contributions to the Foundation are deductible.