It has been a true pleasure to serve the Washington County Community Foundation (WCCF) since July 2024. While the vacancy of the Executive Director position due to tragic circumstances deeply impacted our community, I am both humbled and grateful that the WCCF Board has entrusted me to lead the Foundation’s efforts in growing and expanding in 2025 and beyond.

At the end of 2023, we tragically lost a dear friend in Jordan Rishel. Over the past six months, I have learned a great deal and have worked hard to honor her legacy by stepping into this important role and by highlighting the many positive developments happening at the Foundation.

When I joined WCCF, the scholarship process was nearing completion. We awarded 15 $1,000 scholarships through the WCCF Scholarship Fund, and in total, we distributed $48,000 in scholarships, including those we manage, such as the MCH Auxiliary, Mandy Jo Rounds, Clair and Jeremy McKinnis, Geary Combs Aviation, Amy Murray, Nebraska Archery, Brandon Tomcak, and LeRoy Larsen scholarships. In 2025, we are excited to offer the new Bob Bair Journalism Scholarship as well.

In November, we hosted the 8th annual Washington County Gives Day, raising over $204,000—an incredible achievement that surpassed last year's total. It was inspiring to see local organizations come together for this day of giving. There are so many organizations working hard to fulfill their missions! We are deeply grateful for the generous support from local businesses, which included hourly bonus drawings. A huge thank you to Foundation Board members Dr. Ryan Palmer and Emily Petersen for their leadership and vision in running the Gives campaign year after year. It was an honor to be involved and to learn from them.

At the end of 2024, we began thinking about the Grant process. The deadline for submitting applications was January 15th and they will be awarded in March. During the last grant cycle, we awarded just over $86,000. In 2025, this number is expected to be greater as the Foundation continues to grow.

Looking ahead to 2025, our goal is to reach $15 million in assets, and we are determined to achieve this milestone. As a matter of fact, we are well on our way with a substantial donation that was given at the beginning of the year! The support we’ve received from our community has been invaluable, and we look forward to working together with others to further enhance and enrich Washington County. I cannot say enough about this Board of Directors and their passion for the community and for the Foundation. They are beyond supportive and I admire them for their passion and the direction they provide.

We are blessed to live in a community filled with passionate people who care about making lasting contributions. The Foundation has a beautiful office which has allowed us to strengthen our presence in the community, and it’s exciting to see more people stopping by as they learn about the work we do.

I would love to visit with you and share more about the great things happening at the Foundation. Please feel free to stop by at 1615 Washington Street—I'm always happy to chat and connect with others who share our vision for a better Washington County.