

## 2024 Bush Prize: South Dakota Winner Announced

### Call to Freedom

South Dakota Community Foundation (SDCF) in partnership with the Bush Foundation is proud to announce Call to Freedom (CTF) as the 2024 Bush Prize: South Dakota honoree.

This prestigious award honors extraordinary organizations that consistently engage and lead their community toward creative solutions. Bush Prize: South Dakota provides flexible funding, empowering recipients to bolster their reserves, explore innovative ideas or support initiatives that advance their impactful work. SDCF received 75 applications for the 2024 Bush Prize: South Dakota program.

CTF received \$500,000 to further its mission of bringing wholeness and healing to individuals affected by sex trafficking, labor trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. Six finalist organizations (below) each received \$10,000.



▲ Presenting the ceremonial check to Call to Freedom for earning the Bush Prize: South Dakota are (from left) Malcom Chapman, Bush Foundation Grantmaking Officer, Eileen Briggs, Bush Foundation Grantmaking Director, Rachel Schartz, CTF Director of Grants Management, Becky Rasmussen, CTF President and CEO, Stephanie Judson, SDCF President and CEO, and Ginger Niemann, SDCF Senior Program Officer.

The cornerstone of CTF's continuum of care model is Marissa's House, which in 2023 earned gold-level certification from the Safe House Project, the national anti-trafficking nonprofit. It also received a specialized care badge in the areas of pregnant/parenting survivors, ADA compliance and interpretation. Safe House evaluates programs against national standards set by industry experts. As one of nine gold-standard certified programs in the U.S., CTF has a long-term vision of taking their continuum of care model nationwide.

"Trauma doesn't fit into a convenient timeline. Victims can stay with us anywhere from two months to two years," stated CTF President and CEO Becky Rasmussen, "It is our goal to be there for them as long as it takes to heal and to see moms reunited with their children. To hear a child thank us for believing in their mom...it is a true privilege for us to do life with the victims that walk through our doors."

CTF believes that no single organization has all the answers and resources necessary to combat human trafficking. They believe collaboration drives the heart of their work. So, when a community problem is identified they collaborate with the community members and experts who have a stake in solving the problem. By having community buy-in CTF believes in the likelihood of the project's sustainability, but also the project's success.

**Learn more about Bush Prize: South Dakota:**  
[SDCommunityFoundation.org/bush-prize-south-dakota](https://SDCommunityFoundation.org/bush-prize-south-dakota)

**Learn more about Call to Freedom at [calltofreedom.org](https://calltofreedom.org)**

### Bush Prize: South Dakota Finalists

**BLACK HILLS WORKS, INC.**

**LOVE, INC OF**

**FACE IT TOGETHER, INC.**

**THE BLACK HILLS**

**LIFESCAPE**

**VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA**

**ONE SPIRIT**

**NORTHERN ROCKIES**

Based in Sioux Falls, CTF has developed a cutting-edge continuum of care model to offer individualized and specialized support to survivors as they move through the stages of emergency assistance, supportive services and transitional services. Because every survivor of trafficking is unique and requires a different mix of services CTF offers a variety of in-house experts in addition to a case manager for their clients. The model ensures that clients have a strong network of providers who can offer clients emergency housing, medical care, chemical dependency treatment, trauma counseling, job skill training and other services, ensuring the clients' needs are met.



▲ Call to Freedom's CommUNITY Breakfast brings together over 1,000 South Dakotans in support of trafficking survivors.



# South Dakota Fund Grants

From July 1 to December 31, 2024, SDCF awarded 27 South Dakota Fund grants totaling nearly \$570,000. The South Dakota Fund is an unrestricted fund that makes grants to nonprofits and charitable organizations across the state in support of culture, economic development, education, financial literacy, health and human services. SDCF accepts applications for South Dakota Fund grants on a rolling basis.



## K.O. Lee Aberdeen Public Library

➤ K.O. Lee Aberdeen Public Library received a \$13,000 South Dakota Fund grant to help grow its “A Place” program. The “A Place” program assists immigrants in Aberdeen and surrounding communities integrate into their adoptive home, while celebrating where they come from through programming, classes and diversifying the library’s collection of materials. The library is creating welcoming spaces and providing opportunities for engagement to transform the library into a true community center and making strides toward universal access.



## Lower Brule Community College

➤ A \$20,000 South Dakota Fund grant was presented to Lower Brule Community College (LBCC) to assist with upgrading their Student Information System (SIS). An upgraded SIS will assist LBCC in improving record keeping and student services across all administrative departments on campus. LBCC will also be able to use the data gathered in the SIS to make informed and strategic decisions.



## South Dakota Center for Enterprise Opportunity (SD CEO) West

➤ SD CEO West received a \$20,000 South Dakota Fund grant to support the implementation of an Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) strategic planning and management process. This will allow them to establish goals and visions with a specific implementation plan to improve and expand the delivery of programs and services to meet growing client needs across the state.



## Friends of the Goss Opera House, Inc.

➤ A \$18,500 South Dakota Fund grant was presented to the Friends of the Goss Opera House, Inc. for their “Passport to the Arts” program. “Passport to the Arts” provides art experiences for children in rural and underserved areas in the Watertown community. Participants in the program attend art explorations hosted by regional artists in theater, music, dance and painting at the Goss Opera House at no cost. With each stamp in their “Passport” participants enter a world of creative possibilities.

**The South Dakota Fund grant program is competitive, and grants are awarded by the SDCF Board of Directors throughout the year. Please visit our website to learn more about grant recipients and the application process: [SDCommunityFoundation.org/Grants](https://SDCommunityFoundation.org/Grants)**



# Grantmaking Update

## Beyond Idea Grants

➤ SDCF's Beyond Idea Grant (BIG) Program was designed to support community-based problem solving in South Dakota. Started in partnership with the Bush Foundation in 2022, the program completed three years of grantmaking in 2024, awarding 41 nonprofit organizations nearly \$3.6 million. In 2025, SDCF will have \$1.2 million available to nonprofit organizations from the BIG program.

"Beyond Idea Grant recipients are actively working to problem solve significant community challenges statewide," says Ginger Niemann, Senior Program Officer. "These investments underscore our commitment to supporting positive, community-led progress in South Dakota."



▲ Midwest Street Medicine received \$90,000 from the BIG program. It will use the funding to bring healthcare to homeless people in Sioux Falls. Funding will also assist Midwest Street Medicine in providing a foundation for hope, stability and a brighter future.



▲ Mitchell Area Development Corporation (MADC) received \$100,000 from the BIG program for childcare initiatives in the community. Funding was awarded to test an idea to incentivize both the creation of daycare facilities and to help with the retention of qualified staff for daycare facilities in the Mitchell area.

📄 Learn more about the BIG program, grant recipients and how to apply here: [SDCommunityFoundation.org/BIG](https://SDCommunityFoundation.org/BIG)

## Nonprofit Achieves Success in Endowment Fundraising Challenge

### Wings of Valor Lodge

➤ Wings of Valor Lodge is a hunting lodge located in Parker, SD, on some of the best habitat in eastern South Dakota. Since 2006, they have provided pheasant hunting opportunities for veterans and veterans with mobility issues. They operate on the mission of supporting those who have served by providing a gathering place to motivate and empower veterans in the outdoors. The Lodge is 100% ADA compliant with tracked wheelchairs and groomed hunting trails. Veterans enjoy a four-day hunting experience with all expenses provided by the Lodge.

Wings of Valor was successful in their fundraising challenge to establish a permanent endowment fund at SDCF and was awarded \$20,000 in matching funds from SDCF's Nonprofit Savings Account grant program.



### Non-profit Savings Account (NSA)

➤ SDCF's Nonprofit Savings Account (NSA) grant program challenges nonprofits in South Dakota to build endowment funds, creating a sustainable revenue source for their organizations for years to come. Successful applicants are challenged to raise an agreed-upon amount of money over two years - with SDCF contributing up to \$20,000 in matching dollars at a rate of \$1 for each \$4 raised. From July - December 2024, four organizations accepted this challenge grant opportunity: Hoven Area Health Center, Casey Tibbs South Dakota Rodeo Center, Abbey of the Hills & Retreat Center and Capital Area United Way.

📄 Learn more about this challenge grant opportunity and the benefit of endowment funds on our website: [SDCommunityFoundation.org/Nonprofit-Savings-Accounts](https://SDCommunityFoundation.org/Nonprofit-Savings-Accounts)

Learn more about Wings of Valor here: [info@wingsofvalorlodge.org](mailto:info@wingsofvalorlodge.org)



# A Promise of Hope with Ty Eschenbaum

Ty Eschenbaum, a Lake Preston, South Dakota native, has felt the powerful impact hope can have on one's life. After narrowly surviving a battle with cancer as a teenager, Ty Eschenbaum was motivated to recognize others who lost some of their formative years to cancer. In 2011, at just 23 years old, he established the Ty Eschenbaum Foundation, a nonprofit offering scholarships to graduating seniors in South Dakota who beat cancer. Since that time, his Foundation has granted \$324,000 toward Make-A-Wish South Dakota & Montana, missionary work and scholarships.

Diagnosed at 15, Ty spent much of his high school career in hospitals. During his senior year, however, Ty received the news that his cancer was in remission, and with that came a new sense of hope. Five years later he was pronounced cancer-free and is still so today.

Feeling deeply grateful to be here and be cancer-free, Ty wanted to create a sense of hope for fellow childhood cancer survivors; through this wish, the Ty Eschenbaum Foundation was born. With the help of South Dakota Community Foundation (SDCF), family and friends, Ty was able to give out two \$250 scholarships to cancer survivors graduating from his hometown high school in 2011.

Since the foundation's start as a permanent endowment, The Ty Eschenbaum Foundation has offered nearly \$63,000 in scholarships to cancer survivors. Ty hopes to someday provide a scholarship to every single cancer survivor across the state of South Dakota.

When asked about partnering with SDCF, Ty shared, "My philanthropic interests really began with my diagnosis. The thought process of helping families just like mine, knowing all they go through began right in high school," shared Ty, "Once I was in remission, figuring out a 501c3 and finding a board of directors...it was a lot to figure out for a young person. Then I heard about the community foundation, and it was really a no-brainer to partner with you all."

These scholarships not only offer hope for graduates but serve as a symbol that Ty acknowledges the struggle they have been through. He is enthusiastic about giving back and is proud to partner with SDCF in many ways; not just through

his own foundation, but by serving on the boards of various other organizations and supporting charitable causes personally.

"You know we could talk about the how and the why and the details, but at the end of the day its people-it's all people just trying to make South Dakota a better place," shared Ty.

Since its inception, Ty hoped to grow the Ty Eschenbaum Foundation to have an even greater impact. Sadly, tragedy struck in 2019 when Ty experienced the sudden loss of the love of his life, Autumn, from a blood clot. This spurred the foundation to evolve and begin

supporting Make-A-Wish South Dakota & Montana kids in her memory, as children were her passion.

"I am proud to support Make-a-Wish in Autumn's honor," Ty said. "You know I was a Make-a-Wish kid, and my Make-a-Wish experience was so positive for my whole family," said Ty, "and Autumn-she loved kids and was amazing with them. So, these wish kids we get to support-they are Autumn's wish kids." shared Ty.

Ty's younger brother, Calder, also passed tragically in 2021. This is when the third pillar of the Ty Eschenbaum Foundation was established-supporting missionary causes in honor of his brother's strong faith and inspiring work ethic.

"Everything that we've done with the foundation, we haven't rushed. We've prayed about it and let it resonate, and the right thing just clicks," said Ty, "So, our third pillar has been to support missionary work in my brother's honor, and we have connected with some



▲ Ty Eschenbaum speaks at the Earn the Gift Gala, an annual fundraiser for the Ty Eschenbaum Foundation.

◀ Ty Eschenbaum with Spencer, a child his foundation supported in connection with Make-A-Wish.

amazing individuals and organizations."

Ty is honored to be able to remember the best parts of the people he loves. He hopes that his work through the foundation can have

even a fraction of the impact that Autumn, his brother and the children he met during his fight with cancer have had on this world.

As the conversation ended, Ty shared this closing promise of hope, "We are ready to be a conduit for everybody-I think if we haven't helped someone in your community yet, we sure plan to in the future."

**📍 To learn more about the Ty Eschenbaum Foundation, visit their website at [www.tyefoundation.org](http://www.tyefoundation.org)**

**📍 To listen to the podcast on which this story is based, visit [SDCommunityFoundation.org](http://SDCommunityFoundation.org), click News & Insights at the top right of the page, select South Dakota Podcast and Stories and scroll to this episode.**



# Facilitating Philanthropy with Gordon Nielsen

Gordon Nielsen is a dedicated attorney and partner at Delaney, Nielsen & Sannes, P.C. in Sisseton. With roots deep in Northeast South Dakota, Gordon has been serving his community for decades. After graduating as a Sterling Honors Graduate from the University of South Dakota School of Law, Gordon's career path led him to become a trusted advisor specializing in estate planning, estate administration and real estate matters.

Beyond his legal practice, Gordon is a passionate advocate for philanthropy. As a South Dakota Community Foundation (SDCF) Key Club Member, he helps clients realize their charitable goals through thoughtful estate planning.

Gordon understands the pivotal role of timing in discussing charitable giving with his clients, ensuring they explore opportunities that resonate with their values.

When asked how he brings up charitable giving with his clients, Gordon shared, "You know most people who come to my office have an idea of how they want their estate plan laid out," said Gordon, "but it takes an experienced estate planner to know when it's the right time to bring up the topic of charitable giving. In my experience, clients are often eager to learn more about how they can give back through their estate."

Two of the main ways he encourages charitable giving are through a direct philanthropic gift in an estate plan or by helping clients set up a contingent gift in an estate plan to include a charitable gift that will take effect if their intended heir does not survive them.

"My advice [to fellow estate planners] would be to educate yourself as far as the opportunities that are out there for charitable giving," Gordon said. "You know many people think they don't have enough money to give, or that giving is just for the rich, but places like the South Dakota Community Foundation make it easy to give back. So, when



▲ In addition to his legal work, Gordon Nielsen is a member of the Sisseton Area Community Foundation's Advisory Council. The Advisory Council includes, front (from left): Dennis Jensen, President, Sandi Jaspers, Vice President, Yvonne Hippen, Secretary, Jane Schneider, Treasurer. Back: Kevin Deutsch, Robert Hull, Gordon Nielsen.

◀ Gordon Nielsen.

in other areas, and they will take some of the burden off of our plate."

Gordon shares satisfaction with his clients, and a rewarding feeling of knowing that together they are sharing, and making a difference. To Gordon, this is the power of philanthropy.

**📍 To learn more about SDCF's Legacy Society, [sdcommunityfoundation.org](https://sdcommunityfoundation.org), then click Giving and Legacy Society.**

**📍 To listen to the podcast on which this story is based, visit [SDCommunityFoundation.org](https://SDCommunityFoundation.org), click News & Insights at the top right of the page, select South Dakota Podcast and Stories and scroll to this episode.**

those conversations come up, it's so important to be educated so you can provide people the proper advice to see their charitable goals come to life."

Gordon has also helped nonprofit organizations partner with SDCF. He has enjoyed working with SDCF over the years on several projects and finds the services that SDCF can provide to nonprofit organizations a key to success.

From his perspective as a volunteer board member, he observed, "You know we always have plenty on our plates, but when we partner with the South Dakota Community Foundation, we can take comfort in knowing the services that they provide help us focus our efforts

## SDCF Elects New Board Members

➔ South Dakota Community Foundation (SDCF) held board member elections at the Fall 2024 Board Meeting in Deadwood and welcomed three new members: Jack Kucera of Lead, Susan Overgaard of Centerville and Preston Steele of Huron.

"Jack, Susan and Preston bring a great deal of leadership experience to the Board, but most importantly, they bring a strong commitment to the future of South Dakota," said SDCF President & CEO Stephanie Judson.



**JACK KUCERA** is a 1978 graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy. He earned an MBA from Arizona State University and led the growth of Climatec into the nation's largest independent systems integrator. After selling part of Climatec in 2015, he retained and rebranded the HVAC division as Varitec Solutions. Kucera also co-founded HUNTAIR and BasX Solutions, both focused on high-tech HVAC systems. Dedicated to educational equity,

he has supported A Stepping Stone Foundation, Teach for America, and the Air Force Academy Foundation. Jack and his wife, Vianne, live in Lead and Phoenix.



**SUSAN OVERGAARD** grew up in eastern South Dakota and later moved to Centerville, after graduating from South Dakota State University in 1976. Susan and her husband, Larry, raised two daughters and became active in the community. Susan owned a small retail store before working for 20 years at First Midwest Bank, earning licenses in insurance and investments. Since retiring, she has been deeply involved in local organizations like the Centerville Area Foundation, contributing to numerous community projects.



**PRESTON STEELE** was born in Huron and grew up on a family farm near Wolsey. After earning a business management degree from the University of South Dakota, Preston joined American Bank & Trust in 1997, continuing a family legacy of banking. He led American Trust Insurance LLC from 1999 to 2023, growing the company to 45 employees before selling it. Currently, Preston is Chair/President of Leackco Bank Holding

Company and Executive Chair of American Bank & Trust, with branches across South Dakota, Minnesota and North Dakota. He has held leadership roles in several community organizations.

Three current Board members were elected to serve an additional three-year term: Mark Buche of Mitchell, Casey Peterson of Rapid City and Hani Shafai of Rapid City.

The Board also recognized outgoing members Karl Adam of Pierre, who ended his term as Chair of the Investment Committee and Board Treasurer; Marilyn Hoyt of Huron, who ended her term as Resource Development Committee Chair; and Doug Sharp of Watertown, who ended his term as Past Chair.

"I personally want to thank Karl, Marilyn and Doug for their years of service and leadership to South Dakota. They worked diligently to improve our organizational strength and efficiency for the benefit of those we serve," said Judson. "I consider them leaders, mentors and friends."

## SDCF Leadership

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS - OFFICERS

Scott Jones ..... Chair  
 Dennis Daugaard ..... Vice Chair  
 Shawn Rost ..... Treasurer  
 Stephanie Judson ..... SDCF President & CEO, Secretary

### BOARD MEMBERS

Dennis Batteen	DeMaris Nesheim
Mark Buche	Susan Overgaard
Marci Christensen-Burdick	Casey Peterson
Matt Cronin	Donald L. Roby
Linda Erickson	Shawn Rost
Carla Gatzke	Greg Sands
Marilyn Grossenburg	Hani Shafai
Jack Kucera	Preston Steele
Cynthia Mickelson	Bob Sutton

### STAFF

Denise Bowman ..... Administrative Assistant  
 Clay Cudmore ..... Chief Financial & Administrative Officer  
 Jamie Farnen ..... Community Development Coordinator & Marketing Manager  
 Patrick Gallagher ..... Community Development Coordinator  
 John T. Hanson ..... Senior Accountant  
 Stephanie Harmon ..... Program Assistant  
 Shelly Jund ..... Executive Assistant to the President & CEO  
 Beth Massa ..... Director for Foundation Relations  
 Kelly Nelson ..... Scholarship Coordinator  
 Ginger Niemann ..... Senior Program Officer  
 Jennifer Schuetzle ..... Accountant  
 Cassie Stoesser ..... Controller  
 Jeff Veltkamp ..... Director of Development

### AFFILIATE PARTNERS

Brandy Drew ..... Scholarship Program Specialist  
 Elli Haerter ..... Freedom Scholarship Program Coordinator  
 Deni Martin ..... Build Dakota Program Manager

### NEW STAFF

**Stephanie Harmon** joined SDCF in September 2024 as Program Assistant for SDCF's grants team. She provides technical support to grant applicants and program staff members. Stephanie also works on communication projects related to the Foundation's program and development efforts.



**Stephanie Harmon**