The Ethel S. Abbott Charitable Foundation

For more than 36 years, the Ethel S. Abbott Charitable Foundation has carried forward its founder’s vision by helping those organizations that are making a difference in people’s lives.

Ethel S. Abbott was born in Winona, Minn., in 1895. A few years later, her parents moved to Lincoln, Neb., where Mrs. Abbott lived for the next 35 years. In 1924, she married Raymond H. Page. Together, they operated Lincoln Aircraft Company which trained student pilots and built the Lincoln Page Airplane. They taught Charles Lindbergh to fly and remained in contact with the Lindberghs through the years.

Raymond Page died of cancer in 1932. A year later, Ethel Page married Christopher J. Abbott, a rancher and banker from Hyannis, Neb., who had lost his wife, also to cancer. Mr. and Mrs. Abbott made their home in Hyannis but traveled extensively throughout the United States. Mr. Abbott was a successful businessman and considered to be the wealthiest man in Nebraska at the time. In 1954, Mr. Abbott was killed when the plane he was traveling in crashed outside of Shreveport, La.

In 1972, the Ethel S. Abbott Charitable Foundation was founded so that Mrs. Abbott’s generosity could be perpetuated. Today the foundation continues to support nonprofit organizations that are working to make a difference in people’s lives. Its funding has benefited a variety of areas including health, education, sports and recreation, children and youth, religion and arts and culture. Typically, the foundation’s primary grant area is Western Nebraska, Omaha and Lincoln. These areas represent where Mrs. Abbott spent the majority of her life.

The Ethel S. Abbott Charitable Foundation is a distinguished benefactor of the University of Nebraska. It has provided gifts for the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden and the Lied Performing Arts Center at UNL, as well as the McGoogan Library and College of Nursing at UNMC. The Abbott Foundation also has supported the university-wide student scholarship fund.

Mrs. Abbott passed away in 1992, but through her foundation her legacy of giving will continue to touch people’s lives for generations.

Gerald Christensen, M.D., and Mary Haven, M.S., FASAHP

Collectively Gerald Christensen, M.D., and Mary Haven, M.S., FASAHP, have committed more than 50 years of service to the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Dr. Christensen served as the interim director of the Weigel Williamson Center for Visual Rehabilitation and is a member of UNMC’s volunteer faculty in ophthalmology. Mary Haven, who retired after 38 years at the medical center, holds the titles of associate dean emeritus and professor emeritus, UNMC Department of Pathology and Microbiology and Clinical Laboratory Sciences.

Dr. Christensen earned his medical degree from the University of Oregon Health Science Center. He completed a residency in ophthalmology at the University of Minnesota and a fellowship in ophthalmic pathology at The Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. In 1969 Dr. Christensen joined the ophthalmology faculty at the University of Texas Medical Branch where he remained until 1975. He has served on the faculty in both pathology and ophthalmology at UNMC since that time.

Mary Haven earned a master’s degree in chemistry from Creighton University. She joined UNMC in 1969 as a clinical chemist in the Department of Pathology and Microbiology. During the last 11 years of her tenure at UNMC she served as the associate dean of the School of Allied Health Professions. She is credited with guiding the school to a leadership position in distance learning.

Dr. Christensen and Mary Haven, who have four children and nine grandchildren, both agree that visual rehabilitation facilities are increasingly important to the well-being of our population and, in particular, to the elderly. For those with macular degeneration, glaucoma or other retinal diseases that severely limit vision, a visual rehabilitation center enables those visually impaired to successfully adapt their lives so as to gain maximum benefit from their remaining sight.
Dr. C. Rex and Janet Latta

Dr. C. Rex Latta graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1954. He went on to receive his medical degree from the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Medicine in 1957.

Following graduation, Dr. Latta interned at LA County Harbor General Hospital and then completed his residency in ophthalmology in 1961 at the Illinois Eye and Ear Infirmary. That same year Dr. Latta began a private medical practice in Omaha where he spent his career as part of the First Eye Associates.

Dr. Latta was a member of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Phi Chi Medical Fraternity. He also is actively involved in his local rotary club.

His wife, Janet, received a bachelor of science degree from Omaha University and a degree in nursing from Creighton University St. Joseph School of Nursing.

The Lattas have three children and six grandchildren.

The Lozier Foundation

Formed in 1986, The Lozier Foundation is a personal foundation funded by Allan and Dianne Lozier. The foundation’s focus is education, social services and issues involving women and children with an emphasis on the inner city and underrepresented populations. The foundation’s grants are directed exclusively to the immediate Omaha area.

A member of the Methodist Hospital board of directors for more than 20 years, Allan Lozier has a longtime interest in health care.

Adah and Leon Millard Foundation

Adah and Leon Millard have been described as individuals with kind hearts whose legacy of generosity and outreach continues to benefit the people of Omaha today. During their lifetimes both were astute business people and generous philanthropists. Their diverse charitable interests included the Salvation Army, Boys Clubs, the Henry Doorly Zoo and helping the elderly.

Leon Millard was born in West Union, Iowa, in 1881. After attending Upper Iowa College in Fayette, he began a series of jobs with lumber companies. In 1901, Mr. Millard moved to Omaha to work for Nebraska Bridge Supply and Lumber. His job as a buyer and traveling salesman took him to towns across Nebraska and Iowa. On one of those trips he met Adah Kuns. They married in 1903 in her hometown of Morristown, Ill. A few years later Mr. Millard and the company’s owner, John Towle, organized Nebraska Bridge Supply into the National Lumber and Shingle Company. Later they expanded the business and title to Independent Lumber and Coal Company.

Adah Millard was a woman of great courage, conviction, resourcefulness and intellectual curiosity. She always accompanied her husband on business outings. She was described as having a knack for business and a broad range of interests, one who read widely and kept up on current events.

Mr. Millard was a grand, reserved, pleasant and easygoing man. At the time of his death in 1965 he was chairman of National By-Products, Inc. — a company he first invested in around 1930. By 1937 Mr. Millard had assumed the chairmanship, and the company had 11 plants in Iowa and Nebraska. Growth of the company was steady. By 1954 National By-Products, Inc. was one of the three largest companies of its kind in the country.

During the final years of her life, Mrs. Millard developed a strong interest in medical research and the needs of the elderly. In 1969 she made a gift, enabling UNMC to purchase a sophisticated diagnostic camera. Two years later Mrs. Millard established the Millard Professorship of Geriatrics with a gift benefiting UNMC. When she died in 1975, at the age of 93, she was eulogized in the Omaha World-Herald as “one of Omaha’s most prominent philanthropists.”
Straws Charitable Foundation

The Straws Charitable Foundation was founded in 1998 by members of the Swarts family which include Carol Swarts, M.D., of Crestview Hills, Ky., and Keith Swarts of Omaha. The family foundation was created for, and is dedicated to, providing support for education, research and the prevention of environmental degradation.

The Swarts family knows personally the impact low vision can have on a loved one. Dr. Swarts’ mother had macular degeneration. This experience was one reason the Straws (Swarts spelled backwards) Charitable Foundation decided to support the Weigel Williamson Center for Visual Rehabilitation. With the aging populations, Dr. Swarts said, more and more people will struggle with low vision. The addition of this center, she added, will enable UNMC to provide necessary services that are unique nationally and especially in a university setting.

Dr. Swarts, a 1959 graduate of the UNMC College of Medicine, has worked as a radiation oncologist for more than 40 years. In 1999 Dr. Swarts left her private practice to provide locum tenens, a service that allows physicians to leave their practice for short periods of time.

Keith Swarts earned a master’s degree in 1969 from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Today he serves as the director of business services at UNMC. Mr. Swarts is recognized as one of the key individuals whose never-ending commitment led to the building of the Ronald McDonald House at UNMC. He also is actively involved in the UNMC student-run SHARING Clinic.

Both Dr. Carol Swarts and Keith Swarts serve on the board of the Straws Charitable Foundation.

Dakota and Fred Sturges

Dakota Sturges personally knew the frustration that individuals with low vision often experienced. Later in her life she developed macular degeneration and received low vision services at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. She and her husband, Fred, generously supported UNMC’s vision rehabilitation center to benefit and help expand the care and resources available to persons with low vision.

Mrs. Sturges was born in Presho, S.D., in 1907. She earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of South Dakota in 1932 and then went on to teach in several one-room schools around Presho, Dupree and Winner, S.D. In 1937 Mrs. Sturges moved to Washington, D.C., where she worked for U.S. News and World Report. She is credited with establishing, and then leading, the publication’s research department and became the first female whose name appeared on the magazine’s masthead.

Fred Sturges was born in Iowa in 1909, nine years before his family moved to Winner. There they began a thriving fur and hide business. He served in the Army during World War II and then returned to the family business, opening a location in Omaha.

The Sturgeses were married in 1946. They made their home in Omaha where Mr. Sturges ran the W.H. Sturges Company and his wife served as office manager. Mr. Sturges passed away in 2005, and his wife in 2006.
Lions Clubs International is the world’s largest service club organization with more than 1.3 million members in more than 45,000 clubs worldwide.

Founded in 1917, Lions are best known for fighting blindness. By conducting vision screenings, equipping hospitals and clinics, distributing medicine and raising awareness of eye disease, Lions work toward their mission of providing vision for all. Lions have extended their commitment to sight conservation through countless local efforts and through their international SightFirst Program, which works to eradicate blindness.

Lions also volunteer for many different kinds of community projects—including caring for the environment, feeding the hungry and aiding seniors and the disabled.

Lions support youth by supporting local children and schools through scholarships, recreation and mentoring. Internationally, many programs are offered, including the Peace Poster Contest, Youth Camps and Exchange and Lions Quest.

Since 1968, the Lions Clubs International Foundation has awarded more than $660 million in grants to support Lions humanitarian projects around the world. The Foundation was also ranked the number one nongovernmental organization in a 2007 study by The Financial Times.

Together the Foundation and the Lions help communities following natural disasters by providing for immediate needs such as food, water, clothing and medical supplies and aiding in long-term reconstruction.

The Lion’s motto is “We Serve.” Lions are part of a global service network, doing whatever is necessary to help local communities.

(Excerpt from “Lions Clubs International Fact Sheet”, www.lionsclubs.org)