



**BUILDING THE FUTURE ONE STEP AT A TIME!**

**December 2021 Newsletter**

**Anonymous Donor gives \$100,000 to  
STEP Foundation**



**Pictured Above Left to Right: Barbara K. Vitt and Tory Jost, Executive Director**

The Nemaha County STEP Foundation is excited to announce two new funds provided by an anonymous donor. Thanks to the generosity of this donor, \$50,000 will begin the Barbara K. Vitt Scholarship Fund and \$50,000 will start the Saints Peter and Paul Catholic School (SPPS) Fund.

Barbara Beckenhauer Vitt, born in Council Grove, KS, many decades ago, grew up in Manhattan, KS. There, she attended a small two-room rural grade school. It was while going to the Strong School that she cemented her desire to become a teacher someday. Barbara had been leaning in that direction since she was a little girl, and wanted to follow in her mother and both her maternal and paternal grandmothers' footsteps. They had all taught in one-room country schools when they were young, unmarried women. (In that era, once a woman teacher married, her teaching career was over!) At Strong School, Barbara enjoyed the teaching expertise of two wonderful teachers—Miss Lois Cravens, grades 1-4 and Mrs. Helene Carswell, grades 5-8. Her teachers taught all subjects to students in all four grades, without the assistance of any paraprofessionals, and they handled all disciplinary problems without the aid of a principal on the premises. Both women were smart, dedicated, compassionate, and demanding, and Barbara Beckenhauer wanted to be "just like them."

After graduating from the eighth grade, having had only three others in her class, Barbara entered Manhattan Junior High School where her ninth-grade classmates numbered 198! In the fall after her graduation from Manhattan High School, Barbara enrolled at Kansas State College. She completed her freshman year, married Greg Vitt, and moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado. After having three children (Bernadette, Chris, and Joe), the family moved to Seneca where Greg worked as a dental laboratory technician for Dr. Al Vitt and Dr. Ralph Herrman. The couple had one more baby, David, and Barb ran the household and cared for their four little ones!

When David was three years old, an opportunity arose that allowed Mrs. Vitt to go back to college, so they packed up and moved to Manhattan. Greg stayed in Seneca with Dr. Vitt during the work-week and joined the family on weekends. Mrs. Vitt finished her degree in two years and two summers, taking the maximum number of classes allowed each session. While her first goal had been secondary education/English, she decided that she would have more employment opportunities if she were to major in elementary education. Her first teaching job, for which her salary was \$5500, per year, was at Sts. Peter and Paul in Seneca. She taught at SPPS for nine years, mainly teaching junior high math and vocal music. (She also coached boys track for one season, and played the organ for daily mass after Sts. Peter and Paul High School, until the school closed in 1974.) Mrs. Vitt took a year off from teaching to complete her master's degree (from KSU) in school guidance and counseling and to do two practicums—one in elementary counseling at Highland Park Elementary School in Topeka and one in high school counseling at B & B High School at Baileyville.

Following her practicums, Mrs. Vitt was hired at B & B. She became the school counselor, taught junior high mathematics, junior high language arts, and college psychology for many years. She was also the scholars' bowl and pep club sponsor for years. Her first graduating class was the class of 1980, with whom she worked during her practicum, and her last class before retiring was the class of 2006. After that, she did substitute teaching at the Nemaha Valley Schools and at B & B. Mrs. Vitt's last teaching assignment was instructing the college

psychology class at B & B in the fall of 2013. During the summer of 2014, Mrs. Vitt received a request to take a part-time counseling job at the Axtell school, so she went back to work. Besides counseling, Mrs. Vitt accompanied the choirs and the vocal/instrumental soloists. She retired again in the spring of 2020.

Mrs. Vitt said that in all of her teaching/counseling jobs, she felt as if she were working in a little piece of paradise. The students with whom she worked were considerate, hard-working, and respectful. Her colleagues, the administrators, and the school boards were wonderful. Best of all, the parents of her students valued education, expected their children's best efforts, and were supportive of the school and the teachers. If she, had it to do over again, she would not hesitate!

Barbara K. Vitt has been a wonderful example, serving Nemaha County for decades. Her dedication and commitment to teaching is exemplary. Thanks to a very generous anonymous donor, up to three \$1,500 scholarships will be available to Nemaha County students annually. All graduating High School Seniors in Nemaha County are eligible to apply; however, preference will be given to those majoring in education, science, or mental health. To apply, simply go online to [www.nemahastep.org](http://www.nemahastep.org) and complete the scholarship application.

Additionally, this generous anonymous donor's donation allowed for the creation of the St. Peter and Paul Catholic School (SPPS) Fund for \$50,000. This fund, available beginning in the July 2022 grant cycle, will assist in funding field trips, classroom supplies and/or materials such as microscopes, laptops, etc. Staff at SPPS are encouraged to apply.

**Thank you again, to the anonymous donor for giving back.**

**What an incredible gift!**

## STEP gives to complete Spring Creek Golf Course project



Pictured Right to Left: Diane Yunghans, STEP Board Member; Brock Corby, Golf Pro and Club House Manager; Sarah Hiltgen, Spring Creek Golf Course President of the Board of Directors; Tony Altenhofen, General Manager and Course Superintendent; Tim Rottinghaus, STEP Board Member; and Tory Jost, STEP Executive Director

**The Nemaha County STEP Foundation awarded the Spring Creek Golf Course a grant for its chip and seal parking lot project. The \$13,399.69 grant was the final distribution from the Nate and Bernardine Rettele Fund.**



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2022

# Annual Membership Meeting

6:00 PM | SOCIAL AND MEAL  
6:30 PM | MEETING  
AMERICAN LEGION POST 21  
812 MAIN STREET SENECA, KS  
RSVP TO TORY AT 785-294-0312  
BY JANUARY 19

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## **Our Contact Information**

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