



Western Nebraska Community College

Foundation and Alumni 2022-2023 Annual Report

Western Nebraska Community College Alumni, Donors, and Friends,

It is my pleasure to introduce you to the Foundation and Alumni Annual Report. As I have just stepped into the position of President, I cannot tell you how excited I am to be here at WNCC and part of the amazing work that is happening here.

Some of that work includes the implementation of a new strategic plan, as well as a strategic plan for the Foundation, which ties closely with the college plan. Those living documents will guide the college and the Foundation for years to come.

This fall also brought about more change on the Scottsbluff Campus, as facilities continued to be updated. In addition, major upgrades to health sciences facilities and career and technical education facilities in Scottsbluff, Alliance, and Sidney are in the planning stages as we prepare to serve the people of the Panhandle with new programming in the construction trades.

Unprecedented state support for community colleges and property tax relief for all Nebraskans is helping to situate WNCC to tackle the challenges of a new economy. By streamlining certificate and short-term training programs, WNCC aims to reduce time to completion by increasing partnerships with four-year institutions throughout the state. Add that to a dual enrollment program which provided more credit to high school students in the region this past year, there has never been a more exciting time at WNCC.

Enjoy this report showing how you have helped impact our students over the past year.

Go Cougars!



Greg Dart, President
Western Nebraska Community College



WNCC Alumni are Out of This World!

 **264** 2022-2023 Graduates
(Aug, Dec, and May)

 **8,732** former WNCC students are part
of the Alumni Association

 **4,384** in Western Nebraska
597 in Eastern Nebraska
3,624 elsewhere in the United States
127 internationally

Did you know?



2,622

Jobs (or 1 in 21)
in the service area are supported
by WNCC and its students.



\$3,790

Average Cost of Tuition*

*based on 30 credit hours and double occupancy, excluding meals



\$3,236

Residence Hall Cost*



See more alumni info at www.wncc.edu/alumni

Scan the QR code to
add or update your
contact information!





In May, Dacia Boyer of Hemingford received her Associate of Arts in Business Administration, from WCCA Board Chair Lynne Klemke and WNCC Interim President John Marrin.

Scholarships Provide Access to Education

By Alena Haun, WNCC Foundation Gifts & Grants Director

Thea Boerkircher, Dacia Boyer, and Charlee Guadarrama all crossed the stage to receive their associate degree in May 2023. Three students, three completely different programs, with more in common than they may ever know. Each chose WNCC because it was close to home and affordable due to the scholarships available through the WNCC Foundation.

Hemingford mom, Thea Boerkircher, watched her son experience success in his dual credit classes at WNCC and shared how that helped her feel like she would also be able to succeed. "This scholarship was a huge help to me in paying for college. My son was taking CollegeNow! [dual credit] classes while I was going back to school, and this allowed us to financially be able to support him as well as myself," said Thea, who has set her sights on a degree at Chadron State College now that she has received her Associate Degree in Business Administration from WNCC.

In February, Dacia Boyer, of Gering, stepped out of her comfort zone and shared a piece of her story during the annual Foundation Scholarship Breakfast. "Scholarships mean the world to me because it takes a lot to go through college and raise a family at the same time. I came to college because I wanted to better myself and show my family that they can do anything they put their minds to doing." Dacia chose WNCC because it was close to home, and she was able to take her daughter to school before heading to classes. Dacia graduated in May with an Associate Degree in Human Services and a Certificate in Drug & Alcohol Counseling.

Seven years ago, Charlee Guadarrama, of Scottsbluff, obtained her LPN certification at WNCC. When she was ready to pursue her RN (Advanced Placement Associate Degree of Nursing), Charlee returned to WNCC because of the great advisors, the faculty and staff support, and the scholarship opportunities.

"The scholarships I received were the reason I was able to return to school and obtain my RN degree. As a mom of two kids in a challenging nursing program, working full-time is nearly impossible. I am thankful for the help I have received." When asked what she would tell someone considering WNCC, she stated, "The staff and faculty care about learning, they want you to complete without being in debt, and they want to see you excel and succeed after you graduate." Since graduation, Charlee has transitioned into a new role as a hospice nurse.

In 2022, data* of independent college students (those not financially dependent on their parents), showed that 43 percent have dependent children, 23 percent are single parents, and 41 percent work full-time while enrolled in school. Most of these students are considered non-traditional, having not matriculated directly from high school to college, and have elevated levels of financial need.

Charlee expressed her appreciation, "Many people in our community fund scholarships, making it possible for students like me to cut back on work while taking classes." Donors who fund WNCC Foundation scholarships provide access to education for students who may otherwise not attend.

Three women, three moms, three goals to return to school for themselves and their families – made possible through the support and generosity of the community.

**Amghighered.com*



Performing Arts Programs Expand to Offer Opportunities for Students and Community

By Dr. Patrick Newell with Dr. Nathaniel Johnson

It has been a momentous few years for the Performing Arts at WNCC! With the completion of the Platte Valley Companies Performing Arts Center, comprised of the Judy Chaloupka Theater, adjoining offices and classrooms, and the Kelley Bean Box Office, the program was ready to expand.

To meet the quality of the new performance facilities, the Fine and Performing Arts faculty created six new Associate of Fine Art degrees in Music, Music Performance, Musical Theatre, Theatre, Visual Art, and Interdisciplinary Studies, in addition to keeping the Associate Degree in Music Education. All seven degrees are designed for transfer to four-year degree programs.

With new facilities and new degrees, Dr. Johnson, Instrumental Music, and Dr. Newell, Vocal Music, combined recruiting forces by touring student ensembles to local and regional high schools. Monumental Rock Combo and Varsity Vocalise had been touring together since Newell's arrival at WNCC in 2017. In 2021, we added students from Theatre Arts, under the direction of Theatre Instructor Violette Briggs, to perform scenes at the start of performances, and we hit the road to recruit, recruit, recruit!

COVID-19 switched our performances to virtual, but we kept on painting, dancing, singing, acting, and playing. As soon as we were allowed into high schools, we took our groups back on the road (with the rock combo renamed Cougar Rock) and presented shows to high schools throughout Western Nebraska, the Colorado plains and Front Range, and Eastern Wyoming. Our shows are dynamic, high energy, and often end with all the high schoolers in attendance on their feet dancing and singing. In the words of recently retired WNCC Instructor Dave Nash, "Seeing the performances, who wouldn't want to attend WNCC?"

The Fine and Performing Arts programs at WNCC have indeed grown. 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 were each bigger than the year before in all areas. For the 2023-2024 academic year we have given out every available talent-based tuition remission scholarship: that's 50 full scholarships among the four programs! Varsity Vocalise and Collegiate Chorale are the largest they have ever been in number. Musical Theatre and Theatre continue to expand, with the new Musical Theatre degree having seven students enrolled for this academic year. All the instrumental ensembles continue to give an excellent musical experience to our students, as they play alongside seasoned performers. Recent graduates from our programs are accepted for continued study at Chadron State, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Omaha, University of Wyoming, and Fort Lewis College (with a full tuition scholarship!), or they are going out into the world to pursue their art.

The new theater has enriched the Panhandle in various ways. Audience numbers have greatly increased for all our WNCC performing groups and theatrical productions. Theatre West Summer Repertory continues to utilize the theater in the summers, providing professional theatre opportunities and theatrical youth camps for locals and national-level actors alike. We have also hosted various educational performances such as the String Sprouts youth program, a partnership with the Omaha Conservatory of Music. And to top it all off, Cougar Rock and Varsity Vocalise were invited to perform at the Nebraska Music Education Associations' 2023 Fall Conference. How exciting it was to represent the Panhandle and show off WNCC's best!

For info on WNCC Performing & Visual Arts performances visit wncc.edu/community/performing-arts



Jade Cash grew up in Thornton, Colorado, where she attended a large high school. She knew she wanted to act, but high school auditions attracted 80 students for a single role and her ADHD and anxiety made it tough to get big parts. Jade met Dr. Patrick Newell at an acting conference and was offered a WNCC Theatre scholarship. Hesitant to come to such a small town, she soon realized that Scottsbluff was a great place to be. "It was the best choice I could have made. If I needed something, I didn't have to look far. The instructors gave me the attention I needed, which gave me the confidence and opportunity to realize my potential."

Jade received one of the first AFA degrees from WNCC in May 2021. Not long after, she was hired as a professional actor in St Louis, Missouri, in a seasonal production of *Polar Express*. During the off-season she works at a coffee shop while auditioning for more roles.

To potential future WNCC students, Jade would say, "Absolutely go to WNCC. I received a great education from experienced faculty. Also, the campus resources such as TRIO, mental health counselors, and the student emergency fund are incredibly helpful."



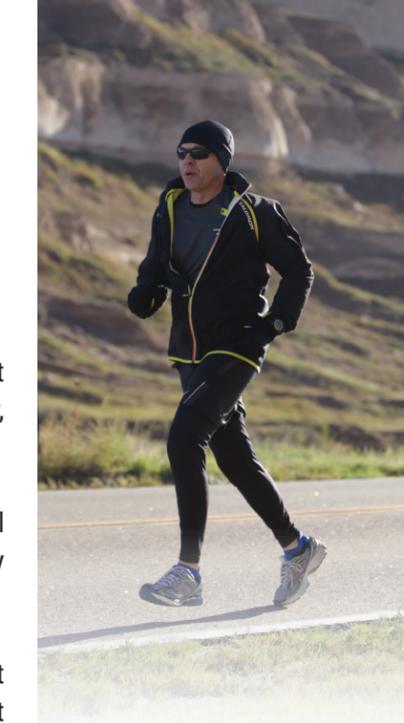
WNCC Alumnus Gives Back Through the Monument Marathon

By Dr. Brett Gies, Superintendent, Sioux County Schools

Of all the races I have run during my racing career, the Monument Marathon is my favorite. I absolutely love the course and all the support the race has to offer. After competing as a runner for 10 years, I have retired from running and now volunteer as a bike marshal. As a runner, I always enjoyed and appreciated the volunteers. So now, I get the satisfaction of giving back and supporting the event.

As an alumnus of WNCC and a current school superintendent, I encourage my high school graduates to attend WNCC. I had an exceptional experience when I attended WNCC, earning an Associate of Arts degree which provided the inspiration and foundation for furthering my education. I eventually obtained a Ph.D., but it all started with a positive experience at WNCC.

The Scottsbluff/Gering area is fortunate to have WNCC and sponsors host such a top-notch event like the Monument Marathon to benefit current and future students. The high quality race reflects the quality of education students receive at WNCC because it is the people at WNCC who make a positive impact on students and community.



\$510k
Total Raised



300+
volunteers needed
each year



237.5
Gallons of
Gatorade



1200
Bottled beverages
donated by Pepsi



554
runners

5 different countries
US, Canada, Niger, Netherlands, Kenya
33 states represented
65% of runners are new each year



To learn more or get involved
visit www.monumentmarathon.com



Health Science Classrooms Use Actors to Simulate Real Life Scenarios

By Amber Jacoby, Former WNCC Nursing Instructor

“Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.” In 2018, Western Nebraska Community College began the process of expanding the use of simulation to bridge the gap between passive instruction and clinical experiences. From the use of equipment that can simulate a birthing experience to actors playing the role of a combative patient or distraught family member, simulation mimics the experience a nurse will see when in a real life, clinical setting. The mission of the simulation program is to provide a safe, student-centered environment to support the development of clinical reasoning and judgment to promote safe, patient-centered care. Additionally, implementing simulation can provide an additional clinical site, allowing for increased capacity for nursing program enrollments.

Donors to the WNCC Foundation have been integral in expanding the program by helping with acquisition of new equipment, educational opportunities, and training programs. In 2019, Foundation donations purchased a wearable simulation piece for use in obstetrics simulations for both the associate degree and practical nursing programs. In 2021-2022, additional donations supported a 12-month long education program for the simulation facilitator to provide growth in applying evidence-based teaching strategies, refinement in scenario development, and integration of instructional design concepts.

The Foundation in 2022-2023 awarded funding for the development of a standardized participant training program to further integrate realism into the current simulation experiences. This grant allowed the nursing programs to advertise, hire, and train 11 paid simulation standardized participants from the community. Actors were utilized in the first semester clinical rotation for health assessment, care of the older adult, and maternal child classes. The students provided great feedback on the use of patient actors which was assessed through surveys.

“Actors help to visualize a scenario or disease for me because I learn best that way. Please continue to use!”

“Trained actors increase the richness of the learning experience and provide texture.”

In addition to students’ feedback, instructors appreciated a new tool to bring increased realism to the bedside for the students. One instructor said, “Student engagement increases when standardized participants are used.” Simulation with standardized participants creates opportunities for faculty to reflect upon student performance related to therapeutic communication with patients and family. “The use of trained actors was key in student learning! The students loved having ‘real people’ to interact with and respond to based off actual interactions. Excellent learning!”

The nursing programs plan to continue to build standardized participant programs through increased integration in both the associate degree and practical nursing programs at WNCC.



Student Emergency Funds Keep Students on Track

By Mary Sheffield, WNCC Alumni Director

"I have learned that seeking help means realizing that there are still people in the world who care about the future of others," said Camila Simbana of Ecuador. Cami is a Mechanical Engineering major who anticipates graduating in 2024.

In 2014, the WNCC Foundation Board voted to use unrestricted donations to create a Student Emergency Fund (SEF) to financially assist WNCC students who encounter an emergency or unexpected barrier which affects their ability to complete a class, semester, or program of study. An application is required, and students must use other assistance first, such as scholarships or Community College GAP funding. They are also encouraged to visit the Cougar Cupboard food pantry and Cougar Closet if they have food or clothing needs. Any WNCC student is eligible to apply for the SEF, whether they are in a credited or non-credited program. If the student has a balance owed to the college, priority is given to helping pay tuition and fees, but the SEF can also help with books, unexpected bills, and housing needs. The average amount a student is given is under \$500, but that can make the difference between staying in school to complete a degree and dropping out due to financial hardship.

Hunter and Cari Maglito of Melbeta were both in the Nursing program at WNCC. They had everything planned out financially, but life threw them an unexpected curve ball and they wondered if one or both should drop out of school and go back to work. That's when they were referred to the Alumni Office to apply for Student Emergency Funds. "Nursing school is difficult, but with the help of the Foundation and its donors, we were able to graduate on time and with honors. This college is an asset to our community, and we are proud to have become alumni of this college," Hunter said.

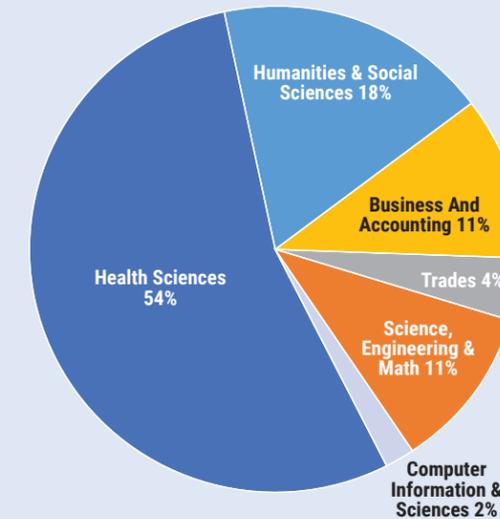
The reasons a student seeks help are as varied as you would imagine, and some you couldn't imagine. The students are so grateful for and humbled by the help. As the Alumni Director, administering these funds is one of the most meaningful parts of my job.

"This help is well received because in a few years they will see this engineer fulfilling her dreams," Cami said.

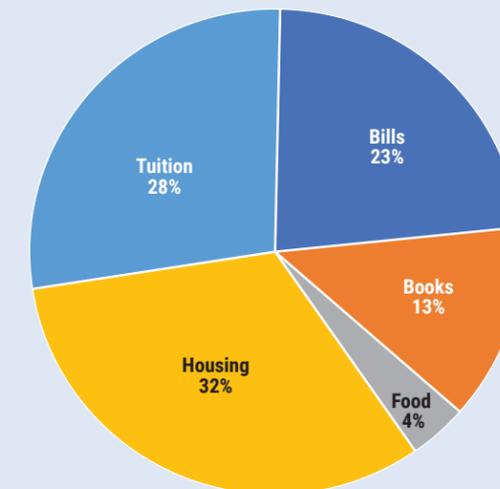
Since 2015, 272 students have been assisted with a total of \$135,376.53, with an average award of \$497.71.

In 22-23, \$21,258 was awarded to 46 students.

Student's major:



What was funded:





Construction Trades Program Builds on History

By Doug Mader, WNCC Workforce & Lifelong Learning Executive Director

In 2022, Interim President John Marrin visited every county in WNCC's service area. These "listening tours" provided a chance for communities to let the college know how things were going and express what is needed in the future.

A common thread showed a dire need for trained construction trades people throughout our region. The shortage is nationwide. However, the pain from the shortage is more acute in our rural setting. We have communities that don't have access to a local electrician or HVAC technician. If the furnace or A/C unit goes down, the cost to fix it is compounded by travel costs for a technician from 40-50 miles away.

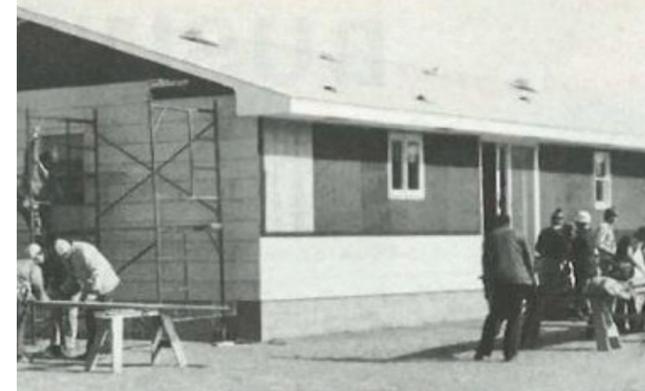
In May 2022, President Marrin charged the college with developing non-credit, competency-based training programs for carpenters, electricians, HVACR technicians, and plumbers. Most importantly, the programs needed to be deliverable in communities outside of Scottsbluff, Sidney, and Alliance. Thus began the process to develop mobile training units and offer training in all four construction trades disciplines.

WNCC hired Rob Conn as the Construction Trades Director. Rob first started his career in the construction trades program at Western Nebraska Technical College (WNTC) in Sidney, Nebraska, in 1982 and he's proud to have been a student. Rob says, "WNTC was the base for my future in the construction industry. These programs have been greatly missed and we are excited to bring them back to our communities."

The first class began in the summer of 2023, with curriculum and corresponding certifications from The National Center for Construction Education and Research, or NCCER. NCCER is a national leader in trades training. Our partnership with this organization as an Approved Training Sponsor gives access to their turn-key curriculum that is vetted by the industry and fully ready to be used by a trainer. The curriculum focuses heavily on hands-on training instead of lectures.

Course work occurs in the evenings and Saturdays. This schedule provides access to training to both unemployed individuals as well as those are currently employed but who wish to enter the trades for a better career. The average time to complete one of the four trades courses is 10 to 12 weeks. Students that complete the training will receive a certification and be ready to find employment in entry-level positions. They will still have much to learn, but they will have the foundation to have a successful start in the trades.

Our biggest hurdle to delivering these programs is finding trainers who are interested, have four years of documented experience in one of the trades, and a desire to help others learn. We are looking for instructors in all four trades throughout the Panhandle.



Annually, a house constructed by students at Western Nebraska Technical College in Sidney was auctioned off and moved to its final location. Rob Conn and Steven Ransom were students and John Marrin was an instructor at WNTC. All three of them have played a part in the launch of the Construction Trades program.

Steven Ransom was born in Lincoln, but his family moved to Sidney when his father, Emerson, found a job at Western Nebraska Technical College (WNTC). The college was established on an abandoned Sioux Army Depot and boasted amenities such as a bowling alley, recreation center, gymnasium, barracks, cafeteria, and classrooms.

During Steven's college years, he would load his motorcycle onto his father's truck and commute together to WNTC, riding his bike back home after classes. He pursued a program in Electrical Wiring – Center Pivot and actively participated in the student senate. When Steven struggled to find employment due to the recession, he joined the Navy and served five years of active duty and an additional 16 in the reserves.

Following active duty, Steven worked as a lineman and electrician in various positions at the Village of Morrill, City of Alliance, Wirelec, ran his own business, and eventually returned to Wirelec. Steven recently retired and donated much of his electrical equipment to help the WNCC Construction Trades program.

To become a student or instructor in the WNCC Construction Trades program, contact Rob Conn at connr9@wncc.edu or 308-635-6733.



50 years after their own graduation, 1973 alumni Melody (Ferguson) Leafgreen and Anita (Burry) Duncan hand an alumni pin to 2023 graduate Benedicte Manvuwa

Alumni Spotlight

James Benitez, III, Class of 2016

"I found myself running alongside the big dogs, challenging myself to keep up."

In high school, James took on the challenge of earning his associate degree from WNCN while completing his Scottsbluff High School diploma. He balanced nine high school classes and 12 college credit hours. Supported by his family, James overcame obstacles, becoming the first student at WNCN to receive both diplomas simultaneously. After completing his UNL degree in three years (including two changes in major), James attended Penn State Law from August 2019 to May 2022. Passing the bar on his first attempt, he began his legal career as the youngest in his class.



James Benitez III

Lori Van Pelt, Class of 1981

"Don't overlook this gem because you think a smaller school offers less opportunities than a larger or more prestigious college. The smaller class sizes and more personalized instruction can help you build a strong foundation for further studies."

Lori Van Pelt graduated from Banner County High School in 1979 and briefly attended a university before returning due to homesickness. Encouraged by her parents, she pursued her education at WNCN (then Nebraska Western College). While working full-time at a local bank, Lori completed her degree through correspondence and night classes. The personalized instruction and smaller class sizes helped foster her love of learning. After earning a bachelor's degree 1993, she embarked on a writing career, publishing several books. Lori's solid educational foundation and passion for lifelong learning play a key role in her success as a legal assistant. She currently works at Gunderson, Palmer, Nelson and Ashmore in Rapid City, SD.



Lori Van Pelt

Chris Gasseling, Class of 2015

"WNCN certainly provided me the foundation for my career."

After graduating from Alliance High School, Chris Gasseling was unsure of his career path but knew he enjoyed hands-on work outdoors. Encouraged by a lifelong friend, he enrolled in WNCN's Powerline Construction & Maintenance Technology program. The class work was interesting and came naturally to him. Chris was the first WNCN grad hired by a North Platte company that typically hired from surrounding trade colleges. After six years there, he got a job in the Panhandle and enjoys being closer to family and friends.



Chris Gasseling



Let us know your alumni updates! go.wncn.edu/alumniform

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In 2022-23, 1,476 gifts totaling over \$1.3 million were given to the WNCC Foundation through grants, scholarships, endowments, and unrestricted donations. Each of these gifts has a direct impact on the success of a student at WNCC.



\$17,012
given by WNCC
employees through
payroll



\$46,680
in athletic
sponsorships



\$15,654
in performing arts
sponsorships



\$20,268
gift-in-kind donations



\$210,040
given in memory of a
loved one



\$16,533
given for General
Scholarship Endowment
in honor of the WNCC
Foundation's 50th year.

Dear Foundation and Alumni Supporters,

It seems like a lifetime ago when I was asked by Dr. John Harms to join the WNCC Foundation Board of Directors. At that time, I felt unprepared for such a task. Throughout the years, I have been educated, informed, and involved in higher education goals and opportunities available at our community college. College personnel help determine what we need to provide for the community, and how we can continue to support our regional citizens.



I feel immense pride to observe our college's adaptation to fit the needs of each of our communities. Even with the onset of online classes, there is still a need for hands-on and one-on-one educational opportunities. We have evolved and adapted to these needs. Introductions of new areas of study and training continue to prepare area residents for service to their respective communities. Our existing programs in areas such as Health Sciences, Automotive & Diesel Technology, Aviation Maintenance, CDL Training, and Powerline Construction & Maintenance have provided students opportunities for careers. Our newest focus in Construction Trades education and training are essential to support the needs of communities within our enormous region. Its enactment brings new courses for careers that develop non-credit competency-based training in carpentry, plumbing, and electrical. These courses are held in the evenings and on weekends for those currently in the workforce and seeking a better career.

Scholarships for our students are essential. Many students work toward their goals of career training while juggling jobs and families. Donor support allowed us to award \$352,000 in scholarships for the 2022-2023 school year. Educational options are made possible because of your interest and financial support to our WNCC Foundation. The Foundation team continues to manage our major fundraiser, the Monument Marathon, as well as seek financial support from outside granting foundations. These would be insufficient without additional funding sources. Our continuous evolution in education and training is made possible with our belief that WNCC can be just exactly what our greater community needs. It does not happen without vision, hard work, dedication, and generous donations from you.

Thank you!

Judy Chaloupka
WNCC Foundation Board President

Emeritus Directors

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John Stinner, Sr.



THANK YOU!



In 2022, the WNCC Foundation celebrated an exciting milestone. For over 50 years, donors to the Foundation have generously helped WNCC students reach their full potential by funding scholarships and programs, creating opportunities to build a successful future for each student and our communities.

Jennifer Reisig
Executive Director
reisigj1@wncc.edu
308.630.6551

Alena Haun
Foundation Gifts & Grants Director
hauna7@wncc.edu
308.635.6375

Mary Sheffield
Alumni Relations & Stewardship Director
sheffie6@wncc.edu
308.630.6571

Charlotte Preston
Executive Secretary
presto14@wncc.edu
308.630.6550

foundation@wncc.edu
wnccfoundation.org