

PASSION & PURPOSE

THE CFO NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2025



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MILLION-DOLLAR LEGACY GIFTS

NEW COMMUNITY LEADERS

Empowering Brighter Tomorrows

Students across the region participate in – and benefit from – philanthropy



Winter credits growing up on a farm in Mount Vernon for teaching her the joy of helping others. "I believe that farm life required me to put the needs of others before my own."



A MESSAGE FROM WINTER

In my nearly 20-year career with the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, I've often reflected on why I feel so drawn to this organization, to this mission and to the nonprofit sector.

I didn't grow up with parents who were on committees or boards. I didn't have a life event that changed the way I saw the world.

I grew up in Mount Vernon on a small horse farm that included barn cats, ducks, chickens, guineas, a pot-bellied pig and a wayward Tyson turkey that somehow escaped the transport trailer. My mom volunteered for class parties, my dad helped with two years of elementary basketball, all while we fed and watered the animals 365 days a year.

I was a joiner (let's be honest, still am). At a rural school, I could be a part of anything if I was interested. Choir, student council, yearbook, organizing the blood drive — I was involved.

I believe that farm life required me to put the needs of others before my own, and being hardwired to be a joiner taught me to find joy in helping.

Fred Rogers credited his mother with the saying "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping." This line is often



used amid tragedy, but I believe it applies in everyday life. Helping is the very essence of philanthropy. And for me, it shows up profoundly in schools: in teachers, administrators, counselors and coaches; in students who choose to spend their time supporting fellow students and their hometowns; in community members who give time or money to provide a greater experience to young people; in individuals who choose to share their legacies with future generations they'll never know.

The CFO wholeheartedly believes that schools and communities are intertwined. We formalized that belief in 2009 when we launched the Rural Schools Partnership. We were fortunate to be on the ground floor when the Rural Schools Collaborative, now a significant national network, was created. We believe supportive, school-based philanthropy changes student trajectories. We are incredibly proud of our work and grateful for our donors' support in this area.

In the pages ahead you'll find stories about these efforts. They are the stories of helpers.

Winter Kinne is president and CEO of the Community Foundation of the Ozarks.

CFO UPDATES

AFFILIATE LEADERSHIP UPDATES



Joplin Regional Community Foundation

Outgoing: Logan Stanley
Incoming: Louise Secker



Marshfield Area Community Foundation

Outgoing: Ruby Dudley
Incoming: Alan Balmer



Perry County Community Foundation

Outgoing: Angela Swan
Incoming: Natalie Lorenz



Truman Lake Community Foundation

Outgoing: Jim Cook
Incoming: Deanna Hendrich

NEW PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS COUNCIL MEMBERS

- Jodi Stokes — StrongPath Financial, Springfield
- Molly Higdon — Simmons Bank, Springfield
- Aaron Sloan — Strategic Financial, Harrisonville
- Steven Perryman — Retired CPA/CFO, Springfield

Through the Professional Advisors Council, the CFO partners with legal and financial experts to meet their clients' philanthropic needs. For more info, visit cfozarks.org/pac.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Rural Philanthropy Summit & Annual Affiliate Awards

- April 10-11
- Lodge of the Four Seasons, Lake Ozark
- Presented by the CFO and Philanthropy Missouri
- For more info: cfozarks.org/summit25

Nonprofit Leader Recharge

- April 23
- Guaranty Bank, Springfield
- For leaders of Springfield-area nonprofits
- For more info: Contact Millie Schuchmann, mschuchmann@cfozarks.org

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION *of the* OZARKS

Passion & Purpose is a quarterly publication of the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, a public charitable foundation representing the region of Missouri south of the Missouri River. For more information, call 417-864-6199, email cfo@cfozarks.org or visit cfozarks.org.

Production: Aaron Scott, Kaitlyn McConnell, Matthew Stewart and Matt Lemmon

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF THE OZARKS



'You are Leaders Right Now'

ANNUAL CONFERENCE INSPIRES YOUNG PHILANTHROPISTS

Thanks largely to economic realities, national entertainment and the flattening effect of social media, it can be easy to forget what makes a place special — especially if you're a teenager in a small, rural community. The desire of so many high school students is to make something of themselves somewhere, maybe anywhere, else. This phenomenon and limited employment opportunities have created brain-drain in our rural areas.

So when students from Springfield and five rural communities throughout the Ozarks convened for the Youth Empowerment Project Conference in February, they were invited into a conversation about place-making.

Dr. Marcos Silva delivered the opening keynote. He serves as executive director of RGV LEAD, an organization based in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas that builds pathways and collaboration between employers and students as a way to both strengthen economic development and motivate young people to become invested in their community.

His message was one of intentional empowerment and knowing your strengths. "There's a pathway between being bored and being bold, and sometimes young people don't know how to get there."

To get students to consider place-making in their own communities, Addison Jones and Laura King of Better Block SGF posed a question to them: "What makes a place great?" Like Dr. Silva, Jones and King illustrated to the students that they hold power: "The community is the expert when it comes to understanding what the community needs."

They led the group in an

EMPOWERING YOUNG LEADERS

Founded by the CFO in 2001, the Youth Empowerment Project teaches students the tenets of philanthropy in chapters across the region. Learn more at cfozarks.org/yep.



"I want to challenge the notion that you are future leaders — you are leaders right now, if you want to be," said Dr. Marcos Silva in the keynote address at the Youth Empowerment Project Conference.



PHOTOS BY AARON SCOTT

At the annual Youth Empowerment Project Conference, students from Seymour High School's YEP chapter participate in a place-making activity led by Better Block SGF.

activity of reimagining a place in their communities. Groups of seven or eight students convened to recreate a place in their towns with the hope of drawing people to those places, of serving as a 'third place' — a space between work and home in which people can socialize and have fun without needing to spend money to do it.

Especially in small towns, third places are sorely lacking. Hailey Lewelyn, a junior at Gainesville High, shared that "there's really only a gas station in town where people hang out after class — it was fun to share ideas and imagine something different."

For two rural YEP chapters in attendance,

place-making is nothing new. The St. James chapter has long operated the Firehouse Coffee Shop to raise funds for its grantmaking, and the Aurora chapter has recently led the painting of large murals in several locations.

Giving young people permission and power to imagine is a foundational goal of YEP, which has nine active chapters throughout the Ozarks. By supporting youth with the tools to dream and create, YEP empowers them to shape the future of their communities. Founded by the CFO in 2001, YEP engages high school students in education, service, grantmaking and fundraising — helping them turn big ideas into real impact.

"It really feels like I'm helping," Kickapoo senior Cassidy Moore said of her time in the Springfield chapter. "It feels like I'm making a difference."

—by Matthew Stewart



Center of Community

Rural schools may be small in size, but their impact goes beyond the number of students. One example is Koshkonong, where a school foundation supports students' futures.

In days when folks were born, lived and died in small pockets of the Ozarks, rural settlements were where they gathered goods and connections. Those moments have faded in many places, where streets are lined with empty storefronts — reminding us of what was and wondering about what's next.

That question has an answer in small communities that still have a school district. One of those places is Koshkonong, a tiny community in Oregon County where 230 or so students come together for classes and that sense of community.

"The school is the hub," says Seth Bryant, superintendent of the Koshkonong R-3 (Oregon Howell) district. "The community is beyond supportive of the school district. They really are."

Today, the district draws students from near the Missouri-Arkansas state line for preschool through high school. The tight-knit district's graduates are supported in part by the Koshkonong School Betterment Foundation, which is connected with the CFO's Rural Schools Partnership, an effort to support rural districts with options for philanthropy.

A PEACHY PAST

The small Oregon County community — today with fewer than 200 people per U.S. Census records — dates to the 1880s.

Named after Lake Koshkonong in Wisconsin — a moniker supposedly bestowed by a railroad man — its early heady days were sweetened by fruit. Specifically, orchards that offered employment and industry as car loads of peaches were shipped out on the train.

"During the early spring, the beauty of blossoms was well worth a trip down the lane next to the railroad," noted an article about Koshkonong years ago in the West Plains Gazette. "Whenever a late frost threatened, the orchards were cloaked in the black smoke of burning tires and smudge pots while men worked throughout the night to protect the peach crop. On better days, the delicate fragrance of the fruit blossoms drifted over the town."

Those days are long gone, but the peach



PHOTOS BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

Lorna Kay Howell, Seth Bryant and Jane Ward, all interviewed for this story, share how the school ties the Koshkonong community together. "The school is the hub," Bryant says of the rural community near the Missouri-Arkansas border.

Painted on the water tower is a reminder of what was. Other things hold memories, too, like family names and long-held land. Another is the school district, which has been part of life for generations and is small enough to build personal connections — ones that cross with an influx of new faces.

Some are folks from across the country who have relocated to more rural areas, searching for farms and greater freedom. Others come into the district during high school. While the majority of Koshkonong's students live within the district, others transfer in from other K-8 schools in neighboring areas for their last four years.

"We get roughly 30 to 35 of those rural school kids that come here for high school every year," Bryant says. "They find their place here and they come right in."

FRUITFUL FINANCES

A significant reason those people can come together at the school is the community and support from local farmers, whose acreage is a significant tax base in the Missouri county with nearly 800 square miles.

"Without them, we wouldn't be here," Bryant says.

In his 12 years with the district, there have been three bond campaigns put to voters. Of those, two passed and the other failed by just three votes. That support has led to infrastructure improvements like the FEMA-grade shelter with classroom space that's currently under construction.

That ongoing support doesn't mean that needs don't exist in the district with more than 70 percent of its students qualifying for free or reduced-cost lunches, a metric of poverty.

A factor in that reality is employment opportunities. There are a few jobs at a gas station, home goods store, meat processing plant and the local Dollar General. The latter came to town after locals lobbied the national chain, garnering attention from the likes of even Fortune magazine. Wood products companies also offer employment. But in some cases, those options aren't enough to support local kids.

The school helps fill in gaps through efforts like its backpack program, which sends food home with students in need. In 2022, the school received a \$5,000 grant from the CFO and the Louis L. and Julia Dorothy Coover Charitable Foundation to stock a "caring closet" with basic hygiene and clothing supplies.

Another avenue of service and support is the school's Youth Empowerment Project chapter, a CFO program that empowers students to improve their community. (Read more about YEP on the previous page.) The Koshkonong chapter is being revived, but its work has included growing a school garden, starting a small store and documenting local history.

"It's looking at what can they do, even as high school kids, to help the school and the community to be better for when they're adults and hopefully come back," says Dr. Jane Ward, YEP advisor, school foundation board member and rural educator with Missouri State University of YEP's goal.

Even as the program finds new footing, the spirit is already there. When a custodian was recently on leave for illness, students in the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America club stepped up to help clean the school.

"This group has been staying after two days

With strong support from district voters, school bonds fund infrastructure improvements like this FEMA-grade shelter currently under construction.



a week to help out and clean the high school while our nighttime janitor is recuperating,” noted a post on the district’s website. “Good job, FCCLA, and what a great endeavor to display community involvement and support.”

SCHOLARSHIPS SEED OPPORTUNITY

What about the future? That is a question asked and answered through the Koshkonong School Betterment Foundation, which primarily exists to help fund scholarships for its students as they make plans for their futures.

“The CFO has really been a big benefit for us,” Ward says, speaking of the grants, scholarships and matching funds that were options for the school foundation. “Without having the foundation built through CFO support, we wouldn’t have the scholarship and the money that we’ve been able to raise.”

One of its recipients — and board members — is Lorna Kay Howell, whose family’s local ties date to 1926. She graduated from Koshkonong in 2020 and today is working as a nurse.

“They paid for me to go through nursing school, so the least I can do is help them put

more kids through school,” she says.

Howell’s connection is personal, too. When her father died, the school held a benefit for the family — but instead of keeping the money, they used it to open the Greg Howell Memorial Scholarship Fund with the Alton Community Foundation, an affiliate of the CFO.

“We wanted to give back to the community,” Howell says. “That way, every year ... somebody would benefit from it.”

Even after graduation, the personal connections with the school remain for some alumni.

Riley Villavicencio is a Koshkonong graduate and scholarship recipient studying to become a nurse, a career inspired by his grandmother’s journey with cancer. He still comes by the high school once a week or so to say hi and complete work for his college classes.

“I’m working hard when I can over the summer,” he says. “It’s just helping pay so I don’t have to pay so much out of pocket.”

The school has also established the Koshkonong Grow Your Own Fund to support teacher recruitment and retention efforts. It’s seeded by nearly \$10,000 from the Missouri



With smaller class sizes, teachers in rural schools like April Mills can build stronger relationships with their students.

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

“When former students from here get admitted to the education program,” Bryant says, “then we could give them a scholarship to help defer cost in some way, shape or form.”

And it all ties back to the meaning and foundation of where they began.

As Ward puts it, “Strong relationships are built, not just with the kids, but with the parents and families.”

—by Kaitlyn McConnell

RURAL SCHOOLS: VALUE WITHOUT MEASURE

Rural schools are unique and represent the differences that define their region, but there is common ground found in the value they bring to communities. They remain a place of opportunity: For understanding and bridging gaps in addition to literal learning, employment and security.

These beliefs are held locally — and supported by the CFO’s Rural Schools Partnership, which provides a framework of support for rural districts — but are also shared far beyond rural Missouri.

“Rural schools and districts are often one of the largest employers in small towns, and are ground zero for preparing and engaging the next generation of rural residents,” says Taylor McCabe-Juhnke, executive director of the Rural Schools Collaborative, a nonprofit founded by former CFO President Gary Funk

in 2014 to build sustainable rural communities across the country through a focus on place, teachers, and philanthropy.

“Additionally, schools themselves serve as a source of public infrastructure, providing a meeting space, social connector for community events, access to health services and supports, and essentially functioning as the hub of the community.”

Of course, there are challenges. Lower teacher salaries and limited housing can be issues to navigate. But they also offer amenities that larger districts may find to be a greater obstacle, such as the interaction and personal connection made possible with fewer students over greater periods of time.

“Many small schools have less bureaucracy



TAYLOR MCCABE-JUHNKE

or hierarchies than larger districts, smaller class sizes, and teachers interacting with students over multiple years/subjects/grades, which can create the conditions for nimble innovation, timely impact and strong relationships,” McCabe-Juhnke says.

And even if businesses close and the population changes, rural schools anchor a sense of connection for community members — with each other, and their local culture.

“The strong sense of community should not be overlooked as an important perk,” McCabe-Juhnke says. “The community buy-in and support for the school, students and staff often transcends the classroom walls into a culture of interdependence versus isolation.”



Legacy Out Loud

QUIET MAN'S ESTATE GIFTS
BENEFIT BOOTHEEL COMMUNITY



Jim Byrd owned and operated the South Missouri Broadcasting Company, better known as KCHR, for nearly 50 years.

COURTESY HUDSON BYRD



COURTESY CHARLESTON R-1

Endowments established by Byrd's estate have already funded improvements at the school district and city park in Charleston.



COURTESY CITY OF CHARLESTON

James L. Byrd III was not someone who wanted attention. It's an interesting reality for a man whose voice was well known through Charleston, a southeastern Missouri community where he long operated a radio station — and whose legacy will impact the area forever through endowments totaling more than \$2 million that serve the school and city.

"He wanted to add something to the community," shares Hudson Byrd of his cousin. "It's a unique opportunity to give a shot in the arm to the city of Charleston and to the school district."

Byrd, who went by Jim, died in 2020. Most of his 90 years were spent in connection with the Bootheel community where his family built a legacy in lumber and land.

Even though he didn't appreciate publicity, "he was a good person, and he helped people," says Reginald Young, an attorney who is Byrd's personal representative and has long known the family.

Byrd was a quiet man; he didn't marry or have any children. He was generous, like when he gave two local churches new pipe organs years ago. And he devoted his life to other loves: trains, Packard automobiles and radio — topics for which he developed deep wells of knowledge.

"He could tell you what the call letter stood for some station in Chicago or New York or New Orleans," Young says. "It was just an amazing, wide range of knowledge that he had on those particular subjects."

Byrd founded South Missouri Broadcasting Company (KCHR) in 1954. It was on air for about half a century before he retired. In its heyday, the station was a connection point for the small community, with advertisements, programs and information bringing people together.

"Back in the day, lots of people in Charleston listened to it," Young says, noting that it broadcast hit music, sports games — with local sports enthusiasts as commentators — and even was a connection for half-hour local church programs on Sundays.

"They had a piano there and the microphone, and they would sing and play," Young says, noting that the services also included a sermon. "He always said he never went to church, but he knew he'd heard more sermons than anybody he ever knew because he was probably hearing seven, eight sermons every Sunday."

When Byrd died, his legacy and family business left a sizeable estate to serve beyond his lifetime. With direction from Young and Hudson Byrd, a sizeable portion of Byrd's estate was put into service through the Bootheel Regional Community Foundation. The CFO affiliate now holds two \$1 million endowments; one benefits the City of Charleston, and another serves the Charleston R-1 School District. Other funding helped improve the city's parks and established a \$1 million scholarship fund for local students attending Three Rivers College.

"What we tried to do was spend some of the money on projects that would have some

immediate impact and then spend some of the money on projects that would last in perpetuity," Young says.

"We are very fortunate to have been touched by his generosity," says Greg Luehmann, Charleston's city manager. "We received our first payment in February for \$42,000, which will allow us to maintain all the equipment in the parks and do additional improvements as we move forward."

At the school, the funds will initially improve the restroom facilities as well as cosmetic issues at the district's 60-year-old facilities. An example already complete: Stuccoing the school's football field house where brick was crumbling.

"We are extremely thankful for the endowment fund," says Jamarcus Williams, superintendent of the Charleston R-I School District. "We want our students and community to feel proud and safe about their schools and these funds help achieve that goal."

Ultimately, the funds will continue improving Charleston far beyond Byrd's lifetime.

"I don't think Jim ever wanted to be told, 'Thank you' or congratulated or anything like that," Hudson Byrd says. "He just wanted to say, 'I didn't have a need for this, and I saved it up and I think it can be put to a better use in this town, which has its own struggles, and maybe it can make it a better place.'"

—by Kaitlyn McConnell

READY TO BEGIN YOUR LEGACY?

Leaving a legacy doesn't require a million-dollar gift — only a passion to support your favorite school, community or nonprofit beyond your lifetime.

Contact **Ashley Silva**, the CFO's vice president of development and philanthropic services, at 417-864-6199 or asilva@cfozarks.org to learn more.



PASSION *for* PROGRESS

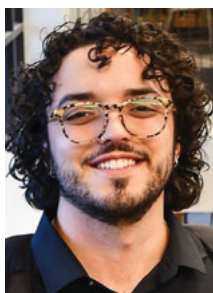
Three leaders moving the needle in their communities through the power of philanthropy

STORIES & PHOTOS BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

Caleb Hatfield

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER AT
JOPLIN HIGH SCHOOL · JOPLIN

Caleb Hatfield continues to invest in a greater tomorrow — both for the community and through students he serves as a special education teacher at Joplin High School.



Hatfield, a graduate of Granby High School and Missouri Southern State University, is in his first year of full-time teaching. While in college, he was a member of Ozarks Teacher Corps, a scholarship program through the CFO.

“I would say the Ozarks Teacher Corps really helped me be very community-minded,” he says — but he didn’t wait until graduation to begin serving. While completing his studies, Hatfield was involved in social service work and with Court Appointed Special Advocates, where he served as a supervisor.

Those efforts gave him a unique perspective on people, particularly how to see them in difficult moments and troubling situations.

“I don’t think your trauma makes you who you are; it just kind of adds to it,” Hatfield says. “I also deal with a lot of kids with ‘behaviors’ — you don’t just act out without a reason. That’s a symptom of a larger issue.”

Hatfield’s work varies day to day, and sometimes, by the minute. Rotating among classrooms, he serves kids and their emerging needs. If a kid is obviously struggling with schoolwork or other issues, for example, Hatfield says he can intervene and try to help.

“I can kind of say, ‘OK, what’s going on?’” he says. “Let’s go to the library,’ or ‘I’ll go make a cup of coffee.’”

Ultimately, Hatfield hopes his teaching — augmented by in-progress master’s studies in social work and a potential law degree — is about meeting people where they are.

“We can’t go back and rewrite someone’s story,” he says, “but we can at least prevent someone else’s from turning out so bad.”

Nki Calloway & Amanda Snead

CO-FOUNDERS OF MOSAIC ARTS
COLLECTIVE · SPRINGFIELD



Like a multicolored window, Mosaic Arts Collective mixes color and light to shine the arts on everyone. Founded in 2022, the Springfield-based nonprofit exists to remove barriers to creative expression.

“It’s expensive to pay for lessons, it’s expensive to pay for materials,” says Nki Calloway, who cofounded Mosaic with Amanda Snead and California-based Keegan Winfield. “It’s hard for people to find transportation, to get the education that they need. But I think some of the best art is hidden in poverty, and it’s hidden in these communities that don’t have access. The biggest need is getting the people to where the arts happen in Springfield.”

To help, Mosaic might connect an aspiring dancer with shoes. Or provide a workshop or experience. Or put on a performance, which offers opportunities to learn how to audition and how to “act” on stage. The CFO supported this work through a grant that provided scholarships, offering easier access for diverse individuals to participate in productions.

“They are for representation, but I think they’re also for community building,” Calloway says of the group’s shows, which includes “The Color Purple,” produced with Springfield Contemporary Theatre in 2023.

“There are real reasons and perceived reasons that individuals may not feel like art is for them, or maybe they’re unable to express themselves in that way,” Snead says. “We exist for that need to say, ‘Yes, you can. Yes, what you contribute is important, and here’s a way to do it.’”

Josh Cotter

PRESIDENT OF COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
OF WEST PLAINS INC. · WEST PLAINS

Josh Cotter’s deep connections with the rural Ozarks give him a unique perspective on its needs and strengths — and the importance of building resources close to home.



He’s spent time in classrooms as a teacher; in spaces where he’s helped develop a local workforce; and now, as president of the Community Foundation of West Plains Inc., an affiliate of the Community Foundation of the Ozarks.

“The track record of the CFO — all of it really impressed me,” Cotter says, who was introduced to the CFO years ago via the start of a scholarship fund. “I was like, ‘This is an amazing organization; I need to be involved in this.’”

Cotter’s early years were spent in Ozark County, where he attended school in Gainesville. His family later moved closer to West Plains, where he graduated from high school and began a college journey that culminated in a doctoral degree. These moments paralleled his professional life, as Cotter taught students at those same schools.

The experience also led to his current role as director of Southern Missouri Technical Institute, which offers certifications in trades — like auto body and nursing — to high school and adult students in West Plains.

“You get to see them working in the community, whether it’s as a nurse or a welder or a lineman or a surge tech,” Cotter says of the center’s graduates. “You get to see the impact that that has, and it’s just phenomenal.”

That effort also links to service through the CFWP, where he began as a board member.

“It’s really exciting and it’s fun to be a part of,” he says of the CFWP. “That kind of ties back to how I feel about my job: It matters. It means something and your time’s being spent doing something valuable and helping people that need it or want it.”

WHO INSPIRES YOU? Send your suggestions of individuals moving the needle in your community to Kaitlyn McConnell, the CFO’s writer in residence, at kmccconnell@cfozarks.org.



PHOTOS BY AARON SCOTT



“It’s going to allow us to *not ever have to say no* to a student who wants counseling.”

UNITY SEAY
FAIR PLAY R-II SCHOOL DISTRICT

PARTING SHOT: Preparing for brighter tomorrows means supporting kids today, and a key need is greater access to mental health care in rural places. On March 18, \$250,000 was distributed to 12 schools, school foundations and nonprofits across central and southern Missouri for this cause by the CFO, in partnership with the Louis L. and Julia Dorothy Coover Charitable Foundation and Commerce Trust.

Efforts across the recipient organizations include peer-to-peer suicide prevention programs, salary support for a clinical child therapist, and general expansion of services. They all tie to the reality that these services are desperately needed but can be challenging to receive in rural areas and for families with limited resources.

For the Fair Play R-II School District, an \$18,650 grant supports students’ therapy co-pays and small group therapy sessions — and hopefully, reduce the stigma of receiving mental health care.

“It is okay — it’s a strength — when you can get help for your mental health,” said Unity Seay, counselor at Fair Play R-II. “We’re just hoping that this will have a positive effect, not only on the students receiving services, but the community at large.”

Find the full list of grant recipients online at cfozarks.org/coover25.

—by Kaitlyn McConnell