



NEBRASKA STATEWIDE  
**Arboretum**

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# **2025 ANNUAL REPORT**

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## MISSION

We plant Nebraska for healthy people, vibrant communities and a resilient environment.

## VISION

We do this through tree planting, garden making, community building and environmental education and outreach.

## VALUES

We believe in purposeful beauty.

We believe in science, smart reasoning and sound evidence.

We believe trees and plants have the power to connect.

We believe relationships matter.

We believe individuals can make a difference.

We believe in transparency and integrity.





## BOARD MEMBERS

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Service



## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Plants and trees have the power to connect. You're undoubtedly reading this today because you wanted to find an organization that could connect you with like-minded friends and information about the plants and trees you love. Those of us who work at NSA, those of us who support this work with our time and money and those of us striving to learn more and do better are all here because we've found something we agree on and care about.

If we were to spend more time talking, we'd likely learn that we don't agree on everything. I love pineapple on my pizza, an absolute atrocity to some pizza lovers. Dig deeper, and we'll always find places where our beliefs don't align. But that's okay—we come together to support the things we do agree on and believe in, and that is powerful.

Throughout this annual report, we shine the spotlight on the many things we can accomplish when we're in it together. Focusing on how we foster appreciation, education, participation and connection, we tell the story of how the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum continues to move forward

in our mission. We also recognize that we can't continue to accomplish our mission without the on-the-ground support from all of you. Thank you. We're here every step of the way to provide you with information, education and the actual plants and trees. In turn, we learn something from each person we interact with and each project we fund.

Thank you for being part of the spark, the connection that keeps all the tree huggers and plant lovers doing what makes them, and the world, happy. If you have any questions about this annual report or our work, please reach out!

**Hanna Pinneo**

## A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT



My appreciation for native plants was seeded 15 years ago, when my wife and I moved to a small Nebraska town. After building a home, we wanted more from our landscape than what commercial nurseries offered. When we hired a young woman who had a passion for prairie planting, our eyes were finally opened to the purposeful beauty of native grasses, perennials and trees. It was not just her knowledge of plant varieties and landscape design that impressed us. Her willingness to share her know-how with us, her appreciation for what we were hoping to achieve, and her enthusiasm for completing the plans she helped us create made us true believers.

When we learned that our mentor also worked with Nebraska Statewide Arboretum (Christina Hoyt, who is now Community Landscape and Forest Health Bureau Chief for the Nebraska Forest Service), we just had to become members. We attended our first NSA plant sale the next year. Seeing others with a passion for prairie flowers was stirring. And at the heart of all we observed were the NSA staff and volunteers, people who enjoyed garden making and tree planting. Their outreach and teaching are at the heart of Nebraska Statewide Arboretum.

As the incoming president of the NSA board of directors, my goal is to help the staff bring their passions to a broader group of people—to folks who, like myself years ago, have yet to experience a beautiful native landscape. We can share with every Nebraska community the joys one discovers by planting more trees and native flowers.

**Ed Pohren**



# TOGETHER WE FOSTER *appreciation*

From backyard gardeners and community leaders to educators and conservation professionals, the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum is a community of people who appreciate all the ways trees and plants enrich our lives. We offer events, educational opportunities and outdoor exploration to encourage the appreciation of natural spaces and green infrastructure, and we partner with those all across the state who do the same. Here are some of the ways we have fostered appreciation this year:

## New Affiliate Sites

Hawley Hamlet in Lincoln, The RiverFront in Omaha and Westview High School in Bennington all joined the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum's network of more than 100 affiliate sites across the state. To be considered for this designation, sites must demonstrate regionally appropriate adaptability and sustainability. We commend the curators of these new affiliate sites for their hard work and commitment to sustainable landscaping, as well as for all the ways they encourage and teach those who interact with their spaces.



## Volunteer Spotlight

Meet Ken Franzen, a longtime volunteer at Prairie Loft Center for Outdoor and Agricultural Learning, an NSA Affiliate Site located in Hastings. Over the last 13 years, Ken has been instrumental in planting more than 100 trees on site. He's also coordinated multiple memorial tree plantings, has led invasive and dead tree removal projects and helped to develop Prairie Loft's five-year tree plan.

Ken is one of the original founders at Prairie Loft and has been an active member since its inception in early 2000. During the spring, summer and fall, he can be found around the 8.3-acre site, diligently watering and pruning trees.

"Ken's work is often quiet, when the grounds aren't bustling with events or campers, but it is so important," said Prairie Loft Executive Director Megan Arrington-Williams. "We don't know what we would do without Ken's passion!"



## Wildflower Week

In June we traveled to western Nebraska to host six public events in celebration of Wildflower Week, a statewide initiative that brings attention to our state's diverse and ecologically important native wildflowers.

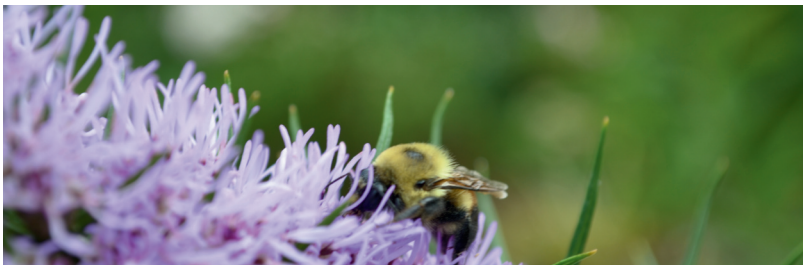
We hosted a volunteer pollinator garden planting in Morrill, celebrated the grand opening of the pollinator garden at the Scotts Bluff County Courthouse in Gering, discovered an abundance of wildflowers during guided hikes at Chimney Rock and Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area and hosted a native plant sale at Community Ever Green House in Gering.

## Garden Walks

Our annual Garden Walks in Lincoln and Omaha are a great opportunity to introduce the concepts of sustainable landscaping in an accessible, non-intimidating way. This year we had 16 gardens on display, with homeowners available to answer questions and offer guidance to the more than 200 visitors who attended.



The Lincoln Garden Walk



Bumble bee on gayfeather



Planting at Scotts Bluff County Courthouse



Shell-leaf pentstemon



Wildflower hike at Wildcat Hills

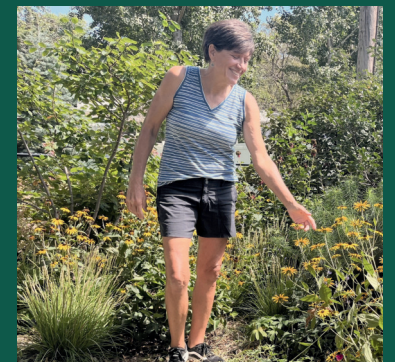


Plant sale in Gering

“ —

There's nothing better than talking to people about plants!

Jane English, Omaha Garden Walk host





# TOGETHER WE FOSTER *education*

Education is a keystone of Nebraska Statewide Arboretum's mission and vision. One of our primary roles is to serve as a resource, providing hands-on guidance and expertise based on proven practices and sound science. We're not stuffy about it, though! We aim to make environmental education fun and accessible by opening the world of plants and trees to people of all ages and walks of life. Here are some of the ways we've fostered knowledge and learning over the last year:



NSA Horticulture Coordinator Bob Henrickson with a plant shopper

## Plant Sales

You might not think of a plant sale as an educational opportunity, but it is for us! When customers visit our greenhouses, they don't just shop; they also learn about the plants they are purchasing—from how to care for them so they thrive to the ecological benefits they are contributing to the environment.

If you've ever met our Horticulture Coordinator, Bob Henrickson, you know he is a walking encyclopedia of plant knowledge. And Bob likes nothing more than to share his knowledge with others so that they, too, can begin to make a lasting impact in their own backyards and neighborhoods.

This year, our new greenhouse enabled us to expand our plant production capacity. We also offered more plant sales than ever, expanding our sales to Saturdays during the spring, in addition to our regular Friday afternoon sales.

## Student Interns

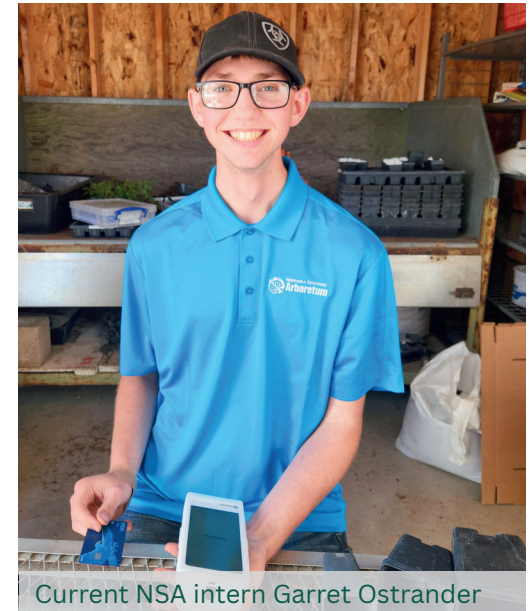
We consider ourselves lucky to have access to the best and brightest young minds in Nebraska. Our University of Nebraska-Lincoln student interns show up in the greenhouse ready to learn and eager to help, and we give them real-world experience—everything from learning about plant production and harvesting seeds, to running a greenhouse and collaborating with community leaders on planting projects.

Recent graduates have taken their experience at NSA and gone on to careers where they are making a difference in their communities—from head gardener for a Lincoln farm-to-table restaurant to a university scientist. We even have two former interns back at NSA: Sarah Buckley now works as a sustainable landscape specialist and John Woodworth came on board this year as an assistant conservation forester.

"Interning at NSA was hands-down the most valuable experience I had as an undergrad," said Alessandra Meza. "I gained knowledge that I use every single day at my job."



Former NSA intern Alessandra Meza



Current NSA intern Garret Ostrander





These three photos: Spring Affair shoppers



## Spring Affair

And speaking of plant sales...the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum also happens to host the biggest plant sale in the Great Plains. Every April, more than 3,500 plant enthusiasts pour in the doors of the Sandhills Global Event Center in Lincoln to browse the more than 800 species of perennials, annuals, herbs, trees, shrubs and grasses we offer. More than 100 volunteers help us pull off this feat, which is our most important fundraiser of the year—we absolutely could not do it without their commitment and hard work.



Former NSA intern Afirah Pedalino (left) at the Wellbeing Fest

## Student Wellbeing Fest

Each August, we set up a plant potting booth at UNL's Student Wellbeing Fest on City Campus, where students line up by the dozen to pot up a free houseplant for their dorm room or apartment. Where do we get all these houseplants, you ask? From you! Our members and friends donate hundreds of rooted cuttings for the giveaway—just one more small but important way plant people are making a big difference in our community. For many of these students, the free houseplant they pot up at our booth is the very first plant they've ever owned and cared for—the beginning of a long and happy plant path for them, we hope!

## Plant Talks & Workshops

Our plants and trees might sleep during the wintertime, but we don't! During January, February and March we hosted eight free, online Plant Talks for more than 1,600 registrants, partnering with local experts to offer guidance and information on topics ranging from invasive species to the importance of greenspaces in healthcare facilities to the benefits of planting native oaks, willows and cherry trees. When the weather warmed up, we took our learning outdoors with hands-on tree planting and pruning workshops, guided hikes and tours of greenspaces statewide.





# TOGETHER WE FOSTER *participation*

Planting Nebraska goes beyond research, education and dialogue. At the end of the day, you’ve got to “walk the talk,” as the saying goes. It’s right there in our mission: we plant Nebraska for healthy people, vibrant communities and a resilient environment, and we do that through partnerships with people and organizations all across the state. Here are some of the ways we fostered active participation to plant Nebraska this year:

## Urban and Community Forestry Grant Projects

Residents of Gothenburg are proud of their town’s unique heritage and charm and work hard to keep it beautiful and thriving. Like many communities across Nebraska, however, Gothenburg’s tree canopy has declined in recent years, leaving public parks and neighborhoods increasingly barren.

A grant enabled Gothenburg to plant a total of 40 trees along residential streets, in city parks, on the public schools campus and at a newly opened Impact Center for children and families. As they mature, the trees planted along the rights-of-way will help to lower homeowners’ energy costs, improve air quality, benefit habitat and bring much-needed shade to neighborhoods.

Ag students from the high school pitched in at the school planting, and a public planting event offered children and staff at the Impact Center the opportunity to participate in the planting and learn about the benefits that trees bring to communities and people.

“We have a list of 20 more homeowners and local businesses that are interested in getting a tree,” said Gothenburg tree board member and local business owner and NSA board member Jeff Kennedy. “There’s a lot of interest in and gratitude for this.”

## Urban and Community Forestry Grant Projects FY 2025

- 38 communities awarded grants
- \$1,900,000 awarded
- 552 trees planted
- 178 damaged or diseased trees removed
- 120 trees pruned
- 28 people trained





## Community Nurseries Help Towns Offset Replanting Costs

A pilot program to help Nebraska towns launch their own community nurseries was developed by NSA this year with a grant from Nebraska Environmental Trust, resulting in tree nurseries established in Beatrice, Eustis, Valley and Crete. The program provided trees and supplies, with the goal of helping communities grow trees to plant in their public spaces as part of a long-term greenspace strategy.

“The cost to remove diseased or dead trees and to replace those trees can be prohibitive,” said NSA Executive Director Hanna Pinneo. “This program can help defray some of those costs, especially for smaller communities, ensuring that they are able to replace the trees they’ve had to take down.”

Chad Kleveland, sexton at Evergreen Home Cemetery in Beatrice, oversees the nursery that was established on the grounds there. He explained that when they mature, the 35 trees in their community nursery will be planted at Beatrice High School and Elementary School and in city parks, as well as in the cemetery, which has lost a number of trees to aging and disease.

“It’s cool that maybe 30 years from now I could go into one of the city parks or the library and see one of these trees,” Kleveland said.

## Memorial Trees Make a Difference at Schramm Park

Planting a tree is a meaningful way to honor a loved one, and, at the same time, make an impactful and lasting contribution to our environment. This year, memorial trees made possible from donor gifts were planted in Schramm Park State Recreation Area in Gretna as part of their state wildlife action plan, which aims to restore the native oak forest over 98 acres of habitat in the park.

Schramm Park is a Nebraska Natural Legacy Demonstration Site, which means it has been designated as an ideal spot to showcase conservation techniques. Over the last year, hundreds of eastern red cedars were removed after Nebraska Game and Parks biologists determined that they were invasively encroaching on the native oak habitat. After the cedar removal was completed in the spring of 2025, Schramm staff planted 29 oak seedlings donated by NSA along the main hiking trail and near the Treehouse Classroom, along with 50 additional seedlings grown from acorns collected by volunteers.

“It will be a long haul to get back to a place where we are seeing oak regeneration and a healthy forest again, but we are so grateful to have received the trees to help make our restoration efforts visible to hikers and trail users and to help jump-start our oak restoration efforts,” said Jennifer Ruyle, an outdoor education specialist at Schramm Education Center.

With some TLC and a little luck, the hills of Schramm Park State Recreation Area will someday be blanketed in a thick forest of native oak trees, much as they were a hundred or more years ago. The memorial trees are one small but beautiful part of this effort—a gift that will keep on giving for decades to come.



Chad Kleveland manages the community nursery at Evergreen Home Cemetery in Beatrice.



Oak seedlings in NSA's greenhouse



# TOGETHER WE FOSTER *connection*

Plants and trees connect us—to our environment, to our heritage, to our future and most of all, to one another. From connecting trails and communities to partnering with businesses and organizations to beautify landscapes that bring our history and culture to life, our connections with Nebraskans over a shared love and appreciation for the natural world are the genesis for some amazing and creative projects happening around the state. Here are just some of our many partnerships that took place this year:

## Bringing History to Life in Central City

When the Merrick County Historical Museum built a new space earlier this year, they knew they wanted the landscape around the building to reflect what early settlers would have seen when they arrived in the Great Plains. Executive Director Schavon Cordsen and her board reached out to NSA Sustainable Landscape Specialist Brad Kindler for consultation on a prairie garden design and plant sourcing.

“I don’t have a green thumb, so we put our complete trust and faith in Brad’s expertise,” said Cordsen. “He designed the landscape, selected the plants and trees and helped us get everything in the ground. The garden is thriving, and it’s been a wonderful experience from start to finish.”



Planting at Merrick County Historical Museum



Native plants were beginning to fill in this spring.



Plantings soften the hardscape at the Ronald McDonald House.

## A Backyard Where Kids Can Be Kids

A gift from JSS Charitable Fund to NSA’s Greener Towns grant program resulted in a backyard landscape renovation at the Ronald McDonald House in Omaha. In addition to a playground, the space features plantings, a firepit where parents can unwind and an outdoor kitchen.

“The plantings really help to soften the space and bring all the elements together,” said Emily Mozer, director of corporate giving at Ronald McDonald House Charities. “We wanted to make it beautiful as well as playful, and the landscaping makes it feel like a real backyard.”

Ronald McDonald House is located on the campus of the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Its mission is to provide a home away from home for families of critically ill children who are hospitalized for long periods. Families are often hundreds of miles or more from home, so having a place to stay that feels welcoming and as much like a real home as possible is important. An inviting backyard that’s both easy for staff to maintain and an aesthetically pleasing place where children and their families can relax and have fun has been a welcome addition to the home.

“I can see the backyard from my office, and it makes me smile every time I see kids enjoying the space,” said Mozer.





Volunteers in Morrill planted the first phase of a native garden at the entrance to the local Farmer's Market.

## A Welcoming Garden in Morrill

The same generous donor gift to our Greener Towns program that made the playground landscaping at Ronald McDonald House in Omaha possible also funded a native garden that was planted in the village of Morrill. Local tree board member Erica Curry has a vision for transforming the large expanse of turf grass that was once a football field into a community park featuring a walking path, memorial trees and native plants. “This garden is our kickstarter into more sustainable landscaping, and I couldn’t be more grateful to Sarah Buckley and the Statewide Arboretum for guiding us every step of the way so far,” she said.



### Bloom Box Plants Community

Omaha gardeners and NSA members Kristen and Ian Peterson are convinced that Bloom Box (NSA’s native garden-in-a-box program) has been a catalyst for conversation and connection with their neighbors.

“People walk out of their way in the neighborhood just to come look at our pollinator habitat,” said Kristen. “We aren’t out there 10 minutes without someone stopping by to chat about what we’re growing.” Parents frequently stop with their kids to check out the butterflies and bees. “It’s an educational opportunity to help kids understand that bees aren’t a threat, they’re a help,” said Kristen.

### Connecting Trails & Community in Chadron

NSA collaborated with the Northwest Nebraska Trails Association (NNTA) and the National Park Service to create a master plan for connecting trails and communities in the Chadron area.

“Chadron has a lot of trail assets, as well as cultural and community assets and some important economic opportunities,” said NSA Sustainable Landscape Specialist Brad Kindler, who collaborated with NNTA and other partners on the master plan. “This is an opportunity for cultural enhancement and to grow the community around the theme of a Trail Town, while also honoring the ecological and historical attributes of the area.”

"We know our trails and what our community needs, but as trail enthusiasts and volunteers, we don't have the capacity and training to broadly plan at the level Brad was able to help us achieve," said NNTA President Brittany Helmbrecht. "His ability to put our needs and wants into a comprehensive vision, engage stakeholders and help us see what's possible, reignited our trail efforts as a group."



# IMPACT *at a glance*

**1,114**  
trees  
planted

**1,253**  
perennials  
& grasses  
planted

**70**  
communities  
impacted

**47,227**  
trees &  
plants sold

**171**  
volunteers  
completed  
**509**  
hours

**\$1,974,993**  
in project  
funds  
granted



# FY 2025 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Thank you to our donors, members and grantors for trusting us to put your funds to good use. This documentation should help you see, broadly, that when we all work together, the money goes further than if we each did something individually. Our annual audit and 990 are available to anyone to review by request. We also would like to thank our accountants Trina, Dillon and Crystal at The Charity CFO for their work to keep us operating efficiently, effectively and transparently.

**Revenue:** In the final years of our Environmental Trust grants, the grant revenue portion decreases significantly. This is because we typically do most of the work during year two of a three-year grant, which means we rely more heavily on donations, memberships and plant sales during these years. Thankfully, we had one of our most successful years with Spring Affair this year, and you can see that reflected here. Each year we also continue to grow our membership and donors, and we are pleased to welcome new folks to the movement to plant Nebraska!

**Expenses:** These remain much more consistent year to year, which is a good thing. For an organization of our type and size, everything is well in line with industry standards. Materials and supplies consist of all greenhouse and plant supplies, including Spring Affair and purchases for grants. Professional and contract services consist of our accounting and auditing firm fees as well as one-off consultants we require from time to time.

## Grants in Progress in FY2025

### Nebraska Environmental Trust

Trees for Nebraska Towns, 3-year grant  
Year 3: \$84,537

### Nebraska Environmental Trust

Greener Nebraska Town, 3-year grant  
Year 3: \$113,616

### Department of Interior Cooperative Agreement

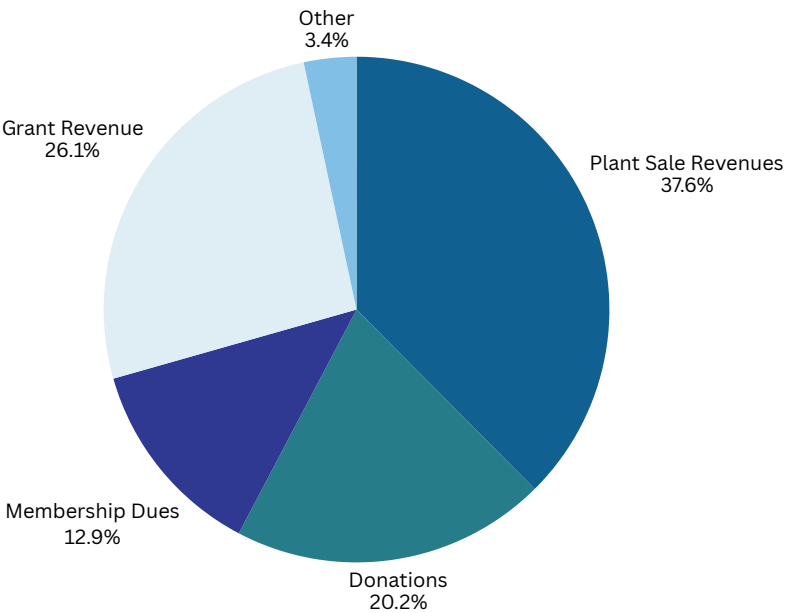
Final year. Total: \$10,000

### U.S. Forest Service UCF Grant

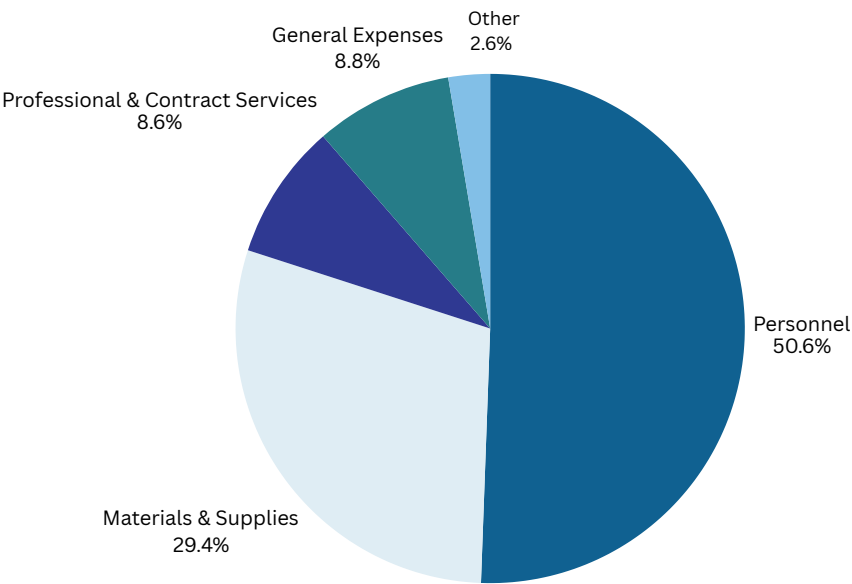
5-year grant (ending 2029). Total: \$10,000,000

A note: This report does not reflect revenue and expenses for the \$10 million grant from the US Forest Service. That grant is being fiscally managed by UNL, and thus the funds do not show up in our reports.

## FY 2025 Revenue



## FY 2025 Expenses





# THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS *donors*

We gratefully acknowledge the following generous supporters for gifts given between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025.

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