

Chamber Business Profile

Golden Goose Club

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Founded in 2016, the Golden Goose Club was created with a simple idea: pool resources to help fund projects that fall outside traditional budgets. “We like to fill in the gaps financially,” said Vicky Collette, president of the Golden Goose Club. “Whether it be city and county needs, personal projects that organizations come across, or any community improvements that aren’t covered by any budget.”

When a Boy Scout envisioned upgrading an amphitheater tucked into the woods, he had the drive to refurbish it but not the funding to finish it. The Golden Goose Club helped close that gap. Ten years after its founding, the women-led giving group has quietly directed more than \$525,000 into projects across Mahaska County, turning small quarterly donations into visible, lasting improvements.

From the beginning, the group focused on ideas driven by local passion. Its first project, The Alley, set the tone. Membership was smaller at the time, but organizers rallied support to transform a downtown space into a destination for murals, public art and social gatherings. Since then, projects have ranged from creating the historical Trolley Alley, improvements at the Nelson Pioneer Farm, kitchen equipment at Spirit Cafe to enhancements at the Southern Iowa Fairgrounds, and support for the Environmental Learning Center with the purchase of fishing rods for family fun.

Collette said she is most energized when someone brings forward a project they believe in but cannot fully fund on their own. “I love it when people have a passion for something, and they can do the whole project, but they just don’t have the funding,” she said. “Somebody comes up with an idea. I don’t want to come up with the idea, and I don’t want to have to do the project, but I love collecting the members so that we can help them out, and then it just happens.”

That structure is straightforward. Members contribute \$100 per quarter, plus a \$10 annual administrative fee. With 208 members at its recent peak, the total of individual contributions adds up quickly. “You may not have the means to write a check for \$20,000, but each member’s \$100 allows the Golden Goose Club to be able to write a check for \$20,000,” Collette said. “Everybody gets to help on the same level.”

That commitment to equal participation is intentional. While some have suggested tiered giving levels, Collette has resisted the idea. “I don’t want one member to feel less important than the next one,” she said.

The club meets four times a year. Community members present their proposals in person, and members vote on which projects to fund. Applicants can return up to three times if not selected. “We’ve never had anybody come back the full three times and not get the funding,” Collette said, describing the process as fair and accessible. She added that the organization is very fortunate to have a dedicated volunteer board that includes treasurer Jill Brumbaugh and secretary Linda Cohrt.

Over the past decade, the club has funded 48 projects totaling more than \$525,000 and counting. Many of those projects have leveraged matching grants or additional community support, multiplying the impact. In some cases, funding has supported public needs that might otherwise go unmet, such as flags displayed by volunteers through the local fire department to honor veterans. Her personal favorite is the magnificent Main Street 21' Christmas tree that shines bright in the town square during December each year.

“In a perfect world, it would come out of the city budget,” Collette said. “But the world is not perfect. You either find a way to get them by avenues like the Golden Goose Club, or you just go without them, and your town doesn't get to enjoy these extras”.

Beyond the dollars, Collette believes the club offers something less tangible but equally important: connection. Members often learn about initiatives they might not have otherwise known existed. Even high-profile efforts, such as Spirit Cafe, became more visible to some through the club's presentations and funded support for kitchen appliances.

As the Golden Goose Club enters its second decade, Collette said growth remains a priority. “We're always looking for members, and everybody makes a difference,” she said. She hopes to dispel lingering misconceptions that membership is invitation-only or costs \$100 per month. Everyone is encouraged to get involved. “It's not the size of your wallet, it's the size of your heart,” she said.

With another quarterly meeting on the horizon and new proposals already taking shape, the Golden Goose Club continues to build on a simple formula: equal giving, shared decision-making, and local passion. By turning modest contributions into meaningful investments, the club ensures that ideas shaping Mahaska County's future do not stall for lack of funding, but instead find the support they need to take flight.
