



Sunflower Foundation

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Lea Ann Seiler



Stephanie Simmons

Seiler, Simmons appointed to Sunflower Foundation board

AG Kobach reappoints Schears to third term

TOPEKA, Kan. – Sunflower Foundation is pleased to announce the appointments of Lea Ann Seiler of Hanston and Stephanie Simmons of Beloit, as well as the re-appointment of Ben Schears of Hays, to the foundation's nine-member board of trustees. Kansas Attorney General Kris Kobach made the appointments.

Individuals can serve up to three, three-year terms as a trustee of the foundation, a statewide health philanthropy with a mission to serve as a catalyst for improving the health of all Kansans. The attorney general appoints eight of the trustees, with one appointed by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas. The board governs the foundation's work and develops the organization's strategic direction.

Seiler and Simmons started their first terms at the board's June 12 meeting.

Seiler, CPM, is Network Kansas' community entrepreneurship manager for

southwest Kansas, where she builds and maintains relationships with economic development organizations and communities and works to improve access to programs, training and funding for entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Simmons is chief operating officer for Mitchell County Hospital Health Systems in Beloit, where she spearheads strategic planning, development and philanthropic initiatives for the rural north-central Kansas health system.

Seiler, who previously served as economic development director for Hodgeman County, attended Kansas State University and later became a Certified Public Manager (CPM) through the University of Kansas School of Public Management. She serves on the boards of the Kansas Sampler Foundation and United Wireless and previously served on boards for the Western Kansas Rural Economic Development Association (WKREDA), Kansas Economic Development Alliance (KEDA), and Hodgeman County Community Foundation.

"I'm truly honored to join the Sunflower Foundation Board of Trustees," Seiler said. "As a rural Kansan, I've witnessed firsthand how strategic grantmaking can ignite meaningful change, and I'm excited to support this mission and contribute to something that matters so deeply to me."

Simmons previously served as executive director of the Mitchell County Regional Medical Foundation, where she worked to secure grant funding and private donations for the foundation and health system. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Communications, with an emphasis in Public Relations, from Fort Hays State University.

As a life-long resident of north-central Kansas, she is passionate about rural health care.

"I am eager to work alongside the Sunflower Foundation board and staff to collaborate across the state, listening and learning from diverse perspectives, and to help catalyze adaptive ideas that will improve the health for all Kansans," Simmons said.

A graduate of the Great Plains Public Health Leadership Institute, Simmons also is a founding member of Mitchell County's AWARE NCK health coalition.

"As respected voices in their communities and passionate advocates for health access and community improvement, Lea Ann and Stephanie bring critical perspectives that will deepen our insight and strengthen our work," said Brandon Skidmore, Sunflower Foundation president and CEO. "We look forward to the impact we will achieve together."

Schears, originally appointed in 2019 by former Attorney General Derek Schmidt, is starting his final term and serves as the board's treasurer. He recently was named vice president for Economic and Workforce Development at Fort Hays State University, after previously serving as president of Fort Hays Tech | Northwest in Goodland, formerly Northwest Kansas Technical College.

Schears earned his Master of Arts in History and Bachelor of Science in History from Emporia State University. He also has an Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts from Cowley College in Arkansas City.

Sunflower Foundation board welcomes new members, elects officers

The Sunflower Foundation Board of Trustees welcomed its new members, Lea Ann Seiler of Hanston and Stephanie Simmons of Beloit, and elected a new slate of officers at its meeting June 12 at the Sunflower Nonprofit Center in Topeka.

Mike Matson, a change management consultant and podcast host from Manhattan, was elected board chairman. He was first appointed to the board in 2018 by former Attorney General Derek Schmidt and is starting the second year of his final term.

Angie Strecker, retired vice president of Provider Relations for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas who is starting the second year of her first term as the BCBSKS appointee to the board, was elected secretary. Ben Schears was reelected treasurer.

Other members of the board include:

- Teresa Lovelady, Wichita, president and CEO of HealthCore Clinic in Wichita;
- Shawn Naccarato, Pittsburg, vice president of Research and Economic Development at Pittsburg State University;
- Carrie Lutz, Topeka, CEO of Holton Community Hospital;
- Jim Martin, Topeka, professor and senior lecturer in the Washburn University School of Business.

ABOUT SUNFLOWER FOUNDATION

Sunflower Foundation was established in 2000 as a statewide health philanthropy with a mission to serve as a catalyst for improving the health of all Kansans. The foundation believes that a thriving, sustainable nonprofit sector contributes to healthy communities, and we are committed to investing in mission-aligned nonprofits through grants, education, advocacy, collaborative learning, and capacity building. To learn more, visit www.SunflowerFoundation.org.



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