

The Arts

“Welcome to this historic moment,” said Jack Thompson, then-president of the Cooper Foundation, who stood before the inaugural crowd at Lincoln’s new performing arts center. “The Lied Center promises to be a major asset, not only to the University of Nebraska but to the whole state.”

It’s difficult to remember Lincoln before the Lied Center for Performing Arts. It feels like the Lied’s annual schedule of Broadway plays, dance troupes and musical performances has been part of the community for generations. In fact, the Lied Center just celebrated its 25th anniversary and the story of its inception is closely linked to the Cooper Foundation. Thompson co-chaired, along with Woody Varner, the fundraising drive for the Lied. Its first event on November 16, 1989, was Cooper supported—an E. N. Thompson Forum lecture by Middle East scholar Robin Wright.

The Cooper Foundation has supported the Lied Center across three decades, beginning with grants totaling more than \$300,000 for the establishment of the Center itself. From funding a project that allowed middle schoolers to sing with the Soweto Gospel Choir, to purchasing projection and sound equipment, funding statewide artist-in-residency programs, and awarding a recent \$25,000 grant toward the purchase of a new grand drape, Cooper trustees have shown ongoing commitment to the Lied’s success. All told, Cooper’s grants to the Lied Center total more than \$575,000.

And what a success it has been. In its first 25 seasons, the Lied Center hosted more than 2,000 artists and sold more than 3,000,000 tickets. Since its founding, one million students have participated in the Lied’s education and performance programs. Oh, and Blue Man Group used 966 bananas during their 2011 and 2013 performances.

The Lied Center continues to shape Lincoln’s cultural landscape. We believe Jack Thompson and Woody Varner would be pleased.



Mahatma Gandhi counseled that we must “be the change we want to see in the world.” The 2015-16 E.N. Thompson Forum on World Issues welcomes four activists who have embraced his advice. While they champion diverse causes, all possess a compelling fusion of courage, intelligence and charisma, which allows them to share their messages of transformation with the global community. “Activism” will examine the origins of activists and the characteristics of effective social and political movements, chronicled with candor by men and women who have inspired generations.

Over the past two decades, the E.N. Thompson Forum on World Issues has established itself as one of the preeminent speaker series in higher education. Its mission is to bring a diversity of viewpoints on international and public policy issues to the university and the residents of the state to promote understanding and encourage debate.

2015-2016 Thompson Forum Speakers

JOSE ANTONIO VARGAS
September 15, 2015 - 7 p.m.

BILL MCKIBBEN
October 6, 2015 - 7 p.m.

WES MOORE
January 19, 2016 - 7 p.m.

SHERYL WUDUNN
February 2, 2016 - 7 p.m.

COOPER PLAZA. LINCOLN, NEBRASKA 68508-1411
December 3, 1984

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OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN
December 10, 1984

Mr. E. N. Thompson, President
Cooper Foundation
504 Cooper Plaza
Lincoln, NE 68508

Dear Woody:
This morning our board of trustees approved a grant of \$150,000 toward the Lied Center, payable over a five-year period beginning in 1985. The amount of each annual payment we have left open for adjustment in accordance with funds available and pressures of other requests.

Dear Jack:
Hooray for the Cooper Foundation!
Thanks for your concise note of December 3. What it lacked in words was fully compensated with substance of the contents thereof.

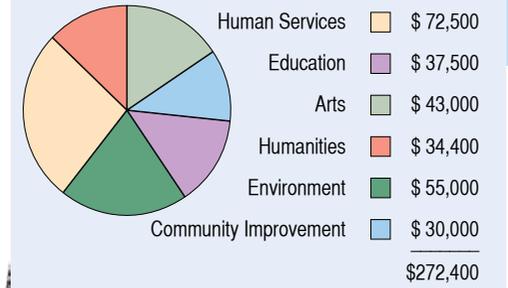
You're a good friend and ally - and a great co-chairman!!

Yours truly,
Woody
D. B. Varner
Chairman

Our mission is to support strong, sustainable organizations, innovative ideas and ventures of significant promise in education, the arts and humanities, human services and the environment. We do that through grants to non-profit organizations located and working in Nebraska, primarily Lincoln and Lancaster County.

Grant Application Deadlines	
LOI	Application
January 1	January 15
March 15	April 1
July 15	August 1
September 15	October 1

2015 Grants 1st & 2nd Quarters



**COOPER
FOUNDATION**

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cooperfoundation.org



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80 YEARS OF GRANTMAKING
Fall 2015