

# Scholarships honor the past and the future

**By Julianne Endres**

Watertown Area Community Foundation

“I wanted to help people get started because I had the feeling they could see what they can do with a start.”

This simple statement was made by Velma Vincent (deceased) as the Watertown Area Community Foundation’s first donor to set up a scholarship fund.

Indeed, Vincent has helped at least 35 students “get a start” since the Jesse D. and Jessie E. Vincent Memorial Scholarship Fund began in 1984.

Those students are thankful for that start, as are the dozens more who have received scholarships

from other scholarship funds at the Foundation over the years. Vincent was the beginning of a long line of donors who decided a scholarship fund was a way they wanted to use their charitable dollars.

While scholarship funds are about the students, they are also about the person being honored and/or memorialized by the establishment of the fund.

Mary Rueb Conner, now of Huntsville, Ala., has established three scholarship funds at the Foundation. The Frank and Mathilda Rueb Scholarship Fund was established in 2005 to honor her parents who she says “loved Watertown.”

She established the Sheila Jean Rueb Scholarship Fund in 2009 with her brother, Frank Jr. (now deceased) in memory of their sister Sheila. “I was only 3 years old when she passed away,” Conner said. “I never really knew her, but I remember her illness. My brother remembered her well. Sheila was 12 and he was 19 when she passed away in 1941. Sheila went to school through the fifth-grade. Then leukemia struck.

“She couldn’t go to school any longer because she was sick in bed a lot.”



Velma Vincent



Sister Hyacinth

Now, Conner has established the Sister Hyacinth Memorial Scholarship Fund in memory of a teacher at Immaculate Conception School in Watertown that she will never forget. "Sister Hyacinth was one of the best teachers I ever had," she said. "When I was young, I had trouble pronouncing words. She made the class quit laughing at me. When she did that I knew I had someone in my corner."

It probably goes without saying, Conner, who will be 81 in a few months, also dearly loved Watertown. "I would have loved to stay my whole life."

The newest scholarship fund at the Foundation is the Jamie Isaacson Memorial Scholarship. Jennifer Harms, her sister Stacey Rost and their mother

Caryn Isaacson hope it will go to a student that has some of the same traits as their father/husband. He worked at Terex for almost 42 years, Harms said. He was a dedicated employee and believed in education as well as a good work ethic. The scholarship will be awarded annually to a second-year LATI student enrolled in an industrial field.

We figured by then the teachers will be able to identify the students with dedication and a good work ethic that has initiative and drive like Dad did. We wanted to set the scholarship up for someone that could follow in his footsteps ... something they believe they, too, have done all these years.

Harms has worked at Slumberland for 18 years and Rost as an RN at Jenkins Living Center for several years.

"We learned the very same traits from Dad," said Harms who is preparing for her son Dylan Schai-ble's graduation from Watertown High School this weekend. "He's plans to go to LATI for welding. Dad definitely had something to do with that, too."

Several scholarships at the Foundation were established to honor a retiree or long-time employee. The Jerry Grotewold Ag Scholarship was established upon Grotewold's retirement after 56 years of working for Smithfield (formerly John Morrell & Co.) Grotewold had made up his mind that he wanted to establish a scholarship and the company matched his donation to honor him.

"The ag business was good to me and the money came from my parent company. I thought I may as well give it to a kid who deserves it," Grotewold told the Foundation. "It's good to see something done with your money while you're still alive."

The scholarship has had two recipients so far, one from Estelline and another from Hamlin County, and he's been thrilled to know he's making a difference in these students' futures.

Whether we are talking about the first scholarship fund established at the Foundation or the most recent, it's just the beginning of giving students "a start."

"I just wanted to pass something on," Grotewold said. "After all, we're put on this earth to help one another."