Legacies Can Last Forever

Legacies…they are all around us in a variety of forms. In fact, we are leaving our legacy every day by the things we do and say.

Some people are remembered for a lifetime of kind deeds and volunteering. Others have built legacies by teaching others or leading by example with their positive, can-do attitude. Still others have left legacies by recipes they have shared, books they have written, school records they have broken or some artistic talent. Of course, many people’s legacies live on through family traditions, their children and grandchildren. Many times legacies have a lot to do with our passion.

The Watertown Area Community Foundation is a collection of many legacies… currently more than 100 – a number which keeps growing as donors of all ages join the Foundation in its mission to invest in the vitality of the greater Watertown area. Many donors have established scholarship funds in honor of/in memory of a loved one. The late Ruth Olson’s passion for English and the arts lives on in the deserving students pursuing just that with the help of the Ruth Chase Olson Scholarship. The same can be said for the first scholarship fund established, the Jesse D. and Jesse E. Vincent Memorial Scholarship, to the last, the Folkerts Family Scholarship. Their legacies live on.

Likewise, other funds at the Foundation are legacies which continue to support their community forever. In a nutshell, the Foundation is made of endowed funds; the principle of which is never spent. Instead, it grows over time to generate an increasing stream of funding to support the donors’ charitable intentions forever.

Another legacy continues with the Christopher Rieb Fund at the Foundation. Christopher’s parents, Dr. Mark and Susan Rieb of Watertown, established the fund to honor Chris and support the passions of his youth including hockey and baseball. The fund has supported acquiring jerseys for the Squirt and Mites Hockey League and will continue to pay tribute to Chris.

The Robert & Arlene Brandt-Jenson Fund at the Foundation focuses on environmental and social concerns as well as cultural,

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Educational and other charitable purposes. As a Donor Advised Fund, the couple has been deciding on an annual basis (with WACF Board approval) where grant monies are allocated. Their fund’s legacy has supported instruments for the WHS Orchestra, as well as supported a South Dakota Symphony Concert. The list grows each year.

Donors’ legacies can be very specific. Chief Jo’s HHH Fund (Hope, Healing & Hoof Prints) is helping children who have been sexually abused find some comfort through an equine experience at Joy Ranch.

Whether donors’ passions are youth, the environment, recreation, the arts or something else... their WACF funds create a legacy that lives on forever because their gifts are invested over time so they can continue to do good work. Trees in your neighborhood park or on your school’s grounds may be the result of the Dr. Edwin W. Harper Fund which supports tree planting in public areas. The fund was established in 1979, shortly after the Foundation was born. After more than 40 years, Dr. Harper’s legacy continues to beautify our community.

Still, some legacies at the Foundation don’t have specific intentions. These funds are called “unrestricted.” They are able to respond to the ever-changing needs of the Watertown area. Unrestricted funds helped support the Bike Trail in 2001 when it was just in the early stages and again when it was expanded. Over the years, hundreds of thousands of dollars in unrestricted funds have made an impact with a variety of programs and organizations. Earlier this year, a $5,000 grant to the Lake Area Pet Pantry supported vaccinations, spay and neuter services for pets of owners in need.

These are only a few of the ways donors’ passions create meaningful legacies that continue to make a difference in our community.