CHEHALIS SCHOOL DISTRICT

HONORING W.F. WEST'S LEGACY OF GIVING

FRIDAY CONNECT

Sept. 29, 2023

The Founding of a Tradition

The Chehalis School District's foundational roots run deeper than the state of Washington (our first schoolhouse was likely built in the 1860s while Washington became a state in 1889) and the namesake of our high school preceded the City of Chehalis (he was born in 1875 while the city was incorporated in 1883). In honor of the memory of William F. (Bill) West's birthday on Sept. 30, we decided to take a look at the legacy of giving that he is part of in the Chehalis School District.

William Francis (Bill) West was known in his time as "the little brother of Chehalis" because he was the youngest child of William "Big Bill" West, the first mayor of Chehalis. Though they had no children of their own, he and his wife, Blanche, believed in the need for good school facilities for local children. They were not the first nor last donors to Chehalis schools but are generally regarded as the first major benefactors for the Chehalis School District. In 1949, they donated 18 acres of land to the school district where W.F. West High School is now located.

Besides the land donation, the Wests would go on to donate tens of thousands of dollars to various school projects in Chehalis.The Chehalis School District’s athletic field was officially named the William F. West Athletic Field in 1953 and what had previously been known as Chehalis high school was officially named W.F. West High School in 1957 to honor these gifts.
"The wonderful thing about (the Wests) is that they do it for our good and not publicity for themselves," noted student writer Bonnie Meyers in a 1957 edition of Crimson And Gray, the high school's newspaper.

Before their deaths, William and Blanche set up the $1.25 million William F. West and Blanche E. West trust to benefit the Chehalis schools. The first scholarships from that fund were given to the class of 1970.

Scholarship Amounts:
ear college & technical college
00 for 4 year college
Tonight's Grand Total:
$3,445,197
Make School A Daily

West & Coffman Scholarship Winners/Photo Courtesy of Chehalis Foundation

Generosity that Keeps Giving

The Wests are an example of the tradition of giving to ensure the future success of the Chehalis School District that is common in the Chehalis community. The Chehalis Foundation Manages several endowments and more than 40 scholarship funds that benefit students in the Chehalis School District in some way.

The Foundation's scholarship branch began as the Dollars for Scholars program, which was founded in 2001 by members of the W.F. West class of 1965. In 2023, W.F. West's 186 graduates received a total of 370 scholarships worth a one year total $985,586 and grand total $3,326,744 including renewable funds.

An endowment is an amount of money that is managed in such a way that it is meant to be available forever. Jenny Collins, Executive Director of the Chehalis Foundation, explained that in general, the foundation uses about 4% of the interest on each endowment annually to keep the money growing and to withstand downturns in interest rates. Each endowment is also overseen by a committee of people who meet to scrutinize every suggested expenditure to make sure that the gift's original intent is always followed.

"They take their jobs really seriously," Collins said of these committee members. "We're always going back to the original documents and making sure we're respecting the legacy of the funds that were left in our care."

Student Achievement Initiative Specialist Becky Moon said her family was one of those that benefited from the West and Coffman scholarships. Moon said her family did not have a lot of money when it came time for her kids to go to college and the West and Coffman scholarships made that expenditure possible for them. Her daughter was even able to use the funding to not only get a teaching degree, but also seek her Master's degree. And the unexpected benefit for her family was that in watching her kids find success at college, Moon herself was inspired to seek higher education.

"I applied for this job because it was all about SAI and I wanted to work in that area because it inspired me to go back and get my degree," Moon said.

And these gifts are truly about equipping W.F. West graduates for the journey ahead, whatever path they take. Collins noted that many of the scholarships managed by the Foundation have no requirement for the student to be pursuing a four-year degree and some even allow for expenditures for certification or career related expenses. One example is 2022 graduating senior Hayzen Hoffman, who received a Leonard Career & Technical Education Endowment Scholarship. Hoffman's post high school plan was to expand his custom leather working business, Dual H Leather. Because the Leonard endowment allows for the purchase of career related items, the scholarship helped Hoffman to purchase a heavy duty sewing machine for leather. In gratitude, Hoffman created a leather bag that was auctioned off at the Chehalis Foundation's gala last December, creating opportunities for more W.F. West students.

"Those kinds of things really float my boat," Collins said.

Generosity that Keeps Growing

The scholarship funds and endowments the Chehalis Foundation manages are constantly growing and evolving. Collins said there are currently a few new endowments in the works. Some are funded by individual families, while others are supported by donors of various financial means. Regardless of the size of the gift, Collins said every donor is motivated by the same thing: their strong ties to community and school district.

"That's one thing I think this community does really well," Collins said. "Giving back no matter the size of our contribution."

One endowment in the works is the Chehalis West/Coffman endowment, which will be funded by donations of any size by those who have received either West or Coffman scholarships at any point. Collins said she is excited to offer this opportunity for those who benefited from these original endowments to pay the opportunity forward.

"It's hard to imagine and it's kind of unreal we have people who were students in the '70s and '80s who received West or Coffman scholarships and these scholarships propelled them to a place where college attainable or more affordable for them and now they're in the position to come back and give," Collins said.

Another endowment in the works through the Chehalis Foundation is being headed by Kristi Shanafelt and John Giese of the W.F. West class of 1967. Shanafelt and her sister, Sue Austin, created the Herman and Virginia Adolphson Memorial Scholarship in honor of their parents. Three $1,000 scholarships are given each year to graduates planning to study at Centralia College. Shanafelt said their parents valued education and encouraged their daughters to pursue college degrees.

"I was able to go to college when I'm sure not everybody gets to do that," Shanafelt said.

Shanafelt said a few years ago, members of the class of 1967 began talking about something they could do to give back to the Chehalis School District and they very quickly settled on a scholarship to benefit students at their alma mater.

"A lot of them want to give back to the community that was their beginning," Shanafelt said. "We want to create something so people can have their dreams."

Shaw Learning Campus

Generous Names in Chehalis School District History

Those who have given financially to benefit the Chehalis School District over the years are too numerous to mention. Here are just a sampling of some of their stories:

- John Coffman - This W.F. West alumni was killed in a freak car accident in 1946 at the age of 18 while home on leave from the Navy. His parents, John and Zylpha Coffman, created a scholarship in his honor that is now part of the West/Coffman Endowment.
- Gail & Carolyn Shaw - Gail was a chemical engineer, real estate developer, visionary and philanthropist and Carolyn was a homemaker who was active in her community. Their children donated 43 acres of land to the Chehalis School District in their parents' memories. This land is where where Orin Smith Elementary and James Lintott Elementary are located and is called the Shaw Learning Campus in their honor.
- Ray & Mary Ingerwersen - Before their deaths, the couple created two trusts through the Chehalis Foundation: one to be used as a permanent endowment to continually fund science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) in the Chehalis School District; and a second to benefit ballfields in Chehalis. The couple is honored by a plaque in the W.F. West Stem Wing. Their ballfields endowment is one helping to pay for the renovations to the Bearcat Baseball Stadium.
- Pauline Parkinson - Pauline worked for three different W.F. West Principals and took great delight in helping students who were struggling, as well as keeping the W.F. West Band program organized. Her friends and family started a scholarship in her name after her death in 2015.
- Robert E. Lintott - many people know the name James W. Lintott but Robert E. Lintott was there helping Chehalis students first. He taught math in the Chehalis School District and a scholarship was created in his memory.
- John & Lois Leonard - Though they never had children of their own, the Leonards helped many lower income kids make it through the Chehalis School District. A scholarship in their honor benefits graduating seniors pursuing vocational training programs.

How Can YOU Give Back to the Chehalis School District?

To make a donation or to learn more about how your gift can benefit the Chehalis School District, contact the Chehalis Foundation. Some of the projects currently looking for donations that benefit the Chehalis School District include:
-Chehalis West/Coffman Endowment - Any previous recipient of a West or Coffman Scholarship is encouraged to donate to this effort to create a new endowment through the Chehalis Foundation that will create even more scholarship opportunities for W.F. West graduates. To date, about $70,000 has been donated to this fund.
-Tennis & Wrestling Facility - This four-court tennis and middle school wrestling facility is planned to be located on 20th Street in Chehalis. It's estimated cost will be about $3 million, of which about $800,000 has been donated so far. All donations made through Dec. 31 up to $750,000 will be matched.
-Bearcat Baseball Stadium Renovation - the work to create an artificial turf surface for the Bearcat baseball facility is already underway and about $1.35 million of the $1.4 million needed has been donated. All donations made through Dec. 31 up to $50,000 will be matched.
-Class of 1967 endowment - Alumni in the class of 1967 are working to establish a scholarship to benefit graduating seniors at W.F. West pursuing any kind of post high school training.

Alumni Come Home Oct. 13

Hey Bearcat Alumni, are you planning to come to the Homecoming football game 7 p.m. Oct. 13 at Bearcat Stadium? Make sure you stop by the Bearcat Connect alumni association's tent for treats and chance to win prizes.

Have you joined Bearcat Connect yet? This website is a place for W.F. West High School alumni of all generations to find former classmates, meet other Bearcats and be in the know about events and networking activities.

BEARCAT CONNECT
W.F. WEST HIGH SCHOOL
CHEHALIS, WA

Notice of Non-discrimination
Anti-bullying Policy and Procedure