

How to Grow a Legacy: Creating a Memorial Scholarship

Memorial scholarships are a wonderful way to celebrate a life and carry on the good works of a loved one. By creating a permanently endowed memorial scholarship fund with Miami County Community Foundation, you can be assured that your loved one's name—their legacy—continues to positively impact members of our community forever.

This was partly what motivated former Peru residents Hal and Jo Cultice to create a scholarship.

Their daughter, 1971 Peru High School graduate and co-valedictorian, Elaine went on to graduate with honors from Indiana State University with an accounting degree. She worked for an industrial firm in Indianapolis where she met her husband, Bruce Bright.

At the age of 33, Elaine was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, an autoimmune disease that affects the central nervous system. Hal and Jo eventually sold their home in Peru and relocated to Indianapolis to be nearer to Elaine. At the age of 50, she passed away.



The Cultices wanted to memorialize their daughter. While updating their wills, they were conscious of the fact that Elaine would no longer be able to share in their estate. It was during this time they read an article from an old Peru Tribune a friend had passed along. It listed the recipients of Miami County scholarship winners.

"Suddenly that seemed the answer to the memorial idea," Jo Cultice said.

About that same time, the Cultices received a publication from the Miami County Community Foundation.

"It was so logical to do it through the foundation, that we did not even consider any other method," Hal said. "We knew that would be the easiest way for us to handle it, and it would be taken care of in a professional manner by people who had expertise in such things."

The process of creating a scholarship with Miami County Community Foundation is easy. Since it is our mission to serve donors in fulfilling their charitable wishes, we work to create a scholarship in accordance to the donors' criteria. We can structure funds to optimize the donor's ability to give. We also help them design a scholarship that best reflects the interests of the person they are honoring. Plus, our donors can have as much or as little involvement in the selection process as they like.

The scholarship the Cultices created allows the family to share Elaine's love of education by providing an annual scholarship to female students graduating from Peru High School. They ask that the young ladies be active and involved in school, work and community; and that they display good citizenship and good academic accomplishments.

The first Elaine Cultice Bright Memorial Scholarship was awarded in 2006 to Ashleigh Stanley.

"I had followed the whole process with such interest," Jo commented on her first time meeting Stanley, "that I was overwhelmed with emotion and felt like crying."

While the Cultices felt they were handling their grief over Elaine, they did say that creating this scholarship helped comfort them.

"It gave us a feeling that we were still doing something for her. It is probably natural for parents to want to care and do for their children forever. This helped fill that need," Jo concluded.

If you are interested in growing a legacy as the Cultices did, please call the Miami County Community Foundation at 475-2859 or 877-432-6423.