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Scholarship gala showcases SPC's tradition of helping students

LEVELLAND – The South Plains College Foundation Annual Scholarship Gala has established a tradition of affording students the ability to achieve higher education through scholarships. The gala, slated for 6 p.m. Feb. 28 at the Physical Education Complex on the Levelland campus, recognizes the contributions of donors who support the scholarship program.

Since 2001, nearly 300 students have received funds through the Founders Opportunity Endowment Fund, whose proceeds are raised through the annual gala. Established in 1998, the fund has become the college's largest endowment with more than \$1.2 million in contributions. Presently, 58 new students are recipients of the Founders Opportunity Scholarships.

SPC sophomore Kassie Wright of Shallowater is a 2008 recipient of the Founders Opportunity Scholarship. "When I was in high school, my counselor helped me fill out the scholarship application," Wright said. "I really needed the help because I don't get grants. The first year, I received a \$500 scholarship split over two semesters. I did really well at SPC and I made the dean and president lists. This year, my scholarship was \$1,000.

"I am so appreciative that someone noticed my hard work in the classroom, and decided to help me out by rewarding me with more money," Wright said. "I tell everybody who thinks they can't go to college that they can. There is a way to pay for college through scholarships. Every little bit of money that you get helps you to get closer to your goals."

Wright plans to continue her education by transferring to Texas Tech University where she will major in an area of physical education.

"Students who receive scholarships are encouraged to go to school," said Dr. Kelvin Sharp, President of South Plains College. "It allows them to not have to work as much and spend more time with their families. It's really rewarding to see these scholarships awarded to students who work hard and deserve the reward."

“The SPC Scholarship Gala is probably one of the nicest evenings in the community in terms of a good meal and entertainment,” Sharp said. “People from the community come to campus to show pride in SPC and being a part of SPC activities.”

SPC freshman Sydni German from Whiteface, a Vergie Belle Smallwood Scholarship recipient, said she views receiving a scholarship is a reward for all the work a student does in high school. “You go to school for 12 years and it may feel like it’s for no reason. But, when you get a scholarship to help you, you know that all your hard work pays off,” German said.

German said she began applying for scholarships on the advice of her high school counselor. She also learned about them when she attended College Day events.

“I wrote an essay about my goals and how receiving a scholarship would help me become successful,” German said. “I am so appreciative of my donors and I want to be able to give something back to the school when I’m successful just like my donor did for me.

“I love going to SPC and living in the dorm,” she said. “It’s like our own little community.”

“I have a sister, Kaci, who is just a year behind me,” German said. “By getting a scholarship will allow my parents to have more money readily available for her.”

German plans to continue her education by enrolling in the nursing program at Covenant Health System.

This year’s annual gala will feature a five-course tableside meal and live entertainment by the SPC Creative Arts Department and Fine Arts Department. The evening also will include a live and silent auction of unique and hand-crafted treasures along with recognition of the recipients of the 2009 Pacesetter Awards.

Individual benefactor tickets are \$100 per person and can be obtained from the SPC Development Office. Various levels of sponsorship and participation are available to interested businesses and individuals. The table sponsorship levels include a Diamond Level, \$2,000; Platinum Level, \$1,000; Gold Level, \$800; and Silver Level, \$400.

For more information about table sponsorships or tickets, contact the SPC Development Office at 716-2020.

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