



## Holmes County Education Foundation Turns 20



It has been said that many things grow better with age, and this sentiment has been no exception to the Holmes County Education Foundation. Beginning August 24, 1989 with a seed (the vision of one person) the Foundation has since grown and thrived, and has become the vision and priority of many people within and outside the Holmes County community. The original donor's intent was to provide scholarships or other financial assistance for the pursuit of education or vocational training beyond grade school. Trustee James McGuire commented, "The vision of the original donor was eloquent and inspiring in its generosity and simplicity. To assist others by providing tools to improve themselves is a



universal concept for the advancement of a community. I feel privileged to have been a part of this worthwhile vehicle and to have played a small part in its development.”

Big changes and major growth has been commonplace for the Foundation since that time. In 1991, the first scholarships were disbursed, totaling \$43,000. This year, twenty years later, over \$561,000 was awarded to new and renewing recipients. An important aspect to the scholarship program and to the students is that most of the scholarships can be renewed three times resulting in a 4-year scholarship. Approximately 1,800 students have received scholarships over the years resulting in more than \$5 million in awards. The pool of scholarships has also grown from one (*the Holmes County Education Foundation Scholarship*) to 38 named scholarships in honor or memory of various organizations, past and present residents and friends. Trustee John Waltman commented, “The foresight the creator had in forming this Foundation has greatly benefited the Holmes County community. As a Trustee, it has been a reward and a pleasure to watch the growth of the Foundation and the generosity of many people.”

In this span of time, opportunities in addition to postsecondary scholarships became available to HolmesCounty residents and businesses. The Foundation’s alternative grant program has allowed for vocational training for the Amish community as well. Nineteen classes have been provided to this group and 100 students have participated in classes such as: welding, engine repair, antique tractor restoration, and bookkeeping. In addition 39 professional development grants have been awarded since 2001 to benefit the community by training individuals from nonprofit and public entities. The scope of educational encouragement has also increased with the creation of the Holmes County College Access Program in 2003. This program provides advisory services to middle school, high school and adult students who want to pursue further education. And grants have been made to the Holmes County Higher Education Center to fund the *Senior Series* which provides enrichment classes to this older population. More than 1,800 seniors have participated in these classes such as: water aerobics, cooking, computers, yoga, and writing.



The passing years have also seen several new faces and some consistent ones. The original Board of Trustees included: John Waltman, James McGuire, Richard Maxwell and Robert Hines. The current Board of Trustees includes: John Waltman, James McGuire, Linda Angelo, Judge Tom Lee, Michael Taylor and Larry Troyer. Terri Loder and Lori Steiner provided the original administrative support to operate the scholarship process. In 1999, Darla Stitzlein was hired as Executive Director and remains today. She is joined by Anna Patton, Administrative Assistant; Ann Gastier, College Access Advisor (grant funded); and Fred Balding, Gift Planning Officer (grant funded). An Advisory Board was created in 2002 and consists of community leaders that offer support and guidance to the Board of Trustees.

The Foundation office originally operated out of the Schuler Law Firm and then eventually moved into rental space below the West Holmes School Board Office (formerly the Holmes County Library building). In 2006, the Foundation moved into the Cary House where it resides today.

To commemorate the celebration of twenty years, the Foundation has spearheaded a \$20/20 campaign, asking the community, donors and scholarship recipient “alumni” to donate \$20 (or more) for the 20 years the Foundation has existed. Checks can be made payable to HCEF and mailed to the Holmes County Education Foundation at

*114 North Clay Street, Millersburg, OH44654*

or you may donate online at their website of [www.hcef.net](http://www.hcef.net).

