

Rossmoor Scholarship Foundation Donor Reception - Sept. 25, 2024

The Rossmoor Scholarship Foundation (RSF) hosted its annual Donor Reception at the Fireside Room. After welcoming the reception's 120 guests, President Shirley Wiegand reminded her audience of what's now become the RSF birdsong----"Every dollar donated to the Foundation goes into a scholarship," she said. "Because of you," she told donors, "we were able to raise \$340,000 in 2023 that funded 84 scholarships in 2024. And that's all because of you."

She then turned to five RSF Trustees located in the audience, who individually read messages sent from past scholarship recipients. "I absolutely would not have been able to go to nursing school, graduate with honors, without scholarships like yours. Thank you everyone who contributes," wrote a 2022 Diablo Valley College graduate. "I am forever grateful to the Foundation," wrote a 2016 Mount Diablo High School graduate now pursuing a doctorate in physical therapy. "These awards have helped change individual lives like mine." "The scholarship ended up being a huge aid for me to attend my dream school and to be on track to graduate without any debt," wrote a 2020 Las Lomas High School graduate.

Wiegand then introduced Frank Nelson, 1987 scholarship recipient now retired after a successful engineering career. Nelson recalled how Hal Skamser, Rossmoor resident and volunteer Diablo Valley College engineering instructor, had encouraged him as a DVC student in 1986. "Three times a week I went to his office just off the lab at 8 in the morning." About week 12, Skamser walked over, put his hand on Nelson's shoulder, and said, "If you keep this up you will go far in your career." Occasionally choking up as he remembered Skamser, Nelson recounted how much impact his mentor and the RFS scholarship had on his academic career. He concluded his remarks by pledging to fund one "Hal Skamser Scholarship" per year for the next ten years.

Following Nelson was Amye Elbert, 2024 scholarship winner from Los Medanos College and now an art education major at UC-Berkeley. "Today I stand before you as a survivor, an artist, a mother, a grandmother, a fur-mom, an ex-wife, an orphan, a woman of faith, a person with disabilities, a recovering alcoholic, a dreamer, and a victor over many of life's harshest challenges," she said. "While my path has been strewn with obstacles, it has also sculpted me into a compassionate, kind-hearted individual, unwavering in my commitment to use my experiences and art to uplift others." At the end of her presentation the audience applauded, many with tears in their eyes.

And it was immediately obvious the recollections from past scholarship winners and the stories Nelson and Elbert told had impact. In the mix of conversations that followed their remarks several RSF trustees heard from many guests that they were going to increase their donations for next year's scholarship winners. Two guests even announced they were going to fund entire scholarships (more on that in a future Rossmoor News article).

RSF thanks Berkshire Hathaway Home Services, which subsidized the printing of the Donor Reception invitations, and Davis Home Pros, which assisted with the cost of the food. RSF is currently seeking donations to fund scholarships in Spring, 2025.

Submitted by: Wayne A. Wiegand, Trustee