



GRATITUDE | 2024



# **A publication by the Crawford Alumni Center**

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Special thanks to Jonathan Frank, Tennessee Tech's News and Public Relations Director, for contributing the Board of Trustees article to this year's edition of Gratitude magazine.

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Dear Golden Eagle community,

Do you remember the first day you stepped foot on the Tennessee Tech campus? From the moment I arrived at Tech, I learned that anything is possible, and I embraced every opportunity to grow and learn. This university equipped me with the tools to be successful in life and in business, and I continue to use those skills today – both in my career and in my role as chair of the Tennessee Tech Alumni Association Board of Directors.

I encourage alumni to find ways to support your alma mater. It could be through a monetary gift, serving on a board, sharing information about Tech with prospective students, speaking to a class, attending an alumni or sporting event or simply showing your Tech spirit. Wear a Tennessee Tech shirt, display your diploma in your office or grab a Tech coffee mug from the bookstore to put on your desk. Your enthusiasm will attract attention, and people will want to know more about why this is such a great university.

The Tennessee Tech Crawford Alumni Center's annual donor magazine, Gratitude, shares a few stories of the alumni, employees and friends who support this university. Philanthropy creates opportunities for the next generation of Golden Eagles, and I extend a heartfelt thank you to every person who has invested in a future student's Tech experience.

One of the most rewarding aspects of serving on the Alumni Association Board is the opportunity to meet alumni from all over the country, from all majors and from all decades. I enjoy learning what brought them to Tech and how Tech prepared them for their career. I hope you'll attend an alumni event in your area and come back to campus for Homecoming on Nov. 2. I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible.

Wings Up!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Baines', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dontrell Baines, '09 accounting  
Chair, Tennessee Tech Alumni Association Board of Directors





# Tennessee Tech alums, trustees Fred Lowery and Tom Jones pledge \$1 million to university athletics

A pair of Tennessee Tech University alumni, Board of Trustees members and philanthropists have pledged a combined \$1 million to support the university's athletic programs.

Fred Lowery, a Knoxville native and 1994 Tech football alumnus with a degree in mechanical engineering, pledged \$500,000 toward the campaign to rebuild the west side of Tech's football stadium and construct a dedicated football operations center.

Lowery now serves as senior vice president and president of customer channels for Thermo Fisher Scientific. A university trustee since 2019, Lowery is also the founder of the Lowery Family Fund, which supports education, leadership development, social justice, health equity and the arts.

Tom Jones, a Cookeville native and 1986 Tech graduate with a degree in electrical engineering, pledged \$500,000 toward the establishment of a new running track. The existing track spanning the perimeter of the university's football field will be removed as part of the stadium renovation plan,



*Tennessee Tech alumni and trustees Tom Jones (left) and Fred Lowery pledged a combined \$1 million to support university athletics.*



which calls for bringing spectator seating closer to the field.

Jones, who ran track for Cookeville High School using the Tech track, is now the president of Research Electronics International (REI). He has served on the university's Board of Trustees since 2017 and was the board's first chairman from 2017 to 2019. Jones has also been a member of the university's Foundation Board of Directors since 2010, including a term as chair from 2014 to 2016.

While Lowery and Jones have made sizable unpublicized gifts to the university in years past, the pair have allowed news of their latest contribution to be made public at the university's request in hopes of inspiring others to consider a gift supporting Tech's student-athletes.

University leaders praised Lowery and Jones' generous example.

"Tom Jones and Fred Lowery represent the best of our Golden Eagle community. The foundation they received here at Tech helped equip them for incredible success in life and we are deeply grateful that they have chosen time and again to pay it forward by giving back to this campus," said Tech President Phil Oldham.

"When donors and alumni give to Tech athletics, they are directly supporting our student-athletes and making a meaningful investment in the future of this university," added Tech Athletic Director Mark Wilson. "Tech's student-athletes have posted average GPAs exceeding 3.0 for 30 straight semesters. With new leadership from head

football coach Bobby Wilder, a rebuilt stadium on the horizon and the generous backing of leaders like Tom Jones and Fred Lowery, Tech is doubling down on its commitment to cultivating champions on and off the field."

For Lowery and Jones, their reasons for giving were both personal and practical.

"I've had a great experience at Tech, and I believe a lot of my success is tied to what I learned and the relationships I developed there," said Lowery. "While I have historically focused on gifts around academics and diversity, I know that another way to continue sharpening Tech's competitive edge is to ensure our athletics program attracts the very best talent."

"Our athletic facilities are an important piece of that," continued Lowery. "I'm excited for the new football stadium and what it will mean for not just the team, but for the entire city of Cookeville and the Upper Cumberland region."

Likewise, Jones recalled fond memories using the outdoor track both as a local Cookevillian and as a Tech student. While Jones did not play intercollegiate sports at Tech, he enjoyed participating in intramural sports and running the track for leisure.

"Using a track is something most anyone can do, whether you're running, jogging, walking or racing a wheelchair — it's an easy way to support the health of students and community," said Jones. "University athletics are an important avenue for students to grow in their leadership and teamwork






skills, and an outdoor track contributes to a broad range of athletic endeavors.”

Kevin Braswell, vice president for university advancement at Tech, said Lowery and Jones’ gifts to the university continue their longstanding tradition of generosity for which they are both known.

“Tom and Fred continue to set the standard for what it means to be engaged alumni and trustees who reinvest their time and treasures right here at the place where it all began for them,” concluded Braswell. “Their gifts will create opportunities for Tech to raise up a new generation of Golden

Eagles to follow in their footsteps and live ‘Wings Up’ in their communities.” 



# To know her was to love her: Remembering Dr. Rose Leigh Vines

Dr. Rose Leigh Bilbrey Vines had a zest for life and took advantage of every opportunity to engage with the world around her. She loved academia, philanthropy and people and found ways to combine all three through a successful career as a professor of biological sciences. In retirement, she had more time to pursue her passion for travel. In fact, Vines was the very first person to sign up for Tennessee Tech's Golden Eagle Travel program, which officially launched in 2022.

Vines' sister, Melinda Bilbrey Swann ('72 foreign language), says Golden Eagle Travel allowed Vines to enjoy her passion with fellow alumni and family members. And as Vines' mobility decreased, group travel made it possible to explore new places more easily, with a professional travel company handling transportation and logistics. Vines joined Swann, Swann's husband Ron ('72 mathematics and '80 MBA), Vines' friend Wanda Judd ('66 human ecology) and two dozen Tech alumni and friends on trips to Utah in summer 2022 and South Dakota in summer 2023. Kathleen Lordo, annual giving coordinator for Tech's Crawford Alumni Center, hosted the trips and says everyone was in love with Vines.

"She was the epitome of the saying, 'To know her was to love her,'" Lordo said. "She loved to see new places, and from the moment she stepped off the bus, she was in awe and just took in everything around her. She had this beautiful smile and beautiful spirit. She used a walker, but she didn't let it slow her down and experienced as much as she could. One day we all needed to cross the street to get ice cream. Our tour guide stopped traffic so Rose Leigh could cross safely. She was the type of person you stop traffic for. Everyone adored her."

Vines' love for Tech began nearly 60 years ago. She graduated from Tech in 1966 with a degree in biology and completed her training in 1968 at St. Thomas Hospital's School of Medical Technology. She





worked as a medical technologist for 11 years before earning her Ph.D. in anatomy from the University of Kentucky. She relocated to Sacramento, Calif., and embarked on a 38-year career in higher education at California State University, Sacramento.

Vines joined the Department of Biological Sciences at CSU Sacramento where she taught anatomy, histology, clinical hematology and body fluid analysis. In addition to teaching, she also served as department chair, the director of Distance and Distributed Education and the university faculty athlete representative to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). After retiring from CSU Sacramento in 2011, she joined the faculty at California Northstate University College of Medicine as a professor of anatomy and became the founding dean of the College of Health Sciences.

She received the Outstanding Teaching Award from CSU Sacramento's College of Arts and Sciences and Medical Technologist of the Year from the California Association for Medical Laboratory Technology for her contributions to the clinical laboratory sciences professions.

In the 1980s, the AIDS epidemic led to a decline in clinical laboratory scientists in California. People were concerned about working in hematology and unsure about lab safety. Recognizing this gap, Vines and a colleague developed a distance education curriculum that was live streamed to the entire California State University system. It was widely popular and boosted the numbers of clinical lab professionals throughout the state.

A leader in her field, Vines published more than 40 multimedia anatomy teaching tools for Pearson Publishing, the Animated Dissection of Anatomy (A.D.A.M.) medical encyclopedia and Micron Biosystems. Through these videos, she shared her love for anatomy with thousands of people around the country.

Rebecca Tolbert, a retired Tennessee Tech nursing faculty member and Academic Affairs administrator, says Vines also developed a digital tool to accompany the A.D.A.M. that included 3D imaging of the body. This manual endured for more than 25 years as the primary laboratory tool for anatomy and physiology. Tolbert and Vines also served together in the Philanthropic Educational Organization (P.E.O), and Tolbert says she considered Vines both a friend and a professional colleague.

"Rose Leigh was a true scholar, primarily interested in assisting students in learning the material required for lifelong careers in the medical fields," Tolbert said.

Swann says that while most little girls wanted baby dolls, Rose Leigh wanted The Invisible Man, a clear plastic model of the human body that could be taken apart and put back together. Swann adds that Vines was never a "home-ec-kind-of person"; instead, she loved Elizabeth Philpot's health classes in high school. She also loved Sara Stewart, her Girl Scout leader, who instilled in each girl a belief that "the sky is the limit." Swann says she thinks Vines' interest in biological science grew even further at Hooper and Huddleston (now Hooper, Huddleston and Horner) Funeral Home, where she went for



*Photo: Sacramento Business Journal*

sleepovers with her friend Helen Ann Hooper. Vines was interested in the business and asked Helen Ann's father Ed Hooper to show her around. She was fascinated by the embalming room.

Being involved in Girl Scouts also provided travel opportunities.

"She went to New York and Mexico with the Girl Scouts, and her suitcase was covered in travel stickers upon return," Swann said. "I really think her love of travel started there."

Vines' passion for biological sciences showed in her teaching. She loved her students, and they loved her. Vines also worked with a team of professionals throughout California to develop a statewide student association known as the California Association of Medical Laboratory Technologists (CAMLT).

Dr. Laurel Heffernen worked with Vines for 37 years in the Department of Biological Sciences at CSU Sacramento.

"I would describe Rose Leigh as one of the most outstanding faculty members I have known," Hefferman said. "Her courses were rigorous, used technology and provided students with the knowledge and skills to be competitive for admission into professional schools or clinical laboratory training programs. She was a valuable mentor to her students. Numerous doctors, physical therapists and clinical technologists in California owe their early professional training to Rose Leigh."

Dr. Jennifer Lundmark served as department chair immediately after Vines and says she inherited a well-run machine.

"Rose Leigh was such an icon of our Department of Biological Sciences, and she was beloved as a teacher by her colleagues and by thousands of students," Lundmark said. "I was honored to work with RLV, as she was often called, for 20 years. She was quick to laugh, quick to forgive and always put the wellbeing of students first. She had such a sense of professionalism and integrity and was absolutely respected by her colleagues. Our



department with RLV in charge was a happy one. If you know academia, you know this is rare.”

In addition to giving to her students and profession, Vines gave back in other ways as well. Swann says when she cleaned out her sister’s home, she found pens from numerous charitable organizations.


“She really thought, ‘I can make a difference. I can help people,’” Swann said. “She was such a loyal supporter of everything she was involved in. I don’t know if there’s a charity that she *didn’t* give to.”

Tech was one of the recipients of Vines’ generosity. Vines was 21 years True To Tech and a member of the President’s Club and gave primarily to Tech’s biology department – the program that laid the foundation for her success.

Swann says in addition to being generous with her philanthropy, Vines was also generous with her heart.

“She was friendly, fun, loyal and protective,” Swann said. “She was a champion of the underdog (me). She was the world’s best aunt to my three sons and their children. She was a sports nut. She taught me the rules to all the sports including how to drop-kick a football. She loved the Olympics and would tape every sport. Even when her mobility declined, she still wanted to travel. Nothing stopped her. I think she spent so much time encouraging other people that she had an encouraging voice in her head. And she loved to be with people. She was the best sister, daughter and friend anyone could have.”

Vines passed away on Aug. 21, 2023, just three weeks after returning home from the Tennessee Tech South Dakota/Badlands trip with Swann and two dozen alumni and friends.

“I enjoyed those trips with her so much,” Swann said. “And I am so grateful for that last trip.” 



*Rose Leigh Vines visits Mt. Rushmore in South Dakota as part of Tennessee Tech’s Golden Eagle Travel program.*

# Donor support inspires civil and environmental engineering students to research, teach and lead

Tennessee Tech's civil and environmental engineering students are inspired to research, teach and lead, thanks to a generous CEE alumnus who wants to help the next generation of engineers.

Danny Stoppenhagen ('78 civil engineering and '79 M.C.E.) has supported CEE students for nearly four decades, establishing the Stoppenhagen Civil & Environmental Engineering Scholarship and Danny R. Stoppenhagen Civil & Environmental Engineering Fund and providing gifts for the new Ashraf Islam Engineering Building (AIEB) and Building Information Modeling (BIM) Lab.

"I am proud of the quality of education that I received, the reputation of the university and the quality of training that graduates continue to receive," Stoppenhagen said.

After graduating from Tech, Stoppenhagen spent a year with an engineering firm before taking a job at Chris-Hill Construction Company, performing various engineering and project management functions until becoming a partner/owner in 1999. The company has played a major part in the development and construction of many roads,



*Center for Construction Business Information Modeling staff and students.*

bridges, sewer and water plants and infrastructure in the Memphis and Midsouth area.

"The depth and breadth of the education I received at Tech, both technical and in general, enabled me to be productive from the start of my career," Stoppenhagen said.

Dr. Craig Henderson, professor of structural engineering, is director and principle investigator for the Center for Construction and Building



Information Modeling (CCBIM) and says Stoppenhagen's construction expertise and financial support have been transformative for the BIM Lab. BIM is a digital representation of the physical and functional characteristics of a facility.

"With BIM, you can virtually fly through a building, turn it around and go underneath it," Henderson said. "We have used BIM to put instrumentation in the new engineering building to understand vibrations like seismic activity and wind. And students did that. Students essentially crawled around in the building using the BIM model to put cabling all through the building. Who gets to do that?! This wouldn't have happened without Danny Stoppenhagen."

Gracey Cobble, a senior CEE major, has worked in the CCBIM with Henderson for two years.

"Danny's contributions to our department have impacted me greatly," Cobble said. "I have gained quite a bit of experience with real-world applications through working there. One great example is using the software in the BIM Lab to model where the cables were placed. When we were out on the jobsite placing the sensors, having those models helped tremendously to figure out where in the building we needed to be. Danny's support has made that — and even more — possible for us."

Stoppenhagen also provides funding for research and teaching.

"I'm the main teacher, but we have students teaching Revit [a 4D building information modeling

application] and BIM," Henderson said. "We've had graduate and undergraduate students, and Danny has funded both."

When Tech hosted the groundbreaking ceremony for the AIEB, Henderson planned to give a presentation in the BIM Lab. Two days prior to the ceremony, he became ill. Henderson asked the students if they could do the presentation instead.

"The students said, 'Sure, we can do that,'" Henderson recalled. "The BIM Lab was full of deans, faculty, administrators, donors and special guests. That typifies the overall demeanor of these students, and it wouldn't be possible without Danny's funding. The overall vision is that students can do all kinds of things that we either don't let them do or don't think they can do. But engineering students can do all of these things, and Danny believes that. He believes in student leadership and has given students the opportunity to lead like this."

Donna Walls, administrative associate for CEE, says Stoppenhagen is providing growth opportunities.

"You can see how these students are truly blossoming, thanks to the experiences they've had here," Walls said. "They can write their own ticket for fantastic jobs. If we say the word 'students,' Danny is ready and eager to help. He always says, 'If the students need something, call me.' He loves to see and hear what we are doing. He's one of us."

At a recent CEE Advisory Board meeting, Ben Mohr, chair and associate professor, mentioned a



*Center for Construction Business Information Modeling staff and students work with Denark Construction and Tennessee Tech construction manager Bill Hall inside the new Ashraf Islam Engineering Building.*

need for additional scholarships. Stoppenhagen immediately stepped forward and established the Stoppenhagen Civil & Environmental Engineering Scholarship.

“The demand for civil engineers right now is the highest we’ve seen in history,” Mohr explained. “One of the ways to attract and retain students is through scholarships. Essentially, we want to make a civil engineering degree as affordable as possible. We want to attract as many students as we can into our program so we can graduate more students to help meet the demand. If companies and individuals help with scholarships now, that will produce more civil engineers in the future.”

Stoppenhagen says he supports CEE because he believes in what the department is doing and, in order to attract students and provide proper training, it must have adequate facilities and programs.

“It is my hope that Tech will continue to provide quality engineering education, the number of engineering graduates will increase and Tech will maintain its fine reputation both in the state and nationwide,” Stoppenhagen said. “I want to do my small part in achieving that. I hope that my giving will encourage and enable the next generation to pursue their education.” [G](#)



# Carolyn V. Whitaker Scholarship honors inaugural Tennessee Tech nursing faculty member

When Tennessee Tech's School of Nursing opened its doors in 1980, it did so with just five inaugural nursing faculty members. One of those faculty members was Carolyn V. Whitaker.

Whitaker passed away on Feb. 9, 2024, but her legacy lives on through every nursing class and every nursing graduate. Now, it will live on through the Carolyn V. Scholarship for Advanced Practice Nursing as well. Rebecca Tolbert, a retired Tech nursing faculty member and Academic Affairs administrator, funded the scholarship to honor a woman who is often described in one word: trailblazer.

"Carolyn was dedicated to excellent nursing care and meeting as many patients' needs as possible," Tolbert said. "And she was a trailblazer in providing nurse practitioner care to patients."

Tolbert knows what it took to establish a school of nursing at Tech because she, too, was one of those inaugural five. Tolbert recalls that in the fall of 1979, Tech received a grant from the National Institutes of Health to establish a school of nursing. While some other higher education institutions in Tennessee were establishing two-year programs, then-Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Wallace Prescott insisted that Tech's school offer a baccalaureate program.

Tech hired Patricia Sommer as the school's first dean in February 1980, then hired the first two nursing faculty members: Tolbert, followed by Whitaker. The three spent the spring of 1980



designing the curriculum, writing course objectives, collaborating with faculty about pre-requisite courses, outlining admission criteria and establishing graduation requirements. They also worked with the physical plant to remodel Tech's Campus School into the school of nursing. They purchased classroom furniture, office furniture and supplies.

"Carolyn and I, along with Dean Patricia Sommer, shared the philosophy of a nursing program where each faculty member would be a nurse with a strong clinical background," Tolbert said. "All faculty members were hired with this in mind. We believe this foundation for the curriculum has served the students well and led to the excellent program it continues to be today. Healthcare in the Upper Cumberland is much improved, thanks to the explosion of BSN nurses, MSN nurses and now doctoral nurses practicing here."

Whitaker, Sommer and Tolbert visited clinical facilities at Cookeville General Hospital (now Cookeville Regional), Cumberland Medical in Crossville, Livingston Memorial and White County and mental health facilities in Cookeville, Chattanooga, Murfreesboro and Virginia. They also visited nursing homes, health departments and senior citizens centers.

They hired three additional faculty members and a laboratory director, advised freshmen and sophomore students, and had 30 juniors ready for nursing school in the fall. Two years later, in the spring of 1982, they awarded bachelor of science in nursing degrees to 28 students.

In 1982, there were just 200 registered nurses and five nurses with master's degrees in the 14 Upper Cumberland counties. Tech's graduates joined them, with 94% remaining in Tennessee and approximately 50% remaining in the Upper Cumberland.

Dr. Tammy Williams Howard was one of Whitaker's early students. Today, she is an assistant professor of nursing at Tech.

"Carolyn was always a strong voice for nursing," said Howard. "Her strong voice included advocating for full practice nurse practitioners and other political issues affecting nursing and healthcare, especially patients in rural areas. She also promoted the idea of the school nurse program."

Tolbert and Howard say Whitaker was a trailblazer for nursing long before her tenure at Tech. She was one of the first to graduate from Vanderbilt's new master's program for nurse practitioners and was one of the first nurse practitioners in the State of Tennessee. In 1972, she opened the first nurse practitioner-run medical clinic in Red Boiling Springs, Tenn. — a rural community without ambulance service. Most households didn't even have a telephone. She ran the clinic with just one assistant and a volunteer who helped clean.

When ambulances weren't available, Whitaker worked with local funeral homes to carry patients in hearses instead. She also made many home visits, often on horseback if the roads weren't passable. The clinic was located next to the post office, which was convenient since the clinic didn't have laboratory service and had to mail everything



to the state lab. It is estimated that Whitaker served more than 6,000 patients in the region.

Whitaker's Tech career allowed her to come full circle. She had actually studied pre-nursing at Tech — then Tennessee Polytechnic Institute — before going on to study at St. Thomas School of Nursing and ultimately earning her bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing from Vanderbilt University.

After more than two decades at Tech, she retired in 2005 and was granted associate professor emerita status, but her impact was far from over. Whitaker had laid the groundwork for decades of impact, growth and success for Tech's School of Nursing.



Today, the Whitson-Hester School of Nursing (named by the late philanthropist Larry Hester for his late wife Jean Whitson-Hester) offers a traditional four-year bachelor's degree, bachelor's of science in nursing second-degree program, registered nurse to bachelor's program, master's of science in nursing program and doctorate of nursing practice program. Tech BSN graduates have a first-time NCLEX pass rate of more than 95%, often outperforming every public and private four-year university in the state.

Dr. Kim Hanna, dean of the Whitson-Hester School of Nursing, has witnessed Whitaker's impact for decades — and it all started when Hanna was a student. Hanna graduated from Tech with a bachelor's degree in nursing in 1983 — a member of the school of nursing's second class.

"I certainly recognize where we come from and appreciate the people and events that led to where we are today," Hanna said. "I believe that the community needed the school, and the school needed the community. I credit the inaugural faculty members for their vision and dedication to building a strong foundation for a school of nursing, and I am grateful to Becky for establishing a scholarship to honor Carolyn and provide scholarship opportunities for advanced practice nursing. Carolyn was passionate about the advancement of nurse practitioners in the Upper Cumberland region, Tennessee and beyond. I firmly believe that our community is better because of people like Carolyn and Becky and because of Tech's Whitson-Hester School of Nursing." [G](#)

# Faculty and staff share why they are True To Tech

Tennessee Tech alumni frequently recall university faculty and staff who made a difference in their lives. Whether it's a professor who delivers an inspiring lecture, an administrative associate who secures a registration permit for a popular class or an advisor who ensures timely graduation, Tech's employees are dedicated to student success.

There's no doubt that faculty and staff give their time and talent to students, but many give philanthropically as well. In fact, a large percentage of Tech's faculty and staff are members of True To Tech, a giving society that recognizes donors who make a gift to Tech every year.

Dr. Brian O'Connor, associate professor of mathematics, is 43-years True To Tech and says many of his gifts are in honor or memory of a respected colleague.

"From my best friend Stuart Stumpf of the history department who passed away in 1984 at the age of 40, to most recently LeBron Bell [professor emeritus in the exercise science department] who passed away last year, I feel it is important to remember people who have done good work and contributed to making Tennessee Tech what it is today," O'Connor said. "It is fitting to remember and honor those who have demonstrated (in the



*Dr. Brian O'Connor, associate professor of mathematics*

words of the Tennessee Tech Hymn) faithful service, love and loyalty."

Gina Padgett, coordinator for the Office of Enrollment and Communications, is 40 years True To Tech. While her support has touched many different areas on campus, she has chosen to designate the majority of her gifts to the School of Music and the Maggie Phelps Endowment for the Millard Oakley STEM Center. Padgett says the School of Music offers high-quality educational and performance opportunities for students, and the Millard Oakley STEM Center provides state-of-the-art educational opportunities for teachers and children.





*Gina Padgett, coordinator for the Office of Enrollment and Communications*

“I give to Tech consistently because I want to make an impact in the lives of students,” Padgett said. “Working at Tech for nearly 24 years, I still find it exciting to talk with students and alumni about their college experiences, career paths and plans for the future. I see the value in my support of the programs and initiatives to which I give and the students who benefit as a result. It is truly rewarding, and I encourage others to join me in making a difference.”

Tawnya Robinson-Moss, administrative associate in the School of Agriculture, says her 34-year history of giving to Tech started with just \$1.

In 1990, Brenda Elrod, an employee in Tech’s financial aid office, asked faculty and staff to give \$1 each month to fund a scholarship for students who were unable to pay their tuition. Hundreds of faculty and staff participated via payroll deduction, making it easy to give monthly. And many of those faculty and staff still give to the scholarship today.

“Did I miss that \$1?” Robinson-Moss asked. “No, not at all. That experience made me realize that even though I wasn’t giving a large amount of money, when combined with gifts from others, we



*Tawnya Robinson-Moss, administrative associate for the School of Agriculture*

were able to fund a scholarship. Since then, I have continued to give to other scholarships and programs that assist students.”

Kim Hanna, dean of the Whitson-Hester School of Nursing, is also 34 years True To Tech and, like Robinson-Moss, started out by giving \$1 each month to the scholarship Elrod created.

“I was one of many who started out by giving \$1 each month,” Hanna said. “Since that time, I have become more aware of the importance of donating to scholarships, and I have made gifts to Tech to honor or memorialize people and continue the legacy of preparing future nurses to provide quality care to individuals families and communities. With the current nursing shortage, the need for more nurses, advanced practice nurses, nurse educators and nurse leaders is crucial. My heart’s desire is to personally contribute and encourage others to give to advance the health and wellbeing for all.”

Thanks to initial support from faculty and staff, the first TTU Student Educational Scholarship was awarded in 1991. In the years that followed, alumni and community members followed the Tech employees’ lead and supported the scholarship as well. In 2013, in recognition of Elrod’s spirit and service, the scholarship was renamed the Brenda Elrod TTU Student Educational Scholarship.

“Brenda was passionate about helping students who were struggling to pay tuition,” said Robinson-Moss. “I’m very happy that the scholarship was renamed in her honor.”




*Dr. Kimberly Hanna, dean of the Whitson-Hester School of Nursing*

Elrod passed away in 2023, but her legacy lives on through the scholarship and the many gifts she inspired. To date, more than 25,000 gifts have been made to the Brenda Elrod TTU Student Educational Scholarship, and the scholarship has been awarded 107 times.

Like Hanna and many others whose support started with \$1 each month, Robinson-Moss increased her giving over time. She now gives to agriculture scholarships as well and witnesses firsthand how scholarships make a difference. She works closely with the School of Agriculture scholarship committee and says they always have more students in need than funds available.



"There have been multiple times we needed funds for a deserving student, but all of our scholarships had been awarded," she said. "We have students who are single moms, or students who are working three jobs, and countless others who are struggling to pay tuition. It's heartbreaking when you have students tell you they won't be back the next semester because they can't afford it."

"I took this position because it was an opportunity to be with students on a day-to-day basis," she said. "They are a great group of young people to work with and are always appreciative of my help. At the end of the day, it is a good feeling to know I have helped a student or two. I truly believe it is better to give than to receive." 

Robinson-Moss says she enjoys working in the School of Agriculture because of the students. They are the inspiration behind her support.



Once a donor has given to Tech for two or more consecutive years, he or she is recognized as True To Tech.

More than 2,200 donors are designated as True To Tech

Each year, True To Tech donors receive a magnet and window cling decal displaying the number of consecutive years they've given.

True To Tech donors' consecutive giving ranges from 2 years to more than 50 years.

**Learn more about how you can become True To Tech:**

**[tntech.edu/TrueToTech](http://tntech.edu/TrueToTech)**

# Tennessee Tech Track and Cross Country Coach Tony Cox and Amy Cox establish scholarship to support next generation of coaches

For Coach Tony Cox ('83 geology, '92 chemistry and '09 M.A.) and Amy Cox, running isn't just a hobby or a sport. It's a way of life. Running brought them together, and for Tony, who serves as the assistant coach of track and cross country at Tennessee Tech, it's become his career. Now, Tony and Amy want to give back to a sport and to a university that has been an important part of their lives and help the next generation of exercise science professionals.

The Coach Tony Cox and Amy Cox Scholarship will be awarded to former Tech student-athletes who are pursuing a graduate degree in the Department of Exercise Science, with preference given to a former member of Tech's track or cross country team.

"Amy and I believe in lifelong learning," Tony said. "We have both continued our formal education well into adulthood and continue to push ourselves to learn new things. We want to pay it forward to student-athletes so that they can push the science of exercise forward, whether that's through research, teaching or coaching. There are many opportunities to make a difference."



Tony was the first person in his family to attend college, and he chose Tech because it was close to his hometown of Crossville.

"Once I started classes, I realized that I could do anything I wanted," he said. "Tennessee Tech has opened up my world."

Tony says he had always been interested in science so he majored in geology. He was also a member of the Golden Eagle cross country team.

"We had a great group of guys and formed some strong bonds through all those miles we ran together," he said. "I was never the best on the team, but I always admired the dedication of those guys."

After graduating with his geology degree, Tony worked for Fleetguard (now Cummins) in Cookeville for more than 20 years. He started as a technician in the chemistry lab doing research and development on engine fluids and metals. This inspired Tony to go back to school to earn a degree in chemistry, which he did while working full time.

While at Cummins, Tony was asked to help coach the track team at Tech. He worked at both Cummins and Tech for a while, but eventually coaching won out.

"I realized how much of an impact I could have on these young people, and I haven't looked back!" he said. "I wanted to do the best job I could, so I went back to school and earned a master's degree in exercise science. It has served me well, and I have now been a part of Tech's cross country and track program for almost 30 years."

Tony added, "There is a phrase that says, 'They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.' A coach has to be there to support the athlete. The athlete has to believe in the coach. The coach has to know his or her sport and how to coach it, but it's really all about building a relationship between the coach and the athlete."

While Amy is not a Tech graduate nor a Tech employee, she considers herself an honorary Golden Eagle and says Tech has become an important part of her life, thanks to Tony. And she shares his love for running. Amy ran track in high school and experienced firsthand the impact a coach can have on a student-athlete.

"I started running in high school before there was a girl's track team," she explained. "The encouragement from my coach and other team members was remarkable. When a visiting coach refused to let his male athletes compete if my coach let 'that girl' run, my coach supported me, even when the other team stayed on the bus during the competition."

Amy also ran track and cross country at the Air Force Academy and was part of the team that competed at Cross Country Nationals in 1980. She attended graduate school at Arizona State University and discovered the sport of summer biathlon (running and shooting). She was selected for the U.S. National Team and competed across the U.S. and at the International Championships in Austria and Poland.

After deciding to pursue a nursing career, Amy moved to Tennessee to attend graduate school at Vanderbilt University and says running in state parks was a great way to experience Tennessee. That's actually how she and Tony met, and Amy says their dates often included traveling to state park races.

Amy enjoyed a successful career as a nurse practitioner and recently retired from Tennessee Oncology. She is currently pursuing a master's



degree in theology through Saint Meinard Seminary in Indiana and is scheduled to graduate in spring 2025.

With multiple undergraduate and graduate degrees between them, Tony and Amy say they hope their scholarship encourages student-athletes to pursue graduate education because they know how important graduate degrees have been for their careers.

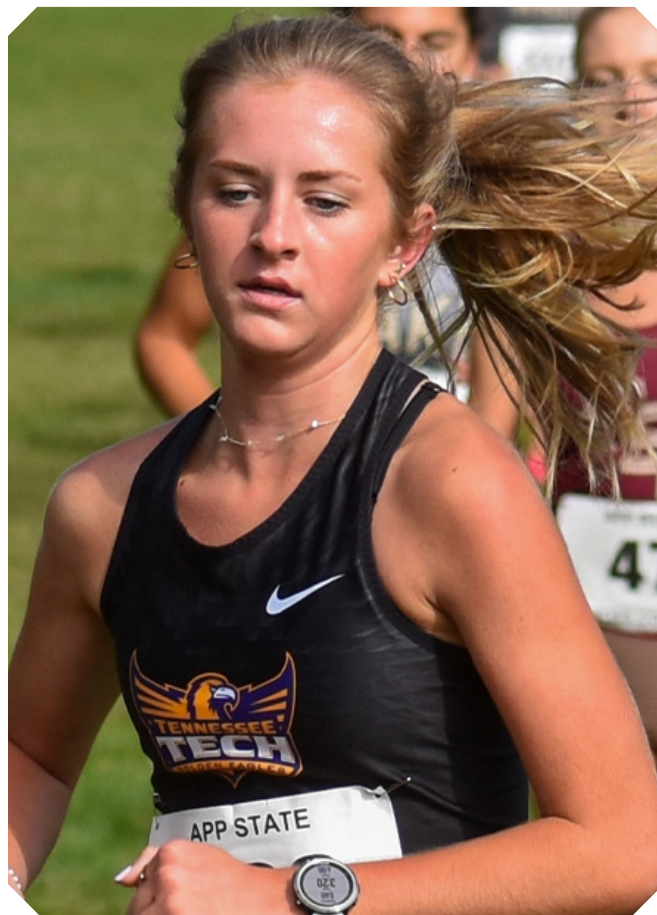
Lisa Zagumny, dean of the College of Education, says the scholarship will have a tremendous impact on both the Department of Exercise Science and the College of Graduate Studies.

“Scholarships often serve as a bridge to support students when there are gaps in funding,” Zagumny said. “Sometimes scholarships are the only means of financial support. Most importantly, scholarships like the Coach Tony Cox and Amy Cox Scholarship show students that there are people out there who care about them and want them to succeed.”

Tony and Amy say they believe strongly that Tech prepares student-athletes for success.

“I have spent most of my adult life in and around Tennessee Tech,” Tony said. “I have three degrees from Tech, and I am proud to tell people that Tech is my school. Tech is a great school academically, and it has an excellent reputation in the region. People who work at Tech take pride in what they do and work hard to give students the best education and college experience possible.”

Amy added, “Coaching is about so much more than athletic success. Tony is, first and foremost, a mentor and role model for his athletes. He cares about their personal growth, educational success and athletic performance. We have watched his athletes graduate, enter the workforce, have families and even become coaches! They keep in touch with Tony. We are invited to weddings and baby showers. Coaches have the opportunity to have a lifelong impact, and we want to support the next generation of coaches.” [G](#)



# Henry Bowman honors wife Monika through gifts to her alma mater

When Henry Bowman is asked why he gives to Tennessee Tech, his answer is simple:

“Well, why not? Giving back helps other people, and that’s a good feeling,” he said.

Henry’s support of Tech also honors his late wife Monika. While Henry is not a Tech graduate, Monika is, and Henry says she is the inspiration behind the couple’s support of Tech.

Henry earned a bachelor’s degree from Austin Peay State University (APSU) and a master’s degree from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville (UTK). Monika received a bachelor’s degree from UTK and a master’s degree in educational psychology and counselor education from Tech. Monika passed away on May 14, 2023, and Henry says he continues to support Tech to honor her.

Tech isn’t the only beneficiary of the Bowmans’ support. They also support APSU, WCTE PBS and Cookeville Regional Medical Center (CRMC), where Monika enjoyed a career in social services. Henry says helping students is what matters most to him; it doesn’t necessarily matter where they attend.



“I grew up in an academic atmosphere,” Henry explained. “My dad was dean of admissions at Austin Peay, and I have always felt an appreciation for the opportunities and experiences the university afforded me. I have a real affinity for higher education.”

Henry adds that his 50-year career as a research analyst for the Upper Cumberland Development

District allowed him to witness firsthand how important Tech is to the community.

“I see the need out there, and giving to Tech is a good thing to do,” he said. “We have some low-income areas within the Upper Cumberland, and anything we can do to help the individuals there is just another bonus.”

The Bowmans have supported Tech for nearly 35 years, giving to numerous areas on campus but specifically designating much of their support for the College of Education through the Monika and Henry Bowman Education Scholarship and the women’s basketball team through the Monika and Henry Bowman Women’s Basketball Endowed Scholarship.

Henry says the scholarship for education majors honors Monika’s master’s degree.

“She cared a lot about the College of Education, and we need teachers in this area, so establishing this scholarship was a big part of that,” Henry said. “She was very dedicated to her work at the hospital, and she was glad she was able to get a master’s degree that enabled her to get that job. She was good at counseling, and she helped a lot of people. I hear that a lot.”

Lisa Zagumny, dean of the College of Education, says she knows Monika was the inspiration behind the scholarship for education majors.

“Student support in the form of scholarships can make a difference in a student earning a degree,” Zagumny said. “Monika and Henry were well

aware of that fact and wanted to ensure that they could be that difference in the life of a student.”

Henry says he and Monika established the women’s basketball scholarship because of their fondness for Head Coach Kim Rosamond and because they have enjoyed attending the games.

“Monika and Henry have been season ticket holders and active supporters of Tennessee Tech Athletics for more than two decades,” Rosamond said. “I was fortunate to get to know them on another level when they established the Monika and Henry Bowman Women’s Basketball Endowment. It was an honor to spend time with them and learn how passionate Monika was about enriching the lives of others and providing opportunities for young women. Monika’s graciousness and kindness were always on display and she is greatly missed, but her legacy lives on in what she has done and continues to do for others.”

Although Monika passed away last year, her impact remains — on Tech’s campus, at APSU and at CRMC.

John Bell, executive director of CRMC Foundation, says Monika had a unique way of navigating difficult situations with professionalism and compassion. To honor her memory and continue her legacy, CRMC Foundation established the Monika Bowman Endowment for Ethics to promote ethics within CRMC through recognition, training and scholarship for staff and volunteers active in patient care.




“Monika was a part of our CRMC family for 40 years, working in social services and later as an auxiliary member,” Bell said. “She helped establish the Women’s Center and was a founding member of the Ethics Committee. Those who worked with Monika knew her as driven, detailed and by-the-book while remaining unconditionally kind. She did what was right – always.”

Tiff Rector serves as executive director of planned giving for Tech and says that in addition to gifts for scholarships and programs, the Bowmans also planned an estate gift.

“The endowments the Bowmans have created and the estate gift they’ve planned are a permanent part of Tech’s campus,” Rector said. “I know that 20, 30, 40, 50 years from now, a student will receive a scholarship that the Bowmans

established. That student will never have had a chance to meet them, but he or she will have the privilege to accept something that others established so unselfishly. I know we all feel Monika’s profound loss, but her legacy will be here, and it will be at APSU, and it will be at the hospital. She will always be a part of this campus and this community.”

Henry says he will continue to support Tech because it’s important to keep Monika’s memory alive.

“May 14,” he said. “I will always remember. And I will continue to give because, well, why not? The students are important, regardless of where they attend. But I live in Cookeville, and Tech is an important part of the Upper Cumberland region, and I want to help the students here.” 



*Tennessee Tech Director of Athletics Mark Wilson, Monika and Henry Bowman, Head Women’s Basketball Coach Kim Rosamond and Executive Director of Planned Giving Tiff Rector announce the new Monika and Henry Bowman Women’s Basketball Endowed Scholarship (Photo: TTU Sports, May 2019).*

# 100-year-old Tennessee Tech alumnus, 1949 electrical engineering graduate reflects on education that led to successful career

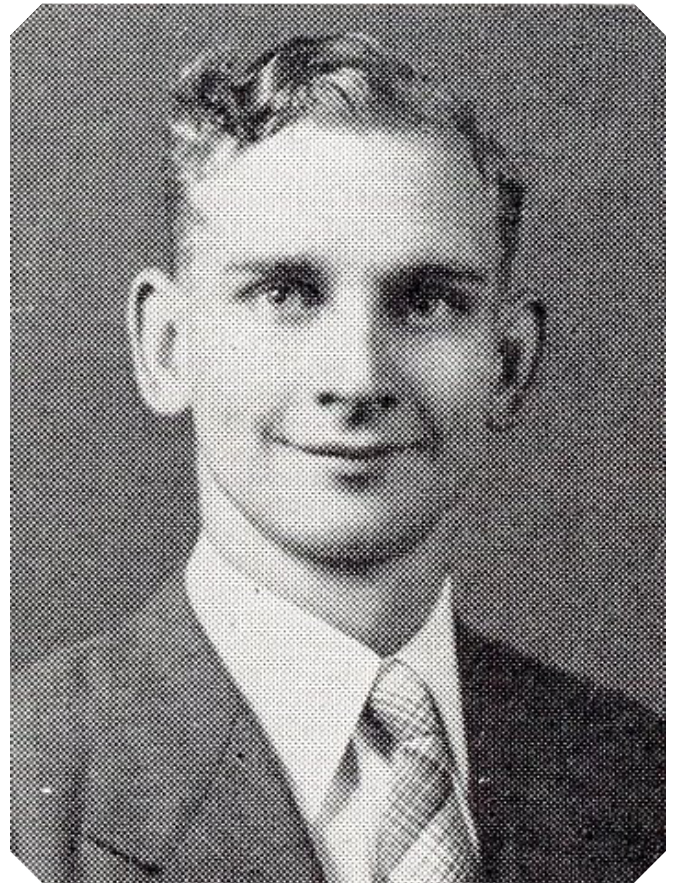
James “Jim” Herschel Boehms turned 100 years young on Feb. 15, 2024.

Jim’s nephew Bill Norton says the secret to turning 100 is that his uncle has done a lot of things right in his life: a Tennessee Tech electrical engineering degree which led to a successful career as an engineer with Tennessee Valley Authority, a loving family and a fulfilling retirement. Jim says many of his life’s successes might not have happened if it weren’t for Tech.

“Tech gave me the background, education and confidence to step into a new place and a new job,” Jim said. “I couldn’t have done anything, really, without my degree from Tech. Tech has always opened doors for me.”

Jim enrolled at Tech (then known as Tennessee Polytechnic Institute) in 1941 through the National Youth Administration (NYA) program, which paid for his tuition.

“I chose Tennessee Tech because it had “tech” in its name,” Jim said. “I liked that Tech had a technical focus. The rest is history.”



*Photo: 1949 Tennessee Tech Eagle yearbook*

Unfortunately, Jim's college education was put on hold on Dec. 7, 1941, when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. The United States was suddenly at war, and the NYA program funding Jim's college education was discontinued. Jim landed a job in Omaha, Neb., at a factory that built airplanes for the military. He enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps (now the U.S. Air Force) in 1943 and was discharged in 1946. After his military service, Jim returned to Tech on the G.I. Bill to finish his degree.

During his senior year at Tech, Jim put his electrical engineering education to practical use when he and his father Herschel wired the family's new home for electricity. The previous Boehms family home burned down while Jim was in Omaha, and the family lost almost everything.

"This was during the war time," Jim explained. "It was hard to get materials. Windows for the new home were actually donated by a hotel that was being torn down. Over Thanksgiving weekend, my dad and I wired the house. And this was before wiring like they have today where you just twist the wires together with a wire nut connector. All of our connections had to be soldered. We wired the house together, and it passed inspection!"

Jim credits this to his Tech education and a Sears, Roebuck guide on wiring homes.

"That booklet included step-by-step instructions on how to make connections and pull wires," Jim said.

Jim's son John added, "This is a good testament to Dad and Grandpa and their wiring prowess:

That house is still standing and has not burned down."

"Getting electricity was like going from night to day," Jim said. "My mother got an electric range and an electric refrigerator right away and gradually added a few more things. Now, you can't imagine going without electricity, but it wasn't available to us back then, so we had to do it."

Jim graduated from Tech in 1949 and, after working for a concrete testing company for two years, received a letter from TVA offering him a job.

Jim retired from TVA in 1984 after 33 years and is proud to say that he has been retired from TVA longer than he worked for TVA. He has enjoyed every minute of his retirement and is grateful for a successful career and retirement plan with TVA that afforded him the opportunity to travel with his wife, Lyla, until she passed away in 2014.

Jim added, "I've heard Max Sprouse, the head electrical engineer and later head engineer of the design division of TVA, say many times, 'I like to get those Tennessee Tech grads. You can put them at a desk and they go to work. All they want to do is work.'"

Jim's love for Tech and success in electrical engineering inspired other family members to attend Tech and pursue a similar career path as well, including Jim's nephew Dennis Boehms ('78 electrical engineering) and niece Joni Batson ('78 electrical engineering).





*Jim Boehms (left) with wife Lyla and sons John and James.*

“Tech was an easy decision for me,” Batson said. “I’d heard about it my whole life from Uncle Jim. My dad also worked for TVA and so did Dennis’s dad, so we all have this connection between TVA and electrical engineering and Tennessee Tech. Uncle Jim was always so encouraging and enthusiastic about Tech. We all did very well after going there.”

Jim’s engineering accomplishments include work on all the coal-fired plants that were in the TVA fleet as well as some groundbreaking work on TVA’s first and largest nuclear power plant, Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant. Given the nuclear regulatory requirements and the size and complexity of the plant, the project was under obvious scrutiny. Jim routinely presented design

concepts and plans to the regulators as TVA’s representative for auxiliary power.

When Jim’s son John worked at Browns Ferry decades later, he found project documents that his dad created and quickly realized what a legacy Jim had left.

“As I moved into nuclear power, I began to learn about some of the things that Dad did,” John said. “The director of projects at Browns Ferry was a friend and close acquaintance. One day he called me and asked, ‘Is your dad James H. Boehms?’ He asked me to come over to his office. He had a presentation about how power was to be supplied to the Browns Ferry cooling towers. The presentation, which was presented to the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission prior to installation, was authored and presented by my dad and another colleague. I called Dad to let him know about the conversation. His response was, ‘Why in the world are they looking at a 40-year-old paper? Don’t they have something new to look at?’”

John says this is one of many examples of Jim’s wit and unassuming nature.

John added, “During my conversation with Dad, he mentioned that he had drafted the key diagram for station auxiliaries, which was the first drawing done on TVA’s nuclear power plant. I still have a copy of that drawing. In those TVA books, you see a list of key engineers at the beginning. And you see the name James H. Boehms. Dad is pretty humble, but that’s a big deal.”

Jim has stayed connected with Tech through the decades, attending sporting events, sitting in the President's Box at football games and serving as treasurer of the Tennessee Tech alumni chapter in his area.

"The chapter didn't have much money, so it was fine," Jim joked.

Jim has also chosen to give back to his alma mater for more than 45 years, giving to numerous areas on campus including the Eagle Assistance Grant (an emergency grant for students in need) and Tech's nursing building, Bell Hall. But the majority of his gifts have been designated for the College of Engineering.

"Tech had given me so much," Jim explained. "Without Tech, I might have been scrubbing floors. I feel like I owe Tech, so I continue to give."

Although 75 years have passed since Jim graduated from Tech, what set Tech apart in the 1940s remains true today.

"One great thing about Tennessee Tech is you can get to know your professors," Jim said. "At a big university, I don't think that's possible. But at Tech, you can get to know them, and they will know you. Their doors are open, and you can go in and talk to them. That's easy to do there. Tech prepared me for a 33-year career as an electrical engineer. Without Tech, I wouldn't be where I am today."

In preparation for Jim's 100th birthday, his nephew Bill Norton wrote a short biography of Jim's life for his hometown newspaper, the Hickman County Times.

"Jim's capacity to surprise has sharpened as he has added decades," Norton wrote. "At 92 years old, when many were giving up their car keys, Jim bought a new Toyota Camry. When immobilized (or so we thought) by a recent fall, he got tired of rehab and simply left the facility and walked home. Jim's love, devotion and loyalty to his family are legendary. You never know when your phone will ring and there will be Uncle Jim, sharp as ever, who just wants to catch up. When asked how he's doing, his response is always, 'Well, I don't buy green bananas.' How can you not love this guy? How should one pursue 10 decades on earth? Just look at what Jim Boehms is doing." [G](#)



# History alumna establishes travel endowment as thank-you to Tennessee Tech's history faculty

Rebekah Tidwell Fisher ('98 history) says her Tennessee Tech degree prepared her for law school and gave her the skills needed to open her own commercial real estate law firm, Rebekah Fisher and Associates, PLLC. As a thank you to the department and the faculty who prepared her for success, Fisher established the Rebekah Tidwell Fisher History Faculty Appreciation Endowment.

"I was so well-prepared for law school because of the rigor of the reading and writing curriculum within Tech's history department," Fisher said. "That's exactly what law school is: reading, analyzing, writing and explaining. And I use those skills in my job every day."

Dr. Kent Dollar, chair of Tech's history department, says financial support for faculty travel is a continuing need in his department.

"Historians are often required to travel to archives and institutions across the nation as well as overseas in order to examine the historical sources they need," Dollar said. "In addition to those research trips, faculty routinely attend history conferences where they not only present



their research, but they also engage in professional networking and serve as ambassadors of Tennessee Tech. Fisher's generous gift will help ensure that history faculty



have the funds necessary to do all of these things.”

Fisher says she always had an interest in law school and was encouraged to pursue a degree in history. During her time at Tech, she took as many law-related classes as possible including political science, history of law and business law.

“If there was anything that was even tangentially law-related, I took that class,” she said. “And that was very helpful in law school – just to have exposure to information like that.”

Fisher says she had many fantastic professors at Tech, but three history faculty stand out as the reason for her endowment: Dr. Peter Field, Dr. Jeff Roberts and Dr. Kriste Lindenmeyer.

“I was at Tech at a really cool time when we had some awesome young professors,” Fisher said. “Those three professors – and many others as well – took an interest in me and in my academic success that was just really above and beyond. They always supported me and knew when to challenge me to do better or work harder, but yet were always encouraging and thoughtful and spent hours helping me. Dr. Field was my advisor, and I audited a course he was teaching at Columbia one summer. That’s something I never would have had exposure to.”

Roberts, who now serves as interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, jokes that it’s been a while since he was “young and cool” but says he is honored by Fisher’s gift.

“Rebekah was one of the finest students I’ve ever had,” Roberts said. “I’m not at all surprised that she has enjoyed success as an attorney – her intellect, writing and analytical skills would have allowed for high achievements in many fields. It warms my heart to learn that she established the Rebekah Tidwell Fisher History Faculty Appreciation Travel Endowment. It will help the newer crop of ‘young and cool’ build their vitae, while also assisting us older but still active types in completing our research projects.”

Fisher says Lindenmeyer helped her figure out her path after completing her undergraduate degree.

“When I graduated, I thought maybe I would be a professor,” Fisher said. “Was I going to get my Ph.D. and teach, or would I go to law school? My professors all gave me a hard time and told me I’m not weird enough to be a college professor. I laugh about that to this day.”

After graduating from Tech, Fisher was accepted to the University of Cincinnati College of Law. She says one of the reasons she applied there is because Lindenmeyer recommended it.

“I went into law school very prepared,” Fisher said. “I wasn’t overwhelmed by the work load or the testing style, and that was thanks to Tech’s history department and the faculty there. I remember Dr. Roberts’ tests in particular where he would pose a question like, ‘If Martin Luther King was Abraham Lincoln’s advisor, what would his advice have been about...whatever topic we were studying at the time?’ They were these super complicated questions where you had to understand two



*Tennessee Tech History Department faculty and staff*

different people plus the topic you were analyzing, and you had to tie all that together.”

After law school, Fisher worked for several law firms in Cincinnati and Nashville before starting her own.

“I wanted to create a new firm that was more aligned with my values,” she said. “I wanted to offer personal services to clients. When I created the firm in 2014, we had four people. Now we have 18.”

Fisher says she wanted to establish a faculty travel endowment because travel is something she’s passionate about.

“One of the things I enjoyed most at Tech was learning about my professors’ research and seeing their passion for their area of study,” she said. “For

a lot of them, their passion is some really weird, obscure thing, and when they have the opportunity to study it or meet their mentor and bring that information back to the classroom, it’s invigorating. My professors would talk about their own research and where they had traveled, and they showed us pictures. I want them to continue to do that.”


Troy Smith, associate professor of history, says he is grateful for faculty travel funds. Smith recently took several graduate students on a four-day trip to visit the most significant Cherokee sites in the East, including the Museum of the Cherokee People in North Carolina, Red Clay in Tennessee, the Tennessee gravesite of Cherokee hero Nancy Ward and the Vann House in Georgia, among others.

“The goal was to prepare graduate students for the cultural focus that is going to be the center of research, plus meet representatives from our partner communities that can help put students in touch with important research sources,” Smith explained.

While a grant paid for the graduate students’ travel, the history department covered Smith’s portion. Roberts says this is why an endowment like Fisher’s is critical.

“Travel is one of those areas that often suffers in budget cuts,” Roberts explained. “Such an endowment helps restore and even expand possibilities for professional development.”

Fisher says her appreciation for educators goes way back: Her mother was a public-school teacher.

“I know there is a public service component to the profession,” Fisher said. “You’re not in it for the money. You’re in it because you have a passion for teaching other people and propelling them to be more than who they are right now. I thought this endowment was a great way to honor some of the professors who were really special to me. This is a way to give back to them so that they, in turn, can pour more into their students.” 



*Associate Professor of History Troy Smith and history graduate students visit Cherokee sites in Tennessee, Georgia and North Carolina.*



# Tennessee Tech's Giving Tuesday honors 100 years of The Oracle newspaper

Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

Tennessee Tech celebrated its most successful Giving Tuesday in history on Nov. 28, 2023, when it asked alumni and friends to honor 100 years of free speech, campus news and experiential learning by making a gift to The Oracle student newspaper.

The very first “Tech Oracle” was published on April 24, 1924, and on Giving Tuesday, more than 150 alumni and friends made a gift to help fund the print and online versions of the newspaper, resulting in the most gifts Tech has ever received on a Giving Tuesday.

“The Oracle turns 100 only once,” said Kathleen Lordo, the annual giving coordinator for the Crawford Alumni Center. “Giving Tuesday was the perfect opportunity to honor 100 years and ensure that this important campus tradition can continue for future generations. The fact that so many alumni and friends made a gift shows how important Tech’s newspaper is to the university. Whether alumni were members of The Oracle staff



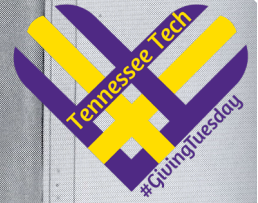
*Managing editor Becky Conquest prepares a paste-up of The Oracle at the plant. (Photo: 1969 Eagle Yearbook)*

or simply remember reading the newspaper, it was part of their college experience.”

Since 2016, Tech has participated in Giving Tuesday, an international day of giving celebrated on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving when people all over the world support causes that have a positive impact on their communities.

Gus Creter, a communication major and copy editor for The Oracle, says he is grateful for the opportunities the student newspaper provides.

“The fact that The Oracle is celebrating its 100-year anniversary is amazing because it means that this piece of media that some people have



*News staff Chris Cantrell, Frankie Hendrixson, Sue Haste, Diane Hartnett and Janice Rogers try to meet a deadline. (Photo: 1959 Eagle Yearbook)*


decided has gone out of style is, at least here at Tennessee Tech, going strong,” Creter said. “We are putting out great issues with a really solid team behind them.”

The Oracle also encourages interdisciplinary learning and collaboration among majors — not all staff members major in communication. Lilly Davis serves as a photographer for The Oracle and is a human ecology major.

“I love being able to capture the pure and raw moments in campus life and share those photos with students and see how happy it makes them,” Davis said.

Bee Goodman, a communication major and managing editor for The Oracle, says she wishes to thank everyone who reads and supports the newspaper.

“My favorite thing about working on The Oracle is being able to make this mark on history while also being able to keep in touch with the community,” Goodman said. “I find that these stories start out as small things and blossom into something more. I am happy that I am able to be here and get real experience and make real connections with The Oracle, the community, the nation and more.”

Read the latest edition of The Oracle online at [tntech.edu/oracle](http://tntech.edu/oracle). 



# Where in the world is Awesome Eagle?

Thanks to Tennessee Tech alumni, Awesome Eagle has traveled the world. He's visited Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, Greece, Amsterdam, Budapest, Germany, more than half of the 50 states and dozens of national parks. And the best part is that behind each adventure is a gift to Tech's University Memorial Scholarship.

Established to remember Golden Eagles loved and lost, the University Memorial Scholarship is one of Tech's most strategic scholarships for recruitment and retention. Last year, Tech's Crawford Alumni Center asked alumni to make a gift to the University Memorial Scholarship and, in return, donors received a small stuffed Awesome Eagle to take with them on their travels. The Crawford Alumni Center encouraged alumni to take photos of Awesome in various locations, and photos flooded in from across the globe.

Eric Hyche ('87 electrical engineering) and Angie Hyche ('87 biology) are on a quest to visit all national parks, and they were excited to take Awesome Eagle with them. So far, they have visited 53 of the 63 national parks.

"We loved the idea of taking a little piece of Tech with us on our travels and including Awesome Eagle in pictures," the Hyches said. "The most difficult part is getting Awesome to sit still for



*Eric Hyche at Bridal Veil Falls in North Carolina*

pictures! He's like a kid. But seriously, we've had a lot of fun with it. Most of our pictures have been on hiking trails, and he's small enough to fit in one of our backpacks. So, whenever we stop at a great view, we take a few regular pictures and then we take a couple with Awesome."

Frank Dixon ('84 computer science) and his wife Karen traveled with their friends Roger Knipp and Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees Chair Trudy Harper ('83 electrical engineering and '84 M.S.) out west a few months ago, and they took Awesome Eagle with them. Frank shared their adventures at Crazy Horse Memorial, Yellowstone, Mount Rushmore, Devil's Tower, Sylvan Lake and more on social media.





*Frank Dixon in Yellowstone National Park*

“We enjoyed posting, and we especially enjoyed the likes and comments from Tech and others on Instagram and Facebook,” Dixon said. “We even had some friends ask how to get their own Awesome Eagle for their travels.”

Joe Crosslin ('74 mathematics) and his wife Maureen took Awesome to Oklahoma and on a Caribbean cruise last year and have plans to take him to Panama and Ireland this year and Spain and Portugal next year.

“When I saw the fundraising initiative, I thought it was an ‘awesome’ idea,” Crosslin said. “It’s been fun having Awesome tag along on our travels and finding places to pose him.”

Long before the Awesome Eagle fundraising initiative, the Hyches showed their Tech spirit by displaying their True To Tech magnets and decals and wearing Tech shirts. The Hyches say it inspires conversation.

“People love to show off what they are proud of,” the Hyches explained. “We’re proud of our degrees from Tech — they’re high-quality, valuable and relatively rare. So, we like people knowing that we went to Tech. It’s also a great conversation starter. There have been so many times when we were wearing some piece of Tech gear and strangers will say something like, ‘Hey! Tennessee Tech!’ Then they will begin to tell us about some friend or relative of theirs who went there.”

Dixon says he experienced similar reactions when he and his traveling companions wore Tech shirts on their trip out west.

“Other vacationers enjoyed seeing the four of us in beautiful Tech purple,” Dixon said. “I also like the feeling when someone asks about Tech and tells us they have family members who attended Tech. This happens to me frequently throughout Tennessee. I also proudly display our Tennessee Tech yard sign, and several of our neighbors do, too.”

While the Hyches, Dixons and Crosslins enjoyed photographing Awesome Eagle on their travels, they say the best part is knowing their gift to the



*Joe Crosslin at scenic overlook in Oklahoma*

University Memorial Scholarship is helping Tech students.

“I have many fond memories of my time at Tech, and I think it is alumni’s responsibility to ensure that current students have the opportunity to create their own memories,” Crosslin said.

“Giving back to the people and places that invested in you is a really good idea – just as a general human principle,” said the Hyches, “So, it’s only natural that we would want to give back to

Tennessee Tech, because so many important things happened to us while we were at Tech. We received an excellent education, made lifelong friends and, most importantly, we met each other. Tech invested in us, and we in turn want to invest in Tech.”

Dixon added, “Tech provided me with a great career and lifelong friends that mean so much to Karen and me. Giving back at any level is something all Tech alumni should strongly consider. When you start to think back on your memories of Tech and how it shaped you, it really is astounding what a great school with a great campus culture can inject into one’s life.”



*Frank Dixon on the largest Jackalope in the world in Dubois, Wyoming*



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