

Friday, February 26, 2010

Scholarship recipients, donors honored at president's reception

By Dan Bodene, contributing writer

There's little doubt that a scholarship can make a huge impact on a student. Recently, Oakland University scholarship donors heard firsthand from students just how much their generosity helped.

The President's Scholarship Reception held this February, recognized students who received scholarships to OU and the donors who made the scholarships possible.

"The challenging economic climate has put a huge strain on families, making it difficult for students to attend college," said Dr. Gary Russi, OU president. "Scholarships become critical for students to get an education. There is no better gift – donors provide opportunities no one else has given."

Dr. Virinder Moudgil, OU provost and senior vice president for academic affairs, noted that scholarships not only defray costs for deserving OU students, but also help attract and retain the best students. After graduation, these students often become "ambassadors" for OU, Moudgil said. "At the end of the day, it is what you do with your education that reflects on the university."

The event began with recognition of several scholarship donors: George and Elizabeth Seifert, Janet Bennett, Steve Sharf, Priscilla Hildum and Warren McCabe, Don and Amanda Iodice, Judy Froemke, Andy Henry and Natalie Cole, Tom Varner and Mike Davis.

Sue Goepp, vice president for University Relations, also recognized the generosity of earlier donors such as Roger and Helen Keyes, whose original endowment currently generates nearly \$4,000 yearly in scholarship awards; and the Benjamin Anibal family, whose endowment is now valued at more than \$1.1 million. More recently, she said, the university's capital campaign contributed \$10.6 million for scholarships and the OU Alumni Association raised nearly \$1 million more in scholarship support.

Goepp also noted that in the spirit of giving back, OU's faculty and staff raised more than \$226,000 for the university, the United Way and Black United Fund.

Throughout the reception, scholarship recipients who were recognized for their achievements in turn thanked their benefactors. Danielle Ager, a junior in The Honors College and recipient of the David and Marion Handleman Scholarship, said, "Scholarships have changed my life, and I hope that someday I will be able to help students achieve their college aspirations like all of you have done for so many students, including myself."

Zack Jones, a senior in Linguistics and International Relations, said his D.B. "Woody" Varner Scholarship provided four years' tuition and a stipend for research. "I'm very grateful," he said. Sitting to his left was Tom Varner, son of the scholarship donor. Varner, whose father served from 1959-1970 as the university's first chancellor, remembered living in a former poultry manager's home on Butler Road (now Varner House) and enjoying regular visits from a distinguished guest.

"Matilda Wilson used to come for Sunday dinner," Varner said. "She was just a nice, nice lady."

Each of the 36 scholarship recipients on hand (others were taking exams and could not attend) received a certificate from Dr. Russi and Dr. Moudgil.

"Students – you're remarkable," said Dr. Russi. "When you leave here, you will make a difference in society." Dr. Moudgil said, "To our donors: We couldn't be more grateful."

SUMMARY

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