

History of the Connestee Falls Student Scholarship Program

Back in 1987, the first year of the Connestee Falls Student Scholarship Program, the founders had one simple goal: Raise enough money for one college scholarship for one student.

And they did. Their pro-am golf tournament at the Connestee Falls golf course brought in \$5,000, and they wrote their first scholarship check. They went on to establish the Student Scholarship Program as a not-for-profit organization and set their sights on helping even more students.

Just how successful has the program been? Over the last 29 years, it has raised more than \$800,000, which has assisted more than 500 Transylvania County residents afford their dreams of higher education.

None of this would have been possible without the continued, enthusiastic support of Connestee Falls residents, the CF Property Owners Association and administrative staff, and the business owners and residents of Brevard and Transylvania County. Financial support in 2015 came from more than 200 donors and businesses. A total of \$66,000 was raised for scholarships, a 23 percent increase over 2014. It is gratifying to see such support for education coming from so many different sources in our community.

Over the years, 24 Connestee Falls residents have led the Student Scholarship Program either as chairs or co-chairs. Dozens of other Connestee Falls residents have served on committees that plan the fundraising events and activities. This includes the annual Celebration of Education Gala and the golf tournament in September, Casino Night sponsored by the Social Committee and the tennis, bocce and pickleball tournaments scheduled from July through September.

The Student Scholarship Program believes that saying “thank you” to its donors is extremely important. The biggest way – literally – is through the massive Sponsor Board at the entrance to the Connestee Falls Golf Course and Clubhouse. In 2015, there were so many new names to add to the donor board that it had to be enlarged. Donors also are publicly thanked in the *Transylvania Times*.

Each January, scholarship funds are distributed equally among Transylvania County Schools, Brevard College and Blue Ridge Community College. In 2015, each school system received \$17,000, which provided scholarships for 22 students. This year, \$22,000 was presented to each school. The Student Scholarship Program has just one stipulation for the awards: Scholarship recipients must be residents of Transylvania County.

All three school systems consider academic merit and financial need in determining who receives a scholarship. BRCC makes awards through its Financial Aid and Scholarship committee. For Brevard College, the Connestee Falls Scholarship is an integral component of the “Brevard Scholarship” initiative. At Rosman and Brevard high schools, graduating seniors are encouraged to apply for Connestee Falls scholarships. Applicants are interviewed by representatives from the Student Scholarship Program (the school liaison and a co-chair) and a Transylvania County Schools official. Scholarship winners from these high schools have enrolled in colleges and universities in North Carolina and out-of-state. Their majors include music, history, public health, nursing, sports medicine, education, broadcasting and architecture.

It’s no surprise that the Student Scholarship Program identifies many more students who deserve scholarships than there is money to give. So every year, volunteers work very hard to raise awareness and more money. What better investment is there in the future of our community and our nation than helping to provide smart young people with a good education?

Please help us reach more students by giving to the Connestee Falls Student Scholarship Program. For more information, email cf scholarship@gmail.com or call 828-885-2001.