Children Endow Scholarship to Honor Firefighter Dad

Thomas W. Posler was destined to be a leader and have an impact on others. Now, thanks to the efforts of his family, his legacy will live on through a scholarship at Schoolcraft College.

The story of Tom Posler’s life is one of inspiration, commitment and compassion. His contributions to the community first started in high school where he proved to be a leader and able to use his skills to guide others to success as captain of the football team. Later, he would also prove himself physically by being a successful Golden Gloves boxer.

He married, and with a growing family, Tom began his professional life in construction. But he soon found his true passion was working with the Wayne–Nankin Fire Department in Southeast Michigan. He joined them in 1956 and later transferred to the Nankin Fire Department, the predecessor of the Westland Fire Department. Tom’s natural charisma and strong leadership qualities served him well as he completed several terms as president of the Westland Firefighters Association. In this role, Tom proudly served his community and his firefighting family, in addition to his own tight-knit family.

Tom’s commitment to his profession and community carried through his entire family. Suzanne McClow, the second of six children, recalls the “irregular life” of a firefighter that often involved holidays celebrated at the firehouse, along with the joy of having the extended family of other firefighters and their families.

Tragedy leads to focus on training and preparedness

A tragedy struck the Posler family that would leave a huge loss and terrible heartache. Tom’s daughter Helen accidentally drowned while the Poslers were on vacation with another firefighter’s family. The loss reinforced Tom’s belief that the community should have trained emergency response professionals to provide assistance whenever and wherever needed. Tom committed himself to assuring access to the most up-to-date training for firefighters. “He was very serious about training. It was his life,” Suzanne said.

Tom continued his passionate dedication to the fire department. He accepted many leadership roles that allowed him to develop training programs for the State of Michigan and Emergency Medical Training in the Fire Service. He also taught fire safety and emergency medical treatment at Washtenaw Community College and Madonna University.

Honoring a hero, continuing a legacy

Even after he retired and moved to Sugar Island in northern Michigan, Tom’s gift for giving to his community and for helping others continued. He became Chief of the Sugar Island Volunteer Fire Department, where he continued to demonstrate his boundless passion for his profession until he passed away in 2007. In 2008, his name was added to the Firefighter’s Memorial in Roscommon Michigan. In addition to this honor, Tom’s children wanted to find a continuing way to memorialize their father.

As Suzanne and her siblings researched a number of options, they knew that whatever they did had to include firefighting. The outstanding reputation of the Fire Technology program at Schoolcraft College led them to establish a scholarship through the Schoolcraft College Foundation. The scholarship provides assistance to deserving young men and women with aspirations of becoming firefighters. “It feels very good to help others,” Suzanne explains. “It has left us feeling very positive and at peace with our father’s legacy.”

Through their charitable contribution, the Posler family continues to honor their father while giving back to the community by making firefighting education accessible. In this very meaningful way, the legacy of Chief Thomas W. Posler continues.

“He was very serious about training,” says Suzanne McClow of her father Thomas Posler, pictured here in an October 1957 training exercise in Wayne–Nankin, Michigan.
The Schoolcraft College Foundation exists to support the college, its students, and faculty, by raising and managing funds that advance the college’s objectives. Only your support makes this possible.

There are many solid reasons for supporting Schoolcraft College, with the key being the human capital this institution brings to our community. But people support the college for various reasons. Some cite the college’s affordable tuition and transfer programs as particular strengths. Others value the college because it provides a flexible curriculum that enables people to seek a quality education while balancing job and family commitments. Still others, including many community leaders and executives, point out that Schoolcraft graduates are the core of a highly qualified workforce that is essential to a strong regional economy.

Whatever your individual reason, we can all agree on one thing—education breeds success; success for the students, the community and for the economy. This year gave us the pleasure of working with many new and old friends to set the stage for continued success. Over the past year many Schoolcraft friends have provided their support to our students and faculty through gifts of cash, securities, trust and wills.

It’s humbling when someone thinks enough of the work that you do for the community that they would invest their resources to help further your success. Therefore it is with gratitude that we acknowledge the generosity of all of our friends listed in this newsletter.

In the year ahead, the Foundation will embark on a very special initiative to raise vital philanthropic funds for the support of the college. We welcome your continued investment in our community through your support of Schoolcraft College.

Sincerely,

A. Reginald Best,
Director of Development

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GRATITUDE IS DEFINED AS THE STATE OF BEING GRATEFUL OR APPRECIATIVE. ON BEHALF OF OUR STUDENTS, LET ME EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE TO ALL OF YOU WHO MADE THE CHOICE TO CONTINUE, BEGIN OR ADD TO YOUR SUPPORT TO HELP THE SCHOOLCRAFT COLLEGE FOUNDATION FULFILL ITS MISSION TO PREPARE SCHOOLCRAFT’S STUDENTS TO SUCCEED IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD.

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In addition to scholarships, the Foundation provides grant funding for innovative and emerging initiatives developed by our faculty and staff for the benefit of the campus community. When needed, the Foundation has supported capital projects such as the VisTaTech Center in 2002 and the Biomedical Technology Center in 2008. The funding priorities of the Foundation are designed to meet the needs of Schoolcraft College, its students and the community.

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We are mindful of the generosity of individuals who have helped to make scholarships and program enhancements possible. Names appearing in bold text indicate donors who have increased their donations over the previous year. Italicized names represent new donors or donors who have restored their gifts this year.

The list of Gifts-in-Kind recognizes donors who supported the Foundation through their gifts of products and services to our fundraising events.

In 2007, the Schoolcraft College Foundation dedicated a permanent display recognizing donors’ contributions. The display recognizes donors whose lifetime giving exceeds $10,000. Members of the Henry Rowe Schoolcraft Society, which honors donors who have recognized the Foundation in their wills or through other similar estate gifts, are also included in the display. In 2009, we established the Bell Tower Society to pay further tribute to our donors. One hundred and eight members were inducted into the Bell Tower Society in 2009.

To inquire about making a donation to the Schoolcraft College Foundation, or for more information about the donor wall and Bell Tower Society, contact the Development Office at 734-462-4455. Information about the Schoolcraft College Foundation can be found at www.schoolcraft.edu/foundation.

We have done our best to accurately present this list of contributors. However, in compiling a list of this size, omissions and misspellings sometimes occur. Please let us know of any errors as we appreciate the opportunity to correct our records.
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Schoolcraft College is committed to the needs of every student who walks through its doors. Whether enrolling in college for the first time, returning to school after working in the community or retraining for new opportunities, our faculty and staff are committed to serving everyone who enrolls. The Foundation provides much needed financial support for our students. Your participation can truly make a difference in the lives of so many people and in the communities where we work and live.

We hope you make plans to join us this year...together we can educate, innovate and inspire.

The Schoolcraft College Foundation is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization created in 1966 by friends and supporters of Schoolcraft College to enhance and enrich the educational opportunities offered to Schoolcraft students. Its mission is to support the programs, purposes and initiatives of Schoolcraft College. Donations to the Foundation directly benefit our students through scholarships and enhancement of college programs.

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