

FAR-REACHING

Scholarship endowment opens opportunities to minority students

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The late Fred Paxton had a favorite maxim: There aren't many problems in life that a good job cannot cure.

But the reality is that good jobs are harder to come by for some than for others. Paxton, publisher of The Paducah Sun from 1972-2000, understood the responsibility that comes with success. His philanthropic spirit, and that of his wife Peggy, have benefited many, most recently African-American scholarship recipients at West Kentucky Community & Technical College.

The Paxtons gave \$1 million to establish the McCracken County Community Career Endowment in January 2006, shortly before Fred Paxton's death. The first 13 students to receive scholarships from the endowment were profiled in a front page story in the Sun Tuesday.

The Paxtons' gift, though generous, was merely seed money for what the Paxton family and endowment board of directors hope will eventually fund far more scholarships — as many as 50 next year. Already the endowment has grown beyond the original gift through private donations from other Paxton family members and community-minded leaders who recognize what a smart long-term investment this endowment is.

Scholarships from the endowment are reserved for African-Americans, but beyond that, the recipients are both traditional and nontraditional students, ranging from a 17-year-old elementary education major right out of high school to single mothers returning to the classroom for the first time in 20 years. One, 37-

year-old Ayesha Wharton, said she wants to be an example to her 13-year-old son; the benefits of the gift will be far-reaching.

The list of career goals of scholarship recipients includes elementary school principal, minister, music teacher, special education teacher, business manager, physical therapy clinic owner, health facility manager. Careers that are heavy on service to others. Careers that will help others overcome odds to achieve their potential.

Fred Paxton wanted J.W. Cleary, president of the Paducah/McCracken County NAACP, to head the endowment board to ensure the scholarships would be awarded to the most deserving and promising students. For his part, Cleary said he is excited at the opportunity the endowment will provide for helping young people become leaders in their communities.

Endowment Director Linda Dungey said fundraisers are planned to boost the size of the endowment. Individual gifts from other donors, large and small, are also sought. Anyone interested can contact Dungey through WKCTC.

Paxton was cognizant of the fact that McCracken County was blessed with an environment of open dialogue and mutual respect between races, free from the tensions — and violence — suffered in other cities. But he also recognized that prejudices remain and the job is far from done. His gift will ensure that others will pick up where he left off.

Fred Paxton dreamed big dreams, but gifts from the community can make the endowment grow even beyond his dreams.