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Ashland Community Health Foundation
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New Scholarship Fund Established to Address Local Health Care Worker Shortages

ACHF will administer the fund and award scholarships

ASHLAND — A persistent work force shortage exists in our community for allied health professions, including for dental health and emergency medical service (EMS) professionals. A new scholarship fund was recently established by the Barbara Roastingear and Henry Oliver, III Family Foundation to help address this local need.

The fund was established at the Ashland Community Health Foundation (ACHF). The foundation will administer the fund and award scholarships, beginning with upcoming school terms.

Health care worker shortages in the area are linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, when many trained providers left the field. Dental health and EMS positions face some of the greatest shortages. Area workers who wish to pursue education and certification to fill these vacancies face costly tuition and fees, which is a barrier to beginning or completing studies.

The Barbara Roastingear Oliver Scholarship Fund will help students fund their education for dental health and emergency medical service professions when they intend to work locally. Harry Oliver and Barbara Roastingear created the fund with a \$75,000 gift to ACHF.

Harry Oliver says one inspiration for his family's gift was Barbara's career as a dental hygienist. She was in the University of New Mexico's first hygiene class in 1963. After being together for 43 years, Barbara passed away in 2023 after a brief illness. They had called upon Ashland EMS providers who were professional, dedicated, and caring. They were both grateful, wanted to give back to their community, and, together, made the decision to establish a named scholarship fund with the Ashland Community Health Foundation.

EMS providers are almost always the first health care professional to aid in an emergency and support ill or injured patients. Many EMS agencies in our area are experiencing a workforce shortage and have multiple job openings at any given time.

Additionally, a recent report from the State of Oregon Employment Department showed that dental health positions are difficult to fill and are among the top health care occupations that have a high number of vacancies.

Upon graduation, students are in high demand with local employers and often have multiple job offers. The Barbara Roastingear Oliver Scholarship Fund of ACHF will remove barriers for students who are seeking these high demand positions.

Founded in 1977, Ashland Community Health Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) leading philanthropic efforts to advance innovative and equitable approaches to community health and wellness. Contributions to the foundation, including the Barbara Roastingear Oliver Scholarship Fund, may be tax-deductible and can be given securely through our website at achfoundation.org or mailed to our office at 123 Clear Creek Drive, Suite 101, Ashland, OR 97520. For additional information about funds at ACHF, contact Executive Director, Stephanie Roland, at 541-482-0367 x2.

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Photo of Harry Oliver and Barbara Roastingear attached.