

MCHS Alumni and Friends Make Memories Into Scholarships

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MASCOUTAH - Graduating high school is a memorable time...a time to look back at all that you've accomplished as well as looking forward to a new life and career. Many think about those high school days, but making another Mascoutah High School graduate's dream come true is a different story.

This story began in 2008. Former graduate Bob Spurlock, currently of Dallas, Texas, returned that year to attend the annual Mascoutah Homecoming. "I missed the fish sandwiches and brats," he joked.

During his visit, he realized how much he loved the area and Mascoutah High School. Soon he knew it wasn't just a matter of missing Mascoutah and those high school days. He wanted to give something back to the community.

"The first thing I did was get on the phone to the three people who I had the highest regard and respect for - Bob Cearnal, Deb Anstedt-Hoerchler, and Bonnie Norrenberns-Hightower. I said, 'Hey, I've got this idea. What do you think?'"

And that's how the non-profit MCHS Alumni and Friends Scholarship Golf Tournament first started. They wanted an event that everyone could enjoy, a day to blend MHS reunion alumni classes, as well as provide scholarship funds for deserving high school seniors.

The four friends began the first scholarship golf tournament in 2009. Spurlock was told not to expect a large group because many had doubts about the program.

"The late athletic director Jim Knott was a big golfer. I talked to him about our idea and he thought it was awe-

some," said Spurlock. "We had a common goal. We wanted to do it right...wanted everything to be top of the line. We wanted people to know we were trying to do it the right way for the right reasons. The sad thing was that two months before our first event, Jim passed away."

The four friends proved the doubters wrong. They had 110 players the first year of the golf tournament. "We decided to schedule it the Friday of the Mascoutah Homecoming, sort of an unofficial kick-off to the Homecoming...the reunion before the reunions," laughed Spurlock. It's held each year at Far Oaks Golf Club in Caseyville.

All their hard work paid off. In the first year, the MCHS Alumni and Friends was able to present \$4,000 to two graduating seniors.

Scholarship applicants complete an application and write an essay explaining to the committee why they should be considered for the scholarship. "We also always interview the kids in person. It gives the kids a chance to show their personality."

"We find the students are so proud of their school," said Anstedt-Hoerchler. She also said there were many students struggling this year due to the economy. "There was a higher number of kids with financial problems looking for resources to help with college expenses."

The scholarships can be used for anything college related whether it be housing, books, travel expenses, etc. The seniors are presented at the golf tournament in August. "We are proud of them; we want the sponsors and volunteers to see them and congratulate them."

This year, the organization will be helping four graduating

seniors. "We had 10 percent of the senior class apply for our scholarship. It was so hard to choose; they are all very deserving," said Cearnal.

Since 2009, the tournament has helped 11 deserving seniors in the amount of over \$22,000. The alumni hopes the legacy of their work will make a profound difference in the lives of Mascoutah graduates and have a positive impact with the community.

"We've sold out the past three years. A couple of years, we had a waiting list," said Spurlock.

The number of golf tournament sponsors has also surprised the Spurlock. "We had a gentleman email us from South Carolina wanting to be a hole sponsor. I get emails from California, Texas, Connecticut, etc. It's amazing."

This is not the end of the story, but just the beginning. "I'm excited about our future. Stay tuned! The best is yet to come," exclaimed Spurlock.

Just as important as the players are the volunteers. Their hard work and dedication makes the event possible.

For more information about the 5th Annual Mascoutah Alumni and Friends Scholarship Golf Tournament to be held Friday, August 2, at Far Oaks Golf Club in Caseyville, contact:

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Or for additional information, gotowww.mchsalumnigolf.com. Players must be registered by July 26.