



# Fort Foundation Focus

by Fred A. Rose, Volunteer Publicist

[www.fortfoundation.org](http://www.fortfoundation.org)

Most people in Fort know that an unusual amount and number of local scholarships are available to Fort High School graduates. This past year the Fort Atkinson Community Foundation alone granted over \$154,000 in scholarships to Fort High School seniors or former Fort High graduates. This is an enviable amount for a city of less than 12,000 and a school district with 926 High School students!

Most of the scholarships are named for the donor, or named in honor of someone, but in this column I would like to focus on an interesting new scholarship offered by the Foundation.

The spectacular level of local support of our community's youth is achieved through the generous contributions of many community members, past and present. At this point, these programs have been bolstering our youth long enough so that many of these recipients are now in successful careers. A number of them have begun giving back to the Foundation in appreciation of the help they received.

Initially, such donations were added to the scholarship fund that had benefitted the former student. However, last year, the Board of Directors decided that it would be more appropriate to set up a new scholarship fund, "The General Scholarship Fund," to receive such contributions, and thereby create a new scholarship. Previous contributions from recipients were moved to that fund. The fund has been enhanced by contributions from some of their parents, and from some of the community at large. It is further enhanced by the Foundation's adding a matching amount for each donation.

Although the General Scholarship Fund is not yet large enough to support an annual Scholarship from its earnings, the Board of Directors decided this year to award a \$1,000 Scholarship to promote the public's awareness of the fund and spur interest in donations to it. The winner, Rhonda Foley, was announced in August.

Directors note that not all of these students return to Fort Atkinson to live, but all of them have fond memories of Fort, and all of them are grateful for the help and encouragement given to them by the community. Here are some excerpts from notes or letters that have accompanied donations.

A student now working as a teacher in Cudahy High

School wrote, "I am very grateful to the ...Foundation for the scholarships that helped put me through college. I am happy to contribute to a very worthwhile cause that will hopefully help another deserving Fort Atkinson High School student."

There were many other former recipients who sent contributions with detailed comments, and many sent just a contribution and a heartfelt "Thank you!"

The Foundation also grants a significant number of scholarships to students who are finished with college, but who have undertaken the rather lengthy and costly endeavor of advanced degrees.

A recipient, now working as a family physician in Mukwonago wrote, "I am so fortunate and proud to be from Fort Atkinson, and to have benefitted so much from the Fort Community Foundation. Its generosity started me down a long and rewarding educational path that continues today! I never miss an opportunity to talk about what a great place Fort is..."

Another recipient who received a law degree with the help of the Foundation wrote, "The Fort Atkinson Community Foundation invested in my education so I could have a career... The grants greatly reduced the amount of student loans... This was a big help because the debt load has been the hardest thing about getting my practice off the ground."

Another person, still on the long road of a professional degree (MD, residency in family practice), who made a contribution, wrote, "... (I) plan to return to the (Fort) area. Thank you for all your assistance through the years!"

These scholarships help young people achieve their dreams. From the notes received, it is also apparent that most of the recipients also get a "heart transplant" from the generosity and caring expressed by the community behind the scholarships — a heart that they carry with them into other communities. The Fort Atkinson tradition of caring and giving is contagious! Thank you, everyone!

Anyone needing more information, or who would like to make a donation to the General Scholarship Fund or any of the other programs or scholarships of the Foundation, is asked to contact Helen Rose, Program Administrator, at 920-563-3210 (office), 920-563-4926 (home), or visit the Foundation's Web site at [www.fortfoundation.org](http://www.fortfoundation.org).