

HENSLEY: Scholarship program boosts Sisters graduates

Continued from page 1

so high now,” she said.

By all measures, her wishes are coming true.

The work that Hensley has poured into establishing, maintaining, and expanding GRO since 2006 has benefited hundreds of Sisters High School graduates to achieve their post-high school dreams.

The class of 2020 will receive \$212,000 dispersed among 57 different graduates. That total is about six times the amount available than when Hensley arrived on the scene.

Hensley’s path to making GRO happen began when she moved to Sisters from Salem with her husband, Tim, in 2005, which was in the middle of a population boom in the school district. Her son, Steven, a junior at the time, enrolled at Sisters High School, and Hensley wanted to find a way to be involved, so she signed on with the ASPIRE mentorship program as it was just getting underway. One thing led to another, and she began to help another parent volunteer, Laurie Adams, work on the local scholarships already being offered in Sisters. At that time, there was no organizing body.

“Within a short time of arriving in Sisters I recognized the community’s uniqueness in how it supported the schools and thought a more robust



PHOTO BY SEEMA HAMID-AMICO

Karen Hensley.

scholarship program was totally attainable,” Hensley said. “With the growth in population I realized we needed to beef things up.”

Hensley, Adams and school leaders approached the Sisters Schools Foundation to find out whether a scholarship program could become a part of the SSF non-profit, but that idea could not be worked out, so the group decided to create GRO, which formally came into existence as a non-profit on November 10, 2008.

Hensley became president, Adams vice-president, and Karen Lord treasurer in the fledgling organization. Shortly after, the group changed the lead title to chairperson, rather than president, according to Hensley.

“The title ‘president’ just didn’t seem to fit,” she said.

Hensley stepped down as chair in November 2019, but remains on the board in emeritus status and continues to contribute in many

practical ways.

A number of current board members have been part of GRO for many years and credit Hensley with leading the organization to where it is today.

Karen Lord, who knew Hensley from when both women lived in Salem, recalled having lunch with Hensley after both had moved to Sisters.

“Karen (Hensley) knew my background as a CPA and asked if I was interested in helping form a non-profit,” she said. “One thing about her is that it is very difficult to say ‘no’ to her. Karen Hensley is generous, reliable, gracious and fiercely determined to make a difference in the future for Sisters students. She is forever modest about her own contributions while making others feel valued and recognized.”

Another long-time board member, Ann Thompson, said, “My recollection is of the hours and hours – actually days – we put in, in the early years, judging scholarships, using all kinds of rubrics to make selections.

“We did nearly everything, down to cutting out and pasting some of the felt college banners to decorate the Commons for the Senior Celebration. Karen always had a smile and a good word, even under some of those dire conditions,” she said.

Lori Larson, another board member said, “Karen is the unsung hero with a heart of gold, instrumental in providing Sisters High School seniors with scholarship dollars for higher education. Parents in our

community should count their blessings for Karen’s passion and vision in support of Sisters kids!”

The GRO board voted earlier this year to rename a scholarship offered by the organization the “Karen Hensley Service Scholarship,” according to current board chair Tim Ross. “She certainly deserves to be honored,” he said.

As to the future of GRO, Hensley continues to be amazed at the generosity and support the community shows to Sisters’ youth. She visualizes a time when more and more graduates come back and want to contribute to the next generation, and also that families will form trusts which will allow GRO to develop an endowment fund.

“Also, considering we are called the Graduate Resource Organization, maybe someday we will have funds to help adults seeking higher degrees, well after they graduated from high school,” she said.

Hensley is grateful for all the relationships she has formed over the years with students, school personnel, donors, and her fellow board members.

“The board is so talented and dedicated,” she said. “I can’t say enough about them.”

Looking back, Hensley has only appreciation for what she has gotten from her investment into the Sisters community.

“My philosophy is ‘when you give, you receive’, and I have received a lot,” she said.

Sisters GRO adds 11 new scholarships

By **Charlie Kanzig**
Correspondent

Sisters GRO (Graduate Resource Organization), the local non-profit that manages dozens of scholarships for graduates of Sisters High School, has announced the addition of numerous new awards for the class of 2020 and beyond.

Behind the efforts of Susan Parker and other members of the GRO board of directors, an additional 11 awards will be available for this year’s senior class.

Board members worked together to identify business groups, organizations, and individuals, who looked like natural and viable supporters of new awards.

Individuals and families stepped forward to fund the following awards: Lieutenant Chris Salisbury USMC Memorial Scholarship; Rietmann Family Legacy Scholarship; and the Linda Douthit Memorial Scholarship.

A number of businesses and groups of professional practitioners also got involved including Sisters Athletic Club; Sisters Coffee Company; Sisters Veterinary Clinic; Hayden Homes (Art); Sisters Country Realtors; and Sisters Festival of Books

See **SISTERS GRO** on page 15

CONGRATULATIONS



MICHAELA MILLER

Time to put on your “big girl” hat!

2020 Graduate, California Baptist University Bachelor of Science, Health Science, Summa Cum Laude

We are so proud of your accomplishments!

Parents: Drs. Kevin & Eden Miller
Sister: Lexie Miller
Grandparents: Col. John & Kathy Miller, Dorothy Judd
Fiancé: Nate Tucker

Academic Honors:

- Sisters High School Valedictorian 2016
- Sisters High School Athlete of the Year 2016
- CBU Dean’s List 2016-2020
- CBU President’s List 2016-2020
- CBU Division 1 Soccer Coaches Award 2019-2020
- CBU Presidential Scholarship 2016-2020
- Pac West Academic Honors 2016-2018
- WAC Academic All-conference 2018-2019, 2019-2020
- NCAA Division 1 CoSIDA All Academic Honors; Google Cloud District 8 Second Team 2018

CONGRATULATIONS

Brogan Petterson



Recipient of the

Outlaw Health Professionals Scholarship!

Your Care (Deb & Dr. Eric Wattenburg) is proud to partner with Drs. Eden & Kevin Miller for this scholarship.

Best Wishes at Utah Valley University!



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