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UA9 Investing in the Spirit

WKU Development & Alumni Relations

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Jessie Ball duPont Fund Provides Great Opportunities for Immigrant Students

Twenty-one-year-old Mexican native Brenda Andrade now has a chance at a college education and a meaningful career in helping young children who do not speak fluent English, thanks to a life-changing gift from the Jessie Ball duPont Fund.

Andrade was selected to participate in a Western Kentucky University pilot program supported by the Jessie Ball duPont Fund. The Jessie Ball duPont Fund makes grants to more than 330 eligible organizations identified by Mrs. duPont in her will. The fund has assets of $291 million and has awarded $229 million in grants since 1977.

WKU received a $112,000 grant to provide tuition and additional assistance for immigrant students who wish to obtain an Associate of Arts Degree in Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education. This will offer students like Andrade a higher level of employment status and increased financial resources, and it will ultimately provide area school systems with excellent bilingual paraprofessionals like Andrade who will be trained to work with young children.

Born in Gaudalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, when Andrade was five years old her family moved to California, which was followed by a move to Bowling Green when she was eight. She hopes to someday use her education to help needy children.

"I love going to college," she said. "I learn something new each day and the classes are really interesting."

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Dear Friends of WKU,

This is truly an exciting time to be a part of the Western Kentucky University Family. The year 2006 marks the 100th anniversary of our founding, and WKU has a year-long celebration planned to mark “A Century of Spirit.” The entire year will be filled with a series of events and activities celebrating the proud heritage of WKU.

As special friends and alumni of WKU, you have been a vital part of making us a leading American university with international reach. I am pleased to have the opportunity to present this issue of Investing in the Spirit 1998-2003: The Impact. Each gift made during our Investing in the Spirit Campaign left a legacy and a mark on our world. In return for his generosity, each donor has made a lasting impact on the life of this university and on our future alumni.

Investing in the Spirit was completed with just over $102 million in gifts and pledges, and it provided the financial impetus to launch an aggressive, thoroughly measurable, strategic plan called Challenging the Spirit. These simultaneous efforts began a definitive transformation of WKU from a university of regional importance to a university of national prominence. I hope you enjoy this copy of our newsletter which highlights how your gifts are leading this transformation.

Please check out our upcoming Centennial plans at www.wku.edu/centennial. I look forward to seeing you on campus in the coming year. Thank you again for your continued friendship and support.

Cordially,

Thomas S. Hiles

Jerry Baker Named WKU Philanthropist of the Year

Bowling Green businessman Jerry Baker was honored by Western Kentucky University as part of National Philanthropy Day. Mr. Baker received his award during a recognition luncheon in Lexington.

According to Tom Hiles, WKU’s vice president for Institutional Advancement, National Philanthropy Day allows us to pay tribute to the contributions that philanthropy has made in our personal lives, our local communities, and our nation. This nationwide celebration allows WKU to recognize those of who have given freely of themselves to enrich the lives of others and enhance the quality of life in our community.

Baker has invested generously in scholarships in Art, Music, Athletics, and Theatre and Dance at WKU. He has created opportunities for local artists to present their work and for audiences to experience that work and has also made the works of many well-known international artists more accessible in the region. Baker was instrumental in establishing and maintaining Bowling Green’s Phoenix Theater, now in its second decade of programming, and established a Professorship in Music to support the Bowling Green Western Symphony Orchestra. Baker is also an active member of the Kentucky Arts Council.

“Jerry Baker has also reached across the visual and performing arts to support a variety of artistic forms,” Hiles said. “He helps promising students and accomplished professionals. Perhaps most importantly, by his resources and his advocacy, he has helped to educate the broader community about the vitality of art in our daily lives.”

Past recipients of the WKU Philanthropist of the Year are: Gordon Ford, Lowell Guthrie, Bud Layne, Leon Page, and Don Vitale.
Dr. Louella Fong in the Department of Consumer and Family Sciences is the director of the pilot program. “I am so pleased that we have a group of students who are really committed to the program,” she said. Thus far each student has passed the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) exam, and has successfully completed developmental English classes and English as a Second Language courses. The program funding has allowed WKU to provide tutoring and needed child care, and each student is now in regular English classes and has taken some core content courses in Early Childhood Education.

“These students will complete their Associate's Degrees in Early Childhood Education and will be able to work in agency or school settings as paraeducators,” Fong said. “They will be able to help assimilate other international families into the community.”

Daniel Moncayo, a 34-year-old Mexico City native who has lived in Bowling Green for the past five years, is also participating in the duPont program, along with his wife, Micaela. “I am learning now in order to give something back to our community,” he said. “This opportunity is one of a kind.”

Beyond the academic benefits, Moncayo says the program has provided personal improvements in his family’s life as well. “It has changed my perception about life,” he said. “I know now that, regardless of your age, it is always time to learn something new to add more value to your life. I would like to thank the people that make this possible, because, without this, people like me would not have the opportunity to attend college and enrich their lives.”

Fong says the Jessie Ball duPont Fund has funded an exciting project that will make a significant impact on the community itself. “It is well worth the energy and investment that has been put into it,” she said.

Dr. Sharon Greene, Senior Program Officer for the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, agrees. “We knew that this was a new venture for Western Kentucky, but the success to date has clearly been worth the effort,” she said. “At every turn, Western Kentucky has found creative ways to meet the needs of these students and to fulfill the high promise of this program. We’re proud to be a partner in such meaningful, life-changing work.”

The ultimate proof of the program's significance can be found in the words of Brenda Andrade. “Without the scholarship I would never have been able to go to college, so this has really had a major impact in my life” she said. “When I found out that I would be able to go to college I almost cried tears of joy. I am really thankful to the duPont Fund for making this program possible.”

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Please Reserve This Date

Friday, April 21, 2006

The President’s Circle Centennial Gala

WKU Campus Bowing Green, Kentucky
One alumnus's dedication to living a wholesome and happy life has spurred Western Kentucky University to take the lead in the topic of longevity and healthful living. J. Clifford Todd, a 1950 graduate in agriculture and biology, has had a lifelong commitment to learning about healthy lifestyles. As a direct result of this dedication, he has made leadership gifts to create the J. Clifford Todd Professorships in Gerontology and Gerontology Research.

Recently two professors were appointed to fill these prestigious positions, Dr. Dana Burr Bradley, Associate Professor of Public Health and Human Services, and Dr. Daniel Roenker, Professor of Psychology in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences.

According to Todd, his interest in this topic started when he was very young. "I was raised in a family of smokers, and even though we didn't know all the effects of cigarettes at that time, we still called them 'coffin nails,'" he said. "My grandfather died from emphysema, and I knew at a very young age that I would never smoke."

After Todd graduated from WKU, he took a job in public health and saw many individuals who enjoyed poor health and lived lifestyles that were unhealthy. "I later obtained my master's in public health from Columbia University, where I took courses in nutrition," he said. "I learned that what we eat makes us who we are in many ways." Todd put his knowledge into practice. He became a vegetarian and made exercise an important part of his daily schedule.

Dr. Dana Burr Bradley says her work invites people to imagine what aging might be like, versus thinking about aging as a period of decline. "What I mean is that often when we talk about aging, members of society picture people with many chronic illnesses that are living their last years by..."
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themselves or in a nursing home," she said. "Not only is this image inaccurate, but for the majority of Americans, aging doesn't have to be equated with gradual decline. The reality is that aging is a life long process and that there are many things that we can do, individually, to ensure that our lives are healthy, active, and productive."

According to Bradley, the Todd Professorship is a catalyst to infuse creative thinking and thinkers into a process where we challenge everyday assumptions about aging for individuals and society. "One of my goals is to make fruitful connections between the community and members of the WKU faculty who share an interest in healthy aging," she said. "I am particularly excited about building upon the rich partnerships formed through The Institute for Rural Health Development and Research and the South Central Kentucky Area Health Education Center."

Dr. Bradley said this work requires an interdisciplinary team, and WKU is a great place to be. "What I will do, whether it is working with our undergraduates who are volunteering in the community, designing new graduate programs, or creating a new postdoctoral training program to enhance our teaching faculty, will involve colleagues from a variety of disciplines. One of the most exciting things about my new position is the chance to listen carefully to what people say they need and then to craft opportunities. I'm really looking forward to working with other funders who care about the quality of the aging experience and designing both outreach activities and research programs that ensure each of us has an optimal aging experience. Growing old is truly the most universal, yet most diverse, of experiences."

Dr. Daniel Roenker said the Todd Professorship will provide some financial support and release time from teaching that will enable him to continue his research with older drivers. "The type of research that I do requires huge sample sizes, prolonged data collection efforts, and the efforts of a large team of researchers," he said. "It is not the kind of research that a single investigator can easily do. Thus, the release time from teaching is especially beneficial in that it will provide me freedom to travel to data collection sites in other states as well as spend time with other members of the research team in data analysis and journal article preparation."

Roenker said the endowed position is a prestigious title. "My colleagues at other universities have offered that they see it as a statement of the value that a university places on an individual's work."

Finally, Roenker said his research on older drivers has already produced large benefits for maintaining the mobility of older adults. "It is a well-established fact that the loss of mobility among older drivers, especially the loss of driving privileges, is often followed by rapid declines in health and quality of life," he said. "The ability to delay such a restriction has obvious benefits to the individual but also has benefits for society in general by reducing potential health care costs."

Roenker's research with his colleagues from the University of Alabama at Birmingham has already received national and international attention and has been featured on the Today Show and Good Morning America, and it has appeared in the Wall Street Journal and numerous other media outlets. "Our findings lie at the heart of public policy changes concerning older drivers that are being considered in Maryland, Florida, and California," he said.

The J. Clifford Todd Professorships are indeed leading the way in promoting healthy living in the Commonwealth and beyond. "My hope is to teach people to go out and teach others how to live," Todd said. "The goal is not necessarily a long life, but a healthy one. It is exciting to see an idea and plan come to fruition and finally develop into a program with two professorships. It has become more than I ever hoped."

"One of the most exciting things about my new position is the chance to listen carefully to what people say they need and then to craft opportunities."

Dr. Dana Burr Bradley
Ford Scholarship Fund Recognizes Exceptional Accounting Students

Sean Weeks, a senior from Elizabethtown, Ky., is one of 68 deserving Accounting students who have received a scholarship from the Gordon Ford Scholarship Fund since it was established 12 years ago. Made possible through a gift from the late Gordon Ford and his wife, Glenda Ford, more than $62,000 has been awarded since 1994.

Sean, along with other recipients of the Gordon Ford Scholarship, recently had the opportunity to meet with Mrs. Ford at WKU’s annual Scholarship Celebration and personally thank her for the gift that made the scholarship possible. “It was great to be able to meet with Mrs. Ford,” he said. “She was quite an interesting and engaging person who was full of questions about the future plans and endeavors of the scholarship recipients. It was really interesting to get to talk to her and hear about how much she cared for her husband, the school, and the recipients of the Gordon Ford Scholarship.”

According to Dr. Richard Aldridge, Chair of the Department of Accounting, said Ford Scholars who have graduated now hold responsible positions in accounting and business. “A number of the scholarship recipients have gone into public accounting, and at least two have risen to the level of partner in their firms,” he said. “Other Ford Scholars hold important accounting positions in manufacturing, health care, banking, service firms, and governmental agencies.”

Weeks plans to be one of those success stories. “After graduation, I plan on getting a job in accounting or an accounting related field such as banking,” he said. “I also will be taking some more classes in order to get my 150 credit hours needed to sit for the Certified Public Accounting exam.”

Because of the fund, Aldridge said the Department of Accounting has been able to attract and retain high quality students and encourage them to enter the accounting profession. “As a successful entrepreneur, CPA, and leader in the profession, Mr. Gordon Ford has left a lasting legacy to the accounting profession in Kentucky,” he said. “Through the Gordon Ford Scholarship Fund, Mr. Ford and his wife, Glenda, will continue to impact the accounting profession for years to come by providing financial assistance to WKU students who will go on to become CPAs and successful accountants.”

Glenda Ford said giving to the scholarship fund is very important to her. “Recently I had the opportunity of being present and meeting the recipients of the Gordon Ford Scholarships,” she said. “It was a delight to meet these young students and observe their enthusiasm for the future.”

“The Ford Scholarship has impacted me in the most positive way,” Weeks said. “It has enabled me to finish my last year at WKU without worry. It has taken the burden off of my mother, who is a single parent, from helping with tuition and books.”

Aldridge expressed his appreciation as well. “The Accounting faculty is extremely grateful to Mrs. Ford and her late husband for establishing the Gordon Ford Scholarship Fund, and we are pleased to honor the memory of Mr. Ford as we educate young men and women for successful careers in accounting.”

Mrs. Ford says education is the key to economic success. “It is my wish to help students and give them the opportunity to move forward and prosper in their lifetime, having the knowledge and skills needed to move to a new level.”

“A successful entrepreneur, CPA, and leader in the profession, Mr. Gordon Ford has left a lasting legacy to the accounting profession in Kentucky.”

Dr. Richard Aldridge
Christopher Kenner, a Todd County, Ky., junior, is from a farming family. A scholarship from U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company is allowing him to finish school while continuing to run the family farm. "My mom and dad just recently moved to Oklahoma and so now my 23-year-old brother and I are running the farm," he said. "We raise around 15 total acres of tobacco, around 100 acres of row crop, have 21 head of cattle, and do a little custom hay work. Since I am a full-time student at Western and my brother has a full 40-plus hour-a-week job, the farm is big enough to keep us plenty busy.

"The scholarship is making it possible for me to attend school," he said. "Without the money I receive from U.S. Smokeless Tobacco, paying for school would be a greater strain financially." After his graduation in 2007, Kenner plans to continue to farm and would like to find a job in the realm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, or even U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company.

Danny Kingins, plant manager of U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company in Hopkinsville, Ky., said, "U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company is honored to provide scholarships to the sons and daughters of tobacco farmers, who are among our company's most valued stakeholders. Our sincere hope is that these scholarships will help provide opportunities for these young men and women to increase their knowledge and develop their skills as they prepare to meet the challenges that lie before them as they embark on their careers in agriculture."

Dr. Gordon Jones, a professor in WKU's Department of Agriculture, said the scholarship fund has had a profound impact on many students over the past decade. "The scholarship has been extremely important to a tremendous number of students," he said. "It allows a student who is interested in going back to the farm to receive financial support for school. Without the scholarship fund many of these students would not have been able to achieve a college education."

Jones said U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company has provided nearly $600,000 in scholarships to WKU students over the past nine years.
Volunteer Spotlight on Ferris Van Meter

WKU Volunteer Positions:
Kentucky Museum Advisory Council
Robert Penn Warren Committee
WKU Foundation Board of Trustees

Other Community Volunteer Positions:
Bowling Green Public Library Board
Family Enrichment Center Board
South Central Kentucky Chapter
American Red Cross
Christ Episcopal Church Vestry

Why I am Involved With WKU:
"I have been a part of the Bowling Green community since coming to Western in 1965. I have witnessed the positive cultural, educational, and sports influences of the University as a key component in the advantageous growth of our region. I want to contribute in any way I could be useful to incorporate the strengths of Western's vision with the welfare of the region's citizens."