



Alumna Shannon Skokos Makes Major Gift to Alma School District

Alma Alumna Shannon Boy Skokos and her husband Ted Skokos, through their private family foundation, are donating \$1,000,000 to the Alma Education and Arts Foundation. The donation is being made to provide for the establishment of the Shannon and Ted Skokos Endowed Scholarship Fund to benefit the graduates of Alma High School who are pursuing college, trade school, or other post-high school educational opportunities. This endowment will be combined with existing endowments that the Foundation manages, with the earnings used to fund scholarships each year. The endowment will continue into perpetuity. A portion of the fund may also be used to make upgrades to the Alma Performing Arts Center. Because of the significance of this size endowment to the students and the community as a whole, the largest of its kind, the Alma Performing Arts Center will be renamed the "Shannon and Ted Skokos Performing Arts Center."

Shannon, a 1988 Alma salutatorian, 1992 Miss Arkansas, and attorney-turned-philanthropist, is giving back to her roots in a big way. "It is truly an honor to give back to a school district that gave so much to me. My husband Ted and I believe in the power of education and want to assist young men and women in pursuing their dreams. At the same time, we are excited to provide funding to enhance the performing arts center and to promote the education of the arts," said Mrs. Skokos.

Ted, a former attorney turned businessman, is delighted to support his wife and the town she grew up in. Ted is no stranger to the River Valley, as he was born and raised right down the road in Fort Smith. He attended the University of Arkansas where he received his Juris Doctor degree. As if starting his legal career after graduating was not enough, he also entered the U.S. Army Reserve as an officer. After being sent off to serve in the Persian Gulf War, he returned home and decided to retire from law to focus on family and private investments.

Shannon and Ted are a dynamic duo. They have spent most of their lives giving back to the communities that mean so much to them, and their faith is the driving factor. "We don't wear our faith on our sleeves, but we do believe it is our

responsibility to leave this earth better than we found it," Mr. Skokos said. Shannon remembers a time in her life when everything changed. She was studying at Law School when her landlord gave her an ultimatum: buy the condo unit in which she lived because it was up for sale or find a new home. At the time, purchasing a condominium is not something she could afford. A sponsor of the Miss Arkansas Scholarship Organization, Pat Riley, Sr., heard of her predicament and made her an offer she couldn't pass up. Mr. Riley decided to purchase the condo himself while also lowering Shannon's rent. Shannon thought there was no way she could possibly repay him and to that Mr. Riley responded, "All that I ask is that one day when you can afford it, that you do the same to help someone else." Ever since then, Shannon continues to live her life with the intention of following the "Riley Rule," and it is evident.

Shannon made a lasting impression on her past educators during her time at Alma. "What a wonderful contribution from Shannon. She was always an outstanding student leader, flutist, and basketball player during her time at Alma and it is amazing to see her giving back to her hometown in such a significant way," said David Woolly, Alma School District Superintendent. Since retired, Jerry Valentine was the principal during Shannon's time at Alma High School. Mr. Valentine remembers Shannon as a goal-oriented and motivated student. "She had an intrinsic motivation that pushed her to excellence in academics, athletics, and instrumental music. She had an incredible work ethic. Her work ethic, poise, and charisma are just a few of the attributes that I knew would lead her to success," Mr. Valentine reflected.

Chuck King, Alma Foundation Executive Director, is also delighted about the announcement. "This is such a tremendous opportunity for the Alma Education and Arts Foundation to grow and improve while supporting our students with plans for pursuing education after high school," said Mr. King.

The Alma Education and Arts Foundation exists to encourage high school students to pursue post-secondary education, promote education in the arts, and provide arts exposure to the community. To date, the foundation has awarded \$1.5 million in scholarships to students in all academic areas of study to pursue post-high school educational opportunities. The Shannon and Ted Skokos Scholarship Fund will further support educational opportunities for the students of the Alma School District.