Leonard family legacy supports liberal arts, journalism and physics

At Nevada, the Leonard family name has been synonymous with higher education and philanthropy for decades. The Leonard’s legacy at the University began in the 1930s with the late Gwen ’37 (history) and Paul Leonard ’36 (journalism), and continues today through several endowments bearing the family name and through the efforts of their daughter, the Rev. Jackie Leonard ’71 (speech/theatre).

“When I was in college and graduate school, I was blessed with parents who could afford to pay for my education,” says the Rev. Jackie Leonard. “The cost of higher education was much less then. These days, much has changed, particularly the state of the economy. Now, more than ever, students need financial assistance.”

English and political science major Aaron Benedetti, Class of 2012, is the recent recipient of the Guy L. Leonard Memorial Endowment Scholarship in English and Physics, established by the Leonards in memory of their late son, Guy Leonard ’77 (philosophy), who was hit and killed by a drunk driver the same year he graduated from Nevada.

Benedetti, 22, says the Leonard scholarships have helped create a culture of recognition and community among students and faculty at the College of Liberal Arts.

“Sometimes the kind of recognition a scholarship provides can serve as motivation, or it can improve work ethic,” Benedetti says. “The culture of recognition in the department is one of the qualities that helps promote community among students studying English. That sense of community is a big part of the reason I’ve enjoyed my time as an undergraduate.”

Through the years, the Leonard family has also created the Paul A. Leonard Chair for Ethics and Writing in Journalism Endowment; the Paul A. and Gwen F. Leonard Memorial Scholarship Endowment; the Leonard Family Music Scholarship Endowment; the Professor James Hulse Scholarship in History Endowment; the Jim Bernardi and Bob Dillard Theater Scholarship Endowment; the Edwin Booth Award for Service to the Theatre and the Leonard Conference Fund in Philosophy.

In addition, the Guy L. Leonard Memorial Endowment in Philosophy funds the department’s Guy L. Leonard Lecture Series and the Paul and Gwen Leonard Ethics and Politics Lecture.

“Scholarships are a key factor in making it possible to get a college education,” Leonard says. “We need more of them. I hope that my fellow alumni, especially the class of 1971, will contribute as they can to the University’s scholarship programs.”

The Leonards’ names are engraved in the University’s Honor Court in recognition of their lives and long-term dedication to the University. The family also made a significant gift to the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center, and the Paul and Gwen Leonard Faculty and Graduate Reading Room is named in their honor.

—Roseann Keegan

To learn more about supporting the College of Liberal Arts, please contact Stuart Golder, director of development, (775) 784-1222 or sgolder@unr.edu.