Ann and Thomas Howell give back to the Department of Chemistry

Ann ’63 (chemistry) and Thomas Howell ’68 Ph.D. (chemistry) both received scholarship support as students at the University of Nevada, Reno. In gratitude for their education and the financial support that made their degrees possible, the Howells have included a trust gift in their estate to establish the Ann and Thomas Howell Memorial Chemistry Department Endowment and continue funding the Ann and Thomas Howell Annual Scholarship in Chemistry.

In the mid-1960s, Thomas obtained a NASA Fellowship to attend graduate school at the University. The Department of Chemistry was just beginning its Ph.D. program in chemistry, and Thomas had graduated from San Jose State University with a bachelor’s in chemistry. He says Reno was just far enough from the Bay Area to be “away” from home, but still close enough to visit during holidays and breaks.

“I want to give back to the University for the help I received via the NASA Fellowship, which took care of most of my living expenses and allowed me to concentrate on my degree without the distraction of working outside the lab, and for preparing me for a career as a research chemist and ultimately doing patent work in the chemical and gaming disciplines,” Thomas says.

Ann, a sixth-generation Nevadan, received scholarships for three of her undergraduate years at the University which, along with a part-time job on campus, helped support her.

“I worked as a teaching assistant and graded papers in the chemistry department, and as a graduate student, I again taught labs to pay my way,” she says. “Things are different now, and I would like to help today’s students receive an education without having a lot of debt looming over them. I was very impressed by the two students I met who are being helped by our scholarship and am delighted to contribute to their success.”

The trust gift, once realized, will establish the couple’s endowment to benefit the Department of Chemistry. The gift will also continue to fund the Ann and Thomas Howell Annual Scholarship in Chemistry for juniors or senior undergraduate students in the College of Science.

“We both recognize the importance of training more scientists for the state and the nation,” Ann says.

Thomas is retired from the Rohm and Haas Company, a manufacturer of specialty chemicals for end-use markets, including building and construction, electronic devices, packaging, household and personal care products.

Senior William Wulftange, one of three students to receive the Ann and Thomas Howell Annual Scholarship in Chemistry, in 2014, says the generosity of donors like the Howells has allowed him to focus more on academics.

“It’s such a selfless act and I feel really lucky,” Wulftange says. “It’s awesome people donate to causes like this. It’s kind of like they’re passing the torch to students so we can keep doing good work.”

—Roseann Keegan