The uncertain economy had Wayne Maloney questioning whether he would be able to complete his master’s degree in special education. Thanks to a scholarship from the Marshall R. Matley Foundation, Maloney is able to continue his coursework at Nevada and meet the requirements needed for his work teaching children with autism at Sarah Winnemucca Elementary School in Reno.

“With this scholarship, I am able to focus on my studies and students, and most importantly, complete my coursework so I can continue to work in the job I love,” says Maloney, the father of three young children. “Being able to make a difference in the young lives of my students and their families provides me with a satisfaction I have not attained previously.”

The Marshall R. Matley Distinguished Scholar in Special Education Scholarship is awarded each year to two students pursuing a master’s degree in special education and disabilities studies in the Department of Educational Specialties. Preference is given to teachers in the Washoe County School District who plan to continue their work in the district after completing their degrees.

Dan Klaich ’72 (accounting), a Matley Foundation trustee and chancellor of the Nevada System of Higher Education, says: “It is the goal of the Matley Foundation to support those educators who have taken on the very important responsibility of working with special education students in Washoe County. We salute those teachers and aim to ensure that these professionals are equipped with the specialized knowledge, skills and attributes needed to work effectively with these exceptional children.”

Jodie Soracco ’05 (elementary/special education), a social resource teacher at Katherine Dunn Elementary School in Sparks, joins Maloney as one of the first Matley Distinguished Scholars. Like Maloney, Soracco was unsure if she could afford to continue pursuing her master’s degree at Nevada. She now plans on receiving her doctorate.

“My husband and I have just started our family, so financially, this scholarship came at just the right time,” Soracco says. “It’s very important for me to finish my master’s,” Soracco adds. “Without scholarship patrons like the Marshall R. Matley Foundation, many students would be unable to pursue higher education opportunities.”

—Roseann Keegan