Sara ’73 (English/journalism) and Leonard Lafrance have made it their life’s work to help communities by providing access to higher education for gifted young students in developing areas of the world, as well as here in northern Nevada.

In 2005, the Lafrances founded Educational Pathways International, a nonprofit foundation that provides university scholarships to students in Ghana, with the mission of educating young people who will in turn contribute to the growth of Ghana’s economy and progress. Two years later, they established a domestic component to support National Merit Scholars enrolled in engineering and computer science at Nevada.

“We’ve been fortunate in our lives,” Sara says. “We looked for a cause to support, and it became apparent both here and overseas that education is so important to our future. Getting an education gives a person the chance to develop a different life. We’ve learned how important education is to an individual, a family and a country.”

Nevada National Merit Scholar Tyler Aas says the support of Educational Pathways International has allowed him to immerse himself completely into the college experience. He will graduate this spring with a degree in mechanical engineering and was just accepted into a master’s program at Carnegie Mellon University.

“Financially it’s been a big help,” Aas says. “My freshman and sophomore years I was able to live in the dorms; there wasn’t a question of where I was going to live. It was provided for.”

“I can’t thank the Lafrances enough for what they’ve provided for me,” he adds. “Being able to get a bachelor’s degree and have the financial freedom to really push and have a good college experience without having to worry about the financial end of things—I’m extremely grateful for it.”

—Roseann Keegan

For more information about supporting the University’s National Merit Scholarship program, contact John Carothers, vice president for Development and Alumni Relations, (775) 784-1352 or jcarothers@unr.edu. For more information about supporting the College of Engineering, please contact Melanie Perish, director of development, (775) 784-6433 or mperish@unr.edu.