

COMMUNITY VOICES: BC thanks donors whose support today creates thinkers and problem solvers of tomorrow

- By Marko S. Zaninovich
- Mar 4, 2021

Just as the season begins to turn and we feel the cold wind shift to warm breezes, the Bakersfield College Foundation recognizes tradition and the people in our community who have shown transformational support for Bakersfield College.

Our annual recognition event is called Sterling Silver, and we are happy to be able to continue to honor our supporters this year in a broadcast event set for 7 p.m. Saturday on KGET-17.

Our donors come from all backgrounds and they appreciate and value the education and experience provided by Bakersfield College. Why? Because an education prepares students for life. It develops thinkers and problem solvers, preparing the people who represent the future of our community. Many of our donors see value in BC because they were once students at BC, preparing for their own future. Other donors are employers who offer jobs to BC students and graduates. One thing our donors have in common: They want to improve our local quality of life, and they are willing to take action in order to make that happen.

At this year's Sterling Silver, we will recognize some of our recent contributors, including Greg and Mary Bynum and Patricia and Clifford Mettler. As chair of the BC Foundation, I spoke with some of these supporters to personally thank them. I had the chance to talk

with the Bynums, real estate developers who have had a tremendous impact on the local landscape. The Bynums both attended BC, and they give the college credit for putting them on a path toward success.

Now they hope to help do the same for current students. Their support has helped solve some immediate needs (such as providing laptops for students during the transition to remote learning during the pandemic); their donation will provide other support that will last well into the future.

I also spoke with the Mettlers' nephew, BC alum John McFarland. John was very close to his late aunt and uncle, Patricia and Clifford Mettler, who were well known for their leadership in Kern County farming. Patricia, in particular, was known for her generosity. When she passed in 2018, we learned that her estate included a very generous gift to help BC students succeed in the area of agriculture. An endowment was created in their name, and is now used to help students begin a career in the food industry.

Other Sterling Silver 2021 honorees include the late Becki Whitson, a beloved member of the BC family, beginning when she was a student Renegade, continuing to her time as faculty and president of the Alumni Association. We'll also honor Margaret "Peggy" Haight, a neighbor of the college who "adopted" BC as her family and, essentially, left all she owned to the college when she passed in 2018.

These donors' thoughtful and generous gifts, and the legacy some of them provided through estate planning, are sincerely appreciated. Their contributions and endowments will deliver value for years to come. These gifts are reason to celebrate and remind our community of the work required to educate students. Our donors have thoughtfully placed their resources, all to benefit students and our community. They share a pride in the community. The message is consistent: Invest in education today to develop thinkers and problem solvers for tomorrow.

Please join me in celebrating our honored guests: The Bynum family and the Mettler and McFarland family, the family of Becki Whitson and the memory of Peggy Haight.

We are grateful today and you may be sure that many BC students now, and in the future, will be grateful as well.

Marko S. Zaninovich is board chair for the BC Foundation and a third-generation farmer in his family business.