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Philanthropist, businessman Bill Gatton dies

By the Daily News
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Bill Gatton
Submitted

Carol Martin “Bill” Gatton, an academic philanthropist, businessman and longtime donor to Western Kentucky University and other institutions, died Monday.

He was 89.

One of Gatton’s visions became a reality after his multi-million dollar gift to WKU in 2006 was used to establish the Carol Martin Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science at the university, with the doors opening to 120 students in 2007.

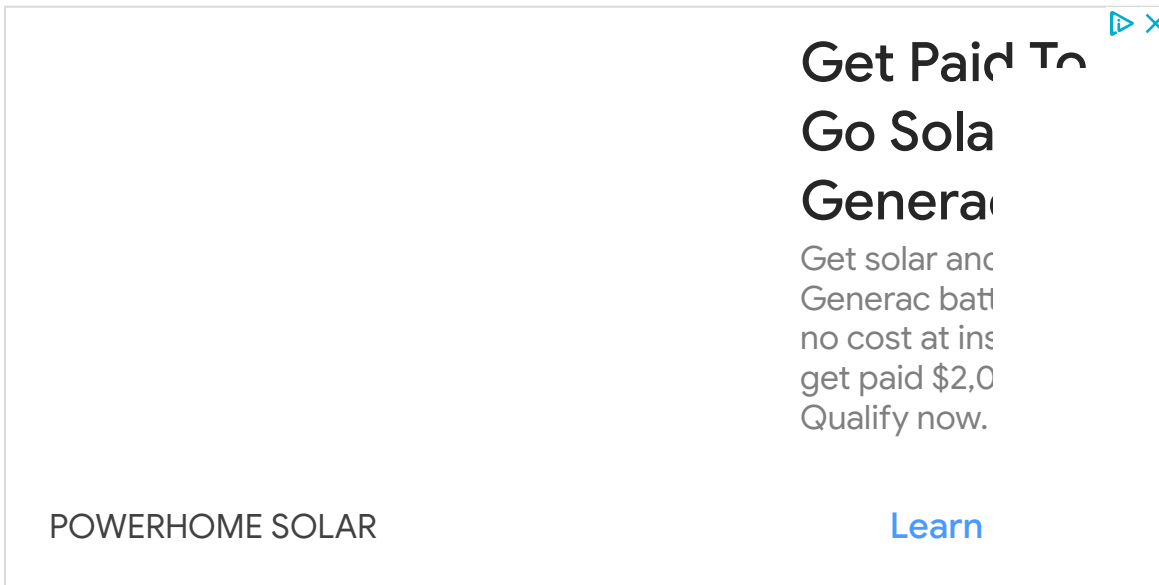
WKU issued the following statement regarding his death: “The WKU family is saddened to learn of Bill Gatton’s passing. His generosity will continue to benefit countless students across the Commonwealth as they make their way to the Gatton Academy on our campus. Few people possess the

level of selflessness and vision that he had, and the entire WKU community has been enriched because of him.”



Gatton made a second major gift for the expansion and renovation of the Gatton Academy in 2013 that provided space for an additional 80 students.

In October 2016 during a celebration of the expansion of Gatton Academy, then-WKU President Gary Ransdell recognized donors who contributed to the expansion. Gatton was presented with the 2016 WKU Philanthropist Of The Year Award.



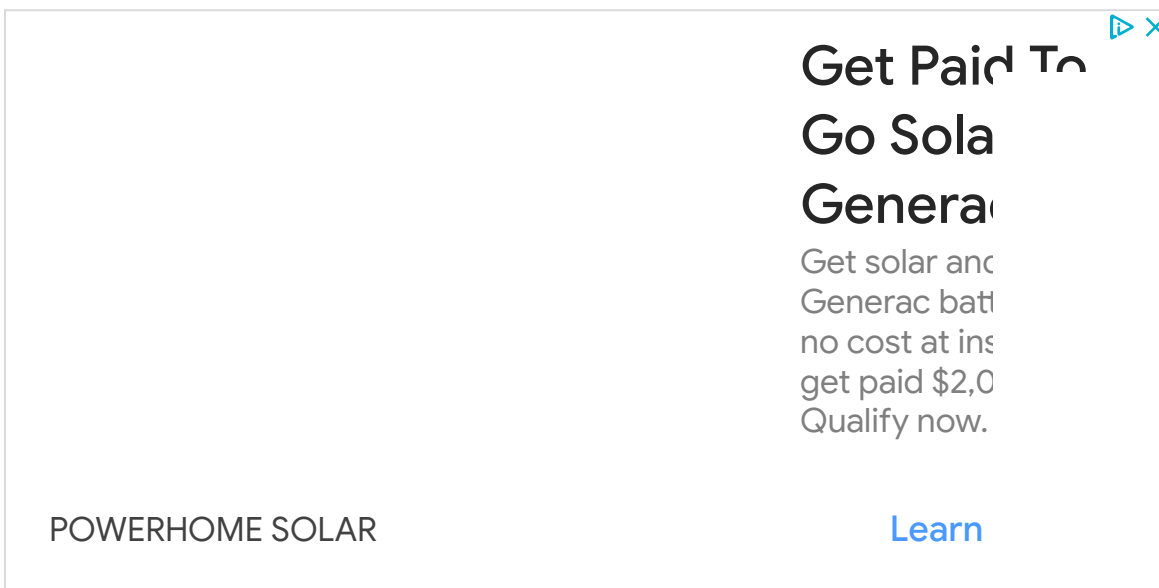
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In 2021, the Julie and Gary Ransdell Living and Learning Community at Lifeworks, a WKU program for adults with autism, opened. Gary Ransdell said that it was a \$5 million gift from Gatton that made it possible.

That gift allowed program organizers to renovate an apartment complex for the Lifeworks program.



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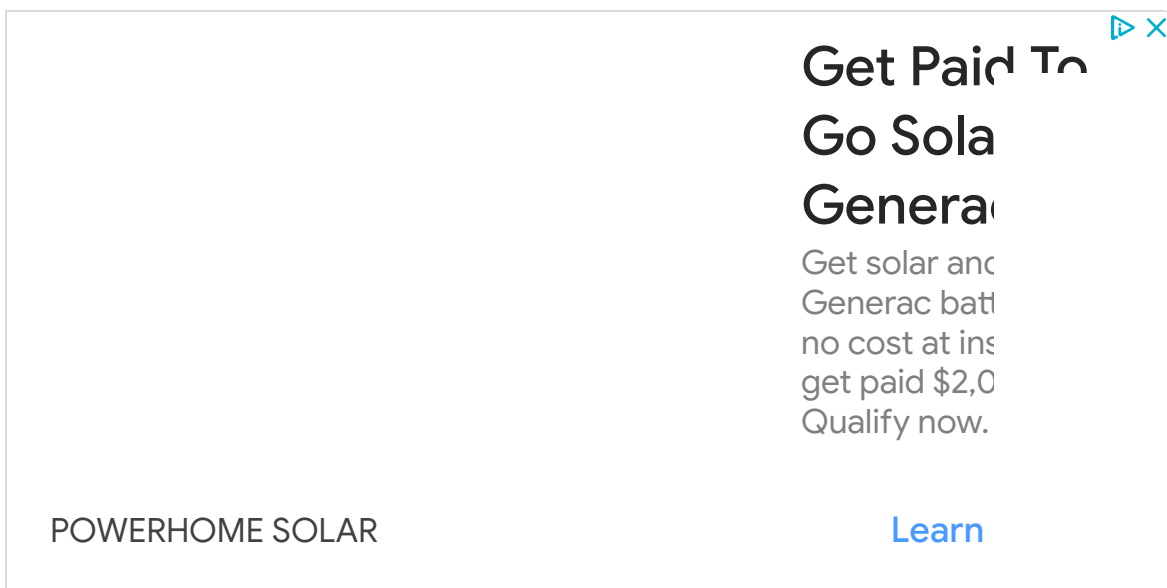
Ransdell said that it was Gatton who wanted the couple's names to be on the facility rather than his own.



An advertisement for Frontier Foundation & Crawl Space Repair. The top part has the text "ALL THINGS BASEMENTY!" in large, bold letters. Below this, it says "WE FIX THIS ...AND THIS ...AND THIS ...AND THIS!" followed by four small images showing basement issues: "EWWW!" (Wet Basements), "OUCH." (Wall Cracks), "UH-OH..." (Structural Problems), and "NASTY!" (Crawl Spaces). A list of services includes: Waterproofing, Concrete Lifting & Leveling, Foundation Repairs, Humidity & Mold Control, and Humidity & Mold Control. The name "Judy, Dustin, & Layne Gebers" is listed. At the bottom, it says "Frontier FOUNDATION & CRAWL SPACE Repair", "FREE ESTIMATES", "270.257.6383", and "frontierbasementy.com". There is also a photo of the three Gebers family members under an umbrella.

Gatton donated millions to other universities nationally, including being the largest single contributor to the University of Kentucky in its history.

Gatton donated more than \$70 million to UK for many construction projects and scholarship initiatives beginning in the 1990s, according to The Lane Report.



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Gatton was born and raised on a farm near Bremen in Muhlenberg County.

According to the website at East Tennessee State University – home of the Bill Gatton College of Pharmacy – Gatton’s initial business venture began when he was 8 years old.

He raised an acre of watermelons each year and sold them on the side of the road.

“At that time, too, he completed his first real estate transaction: he purchased six acres of land for \$600,

and sold the acreage for \$1,200 four years later,” the website said.

He attended Sacramento High School and graduated in 1950, the valedictorian of his graduating class. He graduated from UK, where he majored in business administration.

He went on to own multiple car dealerships and had business holdings across the country.

