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WKU celebrates philanthropic foundation's 100th year

MICHAEL J. COLLINS Michael.Collins@bgdailynews.com

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Guests at the College Heights Foundation's 100th Anniversary mingle in
MICHAEL J. COLLINS/Michael.Collins@bgdailynews.com

Western Kentucky University celebrated the 100th anniversary of the College Heights Foundation on Monday.

City officials, university staff, donors and their families flocked to the Cliff Todd Center to pay respects to the foundation that has overseen over \$500 million in donations to WKU since its inception.

“Throughout the past 100 years, the College Heights Foundation has helped tens of thousands of students accomplish that transformative dream of a college education,” foundation President Donald Smith said.

The foundation, created in 1923, oversees and administers scholarship donations for the university. It began when then-president Henry Hardin Cherry received a \$100 donation from a faculty member to help students in need.

Since then, the foundation’s endowment has grown to nearly \$250 million.

Michael Simpson, CHF chairperson, said he’s “thrilled” to see the opportunities students receive through the foundation's support.

“My father instilled in me the belief that an education is the only thing that can’t be taken away,” Simpson said. “The work the College Heights Foundation does is vital to providing students hope and opportunity for higher education.”



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Bowling Green Mayor Todd Alcott, Warren County Judge-Executive Doug Gorman and members of the city Board of Commissioners attended the celebration to present a proclamation honoring the foundation’s work.

Smith said while the foundation has had its share of hurdles, they haven’t let them slow it down.

“We’ve lived through the Great Depression, we’ve lived through the ups and downs of the stock market,” Smith said. “But we’ve remained steadfast from the beginning,

(our mission) has been a guiding light, our guiding principle.”

The foundation receives donations from nearly 25,000 individuals annually. Smith said if it weren't for this “critical private support,” you wouldn't see many of the buildings and programs present on campus today.

In addition to scholarships, the foundation has helped fund the Kentucky Building, which houses the Kentucky Museum; the Faculty House, a former student center turned event venue; and the Kim Eisert Simpson Sensory Garden at the Cliff Todd Center.

The foundation also provides programming support and establishes professorships as needed.

“Those things are going to create intergenerational equity for the institution,” Smith said. “It's not just about the here and now for the university — it's about 10 years from now, 50 years from now, 100 years from now.”

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Michael Collins

Reporter

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