



# Developments

*This issue profiles individuals who have chosen to share their resources with Western Illinois University. The desire of these individuals to share their success with the University touches the lives of students on both of Western's campuses.*

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**INSIDE THIS ISSUE: Brody Establishes Symposium; Rockes' Establish Two Scholarships; Alumni Give Back**



## Dennis A. Lubbs Memorial Geography Scholarship Established

Western Illinois University geography graduate Dennis Lubbs and his wife, Kathy, founded Genesis Nursery, Inc. 26 years ago. The two spent the last few decades working near Tampico, IL, where their company specializes in wholesale, commercial, institutional and agriculture sales. The nursery has grown from 15 to 375 acres, with approximately 400 native species established on their farm. Thanks to that success, Kathy wanted to honor her husband after he passed away last spring. She chose WIU as the place to do so because Dennis was a WIU alumnus, as are her daughter and son-in-law.

"I believe Dennis would have wanted a scholarship funded in order to provide the opportunity for higher learning ... he would have been extremely happy and perhaps a little taken aback by the attention it has received," stated Kathy.

Lubbs' wife Kathy said she wanted to establish a scholarship in Dennis' name "so his legacy will survive through the enrichment of others."

Dennis graduated from WIU with a bachelor of science degree in 1974 and a master of arts degree in 1977, both in geography. His emphasis of study was physical geography, with minors in urban and community studies. Dennis was the vice president of Genesis Nursery, Inc., a 375-acre native prairie seed and plant



*Kathy and Dennis Lubbs*

supplier. He and Kathy hold a lengthy resume of involvement with a number of conservation organizations, including the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Bureau County Soil and Water Conservation District, where both served in a variety of capacities on boards and committees.

Because of their hard work and success, Kathy donated \$102,750 to establish the Dennis A. Lubbs Memorial Geography Scholarship. This amount was given to not only establish the endowed scholarship but to make sure a scholarship was given in Dennis' name last fall semester. This annual scholarship will be awarded to a graduate student majoring in geography who is active and involved within the WIU Department of Geography and/or the community. The scholarship will be automatically renewed for a second year as

long as the student maintains the required GPA and continues to major in geography.

Kathy hopes the scholarship will help attract strong candidates to Western's geography program. She said the scholarship is intended for "someone who believes in volunteerism and stewardship; in the expansion and disbursement of knowledge and in the idea that knowledge and learning are not just for personal gain, but also for the greater good."

Kathy described her husband as someone who was very generous to many organizations, and now his memory can live on at Western and help future graduate students majoring in geography.

"There are not a lot of scholarships available for graduate degrees. I believe this will help provide the opportunity for students to focus on studies over the financial stress that can sometimes come with school," stated Kathy.

"As someone who completed two degrees at Western Illinois University, Dennis Lubbs knew what a geography degree from WIU could do for one's career. We are very grateful that Kathy wanted to honor her late husband by establishing this scholarship," stated Brad Bainter, vice president for Advancement and Public Services. ♦



# Brody Establishes Pre-Med Symposium

Transitioning from Western Illinois University to medical school is about to get easier for undergraduate students at Western. Thanks to Dr. Jill Brody and McDonough Eye Associates, WIU will host the first-ever Pre-Med Symposium March 8, 2017.

“We need to ‘grow our own’ doctors and it starts by informing WIU undergraduates about the process of applying to medical school,” Dr. Brody said.

WIU Centennial Honors College Director Rick Hardy approached Dr. Brody about the creation of a pre-med symposium, similar to the Honors College pre-law symposium. According to Hardy, work then began to create a symposium to facilitate the undergraduates’ path to gaining admission to medical school. And now with the help of Dr. Brody, who is the lead contributor toward the \$75,000 needed to endow the fund, the Jill M. Brody, MD/McDonough Eye Associates Pre-Medicine Symposium was created.

“This initiative is a one-stop shop for information about medical school and to alleviate the students’ fears about the process of applying,” Dr. Brody added. “It will benefit WIU undergraduate students interested in medicine, especially those interested in practicing medicine in a rural community. It will benefit them by opening their eyes to the medical school application process and what it is like to be in medical school.”

Dr. Brody plans to serve as the facilitator of the inaugural pre-med symposium, which will feature a panel of doctors who will field questions about medical school. Students will also receive information from medical school representatives during the event. Dr. Dimitri Azar, an internationally

recognized ophthalmic surgeon and the dean of the College of Medicine at the University of Illinois at Chicago, will serve as the keynote speaker. According to Dr. Brody, she selected Dr. Azar as the keynote speaker because he is a leader in basic science and clinically-related vision research, who has made significant contributions to the treatment of corneal diseases and to advances in refractive surgery.

“Dr. Azar is a true success story in medicine and he is a tireless teacher and mentor to many others,” she noted.

Dr. Brody, a native of Waterloo, Iowa, completed her undergraduate and medical school degrees in Iowa. She finished her undergraduate studies in three years and obtained one of only 460 spots in ophthalmology after medical school, which she started in 1989 at George Washington University in Washington D.C. She was later selected as a corneal fellow in 1992, at Harvard Medical School/Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, and became an assistant professor at SIU Medical School in 1994. Her career would eventually bring her to Macomb, taking over Dr. Lawrence Kerr’s practice. While she’s not a graduate of WIU, she knows the importance of giving back to the institution in the town she calls home.

According to Hardy, there are numerous WIU Honors College students who “excel in the sciences” and have the potential to become physicians.

“The Centennial Honors College is delighted by the prospect of offering Western’s first-ever Pre-Med Symposium, which will allow our students to visit with area medical school representatives, learn about the



Dr. Jill Brody

medical profession and meet WIU alumni who are currently in medical school or are now engaged in their own practice,” he said. “We are most grateful to Dr. Jill Brody for her generous contribution to the Pre-Med Symposium. She serves as true role model for our students who aspire to be medical practitioners.”

Brad Bainter, vice president for advancement and public services, added that for years, Western’s Pre-Law Symposium has helped numerous students prepare for law school.

“We are grateful for Dr. Brody’s and McDonough Eye Associates’ vision and financial sustenance to help us create this new symposium dedicated to the medical field,” Bainter said.

Dr. Brody added that rural communities across Illinois and the United States often find it difficult to recruit and retain doctors, and that is why she is working to combat this issue.

“The new symposium may aid in doing just that and that’s why I wanted to help establish this pre-med symposium,” Dr. Brody said. “It appealed to my sense of giving back to a community that has welcomed me with open arms and the need for more doctors within this community. WIU is an integral part of Macomb and if we can convince more students to go into medicine, and some of them to return to Macomb, that is ideal.” ♦



# Norm and Judy Rocke Establish Two Scholarships at WIU

Before he came to Western, Norm Rocke didn’t really know what he wanted to do with his life. He toyed with the idea of becoming a math teacher or an astronaut. Rocke claims he wasn’t a great student in

high school, but he did excel in math.

When he arrived at WIU as a freshman in the late 1960s, “everything just fell into place,” he stated. The 1971 mathematics

major and physics minor enjoyed a successful 32-year career at State Farm in Bloomington, IL. And now, he’s in a position to “Pay it Forward,” which happens to be one of his favorite movies.



Judy and Norm Rocke

Rocke and his wife, Judy, have named the WIU Foundation as the beneficiary of a new life insurance policy. Proceeds from this policy will be used to establish the Norm and Judy Rocke Physics Scholarship Endowment and the Norm and Judy Rocke Mathematics Scholarship Endowment. The Rockes wanted to create not one but two scholarships to not only entice students to attend WIU but to stay in school once they are on campus.

“Some people can’t afford college. And even those who can afford it—these scholarships help relieve the burden, and we are trying to do our little part. You never know who’s going to find the cure to cancer or something like that. It could be a person right here at Western,” said Norm.

Once endowed, two annual scholarships will be available to undergraduate students, one majoring in mathematics and the other to a student majoring in physics. The Rockes said

these scholarships will be available to help any student who has a dream or a goal and who enjoys math and the sciences.

“We consider this a reward or a promise that somebody is on their side and believes in them,” said Judy.

While at Western, Norm was a math major with a minor in physics, and he also was involved in the computer science program that was established during his junior year of college. After graduation, he spent a year teaching math and physics at Mason City High School with the stipulation that he had to coach the wrestling team, a sport he had never coached—or even played. While he enjoyed his time as an educator and coach, when an opportunity at State Farm in Bloomington presented itself, Norm jumped at it, ultimately retiring from the company as a systems programmer when he turned 55. In his retirement, he and Judy enjoy traveling, as well as looking at ways to help others, including students at WIU.

“The key thing is that I graduated from there. Western was very, very good to me. It’s just a way of giving back to that. I happen to have been very successful in my career, so why not. I can’t take it with me,” Norm joked. “The professors, the atmosphere, the college was just super, and I really, really enjoyed it there.”

“The future is education. If students can learn something today, then they can apply it

again later. We both feel very strongly about education, and that’s one way to be sure that everyone has the opportunities that they can reach for their goals and their dreams,” Judy added.

To establish these scholarships, Norm met with his financial advisor. He had previously given to Western and shared that his gifts had been small, and he wanted to do something more substantial. It was his financial advisor who suggested the life insurance policy as a way to give back to his alma mater in a larger fashion. After chatting with WIU Foundation staff, Norm learned his gift could be used to fund two named scholarship endowments, helping students for years to come.

“Well, they don’t have to worry about finances, so they can concentrate on their studies. Every little bit helps in there. Lots of students have to work to make ends meet, and hopefully this will just put them a little over the edge so they don’t have to worry about it,” stated Norm.

“We are very grateful that Norm and Judy have decided to support WIU in this manner. Purchasing a life insurance policy to help Western create two scholarships is a wonderful way to support future WIU students majoring in math and physics. I appreciate the Rockes’ vision for the future,” stated Brad Bainter, vice president for Advancement and Public Services. ♦



## Alumni Give Back to Program that Shaped Them

Turn back the clock almost two decades, and Cory Fosdyck and Matt Robins were players on the Western Illinois University Leatherneck men’s basketball team. Today, they are Western alumni and brothers-in-law, and they’ve decided to give back to the program that gave them so much.

“The WIU basketball program was pivotal in my education, professional development and maturity as a man. My experience at WIU shaped who I am today,” Fosdyck said. “I owe a debt of gratitude to my coaches, teammates and the University administration for affording me the opportunity to fulfill my dream of playing D1 basketball. This gift is hopefully the first of many steps that allows me to demonstrate gratitude and pay it forward to future Leathernecks.”

Together, Fosdyck and Robins have pledged \$25,000 to the men’s basketball program. They said the purpose of their investment is three-fold: they hope it will help the program attract and retain talented student athletes, influence the likelihood of the program reaching its first NCAA tournament appearance and encourage other basketball alumni to contribute to the program.

“We would love to see a future Leatherneck team in the NCAA tournament. Attracting the best talent means having upgraded facilities and other amenities that show student-athletes that this is a great place to play and go to school,” Robins added.

Fosdyck said his goals for the program have not changed in the 20 years since he first suited up.

“My objective was to win the conference and make it to the NCAA tournament. There are many variables that contribute to making both of those goals a reality,” he said. “At a medium sized institution in a small town, it can be difficult to raise the financial support needed to upgrade the program and compete with other mid-majors. That is why I believe it’s critical for alumni to financially support the basketball team in any way they can afford.”

“Western was a destination school for me, over 500 miles from my hometown of McPherson, Kansas. Cory was a couple years older than I was, but he made me feel at home with the team and the town. His persuasion helped me pick Macomb,” Robins recalled. “I built some great

relationships with my teammates through the years as well as (with) Coach Kerwin and Coach Underwood.” Robins also went on to marry his college sweetheart, Nicki, who just happens to be Cory’s younger sister.

After hanging up his jersey, Fosdyck and his family ultimately ended up in Florida, where he now works as a senior vice president for Merrill Lynch. But Western Illinois University runs deep in the Fosdyck blood.



“I was the third generation in my family to play basketball at WIU. My grandfather, Fear Fosdyck, played for the legendary Coach Six Morley. My father Ole Fosdyck played two seasons of basketball before focusing on the golf team. My brother-in-law Matt Robins and I played three seasons together and my sister Nicki was a cheerleader,” Fosdyck said. “My father-in-law, Lorán Erdmann, is a professor in the kinesiology department, so my entire family is entwined in the school and basketball program. If I can get my 4-year-old son off his iPad and into the driveway, perhaps he can keep the streak going. Given these roots, you can appreciate why I care

deeply about the town, the University and the basketball program.”

As for Robins, he and his family call Nashville, TN home where he works as a financial adviser for Ameriprise Financial. While he and Nicki give to many causes in the Nashville area, Western definitely holds a special place in their hearts.

“We met at Western and really appreciated our time there,” Robins said. “Giving back to the University and future students seems like a great way to show our support.”

Vice President for Advancement and Public Services Brad Bainter, who is also a Leatherneck men’s basketball alumnus, noted that as a former player, this gift is “extra special” to him.

“While academics should always come first, WIU’s student-athletes gain so many out-of-classroom experiences throughout their time at Western that supplement classroom learning,” Bainter said. “We were proud of Cory and Matt as student-athletes and we are proud of their successes now. We are appreciative of their support of the Leatherneck men’s basketball program.”

Assistant Director of Athletics for Development Michael Jones said athletics is grateful for the gift from the former players. “Having known Cory and Matt since their playing days, it’s obvious they have the same passion for Leatherneck basketball now as they did when they wore the purple and gold,” Jones said. ♦



*Cory Fosdyck and Matt Robins*

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