



MEDIA RELEASE

Miles Community College • 2715 Dickinson Street • Miles City, MT 59301

1-800-541-9281 • milescc.edu • mccnews@milescc.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Monday, August 19, 2024



IMAGE: MCC Board of Trustees and Foundation members, along with MCC President Slinger (far right), stand with Jennifer Pluhar (third from left), presenting a check to the college

Local family estate gifts over \$550,000 for nursing and healthcare scholarships

MILES CITY, MONTANA: Miles Community College (MCC) was recently gifted funds from a local family estate to be used towards registered nursing and certified nursing assistant (CNA) scholarships at the college.

The Evangeline "Eve" M. LeVeque Estate has donated over \$550,000 to MCC as dedicated funds to benefit students in Eastern Montana who are pursuing specific healthcare careers

at MCC. The LeVeque family ranched in the Sonnette area of Powder River County in Southeast Montana for more than 100 years, before Evangeline's death in 2020.

"We are so grateful to Evangeline and the LeVeque family for this transformational gift in support of our students," stated MCC President Ron Slinger.

These endowed scholarship funds will be available to incoming and current MCC students enrolled in the MCC Nursing Program and CNA course and will be open to students from Custer, Carter, and Powder River Counties in Montana.

Jennifer Pluhar, Successor Trustee of the estate and distant member of the LeVeque family, presented a check on the MCC campus last week and was joined by MCC administration, faculty, staff, and both Board of Trustee and Foundation members.

Jennifer spoke of the family and their desire to support healthcare in rural Montana.

"They were incredibly interested in education and wanting to see more kids go to college," she stated. "As they all got older, healthcare was a big deal to them, as well as education. They noticed healthcare was a need in our part of the world, so they wanted to help students with that."

The LeVeque family first arrived in Powder River County in 1917, when Evangeline's father, Pierre V. "Pete" LeVeque was still young. Pete went on to marry Mary Pzinski in 1922 before they filed for a homestead in the Selway area ten miles south of Sonnette. Daughter Evangeline joined the family ten months later and was born at the ranch, weighing only 4.5 pounds.

"It was probably a miracle to survive the homebirth of such a tiny infant," said Jennifer. "Winters were harsh!"

The family continued to ranch at Selway for nearly thirty years before purchasing a ranch from the local Johnson family located two miles north of Sonnette. The family enjoyed their new location closer to Highway 212 and lower in elevation, with somewhat milder winters.

In the early 1950s, Evangeline returned to the family ranch after graduating from the University of Montana in Missoula (then known as Montana State) and spending time working in Miles City. She was an avid student of anything agricultural and worked alongside her dad every day, immersed in the ranching lifestyle. While her mom taught her household skills and the value and of cooking, caregiving, and gardening, Evangeline spent much of her time interested in the land and livestock, which was far less common for a woman during this time.

She also enjoyed reading, painting, photography, and researching family genealogy. While extremely independent, Evangeline enjoyed her family and working at the ranch most of all.

Pete, Mary, and Evangeline remained working at their home in Sonnette late into their lives with help from each other and local neighbors. When Pete was no longer able to continue living at the ranch, he moved into Powder River Manor, an assisted living facility in Broadus. Mary and Evangeline travelled the 62 miles to the manor at least six days a week, and had a phone installed in Pete's room to tell him goodnight every evening. Pete passed away in 1995 at the age of 97.

Mary and Evangeline continued living and working on the ranch before Mary spent her last few years in Powder River Manor before passing away in 2000 at the age of 98.

Evangeline also moved into the same facilities later in life. Jennifer reminisces about her time there fondly. "Eve always had me keep up the house at the ranch in case she decided to move home or get kicked out of the Manor," she said joyfully.

After watching both her parents reside at the Manor and during her own time there as a resident, Evangeline recognized the need for robust rural healthcare, especially in Southeast Montana. She enjoyed the caregivers and excellent care received for both her and her parents and valued the importance of healthcare. She wanted to make an impact in their community and implemented trusts to benefit MCC students, the Powder River Community Foundation, and their local church.

Evangeline lived to be 97 years old before her passing in 2020.

Jennifer mentioned the love the LeVeque family had for their community, ranch, and most importantly, each other. "Thank you to everyone in the community for the kindness shown to me and my family over the years."

MCC scholarship funds are set to be available during the next award cycle in February.

For more information on the Evangeline M. LeVeque Estate scholarship funds or other scholarship opportunities at MCC, please contact MCC Director of Institutional Advancement Dolly Ferris at ferrisd@milesc.edu or 406-874-6192.

-#-