

Our First Lilly Scholar Actually Came Home!

By Janet Haley



April 2010 -- Being selected as the recipient of a four-year undergraduate scholarship can dramatically affect your life. Brent Schwanekamp, math teacher and assistant football coach at Plainfield High School, knows that receiving the first Hendricks County Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship, greatly influenced the direction of his life and career and ultimately brought him back to his hometown.

Schwanekamp, a 1998 Plainfield High School graduate, narrowed his college choices to the University of Toledo or the University of Oklahoma. The intent of the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship program is to keep Indiana students in their home state. Schwanekamp shared with me recently, “Without the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship administered through the Hendricks County Community Foundation (HCCF), I would have left the state to attend college and who knows what would have happened after that.”

After graduating from Butler University, Schwanekamp’s first teaching job was at Ben Davis High School. In 2008, he ‘came home’ to teach and coach where he had grown up and played varsity sports. Schwanekamp has come full circle. As a professional educator and resident, he is now a community volunteer with HCCF, the organization that administered his four-year full-tuition scholarship. “My scholarship showed me one way the Community Foundation works in Hendricks County. Since those early years in the mid-1990s, HCCF has grown into a powerful force for good in our county,” says Schwanekamp.

“I have been privileged to participate in the selection of scholarship recipients and am now serving on the grant committee. These have been amazing experiences. I hope to continue to find ways to serve my community outside my profession as a teacher and coach. The Community Foundation continues to remind me of ways to participate in the growth of our county.”

Schwanekamp continued, “I was blessed with loving parents who taught me so much. The Plainfield school system provided a top notch education that challenged me to be the best I could be. Dr. Jerry Holifield continues to be an outstanding model to me, representing the importance of helping to build and serve your community. I can’t emphasize enough how important the support and guidance from all of them was to me. Their impact on my growth and development prepared me to earn the Lilly Scholarship. And now, I can give back to help others in my community.”

To date, over 3 million dollars have been awarded to over 450 Hendricks County students allowing them to gain advanced training in both vocational and collegiate classes through scholarships administrated by the HCCF.

There is a story behind every one of our scholarships. Stories of families taking tragedy and developing a positive contribution back to the community; contributions and tributes to special teachers, family members, wedding anniversaries and business milestones. Through contributions and special funds administrated by the Hendricks County Community Foundation, all of us are able to give back to Hendricks County. Brent and several others will be speaking at our Annual Dinner on April 29 at Primo Banquet and Conference Center. Register online and join us to learn more about the Community Foundation or contact me at 317.718.1200 or janet@hendrickscountycf.org.