



## *Mt. Baker Scholarship Foundation Newsletter*

*A Dollars for Scholars Organization, Mount Baker School District*

MBSF is a volunteer group of community members committed to encouraging academic achievement by providing scholarships for students in the Mt. Baker School District.

*Looking for updates on past MBSF recipients. Please send the email address of past scholarship recipients to [june@nas.com](mailto:june@nas.com) or call 599-2492 so we can interview them for a future newsletter.*

*MBSF meets the first Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the Mt. Baker School District Administration Office, September through June. Everyone is welcome!*



*MBSF Fundraising Chair Neal Bittner and donor Thorleif Mohn*

### **Mt. Baker grad proves generous** **EDUCATION: Retired teacher donates \$100,000 for scholarships.**

*Mary Lane Gallagher, The Bellingham Herald*

Thorleif R. Mohn had to spend a decade toiling in hardscrabble jobs and fighting illness to earn a college degree after he graduated from Mount Baker High School in 1940.

But the retired teacher and school counselor hopes his donation of \$100,000, and eventually his estate worth more than \$1 million, will make it easier for other Mount Baker graduates to continue their studies.

“I think they can use the money, and a lot of kids will benefit from it,” said Mohn, 81.

The \$100,000 gift, alone, is one of the biggest that Mount Baker Scholarship Foundation has received, said Neal Bittner, the foundation’s fundraising chairman.

## Community bequests

The gift will translate into five new \$1,000 scholarships each year, he said.

“Mount Baker is not a well-to-do district, by any means,” Bittner said. “There are a lot of kids, this is just enough to encourage them to apply and go to school.”

The addition of Mohn’s estate would boost the foundation to a new level of scholarship giving.

“Now, we’re only able to give a one-time scholarship, and we want to be able to give continuing scholarships,” Bittner said. “Eventually, we want to be able to offer a full ride to kids who qualify.”

### *Local need*

Mohn said he considered leaving some of his estate to schools closer to where he lives on south Whidbey Island, but decided many other people in the area were able to fund scholarships there.

“I think it’s more needed at Mount Baker High,” he said.

Mohn grew up on Mount Baker Highway and attended elementary school in a two-room schoolhouse in nearby Rome. His father worked as a logger on the south fork of the Nooksack River. Mohn remembers once taking the afternoon school bus to Saxon - carrying his 30/30 rifle with a long, octagonal barrel - to spend a weekend hunting with his dad in the woods.

After high school, Mohn attended what is now Western Washington University for two quarters while working on a farm in Stanwood, but ran out of money and quit school. He then fished, worked at a bakery and

eventually ended up in Alaska operating a jackhammer.

When Pearl Harbor was attacked, Mohn, then 18, enlisted in the Army to be a radio operator in Alaska. That was cut short when he suffered a hemorrhage in one of his lungs and spent the next two years battling tuberculosis in Army hospitals.

“I was very lucky to live through that,” he said.

He finally got his bachelor’s degree in 1950, but continued to bounce from job to job. Teaching was initially denied him because of his history with TB. After a short spell in law school at the University of Washington, Mohn and his father bought a fishing resort on Whidbey Island, running it for nine years.

Meanwhile, Mohn began his teaching career in 1958, in his mid-30s. He worked as a math teacher for 10 years, got his master’s degree in educational psychology, then worked as a high school counselor in Edmonds for 10 years before quitting to care for his aging parents.

Mohn has no other close family; his brother died in 1958 and Mohn never married, though he “came close once or twice.”

He hopes his estate, much of which grew over the years through conservative certificates of deposit, will help other Mount Baker students make it to college more quickly than he did.

“They need training in some skill, whether it’s at a four-year or two-year (college) or whatever,” he said. “It gets more expensive every year.”

## **Mt. Baker Lions Award Renewable Vocational Scholarships**

In addition to the 25 scholarships given by MBSF to 2003 graduating seniors, Mt. Baker Lions Club voted to award four additional vocational scholarships to students planning to study at a community college or technical school. This club, formed just a few years ago, meets at the Maple Falls Library and makes generous contributions to a variety of good causes. In a show of continuing support for the scholarship recipients, the four recipients of these \$500 scholarships will be eligible to receive a second award of \$500 per person (pending maintaining their eligibility) in their second year of school.

The recipients for the Mt. Baker Lions Club Scholarships are:

Kyle Hull who will study Graphic Design at Whatcom Community College.

Rose Johnston, planning to study Nursing at Bellingham Technical College.

Lacey McNielly, a Running Start student who will continue her studies at Whatcom Community College in pursuit of a General Business degree.

Michael Oostema who plans to attend Bellingham Technical College to study Computer Networking Technology.

On behalf of the students and the community – thanks to the Mt. Baker Lions Club for your support!

## Reports from our graduates...



*Heather Knutzen-Chin with husband Ed and dog Janelle*

### **Heather N. Knutzen-Chin, Class of 1991**

When Heather Knutzen-Chin graduated from Mount Baker High School in 1991, she left with a MBSF scholarship in hand and the best wishes of the Mount Baker teachers and staff whose primary mission is to help students reach their full potential.

Heather went on to attend the University of Washington and graduated with a degree in Business Administration. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in "Taxation" at the Seattle Branch of Golden Gate University and is working as a certified public accountant preparing tax returns for small businesses, individuals, trusts and estates.

In appreciation for the support she received from Mt. Baker School District and the MBSF, she is now a donor to the MBSF herself. In her words, "As a MBSF scholarship recipient, I was grateful for the recognition and money I received. It is important for me to support the organizations that have supported me. I choose to donate to the Scholarship Foundation because it is a way I feel I can make a difference in the MBHS community.

I recently decided to leave a future

bequeath to the foundation. It is my way to thank MBHS for all of the support that I received while I was in the school district. In my profession, I see many situations where individual's final wishes are not carried out because of poor planning. Proper estate planning creates tax benefits for my family and guarantees my wishes will be properly executed when I am gone."

Her advice to juniors and seniors about achieving success after high school: "Create your own definition of success and happiness. It is easy to get wrapped up in the world's idea of achievement and pursue that instead of your own interests."



*Karin Pfeiffer-Hoyt*

### **Sygitowicz-Sherman Scholar Joins Peace Corp**

Karin Pfeiffer-Hoyt, MBHS class of '99 and that year's recipient of the Christine Sygitowicz-Sherman Scholarship, has volunteered for a two year stint in the Peace Corps.

Pfeiffer-Hoyt graduated from Whitman College in spring 2003 with a degree in biology.

Upon receiving the scholarship in June 1999 Karin wrote: "It means a great deal to me to be recognized and encouraged for my interest in science. It is special to be given this scholarship in honor of a woman who had a similar background, encouraging me to aspire to some of her successes."

Pfeiffer-Hoyt's role in the Peace Corps involves working in "Rural and Agricultural Development"; she is stationed in Paraguay for the next two years. Her experiences to date include trying to learn the local language, working in cotton fields, and getting acquainted with the oxen used there for a variety of tasks. Karin is the daughter of Cindy and Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt.

*We need help! Looking for a few people to spend a few hours writing scholarship recipient profiles. It's fun and helps MBSF get the word out about the great results our students get from higher education. Contact June Thompson at [june@nas.com](mailto:june@nas.com) or call 599-2492 if you are interested.*

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# Donation and Interest Form for Mt. Baker Scholarship Foundation

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Yes I am interested in helping Mt. Baker Scholarship Foundation raise scholarship funds for Mt. Baker Students.

**I am enclosing a tax-deductible donation for Mt. Baker Scholarship Foundation:**

\$10    \$20    \$50    \$100 (donor entitled to a commemorative tile on Wall of Honor)

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Can we use your name in promotion efforts for the Foundation?    Yes    No    Check with me first

I am interested in discussing setting up a Named or Endowed scholarship through Mt. Baker Scholarship Foundation. Please contact me. A convenient time to reach me at home is \_\_\_\_\_.

Please contact me with more information about attending monthly meetings of the Foundation.

Please complete and mail this form to: Mt. Baker Scholarship Foundation, P.O. Box 875, Deming, WA 98244.



**Mt. Baker Scholarship Foundation Board Members Include:**

Theresa Sygitowicz, *President*; Bruce Burpee, *Vice President*; Kim Raper, *Treasurer*; Neal Bittner, *Fundraising Chair*; Georgina Head, *Alumni Chair*; Mary Compton, *Awards Chair*; Rachel Osborn, *Secretary*; June Thompson, *Newsletter Chair*; Gail Kuromiya, *Newsletter Design and Layout*.

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