

# FUND HIGHLIGHT

## STEPHEN CHANDLER ERICSON FOUNDATION EST. 2010

2024 marks a significant milestone for the Ericson family: it has been 40 years since son and brother Stephen Chandler Ericson's untimely passing.

September 14th, 1984 started as a normal day for the Ericson family. 16-year-old Stephen was excited for his soccer game. Stephen made a breakaway and was one-on-one with the opposing goalie, about to score. A bolt of lightning and a clap of thunder appeared out of nowhere, surrounding Stephen. Stephen passed away with his family by his side on September 19, 1984, at 6:03pm.

Known for his **infectious positivity**, Stephen left a profound impact on those around him. In 1984, Stephen's mother and father, Laura and Joseph Ericson, Jr., were moved to create a scholarship fund for college or trade school students that embodies Stephen's values: Christian / spiritual character, average academic performance, athletic ability, active in music, good sense of humor and school spirit.

The mission of the scholarship is three-fold: **with God, Turning Tragedy into Triumph; the Importance of Education; and Paying It Forward.** The goal is to inspire young people to recognize **the impact one person can make, a testament to Stephen's influence.**

Over the last 40 years, the Stephen Chandler Ericson Scholarship has been awarded to **45 students**. In 5 of those years, 2 awards were given, beginning with the West Chester Christian School and since 2012, Henderson High School. In 2010, Cynthia Ericson and her husband, Gary Beideman affiliated the Stephen Chandler Ericson Foundation with the Community Foundation, so that Stephen's Scholarship will now go on in perpetuity.

The scholarship has grown from **humble beginnings**, originally awarding a few hundred dollars to reaching **new heights** in 2024, awarding a \$14,000 scholarship!

This increase is thanks to the generosity of donors and sponsors. Their support has been crucial in ensuring that the scholarship makes a significant difference.

Cynthia and Gary oversee the day-to-day operations of Stephen's Foundation under the auspices of the Community Foundation. Cynthia attributes all the successes to her parents.

"Mother and Daddy wanted to make sure that Stephen was never forgotten and that other students could enjoy the academic successes that Stephen didn't have the opportunity to fulfill," says Cynthia.



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"I am continually **inspired by Mother's dedication** to Stephen's Foundation and all the hard work she puts in year after year. 2024 marks another milestone as we **celebrate Mother's 90th Birthday!** Her dedication is a cornerstone of the scholarship's success. We know that my brother Stephen and my father are incredibly proud."

As the Ericson Family and the Community Foundation mark these milestones, the Stephen Chandler Ericson Foundation remains a **beacon of hope and inspiration**, proving that, indeed, **"one life does make a difference."** **Now & Forever.**