



ANNUAL LETTER
FEBRUARY 2021

2020 was a year like no other. We couldn't have foreseen the crises that continue to strain our community and are especially difficult for the families we seek to help at GMFF. Our operations were disrupted by the pandemic of course, but our giving was not. We relied solely on written applications in 2020; foregoing in-person interviews which typically take place between March 15 and March 25. In the end, 19 new students received scholarships, bringing the total number of students receiving funds in 2020 to 68. And, 2020 capped another milestone for us — we reached \$1MM in total giving since our inception.

In a year of challenges, we have found it more important than ever to reflect on our good fortune and good health. Unlike so many of our fellow Americans we have experienced little hardship this year - no loss of employment and no illness. In the context of our philanthropic mission, we are most grateful for the continued perseverance and commitment to education we see in students and our partners. The cohort of students who applied for and received our scholarships proved resilient in the face of so much uncertainty. Nearly 100 high school seniors (the majority of our applicants) kept moving forward in the face of cancelled senior year events and submitted exemplary applications. Make no mistake, this is a testament to the drive and professionalism of our partners and their student mentees. Meanwhile, 11 GMFF scholars graduated in 2020 and moved on to graduate school or started their careers. One student, John Aldrich, is particularly special to us. All of our applicants are talented, but we often acknowledge particularly special students with a shout out, “this kid’s a rock star!” In 2016, when John applied to the Last Dollar Scholarship, he was one bright star. Since then he’s had a successful four years at Morehouse College. Despite losing his father in 2019 and the challenges of online learning during his senior year, John graduated in May 2020. He remained thoughtful upon graduation despite his hardships, John wrote us: “You have

2020 by the Numbers	
68	Total number of students helped
75%	% of cost students raise through savings, merit scholarships, grants and work
\$3,647	Average 2020 scholarship amount
1%	Annual operating expenses as a percent of assets
100%	% of donations that go directly to students
\$248K	Total value of GMFF giving in 2020

effectively given me the gift of an education and I cannot possibly explain how grateful I am. As I prepare for law school and beyond, I will always remember the kindness of the Goodwin-Meissner family.”

Another 2020 GMFF scholar, Adam Jenkins, is moving on to medical school, hopeful that he has made us proud.... and he has! Says Adam, “I am amazed by your generosity and part of my scholastic motivation was making your foundation proud in picking me as one of your recipients. I have just graduated from East Carolina University earning a degree in psychology with a minor in composite natural science. I graduated in 4 years with a 3.45 GPA. Earning dean's list and chancellor's list multiple times while participating in numerous organizations on campus. Wish me luck as I plan to apply to medical school very soon!”

I mentioned our partners earlier. They do the heavy lifting to mentor and support students in navigating the process of preparing, getting into, and graduating from college with academic tutoring, mentoring, access to technology and encouragement. They are: TRIO programs at NC State and Appalachian State University, NC State Student Services, including Pack Promise, Appalachian ACCESS and Carolina Youth Coalition of Charlotte, NC. We added two new partners in 2020, both focused on students earlier in the education life cycle: The Daniel Center in Raleigh and GenOne in Charlotte. Scholarship applicants come to us almost exclusively from our partners.

As we turn our attention to the application cycle in 2021 and the 21/22 school year, we continue to engage students during scholarship information sessions using virtual meeting platforms. We will conduct interviews in the same way. It’s not ideal, but we are thrilled to be “meeting” students once again.

Again this year, I am appreciative of your support and hope that you are all aware of the important role you’ve played in the lives of Goodwin Meissner Scholars. Whether through your cheerleading, donations, or both, you helped them obtain their degrees and ultimately launch their careers.

Best Regards,



Laura Dean Meissner
President, Goodwin Meissner Family Foundation