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The Riley Family Centennial Scholarship

JAMES AND JULIE RILEY's \$250,000 gift to Madison created the Riley Family Centennial Scholarship -- the first privately funded Centennial Scholarship to promote diversity on campus.

Although the Midlothian, Va., orthodontist and his wife, Julie, did not attend JMU, they have spent much of their time there in recent years. The Rileys were especially impressed by President Linwood H. Rose's vision for the Centennial Scholars Program, which promotes diversity, and his goal to invest \$2 million in it by JMU's 100th anniversary in 2008.

"We feel for JMU to continue to grow and achieve its full potential, it must represent society as a whole," James says.

"This requires having students of all ethnic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds to enrich the experience of all students. Our core purpose for the endowed scholarship was to help individuals reach their full potential."

As the Rileys learned more about the program, they appreciated the follow up and support given to the students who are Centennial Scholars.

"I was impressed with the way they've gone about it," James says. "They're trying to make sure these students succeed. You can bring a student into [a university], but if you don't give them the tools, you may be setting them up for failure."

Two of the Riley children attended JMU: Tara R. Krohn graduated in 1999, as did her husband Doug, and Paul Riley graduated in 2005. The Rileys served on the JMU Parents Council and were co-chairs in 2005. James currently serves as a Duke Club board member. The Rileys' daughter, Michelle R. Davenport, is a 1996 Elon College graduate. James Riley is a graduate of the University of Virginia and VCU-MCV Dental School, while Julie graduated from Longwood College. They have three grandchildren.

The Rileys say their giving to JMU begins and ends with relationships. "Can you have a relationship with an institution? I think the answer is no," the Rileys say. "You have a relationship with the people who work for an institution --the people who work hard to uphold the values and the mission of the institution and make it what it is. We have a relationship with the people who make JMU what we consider it to be -- an amazing place for a young person to get an education and become an involved citizen."

When Tara first began attending JMU, the Rileys bought season tickets to football games and found that tailgating with their daughter was a great way to get to know her friends. Tara, a psychology major, became active in Zeta Tau Alpha, Student Ambassadors and was a Ms. Madison finalist. Visiting JMU more and more, the Rileys began to get know the people of JMU, first through Tara, then through their son, Paul, a School of Media Arts and Design major and a Marching Royal Duke.

The Rileys say the Parents Council provided a wonderful behind-the-scenes look at JMU and a chance to know more of its administration.

"It just gave us that much more respect for the entire mission of JMU," Julie says. "To see that everything they said they meant 100 percent."

The Rileys say no one ever asked them to give, but after discussing the needs they heard about through the Parents Council and elsewhere, they wanted to contribute financially.

"The inevitable questions that I suppose everyone must ask are, 'what will I have accomplished with my life and is there anything that I have done that will be remembered after my children and grandchildren are gone?'" the Rileys say. "Giving creates a way to perpetuate something that is meaningful not only to the giver but also to the recipients for years and years to come."



James and Julie Riley

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