

For Immediate Release
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Donations sought for Female Athlete of the Year Scholarship Fund

ASHLAND – Two of Ashland High School’s first women to receive Ashland High School’s Female Athlete of the Year award are raising funds to create an annual scholarship for future award recipients.



Ashland County Community Foundation Executive Director James Cutright (center) accepts a check from Karen Cole (left) and Darla Plice (right) to establish the Female Athlete of the Year Scholarship Fund in honor of Darla Plice.

When Darla Plice and Karen Cole were growing up, girls had few opportunities to compete in sports and even fewer to be recognized as scholar athletes.

Cole recalls how her father used to fight—to no avail—for her to be allowed to play baseball alongside the boys.

After Title IX was passed, Cole joined the girls softball team. She excelled at the sport, and in 1978 she became one of the first female athletes from Ashland to receive an athletic scholarship from The Ohio State University.

“It’s good to recognize excellence, and the scholar-athlete connection is so important,” Cole said of the transformative power of scholarships for athletes.

That’s why she and Plice are working to raise \$11,000 to establish the AHS Female Athlete of the Year Scholarship Fund with Ashland County Community Foundation.

The idea for the fund was inspired by ACCF donor Jack Miller, who recently set up a new fund to create a scholarship for the AHS Male Athlete of the Year.

Ev DeVaul, a retired AHS athletic director who now serves as community relations director at the foundation, told Cole and Plice about Miller’s fund. The pair agreed to take up the cause to ensure the Female Athlete of the Year would receive a scholarship as well.

“You think of the time and commitment athletes put in over the years, and that should be recognized,” Plice said. “It’s great to get a trophy, but we also want to encourage further education.”

At Cole's insistence, the fund will be named in honor of Plice.

Though she is humble about her accomplishments, Plice was the AHS Female Athlete of the Year in 1974.

An exceptional three-sport athlete, Plice went on to play basketball for Ashland University and then to play professionally for Women's Professional Basketball League team the St. Louis Streak.

Cole and Plice recently sat down with ACCF Executive Director James Cutright to officially set up the fund and to present the first donations toward the scholarship.

"We are really trying to encourage the next generation of young ladies to aspire to what you both aspired to," Cutright told Cole and Plice.

ACCF awarded more than 225 scholarships last year. While a majority of scholarship recipients are selected through ACCF's blind application process, the AHS Male Athlete of the Year and Female Athlete of the Year recipients are chosen by Ashland High School coaches from among senior players with at least one varsity letter.

Both new Athlete of the Year scholarship awards will be made payable, on behalf of the recipients, to the college or university where they will attend.

For more information about the Female Athlete of the Year Scholarship Fund in honor of Darla Plice, call or text Karen Cole at (419) 651-1065.

To donate to the fund, contact Ashland County Community Foundation, 300 College Avenue, Ashland OH 44805 or by calling (419) 281-4733. Contributions may also be made online by visiting www.accommunityfoundation.org and clicking "Donate to a Fund."

About Ashland County Community Foundation: Ashland County Community Foundation advances philanthropy and improves the quality of life in Ashland County by supporting charitable activities, providing and administering planned giving programs, and serving as responsible stewards of scholarship, as well as individual and organizational funds for specific charities. ACCF has over \$60 million in invested assets and has awarded over \$15.3 million in scholarships, grants and distributions.

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