

Thomas Family Makes Immediate Impact

When Michigan City resident and former MCHS football coach, **Donnie Thomas**, passed away in May of 2017, his family knew they wanted to honor him in a way that reflected how he lived his life: supporting education and mentoring people to achieve their dreams. His wife, Peggy, instantly thought of creating a scholarship in his memory. The idea of annually honoring a qualified student with financial help for higher education seemed like the perfect fit.

While college scholarships are a great way to support continuing education in our community, it is not the only (or most effective) way to do so. After sitting down with the Unity team and sharing her goals for the fund, Peggy realized a once-a-year award would not reflect the magnitude of Donnie's impact on his community. Together, Peggy and her children Quinten and Kristen, decided to start a donor advised fund, and the Donnie & Peggy Thomas Empowerment Fund was born! Family and friends were encouraged to help grow the fund and make donations in Donnie's memory.



"The response was tremendous," said Thomas, of the donations her fund received in honor of Donnie's larger than life personality. **"When he passed, so many people began to tell stories of how he had helped and supported them."**

Since starting the fund just this year they have already made 6 different grants to projects doing great work. They chose to support High School sports, provide teachers with classroom materials, helped Safe Harbor's Champion Robotics Team attend the world Championships and more. Through a partnership with the Greater Michigan City Chapter of the Drifters, Thomas was able to help 2 deserving young men afford college. Peggy and her family take pride in already helping hundreds of people vs 1 or 2 through a once a year, single scholarship.



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"By establishing a fund with Unity," Thomas said, "I don't have to worry. Maggi and her staff are simply amazing. They made the process easy and were always willing to answer questions."

Unity is proud to offer community members like the Thomas Family an opportunity to support the wide variety of causes they care about. If, like Peggy and her children, you feel passion for many parts of life, this can be a great way to impact the people and programs you care about. A donor advised fund can stretch the possibilities of what it means to support your community. It's flexible, fun and forever. Donnie Thomas was a source of support and inspiration for the many lives he touched, and now, thanks to the Donnie & Peggy Thomas Empowerment Fund his legacy can continue the momentum.