Giving Something Back

The SSA Foundation Scholarship program garners industry support.

By John Dunlap

It was an idea that had been discussed for a number of years at Self Storage Association board of directors meetings. The concept was simple enough: the industry needed to give back to its own by offering educational scholarship awards to the children of self storage professionals or to self storage professionals themselves. The problem was getting the kind of support the program needed to get off the ground.

As it turns out, that was not a problem at all.

“I was on the Self Storage Association board when the scholarship program got off the ground,” said Ken Nitzberg, chairman and CEO of Devon Self Storage in Emeryville, California. “The SSA board had been talking about creating this program for many years, but the board finally took the bull by the horns and said let’s do it.

“A group of us made up the steering committee, put together a plan and went out to our most active members in our industry and simply asked for money to fund it. The response was both amazing and extremely gratifying, as the leaders of the industry are among the most generous business people you will ever meet. In literally very little time we raised in excess of $400,000 in cash and pledges—an amazing total for our first fund raising effort—and we were off and running.”

Phyllis McArthur, executive vice president and CFO of Morningstar Properties in Matthews, North Carolina, was also on the Foundation board when the program got off the ground in a big way.

“Our board was, and still is, committed to supporting education for our employees and their children,” McArthur said. “A number of the board members were involved in their own scholarship program on a smaller scale, and we looked at this as an opportunity to make it much more far ranging. The intent is to get the fund to a size that it is sustained for the long haul. We want to reach as many families as we can each year to further education opportunities.”

In taking a look at some of the top pledges made to the program, you will find great generosity. For example, Ed and Craig Olson donated $50,000 right off the top. Barry Hoeven and Westport Properties pledged $54,000, William Kennedy and All American Self Storage $30,000 and Todd Manganaro and ezStorage Corporation $27,000. Five more pledged $25,000, including the aforementioned McArthur, Nitzberg and Olson, as well as Ben Eisler (Baco Realty) and Edward Roach (SKS Management).

“When the program was initially established, our company was glad to be a major supporter,” said Nancy Gunning, president of Chesapeake Resources, Inc., in Rockville, Maryland. “The storage industry has provided storage owners and operators many opportunities. We need to ‘pay it forward.’ Supporting the SSA Foundation Scholarship fund is the right thing to do.”

And what is it about the SSA Foundation Scholarship program that most appeals to Nitzberg and McArthur?

The 2012 SSA Foundation Scholarship Winners

Here is a list of the SSA Foundation Scholarship Class of 2012-13 with the self storage company and location they or their parents represent:

- Sandee Miller: Lock It Up Self Storage (Salt Lake City, Utah)
- Amanda Vargas: National Mini Storage (Kalamazoo, Michigan)
- Holly Martinsen: Copac Self Storage (Ferndale, Washington)
- Madeline Burman: National Storage Center (West Lansing, Michigan)
- Jeremy Murphy: CubeSmart (Knoxville, Tennessee)
- Peter Gooch: Morningstar Mini-Storage (Lewis Center, Ohio)
- Molly Grenchik: Rocky Ridge Orchards and Self Storage (Baileys Harbor, Wisconsin)
- Jessica Gross: Metro Self Storage Inc. (Ft. Myers, Florida)
- Porter Hahn: Charity Storage (Newport Beach, California)
- Asher Smith: 4 Corners Self Storage (Bozeman, Montana)

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Help Us Help Them!

To make a tax deductible donation to the SSA Foundation Scholarship Fund, please mail a check to: SSA Foundation Scholarship Fund, 1901 N. Beauregard Street, Suite 450, Alexandria, VA 22311.

For more information about the program, visit www.selfstorage.org.
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- **Kingwood, TX** 85,200 sf
- **San Jacinto, CA** 119,600 sf
- **Boulder, CO** 115,200 sf
- **Chesterfield, MO** 121,600 sf
- **East Palo Alto, CA** 49,700 sf
- **Daytona, FL** 70,000 sf
- **Oak Park, MI** 83,900 sf
- **Alpharetta, GA** 82,000 sf
- **Stanhope, NJ** 49,900 sf
- **Philadelphia, PA** 81,000 sf
- **Des Plaines, IL** 57,300 sf
- **Daphne, AL** 68,300 sf
- **Glendale, CA** 53,000 sf
- **Orlando Park, IL** 110,000 sf
- **Westhaven, CT** 93,100 sf
- **Kentfield, CA** 45,000 sf
- **Denver, CO** 61,100 sf
- **Fort Worth, TX** 63,800 sf
- **Hilton Head, SC** 139,200 sf
- **Metairie, LA** 60,200 sf
- **Euless, TX** 59,300 sf
- **Albuquerque, NM** 85,800 sf
- **Philadelphia, PA** 103,000 sf
- **Pennsauken, NJ** 69,100 sf
- **Summerville, SC** 65,200 sf
- **Novi, MI** 79,700 sf
- **Tampa, FL** 41,100 sf
- **Ann Arbor, MI** 113,600 sf
- **Charlotte, NC** 47,100 sf
- **Bedford, TX** 52,600 sf
- **Chicago, IL** 125,800 sf
- **Southampton, NY** 64,300 sf
- **San Diego, CA** 99,000 sf
- **Pattaskala, OH** 37,000 sf
- **Denver, CO** 75,200 sf
- **O’Fallon, MO** 82,200 sf
- **Plano, TX** 71,300 sf
Regardless of Setbacks, Sandee Miller Sets Sights on Helping Others

She was born missing a left hand. That alone could have proved to be the sort of setback that can keep a person from faring well in life; but for Sandee Miller, that infirmity proved to be an inspiration to succeed.

She had help from family and friends who believed in her, but in the end, she had to believe in herself. The SSA Foundation Scholarship board also believed in Miller, as she was awarded a $5,000 scholarship in 2012 to pursue her education goals of becoming a certified social worker.

An employee of Lock It Up Self Storage for nearly 10 years, Miller made a decision to see if she could help others by becoming a social worker. The scholarship money went toward helping her graduate from the masters of social work program at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. She is now preparing to take the state licensing exam to become a Certified Social Worker.

“I am so thankful that the self storage industry places such a high value on education,” Miller said. “Because of this and with the help of the SSA Foundation scholarship, I have been able to further my education, which will ultimately allow me to help those in need.”

For Miller, having to deal without having a hand served as the impetus to help others.

“I decided to pursue the social work profession as a means to help others,” Miller added. “Although some things were a struggle, because of my arm, or otherwise, I always had support from family and friends and those around me. I always knew that people saw in me things that I couldn’t see for myself. I hoped that I would be able to be that support for others.”

“I love the quote by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe that says, ‘Treat others as if they were they ought to be and you will help them become what they are capable of becoming.’ I think that quote embodies what social work means to me and what helping others means to me. If I can help someone, they can become what they want to be, just like I did. I hope to be able to help others by seeing the things in them that they can’t see for themselves.”

Among the many things that Miller has done for others, she has worked with the elderly through a hospice company, visiting and assisting family members who have loved ones on hospice services. She also has worked with families who have children in the pediatric unit of a local hospital with resources, counseling, and support.

“I’ve worked with families and patients in the emergency room, intensive care unit, surgical unit, and medical units of a local hospital with counseling, resources, and support,” Miller concluded. “I hope to continue working in the medical field as a social worker helping individuals and families through their difficult times of sickness, loss and struggle.”

—By John Dunlap

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“As an industry the self storage asset category has prospered beyond anyone’s wildest dream over the past 50 years,” said Nitzberg. “As such, it is only appropriate that we give something back, especially to our employees and their children or grandchildren. The scholarship program is a great start in accomplishing that objective, but we must work to increase our endowment and grow the program so that we as an industry can help as many of our own as possible. Our small investment in education will come back to us many times over in the years ahead.”

“The SSA Foundation Scholarship program provides the industry a chance to give back to the employees that help make our business successful,” added McArthur. “It also sends a message to our employees how much we all value an education—and we put our money where our mouth is. I believe that every company should support the SSA Scholarship program, no matter what the size of the contribution. We should give back to those who work so hard for our businesses. The benefit from the scholarships is significant.”

The fact remains that getting an education, graduating from college, or attaining a masters degree or PhD, gives any student, young or old, a leg up on the competition. The SSA understands that, and acknowledges that helping those in the industry who could use funding to pay their education bills is its own reward.

“There is no better investment you can make than into educating our self storage family,” concludes Nitzberg. “Our employees give us so much that a simple contribution to the scholarship program will go a very long way toward helping our employees, their sons and daughters find those few extra dollars that will allow them to continue their education. It will make you feel better to know that a very small portion of your profits are going for such a noble cause.”

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