



Perry & Sandy Massie

Each month, The Courier profiles local philanthropists helping the Yavapai College Foundation keep higher education accessible in our community. Today, we meet former Yavapai College Foundation Board President Perry Massie, and his wife, Sandy, advocates for local youth.

There's a lot of talk about legacies these days. While most of it focuses on statues –

and where they belong – sooner or later, everyone ponders

what they'd like to leave behind.

Perry and Sandy Massie weren't interested in vanity tributes. As the founder of Outdoor Channel Holdings, Inc., and a director of the Outdoor Channel since 1984, Perry found satisfaction, and success, celebrating the surrounding world. So when the Massies moved to Prescott and began addressing their legacy, it only made sense that they would look outward.

"Our philosophy is that we want to invest in the community," Perry explains. "And the best way to do that is to help its youth transition into successful adults."

So Perry and Sandy began a creative and coordinated approach to youth development – one that begins in community centers with early literacy skills and ends at Yavapai College.

The Massies may be best known for Education Now! As President of the Yavapai College Foundation Board, Perry provided critical early funding for the annual scholarship program that made enrollment at Yavapai College possible for 26 deserving students last year. This new program is helping to close the gap between available scholarships and the number of students who need them.

"It allows them to follow their dreams," Sandy Massie explains. "These students would not otherwise have the finances to pursue a degree or learn a trade. Education Now! gives them a chance at something they thought was out of reach."

Education Now! is already showing results. Of the 26 students who received the one-year scholarship last year, 23 are returning for a second year of college. The early returns are encouraging, but the Massies say assistance must begin earlier.

"A lot of today's kids aren't positioned to succeed," Perry says. "Many struggle in high school, or come from troubled homes. So when they get to college, they drop out." In response, the Massies are creating a ladder of development resources.

"At Big Brothers/Big Sisters, we mentor kids with troubled circumstances." He says. "At the Arizona Community Foundation, we're working with Arizona Reads Now, to make sure every child can read by the third grade. And we're developing a tutoring center with the Launch Pad to teach kids how to learn."

“It’s all connected,” Sandy says. “It’s about getting them on a journey. You have to start early, and help them along the way. You cannot drop the ball on them.”

That vigilance, Perry says, offers a broad-based return. “When we support our young people, we help everyone. We give them a better chance at becoming successful in the workforce, raising healthy families and contributing to their communities.” It works for the young people, the community ... and it makes a better legacy, as well.

“We absolutely love our community,” Sandy adds. “Anything we can do to make it a better place, we’re willing to do that.”

-- MJ Grady