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Keys make \$100,000 gift to enhance WKU scholarship fund

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The Key family stands together for a photo.

Jeff and Mary Key recently made a gift of \$100,000 to enhance the Jeff and Mary Key Scholarship and ensure Western Kentucky University students receive a substantial scholarship, according to a news release from the university.

When asked why he gives back to his alma mater, Jeff Key said it's because the university shaped his life and helped make him who he is, the release said.

"I feel that it is only right to give back and help where I can," Key said in the release. "If it wasn't for Western, I wouldn't have the ability to do that."

The Jeff and Mary Key Scholarship was established in 2017 by the Key family, which consists of Mary and Jeff Key, Jessie Key and Shelby Key, the release said. The scholarship benefits WKU students from Central Hardin High School and Glendale, according to the release.

Key was inspired to establish the scholarship because of two educators who influenced him as a young adult and because he received a scholarship that helped him attend WKU, the release said.

"Two people in education made a tremendous impact on my life: Charles Young of East Hardin High School and Dee Gibson at WKU," Key said in the release. "They both took the time to show an interest in my future when I was very young, and I want to do that for others."

Key said in the release that the scholarship he received, although small, made him feel really special.

“It made a big difference to me and changed my outlook,” he said in the release. “I feel like if I can provide that to another young person and, hopefully, help change their life, that’s my responsibility now.”

Key served on the WKU Alumni Association National Board of Directors from 2016 to 2019, and he is an advocate for young people to consider WKU, the release said.

“I recently saw a young lady who I’ve known for many years who shared she was planning to attend another school in Kentucky for journalism, but I said, ‘What about WKU?’ ” Key said in the release.

“I helped make sure she visited campus and had a tour. Not long after, she told me she’s going to be a Hilltopper. That will forever change her trajectory, and I know that feeling.”

Key said in the release he intends to continue to grow the scholarship fund to benefit more students from the area he calls home.

The Jeff and Mary Key Scholarship is administered by the College Heights Foundation at WKU, the release said.

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