Known for her generous spirit, the late Vivian Smith West loved her church, her family and friends, and her community. During her life, Mrs. West, wife of former Greenville Mayor S. Eugene West, supported many charities in Greenville and Pitt County, rejecting any kind of public recognition or thanks for her contributions. Now, her legacy of generosity and compassion continues through the work of the West Memorial Fund, the charitable fund established with the majority of her estate.

Established after Mrs. West’s death in 1998, the West Memorial Fund provides funding for charities and their recipients and accredited colleges and universities for endowed professorships, research and development, or scholarships for students in need of financial assistance. The fund places priority on Greenville and Pitt County charities, colleges, and universities. Since 2005, the West Memorial Fund has given $240,000 to East Carolina University’s Access Scholarship program. With annual gifts of $60,000, the West Memorial Fund is currently providing scholarship funds for 12 students for four years.

East Carolina University’s Access Scholarship program provides scholarships to a historically underserved but greatly deserving group of people—those with both demonstrated financial need and proven academic potential. Access Scholarships currently provide $5,000 annually to cover the costs of in-state tuition, fees, and books for students from North Carolina.

“The West Memorial Fund has supported the Access Scholarship program from the beginning, and we are incredibly grateful for its help building this important program,” said ECU Foundation President Bill Clark. “Through these contributions from the West Memorial Fund, 12 students who might not have been able to afford to attend East Carolina University have gotten a good start on becoming the leaders of tomorrow.”

The West Memorial Fund is one of three administered by Jim Sullivan, chairman of the West Memorial Fund. The Mildred Sheffield Wells Charitable Trust, the West Memorial Fund, and the James J. and Mamie Richardson Perkins Trust distribute funds to charitable organizations with an emphasis on Greenville and Pitt County.

“There are so many needs that we can’t meet them all,” said Jim Sullivan, adding that they usually receive four to 10 times the number of applications they can fund, according to Sullivan.

But he believes in the local focus of the West Memorial Fund and what they have been able to accomplish at East Carolina University and in eastern North Carolina because of Vivian Smith West’s foresight and generosity.

“We are better able to select organizations [we] believe in, that [we] can see what they’re doing,” said Sullivan, “I feel good about what we do. The scholarships, I really like.”