Scholarship endowment provides 'Sense of Completeness'

"I can’t think of a better tribute for our Mom," said Jessica Gorall, daughter of founding Women’s Roundtable member Kathy Taft.

Providing a deserving individual with access to an education was just the sort of thing her mother would have championed herself, had her life not been cut short in a 2010 attack, Gorall said.

The Women’s Roundtable Board of Directors committed to fully endowing the Kathy A. Taft Memorial Women’s Roundtable Access Scholarship in 2011.

The $125,000 goal required for the commitment is nearly realized, and the board hopes to complete the goal of full endowment through a fundraising event scheduled for Thursday, April 10.

A 6 p.m. reception at the Chancellor’s residence will feature Taft’s family members, who will speak about the scholarship and Taft’s impact on education. The event is hosted by the Taft family and the Women’s Roundtable.

While completing the endowment represents a major achievement for the Women’s Roundtable, reaching that goal will also have significant impact for the Taft family. Gorall said the scholarship in Taft’s memory "provides a sense of completeness" when it comes to her mother’s wishes and the things she would have done. “It’s something that she truly believed in, that everyone should have equal opportunity for an education,” she said.

The Access Scholarship provides $5,000 a year for four years to assist a deserving student who demonstrates both financial need and academic potential.

Support the Access Scholarship program by making a donation online. (Select Women’s Roundtable as the fund) or contact Marcy Romary at 252-744-3057 or e-mail romarym@ecu.edu.

Read more about supporting the Women’s Roundtable.

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**Sarah Moran: Creating a Buzz in Manhattan**

When Super Bowl frenzy descended upon Manhattan in February, Women’s Roundtable member Sarah Moran was literally in the midst of the excitement.

Moran worked alongside 20 to 30 other volunteers on Super Bowl Boulevard in Times Square as a social media communication center listener for the NFL and the Super Bowl Host Committee.

Her job was to monitor the buzz on social media outlets and respond to questions, comments or concerns that people shared about their Super Bowl experience.

Moran, a business major with concentrations in marketing and management, was excited about the opportunity for the unique mass media experience.

"The Super Bowl is light years larger than any Twitter/social media experience I’ve had before," she said.

She said the experience should help advance her career.

Following graduation from ECU this May, Moran plans to attend graduate school in marketing, with a goal of combining advertising and social media skills in a future career.

Moran is a member of the Women’s Roundtable book club and attended the Incredible ECU Women event in October. She is chair of ECU’s Student Media Board and a member of the Fine Arts, Communication.

Interactive tours of facilities within ECU’s College of Fine Arts and Communication will highlight the Women’s Roundtable fourth annual Inside ECU event, scheduled for Friday, April 11.

Participants will gather for breakfast at the Greenville Hilton at 8:30 a.m. Following a panel discussion with ECU Access Scholarship recipients, the group will board a bus and head to ECU’s East Campus for interactive campus visits.

Tours will include an inside look at live rehearsals by students in both the School of Music and the School of Theatre and Dance. Visitors may also test their skills as television news anchors at the School of Communication news production studio, and learn best practices for public speaking at the Speech Communication Center.

Lunch will be provided in one of the ECU dining halls.

The day will end at ECU’s annual Purple-Gold Pirate Pigskin Party, where visitors may indulge in tasty North Carolina barbecue cooked on-site. The Women’s Roundtable will host a tent, providing food and beverages for Inside ECU participants.

Interim President of the Medical & Health Sciences Foundation and Director of Women’s Philanthropy Marcy Romary coordinates the program. She said the event is an excellent networking opportunity for participants as well as a chance for alumni to come back to ECU for a firsthand look at some of the exciting activities taking place on campus. In previous years, participants have toured facilities in Health Sciences, Athletics, the School of Arts and the Queen Anne’s Revenge conservation lab.

The cost of the event is $100 per person. The fee covers all meals, transportation and activities.

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Strengthening leadership through 'Sister Talk'

The Women’s Roundtable launched its first book club, “Sister Talk,” in September 2013. The club offers an enriching experience for female Access scholars, with a goal of enhancing leadership skills through intimate conversation with women in leadership positions.

The book club’s reading selections all focus on leadership. For the first meeting, participants read “How Great Women Lead,” by Paralympian Bonnie St. John. The students met at the inaugural book club event to discuss their reading with the four Women’s Roundtable participants: Nancy Ballard, wife of ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard; Dr. Virginia Hardy, vice chancellor for Student Affairs; Dr. Phyllis Horns, vice chancellor for Health Sciences; and Valeria Lassiter, chair of the Women’s Roundtable and chief executive officer of Lassiter & Associates.

Book club members enjoyed a bonus opportunity to meet the author during the October Incredible ECU Women event, where St. John delivered the keynote address.

Lassiter said the book club is achieving its goal of providing a leadership activity for Access scholars. “It was clear from our first book discussion,” she said. “The students were so engaged.”

“They came with their books marked up, quotes from the book, great questions and enthusiasm,” Lassiter said. “Initially, we planned to do just one book a year, but the students wanted to do two.”

Next on the reading list are “The Power of Nice,” by Linda Kaplan Thaler and Robin Koval and “Lean In,” by Sheryl Sandberg.

Lassiter travels from out of state to attend, but she said it is well worth the effort. “I love to read, hear ideas around a shared text, and to watch and experience what happens in an intergenerational conversation. Ultimately, the book club is helping to strengthen both students and alumnae’s leadership muscles,” Lassiter said.

Jamitress Bowden, an ECU senior who is a member of the book club, said participation in the club has strengthened relationships among the student members. “When we see each other around campus, we greet each other with warmth and support and have wonderful conversations,” she said.

Bowden added, “The ladies of the Roundtable and the board members are just so supportive and wonderful. I enjoy spending time getting to know the ladies and talking with them.”

Access Scholar Sara Hocutt said that while she enjoys an opportunity to discuss “empowering literature” through the book club, she has also gained inspiration personally, “to aspire as a young woman climbing the educational ladder.” The club provides “a wonderful opportunity...to network with some of ECU’s most prestigious women,” Hocutt said.

Access scholar Kenya Shakir agreed. She said the group provides a "wonderful meeting place of the minds for female leaders on campus." The book club, she said, has helped her personal "with networking and harnessing my leadership abilities."

The idea for a book club originated with Nancy Ballard, who hosts the events at the Chancellor’s residence. The inaugural class included a group of 6 students and four Women’s Roundtable Board of Directors. The maximum number for the inaugural book club is 10 Access Scholarship students. Membership numbers for the inaugural class are kept low to allow for a comfortable roundtable discussion where everyone may participate.

Lassiter said expanding to multiple book club sections around the campus is a definite possibility for the future, since so many alumni and students have expressed interest in joining the conversation.
Allen selected for service award

Women's Roundtable board member Angela Allen was selected as the winner of the prestigious 2014 Virgil Clark Distinguished Service Award.

The award is presented by ECU's Alumni Association to recognize uncommon and outstanding service to the association or the university as a whole. She was nominated by the Women's Roundtable's Leadership Committee for distinguished service. Nominating a female alumna each year helps to fulfill the Roundtable's vision of creating and recognizing women's legacy of leadership.

Allen is a 1981 graduate in computer science from ECU and a vice president at IBM. During her career, she's been active with organizations and universities to promote technology and women leadership initiatives.

She serves on several boards at East Carolina University, including the Board of Visitors, the College of Technology Industry Advisory and the ECU Foundation. She is a member of the ECU Chancellor's Society.

In 2014, she is working with the ECU College of Technology to promote science, technology, engineering and math through the school's STEM program for middle-school girls. She also serves on a North Carolina Sate Univeristy College of Textiles board for fashion design, textiles and technology management. She is member of the ECU Alumni Association, Women in Technology International, Society of Women Engineers and the Phi Kappa Phi honor society.

Allen is a founding member of the ECU Women's Roundtable Board of Directors. Award winners will be recognized at a fall ceremony.

Incredible ECU Women materials among award winners

Morgan Printers, a local company that designed and printed the invitation and program book for the Incredible ECU Women Series event, received a Special Judges Award in the Corporate Identity Campaign category from the Printing Industries of the Carolinas. The Incredible ECU Women Series materials were among the selections the printer submitted for the contest.

The award will be presented in an annual awards program April 26.