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Couple with Ties to the North Country Bring New Hope for High School Students in Coos County

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DURHAM, N.H. -- Former, long-time Berlin residents Arnie and Della Hanson have always wanted to make a difference at the University of New Hampshire. They did this first a few years ago with a \$500,000 gift for teaching excellence. Now, they are making another difference at UNH ... and to the lives of students in the North Country.

The UNH Foundation has announced a \$2 million gift from the couple to establish the Arnold P. and Della A. Hanson Endowed Scholarship Fund, which will provide students from Coos County four-year scholarships covering the full cost of attendance at UNH.

"I just wanted a kid in the North Country who has the desire to go to college to know there is this opportunity coming that can help achieve the goals he or she has set," Arnie Hanson says. "I want these kids to feel like there's some hope."

"This is another demonstration of the Hansons' continued quest to make a lifelong difference for members of their community by providing educational opportunities for students with financial need and academic promise," says Young Dawkins III, president of the UNH Foundation.

Arnie Hanson started saving money early in his life. Growing up as a young boy in Berlin, he had a milk route in the morning and three newspaper routes, and he shoveled snow in the winter and mowed lawns in the summer. In college, he had a monopoly on selling corsages and boutonnières to UNH fraternities for their formal social functions. He also was the board manager

at his fraternity, Sigma Beta.

When Hanson attended his first year at UNH in the 1940s, his parents paid the tuition and he received three or four small scholarships. His sister, a teacher, sent Hanson \$2 per week "for spending money," he recalls. Following his first year, he went into the Navy and when he returned, his UNH education was paid for by the G.I. Bill. He could handle up to 26 credits per semester -- the usual load is 16 credits. "I had a lot of help from people when I was going to UNH," he recalls, "and Della and I feel it's only right to help others in the same way."

Arnie and Della were married in 1948, one week after Arnie received his bachelor's degree in political science from UNH. After graduation from Boston University Law School in 1951, he was offered a lucrative job in Boston at a prestigious law firm but, Hanson says, "I wanted to go home. I wanted to know that when my daughter went out with someone, I'd know who his parents were."

Both were born and raised in Berlin, and Della has 12 siblings. "There was a lot of family there for us," she says, "and that was important to both of us."

By 1960, Arnie had formed the partnership of Bergeron and Hanson, and embarked on a successful career in civil and criminal law.

By all accounts, the Hansons were well-respected community members, and gained a reputation for "getting things done" for their community as well as for the university. And it's possible that their modesty exceeds their generosity. "We don't like publicity at all," Della says.

Arnie has been honored for many of his professional and civic achievements, including serving as board member and president of the New Hampshire Bar Association; recipient of the 1977 Boston University Law School's prestigious Silver Shingle Award; and recipient of the UNH Alumni Association's Meritorious Service Award in 1986.

The Hansons continue to support many causes in their retirement, including the establishment of an

endowment in 1998 in honor of the late Dr. Norman Alexander, who had a profound influence on Arnie during his UNH years.

"The Hansons don't just contribute with their wallet," says Diana Koski, vice president at the UNH Foundation. "They give with their hearts. Gifts like that are very special indeed."

The Hansons have three children: Arnold Jr., Caryl S. Brensinger '73, and Julie E. Mook; and seven grandchildren.

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