BCCC receives Wilkinson Trust gift

The Beaufort County Community College Foundation recently received the largest single cash gift in the history of the non-profit from the trust of Beaufort County lawyer John A. Wilkinson.

The gift – in the amount of $330,000 – was announced in January by Foundation Director Judy Meier Jennette.

It comes to the college in addition to a gift of $25,000 made by Wilkinson in 1993 – which has grown to an amount worth about $180,000 and today funds the college’s Ambassador Program which provides eight scholarships in the amount of about $8,000 to outstanding students each year.

"John Wilkinson led by example," said Foundation Director Judy Meier Jennette.

"He saw the true value of education and was committed to giving others access to it."

The gift was made from the John A. Wilkinson Foundation, which also made gifts to other charities, including the George H. and Laura E. Brown Library, following Wilkinson’s death in 2001.

"John Wilkinson had an abiding interest in the welfare and education of the citizens of Beaufort County," said BCCC President David McLawhorn. "This interest led him to set aside funds in his trust for the education of worthy local residents who can profit from Wilkinson’s generosity for generations to come."

This gift to BCCC was important to Wilkinson "because it furthered the education of people who could not otherwise obtain it," said James Vosburgh, a trustee of the Wilkinson Foundation. "Throughout his life, John Wilkinson contributed to the community, but he did it very quietly. This was a continuation of that effort – a major contribution he could make to the community."

Wilkinson, a Beaufort County native, practiced law in the county for over 60 years. He served in the law firms of Ward and Wilkinson, Wilkinson and Vosburgh and Wilkinson and Rader before retiring in 1995. He also served as president of the Second District Judicial Bar Association.

Wilkinson was active in civic and political affairs in Beaufort County and North Carolina throughout his life.

A U.S. Army veteran who served in World War II, Wilkinson was a member of American Legion Post 15 and a member of the Washington Masonic Lodge #675 A.F. & A.M.

He was a delegate for 40 years to the Republican National Convention and served on the National Republican Committee in 1983 to 1984, among other party positions. He was a candidate for the N.C. House of Representatives in 1966, 1980 and 1982. In 1988, Wilkinson was inducted into the N.C. Republican Party Hall of Fame.

Under guidelines established by the college and foundation representatives, the gift will be invested with a portion of its earnings to be used to fund scholarships and faculty and staff awards that promote excellence in education. The first scholarships from the gift are expected to be made in Fall 2010.