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Hummel family pulling together to fight Parkinson's disease through creation of memorial scholarship

Pulling together is a hallmark of the Hummel family, and through the creation of the George and Alice Hummel Neuroscience Award, they are supporting research at the University of Lethbridge that will benefit families for years to come.

Siblings Ruth Hummel Thomson (MA '10), Eleanor (Hummel) Smith (BEd '91) and Bernie Hummel recently established the endowed scholarship in memory of their parents. George and Alice would have celebrated their 70th anniversary this month, however George passed away in 2010 at the age of 83 and Alice six years later when she was 93.



A family who understood the value of hard work, George farmed in the Champion, Alta. district for nearly 60 years, while Alice, an accomplished musician from the Anderson Sisters Orchestra, taught piano lessons to more than 200 students throughout the area. They raised six children, worked with their neighbours to help build a strong community and eventually moved to Lethbridge to enjoy their golden years.



Not long after, George was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, which today affects more than 100,000 Canadians, with more than 25 people in Canada being diagnosed each day. Although George's great sense of humour never waned, the complex neurodegenerative disease took its toll.

By creating the George and Alice Hummel Neuroscience Award, the siblings are coming together to honour their parents' memory and creating a lasting legacy that will impact future generations.

"Our parents always taught us that 'if we pull together, we can do great things'," says Eleanor. "We pulled together as a family supporting dad in our fight against Parkinson's."

The award is an endowed scholarship, with a minimum \$1,000 award given to at least one graduate student each year who is majoring in neuroscience and studying Parkinson's or stroke.

"The three of us benefited from Alberta post-secondary educations," says Bernie. "I didn't go to U of L, but when we decided to establish an endowment in honour of our parents, we knew the U of L was the right choice because, as southern Albertans, mom and dad had a personal interest in the University."

Ruth, who completed her Master of Arts at the U of L while working full-time in the Advancement Office, was especially connected. During her time at the University, she learned about the extraordinary brain research that takes place on campus at the Canadian Centre for Behavioural Neuroscience.

"Our goal is to play a small part in discovering a cure," says Ruth. "And for every student who receives a scholarship, we want them to know: this is our vote of confidence in you and your work toward finding a cure for so many neurological diseases that touch so many families. Because of the work you do, there is hope something better is ahead."

To view online: <https://shine.ulethbridge.ca/blog/pulling-together-to-fight-parkinsons/>

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