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Lethbridge Shrine Club establishes bursaries to support youth in need

The Shriners have been helping youth since the early 1900s and the Lethbridge Shrine Club is continuing that tradition with the establishment of five bursaries for University of Lethbridge students in financial need.

“We used to help young people with their health problems until they turned 17 but those needs have decreased as medical coverage has improved,” says Bob McKay, a U of L senator and past president of the Lethbridge Shrine Club. “A young person may not have a health problem but they may have a financial problem and if they miss out on getting an education, that’s a real drawback. It’s just as bad as being sick. We want to help young people, regardless of whether their problem is physical or financial.”

“We are grateful to the Lethbridge Shrine Club for their donation and for recognizing the connection between health and education. As young people move into adulthood, research shows that one of the key predictors of health and quality of life is access to education,” says Mike Mahon, U of L president and vice-chancellor.

The Lethbridge Shrine Club Bursary will annually provide five full or part-time U of L students in financial need with a \$1,000 bursary. The Club welcomes anyone who would like to donate to the fund.

“There will never be a day where this bursary won’t be accessed,” says Mahon. “The need is always going to be there and it will likely only grow, given the current employment situation.”

The Lethbridge Shrine Club was formed in September 1926 as a member of Calgary’s Al Azhar Shrine Centre. At its peak in the 1990s, the club had about 170 members. The Lethbridge Shrine Club has been involved in the community since its inception. Shriners make regular appearances in parades in Lethbridge and around southern Alberta. Over the years, they’ve had a clown unit, a Desert Corps, Indy cars, an Oriental Band, a barbecue unit and, in recent years, the Prowler unit. They recently donated blankets and two riding horses to the Lethbridge Therapeutic Riding Association and they’ve

contributed to the Flying Doctors of Canada, an organization started by U of L alumnus Dr. Ben Cavilla (BSc '00).

Shriners International is probably most well known for its network of 22 hospitals in the United States, Canada and Mexico that provide free care to children who have orthopedic problems or have been severely burned.

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Contact:

Caroline Zentner, public affairs advisor

403-394-3975 or 403-795-5403 (cell)

caroline.zentner@uleth.ca