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Winthrop University

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New Gifts Support Archives' Mission, Fund Two Historical Projects

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – Two new gifts totaling $15,000 will assist Winthrop University’s Louise Pettus Archives & Special Collections in funding projects that advance the archives’ mission to collect and preserve South Carolina history.

Donor Betty Buff has given $10,000 to archives to fund the collection, organization and preservation of Buff’s personal South Carolina Family & Community Leaders (SCFCL) documents. The West Columbia, South Carolina, resident is a longtime SCFCL member who believes strongly in the importance of preserving history.

“People don’t realize that we lose things we don’t preserve,” said Buff. The retired bookkeeper added that she whole-heartedly encourages the archives’ mission of preserving history.

Donor Julie Epting of Columbia, South Carolina, also supports the archives’ mission of preservation. Epting’s $5,000 gift will fund Project Winthrop Veterans-WWII, an effort to identify nine Winthrop alumnae who joined the Women’s Auxiliary Corps (WAACs) as cryptographers, conduct oral interviews to record their stories, and collect photographs, letters, service records and other documentation.

“Working as cryptographers, these alumnae were involved in breaking codes and helping win the war effort,” said Archives Director Gina Price White ‘83. White added that she hopes to expand the project to include locating all Winthrop alumnae who served in WWII in any capacity, creating biographical sketches and conducting additional oral history interviews with the veterans or their family members.

The project serves as a continuation of Epting’s efforts to tell the story of World War II through the experiences of her late husband, U.S. Navy veteran David Epting. Julie Epting previously donated a cache of her husband’s WWII memorabilia, including his U.S. Navy work and dress uniforms, personal diaries, letters and more. David Epting’s keepsakes will be featured in an upcoming WWII
exhibit at archives that will run mid-August through December.

In addition, archives is home to an antique trunk belonging to David Epting’s late mother, Class of 1909 graduate Annie Davis Epting. The items – which showcase “the life of a turn-of-the-century Winthrop student,” said White – include carefully preserved hand-written letters, photographs, clothing, Winthrop pennants and other memorabilia.

For their historical contributions and continued support, the Friends of Dacus Library will induct both Epting and Buff as Life Members of the group in October.

Buff also works to preserve the history of a number of the groups she serves on, including Associated Country Women of the World; Council for Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching; Country Women’s Council U.S.A.; National Master Farm Homemakers Guild; and Farm Bureau Women’s Leadership Committees for South Carolina and Lexington County.

“If we don’t preserve our history now, nobody will know what we accomplished 100 years ago,” said Buff. “We’re failing our generation if we don’t record the history of what we’re doing right now.”

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