

GIFTS FROM THE HEART

It all started with a gift.

A gift of land was given by four Payne County farmers in 1890 to start a land-grant institution in Oklahoma. This priceless gift was the beginning of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, now Oklahoma State University.

The university's first "gift-in-kind" laid the foundation for OSU, which continues to strengthen today through the donation of gifts-in-kind. Gifts-in-kind are non-monetary donations given to the university.

"Private gifts, monetary or non-monetary as in the case of gift-in-kind, go a long way in making a difference in the lives of teachers, students and citizens who come into contact with OSU's agricultural programs," said Milford Jenkins, Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources senior director of development with the OSU Foundation. "It is not the size of the gift that counts, but it is merely the gift."

The OSU College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources receives many gifts throughout the year. Livestock, ranch property, equipment, real estate and farmland are a few of the gifts received. In addition, companies often provide equipment and classroom technology for the college.

"The gift-in-kind program is an opportunity for donors to provide resources to the university for improvements in research, extension and teaching," said Jenkins.

In 1961, the university started officially receiving gifts-in-kind through the OSU Foundation, said Jenkins. At that time, the foundation was designated as the private gift-receiving entity by the OSU Board of Regents.

Both OSU and donors benefit from the gifts-in-kind program, Jenkins said. Gifts provide additional opportunities for teachers and students both inside and outside of the classroom. In many cases, students receive hands-on experience which benefits them after college. By giving, donors see advancements in departments and programs, as well as tax benefits, he said.

"Any college, program or academic unit can benefit from gifts-in-kind," Jenkins said.



Joe Atkins (right) and Farley Schweighart discuss the first mare he donated to the equine program. (Photos by Kendra Kelton)

"Private resources, whether they be cash gifts or gifts-in-kind, play a critical role in helping the university expand and reach new levels of success."

The OSU Department of Animal Science is one of many areas in CASNR to benefit from gifts-in-kind. Joe Atkins of Hale Center, Texas, has given to the OSU equine program.

"OSU has a good horse program, and I wanted to help it," Atkins said. "I wanted OSU to have quality horses kids could work with and use in class."

Atkins, a Stillwater native, attended Oklahoma A&M in 1938 for a year. In 1949, he started his involvement in the equine industry; his knowledge and background with horses prompted him to make donations to the equine program.

"I was first impressed with the Spirit Rider program at OSU and the student involvement," said Atkins.

In 2002, when Atkins decided to retire from the equine industry, he donated a brood mare, which was in foal to Mr. Sun O Lena, from his horse ranch to the equine program.

Since then Atkins has donated another mare and two breedings to Mr. Sun O Lena, who stands at The Four Sixes Ranch in Guthrie, Texas.

“We do not buy any mares for our production herd at the farm,” said Steven Cooper, equine teaching and research assistant professor. “There is no way we could buy the mares we wanted to improve the horse herd. Invaluable gifts-in-kind started our program and help maintain it today.”

A lot of donors are OSU alumni or have a connection to OSU, said Cooper.

Contributors make sure their donations are going to be a good fit for the program and be useful, Cooper said.

Atkins said he wanted OSU to have his horses and knew they would be taken care of and put to good use.

“For someone to step out and donate horses of this caliber is outstanding,” said Cooper. “Our program would not be what it is today without gifts-in-kind.”

Many donors, like Atkins, are long-time OSU supporters and want to see the university continue growing and strengthening in all areas, said Jenkins.



Joe Atkins (left) and Tim Cash, OSU horse farm manager, discuss the industry.

“I had a goal to improve OSU’s brood mare band by giving outstanding mares,” said Atkins.

The OSU Purebred Beef Center also benefits from gifts-in-kind, said Jenkins.

“Donations to the beef center have helped it obtain the highest quality of genetics in the industry,” said Cindy Pribil, OSU Purebred Beef Center manager.

“The beef center has received cattle, bull semen and trucks,” said Pribil. “Small gifts make a big difference.”

All donations, whether money or gifts-in-kind, are critical and help the university save thousands of dollars every year by not having to expend valuable resources from appropriated things, said Jenkins.

“The center is a teaching herd for students,” said Pribil. “Our labor force is mainly students; they benefit from the donations given and receive hands-on experience.”

Gifts-in-kind enhance OSU’s programs by providing additional opportunities for faculty to supplement their classroom instruction, strategies through technologically advanced distance education and classroom technology. The cooperative extension service and agricultural experiment stations likewise have benefited over the years from generous gifts-in-kind, said Jenkins.

“In 1890, people had a passion, people had a dream and people had a vision. They were willing to unselfishly and graciously provide resources and assets to the university,” said Jenkins. “They made their visions a reality by giving an invaluable gift.” ♦ *By Kendra Kelton, Muldrow, Okla.*