

## In Memoriam



*Kyrstan Glasco, a 2010 Coalgate High School graduate, with Carolyn Watson in 2011. Kyrstan received the Carolyn Watson Opportunities Scholarship for four consecutive years and is set to graduate from Southeastern Oklahoma State University in May 2015.*

## Carolyn Watson: Making a Difference in Rural Oklahoma

Carolyn Watson was a woman of action and understood the value of blessing others with the gifts she was given. The longtime chair and CEO of Shamrock Bancshares wanted to improve the quality of life for the residents living in the rural southern Oklahoma communities where her banks are located. Born in Ada, Okla., and a graduate of East Central University, Carolyn knew well where the needs and opportunities existed. In 1995, she established an Affiliated Fund endowment at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation to do just that. Initially, she wanted to remain anonymous so the focus would be on the programs the grants were supporting. As a result, the fund was named the Rural Oklahoma Community Foundation. Carolyn's name was added to the fund in 2013. Since its inception, more than \$800,000 in grants made through the permanent endowment fund have provided for improvements to firefighting equipment, teaching enhancements for classrooms and public libraries and scholarships for teachers seeking continuing education.

While these grants have certainly benefited the communities, Carolyn also wanted to help individual students graduating from Oklahoma's rural high schools. In 2010, she established the Carolyn Watson Opportunities Scholarship that offers an award of up to \$10,000 per academic year to five eligible graduating high school seniors who want to attend college but may not be able to afford it. To qualify, students must attend high school in one of 62 rural Oklahoma counties, have financial need and have demonstrated academic ability based upon a minimum grade point average of 3.25. Recipients may renew the scholarship each year for up to four academic years as long as they maintain a 3.0 grade point average. Students must be nominated by a teacher or community leader and demonstrate exceptional accomplishments outside of the normal classroom environment. To date, 25 students have received the scholarship.

Carolyn died on March 17, 2014 at the age of 86. She leaves behind a truly meaningful legacy that will benefit future generations of rural Oklahomans.