

# Scholarship & Award Endowment Fund Report

Spring 2015

## Providing Opportunities for Rural Students

Harvard senior Chase Chamberlain is just the type of student Carolyn Watson hoped would benefit from the scholarship endowment fund she established in 2010.

Chase was one of 26 seniors to graduate from Stratford High School in 2011. Stratford is a small community located in south central Oklahoma and has a population of just over 1,500 residents. Thanks in part to the Carolyn Watson Opportunities Scholarship, Chase will graduate in May from Harvard with a degree in Government and a minor in Economics. The Carolyn Watson Opportunities Scholarship offers an award of up to \$10,000 per academic year to a number of seniors graduating from rural Oklahoma high schools.

Chase's interests lie in formulating policy and he hopes to work in the private sector as a consultant. While Chase says he never dreamed of attending Harvard, he does recognize that receiving the scholarship opened up a realm of possibilities.

"I did not have a passion for learning until my experience here," he says. "I was a simple kid, from a normal background, that wanted nothing more in life than what I had already been exposed to. Looking back, I cannot imagine my life if I had not received and taken advantage of this opportunity."

Chase also credits the scholarship to helping him make the most of his college experience and to incur only a minimal amount of debt. "It has allowed me to develop as a person instead of solely worrying about financial matters," he explains. "I have been able to focus on my studies, do a bit of traveling and enjoy the college experience."

Carolyn Watson had a thoughtful approach to her philanthropy. Born in Ada, Okla., and a graduate of East Central University, she knew well the challenges individuals living in the southern

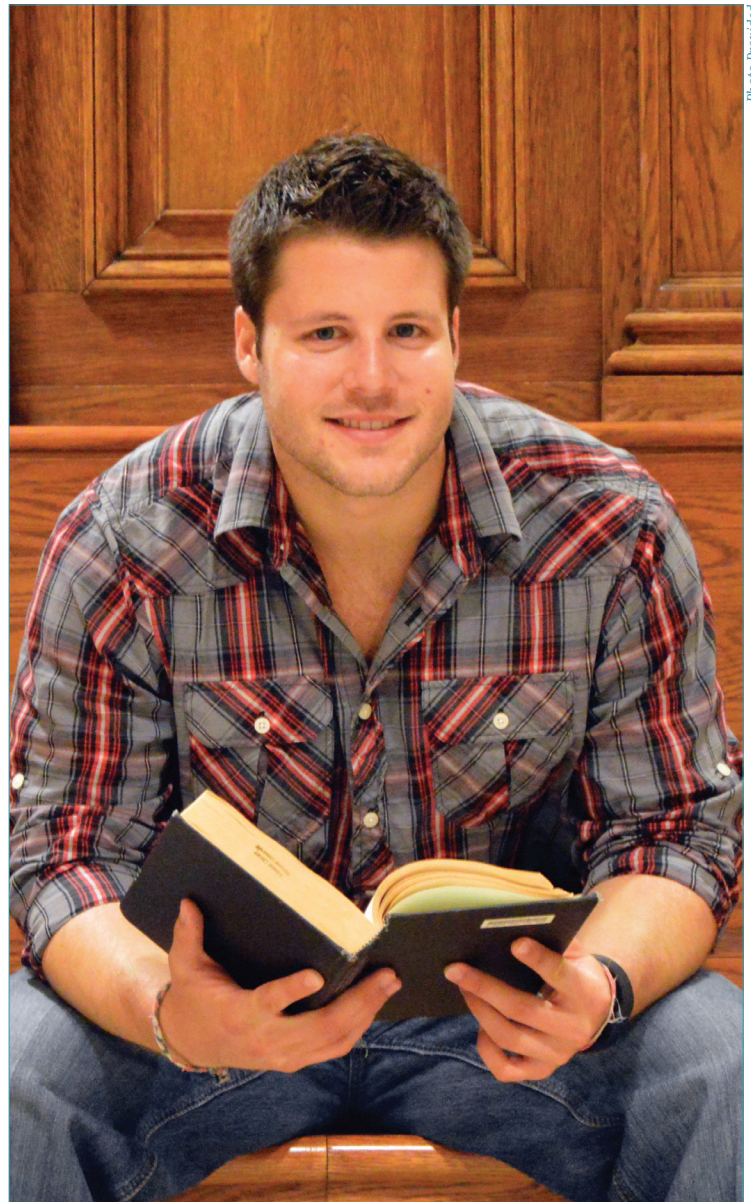


Photo Provided

*Chase Chamberlain, Harvard senior and Carolyn Watson Opportunities Scholarship recipient.*

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counties of Oklahoma faced and the lack of opportunities available. The longtime chair and CEO of Shamrock Bancshares wanted to improve the quality of life for residents living in the southern Oklahoma communities where her banks were located.

In 1995, Carolyn established the Rural Oklahoma Community Foundation, a permanent endowment fund at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation that has supported more than \$800,000 in grants to communities, schools and teachers. Creating a scholarship endowment fund that could have a profound impact was also very important to her and, since 2010, 25 students have received a Carolyn Watson Opportunities Scholarship.



*Carolyn Watson*

## **Carolyn Watson Opportunities Scholarship**

To qualify, applicants must attend high school in one of 62 rural Oklahoma counties, have financial need, have established academic ability based upon a minimum grade point average of 3.25 and demonstrated exceptional accomplishments outside of the normal classroom environment. Recipients may renew the scholarship each year for up to four academic years as long as they maintain a 3.0 grade point average.

Carolyn played an active role in the selection process up until her death in March 2014 at the age of 86. Thanks to her generosity, the endowment will continue to provide scholarships and opportunities to students like Chase.

“Naturally, I am thankful for the generous gift that the scholarship has provided me,” Chase says. “No matter what the future holds, I am excited to start the next chapter of my life.”

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— Chase Chamberlain