

Big Thursday comes up Big

USCL, Clemson to receive \$22,500 each for scholarship programs

By Robert Howey

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Richard Patterson, the chairman of the Big Thursday of Lancaster Inc. Scholarship Fund, had reason to beam at the annual check presentations at the Carole Ray Dowling Center at the University of South Carolina Lancaster on Thursday, Feb. 7.

Patterson presented two checks, each totaling \$22,500, to the University of South Carolina Lancaster and Clemson University.

“That’s a record,” said a smiling Patterson. “In this economy and the way things are, that’s something to smile and be proud about. We’ve done \$20,000 three times, but this tops that.”

The \$45,000 was the results of the Big Thursday Scholarship Committee over the last year.

Funds raised are split equally and given to each high school for scholarships to Lancaster County students – Andrew Jackson, Buford, Indian Land and Lancaster – who will attend one of the schools.

“The University of South Carolina at Lancaster is important to Lancaster County,” said Sharon Novinger, Executive Director for Lancaster County Partners for Youth, which oversees the scholarship selection process for recipients who will attend Clemson. “The future of Lancaster County is in education.”

The selection of scholarship recipients at USCL is overseen by its scholarship committee.

Pledge sponsorship steadily increases

Patterson said a major reason for the record year for the Big Thursday of Lancaster Inc. Scholarship fund is its pledge sponsors program, which has steadily increased since it started in 2010.

The pledge sponsors, which includes individuals and businesses, contribute \$5 a week for 50 weeks.

“We give them two weeks off for vacation, but the pledge must be in by the end of the year,” Patterson said.

The pledge sponsors, who donate at least \$250 and up to \$499, have made quite an impact.

“We have lost 33 percent of our corporate sponsorship in the last year,” Patterson said. “With us setting a new record and presenting \$22,500 to each school, you can see the impact the pledge sponsors have made with our scholarship fund.

“When you think about being a pledge sponsor, it’s easy. That’s \$5 a week for 50 weeks,” he said. “You can set it up as a bank draft where you bank or you can contact Founders Special Services.”

Patterson noted USCL Interim Dean Stan Emanuel has launched a program where faculty and staff can participate in a payroll deduction plan.

“Stan does it and hopes others will follow,” Patterson said. “For them, it’s about \$10.50 a pay period.”

"We're extremely pleased with the results," Emanuel said.

Patterson said Emanuel is following in the footsteps of his predecessor, Dr. John Catalano.

"John Catalano was very supportive of the Big Thursday Scholarship Fund," Patterson said. "He knew how important it was to both schools and what it meant to us. Each year, he sold 25 raffle tickets for our Big Thursday event in November."

Big Thursday Scholarship Committee member Frank Ferguson is an avid supporter of the scholarship program.

"Last year, we had 19 students from Lancaster County enter Clemson as freshman," he said. "Each year, I would like to see each student from Lancaster County who enters Clemson University receive some type of Big Thursday scholarship."

"It all goes to county students who attend Clemson and USC Lancaster," Ferguson said.

For more details on the Big Thursday Scholarship program and to make a pledge, call (803) 285-6800, or write to Big Thursday, P.O. Box 1025, Lancaster, SC 2971.

Patterson said the committee is looking for volunteers to assist with the program.

"Volunteers have played a major role with the scholarship program and we need them to help us in some way," Patterson said.

Contact sports editor Robert Howey at (803) 283-1157