



# An Enduring Legacy

*Ruth Freeman Meyer '24 leaves \$12 million — and many fond memories*



The late Ruth Freeman Meyer, pictured here in a 1940 photo, left \$12 million to SU—the largest gift ever from an individual.

At her death, Ruth Freeman Meyer '24 left the University its largest gift ever from an individual—more than \$12 million. But that considerable sum was only the capstone to decades of direct involvement in the lives and successes of Syracuse students.

Meyer, a Manhattan resident born in Syracuse, died this past February. The 93-year-old widow of Herbert Meyer '24 left the bulk of her estate to the University after decades of giving to scholarships and cultivating relationships with students. Meyer enjoyed enduring friendships with the late SU chancellors William Pearson Tolley and Melvin A. Eggers. The Meyers had no children.

"For her to entrust the University with this tremendous final gift," says SU Chancellor Kenneth A. Shaw, "is testimony to her abiding concern for future students, those who will never have a chance to meet her but who will benefit from her generosity and foresight."

Half of the Meyer gift will be applied to endowing scholarships. The other half will be used to address various priorities of the \$300 million Commitment to Learning campaign.

"As Syracuse strives to become the nation's leading student-centered research university, the Meyer gift will contribute to the overall well-being of the students about whom she cared so much," says Campaign Chair Marvin Lender '63.

Prior to her death, Meyer had already established, through a long history of giving, the University's largest endowed scholarship fund, worth \$1.9 million. Among students currently attending Syracuse, two from each class year are designated Meyer Scholars and receive full scholarships for tuition. First awarded in 1976, Ruth and Herbert Meyer

Scholarships have supported more than 80 students over the years.

Former SU administrator Arthur Fritz Jr. '62 conceived the idea of having Meyer meet her scholarship recipients for casual lunches.

"She thought of them as her kids," says Fritz. "As she saw how her scholarship was helping others, and as she got to know these young people, she became more committed to the scholarship fund."

Suzanne Jacob '80 continued to meet Meyer for lunch two or three times every year following her graduation. Among the first group of Meyer Scholarship recipients, Jacob now works in the music publishing industry.

"If it were not for Ruth Meyer and her generosity," says Jacob, "I would never have had the funds to graduate from SU. I was up to my eyeballs in student loans; attending was a semester-by-semester affair."

Peter Thomas '77, also a member of that first group of Meyer Scholars, says Meyer "was interested in what we were doing and what kind of people we were." Thomas also frequently met with Meyer, even introducing his fiancée to her in 1988. "That relationship kept me aware that there were people who had a vested interest in the development and improvement of the University," says Thomas, vice president for a Connecticut bank. "She was a lovely woman."

"She had great affection for Syracuse," says SU alumnus Tracy Ferguson '31, trustee for the Meyer estate. "I think she would like to be remembered as someone who was deeply interested in the University and in supporting those students who need scholarships to continue their educations."

*To receive a free copy of Commitments, Syracuse University's newsletter about the Commitment to Learning campaign, please write or call Cheri Johnson at 820 Comstock Avenue, Room 100, Syracuse, NY 15244-5040. Telephone: 515-445-2865. Those interested in making a gift should contact Sid Micek, vice president for development and director of the campaign, at the same address and phone number.*