

When it came down to it, if something added value to a child's educational growth – either in or out of the classroom – Dr. Donald C. Jones was for it.

That's why, under Jones' leadership as Board President (2004-06) and then Executive Director (2006-14), the Henderson County Education Foundation raised funds for local student enrichment activities such as Flat Rock Playhouse performances, college scholarships for high school seniors, and small grants for teachers to enhance their efficacy in local classrooms.

"For many years, Dr. Jones has served the community through his extensive volunteer efforts, addressing a broad spectrum of civic, educational, and charitable needs," said James D. Wiley, past president of the Foundation. "The primary focus of these efforts has been to support schools, teachers and students."

A former educator at the elementary, high school, and collegiate levels, Jones was driven by a vision for educational excellence in Henderson County Public Schools (HCPS). And armed with 20 years' experience as a motivational speaker, he spent 14 years promoting the Foundation's mission, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars in the process.

"His management and promotional skills greatly increased the Foundation's profile and awareness throughout our county," says Wiley.

"I remember well his many fundraising efforts to provide college scholarships to deserving Henderson County students," recalls Dr. Jan King, assistant superintendent of HCPS, and former elementary school principal. "Whether he was asking us to sell buy-one-get-one (coupon) books, golf sponsorships or BBQ dinner tickets, his enthusiasm for the cause was always fervent." So fervent, in fact, that the sale of his coupon books alone raised more than \$250,000 in operation funds for the Foundation over the years.

"There was no doubt that he believed in what he was doing," says Mary Frances McAbee, former teacher and 2009 Hall of Fame inductee.

During his 10 years as President and Executive Director, Jones increased the dollar amounts and extended the reach of the Foundation's scholarship program – increasing the number of annual scholarships awarded from four to 63 each year, valuing at least \$150,000 annually, and totaling more than \$1,888,880 during his tenure.

In his first year as Executive Director, Jones also created the Annual HCEF Fall Golf Classic, which continues to be the Foundation's largest fundraising event of the year. Jones is also responsible for establishing and maintaining the HCEF Hall of Fame (2004-14), which was one of only five in the state during the program's inception.

"The Hall of Fame became the event of the year. We who were inducted felt as if we were the most special people in the county," says McAbee. "My induction in 2010 was, without a doubt, the highlight of my career," says Gerald Green, former principal of Mills River Elementary. "It actually made my career complete."

Advocating for the county's students and educators within local service organizations, Jones used his influence as President of the Hendersonville Kiwanis Club (1987-88) to establish the now-longstanding community tradition of recognizing high school athletes through the Kiwanis All-Star program and awards.

In 2011, Jones received the Henderson County Chamber of Commerce's prestigious Education Champion award – confirming what King puts succinctly, and what HCPS staff has known for years:

“(Jones) is a vocal champion of providing excellent educational opportunities for the students of our community.”