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# Advocate for women bequeaths nursing scholarship

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MOUNT VERNON — Leah Hawkinson died with one regret: She never fulfilled her lifelong dream of becoming a nurse.

Instead, she worked cleaning houses and raised five children, two of whom became nurses themselves.

Hawkinson died earlier this month at 95, but her love of nursing will be carried on by an endowment to the nursing program at Skagit Valley College. Hawkinson's will specified that a portion of her estate go toward "something that would support young women."

About \$30,000 will be placed into the Leah G. Hawkinson Nursing Scholarship. Others who knew her have started donating to the fund.

"Her gift and generosity of her family is just very admirable and inspiring," said Carl Young, director of the Skagit Valley College Foundation. "It's a huge commitment on this woman's part. It's wonderful."

Hawkinson was born in a small town in Canada, one of 12 children. She was forced to drop out of high school to help her sister, whose husband had died and left her with small children and no income.

"That was always a loss for her because she was a very good student as a young girl," said Hawkinson's adult daughter, Jan Haaken of Oregon.

Hawkinson grew up in Canada and later lived in the Bellingham and Stanwood areas. She carried with her a passion for community health and helping underprivileged women. She gave to numerous organizations, including a health clinic in West Africa. Many of her extended family members who live in the Skagit County area became advocates of health care and health care reform.

For information about donating to the endowment, call the Skagit Valley College Foundation at 360-416-7646.

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Hawkinson