

donor profile

JOE L. AND ANNIE B. KENNEDY



Couple left the classroom, but not the fight for quality education

Over the course of their 30-plus years working in the Milwaukee Public School district, Joe and Annie Kennedy have been witness to – and participants in – the evolution of local education.

Both started as substitute teachers in 1962. Annie taught science and reading in middle and high school before becoming an elementary school reading teacher. Joe taught at the former Roosevelt Junior High School before heading up Riverside High School, Lincoln Junior High School and helping start the Milwaukee High School of the Arts.

One thing that hasn't changed, however, is their reason for entering education in the first place – the kids. While disheartened by struggles that MPS and its students now face, the retired couple decided that as lifelong educators, they needed to be involved somehow in a solution.

"We need to do something to help children," Annie said. "They are at a desperate point now."



They are channeling their passion and philanthropy through the Joe L. and Annie B. Kennedy Scholarship Fund, an Acorn fund they created in 2002. Initially, the fund was designed to provide scholarships for students attending New Testament Christian Academy, a private school on Milwaukee's northwest side that the couple helped start. Joe served as its principal for nine years and Annie taught reading and first and second grades. They drafted selection criteria and solicited family and friends to help grow the fund.

When the school became part of Milwaukee's school choice program, however, students who previously

needed financial assistance were covered. The Kennedys decided to change their fund's purpose, making it more flexible in whom and how it helps.

"We felt we should have it as an open-ended advisory fund to assist students wherever they might be," Joe said.

Their fund is not quite a decade old, but the couple's relationship with the Foundation stretches back more than 30 years. Joe, a close friend of Hank Aaron, advises the former home run king's Chasing the Dream Fund that was created at the Foundation in 1976.

The Foundation's reputation and longevity gave the Kennedys confidence that their fund's mission would be sustainable. While their fund has yet to reach grantmaking size, the couple hopes that when it does, it can provide opportunities for Milwaukee students to succeed.

"You can't change the whole dynamic so you just have to help where you can," Joe said.

"We need to do something to help children. They are at a desperate point now."

Annie B. Kennedy