

CROCKETT COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL RECEIVES GENEROUS GIFT FOR HOSA, SCHOLARSHIPS

By Ron Barry

A life well-lived in California stands to benefit a multitude of young Crockett Countians for many years to come.

Director of Schools P. A. Pratt and CCHS Principal Jerrod Shelton announced that the high school has received its largest monetary donation in history when Terri Kozlowitz, Trustee of the Franklin M. Privette Trust, presented a gift of \$355,000 for the expressed use of scholarships and equipment by the HOSA department (Health Occupations Students of America).

The award will be divided between \$250,000 going into an ongoing scholarship fund for CCHS students advancing into the medical field and \$105,000 applying to an immediate upgrade of the current HOSA teaching facility at the school.

The gift was officially announced Wednesday afternoon at a reception in the HOSA Lab at the school, featuring members of the Privette family, local health officials, school board members, County Mayor Gary Reasons, school administrators, and – most importantly – current HOSA students.

“When the representatives of the Privette Trust contacted me about the donation to the HOSA program, I was overwhelmed by the generosity of Mr. Privette,” Pratt said. “In addition, the fact that he lived in California made the donation even more unbelievable. The gift is the largest private donation that I have knowledge of in my 30 years in Crockett County. It reiterates that our students matter to others and that their hard work and successes are appreciated.

“Our teachers are making a difference, and others are recognizing their efforts,” Pratt continued.



Left: This photo was taken as the initial contact was made between Terri & Steve Kozlowitz, CCHS Principal Jerrod Shelton, and the HOSA advisors / instructors.

“I am encouraged by Mr. Privette’s generous donation as it will allow the school system to award scholarships for those students who are seeking a profession in the medical field. Crockett County HOSA will be able to help multiple students each year pursue their dreams in a career in the medical field because Mr. Privette read a paper from Crockett County and was impressed with our students’ work and dedication. This inspired him to do something to support their efforts. His generosity will leave a legacy that will positively impact our students for years to come.”

Terri Kozlowitz is Privette’s niece, and along with her husband Steve maintained a special lifelong relationship with Privette, who died on April 19, 2024 from injuries following a fall at his Santa Clara home. While he was “Frank” to everyone who knew him in California, he was always “Uncle Max” to the Kozlowitzes.

“He was born on a farm just off Highway 412 (on August 9, 1934) and was raised on a farm in Crockett Mills,” Terri said. “But even when he moved to California, he never forgot his Crockett roots. He kept up with everything from around here by reading The Crockett County Times, and he visited two or three times every year he was gone.”

Privette attended Hamlett-Robertson School in Crockett Mills, graduating in 1952, and then enrolled in Union University and earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in biology while enjoying membership in the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity.

“When he graduated from Union, the Korean War had begun and Max enlisted into the Navy Officer Candidate School,” Steve said. “This gave him more options than if he had waited until he was drafted. I think he was also anxious to see what life was like in the rest of the world.”

Eventually commissioned as an Ensign in the U. S. Navy and assigned to a radar relay ship – the USS Guardian – he was based in California.

“He really loved it out there,” Terri said. “It was only a matter of time before he’d make it his home. We think that may be how he ended up spelling his last name with an ‘e’ on the end. His parents spelled theirs ‘Privett,’ and pronounced it PRI-vet. Somewhere along the line he changed his to ‘Privette’ and pronounced it Pri-VETTE. Maybe it was a California thing.”

Honorably discharged in 1959 as a Lieutenant Junior Grade, Privette returned home to Crockett County and taught biology for a year at Maury City High School.

But his thirst for learning – and the opportunities provided by his G. I. Bill money – sent Max back out west.

Privette taught biology at Leland High School in San Jose for more than 30 years. During that time, he also earned a Master's Degree in molecular biology from Stanford University and began buying property. "It was very cheap back then," Steve said, "and Max was very smart with his purchases. He was frugal with his money and never tried to live an elaborate lifestyle."

Terri said that Max's love for teaching science is what led to forming the trust fund that produced the gift to CCHS.

"Max was always looking to give something to those around him," she said. "He was always very philanthropic. He gave money when he could, he gave wisdom to his students, and he a lot of love to us and to those in his various communities. In settling his estate, Steve and I have been astounded by the respect and devotion his friends, students, and associates have expressed for his life."

In his later years, Privette added the title of "Reverend" to his resumé, moving his teaching talents into a ministry designed to help others become more cognizant of the needs of people around them and how to best meet those needs spiritually and through their own generosity. He spent a few years in Nashville to be near his sister Ruth, but went back to California after both she and her husband Joe passed away.

Privette remained active and involved in his community even though he was well into his eighties.

"He had season tickets to the opera and the theater. Everyone in the local symphony knew him by name," Terri said. "He played the piano every day. He still drove. He'd replace his car every two years, and right before he died was excited about a new one he was going to get. He'd always buy used cars, but he was really excited about this latest one he was about to get.

"But we'll always remember his quest for learning," she said. "His gift was teaching, and it was driven by a curiosity to learn things himself. And he wanted people to benefit from what he learned, which is why he insisted that this gift to Crockett County be a part of his trust fund."

HOSA teacher Candy Stallings remains tremendously moved about the donation.

"Mrs. Kozlowitz sent an email stating she would like to make a donation and requested a call," she said. "Once we reached out to her, we arranged a meeting with the other HOSA advisors, Mr. Shelton, and Haley Williams (who oversees the CCHS agriscience program).

"Honestly, we all became teary-eyed. There are times and events in life that people reflect on and can say that this made, or they made, a positive difference in someone's life. The day that we met the Kozlowitzes is one of those moments. Mr. Max and his family will forever be etched in my mind and my heart. Their selfless, generous donation will continue to bless our HOSA program and students for many years to come."

In addition to the scholarship money portion of the gift, Stallings said the equipment purchases will include a state-of-the-art mannequin to train the nursing assistant students, allowing them to obtain a certification that increases their employability, and a new EKG machine for helping the cardiovascular class acquire a national certification.

"The mannequin speaks and has several lifelike features that will allow students to perform actual nursing tasks," Stallings said. "They can take blood pressures and even draw blood simulations. It's extremely advanced – and we're going to call her 'Terri.' Words will never be able to express our gratitude for this family and the gift that they have given to our program and students."

The mannequin is scheduled to arrive in September.

The HOSA staff also purchased updated stethoscopes for the students. "There is still money remaining for other things," said Gayla Mayfield, another HOSA advisor. "We didn't want to spend it all at once, because we know there may be other things that can be more beneficial later than now."

Principal Shelton echoed the sentiments of both Stallings and Pratt. "The kindness that the Privette family has displayed is unparalleled," he said. "The extraordinary donation will have a lifelong impact on so many of our students who plan to seek a career in the medical field. I am forever grateful that a former Crockett Countian remembered his hometown and how much he valued education."

Following his death and the settling of the estate, Terri and the other members of the Privette family honored one more wish that "Uncle Max" had expressed.

"He wanted his ashes scattered over the farmland in Crockett Mills where he was raised," she said. "I thought initially that this was going to be very tough for me to fulfill, because it was the first time we had ever been involved with a cremation. But it turned out to be a beautiful ceremony, and in giving his ashes back to his farm, it reminded us that Max was always giving back.

"And that's how we'll always remember him. He was a giver. And with this donation, he'll always be one."



Above: Franklin M. Privette -- the man behind the donation that will benefit Crockett HOSA students for years to come. (Photo courtesy of Terri Kozlowitz)



Above: Family members unveil the plaque that will commemorate all future recipients of the Franklin M. Privette HOSA Scholarships. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Terri Kozlowitz visits with Crockett's HOSA students after the plaque unveiling. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Crockett County Director of Schools P. A. Pratt welcomes guests at Wednesday's reception and announces the Privette donation. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: The Privette family members join with the current CCHS HOSA advisors / instructors to celebrate Wednesday's announcement. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: A close-up of the plaque that will honor the Privette scholarship recipients. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Current HOSA students pose with members of the Franklin M. Privette family. The scholarship fund will provide a total of \$7,500 per year for CCHS students going into medical professions. (Photo by Ron Barry)