



Mrs. Basch's 6th grade classroom spells out a word. Can you guess it? It's at the end of this story.

Scholarships celebrate 'community' in Eastford

In 2012, Eastford entrusted 13 scholarships dating back to 1954 to the care of the Community Foundation. In a school with only one class per grade, so students are with the same classmates for up to 10 years, "community" has an "Our Town" feel. The scholarships and awards similarly represent more than face value.

Do you know the play 'Our Town?' Eastford School Superintendent Linda Loretz asks. "That's where I work. We are the quintessential small New England town." It's hard to disagree, especially when you consider Eastford's single school. "We have one section for every grade, up through 8th grade," Loretz explains. "A student will have the same

classmates, the same cohort, until you leave for high school. It's always been that way. A lot of the parents of our kids went to this school."

"This school" is Eastford Elementary School on Westford Road. It opened in 1949 to welcome 74 K-8 students and three teachers, replacing the last of the one-room schools. Still on the same site, Eastford Elementary has had multiple upgrades and added two wings, as well as a pre-kindergarten program six years ago.

With such a small student body – Eastford's population is roughly 1,700 – the town has always sent students away for high school, primarily Woodstock Academy. But Eastford has kept its younger folks at hand.

"Eastford doesn't want to regionalize," Loretz says. "Residents have certainly investigated the option, but turned it down. Having our own school is an important source of place and pride."

13 scholarships are proof of pride

No surprise that Eastford Elementary is a popular gathering spot for key town activities. Loretz reels them off: before and afterschool childcare, major Town Meetings, Heritage Day, and area road races, to name a few.

Just as significantly, people reinforce their hope for the

The Eastford scholarships

For higher education

- Dennis S. Barlow Scholarship Award
- Harold Carpenter Fund Scholarship
- Esther & Lucy Harmon/Leta Sabin Trepal Scholarship Fund
- Eleanor K. Lewis Scholarship
- Mary King Sharpe Memorial Business Scholarship
- Edith Wheaton Smith Memorial Scholarship
- Emil Vaida Scholarship

For 8th graders

- Allen James Day Memorial Award
- Roger Mason Day Memorial Award
- Olivette Kozey Art Award
- William Shand Memorial Award
- William S. Warren Academic Award

future by establishing and supporting scholarships for Eastford youth.

"We have twelve scholarship funds dating back to 1954: seven for our high school graduates and five for our 8th graders," Loretz relates.

"The scholarships are wonderful for lots of reasons," she says. "Of course, they provide welcome assistance to Eastford graduates for their college expenses.

"We're also able to provide extra honors to 8th graders as an incentive to keep working hard, to let them know their effort was appreciated.

"But the scholarships also give us an opportunity every year to honor the people they're named for, all of whom served the town in one way or another," Loretz notes.

In fact, the names on the scholarships are a veritable 'Who's Who' of community service. They date from 1954 with the Eleanor K. Lewis Memorial Fund, established by former pupils, neighbors, and friends at the passing of a teacher and principal whose tenure lasted 34 years.

Similarly, the William S. Warren Academic Award memorializes a town leader who served on the Board of Education for 39 years. The newest fund remembers Dennis Barlow, who recently passed away at only 51, after nine years on the Board.

Others have held town office, served on committees,

and reflected the best Eastford has to offer, Loretz says.

"In that way, the scholarships and awards are so much more than just the dollars," she concludes.

Town will continue to choose winners

After years of careful management and investment, with a special shout-out to CPA Tom Latham, Eastford transferred management of the scholarships to the Community Foundation in 2012.

"The town asked all the right, tough questions," reports Kip Parker, CFECT Division Director. "They wanted clear

answers about management, investment, reporting, funds transfer, you name it.

"Happily, the Community Foundation has a track record of managing more than 75 scholarships that distributed more than a quarter million dollars last year. We'll have a great partnership with Eastford," Parker says.

Especially since the town will continue to choose the awardees.

"No one knows the students better than we do," Loretz says, referring to the Board and

the educators. "We've known almost all of them since they were little children and we've stayed in close touch ever since.

"It's a package deal in Eastford," she explains. "We're not just educating the students. We're understanding the community!"

