

THE STEVEN L. BUTLER MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

STEVE BUTLER: THE DEDICATED TEACHER BEHIND THE FUND

Steve Butler was a true “Renaissance Man” known for his dedicated teaching, his passionate union activism, and his love of history, politics and music. For 18 years he taught at the Alameda County Juvenile Court Schools, working with students who face numerous challenges and obstacles in their young lives. In 2007, teachers in the Alameda County Office of Education named him “Teacher of the Year.”

Steve Butler typified the teacher who went beyond the call of duty for his students. For almost 20 years, he worked in the Alameda County Juvenile Hall and Community Schools program with the tough-to-teach students – those students who were unable to succeed in a continuation school, let alone a regular high school. His self-contained Hayward Community School classroom was often the only thing standing between the students and incarceration.

Steve lived a professional life as an advocate for students and teachers, serving as the president of the Alameda County Teachers Association for eight years, as a representative on the California Teachers Association’s State Council for two years, and most recently as a member of the ALCOSTA Service Center Council Steering Committee. Union activism and his dedication to students was something Steve shared with his wife of 26 years, Mary Butler, who has held numerous positions in her own teachers’ union.

THE INSPIRATION BEHIND THE STEVEN L. BUTLER MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND (“THE BUTLER FUND”)

Steve worked hard on behalf of his students, especially those who made an effort to help themselves. One of those students was Donna, a young woman who defied the odds. The daughter of a single mother who was a drug addict, Donna took refuge in Steve’s class to escape the difficulties of her home life, regularly coming to his program 90 minutes early. Steve steadily worked with her, and with the help of a school psychologist, was able to enroll Donna in a welding class through the county’s Regional Occupation Program. When Donna’s skills and determination earned her an opportunity to enter a state competition, it was Steve who sought donations from faculty and friends to send her to Los Angeles for the contest. Winning a top award at the statewide competition proved to be a life-changing experience for Donna, and was pay-back enough for Steve.

Donna soon after graduated from the program and went on to earn a good living as a welder. Several years later, Donna ran into Steve and his wife, Mary, and profusely thanked him for helping her succeed. She was not the first student to do so. “Many times, students would come up to Steve when we were out and thank him for helping them turn their lives around,” Mary Butler recalls. “He was definitely a man who believed in second chances.”

It is in dedication to Steve’s advocacy for teachers and students, his love of life and his competitive spirit that his colleagues from the Alameda County Teachers Association, California School Employees Association, Alameda County Office of Education and the California Teachers Association strive to build and sustain the Steven L. Butler Memorial Scholarship Fund for Alameda County Juvenile Court School students. The Steven L. Butler Memorial Scholarship Fund will be used to help other forgotten and struggling students receive a second chance at success, like Donna did under Steve’s care and support.

THE “BUTLER FUND” AWARDS

The Committee guiding the Steven L. Butler Memorial Scholarship Fund will strive to present unique and meaningful awards to recipients. Students may be nominated by employees working in the Alameda County Office of Education or the Alameda County Juvenile Probation Department based on a student’s special needs and talents. If, as in “The Donna Story,” funding is needed for a student to attend a local, regional or state competition, then the award will reflect that need. If, on the other hand, a student shows particular interest in the fine arts, then the award might be attendance at a summer fine arts camp, art supplies, music lessons, or similarly situated learning experiences. Or an award might simply represent “a dream” of a student struggling to change their personal situation by furthering their education. It is the hope and desire of the Committee guiding the “The Butler Fund” that our eclectic awards will do for prospective recipients what Steve Butler’s personal efforts provided his former student, Donna.

NOMINATION DEADLINE

Nominees may be selected at any time throughout the school year so awards are timely with events that will inspire a recipient. You may nominate a student at any time throughout the school year, but no later than April 1st of each calendar year. “The Butler Fund” Committee will meet as needed but no later than May 15th to select a final round of recipients.