

SPRINGFIELD

STCC left \$250,000 by longtime teacher

The reading room in Springfield Technical Community College's library now carries the name of John W. Bennett, who named the college the beneficiary of his life insurance policy.

A Holyoke native, Bennett was the husband of the late Mary Killeen-Bennett, who served as a faculty member in the college's human services program. The couple also established the Killeen-Bennett Scholarship before their deaths.

During a ceremony held last month, college president John B. Cook thanked Bennett family members and friends who were on hand for the formal dedication of the Bennett Reading Room. The college received \$250,000 from the Bennett estate.

The significant donation comes as the STCC Foundation prepares for a major gifts campaign this fall. The foundation, a nonprofit organization, helps



STCC students gather in the Bennett Reading Room. (PHOTO BY CHUCK CHOI)

the college meet its goals and commitment to provide superior educational opportunities in

the community. The goal of the upcoming major gifts campaign is to

raise money to build scholarships and enhance support services for students.

"The gift from the estate of John Bennett is a significant commitment and will have a direct, positive impact on the high quality of library resources available to our students."

Denise M. Hurst, vice president of advancement and external affairs at STCC

Cook said donations like the one from the Bennett estate help create an affordable pathway to the college, with debt a key consideration for many families. "Despite the fact that STCC is one of the most affordable options, each year our students take out

\$4 million in federal student loans," Cook said. "When we receive a gift like this, it has tremendous impact for us and our students. We are tremendously grateful."

Cook told the family that the reading room - designed with attention to historic detail - is one of the most inviting spaces in the newly renovated Ira H. Rubenzahl Student Learning Commons.

"When people now visit campus, this is one of those places we are sure to show. When our trustees hold a meeting in the learning commons, this reading room is the place they gather," Cook said. "We just don't have a space quite like this on campus, and we are thrilled to now identify this as the Bennett Reading Room."

Denise M. Hurst, vice president of advancement and external affairs, said the gift will support the college's

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Family and friends of the late John W. Bennett join in a dedication at STCC. From left, John Willemain, of Monson; Anne Kusekoski, of Springfield; Abbie Kusekoski, of Springfield; Jane Donovan, of Springfield; Jeanie Couvillon, of League City, Texas; Ann Westra, of Englewood, Colo.; Catherine Kusekoski, of Springfield; Beth Aparicio, of Littleton, Colo.; William Bennett, of London, England; Corinne Wingard, of Agawam and STCC President John B. Cook. (STCC)

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mission to transform lives of students.

“The gift from the estate of John Bennett is a significant commitment and will have a direct, positive impact on the high quality of library resources available to our students,” Hurst said. “Dr. Bennett’s philanthropic planning directed his life insurance policy to the STCC Foundation which allowed the college to establish the Bennett Reading Room and the resources within. We are grateful to Dr. Bennett and his forward-thinking planning to ensure his legacy at Springfield Technical Community College.”

The library reading room on the second floor of the

Student Learning Commons includes large windows with a scenic view of the campus and the city. The Student Learning Commons opened in December following a major renovation.

Bennett was a staunch advocate for education. He earned degrees from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Yale University, the University of Pittsburgh and did graduate work at Brown University.

An Army veteran, Bennett taught at Springfield’s High School of Commerce and served as president of the Springfield Federation of Teachers in the 1960s and as vice president of the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers and the Pioneer Valley Central Labor Council in the 1970s. He died in 2017 at the age of 86. His wife died in 2000.