

Bergstrom Family Endowment

Lake Region State College proudly attached the Bergstrom family name to its center for technical education which was completed in 2014. The Bergstrom Technical Center is truly a state-of-the-art instructional resource that will serve the educational needs of students and the community for years to come.

The naming of the building is the result of a gift made by Anne-Marit Bergstrom to the college's foundation for facility improvements and a gift from Renard and Candace Bergstrom to the college endowment program for ongoing scholarship and program support.

Bergstrom family involvement with LRSC has been in place since the college's beginning. In 1923, Arthur Bergstrom founded Lake Chevrolet Motor Company, an auto and implement dealership, in Devils Lake. The dealership has been owned and operated by the Bergstrom family ever since. This business was well established when the Devils Lake Public Schools and community leaders made the decision (in 1941) to create a two-year college to deliver business and technical education courses. Art supported this progressive decision and helped to

nurture the college's growth and development. The fledgling institution survived low enrollments during World War II and then grew rapidly as returning service personnel utilized the GI Bill. By

the 1960s, it was clear the college couldn't continue operating out of rented spaces all over town. A newly constructed campus complex opened for classes the fall of 1966.

William (Bill), son of Art and Marjorie Bergstrom, joined the family business in 1960. Bill served as CEO of the company for over thirty years. During that time, Bill was instrumental in the growth of the college. When the college began

seeking funds to build workshop facilities for technical education programs, including automotive technology, Bill was at the forefront. The fast pace of the college's growth caused the Devils Lake Public School Board to create a formal leadership group to focus exclusively on the needs of the college. Having been actively involved in the college since his return home in 1960, Bill agreed to serve on the first Board of Trustees for the college (1967). Eventually, this group secured funding to build two large workshop buildings



Bill Bergstrom, center, holding grandson Will, is surrounded by family. Standing are Anne-Marit (Mrs. Bill) and daughter Mira, son Renard and daughter-in-law Candace. Seated are Anne-Marit's parents, Leo and Alma Mehus Studness.

(1968 and 1976) to address the need for campus-based classrooms for technical education programs. These early buildings were incorporated into the new technical education center that today bears the Bergstrom family name.

Valuing art and education is a thread that spans many generations of this community-minded family. Through the years, the Bergstrom family has supported the college in many special ways, in addition to Bill's work to create facility resources. Anne-Marit Bergstrom (Mrs. Bill Bergstrom) has engaged in multiple fund-raising efforts for the college. These efforts have resulted in many opportunities for the college, including acquisition of the Steinway grand piano that is used on the stage of the Robert Fawcett Auditorium and creation of the Chautauqua Gallery which is dedicated to Mrs. Bergstrom's parents, Leo and Alma Mehus Studness.

In 1991, Bill and Anne-Marit were joined by their son and daughter-in-law, Renard and Candace, in the family business. In 1996, Renard succeeded Bill as CEO of Bergstrom Automotive Management. As a third-generation automobile dealer, Renard currently operates Lake GM Auto Center (formerly Lake Chevrolet), Marketplace Motors, and Lake Toyota. The business has a close working relationship with the college and employs numerous technical students each year through an internship program that enhances the school's Automotive Technology program immensely. At any given time, six to ten students are doing internships in these dealerships. The service management from Bergstrom Automotive has been very active in development of curriculum for the Automotive Technology program and has filled at least one seat on the program's advisory board for many years.

In the fall of 2014, LRSC cut the ribbon opening its new technical education center. This project had long been at the top of the college's priority list because, once again, the college was renting space off campus. In 2013, North Dakota's Legislature funded a \$5.9-million capital project for technical education. It provided a suite of new classrooms mostly for the Dakota Nursing Program, new mechanical systems, and a touch-up to the exterior of the two older technical buildings that were incorporated into the design for the new center. However, no resources were allocated to

address the needs of thirty-two thousand square feet of classroom/workshop space in the two seventies-era buildings wrapped into the project. Committed to making the older classrooms as new and technologically advanced as the new instructional spaces, LRSC launched a \$2 million fundraising initiative. Gifts for priority projects were eligible for match through a challenge fund, also funded by the legislature. Many generous donors responded to the challenge.

A major gift from the Bergstrom family completed the home stretch for the challenge campaign. LRSC's foundation captured its assigned match of \$1 million. It also claimed \$100 thousand from the residual left by other small campuses unable to capture their entire match allocation.

The Bergstrom family gift has two components: Renard and Candace's endowment gift will be used to strengthen the Automotive Technology program through scholarships and/or program support. When the bequest gift from Anne-Marit matures, it will be used to support priority needs for technical education at LRSC. Both parts of the gift were matched by the North Dakota Higher Education Challenge Fund.

The Bergstrom family's support was critically important to the success of the Challenge campaign and enabled LRSC to provide a level of excellence in technical education beyond the base provided by traditional funding sources. The college and its foundation are extremely grateful to the Bergstrom family for their enduring commitment and generous support. The Bergstrom family is very excited about the new capabilities that the technical center will give the college. The effects on our community are enormous and will continue to grow.

The youngest generation of the family, William and Benjamin Bergstrom, attended LRSC during their high school years, and the classes they took expanded their educational horizons greatly. Many of Bergstrom Automotive's team members also are graduates of LRSC or have attended LRSC to enhance their skills.

From Art and Marge, to Bill and Anne-Marit, to Renard and Candace, and continuing on to Will and Ben, the Bergstrom family has appreciated the impact of Lake Region State College on our community. They look forward to working together to see this great school flourish into the future. ▲