

History of Cape Coral Gold Coast Rotary Scholarship Program

Cape Coral Gold Coast Rotary chartered in 1985. Don Thomas was a founding charter member and the clubs founding scholarship chair in 1988. Originally scholarships were granted annually in the amount of \$500 each to graduating students from Cape Coral High Schools. Students needed to demonstrate C+ or better grades, be graduating from a Cape High School, provide financial profile, demonstrate community involvement, and show acceptance to at least one university or college. Three or four scholarships were normally awarded each year.

As the program matured, we began awarding annually four or more scholarships in the amount of \$1000 each with the same application criteria. Wayne Kirkwood, a club charter member, became scholarship chair in 1995 after serving on the scholarship committee the previous years. The program continued to grow as well as our annual funding. In 2003 and 2004 we were awarding up to four scholarships annually in the amount of \$1500 each. The program at this point was quite successful and time consuming. To this point the entire process was done manually by the scholarship chair, from dropping blank applications off to picking up completed applications from high school counselors, to providing copies to committee members, to calculating and notifying the winners. In addition to all this, in the early 1990's a club member, Sam Terzagian (The Scholarship Godfather), along with members Mike Rubenstein, Mike Gennaro and Bob Welsh, had an idea to establish a Casino Night fundraiser to fund \$100,000 of a \$200,000 endowment goal toward supporting our scholarship program in perpetuity.

The club achieved the \$100,000 goal in 2005 and at that time expanded our scholarship program to a whole new level. In fact, the club expanded the program criteria and scholarship funding to what it is today. From a onetime only criterion of \$1500 with no continued commitment or follow-up, to today a \$4000 scholarship that includes an application and personal interview. Which pays \$1000 annually provided student maintains a 3.2 GPA (unweighted), is a full-time student, continues community involvement at school and reports back to our club annually either by correspondence or in person. Since implementation of this program, we have had only one student fall out.

In 2007 the club partnered with the Cape Coral Community Foundation establishing the Cape Coral Gold Coast Rotary Scholarship Endowment to fund and administrate our scholarship program. The Foundation now protected our hard-earned designated funds in perpetuity, providing all the management and administrative support while club members continue as the selection committee and remain stewards of the program criteria. We are now on the brink of achieving the club's ultimate goal of a \$200,000+ endowment balance. In raising \$10,000 during Don Thomas's presidency the club will receive the third \$10,000 match from our generous donor and achieve our goal.

Thanks to the vision of Sam Terzagian, the belief and hard work of our members and the generosity of an anonymous donor, we are within reach of Cape Coral Gold Coast Rotary making a permanent difference in the future through education of young minds and introducing our recipients to Rotary. As a foot note, I too am a recipient of a Rotary scholarship. Many years ago, I was awarded a scholarship from the Ft. Myers Rotary South Club. Hence my passion for our Rotary Scholarship Program.

Wayne R Kirkwood
Cape Coral Gold Coast Rotary – Charter Member

Scholarship Chairs

Don Thomas	1988 – 1994
Wayne Kirkwood	1995 – 2015
Joe Cerino	2016 – current