

Dr. Ruth Brent Tofle establishes first HES scholarship for Missouri 4-H members



Dr. Ruth Brent Tofle, department chair of Architectural Studies at MU, proudly displays a photo of herself at the age of 10 with her fellow 4-H club officers. The photo appeared in her local newspaper in 1961.

Dr. Ruth Brent Tofle has established the Tofle-Brent-Stumpe Family 4-H Scholarship in honor of her own 4-H experience and in memory of her brother Lester Stumpe and parents Clarence and Dorothy Stumpe of Franklin County. The scholarship will support current or former Missouri 4-H members enrolled or planning to enroll in the MU College of Human Environmental Sciences, with preference for students enrolled in Architectural Studies.

“During the Great Depression, my mother won the American Royal Grand Champion Award for her 4-H steer, which allowed her to get a college degree,” said Dr. Tofle. “Her gratitude to 4-H was displayed in starting the first

4-H club in the small Franklin County town of Washington, Mo., and in being a life-long 4-H leader until her passing at 93 years of age.”

“It’s my turn to ‘pay it forward’ to benefit Missouri 4-H’ers with a college scholarship. I’m smiling and so is my mother.” – Dr. Tofle

Dr. Tofle credits her mother’s commitment to 4-H with much of her own success as a member. “At our charter 4-H meeting, I was elected vice president. Our local newspaper

published this photo of officers and I’m the short kid in the center. I was 10 years old,” she said, sharing a photo published at the time in the local newspaper.

After earning her BS from MU in the College of Human Environmental Sciences and completing her graduate work at the University of Minnesota, she returned to MU as a faculty member at the age of 29. Once again, she was a leader at a young age. Three years later she began service as a University of Missouri department chairperson and served on the Missouri 4-H Foundation Board of Trustees for many years. This year, Dr. Tofle will conclude 34 continuous years as department chair of Architectural Studies. She explains, “It’s my turn to ‘pay it forward’ to benefit Missouri 4-H’ers with a college scholarship. I’m smiling and so is my mother.”

“This generous gift is a testament to Dr. Tofle’s commitment to helping young people in Missouri prepare for and succeed in college and their careers,” said Rachel Augustine, Missouri 4-H Foundation director. “As the cost of higher education continues to climb, college scholarships are becoming essential to the majority of students. We are so grateful to Dr. Tofle for giving back to 4-H in this way.”

This is the first scholarship at MU to support 4-H members in HES. It is also the first Missouri 4-H Foundation scholarship that will be available to students pursuing graduate education. It is one of nearly 70 college scholarships that the Missouri 4-H Foundation awards each year to current or former 4-H youth throughout the state. ■