

DOING GOOD IN
Your Backyard.

Jane Preston
Sullivan County

Unrestricted Fund

To ensure care for children with emotional or mental health issues and to assist with transportation.



Home is Where the Heart Is

Jane Preston was born and raised in northern New Jersey—and spent part of high school and college in Alabama—but if you ask her, she'll tell you she's a Pennsylvanian through-and-through.

It's where she attended graduate school and met her late husband, Ted, at Drexel, where she raised her family in Swarthmore, and where she and Ted built a summer cottage on the shores of Lake Mokoma in Sullivan County.

For the Prestons, the quiet lake and surrounding borough of Laporte served as the perfect setting for a summer respite from school, work, and life's hustle-and-bustle.

"There was always a sense of serenity and peacefulness there," Preston said of the time she spent at the lake. "Back in Swarthmore, which is a busy, active borough that was great to raise a family, I was busy working full-time, and Ted was very busy as a patent attorney. But in Laporte, I just loved the area and the peace. I loved the local people. They have taken such good care of me."

Now, at nearly 78 years old, Preston feels like it's her turn to take care of them.

Having visited Laporte for more than 50 years, Preston has always been well aware of how the area's rural location influenced available resources—especially for children.

After attending a Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers (CFTT) presentation at Eagles Mere Country Club, Preston approached CFTT President and CEO Suzanne Lee with an idea.

I told Suzanne, ‘There really aren’t mental health facilities in Sullivan County,’” Preston recalled. “So I said, ‘If I give money, I’d like it to go to children who have emotional or mental health issues.’ And some of this money would have to go to transportation because people are so spread out there.

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Lee immediately started exploring the possibilities of an unrestricted fund that could address both the known needs of today’s Sullivan County children and the unknown necessities of tomorrow.

Preston credits daughter Cynthia, a successful licensed clinical social worker with experience both in private practice and as a therapist in an alternative middle and high school in New Jersey, as inspiration for the idea directed at helping youth in need.

The fund first went into effect in 2019, but Preston ramped up her giving in the summer of 2020 as she read and heard firsthand from Cynthia about how the COVID-19 pandemic was taking a toll on the mental health of children.

Lee had the idea to go directly to local teachers to talk with them about how the fund can be most impactful, conversations that will play a pivotal role in how Preston’s future gifts will be utilized.

The Prestons headed south in the 1990s, retiring in a small coastal city outside of Jacksonville, Florida. Jane still lives there for most of the year, but just like she has each year since she and Ted built their cottage in 1967, she spends three or four months during the summer in Laporte.

“Since Ted and I lived in Swarthmore and went to the lake for so many years, I wanted to give something back to the county and the community that I felt gave us such a wonderful, happy life,” she added. “Ted was very involved in the community and always wanted to give back. We were married 49 years, and I knew him for 51. He was my best friend, the love of my life, and he just loved Sullivan County. He’d be totally behind all this.”

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