



Washington
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NEWS RELEASE

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**CHORATCH FUND TO PROVIDE SCHOLARSHIPS
TO CHILDREN OF FIRST RESPONDERS**

Washington, PA – The Washington County Community Foundation, Inc is pleased to report that a recent court order signed by President Judge Debbie O’Dell Seneca will enable the Foundation to award thousands of dollars in educational scholarships each year from the *John and Sophie Choratch Scholarship Fund* to Washington County students whose parent is employed or volunteers as a first responder, i.e. fire, ambulance, police etc.

Mrs. Choratch had directed that the residue of her estate be set up in a trust “to assist worthy students of post high school studies, in the payment of their tuition and miscellaneous expenses of their training both in college, post graduate school or trade school. It is my direction that the funds be expended for only students whose parents were victims of the September 11, 2001 Twin Towers Tragedy. Further, my Trustee may select a charitable tax-exempt organization to recommend eligible students.” The Foundation and Mrs. Choratch’s Trustee, Paul Barna, through local attorney James McCune, had petitioned Washington County Orphan’s Court to reassign the charitable purpose in the will of Sophie Choratch. The position of the petitioners was that the charitable purpose defined in Mrs. Choratch’s will was no longer practical and sought the Court’s approval under cy pres to redirect the fund to benefit Washington County students, citing the following:

- Shortly after the 9/11 tragedy, the New York Community Trust and the United Way of New York City created the September 11th Fund to encourage and accept charitable contributions. In January 2002, the September 11th Fund issued a press release urging donors to stop sending donations to the Fund. They asked donors to redirect their contributions to other charities citing long-standing community needs.
- The Families of Freedom Scholarship Fund also was created shortly after 9/11 to encourage and accept charitable contributions to provide educational scholarships to the children of the victims of 9/11. Former President Bill Clinton and U.S. Senator Bob Dole served as co-chairs

of the fundraising campaign. In September 2002, Families of Freedom announced that it had surpassed its fundraising goal of \$100 million.

- The Twin Towers Fund was established to “ensure that the generous outpouring of support for the families of uniformed services personnel affected by the disaster of September 11, were coordinated, responsive, responsible and accountable.” As of September 12, 2003, the Fund, initiated by former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, was no longer accepting donations.
- An article published by Rand Corporation in 2004, indicates that over \$38,000,000,000 (38 billion) has been disbursed by various groups to various victims of the 9/11 tragedy. Further, the report indicates that on average, families affected by the tragedy received \$3.1 million and that families of emergency workers received \$4.2 million.

Sophie Choratch was born Feb. 2, 1916, in Donora, PA, the daughter of the late Joseph and Mary Lenhart Andrews. She was a graduate of Donora High School and the Hixson School of Floral Design, and was a member of Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church in Donora. Mrs. Choratch was the owner and operator of John’s Flower Shoppe in Donora for almost 40 years, retiring in September 2002. She was preceded in death by her husband, John. They had no children. Mrs. Choratch died March 16, 2003, in Havencrest Inc., Carroll Township, following an illness of eight months.

Beginning in 2006, the Foundation will accept applications for the ***John and Sophie Choratch Scholarship Fund*** from students in Washington County whose parent or guardian is employed or volunteers as a first responder. Students may seek scholarships for any type of established post-secondary education, including trade schools, colleges or universities. Applications will be available through the guidance offices in all Washington County high schools as well as through the Foundation’s website. In the selection process, preference will be given to a student whose parent was killed or injured in the line of duty. With the Fund’s value projected at over \$300,000, the Foundation estimates that up to \$10,000 will be awarded in 2006. As the Fund grows over time, the amount of the annual award will also grow. For additional information, please contact the Foundation by phone at 724-222-6330, by mail at 77 South Main Street, Washington, PA 15301 or by email at wccf@cobweb.net.

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