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The ENC remembers Elizabeth Steele

Recently our community lost an individual whose impact will continue for generations. I remember several years ago sitting with Elizabeth Steele at the Environmental Nature Center, her sight nearly gone but her vision as clear as ever. She asked me to call her Betty, but I always called her Mrs. Steele. We talked about philanthropy, the giving history of the Harry & Grace Steele Foundation, her love of the outdoors, and the impact of the ENC on our children. Our conversation was often interrupted by the excited voices of children who were making, for many of them, their first discovery in nature. Mrs. Steele would recognize their reactions and simply smile. She knew the impact the ENC was having on these children. She also recognized that the real impact may not be immediate and may not truly come to fruition for many years later. If those children only knew of the impact that Mrs. Steele had on the ENC, I'm sure they would have stopped to thank her personally.

We sat across from each other talking on land that she helped to acquire next to a building that she and the Steele Foundation were largely responsible for building. Her support went far beyond capital investments for Mrs. Steele knew organizations rely on the community's continued support in order to provide their valuable service. When people ask me about what philanthropy means, I immediately think of Mrs. Steele. She identified a community need, did her homework to identify an organization addressing that need, and provided her financial support to allow the organization to do its work to the best of their ability.

Next month, the ENC will start construction on our communities' first Nature Preschool, another project Mrs. Steele helped bring to fruition, to provide more of those experiences in Nature like the ones Mrs. Steele witnessed, but even more lasting and impactful ones.

The ENC's relationship with Mrs. Steele is one of many similar stories of relationships she had with other organizations throughout our community. Her impact will continue to be realized for many years to come. Our community is better because of Mrs. Steele. She is an example for us all.

Bo Glover, Executive Director
Environmental Nature Center