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Arizona supporter funds largest-ever gift annuity to LU

February 27, 2008 | By Mitzi Bible

Liberty University's growth is directly related to its financial supporters. But many of those, including the donor of the largest-ever gift annuity to the university — \$3.8 million — have never even stepped foot on the campus. Many have witnessed the ministry blossom from a television set in their living room.

Like Gerald and Rose Marie Evans of Arizona, who have been faithful watchers of “The Old Time Gospel Hour.”

“I’ve been listening to Jerry [Falwell Sr.] since he came on [television] in 1956 and I’ve supported him since then,” Gerald Evans said.

Beginning in 2004, the couple funded three charitable gift annuities with the university, with the latest in December 2007, bringing their total to \$3.8 million.

(A charitable gift annuity is when a donor transfers cash or securities in exchange for the charity's promise to pay a fixed annuity for life. According to their age, donors get a rate of return and it's the same for the rest of their life. Most LU donors receive electronic transfers on a monthly or quarterly basis.)

Gerald Evans retired from the printing industry where he printed labels for medicines and other products. After retirement, he said the Lord “had blessed us with more money than I could spend, then I wanted to put it to work for the prayer warriors.” He said he first learned about gift annuities to the college from an ad in the National Liberty Journal (the predecessor to the Liberty Journal magazine, a promotional publication of the university).

He said he is proud of Liberty and what it stands for, even hoping his three grandchildren (now in middle school and high school) choose to attend there.

“He [the Lord] says we’re to send our monies ahead, don’t leave it here ... that’s part of our discipline, sending it on ahead for others to benefit from us,” he said.

But Evans, who notes he is just a few months older than the late Dr. Jerry Falwell, said taking out the annuities makes good financial sense, too.

“If they look around and look at their investment and what it does tax-wise and what it will do for the university ... it makes sense. Even my tax man has said he didn’t understand why more people didn’t do this,” he said.

Tom Arnold, director of LU’s Planned Giving Department, said charitable gift annuities are popular because “it’s guaranteed income for the rest of one’s life and it also offers immediate tax benefits. The older the annuitant, the greater the tax benefit.”

Arnold said the average age of the annuitant with Liberty is 75. Based on current rates with the American Counsel on Gift Annuities, a 75-year-old with a \$10,000 gift annuity would receive a 7.1 percent rate of return, meaning they would receive \$177 every quarter for the rest of their lives.

LU Chancellor Jerry Falwell Jr. is excited when he hears about donors who share in his father’s vision.

“It’s encouraging to know that there are people out there, like Mr. Evans, who are impressed with Liberty, who want their grandchildren to come to Liberty and who will support us at that level,” he said. “I mean, that’s huge — \$3.8 million.”

Evans, who has recently encouraged another couple he knows to fund a gift annuity with Liberty, said it is exciting for him to be a part of the vision.

“It makes my heart palpitate when I see things happening like what’s happening there [at LU] ... and I know it [the money] is going to the right place.”

For more information on Planned Giving to Liberty University, go to www.lugiving.com