

# NEWS RELEASE



Phoenixville Community  
Education Foundation

*taking education to new heights*

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Phoenixville Community Education Foundation

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## **1968 Class Plans to Support New Graduates and Community Forever**

*A one-time class reunion project grew into an endowed fund to support students beginning public service careers and the community that will benefit from them.*

**Phoenixville, PA** - Phoenixville Area High School's Class of 1968 announces the establishment of the John A. Polefka Memorial Endowment Fund. Fifty-five years after walking across the graduation platform, the Class of '68 is closing in on its final goal – one that will last forever. For the past five years, in remembrance of schoolmate John Polefka, who was killed during the Vietnam War, the class has provided support and financial assistance to graduating high school seniors entering the sometimes-unheralded law enforcement and US military service career path.

Now they intend to support future responders far into the future. With a target of 225 recipients over the next 50 years, the endowed fund, administered by the Phoenixville Community Education Foundation, will continue recognizing and supporting Phoenixville graduates entering these challenging fields of service. The group is now focused on its final objective of making the fund self-sustaining to carry on the mission in perpetuity.

As they approached their 50<sup>th</sup> reunion the class wanted to honor John Polefka by providing assistance to graduating seniors committed to service careers that often receive little recognition. Many class members had gone to school with John in grade school at St. Ann's in Phoenixville. According to those who knew him well, his teachers were pretty tough on him because he struggled academically and tended to get in trouble with the nuns. When the rest of his class moved on to high school in 1964, John was left behind to repeat 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The following year he advanced to 9<sup>th</sup> grade but only stayed in school one year before dropping out. After that, John successfully held down a full-time job at The West Company for two years until his induction into the US Army in the fall of 1968. On August 31, 1969 John died in a rocket attack in Vietnam. He was a fallen hero who honorably represented his community. In the game of life he never had a chance.

When the project began, the Memorial Fund provided college scholarships for two law enforcement students, grants for two military service enlistees, and a special recognition award for a graduate entering the Naval Academy. Additional campaigns by the group have resulted in a total of 24 awards, including \$2,000 scholarships for criminal justice majors, book money for students in reserve officer training programs, stipends for military enlistees, and special recognition awards for academy appointees. While these awards may provide only partial financial help to each young recipient, the recognition and gratitude that the class bestows is significant.

The '68ers are about 80% of the way toward their financial goal; this was achieved primarily by donations and pledges from class members with help and support from other current and former

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“Phoenixvillians” who appreciate the value of this program to the community. Beth Briglia, former Senior Philanthropic Advisor at Chester County Community Foundation, who managed over 450 philanthropy legacy funds, says “I am impressed by the commitment and dedication of the Class of 1968 to honor the memory and legacy of a fellow school-mate. I cannot think of another group of unrelated donors who have banded together to create an award like this. It is truly extraordinary. It also speaks to the bonds that are formed in the Phoenixville Area School District amongst schoolmates, that often extend far beyond the boundaries of school years and classrooms.”

Additional information is available about the John A. Polefka Memorial Fund and the Phoenixville Community Education Foundation by contacting PAHS class member Chas Kopp or PCEF Executive Director, Joan Cadigan.

Phoenixville Community Education Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting and enhancing education in the Phoenixville Area School District. Its mission is to enhance and enrich the educational experience of Phoenixville Area School District students so they learn, grow, and thrive both inside and outside the classroom. PCEF does this by raising funds and directing resources from our community.

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John A. Polefka



Members of the Class of 1968 with a recipient