

ONE CHECK - THAT'S ALL?
SKIT - PROJECT AND SCHOLARSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS

2 characters:

Treasurer
Member

Props needed:

2 telephones
1 copy of contribution form

Member dials number. Treasurer's telephone rings. She picks up.

T: Hello.

M: Hello, T, I am ready to write my check for my contribution this year. I thought I would give \$25 to each of the projects and \$25 to Ruth Tabor Fox Scholarship. With 5 projects and the scholarship fund, that totals \$150. Should I make out my check to the chapter?

T: Your generosity is wonderful! I hope others will follow your example. But let's talk for a minute before you write your check.

You have several options for your contribution, but you probably don't want to make your check payable to the chapter. Checks made out to the chapter are not tax deductible, even when it is specified that the funds go to a project. There are two ways you can send a check to the projects and be eligible for a tax deduction. You can write a check to each project, or you can write one check to the P.E.O. Foundation, while specifying on the contribution form how you want it dispersed. Send it directly to International.

M: What's the difference between sending 5 checks, one to each project, and sending one check to the Foundation? Is there an advantage to one over the other?

T: The advantage may be convenience - whether you want to write one check or five. Both types of checks will go directly to the project and will be used this year. But you do have to clearly specify on a check to the Foundation exactly how you want the funds distributed.

M: Well, I'll have to think about that. Will the Foundation handle my contribution to Ruth Tabor Fox Scholarship Fund, too?

T: There is no longer a Ruth Tabor Fox Scholarship Fund. But there is an RTF scholarship. In 2000, Georgia P.E.O.s voted to discontinue holding a scholarship fund in the state. At that time, money in the RTFSF and the ways & means fund were rolled into the Georgia Scholarship Endowment Fund, which is held in the Foundation. Since 2000, the first scholarship awarded from the Georgia Scholarship Fund is called the RTFS. So, if you want to contribute to RTFS, you need to make your check payable to the P.E.O. Foundation, and specify that the funds go

the GSEF. M, do you have the copy of the contribution form that I handed out at the last meeting?

M: Yes, I've got it, but I didn't understand it. I understand the part about the projects, but what's all the stuff at the bottom? Where did these funds come from?

T: Do you have a minute for me to tell you the history of the funds? It's interesting - and it's about P.E.O. in Georgia.

M: Yes, I would like to understand this.

T: Well, of course, it all started in 1935 when Chapter A was formed in Georgia. Chapter B was formed in 1939. Then World War II came along, and there wasn't another chapter until 1945. But by 1954, there were enough chapters to form Georgia State Chapter.

In 1957 Vol. I of Easy Entertaining was published, with the profits going into a savings account to start a P.E.O. home.

M: What is a P.E.O. home?

T: A place for elderly P.E.O.s to live. If you look in THE P.E.O. RECORD, you will see there are a few in existence today. But no states are actually working to build homes any longer. And some states that had homes have sold them. P.E.O.'s focus has changed.

Then in 1962, Chapter F donated \$100 to start a Cottey Scholarship Fund. Other chapters donated \$150 that year, so the Georgia Cottey Scholarship Fund was established. The two funds were supported by Georgia P.E.O.s for the next few years. They were supported by profits from the cookbook, and by donations from Georgia P.E.O.s.

Meanwhile, in 1961, the P.E.O. Foundation was established as a convenient way to make contributions for advancing the goals of the P.E.O. Sisterhood. But Georgia P.E.O.s hadn't caught on how to use it at that time.

In 1971, The P.E.O. home fund had over \$10,000 in it. At that state convention, the fund was dissolved, due to the high cost of construction, maintenance, and all those things. Georgia P.E.O.s accepted that there would never be a home here. So the money was diverted to what was called the Georgia Philanthropic Fund for scholarships. This was the old Cottey Fund.

In 1985, the name of the fund was changed to the Ruth Tabor Fox Scholarship Fund in honor of a PSP. Also in 1985, W. T. Edwards established in the Foundation the Frances Paxson Edwards Scholarship. Frances was a member of Chapter N.

This was when Georgia P.E.O.s caught on to how to use the Foundation as a way to have perpetual funds available for scholarships. So, in 1987, The Georgia Scholarship Endowment Fund was started with \$8000 of unused scholarship funds.

M: What do you mean unused scholarship funds?

It was money that was awarded to women who did not use it for one reason or another. So... after 1987, Georgia State Chapter had two scholarship vehicles: The Ruth Tabor Fox Scholarship Fund and the Georgia Scholarship Endowment Fund. Ruth Tabor Fox was supported by state ways & means, plus contributions. The GSEF was supported exclusively by contributions. Since 1987, several other funds have been started in the Foundation, following the guidelines of the Foundation and Georgia State Chapter. Some funds were started by families or individuals, - some by chapters in honor of one of their members. By the 1990's, there were over 200 funds in the Foundation. Georgia had 10 of them - and some of those were still less than the \$5000 needed in order to have scholarships awarded from the fund. It was felt that paperwork could be reduced and simplified if funds could be consolidated.

But, back to RTF, by the mid-1990's, income from state ways & means had fallen dramatically in Georgia. Many members were choosing to make tax-deductible donations to the Foundation rather than to RTF, which did not qualify as a deduction because it was run by the state rather than the Foundation.

In 2000, the delegates at state convention voted to put state scholarship funds in the GSEF in the Foundation, and to have the first scholarship awarded from that fund to be the Ruth Tabor Fox Scholarship. So, that's why you need to write a check to the Foundation in order to make a contribution to RTF Scholarship. You might be interested to know that Georgia has awarded scholarships to over 200 women - many of them for more than one year. And that doesn't count all the women who have been helped by ELF, PCE and Scholar Awards. It's amazing when you think how many women's lives are touched by P.E.O.

M: I have really learned a lot today. But I do have one more question. What happens if I send a check to the Foundation, and don't include instructions as to how to use it?

T: The Foundation takes what they call "undesignated" funds and uses them at the discretion of the trustees - usually for the projects. But, I do know one year the funds were given to Iowa Wesleyan College to install an elevator in Old Main, the building where P.E.O. was founded. The elevator was to provide easy access to the P.E.O. memorabilia room, which is on the second floor.

M: You know, this is more complicated than I thought. I will have to decide how I want my contribution used. Of course, I want to support the projects, but I also want to give to the Foundation to invest for future scholarships. And now that I understand the tax situation, I may increase the amount of that check! After all, it's deductible!

T: Call me if you have any more questions. Be sure to mail your check to me, so that I can consolidate it with other contributions.

I'll see you next week at the meeting.

M: Yes, I look forward to seeing you then. Bye.

T: Good-bye.

Source: Mary Elizabeth Fernald, Chapter AG, GA, 2001