



PATSIANN SMITH

Vested Interest

Walking down the sidewalks of Northeastern State University is more than just a leisurely jaunt for Patsiann Nix Smith. It's a stroll through her childhood stomping grounds. Part of the university resides on her family's old land, and her family tree reads like a veritable who's who of NSU history. With her Shetland pony by her side, young Patsiann would walk the streets of Tahlequah and play in the area that would later become part of Northeastern.

"My family had ancestors that went to Northeastern Normal School and the Cherokee Seminary," explains Patsiann. "Dr. Irwin Leoser, who served as the physician for the Seminaries, is part of my family. They have all been proud of their association with Northeastern and I want to carry that tradition forward."

The owner of the historic Leoser cabin located just south of campus, Patsiann has included a provision in her will that deeds the property to the university if no one in the family wants to claim it. The family has also provided the land where Leoser complex, the NET Building and the parking lots located south of the administration building now sit.

Though she didn't grow up in Green Country and didn't attend

Northeastern, Patsiann says her heart has always been in Tahlequah, where she would spend summers with her aunts. The family's roots in the community and with NSU are the biggest reason that Patsiann continues to give to the university. Through The Nix Foundation, a charitable agency founded by Patsiann and her nephew, Jimmy Nix, the family established a low vision rehabilitation room at the NSU Oklahoma College of Optometry in honor of Callie and Clyde Stinson, Patsiann's aunt and uncle.

"I was blessed that my parents could afford to send me to school, and that offered me numerous opportunities," shares Patsiann. "The foundation was established as a way to give back. I want to pass on what I have been blessed with. My faith is very strong and I want to help others because I know that in doing for others, I am better off."

Her community involvement is extensive, from working at county animal shows, a personal passion for the former animal science major, to volunteering at Tahlequah's historic Thompson House. A popular volunteer for friends' various projects, Patsiann gives freely of her time for causes important to her and those around her.