Taylor Family promotes educational excellence

As a former teacher, school counsellor and vice-principal, Calgarian Ruth Taylor knows first-hand the importance of providing students with inspiring learning opportunities. She stood at the front of a classroom filled with curious faces and met the challenge of finding creative ways to spark enthusiasm in her students for the day’s lesson.

These teaching experiences generated a passion for promoting lifelong learning that Ruth Taylor shares with her husband, Don, and his children, Christina, Cameron and David. Together, the Taylor family is donating $40 million to establish the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, a project set to become the cornerstone of efforts to provide a world-class learning environment for all University of Calgary students.

“We have always been in favour of enhancing teaching skills at the university level, and have come to understand that the learning process is an integral part. We find this teaching and learning initiative to be an exciting challenge,” says Don Taylor.

Don Taylor came to Calgary at the age of two after drought drove his family off their farm in Barons, Alberta. He joined the Calgary-based company Engineered Air in 1967, building the firm into a Canadian leader in heating, ventilating and air conditioning. In 2008, Don Taylor was inducted into the Calgary Business Hall of Fame and in 2012, he was named a member of the Order of Canada for his life-long career as an innovative entrepreneur and generous philanthropist.

“Our family values enhancing the lives of others and society through our own individual lives and interests, professionally and personally, and through philanthropy. We believe in the power and importance of education,” says Don Taylor.

The Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning is the latest example of the Taylor family’s ongoing commitment to promoting post-secondary education in Alberta. In 2006, they contributed $25 million towards the Taylor Family Digital Library and the Taylor Quadrangle, establishing an inspired library complex and an iconic outdoor space for everyone at the University of Calgary to enjoy.

In 2012, the Taylor Family Foundation created the Katthy Taylor Chair in Vascular Dementia to promote research and treatment of a disease experienced by the mother of the Taylor children. The Taylor family has also helped bring the Engineered Air Chair in Cancer Research and the Engineered Air Gait Laboratory to the University of Calgary, and are supporters of the Seaman Family MR Research Centre and the Stephenson Cardiovascular MR Centre.

“The Taylor family has transformed our community once with the Taylor Family Digital Library, which is now widely viewed as one of the top libraries in the world. The Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning will have as big, if not bigger, effect on our community,” says Dru Marshall, provost and vice-president (academic). “It will truly transform the way we do business.”