



CARTHAGE
COLLEGE

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Pastor's daughter pledges \$1.5 million to Carthage for Distinguished Professorship in Social Change

New faculty position will honor Rev. Raymon L. Pedersen

KENOSHA, Wis. – The daughter of a highly respected retired Kenosha pastor has pledged \$1.5 million to establish a new Carthage College professorship in his honor.

The major financial commitment from LeAnn Pedersen Pope, a 1979 alumna who serves on the college's Board of Trustees, establishes The Rev. Raymon L. Pedersen Distinguished Professorship in Social Change to further the college's equity and inclusion goals.

Pope grew up in Kenosha, where her father was the senior pastor at St. Mary's Lutheran Church for more than 20 years. Through his involvement with a number of community organizations, Rev. Pedersen became a trusted advisor and confidant to many diverse business leaders.

"My dad could calm emotions when tensions ran high," Pope said — a quality she still admires.

The recipient of the distinguished professorship will help academic departments to develop inclusive learning practices and will serve as a resource for discussions on contemporary social topics. Pope envisions the position adding to a transformative liberal arts education that prepares students to dismantle the systems that hold back people of color.

"I am truly grateful to LeAnn Pedersen Pope for her extraordinary generosity," said Carthage President John Swallow. "By endowing this professorship, LeAnn enables us to recruit and retain the finest faculty, indirectly lowering the tuition burden on our students and ensuring that they can study social change with rigor and depth.

"Understanding American social progress requires careful attention to the inequality of opportunities and outcomes by race and other characteristics," President Swallow continued. "As our students work toward opportunity for all — both on and off campus — I cannot think of a more appropriate way for LeAnn to honor her father than through this significant gift."

After a long and successful career as a litigation attorney in Chicago, Pope retired from the legal profession to pursue a Master of Theology degree from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. Her master thesis, titled “From Colorblind to Clearer Vision: A White Christian’s Unexpected Journey Toward Redemption,” was the culmination of four years of study and reflection on racism, privilege, and whiteness.

Today, Pope serves as chair of the board of directors for Opportunity International Inc., a global organization working in Africa, India, and Latin America. The organization designs, delivers, and scales innovative financial solutions that help families living in extreme poverty to build sustainable livelihoods.

Pope also works with young African American men on the south side of Chicago through CRED (Create Real Economic Destiny), an organization dedicated to reducing gun violence in Chicago. Now living in Naples, Florida, Rev. Pedersen remains a primary inspiration for his daughter’s advocacy work.

Pope’s seven-figure commitment comes during the Light that Travels fundraising campaign, which Carthage launched publicly last July. In an effort to maintain its rising trajectory, the college seeks to raise \$100 million.

Two other alumni of the college have stepped forward with major contributions toward equity and inclusion:

- Patrick Anderson, a Carthage trustee and 1985 graduate who has extensively supported students of color, recently pledged an additional \$250,000. Half of that will be set aside for programming related to the professorship, with the other half going toward graduate diversity fellowships in music.
- The Rev. Diane J. Slocum, a 1976 graduate of the college, committed a total of \$100,000. Her gifts established a scholarship in memory of her late husband, Phil (a 1974 alumnus), and named the lounge associated with the Engagement and Inclusion Center.

In addition, a previously announced \$1 million commitment from Kenosha’s Grace Kolakowski provides scholarship funding that will provide both immediate and long-term impact. She particularly aims to help Black male students who are pursuing careers in education.

As part of its deep commitment to cultivate a sense of belonging, Carthage implemented an anti-racism action plan and joined the ambitious Moon Shot for Equity initiative. The college has also enhanced scholarship, internship, and study abroad funding to further eliminate barriers for underrepresented students.

So far, donors have committed about \$4.2 million through the campaign to support diversity in the student body. As part of the overall \$100 million Light that Travels goal, Carthage seeks to raise an

additional \$14 million to expand financial aid, programming, and facilities that serve marginalized populations.



About Carthage

Carthage College is raising expectations for a private college experience. It blends the best liberal arts traditions with desirable degree programs, transformative learning opportunities, personal attention from distinguished faculty, and a focus on career development, which makes its graduates competitive in the workforce. Carthage has undertaken a \$100 million fundraising campaign, Light that Travels, to deliver a radiant future for students through access, program innovation, and sustained excellence. Founded in 1847, Carthage is located on an idyllic shore of Lake Michigan in Kenosha, Wisconsin, in the thriving corridor between Milwaukee and Chicago. Grow with us: www.carthage.edu