Robert E. Donovan Scholarship

Created by his widow, Margaret Donovan, the Robert E. Donovan Scholarship Fund honors and celebrates the life of Robert E. Donovan who believed in the transformative power of education. These scholarships are given each year to one or more females studying engineering and who are on track to complete their degrees, but who need financial assistance in order to continue.

In establishing the Robert E. Donovan Scholarship at the University of Hartford, Peggy reflected that she and Robert "shared the belief that when family funds are being distributed to children for higher education, women are often overlooked if funds are insufficient. Sometimes the better use of the family money would be in educating the female children, but our longstanding traditions say educate the boy, the girl will marry. My husband and I felt this was a cause we would like to champion. After his death, I further realized that of all the non-traditional occupations for which women train, engineering had the least level playing field."

Criteria for the Robert E. Donovan Scholarships are as follows:

- **Female engineering major (or related field within CETA)**
- GPA of 3.0 or greater
- Demonstrated financial need

Robert E. Donovan scholars are selected annually by The Women's Education and Leadership Fund board in collaboration with the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture, and the offices of student financial services and institutional advancement.

One of five daughters, Peg Donovan was the first member of her family to undertake and complete a college education, and having been married to an engineer, she was all too aware of the under-representation of women in both science and engineering. So far, through the generosity of Peg and her family, at least a dozen young women studying in various fields of engineering have received scholarship awards from the “Robert E. Donovan Endowed Scholarship Fund” under the aegis of the WELFund at the University of Hartford.

Peg’s husband, Bob Donovan, was a prominent and successful engineer who was invited to join Commerce Secretary Ron Brown on a Clinton Administration-sanctioned energy mission in April 1996. Their plane crashed in Croatia, killing all aboard. Just two weeks before Bob left, Peg remembers a discussion they had about educational opportunities for women. “I was motivated to provide scholarships for women because of a New York Times article my husband recounted to me shortly before his death. A family had a son and a daughter but only enough funds to send one to college. They felt the daughter would marry and be provided for by her husband, so the son was sent to college. The daughter married, had two children, and then divorced. She was on welfare and struggling to raise her children. A stranger came forward to provide for her college education. My husband thought it unfortunate that women were so often overlooked and put in this untenable position. When my husband was killed in a plane crash and people wanted to donate to his favorite charity, I knew I had to establish a scholarship fund for women.”