

Point of Pride

Widener Alumni Give Back with Donated Laptop Initiative

When Deb Kandrak McCracken '89 thinks back to her time as a Widener undergraduate, she remembers the faculty, staff and mentors who guided her to personal and professional success. Now, as the founder and president of [The Elsie Foundation](#), McCracken is giving back to support Widener students as they reach their potential.

"For me, it's all about giving back and paying it forward because I wouldn't have graduated from Widener if not for some great donors and connections," said McCracken.

In 2016, McCracken, along with her husband and fellow Widener alumnus Jamie '87, launched The Elsie Foundation with the goal of extending financial literacy education, including the necessary learning tools, to students and communities to provide them with the knowledge and skills to build successful futures. The Foundation was created in memory of McCracken's mother, Elsie Alberghini Kandrak, a lifelong educator who was dedicated to teaching and impacting every student with whom she interacted.

"I always tell people, one of the things that my mother used to say was if you could touch just one student and change his or her trajectory in life, then it would make all the sacrifice worth it," explained McCracken.



The Elsie Project

In December, McCracken and her husband, Jamie, presented Frisby with a laptop donation made possible by The Elsie Project, a technology initiative within The Elsie Foundation.

Elsie's belief became the platform for the foundation, and in 2017 the Foundation's Board developed its first initiative to introduce the nonprofit's mission to the Chester community. The Elsie Project now provides technology equipment to one student annually who exhibits great promise and who would benefit from a technology package furnished with the latest equipment and programming.

Last semester the Elsie Project presented its first laptop to Princess Alexander-Frisby. Up until that point Frisby, a junior who commutes to campus, relied on technology available in campus facilities and her cell phone to manage day-to-day communications and assignments, including student email and Canvas.

"Last semester, I struggled with technology and transportation, so now I have all the resources and all the things I need for success," said Frisby.

While the laptop met an immediate need for her, Frisby, who is studying [psychology](#), will put the laptop to good use as she works to earn her master's degree and eventually embark on a career. A native of Chester, Frisby wants to open a counseling practice to work with teens and young adults with mental disabilities and disorders, including depression and anxiety.

"For me, I want to make it and come back to make the community better by using my education and my story: I came from Chester, I went to school in Chester, and now I'm here to help in Chester," said Frisby.

Inspired by the generosity and support she received, Frisby plans to pay it forward and support her community one member at a time – a notion that McCracken knows well.

"It's being a part of that kind of experience that makes it all worth it," said McCracken. "Now I know what my mother was talking about."