

# Big Thursday smashes record

**Matching \$25,000 donations presented to scholarship funds at USCL, Clemson**

Sunday, March 2, 2014 at 7:00 am (Updated: March 2, 7:00 am)

When Gamecocks and Tigers supporters gather, it's a rare occasion for both sides to leave sporting smiles and an upbeat mood.

Such was the case on Tuesday, Feb. 25, when the Big Thursday Inc. of Lancaster Scholarship Committee met at the University of South Carolina Lancaster's Carole Ray Dowling Center for its annual check presentation.

Supporters of each school – Clemson University and the University of South Carolina Lancaster, a branch of the USC system – departed with a happy feeling, akin to beating an arch rival.

Tigers, Gamecocks and, in this case, USCL Lancers, were happy after the Big Thursday Inc., of Lancaster Scholarship Committee presented each school with a record \$25,000 check for its scholarship fund.

"We are for Lancaster County and we come together for a common cause," said Richard Patterson, who chairs the scholarship committee. "That's our purpose."

"We broke the record again," Patterson said. "Last year, we presented a record \$22,500 to each school and this year we have increased that with another record effort for funds raised to benefit Lancaster County students attending USCL and Clemson. Those students are the real winners."

The Lancaster County Partners for Youth board oversees the scholarship selection process for recipients who will attend Clemson. The selection of scholarship recipients at USCL is handled by its scholarship committee.

"Education plays a major role in Lancaster County's future," said Sharon Novinger, the Executive Director for the Lancaster County Partners for Youth.

"We're very prejudiced about educating people here and getting them to come back," Patterson said.

Patterson noted the pledge sponsors, who annually donate at least \$250 and up to \$499, have made a major impact on the committee's work to bolster scholarship funds at USCL and Clemson.

The pledge sponsors, mostly individuals, families and a few area corporations, donate \$5 a week for 50 weeks.

The pledge sponsors program, which has steadily grown since it began in 2010, had 63 in 2013.

"That works a lot easier for people and we give them two weeks off each year for vacation," Patterson said. "We've been able to raise a bunch of money for a great cause and we're looking to increase our pledge sponsors for 2014. Our fundraising has already started for 2014."

The \$50,000 – \$25,000 to each school – was the result of the Big Thursday Scholarship Committee's work over the last year. Funds raised are split equally and given to each school for scholarships to Lancaster County students – Andrew Jackson, Buford, Indian Land and Lancaster – who will attend one of the schools.

The Big Thursday Inc. of Lancaster Scholarship Committee gets its name from the early history of the South Carolina vs. Clemson football game.

The two schools met each year during the annual State Fair Week in Columbia from 1896-1959.

In 1960, the two teams began playing with games alternating between Clemson and Columbia.

The Big Thursday Scholarship Fund began in 2000, and since that time, the committee has worked to boost scholarship funds for county students attending Clemson and USCL.

In addition to the annual scholarship presentation, a highlight of the Big Thursday Scholarship of Lancaster Inc., is the Big Thursday golf tournament and related events to support the scholarships.

The tournament, held the third Thursday in November, is played the week before the annual South Carolina-Clemson football game on the last Saturday in November.

Last fall, the team of University of South Carolina Gamecocks and USC Lancaster Lancers golfers posted their fourth straight win in the 12th annual Big Thursday Scholarship golf tournament.

The Lancers and Gamecocks teamed for a 15.5-7.5 win over the Clemson University golfers at the Lancaster Golf Club.

“The Big Thursday of Lancaster Inc., Scholarship program is a great thing,” said committee member Larry Honeycutt. “We have the hardest working man in Lancaster County in fundraising. Richard Patterson is our leader and he keeps us going.”

USCL Dean Dr. Walt Collins beamed as he left the Dowling Center holding his poster-sized \$25,000 check.

“This is a wonderful addition and we’re grateful for the funds.” Collins said. “It helps keep Lancaster County students here.”

For more details on the Big Thursday Scholarship program or to make a pledge, call (803) 285-6800, or write to Big Thursday, P.O. Box 1025, Lancaster, SC 29721.

“If you can’t donate, we’re always looking for committee volunteers who can be a benefit to our scholarship committee and education here,” Patterson said. “We have a great committee and a great future.”

Contact reporter Robert Howey at (803) 283-1157