

Tractor Supply holds annual fundraiser to benefit FFA

Donations accepted in-store and online will fund student-led agricultural projects across the country

Submitted

Tractor Supply Company continues its efforts to support youth across the country by kicking off the year with its annual Grants for Growing campaign. The fundraiser, which will coincide with National FFA Week, supports hundreds of unique and sustainable



agricultural projects implemented by FFA chapters nationwide.

From now until March 1, donations can be made in store or online at TractorSupply.com.

Each grant will fund projects within the same state the funds were donated in.

"We are committed to the FFA mission of making a positive difference in the lives of our students," said Christi Korzekwa, senior vice president of marketing at Tractor Supply. "Thanks to the passion our team

members and customers have for supporting their communities, Tractor Supply will continue to invest in the next generation of agricultural leaders."

Grants for Growing first launched in 2016 by Tractor Supply, and its ability to fund FFA projects has increased each year. Last year, Tractor Supply's campaign raised a record \$970,121, which funded 259 grants and impacted more than

24,000 students across the country. To date, the program has raised more than \$3.2 million for the National FFA Organization and has funded 1,258 grants supporting agricultural projects.

FFA chapters will submit applications later this spring with detailed proposals. Each application will include how the chapter would start, maintain or expand on a project that will benefit their

local areas as well as both current and future FFA students. In the past, funds have been requested to purchase vegetation, trees, seed, chickens, feed, mulch and tools for projects ranging from livestock shelters, beekeeping and aquaculture labs.

Grants can be up to \$5,000 and will be awarded to chapters on Aug. 1, 2020. For more details about the program, visit FFA.org/GrantsforGrowing.

Hubble Foundation: assisting families affected by telecommunications accidents

By JESSICA VAUGHN

jessica@gulfcoastmedia.com

How often do we drive by telecommunications towers in our day to day lives? How much are we using Wi-Fi to conduct daily business or communications? How many times a day do we depend on wireless services? But how often do we think about the men and women who are responsible for maintaining these towers that keep us connected in this digital society?

For Dr. Bridgette Hester, of Foley, her mind is never too far from the ones who service, upkeep, maintain, and install these towers. Hester lost her husband, Jonce Hubble, in 2010 during a workplace accident. Hubble was performing routine maintenance of a tower in Anniston, when a 33-foot bucket truck backed into the support wire of the tower, collapsing the tower. Hubble and his co-worker, Barry Sloan, were killed.

Now, Hester is the founder and president of the Hubble Foundation, a non-profit she began in 2012 that provides assistance to families of tower climbers who have lost loved ones to work-

place accidents and to injured workers.

"The main reason I did the foundation is because God is bossy," Hester said. "I fleetingly thought of it before, because I knew what Jonce did, I knew some days he was 300 feet off the ground. After he was gone it was like God tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'I told you what you needed to do,' and I said okay."

She states she knows what it's like to lose someone to a workplace accident, and she understands the strain it can put on someone; emotionally, physically, and financially. The Hubble Foundation assists the families of late climbers by providing scholarships or tuition for trade school, monetary assistance such as funeral costs and monthly bills (as able), OSHA and congressional change, academic research within the telecommunications industry from the aspect of the climbers, and helping injured technicians. Since its creation, the Hubble Foundation has given over 50 scholarships of \$600 each to the children and widows of late telecommunications technicians.

When Hester learns

a climber has died, the first thing she does is create a comfort box for the family and mail it to them. Each box is specialized to match the family, and she puts them together on a need basis. She says it's one of the best reactions the foundation receives. Once connected, Hester remains in the family's lives for as long as they will allow her to, calling them to check up even years after the accident.

"A lot of why I do the foundation is because I want people to know that you can visit Griefville, but that's not where you're supposed to stay," said Hester. "You can find an outlet for your grief that would be helpful. For me, I can speak into the life of widows that have lost their spouse, specifically those who have lost a spouse in the telecommunications industry."

Living here since 2018, Hester hopes to grow the Hubble Foundation and begin hosting fundraisers in our area. Currently, the Hubble Foundation puts on an annual motorcycle ride in Guntersville, Alabama, and an annual golf tournament in Canton, Georgia. She stated she'd love to put on a golf tournament in our area, as well as special tournaments that could be held on the beach. In order to host fundraisers, the organization is looking for volunteers. Hester's goal is to have a regular tournament by 2021.

The foundation largely depends on donations, which go towards assisting families who have lost someone to a telecommunications accident, or a climber who was injured on the job.

"We're seeking support to help these families, and if your business or personal life in any way relies on wireless connectivity, then consider donating," Hester said. "We're helping families who make sure that you're staying con-

nected to your family and friends."

Those who are interested in volunteering with the Hubble Foundation or making a donation can visit the website

at <https://www.hubble-foundation.org/>, and follow the organization on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Facebook fundraisers have shown large success in the past

to raise money for families affected by telecommunications accidents. More information on the foundation and the lives of climbers can be found on the website.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Dr. Bridgette Hester, founder and president of the Hubble Foundation



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