

Your Legacy



For women like the ones in this nutrition lab in 1923, home economics was a gateway to university and careers.

A century of learning the business of life

BY SARAH PRATT

As Home Economics and Human Ecology mark 100 years, we highlight two women who share a passion for home, family and community

The early 20th century was a time of burgeoning opportunity for women. In 1918, the same year most Canadian women were granted voting rights, the University of Alberta established the Department of Household Economics.

For women who went through the program, it became their entry into higher education and professional opportunities.

For Catherine Ellis, '63 BSc(HomeEc), it was the science of nutrition that led to university.

"I was always fascinated by how food became us," says Ellis. "How, if you eat various things, they turn into skin and bone and such."

After majoring in food and nutrition and completing her dietetic internship, Ellis worked as a district home economist and a public health nutritionist before becoming a grain farmer in Olds, Alta., with her husband, Graham.

In the 30-odd years since, Ellis has seen many changes in farming: no-till systems, GPS, cellphones. When she thought about how to help prepare tomorrow's farmers, she decided to arrange a gift of life insurance to the U of A.

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Curiosity about nutrition brought Catherine Ellis to the U of A, and her years as a farmer fed her love of food.



“The future is with education, especially with the technological changes happening in the field,” she says.

Her future gift to the Department of Agricultural, Food & Nutritional Science will be used wherever the

department sees the greatest need.

“I feel like they can make that decision for me,” she says.

It is the instructors that Ellis recalls most fondly, especially professor emeritus Ruth Renner, '48 BSc(Ag), '50 MSc.

“My mother babysat her,” recalls Ellis. “I really admired her, she was a wonderful instructor ... they were all very good instructors and I received an excellent education.”

Dorothy Gardner, '61 BSc(HomeEc), also felt the U of A played an important role in shaping her life, and

“The future is with education, especially with the technological changes happening.”

— Catherine Ellis

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“I hope this bursary means students can have an education they might not otherwise get.”

— Dorothy Gardner

After more than 30 years as a home economics teacher, Dorothy Gardner still enjoys painting, baking and sewing.



than 30 years, is an acrylic and watercolour artist, a baker whose pastries and pies are beloved, and a seamstress of intricately embellished garments.

While reviewing her will a few years ago, Gardner decided she wanted to give back to the place that gave her so much.

As a university student, she was turned down for scholarships because she didn't qualify on financial grounds, so she decided to create the Dorothy (Cowan) Gardner Bursary in Human Ecology to help students struggling with costs.

she chose to help students continue their education.

The oldest of four children raised on a farm north of Lloydminster, Sask., Gardner recalls the day her father brought home a Singer Featherweight sewing machine — it didn't take long for Gardner to figure out how to use it.

Her years as a 4H member and high school home economics classes led Gardner down a natural path into the U of A's Household Economics program.

And the lessons she learned there have lasted a lifetime — both professionally and personally. She taught home economics for more

“I hope this bursary means students can have an education they might not otherwise get,” says Gardner, who hopes to reconnect with her alma mater during the September 2018 Alumni Weekend.

“Home economics and the University of Alberta gave me a great background for my career as a home economics teacher.”

Both Gardner and Ellis say their education played an important role in shaping their lives, and their decision to give back to the university will help ensure other students can continue their own journeys.

A few facts about Home Ec

- The Department of Household Economics was established in 1918 under the Faculty of Arts and Science.
- In 1945, the school first offered a master's degree in Household Economics Education. In 1960, postgraduate programs in nutrition were established.
- Throughout its history, the department has responded to the concerns and interests of the day. In 1918, household science was highly regarded. During the 1920s, nutrition was of great importance. During the Depression, food preservation became crucial, while after the Second World War, materialism swept households. From the 1970s to today, science and research are once again at the forefront.
- Today, the Department of Human Ecology & Home Economics offers two undergraduate fields: Clothing, Textiles & Material Culture and Family Science. It also offers the only PhD degree program in human ecology in Canada.



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*Derek Michael, Julian Solberg and
 Kathy Fitzgerald*

We hope you enjoyed reading the Spring 2018 edition of *Your Legacy*, the University of Alberta's semi-annual planned giving newsletter. We would love to hear your thoughts and comments on this newsletter.

Please feel free to contact us if we can be of any assistance in fulfilling your personal legacy goals.