

## **John H. Thill Scholarship**

### *Provides grants to veterans and their families*

When Shirley Thill heard about Inver Hills Community College's Maps to Credentials program—a collaborative effort to help veterans get college credits for the work they do in the military—she immediately knew the best way to honor her recently deceased husband, who served in the Army during the Korean War, was to endow a scholarship in his name.

Starting spring semester 2014, the John H. Thill Scholarship will provide grants for veterans, their spouses and their children.

“I know that the government is cutting some veterans' benefits,” Thill said. “I just want the men and women who serve our country to know they are not forgotten.”

Education was always very important to the Thills. John had already finished a college degree when he volunteered to join the Army in the early 1950s. He spent three years doing clerical work in Austria before returning to the University of Wisconsin for law school. Shirley worked for over a decade as an elementary school teacher in Illinois and Iowa before moving to Minnesota to raise her family.

After earning his J.D., John moved to St. Paul to work at West Publishing. He took a break to practice law in La Crosse, Wis., but returned to his old job at West after a short time. “They told him if he ever wanted to come back, the door was always open,” Shirley said.

The couple met at the First Christian Church in St. Paul and were married in 1987, the second marriage for both.

Having worked his way up to associate editor at West, John had an office overlooking the Mississippi River in downtown St. Paul. Shirley remembered that he very much loved the view. When West relocated to its new Eagan campus late in his career, John spent six months in what he called “the cornfield” before retiring. “This is it,” Shirley recalled John saying. “I'm hanging it up.”

He passed away on Valentine's Day 2012.

Besides memorializing her husband's legacy, Shirley intends for the scholarship to honor and recognize the work of two of her children. Her son, John Mark Holland, has spent nearly 20 years in the Marines. Her daughter, Anne Johnson, is the current interim associate vice president in charge of strategic initiatives at Inver Hills and Dakota County Technical College. Anne helped put together and run the Maps to Credentials project over the past two years. Other children in the Thill family include Lana Holbrook, Kathryn Schneider and Nancy Lee.

“I know that IHCC is doing special things for veterans,” Shirley Thill said. “In a small way, the scholarship in John's name will help the school continue that good work.”