

A Spelling Lesson: The P.E.O. Home Fund A Minnesota Treasure

P.E.O.s are frequently asked about the meaning of the letters that seem to play a significant role in our beloved sisterhood. Our very name, The P.E.O. Sisterhood, prompts questions, as does the way in which we designate the various chapters across our state and internationally. But have you ever stopped to ponder the meaning of the letters that spell out the pride of Minnesota State Chapter, The Home Fund? To understand what something means and what something is, is to be able to act and participate in appropriate fashion. The goals of this brief but important program about our Minnesota Home Fund project are to give every Minnesota P.E.O. the opportunity to understand more fully the important work that is carried on and to encourage our membership in this state to continue to be generous in supporting the program so that it may continue to grow and to serve.

The name "HOME FUND" can quickly be defined as follows: Hope Of Managing Emergencies and Finding Useful New Directions. But what do these words really represent? Let's start with the "H" and find words that describe actual needs that are met for those in crisis. The Home Fund Board of Trustees has come up with words like help, hospital care, hearing aids, and helping hands. The "O" could represent optical or ongoing care. Medications or medical help give insights in to the letter "M", and "E" can be representative of emergency help or electricity assistance for those who require the funds for a period of time. The "F" could represent funds to get through a crisis - food or furniture such as a lift chair or a wheel chair to make life easier for clients requiring such care. The "U" could stand for such help as utility bills. Certainly one of the most recognizable forms of help is represented by the "N", that being nursing home care. Also, nourishment and other necessities of life during a critical time are very good choices to further describe the scope of assistance provided through this wonderful project. And, the "D" could stand for dental care, day care, and drugs that enable a client to live a more active and normal life. Certainly each of us can think of other words that can be assigned to the wide scope of Home Fund caring and sharing as we think of those around us who need some sort of temporary help and support.

Gertrude Porter Tomhave, past president of MN State Chapter, once said, "Every life has eternal meaning, for surmounting all the dazzling inventories of time is God himself; and, nothing can separate us from the love of God...a love with overwhelming, mighty dimensions...the tie that binds us to each other." Our Home Fund project is the arm of love that reaches out and embraces those persons who have needs that cannot be met without help. This help is open to Minnesotans of all ages, races, and creeds, both male and female. The only boundary that exists is that we confine the help that we give to Minnesota residents, as defined in the bylaws of the fund. The gifts that are given to the fund are given from individuals and chapters through loving concern for others, and the funds are administered by the board of trustees in the same fashion. We know that love has power that knows no boundaries. "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things". The character of God's love is the kind that gives and gives and gives, without limit and without demanding a responding love. It may hope for a response, but failing to elicit any, it goes on loving nonetheless. It is drawn to the object of love because of need: someone is hungry - feed him, someone is lonely - visit him.

Our wonderful Minnesota Home Fund project saw its beginning only 16 years after P.E.O. came to our state. It was at the 1928 state convention that the need for a welfare fund to help those close to us was addressed. From this need, came the Welfare and Trust Fund with the first gift in the amount of \$100.00. From that time the concept has evolved into its present day commitment to help those in need through grants of money appropriate within the guidelines of the bylaws established in 1974, which provided for a board of trustees authorized to administer available funds. Throughout the years the assets of the fund have grown, and so have the requests for help that come before that board. It has become increasingly obvious that the need for additional gifts will provide the only means by which the fund can continue its work. Growth of the fund and its use for care and support of those P.E.O. sisters and others in need continue as priorities for the years ahead. The history of the Minnesota P.E.O. Home Fund is a

continuing thread of caring and sharing.

The Trustees encourage all P.E.O.s to be sensitive to any special needs of their sisters, or to others in their communities who might benefit from assistance by the Home Fund. Also, chapters and individual members are reminded that contributions to the Home Fund are always welcome and always needed. Assistance is given as outright grants, making growth and renewal of the fund's resources very important. Leaving money to the Home Fund through wills and bequests is an excellent way for P.E.O.s to help the fund grow and thrive. It is often said, "Caring is sharing". The reverse is also true, and both are demonstrated for all Minnesota P.E.O.s, and for those who are touched in any way, by the sharing of the resources of our Minnesota P.E.O. Home Fund.

Here are a few responses from some of those who have shared in the fund's caring gifts, expressing appreciation and a sense of wonder at the generosity shown them at a time when it meant much to their well-being. A mother writes, "I want to thank you for the help I received. While I am now on AFDC, I hopefully will be employed shortly. It is so wonderful that this was available to me and my children. It got us through a difficult time and I cannot thank you enough. We are slowly picking up our lives and going forward to new horizons." Another writes, "I couldn't figure out who had sent the lovely card but when I opened it, all thoughts fell in place - P.E.O. - and the Home Fund! No other explanation needed! I have so appreciated the Home Fund help!" And finally a woman writes, "How can I ever thank you for your love and support the last two years. I know we would never have made it without you. Your support has served as an example to our children as the way God's children pull together in love and support to each other. I know this is something they will remember in later years. Your faith in our future is a ray of light for us to cling to, and I pray that the time will come when we can find some way to repay your many kindnesses."

We in P.E.O. know that the only repayment that is necessary is the knowledge that we have made a difference in people's lives. Andrew Carnegie once wrote that "As I grow older, I pay less attention to what men say. I just watch what they do." P.E.O.s in Minnesota can watch what we are doing and take great pride and satisfaction in knowing that we have made a difference. Yes, the letters that spell HOME FUND truly do give all of us the continued Hope Of Managing Emergencies and continuing to Find Useful New Directions.

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